

IDEOLOGY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS IN MATT 5.20:

A Study in Identity Politics from the Sermon on the Mount

By

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## DECLARATION

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## ABSTRACT

The study focuses on the description of the function of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel. Not only does the Sermon on the Mount (SM) depict an ethical, eschatological and identity formation function, as it is popularly conceived by scholars, but it is also reflective of reconstruction, legitimation and the negotiation of the cultural identity of the community of Matthew in the city of Antioch, in Syria in the late first century CE. Through a Socio Rhetorical Interpretation (SRI), the analysis of the SM has been found to be reflective of the negotiating of identity politics of the community of Matthew in the aftermath of the destruction of the second Jerusalem temple, following the 66-73 Jewish revolt against Rome. Thus, the implied author of the SM employs the rhetorical function of the SM to consolidate a Christian community in the aftermath of the destruction of the second Jerusalem temple by contesting the Roman empire, borrowing from Israel's religious heritage and, accommodating the Jesus Movement. Consequently, pursuant to identity politics guided by the requirements of righteousness in Matt 5.20, the SM provides a basis for the reconstruction of a superordinate cultural identity for the community of Matthew that embraced both Judeans and the Gentiles. The reconstruction of a superordinate identity for the Matthean community enabled the implied author of the SM to effectively address intra-ethnic conflict that had characterized the Jesus Movement about 35 years before the emergence of the community of Matthew. Thus, the study has established that a creation of a superordinate identity provides the impetus for addressing intra-ethnic conflict situations because it embraces a dual identity, that is, a common identity to which other aspects of identity are subordinated.







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## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my immediate family; my wife, Evelyne A. Manjewa for her unrelenting moral and emotional support, and to my three children-Hoglah, Mwakanyi and Mwanyama, for putting up with my absence during the process of research and writing for this dissertation.

## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AcT.	<i>Acta Theologica</i>
AJS.	<i>American Journal of Sociology</i>
ARS	<i>Annual Review of Sociology</i>
BDAG	Danker, Frederick William. 2000. <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i>
BO	<i>Bible Odyssey</i>
BW	<i>Biblical World</i>
CA.	<i>Journal of Current Anthropology</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
DJG	<i>Dictionary of Jesus and the</i>
DLNTD	<i>Dictionary of the Later New Testament &amp; Its Development,</i>
DNTB	<i>Dictionary of New Testament Background</i>
DS	<i>Die Skriflig</i>
DST	<i>Dictionary of Socio rhetorical Terms</i>
E.Sh	<i>Journal of E-Sharp</i>
ECNT	<i>Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament</i>
ECR	<i>Early Christian Writings: The Works of Philo.</i>
EDNT	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
EJW	<i>Early Jewish Writings</i>

GTh *Gospel of Thomas*

FemRev. *Feminist Review*

HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HTS	<i>Hervormde Teologiese Studies</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
JAC	<i>Journal of Advanced Composition</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JEC	<i>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</i>
JECH	<i>Journal of Early Christian History</i>
JES	<i>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies: Normative Judaism</i>
JNS	<i>Journal of the New Testament Studies</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
Lex	<i>LEXUNDRIA: A Digital Library of Classical</i>
LRLJ	<i>La Raza Law Journal</i>
Neot	<i>Journal of Neotestamentica</i>
NeoT	<i>Journal of Neotestamentica</i>
NIDNTE	<i>New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
NIGC	<i>New International Greek Testament Commentary</i>
NovTest	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
RevExp	<i>Review and Expository</i>
Scrp	<i>The Journal of Scriptura</i>

em	<i>Journal of Semeia</i>
SJ	<i>Journal for Social Justice</i>
SLR	<i>Stanford Law Review</i>
SM	<i>Sermon on the Mount</i>
ThStK	<i>Theologische Studien und Kritiken</i>
TIP	<i>Journal of Theory Into Practice</i>
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift Für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>



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## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to explain Matthew's application of his concept of righteousness and to elaborate on the significance of the Sermon on the Mount (SM) as an ideology for negotiating his community's identity politics. The goal of Matthew's ideology is to reconstruct, legitimate and negotiate the cultural identity of his community in the Roman Empire. This in turn demonstrates the identity politics in the Sermon on the Mount. Matthew's conception of identity is primarily occasioned by the relations of the Matthean community with the Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism and the Jesus Movement (Early Christian communities) in the Syrian city of Antioch in the late first century CE.

### 1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Since late twentieth century CE one controversial issue in the discourse on the Sermon on the Mount (SM), has been the significance of its rhetorical function in Matthew's Gospel. The popular view proposed by New Testament scholars is that the Sermon functions either eschatologically or ethically. The proponents of the eschatological interpretation have proposed that the Sermon on the Mount outlines promises of eschatological blessings that characterize the faithful. These faithful are viewed in a context of joy in the midst of suffering and persecution, as part of a pledge of abundant reward in the future. This suffering and persecution is further seen as a declaration of the future transformation of present dismal circumstances (Allison 1987, 429-430; Carter 2000, 130; Talbert 2004, 54).

The proponents of the ethical interpretation contend that the Beatitudes outline an interim mode of behaviors, which lead to particular rewards for being Torah compliant (Riches, J. K.

2000, 189; Welch 2015, 346). Besides the ethical and eschatological function, recent research by some scholars has shown that the Sermon on the Mount describes the identity of the Matthean community (Viljoen, F. 2013, 1, 10; Du Toit 2016, 79). While the eschatological, ethical and identity formation perspectives of the Sermon on the Mount (SM) are significant in explaining Matthew's special focus on Jesus in the SM, these scholars fail to see the author's appeal to an ideological perspective of righteousness in the SM, which prompts Matthew's reconstruction, legitimation and negotiation of the community's identity in the Roman Empire, as I will further briefly explain in the light of my interest for this study.

## 2. AIMS AND MOTIVATIONS

My aim in the thesis is primarily to investigate the literary significance of righteousness in the SM and secondarily, to find out how Matthew's use of the concept of righteousness in the social context of the Matthean community functioned as an ideology for reconstruction, legitimation and negotiation of the identity politics of the Matthean community in the light of cultural identity formation in the Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism, and the Jesus Movement (Early Christian communities) in the late first century CE.

My interest in venturing into this study of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5-7) has been motivated by two observations: On the one hand, the usage of the noun δικαιοσύνη (*righteousness*) in Matt 5.20. The noun was used five times in the SM alone (5.6, 10, 20; 6.1, 33), that is, the author of the Gospel repeatedly uses the term in relation to "hunger and thirst" (5.6), "persecution" (5.10), "the Pharisees and scribes" (5.20), "prayer" (6.1), and entering "the kingdom of heaven" (6.33). On the other hand, the author of the Gospel of Matthew seems to use

δικαιοσύνη (*righteousness*) as a reference by which he demands from his audience a level of righteousness that exceedingly surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 5.20) as a prerequisite for entrance into the kingdom of heaven. From this brief observation, I raise the following questions for this study: What is the significance of the rhetorical function of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel? What is the significance of the concept of righteousness in the SM? These questions cannot be studied in isolation; rather they necessitate the exploration of Matthean scholarship regarding the composition of the audience of the Gospel of Matthew. This will lead to the sort of challenges which prompted Matthew to compose not only his Gospel, but also to emphasize the special semantic function of righteousness in the SM. But before turning to the scholarship on this, I will briefly clarify the main concerns that I will address in this thesis.

Throughout the SM, the author of Matthew's Gospel applies motifs of contrast to deliver his subject. For instance, a call for the audience to embrace a "peaceful" attitude (Matt 5.9) and accept "suffering" (Matt 5.11-12) suggests antagonistic relations between Matthew's audience and another group. Similarly, the author's demand for a δικαιοσύνη in 5.20, qualified by the verb aorist subjunctive *περισσεύω*, translated as "surpasses (NIV, NASB) or "exceeds" (ESV, ERV) in effect reveals the author's expectation of his audience to embrace righteous attitudes and behaviors that either contrast with or transcend the attitudes and behaviors embraced by another group, which is metaphorically described as "γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων" (scribes/clerks/writers and Pharisees). This group is also characterized as οἱ ὑποκριταὶ (the hypocrites) in Matthew's Gospel (5.20; 6.2; 23.13-29). This motif of contrast reveals the mindset of the author in favor of his audience, but against members of a certain group. It also reveals Matthew's demand of

attitudes and behaviors that mark the identity of his audience in contrast to another group. Besides revealing these two issues, the motif of contrast seems to unearth some antagonistic relations between the audience of Matthew and the other group. If we understand this other group to be a reference which Matthew relates his community to and ideology to be “the particular ways in which our speech and action in their social and cultural location, relate to and interconnect with resources, structures and institutions of power” (Terry, E. 1983, 15; Robbins, V. K. 1996b, 36; Wanamaker, C. A. 2003b, 196), then we can say that the SM portrays Matthew’s ideology. This is because the motif of contrast, mentioned above, probably reveals Matthew’s attempt to use his text to negotiate Rome’s socio-economic and political power relations, mediated by provincial elites, with the local communities.

Guided by the issues briefly mentioned above, this thesis will address the problem of the rhetorical function of the SM. This requires an approach to the solution in two ways: First, a method of interpretation that allows for the critical analysis of the literary significance of the text of the SM must be devised. An interpretative approach that investigates the semantic functions of the SM in terms of its literary structure and content that provides the advantage for critically examining the function of specific words, phrases and passages that collectively reveal the textual meaning of the SM. Second, in view of advancing the current scholarly understanding of the rhetorical function of the SM concerning the identity of the Matthean community, the problem requires a model of interpretation that will help decipher the dynamics of group relations in the SM. Chapter 1 briefly surveys the current trends in New Testament scholarship regarding the rhetorical function of the SM. This allows revision of the problem under investigation in this thesis, which is guided by the following question: What is the significance of the Sermon on the

Mount in Matthew's Gospel narrative in addressing the relations between the Matthean community and the Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism, and the Jesus Movement?

Thus, to address the problem of this thesis I shall use socio rhetorical interpretation as a theoretical frame work with the aim to address the literary and ideological functions of the SM in light of the text, the author and the Matthean community (the audience) as a basis for elaborating the relationship between Matthew's community with the Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism, and the Jesus Movement.

### 3 THESIS' ARGUMENT AND OUTLINE

In view of the question raised above, in this thesis I argue that Matthew composed the Sermon on the Mount to provide a set of norms, beliefs and values which aided in reconstructing, legitimating and negotiating the Christian identity of his community in relation to the Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism, and the Jesus Movement in the late first century CE. To this end, Matthew applies the concept of righteousness to prompt the importance of the SM as an ideology for negotiating the identity politics of the Matthean community in the Empire. It is noteworthy that, on one hand, the late first century Roman socio-economic and political strategies of assimilation with the local communities, mediated by the elites, probably raised concerns about the survival of monotheistic beliefs among the Diaspora Judaeans and members of the Jesus Movement. Thus, individual members of the Jesus Movement such as Paul, Peter, James and John were provoked to write specific letters to consolidate their communities. On the other hand, although the common heritage shared by the Matthean community, Diaspora Judaism, and Jesus

Movement had probably created the feeling of community, in the post-70 CE socio-economic and political situation, the community of Matthew as part of the Jesus Movement was being forced to choose between a Jewish identity and their identity as followers of Jesus of Nazareth, who they believed to be the Messiah. Thus, Matthew probably decided to compose the Sermon on the Mount to provide a set of norms, beliefs and values for reconstructing, legitimating and negotiating the Christian identity of his community suitable for their social setting in the late first century CE.

The research problem stated above is compounded by Biblical scholars' preference for traditional Biblical criticism when interpreting the SM. As the next chapter will demonstrate, in this thesis I will employ the theories of Socio Rhetorical Interpretation (SRI) and Social Identity Political Theory (SIPT) as my analytical and interpretative tools for critically reading the SM, in order to demonstrate that Matthew applied his concept of righteousness in the SM as an ideology to reconstruct, legitimate and negotiate the cultural identity of his community in Syrian Antioch in the late first century CE. The preference for SRI and SIPT over traditional Biblical criticism is based on the understanding that neither traditional Biblical methods nor social science approaches by themselves are adequate for an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the group dynamics present in the SM. SRI in particular is intended to be inclusive of a range of interpretive approaches.

