JESUS CHRIST SUPERSCRIBE:
KNOWLEDGE, INTERPRETATION, AND TEACHING IN THE GOSPEL OF
MATTHEW

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

Master of Arts
in
Religious Studies
University of Regina

by
Esther Marie Snarr Guillen
July 30, 2019

© Copyright, 2019: Esther Guillen
Esther Marie Snarr Guillen, candidate for the degree of Master of Arts in Religious Studies, has presented a thesis titled, *Jesus Christ Superscribe: Knowledge, Interpretation, and Teaching in the Gospel of Matthew*, in an oral examination held on July 25, 2019. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

External Examiner: Dr. Willi Braun, University of Alberta

Supervisor: Dr. William Arnal, Department of Religious Studies

Committee Member: Dr. Darlene Juschka, Department of Religious Studies

Committee Member: Dr. Kevin Bond, Department of Religious Studies

Chair of Defense: Dr. Troni Grande, Department of English
Abstract
Jesus-characters are most often created as a reflection of their authors, and the author/s of the text traditionally known as “The Gospel According to Matthew” is no different. Matthew creates a Jesus that is focussed on knowledge retention, interpretation, and dissemination. Throughout the text, they set up different scribe-characters as foils for Jesus, so that Jesus’s superior ability to interpret and teach the Hebrew writings can be displayed. Like ben Sira, Matthew creates an “ideal scribe” in their Jesus, and also displays the characteristics of the “ideal scribe” in the composition of the text. This scribe is an able teacher, has complete knowledge of the Hebrew prophecies and the Law, and has been granted, from a divine source, the ability to correctly interpret their knowledge.

Matthew’s biography is a creative work, formed by re-working sources and use of original material. The author/s interest in the nature of prophecy and divine knowledge is distinct from other Jesus-biographies, which is displayed by creation of composite prophetic quotations, a requirement for verbatim fulfillment of prophecy, and use of dream-revelations. These are Greco-Roman literary techniques, and Matthew’s biography, alongside other biographies of Jesus, should be imagined to have the same compositional process as other texts of its period and genre.
## Table of Contents

Abstract ...................................................................................................................... i
Table of Contents ................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgements ................................................................................................. iv
Composition of Matthew ......................................................................................... 1
The Text .................................................................................................................... 4
Community .............................................................................................................. 8
Matthew in the Apostolic Fathers ......................................................................... 15
Composition Methods ............................................................................................. 17
Knowledge Holders, Knowledge Interpreters ....................................................... 22
   Lady Wisdom ...................................................................................................... 24
Scribes in Matthew .................................................................................................... 25
   Q and Scribes ...................................................................................................... 39
Prophecy in Matthew ............................................................................................... 40
Sermon on the Mount .............................................................................................. 50
Ben Sira .................................................................................................................... 56
   The Magi ............................................................................................................ 58
   Transfiguration .................................................................................................. 61
   The Second Sophistic ......................................................................................... 62
Scholar ....................................................................................................................... 64
Chains of Knowledge .............................................................................................. 67
   Teacher .............................................................................................................. 73
Qumran ..................................................................................................................... 75
Conclusions .............................................................................................................. 81
Bibliography ........................................................................................................... 86
Appendices .............................................................................................................. 90
   Appendix I ........................................................................................................ 90
   Appendix II ....................................................................................................... 91
   Appendix III ..................................................................................................... 91
   Appendix IV ..................................................................................................... 91
   Appendix V ....................................................................................................... 93
   Appendix VI ..................................................................................................... 93
Appendix VII .........................................................................................................................................................94
Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank Dr. William Arnal for his tireless effort in supervising this thesis. Your open door and willingness to talk through my thoughts and ideas has been essential to this process. I would also like to thank my committee members, Dr. Darlene Juschka and Dr. Kevin Bond, for their insight and input into my work. As well, I would like to thank the wider community of Religious Studies faculty and staff for their support over the past two years.

Dr. Zeba Crook, my mentor and friend, without whom I would never have started on this path.

My parents, Rev. Janet Nield, the late Juan Antonio Guillen, and Rev. Dr. Jack Nield, for their unfailing support for my life-long education.

The congregation of Wesley United Church, Sarah Stubbe, and Morgan Moats, my Regina family.

Maysa Haque and Connor Thompson, my friends and fellow-travellers through the Master’s program, thank you for your academic and emotional support. “Ideas are important.”
I would also like to acknowledge the financial support of the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research of the University of Regina, as well as the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
Composition of Matthew

“Texts are the products of authors engaged in certain practices and conventions that
correspond with their social contexts. They are not disembodied or passive filters
of broader cultural structures.”¹

The ancient biography of Jesus traditionally designated “The Gospel According to
Matthew” was likely composed some time between 80 and 100 CE. This text, a compilation
of sources and independent material, is a use-specific narrative composed in an active
authorial process, involving free creativity. In what follows, I attempt to describe the
authorial process, rather than the specific author, of the text, and references to authorship
are shorthand designations of a compositional process.² Authorship in the ancient world is
not a concept that should be taken for granted. It requires explanation, and theorization, in
order to separate the Hellenistic “author” from our post-enlightenment conceptions of the
“solitary genius.” I do not here mean to remove all individual agency from the ancient
author, but rather to temper both the concept of the editor/redactor who scribes the

² Throughout, I use the gender and number neutral pronoun “they,” and the name “Matthew” to refer to the
author/s of the text I am examining. This should not be understood as a definitive statement of singular or
plural authorship; I do not subscribe to the community-production model, which will be discussed further
below, but because of constraints of evidence, we cannot state firmly that the author was a single person.
Use of the name “Matthew” to designate the author/ authors should be read in the same manner. While
possibly-autobiographical elements contained in the text, which again will be discussed further below, are
presented in the masculine, this is not definitive proof that the authors were masculine, though if these
autobiographical elements are taken as such, then the authors have presented themselves in that way. I have
chosen to use the neutral “they” rather than the specific “her” or “him” to reflect the current impossibility
of knowing the gender or the number of the author/s. There is, of course, good evidence for female scribal
activity in the ancient world, though this evidence centres on a slightly later period than the earlier dates for
the composition of the text I am examining, and shows more that girls and women were employed as
copyist-scribes rather than composer-scribes as described by Matthew’s biography of Jesus. For a full
discussion of the role of women scribes in the transmission of early Christian literature, see Kim Haines-
Oxford University Press, 2000).
memories and traditions of a “community” and on the other hand that of the image of the scholar at a desk “lined with texts” and conversing with “other intellectuals.”\(^3\) I am convinced that authorship in the ancient world, the kind of authorship that should be attributed to the composers of Matthew, was creative, and editorial/redactional, and intertextual. Matthew’s creativity is especially visible in the text’s special material, the portions of the biography of Jesus that do not come from the Markan or Q sources. Here I am adopting Mack’s model of the composition of Mark: Matthew’s biography is not the “product of a divine revelation.”\(^4\) Matthew created the infancy story, with specific goals in mind, such as attributing to Jesus the skills and wisdom reflected in the Magi, and giving his birth a prophetic root. The text also displays creativity in its editorial and redactional changes. The biography was composed using multiple sources, but reinventing them as needed. Matthew changes and adds prophecies, expands on parables and their meanings, and rewrites the death of Jesus to explicitly place the responsibility for the crucifixion on the people of Jerusalem.\(^5\) However, this does not mean that Matthew is solely responsible for the text, or that the author was a “solitary genius.” As is shown below, the author would have been part of multiple social networks, including other intellectuals and authors, and other Jesus/Christ-people. This biography of Jesus would most certainly be influenced by these networks, and may contain traditions told about Jesus, and other “great men.”

---


\(^4\) Mack, 322.

\(^5\) Matthew 27:24-26. This scene, in which Pilate releases Barabbas to the crowd, is from Matthew’s Markan source, but in Matthew’s composition Pilate symbolically washes Jesus’s blood from his hands, and the crowd vocally takes on this blood. Matthew 27:25: Τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἐβάλε ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν. (His blood upon us and our children.)
text itself would be a product of multiple hands and collective thought, but insofar as all composition is a product of collective thought.

The biography is a deeply intertextual document. Matthew uses multiple sources – Mark, Q, and the Septuagint – in direct quotations, and was likely influenced by other books from the Septuagint and elsewhere, such as the writings of ben Sira. However, the author’s use of sources does not negate creative authorship, but rather gives the modern analyst a greater understanding of their creative thought: because we know what Matthew’s sources are, we can examine the changes made to these texts in their own composition, and thereby gain a greater understanding of their own interests and goals. This is the true focus of the following pages. Through an analysis of Matthew’s creative use of their source texts – their editorial and redactional activities – I show that Matthew’s own interests and imaginings of Jesus are visible in their constructions of scribe-characters. The texts of our authors can, and should be, used as windows into their lives, experiences, and intentions, and my process throughout this project has been to “recreate” Matthew’s world through the window of the text. I am searching for Matthew’s intentions in their uses of the term

---

6 Texts were most often a product of authorial dictation, rather than written by the authors own hand. This is discussed further below in relation to Jesus as a scribe who authored, but did not write.

7 That Matthew’s biography is a product of collective thought is, most importantly, not a statement of its “community production.” The text is a product of collective thought in that it is culturally situated: culture is a group activity, a group “production,” that relies upon social interaction and historical awareness. For example, my own thesis, while creative, is not a product of myself alone: it was not created in a vacuum, and it is a product of collective thought. In its creation I have discussed theories and texts with my social networks – my cohort of other graduate students and my professors – and have been influenced by the history of the field. Like Matthew, I cannot create a “work” that is culturally independent: as an enculturated person, so must my writing be.

8 Here I disagree with Foucault’s theory of criticism. Foucault appears to write that we should not, and ultimately cannot, recreate an author from her writing: “It has been understood that the task of criticism is not to re-establish the ties between an author and his work, or to recreate an author’s thought and experience through his works and, further, that criticism should concern itself with the structures of a work, its architectonic forms, which are studies for their intrinsic and internal relationships.” Michel Foucault, “What Is an Author?,” in Language, Counter-Memory, Practice: Selected Essays and Interviews, n.d., 118. If we accept that “the author is dead” then the above theory is appropriate for criticism of literary texts.
“scribe,” to “re-establish” the connection between the author Matthew and the biography produced. For much of the history of New Testament studies we have ignored, and negated, the authors of New Testament narratives, attributing their work to “oral tradition” and “community production,” and used the texts to recreate a Jesus who may have lived. Instead, I attribute the composition of this text to Matthew, and will use the text to attempt a re-description of the author, and their use of scribes as characters in the text.

The Text

Matthew’s biography is a book in seven parts, a prologue and epilogue bracketing five sections of teachings and narratives. The five teaching sections are delineated using the formulaic conclusion καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς (and it happened when Jesus finished). These five phrases signal to the reader that one narrative has been completed, and a new one will be embarked upon. That there are five discourses is significant to Matthew as well, and the text is framed in this way so that the reader will be reminded of Moses. The five books of the Torah, or the Pentateuch, are traditionally attributed to Moses, and by creating five distinct sections of the biography, it has been argued that Matthew attempts to bring to mind the authority and divine associations of Moses. As with the flight and return from Egypt, which is intended to remind the reader of Exodus, Matthew associates Jesus’s life with the life of Moses. For Matthew, Jesus is a new Moses, who will, like Moses at the conclusion of the Exodus, bring his people into a new kingdom. Where

---

However, I do not agree that the author is dead. I am present in my writing, as Matthew is present in their writing, and it is one of the tasks of a critical reader to attempt to recreate and situate the author during the reading process.

9 The formula is found at Matthew 7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1, and 26:1. All translations from the Greek are my own, unless otherwise identified.

Moses led the Israelites from Egypt into the promised land of Canaan, for Matthew, Jesus will lead his descendants into the Kingdom of the Heavens. In these five sections Matthew carves up and reconstitutes the sources extensively, so that they might be cordoned off in this way. For example, Matthew takes the beatitudes and source material for their Sermon on the Mount (5:2-7:29) from Q, but in the Q document these are disconnected sayings and short discourses. In the opening sections of the Sermon, Matthew both groups together and reorders the Beatitudes, found at Q 6:20-23, the parables of the Salt (Q 14:34-35) and the Light (Q 11:33), and a saying about the inviolability of the Mosaic Law (Q 16:17), as found in what is thought to be their sources. To give their narrative a cohesive structure and form, the authors gather these together to form the first section, which begins at Matthew 5:1 and concludes at 7:28 with the first use of the above-noted formula. I will not discuss each section, as the narratives and teachings contained in the text will be addressed extensively in the following chapters, but that Matthew creates a cohesive narrative out of their sources and their own creative narratives is what is important here. Matthew already had a narrative biography, in the form of Mark, and the text is mostly faithful to Mark’s chronology and basic structure. Matthew accepts Mark’s basic narrative structure of baptism, temptation, beginning of the mission and call of the disciples, as well as Mark’s basic structure of the passion narrative. The text also appears to agree with Mark on the geographical area and main location of Jesus’s teaching, basing him in the Galilee with only the one journey to Jerusalem, in contrast to John’s biography, in which Jesus is sent on three separate visits.

Biographies of Jesus and collection of sayings of Jesus were, of course, widespread in the first and second century. Many were written as use-specific documents, intended for particular groups of Christ-followers, who had unique interests and concerns. These texts
were not created out of whole cloth; on the contrary, they exhibit a great deal of literary and theological reliance on each other. These many biographies, circulated among Christ-followers, “were not distinguished at the time with respect to their authority and authenticity.” Rather, they were shaped by the interests of the specific author, much in the same way that Paul’s letters were written to specific associations to answer their specific questions and concerns. These texts were not “considered to be inviolable,” but were “used freely” in new narratives to address specific needs of the redactor or composer of a composite text. We have multiple examples of this practice, but the most obvious are Luke and Matthew. These texts were heavily reliant on other sources, primarily Mark and Q, and appear to have no problem with altering and manipulating these sources to serve their specific interests. This is, I think, analogous to the composition of the book of Chronicles.

Chronicles, a reworking of earlier biblical narratives, was composed some time in the late Persian- or early Hellenistic-period of Yehud / Judean history. Re-use of biblical texts in the Hebrew Bible shows evidence of two, likely intersectional, cultures in the Second Temple period: a priestly Temple-focused culture, and a literary culture. Christine

---

12 Koester, 43.
13 For example, QPaleoExodus, which is a text comprised primarily of Exodus but also containing prophecies and narratives from other Hebrew writings; (John S Kloppenborg, “Variation in the Reproduction of the Double Tradition and an Oral Q?,” Ephemeredes Theologicae Lovanienses 83, no. 1 (2007): 74.); and the Diatesseron by Tatian. Harry Y. Gamble, The New Testament Canon: Its Making and Meaning (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1985), 30. All of these texts take either Israelite, Jewish, or Jesus narratives and prophecies, and reformulate them into new narratives serving the interests of the author/redactor.
Mitchell notes that earlier theories of textual re-use in this period place all books like Chronicles in the genre of exegesis, that did not “displace authority, but preserved the older traditions while constructing new meanings.”¹⁵ This theory assumes the authoritativeness and “scripturalness” of the Hebrew Bible, and appears to attempt to preserve notions of inviolability and canon that were likely not present at the times of composition. By locating Chronicles in a literary genre, and its composition in a literary culture, Mitchell returns authorial intent and compositional characteristics to Chronicles; the text becomes, rather than simply an exegesis of an earlier text, a new composition using earlier literary material. Chronicles, like Matthew, is a literary text, with an author, that is influenced by, and shares an intertextual relationship with, earlier texts. Again analogous to Matthew, the Chronicler/s created parallelisms and patterned themes throughout their composition, using a combination of straight-up quotations and blocks of text, creative composition, prophetic quotations, and transformations of earlier narratives in a creative way.¹⁶ I am not directly suggesting that Matthew was influenced by Chronicles in the composition of the biography, though this is possible as Chronicles was composed much earlier than Matthew, and appears to have been in wide use. However, I am suggesting that the two texts, the Gospel of Matthew and the Book of Chronicles, bear a striking compositional resemblance, and should be thought of as analogous texts: literary compositions with authorial stamp, rather than exegetical interpretations of earlier material reflecting “oral traditions” or “community production.”

¹⁵ Mitchell, 4.
¹⁶ Mitchell, 14.
Community

“Community” is often used in studies of early Christianity to refer to so-called “textual communities.” These are imagined groups that produce texts, as a group activity.\(^\text{17}\) In this imagining of textual production, the four biographies of Jesus in the New Testament are not “literature” but collections of stories and sayings, gathered, memorized, and recorded by a group for use by the group. However, this was not, by and large, the way in which texts and literature were created in the ancient world. Textual and cultural production was a specialized skill, performed by educated persons, who may or may not have been economically elite.\(^\text{18}\) There is a difference between the ability to memorize, say the sayings from Q, or even whole books, and the ability or skill needed to “produce literature according to accepted standard [,which] required an advanced rhetorical education.”\(^\text{19}\) As Walsh notes, we should expect the authors of the biographies of Jesus to work in basically the same way as other writers from the ancient world, and to think of their social networks in the same way. Walsh rejects the idea of “Christian communities” as the primary social network of these authors, but I wonder if Matthew’s social networks

\(^{17}\) In some sense, of course, all “groups” are imagined, whether by those inside or outside them. My group of graduate students at the University of Regina does not exist, apart from the imaginings of those who interact with the individuals who identify, or are identified, with it. The same can be said for “social networks,” “communities,” “cohorts,” and so on. Collectivising individuals is a boundary-creation activity. The authors contained in the New Testament engaged in the process of creating “groups” themselves, Luke most particularly. By laying claim to earlier characters and events, and creating a continuous “community” through Luke-Acts, the author/s imagine and invent a continuous tradition, and an identifiable “group.” William E. Arnal, “The Collection and Synthesis of ‘Tradition’ and the Second-Century Invention of Christianity,” Method and Theory in the Study of Religion 23, no. 3/4 (2011): 199. By imagining a “group” we create authority for those within, and non-authority for those without, and categorize that we may better “understand.”

\(^{18}\) Walsh notes that many “ancient writers were slaves or libertinii or the sons of freedmen.” Walsh, “Romantic Genius,” 32.

\(^{19}\) Walsh, 42. Emphasis added.
could have been both literary and Christ-following. Walsh appears to reject the possibility of the authors belonging to social networks that were primarily formed around Christ-worship, and while I do agree that our earlier modes of gospel-composition – of texts written by and for communities of “Christians” – require a great deal of deconstruction, I am not prepared to entirely remove the authors from these networks and associations. Rather, I think that a tempering of the composition model is best: we must think of these authors as primarily members of a literary social network, but we should be open to the possibility that they were also part of Christ-following networks and associations.

Richard Last identifies a similar consistent issue within New Testament scholarship: imagining that the social networks of authors of biographies of Jesus were only Christ-following, that they had positive social contact only with persons of who shared their cultic practices. The argument presented in the models Last critiques is that the New Testament narrative authors, as Christ-followers, were not able to form social relationships with people who were not Christ-followers, because Christ-following was antithetical to all other “religious” or political belief systems. For example, Warren Carter, who locates Matthew in Antioch, writes that Matthew could only associate with other Christ-followers, because of their “struggles” with the Jewish community, and issues with Roman imperialism. Likewise, Last presents Brian Incigneri’s description of Mark’s social

---

20 Walsh, 44. I am not intending to create a binary distinction between the two, but rather to nuance Walsh’s presentation of literary communities.


relationships in Rome. In this model, Mark, like Matthew, associates only with other Christ-followers, and not with the other literate and cultural producers in Rome, because Rome was a place of Christian persecution. Both of these models seem to rest on the idea that Christ-following was a socially closed practice, and that all people who were not Christ-followers were persecutors of those who were. Even if we take official persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire as a fact, this does not mean that all social relationships were hampered. As well, I agree with both Last and Walsh that it seems very unlikely that highly educated and literate authors, such as Matthew and Mark, would not form social networks with other people with the same education level or economic standing, as this was the norm for most, if not all, other occupations in the Roman world, through voluntary associations or professional guilds. That analogous authors did fully participate in the literary and cultural networks of their cities has been shown through analysis of inscriptions.