Thus, the argument stated above is further supported by the following five premises that also outline the chapters of this thesis. In chapter 1, a brief literature survey on the current studies regarding the rhetorical significance of the SM show that a preference for traditional Biblical

criticism, though effective in elaborating the semantic and philological significance of the SM, lacks the capacity to explain the cultural identity and group dynamics of the Matthean community evident in the text of the SM. Chapter 2 proposes that although Robbins' SRI has the capacity for effectively analyzing the SM to explain its semantic significance for this study, Robbins' SRI has to be supplemented with additional theories of social identity. Chapter 3 argues that the composition of Matthew's Gospel was shaped by cultural identity formations in the Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism and the Jesus Movement. Chapter 4 demonstrates that an SRI reading of the SM shows that Matthew's concept of righteousness provides the hermeneutical key for explaining the semantic significance of the beatitudes, Jesus' sayings on the Law, and the Lord's Prayer. In chapters 5 to 7, I argue that the Beatitudes (5.3-12), Jesus' sayings on the Law (5.17-20) and the Lord's Prayer (6.9-13) respectively present three modes of identity politics; an embattled and contestive-accommodation, humanistic and contestive-accommodation, and a social evangelistic and contestive-accommodation. These modes of identity politics outline the beliefs, values, norms, and prototypes which help elaborate on how Matthew negotiates the identity politics of his community in the context of cultural identity formation in the Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism and the Jesus Movement. Continuing with this approach, chapter 8 is the conclusion of the thesis which summarizes the research findings and suggests possibilities for future Biblical scholarship.

## CHAPTER 1

### TRENDS IN NEW TESTAMENT SCHOLARSHIP

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to briefly survey some literature regarding the function of Matthew's concept of righteousness in the SM, in order to locate a scholarly gap to be addressed by this thesis. The question guiding this chapter is: how do New Testament scholars describe the function of Matthew's concept of righteousness in the SM? This question entails the observations of the interpretive approaches applied to studies on the Gospel of Matthew and the resultant description of Matthew's concept of righteousness. In this chapter, I intend to engage scholars of Matthew in order to propose the argument that New Testament scholarship from the mid-twentieth and early twenty-first century CE indicates a gradual shift in the approach to the study the Gospel of Matthew from traditional Biblical criticism to the social sciences; the latter in addition to or without Biblical criticism. This shift has correspondingly resulted in a spectrum of descriptions of Matthew's concept of righteousness, ranging from a Jewish concept to a Christian one. To this end, following is a survey of the research works of Przybylski (1980), Overman (1990), Riches (2000), Forster (2004), Talbert (2004) and Du Toit (2016). These five scholars have been selected for this survey because their research falls within the period between the late twentieth and early twenty first century CE. Their work helps to illustrate the gradual shift in the approach to the study of the Gospel of Matthew from traditional Biblical criticism to the social sciences.

## 1. 2 A BRIEF SURVEY OF THE CURRENT TRENDS IN NEW TESTAMENT SCHOLARSHIP REGARDING MATTHEW'S CONCEPT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

In his monograph, *Righteousness in Matthew and his Thought in Society*, Przybylski employs historical and redaction criticism to study the concept of righteousness in Matthew's Gospel narrative. Przybylski accomplishes this task by first discussing the historical background of Matthew's Gospel in the context of the Old Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Tannaitic literature. After this background study, Przybylski applies redaction criticism to explore the semantic function of righteousness in the Gospel of Matthew. Przybylski arrives at two conclusions: first, viewed in the context of the historical background, he argues that Matthew's narrative demonstrates that the concept of righteousness is not primarily a Christian theological concept; rather it is essentially a Jewish religious concept that Matthew "used [it] provisionally to provide a point of contact between contemporary Jewish religious understanding and the teaching of Jesus as Matthew understood it" (Przybylski 1980, 123).<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, Przybylski seems to be restrictive in his view of the significance of

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<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, Przybylski suggests that in writing his Gospel, Matthew was more interested in recording the teaching of Jesus than propagating a Jewish agenda. This suggestion begs the question of whether Matthew had a pro-Jewish agenda in his narrative. If he did, why did he include a pro-Jewish text emphasizing a mission to the Jews such as we see in Matthew 10.5-15? Indeed, this text was part of an early church tradition (see Mark 6.7-13/Luke 9.1-6) redacted by Matthew when he added to Jesus' instruction; "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 10. 5-6). It is noteworthy that Przybylski suggests that in Matthew's narrative, the concept of righteousness and God's will are applied to describe the identity of first-century Jews and of the members of the Matthean community, respectively. To this end, Przybylski argues that Matthew applies the concept of righteousness to present Jesus' polemical encounter with the contemporary Jewish religious tradition. In the narrative this is later discarded, and in its place, Matthew applies the will of God to demand certain lifestyle requirements for Jesus' disciples (Przybylski 1980, 120-122).

Matthew's concept of righteousness by limiting it to its religious significance in Jewish tradition. This restriction of its significance in Judaism leads him to overlook the socio-economic and political importance of righteousness in Matthew's narrative. For example, in Matthew 6.1 δικαιοσύνη (translated as 'righteousness' in NAS and NIV and 'piety' in NRS), righteousness of the Φαρισαῖοι (hypocritical Pharisees) and the γραμματεὺς (teachers of the law) (5.20) is depicted in three well-known Jewish religious practices; almsgiving (5.2-4), offering prayer (5.13) and fasting (6.16-18). Here Φαρισαῖοι and γραμματεὺς as well as in several other places, metaphorically refer to the Jewish leadership of the late first century CE. Considering the demand for practicing and teaching the commandments of Jesus in the context of the Matthean community's universal mission (Matt 5.13-16), apparently the community had a pedagogical responsibility to unpack the significance of the requirement to surpass the righteousness of current Jewish religious leaders (Matt 5.20). This demonstrates that righteousness as a religious concept in Matthew's narrative performs a variety of semantically significant tasks related to both Jewish and Christian understandings of the concept.

Przybylski diligently traces the background of the concept of righteousness in the Old Testament, the Dead Sea Scrolls and Tannaitic literature, which shows the development of the meaning of righteousness through various religious Hebrew, Jewish traditions. However, he did not demonstrate the group dynamics in relation to the concept of righteousness in Matthew's Gospel narrative as it is hinted at by the contrast between the disciples' righteousness and that of the hypocritical Pharisees, scribes (though I would use the expression "teachers of the law" which is what the Jewish scribes were, as opposed to mere secretaries) and the Gentiles (Matt 5.20; 6.2, 5, 7). Here Φαρισαῖοι and γραμματεὺς and any other places metaphorically refer to Jewish

leadership of the late first century CE, as it will be espoused in the thesis.

In his article, “Scholars, Theologians and Ancient Rhetoric,” Wilder noted the weakness in Biblical studies due to the lack of using “humanistic studies.” That is; a failure to focus on the language of the text to reconstruct the communities addressed in the text. In pursuit of humanistic studies in his paper, Wilder mainly supplements a theological approach with mythical and ritual interpretations. Wilder sees Biblical text as a referent for images reflective of social-cultural experiences. This reveals his desire for humanistic approaches in Biblical interpretation besides traditional criticism, by saying that:

The meaning of the imagery [in a Biblical text or passage] is to be found in the associations and connotations it possessed, discoverable for us in their traditions. These meanings and associations had a very concrete social-cultural reference, something quite different from what we mean by a philological or theological context. Just as the imagery has concrete social reference backwards, so it has reference at the time of writing to actual historical realities in the environment of the Church (Wilder 1956, 11).

Wilder implies that behind any discourse of Biblical text is the social reality of a particular community. The Bible as a literary text is socially driven, and it also depicts an image of God who stands outside every social reality. Although Wilder’s position that “meanings and associations” derived from Biblical texts “had a very concrete social-cultural reference” (Wilder 1956, 11) shows the capacity of Biblical text to infer the emic (original) situation of the audience, he shows his concern for Biblical interpretations which are connected to humanistic studies, including sociology and social psychology. He regards these as “a new cross-fertilization ...from the side of wider humanistic studies” (3), but he does not develop fully any such social scientific method of interpretation relevant for explaining the social dynamics of human relations from the point of view of a Biblical text. However, his propositions that “just as the imagery [in a myth] has

concrete social reference backwards, so it has reference at the time of writing to actual historical realities in the environment of the Church” (Wilder 1956, 11), is a call to employ the social sciences to explore Biblical texts. Wilder appeals to the social sciences because using humanistic studies alongside traditional Biblical criticism has failed to elucidate the Biblical text as a discourse reflective of the human social experiences in early Christian communities.

In his monograph, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (1990), J. Andrew Overman, after engaging with the six sources on first century Judaism including the Law, traditions (including *Birkhat-ha-minim*), and synagogues, among others, in order to assist in reading the Gospel of Matthew, presents the Matthean community as a post-70 CE Jewish sectarian community in conflict with formative Judaism. While Overman’s sociological approach enables him to trace the Jewish sectarian nature of the Matthean community, there are some problems regarding his findings. Rather than recognizing the missionary perspective of the Matthean community, a social function acknowledged by Saunders (1993, 357), Overman undermines this function by his claims that the Gospel of Matthew represents a monolithic perspective of post-70 CE Judaism, that is; a religious community not interested in the world. The usage of the concept of formative Judaism, first coined by Neusner (1979, 22) and noted in Overman’s usage, is problematic. Post-70 CE Judaism was composed of various Jewish sectarian groups, and Matthew’s community was probably one of them. The Matthean community was competing with these sectarian groups by using Jewish traditions to justify a Jewish sectarian identity. However; ‘formative Judaism’, which refers to a nascent Jewish sectarian community, can only be located in the second and third century CE; when the Mishnah and the Talmud had been developed into written sources that provided crystalized

traditions for determining normativity in post-70 CE Judaism.

John K. Riches, in his *Conflicting Mythologies: Identity Formation in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew*, appeals for the use of sociology to study the Matthean community. Unlike Overman, who viewed the Matthean community as a sect of first century Diaspora Judaism (Overman 1990, 4-5), Riches regards the Matthean community as a deviant Jewish-Christian community, located in the Roman province of Syria, that was “becoming separated” from post-70 CE Diaspora Judaism (Riches, 2000, 2, 204).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Riches’ research, like that of Overman (discussed in chapter 4), demonstrates the effectiveness of sociology for explaining social relations and identity in the Matthean community, although the two lead to an antithetical conclusion regarding the identity of the Matthean community. Overman employs E.D. Hirsch’s and Weber’s concepts of sociology of knowledge, regarding the Matthean community as part of the first century Jewish sectarian community (Overman 1990, 150-155). Riches employs Bryan Wilson’s concepts of deviance, reformism, revolution, and Isaianic prophetic narratives to describe the Matthean Christian-Jewish community “becoming separated” from post-70 CE Judaism (Riches 2000, 197). Contrary to Overman, Riches claims that the Matthean community was experiencing a process of separation from Judaism. He regards the community of Matthew as emerging in the context of the Roman Empire and first century Judaism, attempting to answer the question; “within this massive political change, how were the self-understandings of those who became members of these small Christian groups affected?... [W]hat evidence of such transitions, such reshaping of their sense of identity do we find in the Gospel of ... Matthew?” (Riches 2000, 2). Riches, addressing his own question, argues that although the group consciousness of the Matthean community members was informed by their Jewish roots and symbolized by “their Jewish savior”, their relationship with non-Christian Jewish groups had become painful and they were “becoming a separate religious group... [T]hey were deviants within their own wider Jewish groupings”, and, “though by no means without friction and conflict” (Riches 2000,2-3). Thus, Overman and Riches are arguing for very antithetical positions regarding the relations between the Matthean community and Diaspora Judaism. Furthermore, Riches argues that in their effort to reconstruct a new identity, the community of Matthew, like other early Christian communities, appealed to a new myth based on Jesus’ teachings to provide a cosmological perspective in conflict with Jewish sectarian cosmology. Riches believes this conflict was instrumental in shaping the liminal identity of the Matthean community, because Matthew’s Gospel narrative shows a subversive element closely associated with the new cosmology of the followers of Jesus. To justify the presence of this subversive element in the narrative, Riches applies a sociological theory of cosmology and myth in contrast to Jewish sectarian identities. The latter was grounded in the Jewish notions of land, kinship and sacred space (Riches, 2000, 21-67), as opposed to Matthew’s perspectives of discipleship, church,

To this end, Riches regards the application of the concept of righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount as indicative of the Christian identity of the Matthean community in reference to their ethics and active participation in accomplishing an eschatological mission. Thus, Riches believes that the righteousness demanded by Jesus of his disciples, which greatly surpassed that of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees (Matt 5.20), refers to “a tradition of forensic, restorative eschatology” because it is grounded in “the hopes and the restoration of the people of Israel” in Isaianic prophetic narratives that emphasize “repentance and freedom of the people to obey or to disobey” (Riches, J. K. 2000, 197). In short, both Overman and Riches antithetically insist that the Matthean community was either a first century Jewish sectarian community (Overman) or a Jewish-Christian community separating from post-70 CE Diaspora Judaism. For the purposes of this thesis, Riches’ conception of the identity of the Matthean community is preferable as I will demonstrate in the rest of the thesis.