23 Last, 225.

24 Candida Moss has shown that the idea of persistent, constant, official persecution of Christians from the death of Jesus until the conversion of Constantine in 313 CE is most likely a theological invention of early Christ-followers, in an attempt to link the early “church” with the life and death of Jesus. For example, Luke parallels the death of Stephen in Acts 7:54-60 with their version of the death of Jesus in Luke 23:34, 44-49. Jesus asks for forgiveness for those who crucified him (Luke 23:34) while Stephen asks Jesus to forgive the people who stone him to death (Acts 7:60), and Jesus gives his spirit up to God (Luke 23:46) while Stephen gives his up to Jesus (Acts 7:59). The same parallelism is used in multiple accounts of the death of the apostles that recount their arrest and execution. Candida Moss, The Myth of Persecution: How Early Christians Invented a Story of Martyrdom (New York: HarperCollins, 2013), 130–33, 136.

25 Philip Harland suggests that the social networks that formed associations should be our starting point for imagining their makeup, that rather than thinking about the function of associations – as funerary, cultic, or occupational – we would more effectively describe associations with a “focus on membership bases, rather than purpose.” Phillip A. Harland, Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003), 29. If we accept this position, then we can locate Matthew in associations and social networks that are based on social connections, such as households or shared social standing, rather than cultic adherence.

Historians were not only writers, but also teachers and lecturers. One inscription from Amphipolis, dated to the third century BCE, commemorates a visiting historian, who lectured for several days on the history of the city, compiled a history using multiple sources, and wrote a “book concerning the Tauropolis,” the city’s patron god. All of these activities are pertinent for an analysis and identification of Matthew. I will address the latter two activities first, and then return to teaching and lecturing. It may seem obvious to the point of banality to state that Matthew compiled a history using multiple sources and wrote a book about a deity. However, what is pertinent here is that Matthew’s activities are the same as non-Christian authors and historians. Matthew, like the unnamed historian in Amphipolis, gathered together multiple written sources and used them to write another account of an event: a text, incorporating myth, about a patron deity. The first activity

---

27 Last, 231.

28 The term “myth” is not intended to imply “truth” or “falsehood,” or really to make a statement about the historicity of the βίος of Jesus at all. Instead I intend to establish a designation for narratives which employ supernatural elements as a persuasive device. The word “myth” does not have a static meaning, and the way that Lucian understands “myth” is likely not the same as how Plutarch or the author of Jesus-biographies understood the term. As per Bruce Lincoln: mythos and logos “were the sites of pointed and highly consequential semantic skirmishes fought between rival regimes of truth.” Bruce Lincoln, Theorizing Myth (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 18. Lincoln is referring to their uses in the ancient world, particularly by Plato and Heraclitus, but we should not imagine that our own uses of “myth,” particularly in the study of Christian origins, should be any less contentious or consequential. Matthew’s use of mythic elements in their βίος should not detract from their non-mythic elements, or character developments, nor should they detract from their status as a biographer and author. Supernatural elements were acceptable persuasive tools in the composer’s kit in the ancient world, and we should understand Matthew’s use of these elements in the same way we would Plutarch’s.

named in the inscription – lecturing and teaching well – is not something that we can know that Matthew the author did. However, as will be shown below, Matthew greatly valued teaching ability, and the good-scribe characters displayed in the text are also effective teachers. From this, if we imagine the text as a whole as a tool to re-describe the author, and also think of Matthew as analogous to other historians and biographers of their historical period, we can surmise that Matthew also lectured and taught on topics they were educated on. If Matthew is an historian, biographer, and author, then they would likely also be an educator.\textsuperscript{30}

It is necessary to discuss the implications of the term “community” and identify what I am not describing. Within the context of early Christian studies, “community” has generally been imagined as people with “deep social and mental coherence, a commonality in mind and practice.”\textsuperscript{31} While I am comfortable with this description of community, I am hesitant because this does not appear to allow for intersectional communities. If one has “deep social and mental coherence” with a group of persons, this appears to imply that one cannot have the same coherence with another group. However, it would be obtuse to

\textsuperscript{30} Last also provides examples of historians lecturing in public spaces, such as temples. It is possible that these lectures would enhance the social network of writers and historians. Last, “The Social Relationships of Gospel Writers: New Insights from Inscriptions Commending Greek Historiographers,” 234–40. Jesus is presented participating in this practice as well, during his time in Jerusalem, and at his arrest explicitly asks the crowd why they have come for him in violence at night, when he was teaching in the temple “day after day” and they did nothing to him. (26:55)

\textsuperscript{31} Stanley Stowers, “The Concept of ‘Community’ and the History of Early Christianity,” Method and Theory in the Study of Religion 23, no. 3–4 (2011): 238. Stowers argues against this concept of community, and while I generally agree with his theory, I do not believe that we need to throw out all concepts of cohesion amongst persons. I do, however, fully disagree with the statement of community as found in Acts 4:32-37. In these verses, Luke describes the πλήθους τῶν πιστεύσαντων as being of “one heart and mind,” sharing possessions and beliefs fully. Luke’s idealistic view of the earliest Christ-followers is contradicted by our own canonical sources. Paul’s letters describe associations and assemblies with extremely fractious internal relations, and economic and class differences. (See First Corinthians, Galatians.) Luke’s description in Acts 4 is more likely to be a product of their own theological imaginings of Christ-followers as the inheritors of Jewish and Israelite biblical traditions of care for the poor, and their desire to present Christ-followers as a unified group without theological divisions.
imagine that any person felt this coherence with only one group. This is as true of the ancient world as it is of the modern one, and can be seen in any character from the early Christian writings. As an example, we can take the Corinthian *ekklēsia*. I believe we can assume that this group felt some sort of coherence with one another, as Christ-followers, as they were evidently members of the same voluntary association. However, this is only one of their intersectional identities. From the letters, we know that this group was comprised of people of different occupations, social strata (or class), and kinship groups, to identify only three, and that these differences upset the coherence of the *ekklēsia*. This does not negate their community status, but highlights their *intersectional communities*. All early Christian groups must be imagined this way: as multiple interconnected and disconnected communities, each which would have its own commonalities in “mind and practice.”

---


33 The Corinthian association likely had members who were slaves, as Paul refers to them at 1 Corinthians 7:29. Paul identifies the kinship group headed by Stephanus in the closing of 1 Corinthians. By identifying them, we can surmise that there were multiple household and kinship groups in the association.
In my work, “community” refers to a conglomerate of people, with more or less loose connections, connections that may be literary, commensal, ethnic, kinship, or economic. Literary communities would be comprised of authors or editors who shared their texts, either in public or semi-private readings\textsuperscript{34} or through non-geographically limited networks of intellectuals.\textsuperscript{35} Commensal communities in the ancient Mediterranean were mostly organised within voluntary associations, who met for a group meal at set intervals, such as the Corinthian association described in Paul’s letters.\textsuperscript{36} Voluntary associations were


\textsuperscript{35} Robyn Walsh writes that “a writer’s most immediate and formative social network was their circle of fellow writers and literary critics – an interconnected network of professional authors and literate consumers with particular kinds of “intellectual” knowledge and skill.” Walsh, “Romantic Genius,” 42. These writers could be located within a particular geographical boundary, but would also be linked through networks of booksellers, and by the wide-ranging travel available in the Greco-Roman world.

also ethnic, fictive-kinship groups, and economic, such as fishermen’s associations, or associations of immigrants or migrants. Each of these conglomerates may have been connected with other communities through intersectional memberships. The Matthean community was possibly a combination of all of the above connection types. This community is reflected in Matthew’s text, but only secondarily, insofar as the community that read Matthew saw in it a reflection of their own beliefs and practices, which can be surmised from their choice to read and use Matthew as a Jesus-text.

Matthew in the Apostolic Fathers

Matthew was widely read in the ancient world; our papyrological evidence, and reflections of Matthew in the Apostolic Fathers, tell us that Matthew’s biography was extremely popular in the second and third centuries. Ignatius, in his letter to the Ephesians, relates the story of the star38 to his readers, and identifies Jesus as a descendent of David.39 In the same letter Ignatius quotes Matthew 12:33 and 26:7. In the first, Ignatius’s wording does not directly reflect either Matthew or Luke (see Figure 1), and in the second Ignatius relates the story of the woman pouring oil on Jesus’s head, rather than quoting Matthew 26:7 or Mark 14:3 directly. Though neither are Matthean compositions, when seen in conjunction with the references to the sign of the star and Davidic ancestry, a Matthean source for Ignatius appears more likely.

Figure 1

|---------------|--------------|----------|

37 Harland, Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society, 29.

38 Matthew 2:1-2

It is less clear which biography of Jesus Polycarp used as his source. It appears that Polycarp quotes directly from Matthew 7:1-2 at Philippians 2:3, but his use in the same chapter of “kingdom of God” rather than “kingdom of the heavens” in a quotation from the Beatitudes seems to argue against a Matthean source. However, at Philippians 7:2 Polycarp inserts two quotations, one from Matthew 6:13 and another from Matthew 26:41. The first, from the Lord’s prayer, is from Matthew’s Q source, and the second, from the scene in Gethsemane, is from Matthew’s Markan source. Both of these quotations are found in Matthew, but not in Luke, who omits “the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak” from their account of Gethsemane. The argument for Polycarp’s use of Matthew instead of Mark of Luke is one of consistency; Polycarp’s quotations are not only found in Matthew, but all of them are found only in Matthew. It is most likely that he was using Matthew as his source, and the use of “God” rather than “heavens” is an anomaly, possibly attributable to Polycarp having a differently-worded source copy of Matthew than what is currently accepted as authoritative. 40

Justin Martyr was aware of all three of the synoptics, but quoted most extensively from Matthew and Luke, and the “vast majority” of their synoptic quotations are

---

40 Helmut Koester addresses a similar occurrence in 2 Clement, a text whose quotations cannot be firmly attributed to Matthew, Luke, or Q. Koester concludes that, rather than attempting a sole-attribution, the quotations should be attributed to a currently-unknown harmonization of the synoptics, in document form. Helmut Koester, Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development (Philadelphia: Trinity Pr Intl, 1990). The same may, of course, be true for Polycarp.
harmonized versions from the two books. Koester writes that these harmonizations were intentional, and should not be attributed to memory lapses or laziness on the part of Justin, and that Justin may have been working from a harmonized text, as their repeated quotations in the First Apology and the Dialogue agree almost completely. Justin’s use of a harmonized biography, and in the non-harmonized passages, his equal comfort with Luke’s biography, does not negate the importance of Matthew or Matthew’s influence on Justin. Justin’s heavy reliance on Israelite and Jewish prophecy, and his appreciation for scribal activities, show a clear Matthean influence which will be discussed further below.

Composition Methods

I have identified Matthew as an author, and their composition as a narrative, but the question of the method of composition is not closed. Other composition-methods are of course possible, and should be addressed. It is possible that a group of people commissioned an author to write an history of the memorialised founder of their group, from stories and sources that they provided to the writer. Last identifies two types of historians through their analysis of inscriptions and epigraphy: first, the “citizen-historian,” who actively participates in the life of the town where they are citizens, and second, the “itinerant professional,” who travels throughout the Greco-Roman world performing historian’s tasks where needed and commissioned. These two types are not exclusive; one historian could both fully participate in the life of their hometown, and travel to other

41 Koester, 365.
cities to work as an historian for commissioned projects. It does not, however, seem likely that the Matthew’s biography was produced as a commissioned history.

Matthew’s text appears to have a great deal of authorial stamp. The author uses their sources in a (fairly) consistent way, the book has a consistent theme and goal, and Matthew’s characters are both internally consistent and significantly different from those of their sources. Matthew’s biography is not just an edited text, or a compilation of sources. They change their source material, and add in their own narratives, in a way that expresses their theology, cultural perspective and values, and education. Matthew’s biography is a work of creative literature, of the same genre as other biographies that employ myth and miracle as persuasive tools.

Eugene Boring’s model of the composition and structure of Matthew’s text suggests the priority of, and continuity with, the Q document. Boring’s model, while it is heavily reliant on an untheorized concept of “community,” should not be ignored. This model presents the text of Matthew as a “Q⁴⁴ document; Boring suggests that Matthew’s “community” was using Q³ as their primary Jesus-text, and that when they were introduced

---

43 Many of Matthew’s characters are treated differently than in their sources, most obviously the scribe-characters and Jesus, but Matthew’s treatment of Peter exemplifies how he takes Mark’s people, locations, and events, and makes them their own. For example, in the pericope of Peter’s declaration about Jesus, where Peter identifies Jesus as the Messiah, Matthew gives Peter great authority, making him the hero. In the Markan version of this narrative, Jesus asks his disciples “who do you say that I am?” and Peter responds: “you are the messiah” and Jesus rebukes him for saying this, and admonishes the disciples to keep it secret. In Matthew’s version, all of Mark’s content is present, but the intent of the exchange is greatly altered. When Peter tells Jesus that they say he is the messiah, Jesus blesses him, and rewards him, with authority over his ekklēsia, and the keys to the kingdom of the heavens. In Mark, Peter is a failure with a big mouth; in Matthew, he is a hero and the basis for the ekklēsia.


45 Q can be stratified into three distinct literary documents, denoted by Kloppenborg as Q¹, Q², and Q³. Q³ is the version identified within the biographies of Luke and Matthew. John S. Kloppenborg, The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987).
to Mark’s version, Matthew the author, as a scribal extension of this community, wove the Q sayings into a overarching narrative of Jesus’s life, using Mark as their model. Here I am imagining Boring’s concept of community as a conglomerate of people, that instead of having a mouthpiece has a “writing-piece.” This community is cohesive in their beliefs and practices, and is also not intersectional. In this imagining, Matthew the author is not an author: they are only the scribe that captures the community’s beliefs and traditions. While I do not agree that the evidence from Matthew supports this theory, it is worth unpacking and refuting in order to tease out the useful aspects. First, Boring’s assumption of “community” bears mention. While it firmly reflects the scholarship of the time this article was presented and published, the author’s use of “community” assumes a number of concepts that are untenable in light of further theorizing. The article begins by presenting Boring’s three thesis elements. First, that Matthew used three sources to write their biography: Mark, Q, and “traditions peculiar to their community.” The first two, Mark and Q, are almost universally accepted as sources for Matthew, and do not, I believe, require justification or discussion. Boring’s third source, however, most definitely bears discussion. In this statement, Boring presupposes the existence of a “community;” that Matthew was a member of it; that their non-Markan and non-Q material was tradition and not creative literature; and that Matthew’s literary influences would be only “Christian,” and not Greek, Roman, or Hellenistic. As argued above, this last point is extremely unlikely. Matthew’s primary network, as a scribe and author, would have been other scribes and authors, whether they were Christ-followers or not. Through this network, and their

46 Stowers, “The Concept of ‘Community’ and the History of Early Christianity.”

assumed association memberships, Matthew would have been exposed to, and likely heavily influenced by other writers of *bios* and history, and the text is a reflection of this. Matthew’s independent material, those parts of the text that do not appear in the sources, are productions of their culture and education. They are reflections of cultural norms and tropes from the period in which the text was composed. However, the way in which these tropes and norms are used is a creative, authorial process. We can take, for example, Matthew’s genealogy and infancy narrative. Matthew uses pre-existing material – the genealogy taken from the Hebrew writings,\(^ {48}\) the Magi and the star in the east – and creatively applies this material to Jesus. In this way Matthew writes a narrative that is both creative and reliant on sources of tradition; the messiah is known to be a descendent of David, so Matthew uses pre-existing characters from the Hebrew writings to create a Davidic ancestry for Jesus. Magi from the east and stars as signs are both pre-existing tropes and are used throughout the ancient world to signal wisdom and divine intervention,\(^ {49}\) and Matthew, again, creatively applies these tropes to Jesus, to signal Jesus’s wisdom and divine association. A non-Matthean example of this phenomenon is found in the Q sayings at Q 9:58. This verse, reproduced in both Matthew and Luke, reads “foxes have holes, and birds of the air have their nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay their head.” (NRSV translation of Luke 9:58) This saying is not unique to Q, but also

\(^{48}\) References to the “Hebrew writings” and “the writings” throughout this paper are, unless otherwise specified, referring to the textual artifacts Matthew himself refers to as ἁγράφαι.

\(^{49}\) Celestial divination was practiced in the Mediterranean region at least from the Ugaritic period, throughout the Greco-Roman period. Astral signs were read as omens because it was understood that deities were responsible for their movements. As divine entities are the “agents behind the celestial signs” and these signs communicate divine wisdom to human interpreters, by inventing this sign Matthew imbues their Magi with divinely granted wisdom. Francesca Rochberg, “Heaven and Earth: Divine-Human Relations in Mesopotamian Celestial Divination,” in *Prayer, Magic, and the Stars in the Ancient and Late Antique World*, ed. Scott Noegel, Joel Walker, and Brannon Wheeler (University Park, PA: Penn State Press, 2003), 170.
appears in the Gospel of Thomas. The Coptic text has been reconstructed to read “Jesus said, ‘[foxes ha]ve their dens and birds have their nests, but human beings have no place to lay down and rest.’”\(^{50}\) This saying has been designated as “Jesus probably said something like this” by Funk, Hoover, and The Jesus Seminar,\(^{51}\) and my purpose here is not to refute that, but to point out that analogous sayings are attributed to Cynic teacher Anacharsis,\(^{52}\) and to Tiberius Gracchus. The second example is closer to Q and Thomas than the first, and is found in Plutarch’s \textit{bios} of Gracchus at 9.45. Plutarch writes that Gracchus, while arguing for benefits for the Roman poor, said “The wild beasts that roam over Italy have every one of them a cave or lair to lurk in, but the men who fight and die for Italy enjoy the common air and light, indeed, but nothing else; houseless and homeless they wander about with their wives and children. … they have not a single clod of earth that is their own.”\(^{53}\) Whether Jesus, Tiberius Gracchus, or Anacharsis actually said these words is not important, but it is important that multiple authors attribute this trope to these figures. Whatever the origin, these authors, like Matthew, take pre-existing material and creatively reapply it to their subjects. Modern historians would not hesitate to name Plutarch an author. That Matthew wrote about Jesus should not exclude him from the same profession. Equally, Christian texts must not be treated differently from non-Christian texts, and the writers of both should be afforded the same status and professional association.


\(^{51}\) Funk, Hoover, and The Jesus Seminar, 36.

\(^{52}\) Funk, Hoover, and The Jesus Seminar, 316.

Knowledge Holders, Knowledge Interpreters

All compositions from the ancient world, as now, are in some way concerned with knowledge production, retention, and interpretation, and in Matthew’s account of Jesus’s life and death scribes serve multiple functions, but this above all else. For Matthew, scribes are the ultimate knowledge-holders and knowledge-interpreters. Interpretation of knowledge is one of the most important scribal characteristics for Matthew. Matthew did not imagine interpretation of knowledge to be a creative process unto itself. For Matthew, knowledge is revelatory, as can be seen in their use of dream revelation and prophetic statements. Interpretation of this revealed knowledge is either right or wrong. Correct interpretation is a divine gift or power, where wrong interpretation is caused by an inability to “make room” for the teaching. In this text, Jesus is, of course, the waited-for messiah who will bring about the Kingdom of the Heavens, but the character developed throughout narrative is also a scribe, in that he teaches and interprets divine knowledge for his disciples. In Jesus’s second scene as an adult in the biography, he encounters the devil. This pericope, at 4:1-11, is found in both Mark and Q, though the majority of Matthew’s version appears to come from Q. The pertinent sections of this pericope, for the purposes of this project, are the quotations from the writings that Jesus uses to rebuke the devil. The first is at 4:4. Jesus has fasted for forty days and nights, and the devil tells him to turn the rocks to bread. Jesus responds:

Matthew 19:11: χωρεύσι τὸν λόγον (make room for the teaching, or the “words”)


References to “the writings” refer to the Hebrew Bible in either Hebrew or Greek. When the Greek version is intended, “Septuagint” is used. I have chosen this terminology to avoid use of “scripture” and to reflect Matthew’s language in the text.
Γέγραπται· Οὐκ ἐπ᾽ ἄρτῳ μόνῳ ζησεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ πάντι ρήματι ἐκπορευομένῳ διὰ στόματος θεοῦ.

It is written, one will not live upon bread alone, but upon every word coming out from the mouth of God.

Matthew has here altered the quotation, which is from Deuteronomy, from the form found in Q. Q has only the first part,57 “one will not live upon bread alone” and the second part that Matthew has added extends the quotation.58 Jesus speaks two further quotations to the devil, both from Deuteronomy, but Matthew makes changes to only the first. Matthew’s addition to the quotation from Q is entirely in keeping with Matthew’s writing and redactional style. They are very comfortable with adding to existing quotations from the writings, and with adding entirely new verses, both as composite59 quotations and as they are found in their original form.60 This addition, though, is particularly exemplary of Matthew’s world-view. This verse, in its full form, would hold strong appeal for Mathew, primarily because this is a wisdom-statement, and the texts presents all knowledge as coming from a divine source. For Matthew, this wisdom source is God, and the wisdom is


58 This is not a composite, the full quotation found in Matthew is from Deuteronomy 8:3. Οὐκ ἐπ᾽ ἄρτῳ μόνῳ ζησεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἀλλ᾽ ἐπὶ πάντι ρήματι τῷ ἐκπορευομένῳ διὰ στόματος θεοῦ ζησεται ὁ ἄνθρωπος. (One will not live upon bread alone, but one will live upon every word issuing forth through the mouth of God.)

59 “Composite” quotations are quotations from other sources, generally the Hebrew Bible, that are a composite of two seemingly-disparate verses. For example, an author could use the opening section of Isaiah 61:7 (“because their shame was double and dishonour was proclaimed as their lot”) and the second section of Jeremiah 12:11 (“the whole land is made desolate but no one lays it to heart”) to form a new prophecy, which reads: “Because their shame was double and dishonour was proclaimed as their lot the whole land is made desolate but no one lays it to heart.” I have here taken two “authoritative” prophecies from the Hebrew Bible, and combined the two in a new, still authoritative, prophecy, for a specific use (to illustrate composite quotations) and audience (you, my reader).

60 It seems most likely that the “original form” Matthew is using is the Septuagint, as is Q. John S. Kloppenborg, “The Temptation Story in Q,” in The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections, Studies in Antiquity and Christianity (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987), 246.
transmitted through dreams, and the writings. Scribes, as knowledge-holders, must have room in their hearts (as the seat of wisdom) for new knowledge, and must interpret this knowledge correctly. In this pericope, the devil quotes the writings himself, at 4:6, but Jesus responds with another quotation, which Matthew thinks overrides that given by the devil. This shows that for Matthew, knowledge of the writings is not enough: a true scribe must also be able to interpret them correctly. In this story, the devil does not interpret the writings correctly, but Jesus, with his superior wisdom-capability, does.

Lady Wisdom

Matthew associates Wisdom, the character or metaphor as found in the Hebrew bible, with Jesus.61 Wisdom, as a concept and embodied character, as in Proverbs, is part of Matthew’s imagining of Jesus’s role and knowledge-chain as described above. By associating Jesus with Wisdom, Matthew creates another justification for the new knowledge-chain that begins with God, and is translated to the world through Jesus. It is important to understand that that the metaphoric Wisdom is gendered female.62 As Celia Deutsch writes, when a metaphor is introduced or created, it is composed of two parts: the tenor, that which is less familiar, and the vehicle, that which is more familiar.63 Thus, “the bringing together of ‘Lady’ (or Woman) and ‘Wisdom’ creates a semantic context in which both terms acquire new meaning.”64 Both the vehicle and the tenor, Lady and Wisdom,

---


62 Deutsch, 89.

63 Deutsch, 90.

64 Deutsch, 90.
inform our understanding of the other. According to Deutsch, however, the female personification of Wisdom does not inform us about the status of women within Matthew’s imagining of the Jesus movement, nor about women and education in the greater Jewish-Hellenistic world. Deutsch suggests that this metaphor, *Lady Wisdom*, has its source in educational instructional environments, which were “usually exclusively male.” Wisdom is firmly associated with teachers in Proverbs, Ben Sira, and the Qumran literature, linking the metaphor with the instructional environment. The deep concern with both *true* wisdom, and educational instruction from both the teacher and the student viewpoint, in Matthew’s biography links the use of this metaphor with the above literature, and with Jewish-Hellenistic teaching. Even if the core conception goes back to Q, Matthew’s extension of the quotation in the first temptation demonstrates their own investment in the *word* of God.

**Scribes in Matthew**

The first time Matthew refers to scribes in their account of Jesus is in the infancy narrative, at 2:4.

καὶ συναγαγὼν πάντας τοὺς ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ γραμματεῖς τοῦ λαοῦ ἐπυνθάνετο παρ’ αὐτῶν ποῦ ὁ χριστὸς γεννᾶται.

And calling together the chief priests and the scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

---

65 Deutsch, 94.
66 Deutsch, 94, note 39.
67 Matthew’s biography displays concern with teaching and education through multiple uses of “teacher” and “student” language. The students are personified in the disciples (μαθητής) and the teachers in the figure of Jesus, and the other scribes presented throughout the biography as his foils.
The “he” referred to here is Herod the Great, current ruler of the Roman client kingdom of Judea, and the scene is that of the wise men coming to worship the “king of the Jews.” In this first instance of scribes in Matthew’s text, there are three important pieces of information to note. First, the text refers to a group of scribes, not an individual. Second, the scribes are grouped with the chief priests, locating them within the Temple authority structure. Third, and most importantly for my purposes, scribes are here persons of knowledge and authority themselves; in the second fulfillment formula, which follows at 2:5-6, they correctly identify the location where the Messiah will be born. This reference to scribes is neither wholly positive nor negative; scribes here advise Herod, clearly the bad guy in this narrative, and their advice allows for the massacre of the infants in 2:16 though their participation is presented as unwitting. However, that the scribes, with the chief priests, correctly identify Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah, shows that they have knowledge of the prophetic books. As well, they have understanding. The scribes, while they serve the antagonistic political / priestly structure in Jerusalem, are the holders of ancient knowledge, knowledge that was revealed by God through some of Matthew’s most revered characters, the prophets. That this knowledge led to the massacre of the infants, and the flight to Egypt by Joseph with Mary and the newborn Jesus, should not be seen as a failing of the scribes, or the chief priests. For Matthew, these events are required; both of these events happen to fulfill prophetic requirements for the Messiah. Without the massacre of the infants, the flight to – and return from – Egypt, and the Bethlehem birth

---

68 This event is analogous to the scene in chapter 26, where Judas hands Jesus over to the mob sent by the chief priests and the elders. Though this action by Judas has been used to vilify him, Matthew’s Jesus, in an addition to this Markan pericope, acknowledges that Judas is acting as required by the prophecy: “Ἑταξέως, ἐφ’ ὄ πάρει.” (Friend, do what you came to do.) Judas, like the scribes in chapter 2, performs an action that leads to a death. Those who act against Jesus to fulfill the required prophecies are not, for Matthew, automatically “bad guys” but are only fulfilling their pre-ordained roles needed for Jesus to be the Messiah.
event, Jesus cannot be the Messiah for Matthew. In the birth and infancy narrative alone, a mere chapter and a half in Matthew’s quite extensive account of Jesus’s life, there are five prophetic fulfillments. The same requirements are also seen in 16:21-23. Here Jesus prophesies his own mistreatment and death at the hands of the Temple hierarchy, and when Peter tells him that “this must never happen to you,” Jesus rejects Peter’s assertion. For Matthew, Jesus fulfills the prophecies found in the writings, but he is also a prophet in his own right, and must fulfill his own prophecies as well. Jesus’s admonition that Peter causes him to think on “human things rather than divine things” does not negate Peter’s place amongst Jesus’s followers, but rather provides Matthew, through their use of this Markan pericope, with an opportunity to show that everything in Jesus’s life, and death, is foretold. Matthew must justify Jesus’s status as Messiah and heir of the Davidic kingship through prophetic fulfillment, and that the scribes are able correctly to identify Bethlehem as the location of their birth, and quote the prophets correctly and with understanding, locates them firmly in Matthew’s privileged category: that of knowledge holders and knowledge interpreters.

Scribal ability for knowledge is illustrated in Matthew 7:29, which reads:

ἐὴν γὰρ διδάσκων αὐτοὺς ὡς ἐξουσίαν ἔχων καὶ ὕψως οἱ γραμματεῖς αὐτῶν.

for he was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes

---

69 The same issue is at play in 20:17-19. Here, Jesus again prophesies his own death at the hands of the “chief priests and scribes” again locating scribes among the knowledgeable but non-understanding religious hierarchy. These scribes will participate in the death of Jesus because it was foretold, and because of their inability to correctly interpret the writings, they cannot understand that Jesus is the Messiah. A similar concern is at play in 21:15. Here the Chief Priests and scribes are angry that Jesus is forgiving sins and healing people in the Temple, and that the people of Jerusalem identify Jesus as the “son of David” and Jesus rebukes them for their lack of understanding. Here, though, it appears that the antagonists also lack knowledge of the writings that Jesus believes they should have, as he asks them “have you never read” and follows with a (mis)quote from Psalm 8.
On the surface this appears to imply that Matthew imagined scribes as persons “giving teaching lacking in authority.”\(^{70}\) However, there are two problems with this assumption. First, as has been mentioned above, that Matthew refers to a cohesive and monolithic category of \textit{scribes} is questionable, and second, ἐξουσία can be understood variantly. I will address the translation first, as this will illuminate why Matthew refers to scribes in this verse. ἐξουσία is most commonly translated here as \textit{authority}, in all three synoptic versions of this narrative. In Mark, this makes consistent sense. Mark is consistently negative towards scribes, no matter who they are associated with, and does not imagine them to be persons with authority, legitimate or otherwise. For Matthew, this is demonstrably not the case. Matthew presents scribes as having authority, sitting on the seat of Moses,\(^{71}\) and thinks of the disciples as scribes of the kingdom of the heavens, the most important role to be played by anyone who is not Jesus in Matthew’s biography.\(^{72}\) In this case, the Markan translation has been accepted for Matthew, out of a desire for harmonization between the biographies, and because we read for similarity in the


\(^{71}\) Matthew 23:2: Ἡπὶ τῆς Μωϋσέως καθέδρας ἐκάθισαν οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι. (The scribes and the Pharisees sit upon the seat of Moses.) The \textit{kathedra} is not just a metaphorical image: “teaching chairs” have been found in the synagogues at Dura Europos, En Gedi, and Chorazin, among others. The teaching chair, though not, of course, designated “seat of Moses,” was a stone seat “near the Torah shrine on which the learned man sat and taught facing the people.” Ulrich Luz, \textit{Matthew 21-28}, trans. James E. Crouch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 99.

\(^{72}\) The “kingdom of the heavens” (as opposed to the “kingdom of God”) appears only in Matthew, and its centrality to Jesus’s message has been noted particularly by Duling. Dennis C. Duling, \textit{A Marginal Scribe: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew in a Social Scientific Perspective} (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2012), 202. Matthew imagines that the primary function of scribes is to understand and correctly interpret the teachings of Jesus, and the Hebrew writings. If the Kingdom is the central teaching, the goal of Jesus’s teaching is to be understood, and the function of scribes is to understand this teaching, then it follows that a scribe discipled / trained for the kingdom would be the most important role possible for Jesus’s followers. 13:52 is identified as the “Matthean ideal” by Harrington. Daniel J. Harrington, \textit{The Gospel of Matthew}, vol. 1, Sacra Pagina (Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 8, 207–9.
There are multiple other possible translations for ἐξουσία, but I think in this instance, the most appropriate is *ability*.\(^{74}\) If this is accepted, the verse becomes a statement about the relative teaching capabilities of Jesus and the scribes, rather than some sense of inherent authority. Jesus is an able teacher, and this is the defining difference between him and others of his ilk. In Matthew’s biography, the correct responsibility of scribes of all associations is the gathering and dissemination of right knowledge, and this knowledge should be disseminated with ability.\(^{75}\) This is also apparent in Matthew’s transference of Lady Wisdom to Jesus Wisdom.\(^{76}\) Throughout their text, Matthew presents the source of knowledge as revelation. This is clear from the dream sequences\(^{77}\) as well as the manner in which Jesus presents the knowledge he disseminates. Jesus’s teachings are not of his own creation: he as well has received revelation. The source of revelation is, of course, God. The scribes of the temple, the Pharisees, and the synagogues, all have access to this revelation through the writings, as does Jesus, and Matthew themself. The problem with scribes in 7:29 is not that they do

---

\(^{73}\) Bill Richards, “Reading for Difference: The Un-Synoptic Problem” (Canadian Society for Biblical Studies, Regina, SK, 2018).

\(^{74}\) This translation is supported by the Greek version of Ecclesiastes. Eccl. 5:18: καὶ γε πᾶς ὁ ἀνήρ ὁ ἀνήρ, ὁ ἐδώκεν αὐτῷ ὁ θεὸς πλοῦτον καὶ ὑπάρχοντα καὶ ἐξουσίασεν αὐτὸν τοῦ φαγεῖν ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦ λαβεῖν τὸ μέρος αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῦ εὐφρανθῆναι ἐν μῆνῃ αὐτοῦ, τόστῳ δόμα θεοῦ ἐστιν. (And all the people, to whom God has given wealth and possessions and the ability to eat of them, and to receive his portion and rejoice in his labour, this is the gift of God.) Here ἐξουσίασεν refers to divinely-given ability to enjoy (eat of) the gifts of God.

\(^{75}\) Richard Last provides multiple examples of historians engaging in teaching activities, as recorded on Greek inscriptions. For historians, engaging in teaching provided them with “symbolic capital” as well as financial remuneration. Teaching was an honoured activity, and teaching well could lead to greater honour, and memorialization on inscriptions. Last, “The Social Relationships of Gospel Writers: New Insights from Inscriptions Commending Greek Historiographers,” 233.

\(^{76}\) Deutsch, “Jesus as Wisdom,” 89.

\(^{77}\) There are five revelatory dreams in Matthew’s infancy narrative through which knowledge from God is relayed. The first dream (1:20-21) and the last three (2:13, 19-20, 22) are given to Joseph, and the second (2:12) to the magi.
not have the correct knowledge, but that they do not teach this knowledge to others with any ability. Instead, Jesus is presented as the able teacher, who not only possesses the correct knowledge, but can teach that knowledge to others. I would like to suggest that in this verse, Matthew’s biography refers specifically to the scribes of the crowds listening to Jesus’s teaching, who, I think, can be likely be identified as synagogue scribes from the Galilee, and that while these scribes have authority, they do not teach with authority, because they lack the right knowledge that Matthew sees as essential to entry into the kingdom. It is also important to note that this verse and the previous are not Matthew’s own writing, but are copied from their Markan source. Mark, unlike Matthew, is consistently negative about scribes, and Matthew takes care not to reproduce this in many instances of the term.

In 8:18-22 Matthew relates a very short story about a scribe desiring to follow Jesus. These verses are again not of Matthew’s invention, though this time their source is Q rather than Mark. The mention of a scribe is, however, Matthew’s invention; the Q verse reads “and someone said to him (Jesus) ‘I will follow you where ever you might go’” (Q 9:57) where Matthew has inserted “and one scribe, having approached, said to him, ‘teacher, I will follow you where ever you might go.’” In this instance of γραμματεύς we must ask why it was important to Matthew for this person to be a scribe, rather than keeping him unnamed.\(^78\) I am convinced that Matthew has identified this

\(^78\) Luz disagrees that this is a Matthean addition, and writes that εις γραμματεύς was likely already in Q; he writes that a Jewish scribe desiring to follow Jesus does not fit within Matthew’s Jesus movement framework, and therefore Matthew must have copied this from Q. Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, trans. James E. Crouch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2005), 16. However, if this scribe does not fit within Matthew’s framework, it seems likely that Matthew would just have removed the reference, as he does elsewhere. See Appendix III *Matthean omissions of γραμματεύς*. 
character as a scribe to locate scribes among Jesus’s followers. If Matthew is a scribe, marginal or otherwise, and imagines himself as a disciple of Jesus, then inserting this character allows Matthew to locate himself in the narrative.

Matthew’s mention of scribes at 9:3 serves a very different purpose than the previous instance. In this pericope, Markan in origin, Jesus forgives the sins of a paralyzed man, and the scribes present accuse him of blasphemy. This accusation could be seen as a slight against the scribes because they do not recognize the authority of Jesus to forgive sins, and it is likely that Matthew intended this interpretation. However, this interpretation disregards the view that Jesus did not have authority to forgive sins, and that therefore the criticism of the scribes is perfectly appropriate. The scribes are presented here as persons knowing where proper authority for forgiveness lies: in the Temple. This short narrative serves to legitimate Jesus’s authority, not to negate it, in the eyes of the Temple hierarchy. Jesus does an act of power – healing a paralyzed man – in order that the scribes present may see and know that he has been imbued with the proper authority to forgive sins. This does not negate the authority of the scribes and the Temple, but instead adds to the authority of Jesus. The next time scribes appear is in 12:38, where with the Pharisees they ask for a sign of power from Jesus. This pericope is from Q, and it appears that Matthew named the previously unidentified characters scribes and Pharisees. These two groups are strongly

79 Luz disagrees that this locates the scribe amongst Jesus’s followers, and writes that “the address, ‘teacher’ (διδάσκαλε) makes clear that he is not a disciple.” Luz, 17. However, the view that this scribe is a disciple of Jesus is supported by Duling, who states that this pericope shows that “there are ‘good scribes’ among Jesus’s followers/disciples.” Duling, A Marginal Scribe, 201.

80 That there were scribes within the Matthean brotherhood, as Duling identifies the association that Matthew presumably belonged to, is positively supported by the “scribe discipled for the kingdom” in 13:52. Duling, A Marginal Scribe, 203. This scribe may also be a “self-portrait of the evangelist.” Harrington, The Gospel of Matthew, 1:208.