Four years after Riches’ book, Charles Talbert published *Reading the Sermon on the Mount: Character Formation and Decision Making*, in which he applies a moral philosophical

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sacred space, and Christology (Riches, 2000, 145-196). Based on this, Riches concludes three things. First, that there are two schemata in Matthew’s Gospel narrative; (1) a restorative eschatology which regards the church as the place of the restoration of God’s former glory and (2); a cosmic dualist eschatology that regards the church as the “bastion against forces of darkness that threaten the world but will finally be destroyed” (Riches, 2000, 227). Second that the Matthean community was marginal in relation to the Jewish community and the Roman empire, because both these groups regarded the Matthean community as part of the Jewish community for a time, which the Romans treated with suspicion (Riches, 2000, 313). Third, to emphasize the nature of Jewish-Christian identity of the Matthean community, Riches claims that there is also the identity of an “extremely liminal community” in Matthew’s community which is not marked by Jewish heritage for three reasons; (1) the narrative is silent over circumcision; (2) the place of Jesus’ disciples and God’s will downplay the role of Jewish descent and; (3) land plays no part in identity formation, rather; it is formed by a cosmology or myth derived from Jesus’ persona, life, work and teachings (Riches, 2000, 313, 318).

theory categorized by deontologist, consequentialist and perfectionist perspectives to advance the ethical perspective of righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount that was suggested by Riches in his study. Moreover, Talbert's thesis that the SM is primarily "a catalyst for the formation of the character" and secondarily "contributes to decision making when it is taken together with the whole Gospel of Matthew" (Talbert 2004, 29), suggests that the text of the SM outlines a code of ethics for the Matthean Community. Contrary to Overman but closer to Riches, Talbert regards the Matthean community as part of first century Judaism because it was distinctively established by "synagogues of formative Judaism" but was separated from "within Judaism not from it" (Talbert 2004, 6).<sup>3</sup>

Talbert, like Overman, locates the Matthean community in Palestine. However, because he has not observed the Matthean community in its late first-century social setting, Talbert failed to see the role of righteousness (5.20) in facilitating the relations between the Matthean community with the Roman Empire. According to Carter's perspective, in Matthew's narrative, the phrase "Scribes and Pharisees" in Matt 5.20 rhetorically stands for the representatives of the Roman Empire because it describes the first-century societal elite as, "the governing group in alliance with Rome" (Carter 2000, 143). Carter provides insights that are useful in espousing the

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<sup>3</sup>Additionally, Talbert sees a connection between the semantic function of the Beatitudes and righteousness, surpassing that of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees and positively impacting the moral formation of the Matthean community. To this end, Talbert claims that the Beatitudes (Matt 5.3-16) present divine enablement as promises of eschatological blessings that empower the disciples of Jesus to perform a form of righteousness that greatly surpasses that of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees (Matt 5.20), which shapes the disciples' disposition (Matt 5.21-26) for positive decision making (Talbert 2004, 47-65). Talbert's findings provide the advantage of understanding the Beatitudes as outlining an ethical content of exceeding righteousness that characterizes the identity of the Matthean community. This is emphasized by the beatitudes' role in character formation in the Matthean group as an eschatological Jewish Messianic community.

socio-economic and political function of the Sermon on the Mount, which will be discussed in chapters 5 to 7.

Paul Foster published his monograph, *Community, Law and Mission in Matthew's Gospel* in the same year that Talbert published his study of the SM. Foster differs from Talbert concerning the relations between the Matthean community and Judaism on two fronts. First, unlike Talbert, who regards the separation of the Matthean community as having taken place within first-century Judaism, Foster claims that based on its former religious setting, the community of Matthew understood themselves and operated as an independent group (Foster 2004, 253). To the separation hinted by Riches and Talbert, Foster adds “operated as independent group” to emphasize the separation of the Matthean community from first century Judaism. Second, while Riches and Talbert understood the Matthean community to be involved in a struggle against Jewish opponents, Foster sees a different struggle. Foster claims that the tension in Matthew's Gospel narrative does not indicate a conflict with Judaism, but the struggle of the Matthean community in its pastoral and pedagogical attempt to accommodate newly converted Gentiles (Foster 2004, 257; footnote 6).

On the one hand, Foster's position confirms Matthew's interest in including Gentiles such as Tamar, Rahab and Ruth in the genealogy of Jesus. Although Jesus is described in Jewish terms as, “the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matt 1.1-11), he entrusts to his disciple's a mission that requires them to symbolically act as “light” and “salt” to the world (Matt 5.13-16) charged with the responsibility of teaching the nations the message of Jesus (Matt 28.19). Jesus' genealogy and the disciples' mission stand as modes of identity formation that go beyond

Jewish descent, nationality and kinship to embrace an inclusive perspective of identity that embraces not only the Judeans (people from Judea) but also the Gentiles. Thus, Foster (2004, 144-217) correctly observes that Matthew's programmatic statement on the law marks the community's continuity with Jewish observation of the Torah, but also "affirms the church as the true Israel and upholder of the Law and the Prophets as fulfilled by Jesus." On the other hand, because Foster overlooks the social context of the Matthean community in his research, he has left unanswered questions as to whether Matthew applied the concept of righteousness that greatly surpassed that of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees (Matt5.20) to describe the relations between the Matthean community and other early Christian communities in the late first-century CE. Viewed in its proper social setting, the Matthean community ought to be conceived of as part of the emerging Jewish Christian community, a position discussed in detail in chapters 5 to 7.

Twelve years after Foster and Talbert, Andre du Toit published an article, "Revisiting the Sermon on the Mount" (2016), in which he presents perhaps the best attempt at demonstrating the function of Matthew's phrase ἐὰν μὴ περισσεύσῃ ὑμῶν ἢ δικαιοσύνη πλεῖον τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν (Mat 5:20 NA28), literally translated: *unless your righteousness* (ὑμῶν ἢ δικαιοσύνη) surpasses (περισσεύσῃ) greatly (πλεῖον) that of the teachers of the law (τῶν γραμματέων) and Pharisees (Φαρισαίων) you will not enter (οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθητε) into (εἰς) the kingdom of heaven (τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν). Du Toit's thesis is that, "the basic theme of the Sermon on the Mount can be formulated as the unique identity of Jesus' new, end time community," and its purpose is, "to shape...this unique identity" (Du Toit 2016, 79). Compared to Przybylski, Overman, Riches, Talbert and Foster, Du Toit more directly links up Matthew's concept of righteousness with the formation of the identity of the

Matthean community than any of the scholars mentioned above.<sup>4</sup>

Du Toit correctly observes that Matt 5.11-12, as the amplification of the eight beatitudes outlined in Matt 5.3-10, addresses the suffering and persecution in the early church, including the situation of the Matthean community (Du Toit 2016, 80-81). Unfortunately Overman, like Du Toit, regards the administration of suffering by Jewish leadership in first-century CE as generally connected to the early church, while Du Toit specifically connects such suffering to the Matthean community. For instance, Overman connects the rejection by local Jewish authorities of the early Church (Matt 10.17/Mark13.9/Luke 21.13-14) to the emergence of Birkhat-ha-minim in the Eighteen Benedictions that were to be said as part of the silent prayer, to be spoken thrice by the faithful (Overman 1990, 55). Conversely, Du Toit refers to Matt 5.11-12, a part of the Special Matthean material, to connect the Birkhat-ha-minim to the suffering experienced by the Matthean community (Du Toit 2016, 80).

The issue of Birkhat-ha-minim, which is connected to the misconception of the emergence of formative Judaism in the late first century, contrasts with the positions of Overman and Du Toit. The traditional view of the impact of the supposed Yavneh Council in the late first century, which created Rabbinic Judaism as the main form of Judaism and the Birkhat as a prayer from the period, are no longer tenable as the Yavneh Council was a construction that was retrospectively applied by rabbinic Jewish authorities to the late first century to give the impression that Rabbinic

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<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Du Toit asserts that the Beatitudes (5.3-12) and the metaphorical statements, “light and salt of the earth,” and “light of the world” (5.13-14), that depict the mission of Christ’s followers, are the “real substance of the Sermon on the Mount” (Du Toit 2016, 73-74). Viewed from the perspective of first-century Judaism’s lack of missionary focus among Gentiles (McKnight 1991, 102-115), these literary sections of the SM implicitly and complementarily present some of the content that elaborates on the significance of the righteousness that Matthew demands from his community, modeled on the disciples’ righteousness that greatly surpasses that of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees.

Judaism was the dominant form of Judaism from that period. The Birkhat-ha-minim was connected to this as a way to drive "heretics" out of the synagogue, particularly Jewish Christians, from the late first century. This scenario is no longer considered likely, especially since our source for the Birkhat-ha-minim is from the fourth century CE.

Du Toit's argument is not without some further problems. He sees the instrumentality of only one trajectory of relations in the SM. That is, the relations of the Matthean community with first-century Judaism in shaping and affirming the identity of the former. He does not discuss the two other trajectories that are crucial for the identity formation of the Matthean community, namely; the relations of the Matthean community with the early Christianity—particularly the Jesus Movement from the Jewish homeland—and the Roman Empire.

Du Toit's synchronistic reading of the SM which focuses on the time period of the Matthean community without taking into account other historical antecedents enables him to present a more plausible position regarding the function of Matthew's concept of righteousness in shaping the identity of the Matthean community than Przybylski, Riches, Talbert and Foster. Although Przybylski's preference for a historical approach enabled him to depict the background of Matthew's concept of righteousness in relation to the Old Testament, he unfortunately ended up seeing Matthew's concept of righteousness as a Jewish concept. Similarly, through a sociology of knowledge theory, Overman managed to explain the relations among the Matthean community in the late first century (as we see in chapter 4). He unfortunately ended up conceiving such relations as between the Matthean community with a non-existent group (formative Judaism), instead of Diaspora Judaism. Although Riches' preference for cosmological theory enabled him to contrast<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> See Sean Freyne, *The Jesus Movement and Its Expansion: Meaning and Mission* (2014),

Jewish cosmology with that of Jesus' disciples to aptly describe the role of Matthew's concept of righteousness in the formation of the identity of the Matthean community, he failed to see the role of the early Christian community. Talbert and Foster's preference for moral philosophy and redaction criticism, respectively, provides the advantage of explaining the function of Matthew's concept in forming a Jewish identity for the Matthean community.

Both Talbert and Foster failed to see the importance of relations between the Matthean community, the Early Christian community, and the Roman Empire in shaping the identity of the Matthean community. Thus, Du Toit's synchronistic analysis, which focuses on the text of Matthew as received in the present form, coupled with observations of redaction criticism and the social setting, or, "*Sitz Im Leben* of the real-world," of the audience of the SM, enabled him to reconstruct the historical situation of the Matthean community in Syria, although he unfortunately explains the function of Matthew's concept of righteousness in shaping the Christian identity of his community as Jesus' end-time community, in the context of the Birkhat-ha-minin. Du Toit's findings suggest that certain social sciences theories have the capacity to explain group relations and so can be helpful in supplementing Biblical criticism. If the failure of Przybylski, Riches and Forster to infer the dynamics of group relations in the Matthean community is attributed to their use of certain types of Biblical criticism, such as source, redaction, and historical criticism, in isolation from a social sciences approach, then we can attribute the success of the inference of such group relations from the SM by later Matthean scholars, such as Du Toit, to the application of a social sciences approach. This is the transformation we see in Biblical scholarship with scholars such as Bruce J. Malina in *The New Testament World: Insights From Cultural*

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whereby the Movement of historical Jesus is discussed in its Galilean beginnings and spreads out beyond Palestine.

*Anthropology* (1981), David Balch's *Social History of the Matthean Community* (1991), Bruce J. Malina and J.H. Neyrey in *Portraits of Paul: An Archeology of Ancient Personality* (1996), and John K. Riches and David C. Sim's *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context* (2005). These scholars have begun to focus more on a social sciences approach in studying the discourse of early Christian communities.

### 1.3 CONCLUSION

As demonstrated from the above exploration of a sample of Matthean scholars, there has been some inconsistency in the way they describe the semantic function of righteousness in the SM. While some scholars regard the concept of righteousness in the SM as a Jewish religious conception (Przybylski), others understand it as a Christian concept that was intended to empower the Matthean community in accomplishing their eschatological mission in Antioch, as well as to describe the community's identity as Jesus' end-time community (Riches and Du Toit). Just as there is some inconsistency with the description of the rhetorical function of righteousness in the SM, there is also inconsistency in describing the identity and relations of the Matthean community in the SM. The identity of the Matthean community is viewed either as a new Israel in Palestine (Przybylski), a sectarian group and part of middle Judaism in Palestine (Overman, Talbert), or as a separate Christian (Riches) or Jesus end-time community (Foster, Du Toit) in Syrian Antioch. Thus, given these findings, it is incumbent for this thesis to attempt to engage some aspects of Biblical criticism, such as source and redaction criticism, to back up a socio-rhetorical interpretation using social identity theory, that will be applied to analyze the SM in order to explain the function of Matthew's concept of righteousness in shaping the identity of the Matthean

community. To this end, I will first outline the interpretive approach before an analysis of the SM and the exploration of identity formation in Antiquity. This will prepare the literary and social contexts for explaining the role of Matthew's concept of righteousness in the formation of the identity and social relations of the Matthean community from the point of view of the SM.

## CHAPTER 2

### DEVELOPING A SOCIO RHETORICAL ANALYTICAL TOOL

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to outline an interpretative approach for reading Biblical texts. The argument I propose here is that although Robbins' Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation (SRI) depicts the capacity for modifying some literary theorists' conceptions of the author and audience, it requires the supplementary efforts of a social sciences theory to elaborate group relations from a textual point of view. Derived from Social Identity Theory (SIT) and Self-Categorization Theory (SCT), Social Identity Political Theory (SIPT) is used to perform the analytical task for this thesis that has the capacity to explain group relations from a textual point of view. To this end, I will first briefly explain the literary theorists' conception of implied author and implied audience interaction aspects before outlining Robbins' inner texture and inter texture and ideological analysis theory, and then conclude by proposing a Social Identity Political Theory (SIPT).

#### 2.2 READER-AUTHOR-AUDIENCE INTERACTION

The reader-author-audience interaction refers to reading the Biblical text as literature, while focusing on the role played by the *reader* (the current interpreter of the text), the author (the *implied author* of the text under investigation) and the audience (the *implied first readers* of the text). To elaborate on this interactive approach, it is crucial to briefly explain the process of "the reader-author-audience interaction" before highlighting the meaning of this approach in terms of the functions of the implied author and implied audience.

The Bible is a literature with meaning which is conveyed through speech and actions, with

social, cultural, and historical contexts that constitute the arenas which inform its meaning (Robbins 1996b, 21-24; Ro 1999, 52). It follows that, if an improper interpretative approach is applied to read a Biblical text, we may end up with the wrong interpretation. Golden emphasizes that, “text is a living organism whose life has a series of phases ...rather than a static entity with one correct interpretation” (Golden 1986, 91). Here Golden points out the importance of observing the literary dynamism of texts as one executes the task of interpretation. In this case the text itself, the author, and the audience have a significant contribution to make. Consequently, Ro observed that the meaning of a text is primarily dependent on the authorial intentions; a text’s meaning should be differentiated from a text’s significance (Ro 1999, 54). Herein lies the power of observing the function of the text, author, and audience in the task of interpretation, for these three collectively provide the basis for exploring the original meaning of a Biblical text. Furthermore, following Thiselton, Hirsch and Tale, Ro aptly claims that the meaning of a text is different from its significance because while the meaning of text is based on the author’s intentions, its significance indicates “the relationships between the meaning and the persons, or conceptions, or situations, or anything imaginable” (Ro 1999, 54). From Ro’s suggestions, it can be deduced that while ideally the real author and real audience provide the leverage for the original textual meaning, because of differences in time and perceptions of the readers and the authors, we can only approach the significance of a text from the so-called “implied author” and “implied audience.” Thus, identifying the contributions of the implied author and implied audience is a crucial and more realistic step towards proper interpretation of a Biblical text.

### 2.2.1 Text-Implied Author Interaction

What constitutes the characteristics of text-author interaction, and what approaches shall be employed to address the text-reader interaction that would help to espouse the meaning of the SM? Before highlighting the role of text-author interaction in this chapter, let me first explain the meaning of “implied author.” The implied author is a concept developed by Wayne C. Booth in his monograph, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (1983). In writing his book, Booth was focusing on the rhetoric of fiction in which his aim was to present a technique of the art of communication for writers of fiction. In focusing on fiction, Booth says while developing his interpretative technique that he had to deliberately avoid aspects of “social and psychological forces that affect authors and readers” (Booth 1983, xiii). Furthermore, Booth’s notion of the role played by the “implied author” in the interpretation of texts is based on his conviction that “however impersonal [an author] may try to be, his reader will inevitably construct a picture of the official scribe who writes in this manner” (Booth 1983, 71). Going by Booth’s assumptions, the implied author is, therefore, the author constructed by a text-reader from within a text who may be conceived by the text reader as the narrator. However, regarding the implied author to be the same as the text’s narrator may be too limiting because in some cases, the implied author is not necessarily the narrator. For instance, the implied author of a Pauline letter is not necessarily the narrator. He may be a rhetorician or a moral philosopher, depending on the kind of implied author that is reconstructed from the text.

Similar to Booth, Robbins differentiates between the implied author and the real author by claiming that the implied author is the speaker in the text, as opposed to the writer who records

the words of the text. Robbins refers to the latter as the “real author,” who stands outside the text (Robbins 1996b, 29).

This concept of implied author makes sense because when people read texts, they normally tend to hear a “silent voice” from within themselves; a voice of a text’s author that may not be uniform in all readers of the same text. This text-generated silent voice, which also prompts a reader’s subjectivity in the text and is triggered by the implied author of a text, becomes the reader’s basis for reconstructing the meaning of a text that may go beyond the real author’s intentions. How do we analyze the contribution of the implied author in the interpretation of the text? To derive the implied author’s significance, literary theorists claim that readers of texts must focus on the characterization process, development of a plot, and the role of voice, or direct speech, in a text (Golden 1986, 91; Baker 2011, 19-22). These methods direct us towards what to look for in order to demonstrate the text-implied author interaction in a Biblical text.

Although some literary theorists prefer the concept of “real author” as relevant in communicating textual meaning of a given text, there is the problem of accessing the real author. Ro and Sipe suggest that we can access the real author from the text. Underscoring the importance of the real author in the interpretation of a text, Ro (1999, 53) contends that the meaning of a text is based on the author’s intentions. Furthermore, Sipe, emphasizing the importance of the real author in a text’s interpretation, contends that in writing a text, authors posit three stances in relation to their societal norms and ideologies. These three stances are: the politics of assent, the politics of advocacy, and the politics of attack (Sipe 1999, 121). The position of this literary theory on the accessibility of the real author is challenged by SRI critics such as Robbins. According to Robbins, “Words in texts ‘imply’ authors, and the kind of author a reader constructs

on the basis of words in a text is the implied author of the text” (Robbins 1996b, 21). Robbins aptly implies that since it is the implied author (not the real author) that is accessible through the text, the author’s intentions (Ro 1999, 53) and societal and ideological stances in which an author posits their relation (Sipe 199,121) can best be understood as textual constructs and not conceptions of the real author.

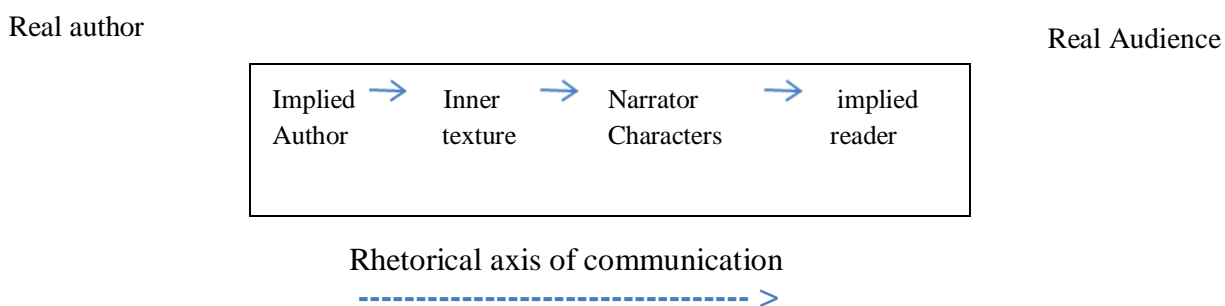
How should we then draw meaning from a narrative? According to Robbins’ definition, narrative discourse is a discourse that tells a story. Its components, as proposed by Baker (2011, 18-22) and supported by Robbins, are characters, a plot, and a setting.<sup>6</sup> Because these components are responsible in determining the meaning of the narrative from the text, they provide inference for deciphering the implied-author’s meaning in a text. Also, the narrator, whose function is closely linked to author of a text, contributes by shaping the meaning of a text. Baker notes that it was the tradition of the authors of the canonical gospels to present the narrator of the story as “a persona developed by the author to tell his/her story” (Baker 2011, 32). Ro aptly noted that “the implied reader is not only text-bound but also textually constructed” (1999, 62). Furthermore, Robbins explains that for a proper narrational analysis to take place, “the reader must reconstruct the natural flow of the argument from narrative components of the text”, by observing the literary and semantic functions of characterization and plot development in the light of the narrator’s interests (Robbins 1992, 62). To determine the meaning of text, we must conceive such meaning as dependent on the function of the implied author in terms of a text’s narrative as provided by the

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<sup>6</sup> Robbins’ *Socio Rhetorical Interpretation* reader reconstructs the natural flow of the argument from narrative components of the text by observing the literary and semantic functions of characterization and plot development in the light of the narrator’s interests (Robbins 1992, 62). To determine the meaning of text, we must conceive of such meaning as dependent on the function of the implied author in terms of a text’s narrative as provided by the plot and characters, and the implied author’s interaction with their social and ideological environment.

plot and characters and the implied author's interaction with their social and ideological environment.

Because the narrator plays a significant role in the task of interpreting a narrative, it is important to observe the relations between the author and the narrator in the task of interpretation. In the following diagram, Robbins (1996b, 29) displays a rhetorical axis of communication in inner texture which also shows the position of the author, implied author, narrator, and implied reader, real reader/audience:



Using this diagram, Robbins demonstrates the various literary players that inform the meaning and significance of a text. From the diagram, it is clearly indicated that it is hardly possible to access the real author and real audience of the text from the text alone, because they stand outside the text. We also note from Robbins' rhetorical axis of communication that the real author, the narrator, and the implied author are differentiated by their relationship to the text. While the real author stands outside the text, the implied author stands inside of it. This means that while the implied author can be reconstructed from a text, the real author may not be fully

accessed from it, which is often problematic for two reasons. One, the readers of a text can only subjectively attempt to access the real author from the text. Two, how do we know the author's intention? It is through reading the text and then using it that we attempt to determine the author's intention, but this is often problematic because naturally text interpreters cannot always agree on an author's intention.

The authors' intentions in the New Testament are only knowable through the text, since we have no other access to them. Often, an author's intention turns out to be ambiguous. Therefore, Robbins' SRI favors rhetorical/literary interpretations that do not rely on an author's intentions but draw meaning in terms of the text's relationship with its social, economic and political environment. Consequently, in the case of Matthew's Gospel, the implied author and the narrator may be treated as one and the same because Matthew's implied author employs a narrative of Jesus as the main character and a plot that focuses on the emergence of Jesus, his disciples, his followers, his work, death and ascension.

### *2.2.2 Text- Implied Audience Interactions*

In this section, the implied audience will be discussed to highlight some principles for interpreting the text-audience interaction. Like the implied author, the implied audience is textually reconstructed. Literalist theories on implied author and implied audience provide a short-sighted view of the author and the audience, because these theories do not refer to the cultural and social factors that probably influenced the perception of the author and the audience regarding a text. In order to properly interpret the Biblical text as a discourse of a community, it is necessary to find ways of accessing the real world of the original reader or audience, as this cannot be fully

inferred from the text alone. How can we reconstruct the world of the implied author and implied audience of a Biblical text?

Robbins aptly claims that it sounds like an impossible task to access the real world of an audience that lived approximately 2000 years ago. However, Robbins' socio-rhetorical notions in his SRI in reference to the rich resources of modern anthropology and sociology, and "the way language in a text is a means of communication among people," respectively, offers some useful insights towards the world of the implied reader. This is because socio-rhetorical interpretation looks at the Biblical text as a metaphor of "a thick tapestry". This allows the interpreter to explore the text "from different angles," and in effect to arrive at "multiple of textures of meanings, convictions, beliefs, values, emotions and actions," including social, cultural and ideological meanings at work in the environment of the first readers of a text (Robbins 1996a, 1-2; Robbins 2009, 18-19). Thus, Robbins' socio-rhetorical interpretation supplements the limited perception of many literary theorists in their views on implied author and implied audience by helping us to get a better idea of how cultural values and social relations based on the first century Mediterranean world influenced the perception of the implied author and implied audience.