81 There is, of course, no way to be certain that the Q pericope did not identify these characters as scribes, and that Luke has omitted the reference where Matthew has reproduced it. However, as there are no other
rebuked for requesting a sign of power, and are compared unfavorably to the people of Nineveh. When seen together with 9:3, 12:38 does not paint the scribes or the Pharisees in a very favorable light; they have already been given a sign to show that Jesus has authority, and should not require another. Here, Matthew shows scribes and Pharisees to be uneducable; they have been shown an example of Jesus’s power, in 9:3, and did not retain the lesson, but instead ask for another sign of his authority to forgive sins. The scribes, whose very purpose is knowledge retention and dissemination, have failed at retaining this knowledge, and are therefore rebuked. By identifying the questioners in Q 11:16, Matthew links the previous lesson with this example of failed retention. When we read Matthew 9:3 and 12:38 alongside 13:52, where Matthew identifies the followers of Jesus as “scribes discipled to the kingdom of the heavens” (13:52) who retain their lessons and understand them, a further comparison of scribe versus scribe is evident.82 Those who follow Jesus are correctly trained scribes who learn and interpret correctly. The other scribes, who are grouped with Pharisees and do not learn their lessons, have failed in their primary function, of knowledge retention and interpretation. This is also clear in chapter 16, where Pharisees, grouped with Sadducees in this scene, again ask Jesus for a sign of power to legitimate his authority, and again Jesus rebukes them. While Jesus here, as in the previous rebuke, compares his antagonists to those of Jonah and calls them “an evil and adulterous

________

82 Foster identifies 9:3 and 12:38 as instances of “scribes as opponents” of Jesus. For Foster, these references clearly identify scribes, as a category, as opponents of Jesus, and likely were imagined as such by Matthew’s audience as well: he writes that Matthew does not need to reproduce the entirety of the Markan pericope at 9:3 because “they shared Matthew’s perspective on scribes as opponents.” Here it seems that Foster has examined what Matthew has written, but not questioned why he wrote it. To be specific, Foster has not asked why are scribes opponents or characters of comparison or opposition in Matthew? Foster, “Scribes and Scribalism in Matthew’s Gospel,” 162–63.
generation,” in this rebuke there is an added point. Verses one and four are Markan in origin, but two and three, which describe how the Pharisees and Sadducees are unable to correctly interpret the “sign of the times,” are Matthean invention (see Figure 2). Again, Matthew is stating that the correct role of the religious hierarchy is knowledge and interpretation, and that they are failing in this role.

Figure 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 16:1-4</th>
<th>Mark 8:11-13</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Pharisees and Sadducees came, and to test Jesus they asked him to show them a sign from heaven.</td>
<td>The Pharisees came and began to argue with him, asking him for a sign from heaven, to test him.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 He answered them, “When it is evening, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red.’”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 And in the morning, ‘It will be stormy today, for the sky is red and threatening.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 An evil and adulterous generation asks for a sign, but no sign will be given to it except the sign of Jonah.”</td>
<td>12 And he sighed deeply in his spirit and said, “Why does this generation ask for a sign? Truly I tell you, no sign will be given to this generation.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Then he left them and went away.</td>
<td>13 And he left them, and getting into the boat again, he went across to the other side.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 15:1-20 Matthew reproduces a Markan pericope describing an exchange between Jesus and a group of Pharisees and scribes in which the antagonists question why Jesus’s followers do not wash their hands before eating, according to the traditional practices of ritual cleansing.\(^3\) Again Jesus rebukes these scribes and Pharisees, accusing them of

---

\(^3\) In the Markan version (Mark 7:1-23) there is an explanation of Pharisaic practices of ritual washing and purity that Matthew does not reproduce in their version, likely because he saw this explanation as unnecessary for their readers.
focusing on the wrong teachings and on outward purity instead of the commandments of God. In this scene Pharisees and scribes serve as a foil for Jesus, allowing the authors to present their vision of clean hearts being more important than clean bodies. In this instance I think Matthew has kept Mark’s reference to scribes because they serve to provide an opportunity for Jesus to talk about the importance of things that come from the heart, the seat of knowledge and understanding. As well, these scribes and Pharisees act again as comparison for the disciples. In verse fifteen Peter asks Jesus to explain the preceding parable – that of the blind leading the blind – and Jesus answers him “even now you also are without understanding?” In this instance the disciples, like the scribes who are referred to, are unable to interpret and understand the teachings of Jesus. Here the disciples are failing in their scribal purpose of knowledge retention and interpretation.

In chapter 17 Matthew is given another opportunity to show that the scribes associated with the religious hierarchy have correct knowledge of the writings, but have been unable to interpret this knowledge correctly. The opening of chapter 17 relates the transfiguration and adoption of Jesus by God, where Jesus is definitively identified as the Son of God. Following this, Jesus is walking down the mountain with three of his disciples, and they ask him “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?” Jesus tells the

---

84 That the heart is the seat of knowledge and interpretation is present in Homer. Iliad 21:440-1 reads “since I was born before you, and have more wisdom. You fool, what a witless heart you have!” Homer, The Iliad, trans. Peter Green (Oakland: University of California Press, 2015), 394. Homer was used in divination throughout the ancient world, and well in to the Roman period. Jennifer Eyl, Signs, Wonders, and Gifts: A Study of Divination and Reciprocity in the Letters of Paul (Oxford University Press, Forthcoming), 129. As well, Homeric texts were understood to have a “scriptural” quality: they were sources of divine knowledge through divinatory practices, but were also imagined to hold “divine truths” that could be applied to seemingly-non-relevant situations. The heart is also referred to as the proper organ for seeing the “upward path” in the Corpus Hermeticum: “if you gaze upon this likeness with the eyes of your heart (τοῖς τῆς καρδίας ὀφθαλμοῖς) you will find the upward path.” Libellus 4.11b.

85 Matthew 15:16: ἀκμὴν καὶ ύμεῖς ἁσύνετοι ἦστε;
disciples that the scribes are correct, Elijah must come before the Son of Man, but that he has already returned, and the religious hierarchy did not recognise him. This pericope and interpretation are Markan. However, Matthew adds to it in a predictable manner, explicitly identifying the person of Elijah as John the Baptiser, where Mark only implies this. I will discuss how Matthew’s biography displays a desire for explicit prophetic fulfillment further below, but for now it is enough that we understand this reference to scribes as locating them within the religious hierarchy, acknowledging that they have correct knowledge of the writings, but that they are unable to correctly interpret the signs they see in front of them, in this case that John the Baptiser was Elijah returned and that Jesus is the eschatological Son of Man.

Chapter 23 contains eight mentions of scribes, the majority of which appear to be disparaging. This chapter is a combination of Q sayings and Matthean material, though the use of scribes as characters is entirely Matthean. Throughout this chapter Matthew disparages scribes and Pharisees: they do not follow their own teachings, they are concerned with outward purity but not inward, they worry about tithes but not the more important aspects of the law. However, the woes are bracketed by authorially invented statements which explicitly give authority for teaching to the scribes and Pharisees:

Ἐπὶ τῆς Μωϋσέως καθέδρας ἐκάθισαν οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαίοι, πάντα οὖν ὅσα ἐὰν εἴπωσιν υμῖν ποιῆσατε καὶ τηρεῖτε.

The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it.

Here Matthew acknowledges the learning and authority of the scribes of the religious hierarchy, though he does tell their readers to follow their teachings but not to emulate their
actions. The final reference to scribes in chapter 23 groups them with sages and prophets, the latter of which is explicitly valorized, for example, in Matthew 3:3; 5:12, 17; 7:12; 10:41; 14:5; 21:26, 46; and 22:40; as well implicitly valorized in the fulfillment formulas and the references to Elijah, Jeremiah, and Isaiah.

Matthew 26:1 closes the final discursive section of the text, transitioning into the passion narrative. For the passion, Matthew follows Mark’s narrative quite closely, maintaining Mark’s chronology, order, and events. Precisely because Matthew’s biography is so faithful to Mark in the final chapters, any changes in the Matthean text are more remarkable, and likely hold great significance for Matthew. Mark, as stated above, does not display great respect for their scribe-characters, often placing them in opposition to Jesus and his disciples. Matthew also uses scribes as foils for Jesus, but with a slightly different purpose. Matthew’s presentation of the scribes is not fully positive or negative; rather, they present good scribes, and bad scribes. Unlike Mark, who has only bad scribes, Matthew’s text presents that many scribes, if they behave in the correct manner, are capable of righteousness. In Mark’s passion narrative they mentions scribes five times: at Mark 14:1 they are implicated in the plot to arrest and kill Jesus; at Mark 14:43 they are part of the crowd who comes to arrest Jesus; at Mark 14:53 scribes are present at the trial of Jesus before the council; at Mark 15:1 the scribes join with the elders and chief priests to hand Jesus over to Pilate; and at Mark 15:30 the scribes join the high priests in mocking Jesus on the cross. Throughout the story of Jesus’s arrest, trial, and crucifixion, Mark presents the scribes as participating members of the plot, and fully complicit in the death of Jesus.

Foster identifies this as a “begrudging admission of the pedagogical status of these two groups.” While I do not see why Matthew should “begrudge” them their status, I do agree that this is an admission of their pedagogical authority, and that Matthew recognises the “correctness of their teaching and perspectives.” Foster, “Scribes and Scribalism in Matthew’s Gospel,” 167.
Matthew’s biography, however, treats these characters very differently. Scribes are not present during the plotting, arrest, or handing over of Jesus, but only at the trial before the council. When the plot to kill Jesus is related in 26:3 (Mark 14:1) scribes are replaced with οἱ πρεσβύτεροι τοῦ λαοῦ, the elders of the people. During the actual arrest, at 26:47 (Mark 14:43), scribes are simply omitted from the crowd, and in the scene where Jesus is handed over to Pilate, at 27:1 (Mark 15:1), Matthew does the same. Matthew does keep the reference to scribes during the trial scene at 26:57 (Mark 14:53) and the mocking of Jesus at 27:41 (Mark 15:30), and this requires some explanation. Matthew’s text recognizes and presents scribes of different affiliations and abilities throughout their biography of Jesus, and the scribes present during the trial scene should not be imagined to have the same affiliations as, for example, the scribe at 13:52. The scribes present at the trial are part of the Temple hierarchy, part of the religious governing body of Jerusalem. Matthew has used these scribes as foils for Jesus previously, most notably during the “Cleansing” of the Temple at 21:12-16. This poses a problem, though. If in Matthew’s biography these scribes are imagined as part of the Temple hierarchy, then would it not be the same for the scribes Mark has present in the three other scenes? Why then would they take the care to remove the other three references, but not this one? One possible answer is that they felt compelled to maintain the presence of scribes at the trial, as their absence might have been noted by persons familiar with the procedures of the Sanhedrin. Another is that they simply were not concerned about presenting scribes in this scene, but felt that the presence of scribes at the plotting, arrest, and handing over of Jesus was damning to scribes, and would hamper the presentation of the model scribe, discipled for the kingdom. This does not, however, explain the presence of scribes at 27:41. That Matthew presents a scribe as
mocking Jesus on the cross may be the final scribe-as-foil scene in Matthew’s text. During the crucifixion, Jesus is presented as accepting that he must be crucified, in order to fulfill the required prophecy. The scribe and priest who mock him, however, are presented as not knowing that Jesus’s death was foreordained, and therefore rather than being a sign that Jesus is not the Messiah, is a sign that Jesus is the Messiah. In keeping with the other times that scribes are presented as unknowledgeable about the Hebrew writings, here the scribe lacks the needed prophetic knowledge, and is also not able to correctly interpret the sign of the crucifixion. The scribe’s inability is further contrasted with the ability of the centurion and his fellows in 27:54. Here Jesus’s death is accompanied by an earthquake and other signs, and the gentile guards interpret these signs correctly, according to Matthew, and they announce that Jesus was “truly God’s son.” Matthew presents the juxtaposition of the failure of the scribe and the success of the gentile guards as a further example that knowledge of the writings is insufficient: one must also be open to divine wisdom and revelation through signs. Both of the previous verses, 26:57 and 27:41, do pose a problem for making any positive statement about how Matthew’s biography displays the scribes that is in keeping with the theory that Matthew is attempting to present scribes as righteous people, who can enter the Kingdom, and I can only appeal to the previous statement that Matthew imagined scribes as multi-varied groups, some that are righteous, and some that are not. If we examine only their omission of the three Markan occurrences, it appears that

87 The lack of knowledge and ability to interpret the writings is also highlighted in 27:46. Here Jesus cries out from the cross, and his cry is a quotation from Psalm 22:1. The people around him who hear do not recognise the verse, and imagine the Hebrew “Eli” (my God) to refer to Elijah, that Jesus is calling for Elijah to save him.

88 Matthew 27:54: ‘Ὁ δὲ ἐκατόνταρχος καὶ οἱ μετ' αὐτῶν τηροῦντες τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἱδόντες τὸν σεισμὸν καὶ τὰ γενόμενα ἐφοβήθησαν σφόδρα λέγοντες· Ἀληθῶς ήσει θεοῦ γὰρ οὗτος. (And the centurion, and those guarding Jesus with him became greatly fearful seeing the earthquake and the things that happened, saying: “truly this was God's son.”)
Matthew is removing the culpability of the scribes in Jesus’s crucifixion, and if they had not left in two references to scribes, it would be possible to make this statement unequivocally.\(^8^9\) However, my analysis of Matthew’s use of scribes has not yet allowed for a firm statement of how they view these characters, and the passion narrative is no different. What can be said with certainty is that Matthew’s text presents a much more nuanced view of scribes than Mark, and consciously changes their sources so that it is possible for the reader to imagine scribes as both knowledgeable and righteous, and, on the other hand, as severely flawed proclaimers of a false path to God.

**Q and Scribes**

It should come as no surprise that the authors of Q would valorize scribal activities,\(^9^0\) and for Matthew to take on this orientation makes perfect sense.\(^9^1\) The temptation narrative is only one of two locations where Q introduces a quotation from the

---

\(^8^9\) Matthew omits six other Markan references to scribes. At 9:11 (Mark 2:16 and 3:22) Matthew keeps reference to the Pharisees and at 9:34 he adds reference to the Pharisees, in pericopes which specifically challenge Jesus’s acts of eating with tax collectors and casting out demons. At Mark 11:27 (Matt. 21:23) the scribes are grouped with the high priests and the elders, and come to challenge Jesus’s authority to teach and heal, and at Matthew 22:34 and 22:42 the opposition between Jesus and the scribes over the Law which is found in Mark is replaced with a disagreement between Jesus and the Pharisees.


\(^9^1\) Eugene Boring posits that the Gospel of Matthew is a sort of “Q-4”, a new narrative format of the Q sayings, produced and used by the same people that produced and used Q. This theory is discussed on pages 17-18. Boring, “The Convergence of Source Analysis, Social History, and Literary Structure in the Gospel of Matthew.”
writings with γέγραπται. Matthew, however, appears to quite like this introduction, and uses it nine times. If Matthew is a kind of Q, as posited by Boring, then their expansion of this introductory form shows their continued interest in the validity of the writings, over and above the authors of Q. If instead Matthew should be looked at as an independent, though source-reliant, document of literature, rather than a community production and reflection of some posited Matthean group, then we can think of Matthew’s use of this introduction form as an adoption. I favour the latter model. As I have stated above, Matthew bears all of the hallmarks of Greek literature, rather than group production. Matthew is an author, not a mere redactor.

Prophecy in Matthew

The treatment of prophetic verses in Matthew’s biography of Jesus displays the emphasis on interpretation present throughout the text. While we cannot know whether Matthew’s source copy of the Septuagint conforms to the version now available, the evidence is fairly strong that Matthew was less free-handed when copying prophetic sources than when copying Mark or Q (See Figure 3). Matthew uses γέγραπται seven times in their text to refer to Septuagint verses. One is independent Matthean and found in the infancy narrative, two are Markan in origin, and four are sourced from Q. Matthew’s “quotations” from the infancy narrative, discussed in brief above, is more fully examined here. It is a combination of Micah 5:2 and 2 Samuel 5:2. In the chart below, underlined wording is verbatim from Micah, while italicized wording is verbatim from 2 Samuel.

92 Kloppenborg, “The Formation of Q,” 247. The other instance is at Q 7:27 (Matthew 11:10).

93 2:5; 4:4,6,7,10;11:10; 21:13; 26:24,31. In addition to these uses of γέγραπται, Matthew refers to “the writings” an additional five times with a comparable meaning, at 21:42 (ταῖς γράφαις); 22:29 (τάς γράφας); 26:56, 54 (αἱ γράφαι); 27:37 (γέγραμμενην).
Matthew’s use of the Septuagint is here similar to the scribe of 4QpaleoExod⁹⁴. Both have taken material from one book of the writings and supplemented with material from another book. Judith Sanderson writes that when copying prophecy or revelation, it appears that the “words of revelation were treated with more care than the form and structure of revelation.”⁹⁴ A scribe could easily take material from other books, or other locations in the same book, and add it together to produce the required narrative or message. While it may be easy to judge Matthew deficient in their knowledge of the Israelite and Jewish writings when they make “mistakes” such as that found in 2:5, it may be that the text follows an established procedure for creating use-specific copies of other texts. Matthew’s use of Mark and Q is less wooden, however.⁹⁵ Matthew elaborates and edits these sources much more than they do their Septuagint prophecies. John Kloppenborg uses this evidence to identify the social location of the Gospel writers as non-elite, and states that Matthew and Luke’s use of Q “approximates the practices of the librarius or archivist/scribe.”⁹⁶ The librarius was a skilled copier, whose goal was a text free from errors: a verbatim

96 Kloppenborg, 78.
transcription.\textsuperscript{97} The archivist/scribe was someone “whose role included both simple transcription and a degree of genuine composition.”\textsuperscript{98} This, on the surface, is in keeping with Matthew’s production, though it removes authorial intention and analysis from the process of copying. Matthew uses both Mark, Q, and the Septuagint, but not in the same way. Matthew’s independent transcriptions from the Septuagint are more faithful to the (assumed) source text that their transcriptions of Mark and Q.\textsuperscript{99}

The two γέγραπται quotations which come from the Markan source are found at Matthew 21:13 and 26:31. 21:13 is a composite of Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 7:11, and Zechariah 14:21, in a similar manner to that found in 2:5 (See Figure 4). At 21:13 and 26:31, however, Matthew has directly quoted Mark, without additions to the prophecies, though they do shorten Mark’s Septuagint quotation. It appears from this that Matthew believed the quotations from the Septuagint were sufficient to fulfill the prophecies as found in the writings.

Figure 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘My house shall be called a house of prayer’; but you are making it a den of robbers</td>
<td>for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples</td>
<td>Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your sight?</td>
<td>And there shall no longer be traders in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day.</td>
<td>‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{97} Kloppenborg, 62.

\textsuperscript{98} Kloppenborg, 78.

\textsuperscript{99} I say assumed because we cannot, of course, know the actual form of the Septuagint Matthew was using. Ancient texts were hardly fully reliable in their same-ness: lazy scribes, overzealous use of memory in copying, and different versions of the Greek source text would all contribute to the variations we now see in Matthew’s prophetic transcriptions.
Matthew’s twelfth fulfillment formula uses another composite quotation. In this narrative Matthew has Jesus request “a donkey tied, and a colt with her” (21:2) from his disciples. This story is Markan in origin, but Matthew adds a prophetic fulfillment that combines Isaiah 62:11 and Zechariah 9:9.