### 2.3 V. K ROBBINS' SRI

In developing his Socio Rhetorical Interpretation (SRI), Robbins employs various categories from the social sciences, particularly anthropology and sociology, alongside linguistic perspectives to interpret the discourse of early Christian communities. Robbins' approach bears in mind both *emic* and *etic* perspectives of interpretation. Thus, in pursuit of developing his SRI interpretative analytic framework, Robbins discusses the discourse of the early Christians in light

of a modern world view (the world outside the Biblical text). That is; the *etic* perspective, or the first-century world view of the Mediterranean social and cultural systems and institutions, and the world view of Antiquity, which is the world view of the Jesus movement (the world of the text), or the *emic* perspective. It is noteworthy that Robbins's SRI is a collection of essays, four by Robbins and three by Mack. Only the conclusion was jointly co-authored with Burton L Mack.<sup>7</sup> Robbins also draws some perspective of his SRI from research works by Wayne A. Meeks<sup>8</sup> and John G. Gager.<sup>9</sup> In his SRI, Robbins adapts Bryan Wilson's seven types of religious sects, which are based on his findings from empirical sociological research.<sup>10</sup>

Robbins defines Social Rhetorical Interpretation (SRI) as “an approach [not method] to literature that focuses on values, conviction, and beliefs both in the text we read and in the world we live.” Thus, to Robbins, SRI “views [Biblical] text as performances of language in particular historical and cultural situations” (Robbins, 2009, xxviii) which involves a multi-dimensional approach to textual analysis guided by a multi-dimensional hermeneutic. Consequently, Robbins' SRI, which he has been developing over a period from 1984 to 2009 in pursuit of its analytical

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<sup>7</sup>Mack and Robbins (1989) discuss cultural categories which they referred to as “Typology of cultures” classified into five further categories; dominant culture, subculture, counterculture, contra-culture and liminal culture.

<sup>8</sup>Meeks (1972) integrates both anthropological and sociological insights in order to rhetorically analyze the special patterns of language in the Gospel of John regarding the logic of the myth of the descending man and ascending redeemer. His analysis played a significant role in informing Robbins' social and cultural texture of a text in a manner that focuses on the inner texture of the text (Robbins, 1996b, 144-145).

<sup>9</sup>Gager (1975) employs twentieth century anthropological and sociological models to the study of early Christianity. These influenced Robbins' strategies for socio-rhetorical criticism (Robbins, 1996b, 146-147).

<sup>10</sup>Wilson (1959, 4, 5-11) begins by differentiating a sect from a denomination. He further demonstrates how the genesis of sects is mostly associated with tensions within a religious body. His outline of seven types of sects; conversionist, revolutionist, intro-versionist, gnostic manipulation, thaumaturgical, reformist and utopian, provides the basis for Robbins' specific social topics in religious literature to explain the early church's responses to the world (Robbins, 1996b, 147-150).

task, incorporates some aspects of certain social sciences theories such as rhetorical, social psychological and anthropological perspectives.<sup>11</sup>

Robbins (1996a, 7-20; 1996b, 46-53) refers to *inner texture* as a process of deriving the significance of a Biblical passage by observing the literary characteristics of peculiar words or phrases in a given passage by taking note of literary performances of the following textures of the words and phrases in the same passage; repetitive-progressive, opening-middle-closing, narrational, argumentative, and sensory-aesthetic textures. Thus, through inner-textual analysis, an interpreter attempts to discover the inner voice of the passage from the literary function of peculiar words and phrases in that passage. Robbins' (1996b, 96-143) *inter texture* refers to a process of determining the significance of a passage by observing the relation between a Biblical text with an appropriate phenomenon outside the text in the light of an oral-scribal inter texture, the cultural inter texture, social inter texture and historical events outside that text. By implication, Robbins' inter texture attempts to find the meaning of a Biblical text by listening to the text's inner voice in relation to those emerging from other surrounding literary traditions outside the text. That is, from the literary traditions of a society contemporaneous to that text.

In this study, I limit my SRI aspects to Robbins' inner texture, inter texture and ideological texture, leaving out his social and cultural textures because these have been supplemented with the model of social identity political theory highlighted in the next section of this chapter.

In this chapter I will analyze the inner and inter textual perspectives of the SM first by exploring the redaction activity of Matthew in terms of the text's repetitive-progressive pattern, opening-

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<sup>11</sup> In his seminal paper, "Beginnings and Developments of Socio-Rhetorical Interpretation" (2004) discusses the conception of SRI to the birth and growth of his Socio Rhetorical Analytic from 1984 to beyond 2009.

middle-closing, narrational, and argumentative elements. Then, I will undertake an analysis using the social, cultural, and historical inter textual dimensions of the Beatitudes (5.3-12), Jesus' sayings on law (5.17-20), and the Lord's Prayer (6.9-13). This will allow me to elaborate on the semantic function and ethical and eschatological meanings of righteousness in the SM. The aspect of interpretive approach outlined here will also be applied in chapter 3, to provide the leverage for explaining, in chapters 5 to 7, the *modes* and *process* of reconstructing, legitimating and negotiating the cultural identity of the Matthean community as a result of the three-fold narratives of identity formation, namely; the embattled and contestive -accommodation, humanistic and contestive-accommodation, and social evangelistic and contestive-accommodation. These three narratives of identity rhetorically depict the inter-group relations between the Matthean community and the Roman Empire, and intra-group relations of the Matthean community with Diaspora Judaism and the Jesus Movement. These relations provide the challenges, tensions and conflicts that produce a social environment that was conducive for the composition of the SM as an ideology for negotiating the cultural identity of the Matthean community. To this end, the discussion now turns to a brief elaboration of the inner texture, inter texture and ideological framework before these aspects of SRI are applied to analyze the SM in chapter 3.

### 2.3.1 *Inner texture*

The inner texture consists of the repetitive-progressive, narrational, opening-middle--closing, and argumentative perspectives, as presented below.

#### 2.3.1.1 *The Repetitive-Progressive texture*

The *repetitive-progressive texture* communicates meaning and effects which reformulate the meaning and function through the repetition of verbs and nouns, which produce patterns and

concepts within the literary structure, semantic functions, and content of a passage. To emphasize the effectiveness of rhetoric in the process of progression, the interpreter stresses (1) the relations between “*signs* and *sounds* rather than content and meaning” and (2) may use a *diagram* to plot the repeated words and phrases in a vertical column which list characters and concepts in the discourse (Robbins, 1996a, 9-14; 1996b, 47-49). What is the *value* of carefully observing repetitive-progressive patterns in Biblical scholarship? The value of observing repetitive-progressive patterns lays in the fact that the inner linguistic features of verbs, concepts, nouns, etc. present relations which are significant in understanding the nature of the discourse (Robbins, 1996b, 49) of the early Christians behind the Biblical text. Robbins suggests some guiding questions that can help in accomplishing the task of observing repetitive-progressive patterns: “What patterns emerge from the repetition of particular topics in the text? What topics replace the other topics in the progression of the text? Is the repetition a continuous one or are there some interruptions or modifications observable? Do the repetitions tend to gather together or separate some words? Are there any repetitions that create a context for a new word in the progression?” (Robbins 1996b, 50).

#### 2.3.1.2 *The Opening-Middle-Closing texture*

While the repetitive-progressive pattern emerges from word analysis, the *opening-middle-closing texture* is a product of the exploration of the repetitive-progressive pattern. How does the opening, middle and closing of a text aid the task of analyzing inner-texture, and what is its main *goal*? According to Robbins (1996a 19-20; 1996b, 51-52), to achieve the goals of the opening-middle-closing aspect of analysis, it is important for interpreters to do the following: (1) correlate their sub-units with the overall unit to explain their rhetorical function in relation to each other,

and (2) bear in mind that the goal of opening-middle-closing analysis is to discern the persuasive effects of the various parts, and how they work together in relation to the persuasive nature of the text. The following are some of the critical questions that guide the task of achieving the goal of opening-middle-closing aspects: (1) what is the nature of the opening of a unit [or passage] in relation to closure? What is the nature of the topics at the beginning in relation to the topics at the end of a unit? (2) What is the nature of the topics that replace the topics at the beginning? (3) Is there repetition connecting the beginning, middle and end? Or (4) is the repetition limited only to a particular section of the texture? (5) What is the function of the parts of texts in relation to the whole passage? The *value* of opening-middle-closing analysis in socio-rhetorical interpretation lies in preparing the interpreter for detailed analysis of the narrational and argumentative texture (Robbins 1996b, 53).

#### 2.3.1.3 *The Argumentative texture*

The *argumentative texture* is a product of the analysis performed in the context of repetition. The *argumentative texture* focuses on investigating “multiple kinds of inner reasoning in a discourse” (Robbins 1996a, 21). Argumentative inner texture is a product of the analysis performed in the context of repetitive-progressive, opening-middle-closing, and narrational textures. What does the argumentative texture consist of? Basically, argumentative texture consists of a qualitative description that includes analogies, examples, and even citations as means which back up assertions (Robbins 1996a, 21). It may also include either *sylogism* and/or *logic*. Logical or syllogistic reasoning takes place in the context of three premises; minor, major, and a conclusion. In the case of *enthymeme*, a narrator presents an argument in the context of ‘if-then’ causal perspectives, or by appealing to a *chreia* that normally attributes speech or action to a

particular person. In this case *chreia*, a significant element for providing insights, is to be understood as a term used by rhetoricians to refer to the anecdote in which a narrator attributes speech and/or action to a specific personage (Robbins 1996b, 59). *Chreia* is the root of argumentative analysis, because by using it, a rhetorician can provide the rationale for an action or/and speech to clarify their assertion in a given statement. *Enthymeme*, a statement with a supporting reason introduced by, “for,” “because,” or “since,” and its premises are probable but not necessarily logically valid, is applied in syllogistic/logical reasoning to support argumentative texture.<sup>12</sup>

#### 2.3.1.4 *The Narrational texture*

The *narrational texture* is the analysis of a discourse from the point of view of the interpreter’s focus on the narrator and characters. How is the analysis of narrational texture undertaken? It is noteworthy that early Christianity emerged in a “rhetorical culture”. That is; a kind of culture that “is aware of written text, uses written text and oral language interactively” in which case written texts are viewed as additional tools that give power to language (Robbins 1996b, 56-57). Socio-rhetorical interpretation attempts to avoid the literalist approach that focuses

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<sup>12</sup> For instance, the woman in Matthew 9.20-22 as she approached Jesus in her mind was thinking; “if I only I touch his garments, I shall be made well.” Note that rhetoricians at the time of early Christianity would classify this statement as ‘enthymeme’ because the premises and conclusion are probable but not necessarily logically valid (Robbins, 1996a, 59). So, as Robbins (1996a, 21-24; 1996b, 58-64) has rightly noted, the processes involved in argumentative texture are primarily composed of three elements, namely; logical reasoning, syllogism reasoning, and enthymeme which, “reveal aspects of the argumentative texture in its social and cultural environment that the narrator may never state,” concerning two important facts about Christianity: (1) the insights drawn from argumentative texture bring out the awareness of social and cultural presuppositions and network reasoning that interpreters can examine from the New Testament literature, and (2); the revelation of significant insights concerning the participation of early Christian discourse in Mediterranean society and culture.

on “distinguishing between real author, implied author, narrator, characters, narratee, implied reader and real reader,” whose main weakness, as Robbins (1996b, 54-55) observes, is to allow “literary critics to regularly re-enact the rhetoric of the narrator rather than exhibit the nature of that rhetoric to their readers.” To avoid this folly, socio-rhetorical interpretation regards the text as having the voice to speak for itself (Robbins 1996a, 15) which calls for the analysis not to attempt to create real reader, real author, or real audience, but rather to reconstruct the implied author, speech, narrator and implied audience. This is because primarily socio-rhetorical interpretation as rhetorical theory is grounded on “the presupposition that speaker, speech and audience are primary constituents of a situation of communication.” Moreover, the contrasting arguments that may appeal to analogy or written testimony play a significant role in addressing the concerns of a narrational nature (Robbins 1996b, 45). Thus, the approach of socio-rhetorical interpretation in narrational analysis sounds more realistic than literary theorists’ that attempt to discover the real author, or real audience from a written text. In any case, if one happens to read a piece of literature from the inner texture perspective, the image of the author from the text is reconstructed according to one’s perception of a text’s literary dynamics. Moreover, Robbins’ inner texture which are relevant for analyzing the SM in chapters 3, 5, and 7 by way of employing inter textual analysis in the context of SIPT. The discussion will now turn to some aspects of Robbins’ intertexture.

### *2.3.2 Inter texture*

Intertexture is primarily composed of the cultural, social and historical perspectives that can be inferred from the text.

### 2.3.2.1 *Cultural inter texture*

In socio-rhetorical interpretation, “culture” refers to “the status of a phenomenon that appears in a wide range of literature that spans many centuries” (Robbins, 1996b, 110). This is in reference to a person’s or peoples’ traditions. Robbins’ definition of culture implies that culture refers to a group’s shared meaning derived from traditionally inherited beliefs, norms and values of a given community. Thus, cultural inter-texture is the focus of an inter-textual analysis that crosses the boundaries of the Biblical canon to include Greco-Roman, Hebraic or Jewish cultural intertexture (Robbins, 1996a 62-63; 1996b, 110). Moreover, how does cultural inter-texture participate in socio-rhetorical interpretation of the SM?