Figure 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 21:5</th>
<th>Isaiah 62:11</th>
<th>Zechariah 9:9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tell the daughter of Zion,</td>
<td>The Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to your daughter Zion,</td>
<td>Lo, your king comes to you;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.</td>
<td>“See, your salvation comes.”</td>
<td>triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Mark, Jesus rides on “a colt that has never been ridden” and Luke reproduces the Markan version almost verbatim. Matthew, however, is concerned with Mark’s seemingly unliteral transcription of the essence of the prophecy, and while we cannot know whether Matthew saw Mark’s narrative as prophetic, something triggered this use of prophecy for Matthew. There are two issues worth noting about Matthew’s use of the Zechariah prophecy: first, that they have added it to Mark’s Jerusalem entry narrative, and second, that they sacrifice plausibility for verbatim prophetic fulfillment. Matthew is not concerned that in their version Jesus implausibly rides two donkeys at once; where Mark is content with the essence of prophecy, Matthew requires verbatim agreement. I will address the second issue first, and then discuss Matthew’s literary pretensions and bibliomantic use of the prophecy.

100 Crook, Parallel Gospels: A Synopsis of Early Christian Writing, 222.
In Matthew, Jesus rides two animals into Jerusalem. While the image of Jesus straddling two donkeys at once is rather amusing, it seems a somewhat uncomfortable and impractical way to travel. We do not know whether Matthew was using the Septuagint or a Hebrew version of the writings in this instance. Matthew does not reproduce the Greek text verbatim (see Figure 6) but does reproduce the additional colt, which is found in both the Hebrew and the Greek.

Figure 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 21:5 (Greek)</th>
<th>Zechariah 9:9 (Hebrew)</th>
<th>Zechariah 9:9 (Greek)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ἰδοὺ ὁ βασιλεὺς σου ἐρχεται σοι πραῦς καὶ ἐπιβεβηκὼς ἐπὶ ὄνον καὶ ἐπὶ πῶλον ὕποξυγίου</td>
<td>יְהוָה יְשׁרור עֹלֶה-שְׁפַר אוֹר</td>
<td>ידועו הַמְלֵךְ יְהוָה יֶרֶשֶׁם יִגְדֵּל עָלָיו מַלְכָּה יִשְׂרָאֵל:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look, your king is coming to you, humble, and mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.</td>
<td>Look, your king comes to you, righteous and saving, he is riding a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.</td>
<td>Look, your king is coming to you, he is righteous and saving, mounted on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While this is interesting from a grammatical and source-critical viewpoint, it does not tell us much about the goals of the text. For this, we must look at Matthew’s choice of adding the prophetic quotation at all. By adding the fulfillment formulas, Matthew explicitly links Jesus to the Israelite and Hebrew writings, and assigns him the position of *Jewish* messiah. This is, of course, already present in Q, and Mark to a lesser extent, but it is not until Matthew that the synoptics take on this particular *textual* messiah characteristic. In Matthew’s version, that Jesus is the messiah is flagged by specific verbatim fulfillment of the writings. For Matthew, it is much more important that Jesus fulfill the written prophecy, than what he do be realistically possible. Mark has Jesus fulfill the
prophecy implicitly, but Matthew requires explicit fulfilment of the text as it is written.

Matthew’s use of Mark’s crucifixion narrative displays the same requirement.

Figure 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark 15:34</th>
<th>Matthew 27:46</th>
<th>Psalm 22:2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ἐλωὶ σαβαχθάνι;</td>
<td>Ἐλωὶ λεμά</td>
<td>Ἀλη Ἰελι λέμα σαβαχθάνι;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eloi, eloī, lema sabachthani</td>
<td>Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani</td>
<td>Eli, eli, lama azavtani</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

My god, my god, why have you forsaken me

In Mark’s narrative, Jesus calls out from the cross in Aramaic, but Matthew, who reproduces much of Mark’s crucifixion story, replaces the Aramaic with a transliteration of the Hebrew. As above, Mark does not require Jesus to fulfill prophecy to the exact word, but only in essence. Matthew, however, is using the writings in an oracular sense: for Jesus to be the Jewish messiah, they must use the words as they are written in the Jewish texts. This is also evident in Matthew’s temptation narrative, at 4:4. This narrative was analysed above in relation to how it is used to show Jesus’s superior ability to interpret the writings, but here the sources used and the purpose of the quotations themselves is of concern. The source for this narrative is Q; Mark has a much shorter version, two verses to Matthew’s eleven, and Q’s thirteen. In this pericope there are four quotations from the writings, and Matthew reproduces the latter three verbatim, and the first with an addition.

Figure 8

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 4:4</th>
<th>Q 4:4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Οὐκ ἐπὶ ἄρτῳ μόνῳ ζῆσεται ὁ ἀνθρώπος, ἀλλ’ ἐπὶ παντὶ ῥήματι ἐκπορευομένῳ διὰ στόματος θεοῦ.</td>
<td>Οὐκ ἐπὶ ἄρτῳ μόνῳ ζῆσεται ὁ ἀνθρώπος.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One does not live by bread alone, but on every word coming from the mouth of God.

As previously discussed in my Knowledge section, the quotation is from Deuteronomy 8:3, and whether Matthew is quoting from the Septuagint or the Hebrew writings is here unimportant. What is of interest is that Matthew takes the quotation from the Q source and adds to it.\(^{102}\) As with the two examples above, Matthew takes a perfectly serviceable source and changes it, because it does not exactly conform to the prophetic writings they require Jesus to fulfill.\(^{103}\) Matthew’s oracular use of the writings is analogous to the oracles from Delphi. The Pythia acted as a vessel for the words of the god,\(^{104}\) as the writings did for the words of the Hebraic god, and in the case of the Pythia, the oracles were used *verbatim*, as Matthew requires them to be. This is seen in Herodotus, who recounts Croesus’s interaction with the Delphic oracle in *The Histories* in 1.46-51. Croesus sent emissaries to enquire of a number of oracles whether he should resume the campaign against the Persians, and at 1.47.1, Herodotus tells us that Croesus told his emissaries to *write down* the answer given by the oracles and bring the writing to him. This shows that the written account – the *verbatim* words – of the prophecy were needed, and not just the essence, or gist, of the oracle.

If we think about the Matthew’s biography as a literary production, and of Matthew as an author, as I think we must, then we can locate Matthew within a genre of Greek

---


\(^{103}\) There are three other similar instances, at 8:17, 13:14-15, and 13:34, where Matthew adds quotations from the writings to Markan pericopes. At 8:17 Matthew adds a quotation from Isaiah 53:4, at 13:14-15 a quotation from Isaiah 6:9, and at 13:35 the quotation is from Psalm 78:2.

literature using prophecy as a plot-moving vehicle. This does mean that the book Matthew straddles literary genres; I have above asked the reader to imagine the biography as history, as “prophecy”, and as bios, and I am here asking for another genre intersection. This new genre will simply be called Greek storytelling. In Greek storytelling, whether this takes the form of tragedy in verse or a novel written in prose, attention is always paid to the gods, and oracles are often, if not always, used as a plot device to move the story forward. While this may seem strange to a modern reader of fiction, it would be perfectly normal, and even expected, in the Hellenistic and Greco-Roman worlds. As stated above, oracles were used for decision making in all aspects of life, from whether to embark on a trading voyage to whether to take on a liturgical responsibility. Oracles were not imagined to be unchanging or firm predictions. It was thought that if you knew a prophecy, then they could “change your life if you knew how to handle them.”

Prophecies were not obvious in their meaning, even if they appeared obvious in their wording. For example, Seleucus, one of Alexander’s successors, received an oracle about his death that said “If you keep away from Argos you will reach your allotted year, but if you approach that place you will die before your time.” Seleucus therefore finds all the places called Argos he can, and avoids them, but accidentally comes to an altar set up by the Argonauts in Lysimacheia, and is killed there by Ptolemy. Seleucus’s oracle is not firm, and he believes that he has changed the course of his life by managing his passages with the information he has. Unfortunately for Seleucus, his information is incomplete, and the oracle is fulfilled. If he had known about the altar, he could have averted the prophecy.


106 Appian, The Syrian Wars, 63
Other oracles, however, have already moved beyond their conditional possibilities by the time the story begins. *Oedipus Tyrannus* contains a conditional clause prophecy that cannot be averted; as Jocasta tells Oedipus, the Delphic oracle predicted that Laius would “suffer his doom at the hand of the child to be born to him and me.”107 The prophecy can be understood conditionally as “if Laius and Jocasta have a child, then the child will kill Laius.” When the play opens, the child has been born and already killed his father; the conditional possibilities are already complete.108 Unlike Seleucus, who in Herodotus’s account could have averted the prophecy with more complete information, Oedipus is stuck; he survived birth, exposure, and childhood, and therefore kills his father. The prophecies in Matthew’s biography are fixed as well. While the text relates to us the story of Jesus’s birth, the event cannot be changed. For Matthew, the prophecy and the event are in a different literary order than in Herodotus’s stories. For example, Jesus is born in a certain place, and then Matthew tells us that the event happened in this way in order that the prophecy of a great ruler coming out of Bethlehem could be fulfilled. In all of these instances, the prophecy is fulfilled in its verbatim form; Seleucus dies because he does not follow the exact prohibition, Oedipus kills his father even though he does not know Laius is his father, Jesus is born in Bethlehem because the prophecy says he must.109

---

107 Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, 710
109 In an argument against the need for verbatim prophecy, Plutarch proposes that every message is coloured by its medium, including divine prophecy. “But to present this, not in the form in which it was existent in its creator, uncontaminated, unaffected, and faultless, but combined with much that is alien to this.” Also, “the Lord whose prophetic shrine is at Delphi neither tells nor conceals, but indicates.” Plutarch, “The Oracles at Delphi,” in *Moralia*, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt, vol. V (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1936), 313–17. While Plutarch’s writings appear to negate the need for verbatim prophecy at Delphi specifically, it is possible that this is indicative of a wider decline in consultation, and belief in the accuracy, of oracles, partly due to the perceived change from verse to prose prophetic form. Stoneman, *Ancient Oracles*, 174.
Matthew’s ancient readers adopted their oracular use of the writings, in their Septuagint form. Justin Martyr, who quotes from Matthew, was attempting to solve an hermeneutical problem of the Jewish scriptures: whether they were to be read as law or prophecy. This relationship between the Jewish writings and the biographies of Jesus, which at times reject the written law, was problematic for Justin and his contemporaries, and it is evident that Justin’s use of the Matthean text allowed for a prophetic reading of the Jewish writings that meant the contradictions could be reconciled. Justin Martyr, as a literate cultural producer himself, is a prime candidate for the category of Matthew’s intended audience, and I am convinced that the influence of Matthew’s readings and use of the Jewish writings are evident in the texts produced by Justin. Justin would have read Matthew in its original language, Greek, and takes care to authorise the prophetic and oracular nature of the Septuagint. In chapter 31 of the First Apology Justin modifies the legend of the Letter of Aristeas to include divinely-authorised translation not just of the Law, but of all of the “prophetic writings.” In this way Justin follows, and authorises, Matthew. If, like Mark, Justin had been content that Jesus fulfilled the essence of the prophecy, there would be no need for the Greek version of the writings to be divinely authorised: the translation would not change the meaning, and therefore the Hebrew would


111 As per Koester: “The foundation of the proof for the truth of Christian faith is, therefore, the Bible of Israel – a book of venerable ancient prophecy.” Koester, Ancient Christian Gospels: Their History and Development, 376.

suffice. However, Justin, like Matthew, requires a word agreement for prophetic fulfillment, and therefore the Greek translation must have prophetic weight.113

Sermon on the Mount

Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29), discussed briefly above and more fully examined here, is an excellent example of Jesus’s superior knowledge-interpretation skills. Throughout this section of the narrative, Matthew has Jesus refute what they believe to be previously-held ideas about righteousness, the law, the prophets, and the nature of God. The Sermon is from the Q source, and Matthew makes significant structural and theological changes to their source material.114 Matthew’s structural changes include gathering fragments together and creating a cohesive structure for the Sermon, and bracketing Jesus’s teaching with a narrative introduction (5:1) and conclusion (7:28-29). The Sermon closely follows the calls of Peter and Andrew and the sons of Zebedee, and Jesus’s fame – given as the reason he has to retreat to the mountain to preach – is accounted for in the short pericope at 4:23-25, which is a Matthean composition. In this pericope Jesus begins his teaching and healing mission, while his fame appears to be because of his abilities to heal, rather than teach. This is, however, followed by Matthew’s most extensive teaching section, leading me to think that for Matthew, the two skills are closely associated. Jesus’s

113 Giving the Greek translation of the prophets divine authority also solves the virgin-birth problem. I imagine that this would have been a contentious issue for the prophetic-fulfillment camp, and the idea appears to have been important to the early Church fathers. By authorising the Septuagint, Justin effectively authorises parthenos over almah.

114 The content of Matthew’s Sermon is found throughout Luke, in fragmentary form. While not a hard rule, Luke’s order is generally taken to be the original order of Q, and Matthew’s is thought to be redactional. This is because it seems more likely that an author would take fragments and compile them together, rather than take a cohesive document and fragment it. We also know that the author of Matthew is very comfortable reorganizing their source material, to create cohesive narratives, whereas Luke tends to use their sources as he finds them. We cannot, of course, be sure that the Lukan order is the original Q3 order, but the majority of scholars conclude that Luke best reflects Q’s order. Kloppenborg, The Formation of Q: Trajectories in Ancient Wisdom Collections, 64–80.
superior (in comparison to the other scribes) teaching ability is directly associated with (1) that God has granted him wisdom, and (2) that he is able to correctly interpret that wisdom, and therefore Jesus’s teaching should be understood as issuing forth from God. Healing is, of course, also a divinely-granted ability. Therefore, rather than an expression of the importance of Jesus’s healing mission, 4:23-25 should be understood as Matthew’s statement on the nature of divinely-granted abilities. By linking teaching and healing, Matthew implies that the two are of the same nature; both are divinely-granted abilities, and can only be employed correctly by righteous persons. By expanding on Jesus’s ability to heal, in a pericope that immediately introduces the main teaching section, the text, I am convinced intentionally, links healing and teaching in the reader’s mind.

Matthew’s additions to the Q source serve to highlight Jesus’s ability to correctly interpret the writings and other traditional sayings. For example, Matthew 5:21-26 takes a short saying on settling disputes, and creates out of it a lesson on murder. The lesson itself, though, is not the interesting part, but rather that Matthew adds a contradiction between Jesus and what Matthew’s biography presents as the previously accepted teaching on this issue. This lesson is introduced with Ἠκούσατε ὅτι ἔρρεθη ... ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν. This is a formulaic introduction that Matthew uses five additional times in the Sermon, for their first six lessons. Matthew often uses formulaic introductions and conclusions in their text, so that they use one here is not particularly noteworthy. The purpose, however, that this

---

115 Paul identifies healing as a “gift of the spirit” in 1 Corinthians 12:9: ἀλλὰς χαρίσματα ἵκαμάτων ἐν τῷ ἐν τῷ πνεύματι (to another gifts of healing by the one spirit).

116 “You have heard that it was said … but I, I say to you.” This formula is reminiscent of another that Matthew often uses, ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν (truly I say to you). Both serve the purpose of identifying Jesus’s words as superior, and his teaching and interpretation as correct.

117 Matthew 5:21, 27, 33, 38, 43. I also include 5:31 in counting instances of this formula, though it is worded slightly differently: here Matthew uses only the verb ἔρρεθη leaving out Ἠκούσατε ὅτι.
formula serves is noteworthy: Matthew is here identifying Jesus as a teacher of the writings, a scribe who can train other scribes for the Kingdom.

In this text, attaining the Kingdom of the Heavens is the ultimate goal, and Matthew’s Jesus is continuously set against “unrighteous” persons, who cannot reach the Kingdom. This motif is present in Matthew’s sermon, particularly at 5:20. In this section scribes are referred to in the plural, as a group, and in this section they are connected with the Pharisees. In 5:20 Matthew writes:

ἐὰν μὴ περισσεύσῃ ὑμῶν ἡ δικαιοσύνη πλείον τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν.

Unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of the heavens.

The question of righteousness, and whether Matthew saw the scribes and Pharisees as righteous or not, has been addressed in my Scribes in Matthew section. For the purposes of this analysis, the more interesting question is rather, why did Matthew use these categories as a comparison for their readers? Why scribes and Pharisees, and not merchants or artisans? What does the author say about these categories by making this comparison?

One possible answer as to why scribes and Pharisees is that they would have been the religious authority that was most familiar and present in Judea / Palestina Prima of Matthew’s period. If Matthew is a scribe writing for a non-Jerusalem audience, then comparison of righteousness with scribes and Pharisees would resonate more than chief priests or kings, as the later categories would likely be extremely distant to Matthew’s audience, where there may have been actual Pharisees and scribes in their immediate world. This does not, however, answer the question of why Pharisees and scribes instead of merchants and artisans. This question is best answered I think by reference to a later
mention of scribes found at 13:52. This verse, a Matthean invention\textsuperscript{118} which concludes a
series of parables about the kingdom of the heavens told by Jesus to his followers, reads:

\begin{verbatim}
Διὰ τοῦτο πᾶς γραμματεύς μαθητευθεὶς τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν ὁμοίος ἐστὶν ἀνθρώπῳ οἰκοδεσπότῃ ὃστις ἔκβαλλει ἐκ τοῦ θησαυροῦ αὐτοῦ καινά καὶ παλαιά.
\end{verbatim}

Therefore every scribe having been discipled to the kingdom of the heavens is like a
house-despot, who brings out his treasure new and old.\textsuperscript{119}

While it is generally difficult to interpret Matthew’s kingdom-comparisons, this verse can
shed light on their earlier comparison (5:20) of levels of righteousness. In the former verse,
as above, we have reference to both the kingdom of the heavens and scribes. In 5:20 it
appears that Matthew is saying that scribes cannot enter the kingdom of the heavens, and
in 13:52 that scribes are discipled specifically for the kingdom. How can the two be
reconciled, without appeal to Matthew’s seeming unconcern with contradictions, which I
find to be a simplistic and unhelpful conclusion? The answer, I think, is that the scribes
referred to in 5:20 are not the scribes in 13:52. As argued above, in my Scribes in Matthew
section, scribes have a range of valences. In 5:20 the scribes are linked with the Pharisees,
a comfortable antagonistic group for Matthew. In 13:52, the scribes are not linked with
another group, but are instead disciples of the kingdom of the heavens. The scribes in 13:52
should not be associated with the scribes in 5:20, but rather with the hearers of those

\textsuperscript{118} “The Matthean composition of 13,52 is supported by word statistics and Matthean content.” Dennis C.
Duling, “The Scribe ‘Discipled’ for the Kingdom of the Heavens and the Θησαυρός of the Head of the
Household (Matthew 13,52),” in *Scribal Practices and Social Structures Among Jesus Adherents: Essays in

\textsuperscript{119} The NRSV here translates μαθητευθεὶς as “trained” but the root of this participle is μαθητεύω, the
same term Matthew uses to refer to Jesus’s disciples, the μαθηταί. This is also the root of the name
“Matthew.” While the vagaries of translation in the NRSV are not the topic of the project, it is unfortunate
that the same English term cannot be used in 13:52 as is used in references to the disciples, as it was likely
the intention of the author to associate the scribe in 13:52 with the other disciples referred to in the
biography. For a more complete discussion of the translation of μαθητευθεὶς see Duling, “The Scribe
‘Discipled’ for the Kingdom of the Heavens and the Θησαυρός of the Head of the Household (Matthew
13,52).”
lessons, the disciples of Jesus and the adjacent crowds. The text presents the followers of Jesus as scribes discipled to the kingdom, whose righteousness must exceed that other group of scribes, those who work with the Pharisees. This is particularly important when we note that this verse is not found in either Mark or Q, but appears to be Matthew’s own composition. In 13:52 Matthew tells us which scribes they value: those who are disciples of Jesus, who value learning and interpretation of the writings, and can retain the lessons taught to them in parables. David Orton writes that 13:52 displays Matthew’s ideal scribe. As per Orton, the Matthean scribe is one who understands. “The telling verse is actually v.51, in which the understanding of the disciples is emphatically announced.”