Cultural inter texture employs *reference*, *echoes*, and *comparison* to contribute to socio-rhetorical interpretation: (1) In this case a *reference* refers to the presence of a word, phrase or clause that points to a personage who is familiar to the people in a culture. For instance, in Acts (14.12) “Barnabas they called Zeus and Paul they called Hermes” significant gods in the Greco-Roman cultural stories found in Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* are clearly referenced. (2) Here *echo* refers to a word or phrase that evokes the cultural traditions. For instance, in the Gospel of Mark, several cultural traditions are evoked: (1) the analogy between “the seed falling on prepared ground” (Mark. 4.15-20) echoes Hippocrates (Law III) concerning views of the teacher; (2) the parable of the Mustard seed (Mark. 4.30-32) echoes a quotation from Seneca (*Epist* 38. 2) which claims that words, like seeds, should be scattered; the scattered seed confronted with worldly concerns (Mark. 4.18-20) echoes quotations from Quintilian (*Inst Orat* 5.11.24), as noted by Robbins (1996b, 113-114), that concerns cultivation of the mind. Thus, Robbins (1996b, 115) observes that in cultural inter-texture *references* and *echoes* point to “a symbolic world that particular communities of discourse nurture with special nuances and emphases.” Robbins’

suggestion here in effect clarifies how the meaning of Biblical texts might be elucidated by engaging phenomena from other non-Christian cultural, social and/or religious contexts that are contemporaneous to the writing of that text.

*Comparison* is another concept not from Robbins, but from Ewald. This concept can help to conceptualize the world of the implied reader/audience of a text. Ewald views comparison as a signal to the implied reader because of the second term of a comparison. For instance, X in the case of B is better than X, which is usually assumed to be more familiar than the first that is B, which helps to imagine the world of the implied reader (Ewald, H. R. 1988, 170). Consequently, to supplement Robbins' reference and echoes in communicating the cultural environment of the implied audience, rhetorically words that signal a comparison in text most probably signal the other groups that interacted with the audience of a given text.

#### 2.3.2.2 *Social inter texture*

To achieve social intertexture, interpreters usually focus on analyzing conventional practices, customs, and traditions that “support conventional practices in certain kinds of social settings” (Robbins 1996b, 116). Unlike cultural knowledge which is limited to specific groups and has to be taught under careful use of language, “social knowledge is readily accessible to all people through general interaction. Generally, social knowledge is constituted from the following four categories; social role (e.g. soldier, shepherd, slave), social institutions (e.g. empire, synagogue, traders' association), social codes (e.g. honor, hospitality), and social relationships (e.g. patron, friend, enemy, kin). Thus, social inter texture aims to address social meaning that interpreters investigate using data outside the text such as archeological data, meaning of identities, texts, institutions, etc. (Robbins 1996a, 62-63; 1996b,118-120). Thus, social inter

texture enables the interpreter of a Biblical text to access a wide range of social facts that may have influenced the discourse of the early Christian communities, because early Christian communities were not insulated from society but actively participated in the first century social world of the Mediterranean.

### 2.3.2.3 *Historical inter texture*

Unlike the social inter texture which focuses on social practices that occurred regularly as life events, historical experiences and events occur over periods of time. For instance, John 9.22, 12.42, and 16.2, seem to show a historical event occurring in the early Christian community in the post 70 CE period. This is not an attempt to undermine the Martyn-Bauckham Johannine community hypothesis controversy regarding the historical function of John's Gospel.<sup>13</sup> Rather, it is to dispute Bauckham's view (regarding the text as addressing general audiences, not specific groups) which gives preference to J. Louis Martyn's (1998, 26-30) position by supporting Wally

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<sup>13</sup> In his monograph, *History and Theology in the Fourth Gospel* (2nd rev. and enl. ed); Nashville Abingdon (1979) J. Louis Matyn employs redaction criticism to read John's Gospel at two levels: first at the level of tradition and second, in light of John's audience (Martyn 1979, 15-21). Through this approach, Martyn concludes that the term ἀποσυναγωγους in John. 9:22 and 16.2 is reflective of a historical situation in which a formal decision was made by an authoritative body in Judaism to expel Christians from the synagogues in the late first century CE (Martyn 1979,39). In 1998 Martyn's Johannine Gospel hypothesis was challenged by Bauckham. In his essay "For Whom Were the Gospels Written?" published in *The Gospels for All Christians* (1998:9-48), he claimed that the Gospels, like all Greco-Roman biographies, were written to address general audiences, not specific groups (1998, 26-30). In 2014, Wally V. Cirafesi joined the conversation on the Johannine community hypotheses. In his article, "The Johannine Community Hypothesis (1968–Present): Past and Present Approaches and a New Way Forward" (2014), he argues that the solution to the Johannine community hypotheses lies in "the development of methods that place primary emphasis on textual data and, at the same time, have a deep concern for a text's social setting" (Cirafesi 2014, 173). Cirafesi (2014,) supporting Bauckham's earlier hypothesis concludes that "[t]he paradigm shift, I suggest, is in essence a shift back to a scholarly setting that allows for the reconsideration of traditional perspectives on issues such as the authorship, audience and historical value of John's Gospel."

V. Cirefesi's hypothesis on the linguistic functions of the Gospel of John that, "allows for the reconsideration of traditional perspectives on issues such as the authorship, audience and historical value of John's Gospel" (Cirefesi 2014, 173). Although Cifereri's view that John "allows for the reconsideration of traditional perspectives on issues such as the authorship, audience and historical value of John's Gospel", implies that ἀποσυνάγωγος in John 9.22, 12.42, 16.2 is reflective of a historical account, it neither supports total separation between the Matthean community with post-70 CE Judaism, nor does it discount the possibility of the text's rhetorical power and persuasion. In other words, ἀποσυνάγωγος in John 9, 12 and 16, like μαστιγῶω in Matthew 10.17, may not reflect an actual historical circumstance but may be trying to shape the readers' perceptions by the use of rhetoric that may create its own reality rather than reflect it.

The inter texture provides the following two valuable contributions to socio-rhetorical interpretation, namely: (1) providing new information about the history of early Christianity from the point of view of a Biblical text; and (2) presenting the text of the Bible as a symbolic drama representing the experiences of the early Christian community in the historical time of early Christianity (Robbins, 1996a, 63-68; 1996b, 118-120).

In order to decipher the meaning of a Biblical text, it is crucial to read it inter textually; an approach which not only helps in discovering the social, cultural and historical factors that influenced the discourse of the early Christian communities, but also allows for a way to determine some aspects of group relations between the early Christian communities and other religious communities, and with socio-economic and political institutions in their area, within the Roman Empire. Having looked at the inner texture and inter texture, we can now explore the ideological and social identity theories that will be applied in this study when analyzing inter group and intra-group relations.

### 2.3 IDEOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

The understanding of *ideology* in this thesis is mainly grounded in Eagleton's, Robbins', and Wanamaker's perspectives of ideology. Eagleton defines ideology as "the way in which what we say and believe connects with the power-structures and the power-relations of the society we live in... those modes of feelings, valuing, perceiving and believing which have some kind of relations to the maintenance of social power" (Eagleton, 1983, 15). In his definition, Eagleton presents two categories of social phenomena that inform the significance of the concept of ideology. They are; power-relations and power-structures. Thompson understands ideology as "the ways in which the meaning mobilized by symbolic forms serves to establish and sustain relations of domination: to establish, in the sense that meaning may actively create and institute relations of domination; to sustain in the sense that meaning may serve to maintain and reproduce relations of domination through ongoing processes of producing and receiving symbolic forms" (Thompson 1990, 56-57). Grounding his definition in Eagleton, Robbins defines ideology as a reference to "the particular ways in which our speech and action in their social and cultural location, relate to and interconnect with resources, structures and institutions of power" (Robbins 1996b, 36). Robbins' definition adds two additional categories that are helpful in explaining the significance of ideology as a demonstration of power (whether socially or culturally located), namely; speech and action. Hence, the emphasis on rhetoric by Robbins in his SRI. Furthermore, because Robbins' understanding of ideology suggests that "the maintenance and reproduction of social power" are placed in the interest of "some but not others," Wanamaker rightly observed that in this case Robbins' perspective on ideology seems to imply a critical understanding of ideology, not a neutral one. Wanamaker's view is based on the suggestion that Robbins' stand for

critical ideology is based on his use of Eagleton, who stands in the critical tradition of ideology (Wanamaker 2003b, 200-201).

Given the above brief discussion, in this study ideology is referred to as *the symbolic use of language in the form of speech and action as a cultural power generated in response to socio-economic and political structures in order to reconstruct, legitimate and negotiate a cultural identity in a society.*

Basing his views on Thompson, Wanamaker argues that as an analytical tool, ideological analysis attends to four tasks: first is the crucial study of symbolic forms of social meanings. Second, to examine the social context in which symbolic forms are used. Third is to explore the ways in which the meanings generated by symbolic forms can be used to produce and maintain relations of dominion. The fourth task of ideological analysis is to identify the general modes in which ideology operates. For instance; the two ways of justifying legitimation. On the one hand, ideological analysis explores legitimation through “rationalization,” that is; the application of “interconnected reasons” to rationalize or defend social institutions, or social relations. On the other hand, exploring the legitimation process in ideological analysis requires one to investigate how legitimation is justified through “universalization” by portraying features of the institute that in reality serve the interests of a few people, while claiming to serve the interests of everybody, to justify legitimation (Wanamaker 2003b, 200-201). Furthermore, Max Weber and Peter Berger’s theories supplement Wanamaker’s notion of the process by which legitimation takes place through traditionalizing of sacred references. On the one hand, Weber noted that adherents of charismatic movements tend to either traditionalize or rationalize the status of a movement in order to legitimate their charismatic authority (Weber 1968, 246). On the other hand, Berger

contends that some leaders tend to legitimate the beliefs of a movement through a sacred frame of reference to bestow ontological status to the movement and facilitate its validity and sustenance in a manner that transcends its own history (Berger 1969, 33-34).

Robbins, Wanamaker and Berger collectively offer a description of ideological analysis which is relevant in this study because they suggest the importance of studying the first-century social history of the Matthean community. This is necessary in order to observe the symbols of power relations and power structures emerging from the Roman Empire, the Jesus Movement (Early Christian communities), and Diaspora Judaism, and how these relations impacted the conception of the cultural identity of the Matthean community from the point of view of the Gospel narrative. Their conception of the analytical task of critical ideology calls for certain concepts that signify certain political, religious, and cultural structures associated with identity formation in Antiquity, such as ethnicity, deity, geography, taxation, baptism, family, and law. These concepts will be explored to elaborate on the social context which triggered Matthew to compose his Gospel. Matthew's Gospel stands as a kind of ideology for shaping the identity of his community where concepts such as ἀδελφός, ἑκκλησία and names such as David and Abraham expressed in Jesus' genealogy (Matt 1.1: 1 Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυεὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ) are of special relevance in the formation of the Christian identity of Matthew's community.

Having outlined SRI approaches as analytical tool for analyzing the text of the SM, I shall now explore the dynamics of Social Identity Political Theory (SIPT) and point out its relevance in analyzing the group relations between the Matthean community and the Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism, and the Jesus Movement from the point of view of the SM.

## 2.4 A SOCIAL-IDENTITY POLITICAL THEORY (SIPT)

Having outlined the rationale for using the concept of identity politics in this study, it is time to set out the definition of identity politics in order to provide the focus and limitations of this study. Sylvia Tesh and Bruce Williams view identity politics as “the demand based on lived experiences of common knowledge and shared values of ordinary people evident in women’s, gay and lesbian and civil rights movements, where members struggle to replace negative stereotypes with robust and positive images of themselves” (Tesh and Williams 1996). Even though Tesh and Williams in their definition have not specified the point of reference from which the collective action is determined, they present the subjects of identity politics as aggravated persons contesting together to defend their collective self-esteem. Mary Bernstein’s perception of identity politics as “the emergency of a way to make sense of, engage and change the social condition of stigmatization and material disadvantaged people” (Bernstein 2005) portrays identity politics as a social movement that intends to mitigate social malevolence. Unfortunately, Bernstein has left out the subject of her version of identity politics, that is; she does not describe the ‘actors’ of this perspective of identity politics.

In defining identity politics as “narratives of collective selfhood...that help to guide people’s actions and simultaneously constitute individuals and collectivities” they attempt to answer the question of who are we (consciousness), how we define others (boundaries), what is the source of our problem, and how we can make the world better (politics), Dawn Moon (2012, 1340) presents a definition that focuses on the function of the individual self (“I”) and collective selfhood (“we”) in forming and maintaining the function of a social movement. Moon’s definition of identity politics is more plausible than that proposed by either Tesh, Williams, or Bernstein, not only because it goes beyond perceiving identity politics as merely a social movement, but also

because it regards the concept to be a result of collective and individual narratives.