The categories of comparison in 5:20 are not scribe and non-scribe, but rather scribe and scribe; there are many different groups of scribes for Matthew, which makes sense, as there were many different groups of scribes in reality, as well as individual scribes not associated with any particular group. We cannot make definitive statements like “Matthew presents scribes as righteous” or “Matthew presents scribes as evil” because “scribe” is not a monolithic category for Matthew. The pertinent reference to scribes in 5:20 is not the explicit mention of scribes who are grouped with Pharisees and have insufficient righteousness, but rather those referred to implicitly: the scribes of Jesus, who are being trained for the kingdom of the heavens, and who must therefore have sufficient righteousness. The issue here is not that the scribes are scribes; this alone does not make them insufficiently righteous. Of concern to Matthew is that those hearing and

---

understanding Jesus’s parables must be *correctly trained* scribes, with right knowledge and right interpretation.

Matthew’s biography shows Jesus’s knowledge of the writings by having him refute “previous” interpretations. Here, as in the above-discussed references to the scribes, Matthew sets other teachers of Jewish knowledge up as foils for Jesus, though in 5:21-48 the foils are implied rather than actually stated. In the following three lessons, found at 6:1-18, Matthew identifies the foils as *oι υποκριται* (the hypocrites). While this epithet is not solely reserved for the scribes, Matthew does use it to refer to the scribes and Pharisees at 15:7 and a further six times in the woes in chapter 23, and to the disciples of the Pharisees and the Herodians at 22:18. The use at 15:7 is an adoption of Markan terms, as found in Mark 7:6. This is the only use of *oι υποκριται* in Mark, which is evidence that Matthew’s use of this term is generally their own invention. Two further uses of *oι υποκριται* may also be referring to false teachers, though in the first, at 7:5, Matthew directly reproduces their Q source. Matthew 24:51, the final use of *oι υποκριται*, is a Q-source pericope,¹²¹ but Matthew changes “the disloyal” (τῶν ἀπίστων) to “the hypocrites.” In the Q form of this verse, “disloyal” in Q 12:46 acts as a contrast to the “loyal slave” in Q 12:42, as in the Lukan parallel. That the reconstruction of Q 12:46 reads τῶν ἀπίστων rather than τῶν υποκριτῶν is further evidence of *oι υποκριται* being a Matthean term. Luke does not display an aversion to this term, so it is unlikely that they would have changed τῶν υποκριτῶν to τῶν ἀπίστων, as ἀπίστων is used much less often in both Luke and Matthew. Matthew’s change may be intended to reflect their other uses

of οἱ ὑποκριταὶ, and if this is the case, they may be referring here to false teachers. This use may only be meant to remind the reader of unrighteous people who profess righteousness, people who say one thing but do another. However, the characters Matthew most often refers to in this way are the Pharisees and the scribes, and given Matthew’s description of the scribes and Pharisees in chapter 23, where they open by saying do what they say, but not what they do, it appears that Matthew is referring to these same characters in 24:51. In all, at least seven of Matthew’s uses of οἱ ὑποκριταὶ refer directly to the scribes, and therefore it is reasonable to surmise that they were thinking of the same foil for Jesus when they use this term in the Sermon. Matthew’s use of the term “hypocrites” further highlights their statement at 23:3, that Jesus’s hearers should do what the scribes and Pharisees say, but not what they do. For Matthew, scribes are meant to hold, interpret, and disseminate the knowledge of the Laws and the Prophets, but they neither live by the correct principles nor interpret the law correctly. Their hypocrisy underlines Matthew’s Jesus, who teaches and interprets correctly, and lives in the way he proclaims that all people should.

Ben Sira

Matthew’s Jesus as exemplar scribe is analogous to ben Sira’s model scribe. This Wisdom book was written originally in Hebrew, in the second century BCE, though a third of the book is only extant in Greek. Of main interest is 39:1-11, wherein the author describes the characteristics of the ideal scribe. Ben Sira’s scribe displays many of the

---

characteristics Matthew’s biography presents as valuable in scribes, and it will be useful to reproduce these eleven verses in full.

1 He seeks out the wisdom of all the ancients,
   and is concerned with prophecies;
2 he preserves the sayings of the famous
   and penetrates the subtleties of parables;
3 he seeks out the hidden meanings of proverbs
   and is at home with the obscurities of parables.
4 He serves among the great
   and appears before rulers;
he travels in foreign lands
   and learns what is good and evil in the human lot.
5 He sets his heart to rise early
   to seek the Lord who made him,
   and to petition the Most High;
he opens his mouth in prayer
   and asks pardon for his sins.
6 If the great Lord is willing,
   he will be filled with the spirit of understanding;
he will pour forth words of wisdom of his own
   and give thanks to the Lord in prayer.
7 The Lord will direct his counsel and knowledge,
   as he meditates on their mysteries.
8 He will show the wisdom of what he has learned,
   and will glory in the law of the Lord’s covenant.
9 Many will praise his understanding;
   it will never be blotted out.
His memory will not disappear,
   and his name will live through all generations.
10 Nations will speak of his wisdom,
   and the congregation will proclaim his praise.
If he lives long, he will leave a name greater than a thousand, and if he goes to rest, it is enough for him. Matthew’s scribe is reflected in these verses in multiple ways, both in their character of Jesus, and in how the author reflects these precepts. I will address each characteristic in turn, showing how the author of Matthew embodies them, as does Jesus and the proper scribe, as described in Matthew 13:52. Ben Sira’s scribe, as a scholar of the Law, looks to the ancients for wisdom, and is “concerned with prophecies.” Matthew’s biography itself is an exploration of ancient wisdom and prophecy. This is evidenced most clearly in Matthew’s narrative of the magi. The magi are representatives of ancient wisdom, who correctly interpret the sign of the star.

The Magi

The pericope found at 2:1-12 – the prophecy of the Bethlehem birth and the visitation of the Magi – has been discussed above in reference to scribal motifs and prophetic fulfillment, but this scene also has bearing on Matthew’s idea of knowledge and wisdom. This is for two reasons. First, the parallels with the Moses haggadah. Moses’s birth is prophesied to Pharaoh, corresponding with the prophecy given to Herod by the chief priests and scribes. In this Matthew links Jesus with Moses’s saviour characteristics, but also with Moses’s direct link to God’s wisdom. Here Matthew first introduces Jesus’s connection with, and replacement of, the Mosaic smicha chain, the linked knowledge from God, to teacher, and then to the people. The second reason this scene should be understood within the context of Matthew’s understanding of knowledge and wisdom is the

\[123\] NRSV translation.
\[124\] Luz, Matthew 1-7, 104.
introduction of the μάγοι ἀπὸ ἀνατολῆς (the magi from the east), and the gifts that they bring. Throughout the text Matthew seeks to associate Jesus with earlier periods of Jewish / Israelite history, and “magicians” from the east furthers this goal. The journey of the Magi parallels Abraham’s original journey to Canaan, and associates Jesus with the return from exile. The Magi themselves are also symbols of divinely-granted wisdom. They are from the east, the “origin of magic, astrology, and religious wisdom,” and their ability to correctly interpret the sign of the star shows that they are both able to receive and interpret divine wisdom. They also directly receive inspiration from God, through the dream in 2:12 which instructs them to return home by a different road. The Magi are able here to receive direct communication from God, which they are again able to correctly interpret.

This revelation is contrasted with Joseph’s dreams, which bracket 2:12. Joseph receives two divine revelations, at 1:20-23 and 2:19-22. However, Matthew notes that in Joseph’s dreams wisdom is mediated through an angel, whereas in the dream of the Magi no mediator or interpreter is indicated.

---

125 Luz, 112.

126 Communication from deities in dreams is a common occurrence in the Greek world. Intentional dream-communication was achieved through incubation rituals, where a person would sleep in the temple in order to receive a dream from the god, or through happenstance, such as seems to be the case here.

127 Matthew does not directly state that interpretation of divine dreams is necessary. However, reading and interpreting dreams was a specialized function of priests, magicians, and ritual-practitioners in the ancient world. Dream interpretation was also attributed to Moses by Pompeius Trogus, and Porphyry attributes the knowledge of dream-interpretations to the Hebrews. Heidi Wendt, At the Temple Gates: The Religion of Freelance Experts in the Roman Empire (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 91.

128 It is possible that the dream revelations given to Joseph in Matthew are mediated through an angel because Joseph requires interpretation be done for him, where the Magi are themselves able to correctly read dreams from divine sources, as part of their magical functions. It is, of course, also possible that the lack of mediator or interpreter is merely a narrative oversight, that Matthew just neglected to include a required mediator. In the crucifixion narrative Pilate’s wife is also sent a dream about Jesus, the meaning of which is not obviously interpreted for her. In 27:19 Pilate’s wife sends a message to him, telling Pilate to have nothing to do with Jesus “for today I have greatly suffered because of a dream concerning him.” Mathew does not lay out the meaning of the dream, but implies that it is the reason Pilate ritually cleanses his hands of Jesus’s blood. It is possible that Pilate is the interpreter of the dream; as a Roman civic official he may have served as civic priest prior to, or during, his governorship, and he may be for Matthew here a
The gifts the Magi bring serve two symbolic functions. First, they are all three extremely expensive luxury goods. Frankincense and myrrh are both tree-resins, used in ritual practices throughout the ancient near east.\textsuperscript{129} Gold is itself associated with luxury and kingly wealth throughout the ancient near east and the Hellenistic world.\textsuperscript{130} All three items also have magical and wisdom associations. Gold was used for inscribed amulets from the classical period \textsuperscript{131} and for spells to transmit dreams,\textsuperscript{132} myrrh ink was used for writing oracular requests,\textsuperscript{133} and frankincense smoke is called for in a number of spells for bringing on or transmitting dreams.\textsuperscript{134} That these items were used for divination and other magical purposes does not directly imply that Matthew is imagining these uses, of course. However, it is unlikely that they would have been unaware of the magical properties of the gifts, as they place them in the hands of \textit{μάγοι}. It is important to note that in the ancient world magic does not equal superstition: magical practices and practitioners were skilled ritual specialists, and likely priests as well.\textsuperscript{135} Divination, dream interpretation and transmission,

\textsuperscript{129} Luz, \textit{Matthew 1-7}, 114–15.

\textsuperscript{130} Gold was mined and used for luxury items throughout the ancient world, was deposited in graves of kings and chieftains, and was even used by the Persians to make (assumedly ceremonial) horse armour. Robin Lane Fox, \textit{The Classical World: An Epic History from Homer to Hadrian} (New York: Basic Books, 2006), 101.


\textsuperscript{133} Myrrh ink is referenced throughout the Greek Magical Papyrus as a preferred ink for writing magic incantations. Eitrem, 180.

\textsuperscript{134} Eitrem, 177–79.

\textsuperscript{135} There is also good evidence for “fraudulent” “magicians” and ritual practitioners as well, and criminal “magicians,” such as is seen in the \textit{Golden Ass} of Apuleius. “Fraudulent” is, of course, a normative term, and is used to intentionally de-authorize ritual practitioners and teachers. For example, Jesus would be
and healing spells are all practices that Matthew is comfortable with Jesus and his disciples participating in. These practices are, of course, associated with divine wisdom, and therefore the Magi and the gifts they bring should be as well. It is possible that the Magi give these gifts to Jesus both as signs of kingly place and power, and as the tools of his future trade as a ritual specialist and holder of divine knowledge. That the Magi pay homage\textsuperscript{136} to Jesus shows that they acknowledge him as a knowledge holder and wisdom interpreter greater than themselves.

**Transfiguration**

The importance of ancient wisdom is reiterated throughout the biography in references to the sages and to Moses. The clearest association of Jesus with ancient wisdom comes in the transfiguration in 17:1-8. In this narrative Jesus is transformed, and he is shown talking to Moses and the prophet Elijah. Here Matthew is both acknowledging the value of ancient wisdom, and identifying Jesus as a possessor of wisdom that he shares with Moses and Elijah. For Matthew, Moses and Elijah signify divine wisdom revealed: both have a direct wisdom-connection with God, both are able to perform miracles and healings, both receive prophetic wisdom. Furthermore, Moses and Elijah are also teachers. Matthew’s main concerns in their biography are the Law and the prophets; here Moses represents the Law, and Elijah the prophets, and their interaction with Jesus signifies them passing on their authority to Jesus. Through the encounter at the transfiguration, Jesus takes on the previous roles of these two figures, and assumes their authority, the two combined in one person. As was shown above, Matthew is very concerned with prophecy, both in

\textsuperscript{136}προσκυνήσαν. This can be translated as “homage” or “prostrate” though the latter option still maintains the concept of homage.
how Jesus fulfills prophecy and in how Jesus interprets prophecy. By having him take on
Elijah’s authority, Matthew has Jesus also take on Elijah’s ability to understand and
disseminate divine wisdom. From here onward, Matthew’s Jesus wears the mantle of both
the law and the prophets.

Ben Sira’s scribe “preserves the discourse of notable men.” The text itself is an
example of Matthew’s value of this skill. In this book Matthew preserves what they believe
to be the sayings of Jesus, as they have them in the Q source, but they also preserve both
the ancient prophets, and Mark’s biography. Matthew esteems all of these sources, though
to varying degrees, and by the act of re-writing the Jesus narrative they embody ben
Sira’s model scribe. Matthew “preserves the discourse” of Jesus himself by copying the
sayings attributed to him, most likely from the Q source, and preserves the sayings of the
prophets as well.

The Second Sophistic

Matthew’s work is also analogous to the work of the Second Sophistic. Whether
one prefers a late or an early dating for the biography, it can be situated in the Second
Sophistic period, which ranged from 50 to 250 CE. This style of philosophical inquiry
and rhetorical exchange has been previously discarded by historians as one of intellectual
decline, a time of repetition and reworking of existing texts, rather than creative intellectual
thought. However, this thinking has changed in recent years. This style was characterised
by performance; philosophical speeches were given as public performance. These speeches

137 As noted above, Matthew modifies their sources in different ways, appearing to display differing views
as to their authority and whether they need to be maintained verbatim or can be extensively rewritten.


were panegyric, and used as rhetorical training. While it is not known exactly when these speeches took on such a performative nature, it is clear that “by the second half of the first century CE, declamation moved into the highest rank of cultural activities and acquired an unprecedented and almost unimaginable popularity.”\textsuperscript{140} This is the context in which Matthew was writing and creating their characters, and it is likely that the biography displays a two-fold example of Second Sophistic thinking. What I mean by this is that both the biography itself and the characters Matthew creates display panegyric and encomiastic declamations. First, the biography itself, while being a primarily a written text, would have been performed, either for a small group of other writers and intellectuals by the author himself, or by others within the context of temple and other public teachings. Matthew’s text enjoyed wide popularity throughout the Empire, and as literacy rates\textsuperscript{141} were still quite low during the entire period of the Second Sophistic, we can presume that these texts were read aloud. Portions of the text may also have been used as “practice” speeches: it is possible that Matthew’s teaching sections and their compilation of the beatitudes and the sermon on the plain, from dislocated sayings into a cohesive narrative, could have been

\textsuperscript{140} Fowler, “The Second Sophistic,” 101.

\textsuperscript{141} While it is not the main focus of this project, literacy in the ancient world must be addressed here. However, I am convinced that literate and illiterate are insufficient categories for the ancient world. Rather than this binary opposition, literacy in the ancient world is better understood as a gradation; that someone was not able to pen a philosophical or theological treatise does not make them illiterate, but neither should we assume that artisans or economic tradespeople, such as tax collectors, were incapable of a high level of literate consumption and production, or that persons with a low level of literacy did not value literacy and literate materials. As an example, we have papyrological evidence for two tax collectors, who we would expect to have only practical literary skills, with greater literary goals and aspirations. Roger S. Bagnall, “Papyrology,” in \textit{The Oxford Handbook of Roman Studies}, ed. Alessandro Barchiesi and Walter Scheidel (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 130. Literacy should be understood as a differentiated concept. As noted by Agnes Choi, “attempts to advance in reading or writing competency should be taken seriously.” Agnes Choi, “Between Literacy and Illiteracy,” in \textit{Scribal Practices and Social Structures Among Jesus Adherents: Essays in Honour of John S. Kloppenborg}, ed. William E. Arnal et al. (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), 74. Choi examines Abecedaries found in Israel as evidence of attempts to improve writing and literacy skills.
used in this way. Public readings and declamation of memorized sections would be performances of the rhetorical skill of the writer, and of other rhetoricians who used their work. The evidence of the popularity of declamatory speech is even stronger within the text. Throughout the text Matthew writes scenes of public rhetorical display to show Jesus’s skill as a rhetorician, and the lack of skill displayed by the Pharisees and other antagonistic characters. Each time Jesus concludes a teaching section in the biography, their hearers are “astounded by his teaching” (ἐξεπλήσσοντο ... ἐπὶ τῇ διδαχῇ αὐτοῦ).

By including this statement at the conclusion of Matthew’s teaching sections, they are signalling to the reader and hearer of the text that Jesus proclaims authoritatively: Jesus is an effective and skilled orator, whose grasp of this skill far exceeds that of his antagonists, who are always represented unfavorably. The crowds that listen to Jesus’s public speeches compare his to the Pharisees and the scribes, and always concludes that Jesus is the more skilled, the more persuasive, rhetorician. As a result, both the text of Matthew and its protagonist display characteristics of the Second Sophistic.

Scholar

Ben Sira’s next notable characteristic is one that Matthew takes great care to attribute to the Jesus of the text. Ben Sira’s scribe is a scholar of proverbs and parables, tools that Matthew uses often throughout their biography, to show Jesus’s skill in teaching, the ability of the disciples to understand obscure knowledge, and the inability of the scribes associated with the religious hierarchy to understand the true meaning of Jesus’s teachings. Chapter 13 of the text contains the majority of the parables Matthew uses, and an explanation of the purpose of teaching in parables. Matthew uses a similar number of

---

parables as Luke, and takes over all but one of Mark’s parables, so in their use of parables as a teaching vehicle they do not differ greatly from other biographies of Jesus, canonical or otherwise. The primary difference is that Matthew takes care to have Jesus explain both parables and proverbs. In 13:10-17 Matthew writes, in a pericope taken over from Mark, why Jesus teaches in parables. The purpose of this style of teaching, as Mark has it, is primarily to obscure; to prevent all people from knowing the truth and meaning of Jesus’s teaching. It is important though that the disciples hear and understand the parables, as Matthew shows in their further explanation of the parable of the weeds in 13:36-43. Though Mark presents their Jesus character as wanting the disciples to hear and understand the parables in Mark 4:10-20 and 4:33-34, Mark does not write out explanations for the majority of parables they use, where Matthew does. In this Matthew performs ideal scribal characteristics on two levels, as a model scribe himself, and showing Jesus as a model scribe. Jesus’s explanations display his ability to teach and understand the parables, and Matthew’s written explanations perform their own ability to both “penetrate the subtleties” and “be at home with the obscurities” of parables. As Orton notes, “the scribe’s prime task is to understand parables.” This is a task that Matthew emphatically shows Jesus completing and achieving.