Although there are several theories espoused for identity politics,<sup>14</sup> for the purpose of this study, the definition of identity politics is derived from those stated above by Tesh and Williams, Bernstein, and Moon. From the above definitions, the following concepts offer the appropriate nuances for the definition of identity politics which will be used in this thesis: power struggles, group and individual narratives, group image, disenfranchised community, values/beliefs. For the purposes of this study, I define identity politics as the *accommodation of beliefs, values and norms by a marginal group to leverage their social status by recategorization and identification with a movement in order to contest against a dominating group.*

To elaborate the implied author's basis for the SM in the identity politics of the Matthean community, three modes are applied in the analysis of chapters 5 to 7. These modes of identity politics are: (1) the embattled and contestive-accommodation, (2) the humanistic and contestive-accommodation and, (3) social evangelistic-accommodation.

In this chapter I will employ a social identity political theory derived from the work of Ann Faulkner, Aaron Kuecker, and Philip Esler. From Dawn Moon's work, particularly the categories of *recategorization* and *identification* will be used.

A two-step elaboration of this social identity theory is important. First, recategorization refers to the "division of the social world into assessable group entities," whose main three preconditions are depersonalization, stereotyping, and vilification (Faulkner 2005, 3-4; Kuecker

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<sup>14</sup>Several theories have been employed to explore the subject of identity politics. On the one hand, some scholars in reference to other theories in the social sciences, such as Critical Race Theory (Valdes 1996), Cultural Logic Theory (Fisher 1999) and Genetic Theory (Brodwin 2002), have appreciated the contribution of *essentialism* and *non-essentialism* in identity politics. However, there are some scholars (Hall 1993, 11,99; Tesh and Williams 1996, 289; Crenshaw 1991, 1226-1297; Clifford 2000, 89; Nash 2008, 2) who, being apprehensive of this contribution, prefer intersectionality to either essentialism or non-essentialism.

2016, 70; Esler 2016, 164-165). This is pertinent for elaborating on the dynamics of group relations in identity formation. In pursuit of this, *depersonalization*, *stereotyping*, and *vilification* are vital preconditions to recategorization because they collectively facilitate peoples' self-conceptions of who they are in terms of community membership, and in the less favorable attitudes towards the outer group (Faulkner 2005, 2-4; Kuecker 2016, 70). *Stereotype* refers to a conception of peoples' self-awareness of who they are in terms of their group membership, rather than unique individual traits. Stereotypical categories may bear either negative or positive connotations (Esler 2003, 21-22; Kuecker 2016, 70). *Vilification*, like stereotypes, conceives identity in terms of group membership, but mostly appeals to derogatory language or prejudice against members of an outer group (Faulkner 2005, 3-4). To address the negative effects of vilification and stereotyping that tend to perpetuate inter-group hostility and antagonism, recategorization into a *superordinate category* is necessary. A superordinate category refers to the redrawing of group boundaries in order to bring into one group members of an in-group and out-group, without collapsing their distinctiveness, but in a manner that acknowledges their commonality (Baker 2016, 107-108).

*Identification* refers to the notion of human beings' preference to belong to a group because they conceive it to rightfully express a self-conception of who they are. The precondition for identification is the existence of two or more individuals who conceive themselves as members of a group (Faulkner 2005, 3-4). Belonging to a group is driven by two factors, namely; (1) a desire to maintain self-esteem and (2) to have their life guided by group norms. In some cases, identification, such as in ethnic groupings, presents rigid boundaries of identity, unlike in such a case as belonging to a football club (Faulkner 2005, 2-3; Kuecker 2016, 70-71).

*Comparison* refers to the maintenance of one's awareness of who they are through a

process of observing similarities and differences, by which groups favorably differentiate themselves. Because comparison is applied positively as a mode of expression of in-group self-love rather than out-group hatred, comparison generally aims to maintain the positive social identity of a group. For example, economic status, purity codes, or language may have been used to refer to one group in comparison to a higher status group in order to boost the in-group's identity against an outer-group (Kuecker 2016, 71-72).

In Antiquity, identity was not focused on self-individuation. Rather, the individual was understood and expressed in relation to others. Malina and Neyrey in *Portraits of Paul: An Archeology of Ancient Personality* (1996), claim that in Antiquity:

...the most elementary unit of social analysis is not the individual person considered apart from others as a unique being. Rather, it is the collectivist person, the group-embedded person, the person always in relation with and connected to at least one other social unit, usually a kinship group (Malina, and Jerome H. Neyrey 1996, 157).

Thus, in Antiquity, the individual was known not from his personal preference but on account of the group's norms and aspirations. Thus, Malina and Neyrey apply the concept of *embeddedness*, which refers to “a social-psychological quality describing the dimensions of group-oriented persons by which all members of the group share a common perspective” (Malina, and Neyrey 1996, 159). This *dyadic personality*, that is; the expression and the knowledge of the individual through other people or institutions, is confirmed by Plutarch (46-120 CE), a Greek biographer and essayist, who later became a Roman citizen, in his *Dialogue on Love* (754D) when he claimed that:

The nurses rule the infant, the teacher the boy, the gymnasiarch the youth, his admirer the Youngman who, when he comes of age, is ruled by law and his commanding general. No one is his own master, no one is unrestricted.

If we understand Plutarch's "rule" to be explicitly pointing to the expression of knowledge, then the above passage confirms that a person's identity was expressed in relation to the mentor or associations to which one belonged. Malina and Neyrey (1996, 158) observe that expressions of identity, as rhetorically expressed by Plutarch, indicate that in Antiquity, "persons... define themselves almost exclusively in terms of the groups in which they are embedded. Their total self-awareness emphatically depends on such group embeddedness." Thus, in Antiquity, group norms, rather than individual or self-choice and decisions, such as those in a household, kinship, family, clan, factions, or cultic associations, provided modes of identity formation, as shall be discussed in relation to the cultural identity formation in the Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism, the Jesus Movement and the Matthean community.

The expression of identity in light of group-embeddedness challenges modern theories of identity politics, particularly, Moon's identity politics. The main challenge is Moon's conception of her understanding that in modern identity politics, identity is expressed in collective selfhood. The concept of collective selfhood would have been a strange, if not anachronistic way of conceiving expressions of identity in Antiquity, because in ancient times identity was often expressed via group-embeddedness rather than collective selfhood. Thus, Malina and Neyrey's conception of dyadic personality provides us with a four-point leverage for deriving a modified version of Moon's perspective on identity politics. In this way, her theory is applicable in explaining group relations and expressions of identity in Antiquity.

Following Mayer N. Zald and John D. McCarthy, Moon proposes that when a community suspects that the narrative for its identity is threatened with destruction, "they can respond by defining and defending explicit, fixed boundaries, foreclose negotiation and thus reifying the

boundaries of the group”, to produce, “embattled collective selfhood” (Moon 2012, 1350), which requires some adjustment for it to be relevant when examining identity politics in Antiquity. Rather, the maxim, while maintaining the cause, needs some modifications. This can be stated as follows: when a community conceives that the accepted narrative for identity is challenged by another, a dominant narrative of identity, they can respond by defining and defending explicit, fixed boundaries which foreclose negotiation and thus reify the boundaries of the group to negotiate the cultural status of their embattled and contestive-accommodative identity. This modification is based on the understanding that since Antiquity, identity was expressed in the light of group-embeddedness, so the response of individuals will, when the survival of their identity is challenged, respond by accommodating the group beliefs, values and norms of a particular group (rather than self-individual preference) to contest against the dominating group. This will be demonstrated in chapter 5.

Drawing from Martin Buber’s *I-thou* and *I-it* perspective of identity, Moon (2012, 1356) presents a principle he refers to as a “humanistic dialogue” mode of identity politics. The humanistic dialogue mode of identity politics can be defined as a category of identity politics which focuses on “shared humanity” in order to effect social change by focusing on “breaking down boundaries between the self and the other.” How does the humanistic dialogue mode accomplish the breaking down of boundaries that cause divisions, and hence could cause and sustain group conflict? Moon contends that the humanistic dialogue mode of identity politics attempts to seek lasting political transformation by encouraging antagonistic groups to “develop a consciousness of the deeper values shared commonly by all the people-through dialogue, education, and listening with love and compassion” (Moon 2012, 1355-1357). What is the purpose and value of a humanistic dialogue mode of identity politics? Moon outlines at least two

purposes for this mode of identity politics, the overall goal of which is to develop a “relating model of the collective self.” The purpose of a humanistic dialogue mode of identity politics is to promote porous boundaries of identity by seeking “to expand...boundaries until there is no more ‘they’ at all” (Moon 2012, 1355). The value of a humanistic dialogue mode is that a group’s focus on common shared values has the propensity to mitigate the violent outcomes of an embattled mode of identity politics. This mode of identity politics is premised on the principle that to mitigate the violent outcomes of an embattled mode of identity politics, proponents of a humanistic and contestive-accommodation approach respond by accommodating the beliefs, values and norms of a particular group to reconstruct and legitimate their cultural identity. The humanistic and contestive-accommodation mode of identity politics is employed in this thesis to explain Matthew’s negotiation of a cultural identity in his community in terms of the relations of the Matthean community with the Jesus Movement. This will be undertaken in chapter 6.

Moon (2013, 1363) defines the social movement evangelism mode as “any process of teaching others that there is good and evil, and recruiting them to the side of good.” Moon, exemplifying the function of a social evangelism mode of identity politics, says that “a group may, for instance, see the teachings of Mao or Trotsky as the truth that redeems people from the evils of capitalism and defines outsiders as those lost to the truth” (Moon 2012, 1363). Moon’s social movement evangelism mode of identity politics signifies deliverance from ignorance and subjection to social injustices described as “evils.” Thus, Moon contends that the goal of social movement evangelism is “to transform individuals [by] creating redeemed selves” in the process (Moon 2012, 1363).

What is the *modus operandi* of social movement evangelism? To execute its operations, the social movement evangelism mode of identity politics focuses on “its combination of a

consciousness of the self as fluid, and a focus on the individual level of transformation” (Moon 2012, 1363). In this case, Moon affirms a three-fold process through which the operations of the social movement evangelism mode are accomplished: (1) the conception of the self as fluid allows transformation to take place on account of psychological self-decision making; (2) Manichaean boundaries emphasize rigidity made possible by the conception of reality in terms of the contrast between good and evil and; (3) a focus on the individual implies that transformation is to be understood as the redemption of the individual as opposed to a group. To be noted here, and contrary to Moon, in the ancient world individualism was not strongly experienced. Instead, people expressed their identity in relation to other people, places and things. Life was group-oriented through associations such as families and other social groups.

Furthermore, the process of the transformation of the individual in social movement evangelism is observed in a two-fold process that marks a change in; (1) the self-perception of one’s identity and; (2) lifestyle. Citing an example of change of attitude as part of the transformation, Moon remarks: “I did hear echoes of this narrative in my research...when Palestinian-Jewish dialoguers referred to themselves as a type of person converted from, but now unlike, those others who prefer to dehumanize others and fight rather than listen and make peace” (Moon 2012, 1364). In this example, Moon cites a case where transformation of the individual is understood in terms of a conversion of attitude from being violent to becoming peaceful. Moon claims that the transformation perspective of the social movement evangelism mode of identity politics is a community experience, such as gay rights movements. Moon reports an example of a former gay rights movement leader, who rejected gay identity in favor of a heterosexual, Christian identity. Moon noted him saying:

If you’ve submitted, the Lord will put you through a period where you don’t know who

you are. You lose your identity for a while. Then finally, your heterosexual identity begins to emerge, and you think, I could do that. I could have relationships. You really want someone who is yours. You can have it in [heterosexual] marriage (Moon 2012, 1369).

Moon's citation of the example of this former gay rights movement leader illustrates the transformation of the individual taking place through a decision-making process enforced by self-assessment. In the social movement evangelism mode of identity politics, this self-decision making by the former gay rights movement leader led to the redemption of the previous preference of sexual orientation.

Applying Moon's psychological self-decision-making concept would be anachronistic with respect to Antiquity because at that time, the identity of the individual was based on dyadic personality. That is, individual identity was derived from belonging to a collective of some sort or in relation to other people or cities. To appropriately apply Moon's theory of identity politics to explain the reconstruction and legitimation of a first-century Christian identity, social evangelistic and contestive- accommodation is premised on the principle that marginal groups accommodate group beliefs, values and norms of a particular group to contest against the dominating group and redeem unredeemed individuals. Social evangelistic and contestive- accommodation mode of identity politics is discussed in chapter 7.

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

The above discussion of ideological analysis and social identity theories is an attempt at constructing a model for explaining group relations in this thesis, namely; the social-identity political theory (SIPT). The SIPT in this thesis operates under the three premises provided above. Robbins' SRI and the SIPT briefly outlined here collectively provide a theoretical framework for

extrapolating the identity politics in the SM. To this end, I will proceed by employing Robbins' SRI to analyze the SM before exploring cultural identity formation in Antiquity to provide the social setting for the interpretation of the Beatitudes (5.3-12), Jesus' sayings on law (5.17-20) and the Matthean Lord's Prayer (6.9-13) as a basis for Matthew's negotiation of a cultural identity in his community.