143 Mark uses four parables is their biography, the Sower (4:1-8), the Growing Seed (4:26-29), the Mustard Seed (4:30-32), and the Tenants (12:1-9). Out of these four, only the Sower is explained in the text (4:14-20). Mark does write that Jesus “explained everything in private to his disciples” in Mark 4:34, but he does not explicitly have Jesus teach the meanings of his parables. Matthew uses Mark’s four parables (the Sower [13:3-8]; the Growing Seed [13:24-30]; the Mustard Seed [13:31-32]; the Tenants [21:33-44]), and an additional twelve (the Yeast [13:33], the Hidden Treasure [13:44], the Pearls [13:45], the Dragnet [13:47-48], the Scribe [13:52], the Lost Sheep [18:10-14], the Unforgiving Servant [18:23-35], the Labourers [20:1-16], the Two Sons [21:28-32], the Wedding Banquet [22:1-14], the Ten Bridesmaids [25:1-13], and the Talents [25:14-30]). Matthew adopts Mark’s explanation for the Sower, and adds their own explanations for six other parables.

144 Orton, The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Ideal, 68. Emphasis original.
The most important characteristic ben Sira’s scribe displays is understanding. Orton sees verse six as the climax of this description, and notes that σύνεσις \(^{145}\) is also the characteristic that the scribe will be remembered for in verse nine.\(^{146}\) Matthew, like ben Sira’s scribe, who is likely a reflection of ben Sira himself,\(^{147}\) is continuously searching for understanding. Matthew’s Jesus is a teacher who, unlike ben Sira’s scribe, does not have to wait for the willingness of God to be filled with understanding, as he himself embodies all of the divine knowledge possible. However, the first link in Jesus’s chain of knowledge is to the disciples, who do have to wait for the willingness of God. In Matthew, Jesus’s role is to understand and teach, so that his students may then understand and teach, and so on. Ben Sira’s scribe is himself a “professional understander”\(^{148}\) who “will reveal instruction in his teaching”\(^{149}\) in his dual and interconnected roles as knowledge holder and knowledge disseminator. Like the Greco-Roman scribes, grammaticians, biographers, and historians memorialized in Greek epigraphy, Matthew and ben Sira desire their scribes to be scholars and teachers, who are able to learn, be inspired by the divine, and communicate their knowledge to others.\(^{150}\) These scholars see and perceive, hear, listen, and understand.\(^{151}\)

\(^{145}\) For Matthew’s use of σύνεσις and related terms see Appendix VII.

\(^{146}\) Orton, *The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Ideal*, 67.

\(^{147}\) Orton notes the difficulty in teasing out the description of the model scribe from the author himself, and that “our distinction between the two can only be loose.” Orton, 66. The task of separating the description from the author in 39:1-11 is very similar to the project I have attempted here: to identify Matthew’s ideal scribe. However, I am not attempting to describe Matthew’s ideal scribe and Matthew, but rather I believe that when Matthew displays in their biography what he thinks a scribe should be like, he is actually describing himself, either in actual or idealized form. Like Harrington, I see the scribe in 13:52 as both the Matthean ideal scribe, and as an autobiographical description of Matthew himself. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1:208.

\(^{148}\) Orton, *The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Ideal*, 68.

\(^{149}\) Ben Sira 39:8

\(^{150}\) See Community section for discussion of Greek inscriptions.

\(^{151}\) Matthew 10:13.
Chains of Knowledge

Matthew presents their understanding of the chain of divine knowledge most clearly in their rewriting of the teachings on divorce. The pericope at 19:3-12 describes an interchange between Jesus, his disciples, and some Pharisees, who have come to test Jesus on his knowledge of the Mosaic laws on divorce. The Pharisees ask Jesus whether it is lawful for a man to divorce his wife, and when he tells them it is not, they respond that Mosaic law tells that it is lawful. Jesus then tells them that while Moses did allow for divorce, it was only because of their “hardheartedness”¹⁵² that he did so; but from the beginning of time God did not allow for divorce, implying that Jesus knew the mind of God as well as or better than Moses did. When Jesus has completed this interchange, his disciples then say to him that if divorce is not allowed, then they are better off not to marry. Jesus responds that while this teaching, that divorce is not permitted, is the correct and best way, it is not for everyone to follow, but only for those who are able to “make room for the teaching.”¹⁵³ This narrative is a combination of the Markan source and Matthean composition. The first part, wherein the Pharisees question Jesus about divorce and Jesus accuses them of “hardheartedness,” is Markan, and the second part, verses 10-12, is Matthean (see Figure 9).

Figure 9

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew 19:3-12</th>
<th>Mark 10:2-12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>³ Some Pharisees came to him, and to test him they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?”</td>
<td>² Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⁴ He answered, “Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹⁵² Matthew 19:8: σκληροκαρδία

¹⁵³ Matthew 19:11: Οὐ πάντες χαροῦσι τὸν λόγον τοῦτον ἀλλ' οἷς δέδοται.
He answered them, “What did Moses command you?”

5 and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’?

7 ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’

6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

8 ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.’

9 They said to him, “Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?”

4 They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.”

8 He said to them, “It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

5 But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. 6 But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’

9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery.”

11 He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; 12 and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

10 his disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.”

10 Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter.

11 But he said to them, “Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given.

12 For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.”

This pericope serves multiple purposes. First, it shows that some of the Pharisees sought to catch Jesus out, to show that their knowledge of the Mosaic law was lacking; second,
that the Mosaic law is not always to be accepted as the final statement. This may be seen
as a contradiction of 5:17-18:

Μὴ νομίσητε ὅτι ἢλθον καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφήτας· οὐκ ἢλθον καταλῦσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι· ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν, ἐως ἐν παρέλθῃ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ, ἰῶτα ἐν ἧ μία κεραίᾳ οὐ μὴ παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου, ἐως ἐν πάντα γένηται.

Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

However, if the Mosaic law was put in place for those who are unable to understand the teachings of Jesus and God, when all are able to accept the teaching, then the law will no longer be needed. This state can only exist once Jesus’s eschatological purpose has been fulfilled, at which time all people will be righteous, and therefore able to accept his lessons (i.e., “until all is accomplished”). Because of this, Matthew is able to have Jesus both uphold the law, and teach contradictorily to it; the law is needed for the pre-Kingdom world, Jesus has come to bring about the Kingdom, when he does so, the law will be superfluous, because righteousness for all people will come from God, rather than from the Law. Thirdly, and most importantly, the pericope at 19:3-12 provides an illustration of the way the text presents how knowledge to be held and accepted. The Pharisees are hardhearted (σκληροκαρδίαν) and therefore unable to make room (οὐ χωροῦσι) for Jesus’s teaching. The heart, rather than the brain, was the organ associated with knowledge in the ancient world.154 This is in contrast to our modern thinking, wherein the heart is the seat of emotion, and the brain is the seat of knowledge and intellect.

154 See 1 Corinthians 2:9: Ἄ φθαλμὸς οὐκ εἶδεν καὶ οἷς οὐκ ἤκουσεν καὶ ἐπὶ καρδίαν ἀνθρώπου οὐκ ἀνέβη (What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived.) Matthew makes nine relevant mentions of καρδία in their text that imply learning, understanding, or interpretation of knowledge. See Appendix IV.
Matthew 19:3-12 also illustrates how the author imagines knowledge is gained. For Matthew, knowledge is not a creative process; they do not imagine that people create the things they know, or that creative thought is possible. This is because all knowledge is revealed knowledge. I can know something you do not, but this is not due to my own thinking process, but rather because that knowledge has been revealed to me, and not to you. As well, knowledge is received in a linked chain; I learn from William Arnal, who learned from John Kloppenborg, and through this chain I am authorized in my knowledge not because of my own creative power, nor only through receiving knowledge from Dr. Arnal. My knowledge is authorized by Dr. Kloppenborg, because that is where the chain began. In this analogy Dr. Kloppenborg, like Moses, acts as the first link in my chain of revealed knowledge. I am convinced that Matthew refers to this concept of linked knowledge throughout their biography of Jesus, and that the first link in Matthew’s imagined chain – for the Israelite laws – is Moses. This chain is synonymous with biblical semikhah or smicha (טמיכה), as found in Numbers 27:19, and translated as ἐπιθήσεις τὰς χεῖράς in the Septuagint. In this verse, and the subsequent, Moses transfers some of his authority to Joshua, who will lead the Israelites in to Canaan in Moses’s place. This transfer, from Moses to Joshua, is the second link in the chain of knowledge and authority. The first is from YHWH to Moses, as can be seen throughout Exodus and Leviticus.\footnote{Moses’s first direct contact with divine knowledge is at Exodus 3:13-15, where God reveals his name, and is then granted the power to perform miracles (Exodus 4:17). The Mosaic chain of knowledge is most explicitly begun at Exodus 20, when the Ten Commandments are revealed in the Biblical chronology. Moses is given knowledge of the correct way to behave, and then in turn reveals this knowledge to the Israelites. Moses’s divine connection is also made explicit at Leviticus 1:1-2 “And He called to Moses, and YHWH spoke to him from the Tent of Meeting, saying: ‘Speak to the children of Israel. And you shall way to them...’” This opening formula from the Priestly source (Richard Elliott Friedman, The Bible with Sources Revealed: A New View into the Five Books of Moses (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2003), 191–238.), or a slight variant of it, is used thirty-one times in Leviticus to introduce a behavioural law to the people. The narratives are generally ended with “and Moses spoke to the children of Israel” following which the Israelites complete the action prescribed by God.}
smicha is laying on of hands by a person in authority. Conceptually, it transfers knowledge and authority, through physical contact, from teacher to student.

This concept, of linked knowledge leading back to the divine, is not solely biblical. In Plato’s Ion, Socrates discussed the nature of Ion’s ability to expound on Homer. Ion is a rhapsode and expositor of Homer, who has recently won first prize in a contest at Epidaurus, during the festival of Asclepius. In this dialogue Socrates explains the nature and source of Ion’s ability to exposit on Homer, particularly the nature of his inspiration. Socrates tells Ion that his ability does not come through artifice (τέχνη) but from a divine power (θεία δὲ δύναμις) and that this divine power works through a chain of inspiration. In the analogy, the divine power is a magnet (λίθῳ Μαγνῆτιν or Ἡρακλείαν) that attracts bits of iron, sometimes in a great chain, all parts of which rely on the stone for their collective power, and this is the way that inspiration from the Muses affects humans as well:

οὕτω δὲ καὶ Ἡ Μοῦσα ἐνθέους μὲν ποιεῖ αὐτή, διὰ δὲ τῶν ἐνθουσίων ὁμοθάντω ὡς ἡ Μοῦσα ἐνθεούσιον ὁμοθάνται.

In the same manner also the Muse herself inspires, and then by means of these inspired persons the inspiration spreads to others and holds them in a connected chain.

Plato sees this as the same inspiration that possesses Bacchic worshipers during their frenzy. For Plato, inspiration and ability are both linked through other persons, and given by the divine.

I wrote above that Moses is the intermediary link between YHWH and Joshua, and therefore all others in the chain of authority and knowledge, for the Israelite laws. While I


157 Plato, sec. 533e. My own translation.
do not believe that Matthew negates this authority in their account of Jesus’s life, or seeks
to disparage the authority of Moses, I am convinced that the text displays the disciples’
smicha as originating not in Moses, but in Jesus himself. Jesus is not authorized as a teacher
by a Mosaic smicha, but rather by direct connection with God. This explains both why
Jesus is consistently accused of acting outside the accepted authority structure, as the
Temple hierarchy and Pharisees outside of Jerusalem would expect any teacher to be linked
to the Mosaic chain, but also why Jesus does have authority for Matthew, and for
Matthew’s characters. It appears to me that Matthew, who is so interested in correct
teaching and authority, would expect Jesus’s authority to be given by God, and as he does
not receive divine authority through the Mosaic lineage, he must therefore receive it
directly from what the text presents as the original source of all knowledge: the divine.
Again, though, this does not negate Mosaic authority or law. As seen in the direction
regarding divorce, Matthew imagines Mosaic law as good enough for those who are not
able to receive the teachings of Jesus. As well, Matthew does not impugn Moses himself.
In 19:8 Jesus tells the Pharisees that Moses ἐπέτρεψεν ύμῖν ἀπολύσαι τὰς γυναῖκας ύμῶν.158
I am convinced here that Matthew is implying that Moses knew that this teaching was not
ideal, and that in the beginning divorce was not instituted by God, but rather that two people
once married should remain in that state, as Matthew himself appears to believe.159 Because
of this, we can surmise that Matthew sees the Mosaic chain as valid, currently, but that the

158 “Moses allowed you to release your women.” My own translation.
159 Matthew does slightly temper the Markan prohibition. Where Mark writes that divorce is never
acceptable, in verse nine Matthew adds a codicil: a woman may be divorced by her husband if she has been
sexually unfaithful to him. Matthew 19:9: λέγω δὲ ύμῖν ὅτι δὲ ἂν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ μὴ ἐπὶ πορνεία
cαι γαμήσῃ ἄλλην μοιχᾶται καὶ ἀπολελυμένην γαμήσῃς μοιχᾶται. (And I say to you, whoever divorces his
wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery. NRSV, Matthean codicil in italics.)
knowledge Jesus reveals, and the subsequent chain of authority he institutes, as the ideal. Once the kingdom has been established, only the teachings of Jesus will remain, and the only chain of authority will be that of God to Jesus, to his disciples, and so on.

**Teacher**

The final four verses of the ben Sira section I have been examining are, I believe, linked. Verse 8 opens with a description of the scribe’s teaching ability, as a revealer of instruction or culture through his teaching (αὐτὸς ἐκφανεῖ παιδείαν διδασκαλίας αὐτοῦ). From the second half of the verse, and the reference in verse 1, it appears that the scribe’s main topic of teaching is the Law (νόμῳ ὑψίστου, νόμῳ ... κυρίου). For Matthew, the Law is not a straightforward topic. Matthew’s Jesus does not intend to “abolish the law or the prophets” but rather he has “come to fulfill.” The concept of fulfillment of the law is itself not straightforward, though. Matthew’s Jesus fulfills the law, but also negates the need for the law, and teaches contrary to what Matthew presents as the accepted interpretations of the Law in much of the Sermon. This teaching is tempered, though, by chapter 23, in the woes. In this chapter Jesus gives authority to the scribes to teach the law, and instructs his hearers to follow their teaching. Matthew’s concern is not with the Teachings themselves, or with the law, but with what they see to be the faulty interpretations of the scribes and Pharisees. The ideal scribe, for Matthew, both teaches the law and interprets it in a way that Matthew presents as correct, revealing the true meaning in a way that is understood by the disciples, as is shown in Matthew’s explanations of the parables.

The final three verses of the passage from ben Sira discuss the legacy of the model scribe. His teaching and wisdom are such that his name will be remembered forever.

---

160 Matthew 5:18.
(τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ ᾗςται εἰς γενεὰς γενεών), and his understanding will continue to inform the wisdom of later generations. Like Jesus ben Sira himself, the wisdom contained in Matthew’s text has continued to inform thinkers in later generations. I am convinced that here again the meaning for Matthew should be understood as twofold. In their biography, by the act of writing it, they are preserving what they believe to be the teaching of Jesus. This applies whether one thinks that Matthew wrote from written sources, a combination of written sources and oral tradition, or a combination of written sources and their own creative thought; whatever Matthew’s sources, they believed that they were writing a text that would preserve the teaching and memory of Jesus, whether they believed that Jesus said those exact words at those exact times or not. However, the text does not only preserve the memory of Jesus, it also – and I am convinced that Matthew would have been conscious of this while writing – preserves the memory of Matthew. Matthew is here creating a two-fold memorial, for Jesus, and for themself, and both of them are the model scribe. Matthew imagines that he has a unique understanding of the, in turn, unique understanding that Jesus has. Both Matthew and Jesus teach effectively, Matthew through writing this biography and Jesus through Matthew’s characterization of him. Matthew’s character Jesus is ben Sira’s model scribe, which we can see though his wisdom, teaching, revelatory knowledge, use of parables and proverbs, and use of prayer. Matthew is ben Sira’s model scribe, and this is shown by their choice of teaching methods, their use of prophetic wisdom, their characterization of Jesus, and their likely auto-biographical description of the scribe discipled for the kingdom of heaven in 13:52. While we cannot know for sure, it does seem likely that Matthew was aware of Jesus ben Sira and their writings. Ben Sira was likely written sometime before the Maccabean Revolt in 168 BCE, and was present in Egypt, in
its Greek form, sometime around 132 BCE. From this, we can posit that the text was known to intellectual social networks in Egypt, and likely Alexandria. If this is correct, then we can further posit that Matthew would have been aware of the writings of ben Sira through their own social networks or authors, scribes, and exegetes. The characteristics that both authors valued in wise men and scribes are so far overlapping that there is likely some sort of connection between them, either directly or indirectly. It is also possible that the model or ideal scribe was a larger trope in Hellenistic Jewish writing, and ben Sira and Matthew both incorporated this trope in their writing, Matthew independent of ben Sira.

Qumran

Scribe characters and characteristics are also of great concern to the authors of the Qumran literature. The Qumranites and the Essenes practiced scribal activities, in the creation of the scrolls, and also in the preservation of them. Like the later Christians, the Qumranites appear to have valorized textual production and preservation. This is evidenced through their actions, but also through the scribal values shown in the writings themselves. The Qumranites present valued members of their community, and historical figures, as able scribes, who embody the characteristics of ben Sira’s model scribe and of Matthew’s ideal scribe. The described leaders of the Qumran community were able teachers, who were thought to have access to special knowledge, knowledge that was most likely revealed to


162 In this description, “community” refers to a group of persons (1) living primarily in the same geographical area, in this case at Qumran in the Judean desert, and / or (2) persons who ascribed membership to the values described in the Qumran literature, and / or (3) persons who thought of the “Teacher of Righteousness” as their spiritual, religious, and / or cultural leader. As with all other uses of the term community in this project, members should be imagined as intersectional, holding varying other memberships and community or kinship relationships at the same time as they are part of the Qumran community. Adherence to the “Rules” or acknowledgement that one should adhere to the same, is enough to group a person with this “community.”
them by a divine figure, in this case the god of the Hebrew Bible. The leader of the community is not referred to as a šōfer in the Qumran literature, but rather as the Teacher of Righteousness, or just Teacher. The Teacher has received knowledge on the correct way to interpret the prophets, and his teachings are inspired by God.\textsuperscript{163} As the interpreter of the Law and the prophets, the Teacher, like the model scribe, is a professional understander, “whose role is to interpret and teach mysteries to the wise.”\textsuperscript{164}

As stated above, the writings found at Qumran also describe important historical or literary figures as scribes, such as Enoch and David. This descriptor is found most often in apocalyptic literature, and the most-used descriptor for Enoch in the early literature is scribe. However, later literature associates Enoch with the “Son of Man” and the “Elect One.”\textsuperscript{165} These terms will, of course, be familiar from Matthew. Matthew does not directly refer to Jesus as a scribe, but gives him all of the characteristics of an ideal scribe. That Matthew does not name Jesus as a scribe does pose a small problem for my theory, but I am convinced that Matthew does not directly refer to Jesus as a scribe, because they have chosen scribes as foils for Jesus throughout the biography. Jesus is also not shown actually writing in this narrative. An adjustment of categories can explain this. If we think of two categories of scribes, with different skill sets, we can gain a clearer picture of scribal activities in the ancient world. These categories are focused on the skills of reading, interpretation, writing, and oratory. For those of us in the modern world, the skills of reading and writing are parallel. It is possible, however, that reading and writing were not parallel skills in the ancient world, but that rather writing was a separate task, and the scribe

\textsuperscript{163} Orton, \textit{The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Ideal}, 124.

\textsuperscript{164} Orton, 125.

\textsuperscript{165} Orton, 78.
that Matthew imagines Jesus to be is skilled at interpretation and oratory, and presumably reading.\textsuperscript{166} The physical act of writing was one that required specific training, and that training was not the same as was required for composing.\textsuperscript{167}

Many, if not most, ancient authors wrote in dictation, rather than by their own hands. In a letter to Baebius Macer, Pliny the Younger describes his uncle Pliny the Elder’s writing process. Here we are told that Pliny the Elder wrote and read very little on his own, but rather employed both a scribe to take dictation, and a lector to read to him. As he was read to, he would note sections to be used in his own compositions, and the lector would annotate their reading copy. Pliny would then, using the annotations, dictate to a notarius, or, stenographer.\textsuperscript{168} Parts of this model are appealing for both the composition of the text itself, and for Matthew’s imagining of scribal function, though not all. Matthew’s characterization of Jesus as a scribe who interprets divine wisdom does not require Jesus to participate, himself, in the acts of either reading or writing; they also do not portray Jesus using a lector. This is, of course, not something that requires an either/or conclusion:

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{166}] If the categories of scribal skills were separated into reading and interpretation, and writing, then this is analogous to the categories present in education of scribes and statemen throughout medieval Europe. For example, John Guy writes, in his biography of Thomas Becket, that during the period Becket was receiving his education the act of writing was considered a separate skill, and while Becket would have been taught to read extensively, and how to interpret his readings, from a young age, it is possible he would not have been taught to write till much later in his education, as this skill was not considered necessary for most statemen and scribes of his category. John Guy, \textit{Thomas Becket: Warrior, Priest, Rebel} (New York: Random House, 2012), 80.

\item[\textsuperscript{167}] The separation between the act of writing and “literariness” is noted by Botha, who writes that the physical act of writing was “labour.” Pieter JJ Botha, “‘I Am Writing This with My Own Hand...’: Authorship in New Testament Times,” \textit{Verbum et Ecclesia} 30, no. 2 (2009): 116. In antiquity writing on scrolls was done on the scribes knee, or on a taut section of clothing, often the loincloth, while taking notes on a tablet could be done while standing. This does not mean that composers of literature and other literate materials were not also writers, but that this was not necessarily so. A composer could be a prolific reader and dictator, and have only minimal writing skill. What is most important to note here is that Matthew does not need to show Jesus in the acts of either reading or writing, as lacking these skills does not negate his ability to interpret and compose.

\end{itemize}
perhaps Matthew is imagining that Jesus heard the Hebrew writings in a synagogue, and was able to remember and interpret them. Certainly, they have Jesus quote from the writings from memory only, and never seem to picture him carrying a scroll to read from when a scriptural justification is needed. Rather, it seems that the ability to recall multiple appropriate passages from the Hebrew writings is a skill that Matthew requires from their Jesus, and from their other scribe-characters, but Matthew never tells their reader how they think these passages were originally learned. As for the composition of the biography itself, and how Matthew imagines their own scribal functions, Pliny’s model as described by Botha is a possibility. Matthew could have employed a lector to read their sources to them, and a notarius to dictate to. If Matthew does think that the ideal scribe, who they likely embody themself, has scriptural quotations memorized, and Matthew has heard and annotated their Markan and Q sources, then it is possible they could have dictated their biography. We should not imagine that the entire narrative came out immaculate and complete, though. The process of composition would be comprised of multiple layers of edits, as would any other written text, and dictation would play a large role in each version of the text. The biography could have been produced in a similar manner to that used by Pliny the Elder, as described by his nephew, but we simply lack enough evidence to say this with any certainty. What we can say with certainty, though, is that reading, writing, authoring, and composing in the ancient world should not be thought of as being one and the same process as it is now. Reading may have been an oral, and aural, experience, and writing likely was as well. Because of this, the fact that Matthew does not portray Jesus in the acts of either reading or writing does not negate Jesus as a scribe; these were not the functions of the type of scribe Matthew imagines Jesus to be. For Matthew, Jesus’s scribal
functions are knowledge holding and wisdom interpretation, two actions Jesus participates in throughout Matthew’s account of their life.

That composers were not always writers is evidenced from other New Testament literature, namely the letters of Paul. Paul tells us himself that he did not write much of at least one of his letters, by indicating that the one part he did write was identifiable as different. Galatians 6:11 reads:

"Ἰδεῖτε πηλίκοις ὑμῖν γράμμασιν ἔγραψα τῇ ἐμῇ χειρί.

Behold what great letters I write to you by my own hand.

Γράμμασιν refers to the actual letters formed by Paul’s pen, and identifies these as different from the other formed letters in his composition. From this, we can surmise that Paul most often composed his letters and did not actually write them. Paul was evidently trained in, and comfortable in, interpretation and dictation, but was not a proficient writer. This does not appear to have hampered his ability to compose letters, speak to his associations, or “convert” people. As to Paul’s skills at oratory, it appears that there were differing opinions, in Corinth at least. Paul tells us that he is accused of having a weak “bodily presence” and of speaking contemptibly. However, Paul refutes this in 2 Corinthians 10:11, saying that whatever force is present in his letters will also be present in their person when he does travel to Corinth. From this, I am convinced that we can think of Paul as belonging

---

169 Paul’s “conversion” of his followers was not a psychological / faith-based emotional movement from “Greco-Roman religion” to Christ-following, but was instead a movement of loyalties. The language of patron / benefactor is heavily present in Paul’s letters, which should be thought of as exemplary of their historical context. Conversion in the ancient world was not an “essentially internalized and introspective experience,” but was rather a move from one benefactor to another. We should think of Paul’s “converts” in the same way, as persons whose divine patron is now God, through Jesus. It is unlikely that a person’s divine patron was monolithic, but instead was likely intersectional, as were the remainder of their identity-markers. Zeba A. Crook, *Reconceptualising Conversion: Patronage, Loyalty, and Conversion in the Religions of the Ancient Mediterranean* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2004), 199.
to that category of scribes that Matthew imagines Jesus to belong to: composers, interpreters, and orators who spoke effectively and convincingly. We cannot know whether Matthew themself was a skilled orator, but we can assume that they present themself to be a skilled interpreter, as shown in their interpretations of the prophecies and the parables. If we imagine of Matthew dictating their narrative, rather than putting pen to papyrus, then we can further locate Matthew and Jesus in the same category of scribe.

Matthew does, however, refer to Jesus as the “Son of Man” throughout the biography, likely linking Jesus with earlier apocalyptic figures their readers may have been familiar with, who were thought of as scribes. One historical figure the Qumranites referred to as a scribe is David. 11QPs reads as follows: “David son of Jesse was a wise man and a light like the light of the sun, and a scribe, and understanding and perfect in all his ways before God and men.” The associations between Jesus and David for Matthew are clear. In their biography identifying Jesus as the Davidic king is essential, as evidenced by the addition of the David genealogy in 1:1-17. Matthew opens their narrative by identifying Jesus as the “son of David.” In the historical imagination David was a composer

---

170 Matthew refers to Jesus as the Son of Man at 8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 11:19; 12:8, 32, 40; 13:37, 41; 16:13, 27, 28; 17:9, 22; 19:28; 20:18, 28; 24:27, 30, 37; 25:31; 26:2, 24, 64. The term is used by Matthew only in apocalyptic contexts, and the majority of Matthew’s uses are from their Mark source, though four are from Q, and seven are independent uses. For source details see Appendix V.

171 Other literary figures called scribes or bearing scribal characteristics such as interpretation of the prophets, teaching in parables, and using proverbs, are Daniel, Ezra, and Baruch. See Orton, *The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Ideal*, chap. 4.

172 Orton, 122.

173 A careful reader may note that while Matthew tells us that there are fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the Exile, and fourteen from the Exile to Jesus, this is not what Matthew has actually written in their genealogy. The second grouping is of fourteen generations, but the first and third are each comprised of only thirteen. From this we could construe that Matthew was bad at arithmetic, which may or may not have been the reality, but we could also assume that it simply was not important for Matthew, or for their readers that their math was correct. He tells their reader that there are fourteen generations, and so, for them, there are. This is not an arbitrary number. The numerological value of “David” is fourteen, which is why Matthew presents fourteen generations; he is, in a sense, repeating the number again and again, to hammer home Jesus’s Davidic ancestry and Davidic kingship.
of panegyrics to God, which we can see through the attribution of many of the Psalms to David. However, it is significant that other great historical figures were described in literature of the period as scribes. Being a scribe was, I am convinced, a highly valued role within apocalyptic and textual communities, both of which Matthew and the Qumranites appear to have been. Apocalypses were a textual genre, and wisdom and teaching ability are traits often associated with apocalyptic prophets and teachers, such as Enoch. I am not suggesting that Matthew was aware of the writings of the Qumran community, though it is possible that Matthew was alive during the period Qumran was used by the sect that produced the scrolls. Like ben Sira and the model scribe discussed above, the examples from apocalyptic literature and the Qumran scrolls are presented only as analogies to Matthew’s text. These authors appear to have valued the same or similar characteristics in their teachers and leaders, primarily understanding, but also the ability to communicate that understanding through effective teaching. Matthew, Matthew’s Jesus, ben Sira, and the Teacher of Righteous all display the ability to understand and correctly interpret the laws and the prophets, and to communicate that understanding to their students and disciples.

Conclusions

Matthew’s use of scribes as foils for Jesus is present throughout their account of Jesus’s life, and is a theme that is easy to identify. What is less clear is how Matthew imagines their character of Jesus. On the surface, Matthew’s Jesus is the son of God; he is the Son of Man, as described by Jewish apocalyptic literature; he is the messiah, the anointed one of God, as prophesied in the ancient writings; he is the bringer of the end of the current age, in the Kingdom of the Heavens; and he is the ancestral son of King David, through his chthonic father, Joseph. All of these characteristics are present in the biography
that Matthew wrote, and all have been previously identified by academics and theologians, multiple times over the last two thousand years. What is less clear is how Matthew imagines Jesus to be as a person. Jesus is so often thought of as an unobtainable goal, a perfect being, something ephemeral and uncategorizable, that little attention is paid to his personhood, aside from discussions of his human versus divine natures. I am not here attempting to contribute to this discourse, or to make some statement about the actual nature of the historical Jesus; I believe this to be neither historically accessible, nor illuminating in a discussion of the biographies of Jesus. I am interested in who Matthew’s Jesus is, not who the actual Jesus was. This is because I am firmly convinced that by identifying who Matthew’s Jesus is, we can glimpse who Matthew himself was: Matthew’s values and goals are reflected in their Jesus-character.

Matthew’s Jesus is, of course, multi-faceted and intersectional. He is a Hellenised Galilean, a Temple-focussed Jew, a revolutionary preacher, and a healer-exorcist. But woven through all of these identities is Jesus’s capacity for, and interest in, knowledge-holding, knowledge-interpreting, and knowledge-disseminating. In Matthew’s second scene featuring the adult Jesus, Jesus displays his capacity for knowledge and right interpretation in his encounter with the devil. This carries through the text, until Jesus’s last scene before his death, where he quotes from Psalm 22. In the temptation Jesus displays his superior knowledge-interpretation ability, and this theme is continued in his engagements with temple officials, scribes and Pharisees. In their account of Jesus’s life, Matthew consistently presents Jesus as a capable teacher, superior to his foils in his knowledge of the writings, and in his ability to interpret them.
Matthew’s presentation of Jesus as a teacher has, of course, been addressed by other scholars, but in the preceding pages I have taken this further, to identify Jesus as Matthew’s ideal scribe. Matthew’s scribes are, first and foremost, holders, interpreters, and disseminators of knowledge, and this is the role in which Matthew presents Jesus. Underlying all of this is the presentation, well-supported above, of Matthew as an author. Matthew wrote their life of Jesus as a creative work of ancient fiction using historical characters and (possibly) historical events, and the sources available to him in Mark, Q, and the Septuagint, and adding in their own material, that they developed within their social framework of Greco-Roman and Hellenistic culture. Matthew’s social networks of other writers and scribes would also have greatly influenced their work, as it was likely presented to them in multiple stages and discussed throughout its development.

The emphasis Matthew places on Jesus’s prophetic fulfillment also acts as a signpost for their interest in knowledge and interpretation. Matthew repeatedly corrects and adds to the prophecies they find in their Mark source, creating a verbatim prophetic fulfillment in their Jesus-character, where Mark appears to have been satisfied with the fulfillment of the gist of the prophecy. As well, Matthew’s introduction of the Magi and their role in Jesus’s infancy displays Matthew’s interest in divine wisdom, as does their presentation of Jesus’s smicha as direct from God, and their association of Jesus with Lady Wisdom. For Matthew, all knowledge and skills come from the divine, and as Jesus communes with Moses and Elijah during the Transfiguration scene, and as the gifts from the Magi are presented to him, Jesus takes on the roles and abilities of receiver, interpreter, and disseminator of divine knowledge.
As written above, for Matthew scribes act as foils for Jesus. In their presentation of differentiated scribes, Matthew creates scenes for Jesus to display his superior abilities, but for Matthew, not all scribes are created equal. Matthew thinks of multiple categories of scribes: those associated with Pharisees; those associated with the Temple hierarchy; and independent scribes of little ability, who are still unable to receive and correctly interpret either the laws of Moses, or the teachings of Jesus. All three of the, again intersectional, groups are used to show that Jesus is superior to them, but for Matthew, not all scribes should be thought of this way. Their use of scribe in 13:52 (the scribe discipled for the Kingdom of the Heavens) shows that Matthew wants their readers to think of Jesus’s disciples as scribes, and further, of Jesus as a scribe himself. The scribe in 13:52 should be thought of as the goal, the scribe for all other scribes to aspire to be. Matthew’s ideal scribe is, in many ways, identical to ben Sira’s model scribe, and this resemblance may be due to Matthew’s direct knowledge of ben Sira’s writing, or to cultural norms during the late Second Temple and early Rabbinic periods, or both.

It is likely that Matthew also wants their readers to imagine Matthew themself as the ideal scribe. Through their reinvention of the story of Jesus Matthew displays their own ability to retain, interpret, and disseminate knowledge, and should therefore be thought of as having the same abilities as Jesus. These are not the modern categories of writer, author, or intellectual, as the skills required for these roles in the ancient world would, of course, be different from our modern roles. For example, it is possible that Matthew themself did not have the technical skill to put pen to papyrus, but rather composed their biography by dictating to another scribe, who was trained for this skill, and Matthew has presented Jesus in this way. In this biography, Jesus does not read or write, but holds knowledge, and with
right interpretation, teaches it to his hearers. It is possible that for Matthew, the ideal scribe was not one who *wrote*, but one who *composed*, and so their Jesus does not need to be shown with pen and papyrus or tablet to be seen as a scribe, just as Matthew themself. In the ancient world, scribes are not monolithic; they perform varied tasks depending on their training and the requirements of their employment, and in their multiple presentations of differentiated scribes Matthew illustrates this idea. However, the ideal scribe for Matthew is Jesus, a receiver of divine knowledge, who “has room” for the teaching and interprets it correctly, and then goes out into the world to give this teaching to others. Matthew, like so many people who write about Jesus, has created him in Matthew’s own image.
Bibliography


## Appendices

### Appendix I

Matthean references to “the writings” and prophetic quotes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1:23</td>
<td>FF1</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Isa 7:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:6</td>
<td>FF2</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Mic 5:2, 2 Sam 5:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:15</td>
<td>FF3</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Hos 11:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:18</td>
<td>FF4</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Jer 31:15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2:23</td>
<td>FF5</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3:03</td>
<td>FF6</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Isa 40:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:4</td>
<td>Q / Matthew</td>
<td>Deut 8:3</td>
<td>Y Matthew adds to the quote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:6</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Ps 91:11-12</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:7</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Deut 6:16</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:10</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Deut 6:13</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4:15-16</td>
<td>FF7</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Isa 9:1-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8:17</td>
<td>FF8</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Isa 53:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:10</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>Mal 3:1</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:17</td>
<td>FF9</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Isa 42:1-4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:14-15</td>
<td>FF10</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Isa 6:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:35</td>
<td>FF11</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Ps 78:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:5</td>
<td>FF12</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Isa 62:11, Zech 9.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:13</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Isa 56:7, Jer 7:11, Zech 14:21</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:42</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Ps 111:22-23</td>
<td>Y τας γραφας</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26:24</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Son of Man</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26:31</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Zech 13:17</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26:56</td>
<td>FF13</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Y αι γραφαι</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27:9</td>
<td>FF14</td>
<td>Matthew</td>
<td>Zech 11:13 (loosely)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27:46</td>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>Ps 22:11</td>
<td>N Matthew changes quote from Aramaic to Hebrew</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthean addition of γραμματεύς – Q Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23:25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23:29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23:34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthean omission of γραμματεύς – Markan Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22:34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22:42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26:3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26:47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix IV

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Matthean uses of γραμματεύς</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix V

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Use of υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου (son of man) in Matthew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Q, verse and Son of Man</td>
<td>Matthew 8:20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark, verse and Son of Man</td>
<td>9:6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent, verse and Son of Man</td>
<td>10:23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q, verse and Son of Man</td>
<td>11:19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark, verse and Son of Man</td>
<td>12:8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q, verse and Son of Man (pericope is combination of Mark and Q)</td>
<td>12:32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q, verse and Son of Man</td>
<td>12:40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent pericope – parable explanation</td>
<td>13:37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent pericope – parable explanation</td>
<td>13:41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent Son of Man, Markan pericope</td>
<td>16:13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son of Man is Markan, verse is independent</td>
<td>16:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son of Man is independent, verse is Markan</td>
<td>16:28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark, verse and Son of Man</td>
<td>17:9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark, verse and Son of Man</td>
<td>17:22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son of Man is independent, pericope is Markan</td>
<td>19:28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark, verse and Son of Man</td>
<td>20:18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark, verse and Son of Man</td>
<td>20:28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q, verse and Son of Man</td>
<td>24:27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark, verse and Son of Man</td>
<td>24:30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q, verse and Son of Man</td>
<td>24:37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent pericope</td>
<td>25:31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Son of Man is independent, verse is Markan</td>
<td>26:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark, verse and Son of Man</td>
<td>26:24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark, verse and Son of Man</td>
<td>26:64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Appendix VI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Use of καρδία (heart) in Matthew</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independent (beatitude)</td>
<td>Matthew 5:8 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent (teaching on adultery)</td>
<td>5:28 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q (sermon on the mount)</td>
<td>6:21 No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verse</td>
<td>Answer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:4</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:29</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:34</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:40</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:15</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:8</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:18</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:19</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18:35</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22:37</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24:48</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Appendix VII**

Use of συνίημι (understand) and related terms in Matthew

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Matthew</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13:13</td>
<td>Mark (purpose of parables)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:14</td>
<td>Independent (prophetic quotation) (pericope is Markan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:15</td>
<td>Independent (prophetic quotation) (pericope is Markan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:19</td>
<td>Independent (pericope is Markan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:23</td>
<td>Independent (pericope is Markan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:51</td>
<td>Independent (Matthean parable)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:10</td>
<td>Mark (teaching on purity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15:16</td>
<td>ἀσύνετοι</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:12</td>
<td>Independent (pericope is Markan)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17:13</td>
<td>Independent (pericope is Markan)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>