## CHAPTER 3

### A TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

How should we read a Biblical text in order to appropriately uncover its original meaning in light of its textuality, implied author and implied audience? Answering this question is important not only because it provides the opportunity for exploring the text-author-audience interaction as a way of drawing meanings from the text, but it also begs an interpretive approach that helps to elucidate the difference between the intentions of the implied author from that of the implied audience. To answer this question, I am going to engage SRI to critically analyze the SM in terms of the text-author-audience interaction. The purpose of this approach is to determine the meaning of the text regarding the contribution of the implied author and that of the implied audience. The goal of this analysis is to support the argument that an SRI reading of the SM in the context shows that Matthew, as the implied author and narrator, applied his concept of righteousness as a hermeneutical key for explaining the ideological significance of the SM. To this end, I will first briefly elaborate the inner texture of the SM before briefly discussing its intertextual dynamics.

#### 3.2 INNER TEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF THE SM

##### 3.2.1 *Repetitive-Progressive Inner Texture*

The repetitive-progressive inner texture can be observed by taking note of the words in italics and bold print from the Greek text of Matt 5:3-12 (NA<sup>28</sup>):

3	<b>μακάριοι</b> οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι ἡ βασιλεία ἐστὶν αὐτῶν τῶν οὐρανῶν.	(declaration)  explanation reason for being honored
4	<b>μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες</b> (declaration) ὅτι <b>αὐτοὶ</b> παρακληθήσονται.	explanation reason for being honored
5	<b>μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς</b> ὅτι <b>αὐτοὶ</b> κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.	(declaration) explanation reason for being honored
6	<b>μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες</b> καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην ὅτι <b>αὐτοὶ</b> χορτασθήσονται.	(declaration) explanation reason for being honored
7	<b>μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες</b> ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.	(declaration) explanation reason for being honored
8	<b>μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ</b> τῆ καρδία, ὅτι <b>αὐτοὶ</b> ὄψονται τὸν θεὸν .	(declaration) explanation reason for being honored
9	<b>μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοὶ</b> ὅτι <b>αὐτοὶ</b> κληθήσονται υἱοὶ θεοῦ	(declaration ) explanation reason for being honored
10	<b>μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι</b> ἐνεκεν δικαιοσύνης ὅτι ἡ βασιλεία ἐστὶν αὐτῶν τῶν οὐρανῶν.	explanation reason for being honored
11	<b>μακάριοι</b> ἐστε... (declaration) ὅταν <b>ὀνειδίωσιν</b> καὶ <b>ὑμᾶς</b> <b>διώξωσιν</b> καὶ <b>εἰπωσιν</b> ῥῆμα πονηρὸν πάν ψευδόμενοι ἐνεκεν ἐμοῦ καθ' ὑμῶν	amplification
12	χαίrete καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε ὅτι ὁ μισθὸς <b>ὑμῶν</b> ..... πολὺς οὐρανοῖς ἐν τοῖς γὰρ ἐδίωξαν τοὺς προφήτας οὕτως πρὸς ὑμῶν.	exhortation  explanation  Illustration=Legitimation

In the Beatitudes (Matt 5.3-12), the term μακάριοι is traditionally translated as “blessed” (Rodgers and Rodgers 1998, 8; Luz 2007, 190). Although blessed makes a reasonable translation in a religious context where good fortune is regarded as a divine gift, Janzen and Hanson have disputed this translation, preferring a different one. Janzen translated μακάριοι as, “to be envied is the man,” or, “enviable is the situation of a man” (Janzen 1965, 225). Hanson contends that Janzen’s translation is misleading because “in the Mediterranean, envy is associated with casting an evil eye, wishing misfortune, and greed.” So, Hanson translates μακάριοι as “how honorable,” which he thinks befits Mediterranean cultural expectations where μακάριοι in Matthew’s Beatitudes, “are part of the word-field and value system of honor and shame, the foundational Mediterranean culture” (Hanson 1994, 81, 87, 90). Malina and Neyrey noted that honor and shame are “paramount pivotal values” of the Mediterranean culture (Malina and Jerome H. Neyrey 1991, 25). In this chapter, I rely on Hanson’s translation of “how honorable” because it befits the social cultural significance of the time and the concerns of cultural identity formation in Matthew’s Gospel, which will be discussed further in chapters 5 to 7.

From the above diagram it can be seen that the rhetorical function of μακάριοι in Matthew’s Beatitudes is elaborated by the repetitive-progressive inner texture in the context of cause-result-explanation in verses 3 to 10, which climaxes with amplification via an illustration in verses 11 and 12. Furthermore, μακάριοι is repeatedly mentioned—nine times in total—from verses 3 to 11, and stands as the *result* of the *cause* presented by either a substantive adjective (3, 5, 7-9) or adjectival participles used substantively as the accompanying articles to each of them (4,6,10) to stand as objects (results) of the declaration μακάριοι. The relation between the cause and result necessitates the presence of the conjunction in order to explain this relationship of

*cause-result*, particularly in verses 3-10. In other words, the conjunction ὅτι, which occurs eight times, is translated “because,” “since” or “for,” in these Beatitudes, which semantically serves an explanatory purpose. This is because in the context of repetitive-progressive texture it introduces the explanation of the dependent clause, bearing the μακάριοί, a sustentative adjective presenting the object of the dependent clause, which lacks a transitive verb. To elaborate this in the SM, it is crucial to observe the tenses, verbs, adjectives and participles because they describe the action and either the subject and/or object, which characterizes Matt 5. 3-12. The repetitive-progressive inner texture in the Beatitudes is observed by taking note of the semantic function of adjectives and participles in the text, as elaborated in the following three ways.

First, μακάριοι, a plural substantive adjective modified by several repetitive adjectives (in verses 3,5,7,8 and 9) and repetitive adjectival participles (in verses 4, 6, 10 and 11) indicate that the Beatitudes are ethical in character because they describe a specific mode of behavior related to specific deeds and consequences to which a reward is promised, which motivates such behavior and deeds (Riches 2000, 189). In this case, οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι (5.3), οἱ πενθοῦντες (5.4) and οἱ πραεῖς (5.5) collectively describe behavior or virtue while οἱ ἐλεήμονες (5.7), οἱ καθαροὶ τῆ καρδίᾳ (5.8), οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί (5.9) describe the attitudes which ought to be associated with the way of acting towards others, or the world. Thus, the repetitive aspect of μακάριοι is applied to progressively declare first the virtues or behaviors, and then the attitudes that ought to shape the character of the disciples of Jesus.

Second, while the nominative adjectives and adjectival participles introduce the subject of the blessings, the future tenses (verses 4 to 9) correspondingly and repetitively describe various rewards in the future as the result of the state of the disciples described by nominative adjective or

adjectival participles and are qualified by the declaration of μακάριοι. The various future rewards ranging from παρακαλέω (v 4) κληρονομέω (v 5), χορτάζω (v 6), ἐλεέω (7), αὐτοὶ τὸν θεὸν ὄψονται (v 8) and αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται (v9), are explained in an independent clause and introduced by the conjunction ὅτι. For instance, in verse 5 οἱ πραεῖς is a nominative adjective stating the cause and is qualified by the declaration of μακάριοι (a nominative adjective) and the cause (of οἱ πραεῖς) is explained as ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν, which is a declaration of promise in the future tense in regarding earthly life. This repetitive mention of various rewards in the future that progress from being comforted (παρακαλέω) to being called or recognized as a son of God (αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ θεοῦ κληθήσονται) seems to be revealing something about social values associated with honor.

Third, given this brief analysis, it means that the first eight Beatitudes (5.3-9) have a chiasmic structure with verse 6 as the center of this chiasm. The Beatitude, οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, is the center of the chiasm, and performs two crucial semantic tasks in the Beatitudes as well as in the SM. On the one hand, as the center of the chiasmus, verse 6 indicates that the behaviors outlined in the first three Beatitudes (5.3-5), as well as the attitudes represented by the other three (5.7-9), collectively demonstrate the meaning of οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην. There is a chiasmic connection between ABC and C'B'A', which can be explained as follows. The virtues or behaviors described by οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, οἱ πενθοῦντες, οἱ πραεῖς (Matt 5.3-5) collectively demonstrate a character described as οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην (Matt. 5:6 BGT). Thus, we have the ABC aspect of chiasmus. On the other hand, those whose character is described by οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην depict the capacity to relate to the world demonstrated by ἐλεηθήσονται (Matt 5.7), ὄψονται (Matt 5.8), and κληθήσονται (5.9). This then is the C'B'A' aspect of the chiasmus.

Because the first eight Beatitudes collectively demonstrate the meaning of “those thirsting and hungering for righteousness” (5.6), they seem to elaborate the significance of the declaration in 5.20, ὅτι ἐὰν μὴ περισσεύσῃ ἡ δικαιοσύνη ὑμῶν πλεῖον τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων, οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν. This connection between the Beatitudes and Jesus’ declaration in 5.20 is further emphasized by the first Beatitude’s insistence that οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι are declared μακάριοι because ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. This means if δικαιοσύνη is to be understood as a reference to virtue, human attitude, or behavior (Betz 1995, 152, 192; Luz 2007, 195), then οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι describes an example of the virtue or behavior which qualifies one to enter the kingdom of heaven. Thus, the Beatitudes elaborate the significance of Jesus’ declaration in 5.20. In addition, verses 3 and 10 share a common feature not present in any of the others (excluding 11-12). The focus belongs to the poor in spirit and those who are reviled. There is also a kind of formulation used to develop these Beatitudes, namely; μακάριος + adjective or participle + explanatory ὅτι clause. Hanson says that third-person forms of μακάριος (verses 3-12) are most likely original and “emphasize a relationship to Jesus [and] focus on general ethical behavior.” 5.11-12 seem to have been appended later (Hanson 1994, 99).

The final Beatitude in 5:11-12 stands outside this ring of composition because it breaks the pattern of the others completely. As noted, it changes from the third person to the second, from the indicative to the subjunctive. It is also by far the longest; thirty-four words compared to twelve. The next longest are the two verses forming the ring composition (verses 3 and 10). It is progressive in nature because it picks up the theme from verse 3 of “poor in spirit” and progressively elaborates its significance using the Beatitudes, outlining ethical behavior (verses 4-9), concluding with the promise of the kingdom of heaven in verse 10. Thus, the Beatitude elaborates upon the theme of “poor in spirit” extensively, going beyond what seems to have

existed in the Q tradition (the source for the common tradition of Jesus' sayings found in Luke and Matthew only). Luke 6:22-23 is closer to the original tradition. The prepositional phrases τῷ πνεύματι and τῇ καρδίᾳ appearing in the first and sixth Beatitudes, respectively, seem to focus on the spirit and heart as spheres of operation for the subjects of "how honored." Nolland affirms that these prepositional phrases indicate a background of deprivation and oppression viewed in terms of the absence of God but bear the oppression patiently; waiting for God to act on their behalf (Nolland 2005, 200-201, 204). Baasland claims that the prepositional phrase in the first Beatitude (τῷ πνεύματι) refers to "poor in an economic and social sense." In the sixth one (τῇ καρδίᾳ), indicates a Jewish background regarding the temple visions of God's *shekhinah*, and refers to a precondition for "mystical seeing or a cognitive understanding" of God (Baasland 2015, 53, 60). Baasland points to the socio-economic and political function of the Matthean Beatitudes. This multivalent function of the Beatitudes is discussed in chapter 5.

Moreover, as these Beatitudes unfold, there is a change from third person plural in verses 3 to 9 to the second person plural in verses 11. What does this change signify? Luz asserts that the shift to second person is most likely the original form. This indicates that originally the Beatitudes directly addressed people who were suffering. Later, but prior to Matthew, this was changed to third person as is customary with the macarisms in Luke 6.22-23. Luz suggests that the Beatitudes were first redacted from the Q source by both Luke and Matthew, but later added to the so-called "special M" bearing the third person plural, and of course "M" may not have been available to Luke (Luz 2007, 185-186). Davies and Allison suggest that originally the Beatitudes probably circulated in second person in isolation in the form of 5.11-12. Later, Matthew joined them to 5.3-10 because, "either he wished to smoothen the transition to 5.13-16 which is in the second person: 'You are the salt of the earth' ... or he thought it would be climatic to switch from the third to

second person: ‘you rejoice and you be glad’” (Davies and Allison 1988, 461).

Consequently, in view of Matthew’s redactive activities, the beatitudes seem to convey a discourse for three communities, namely; the community of Q, Luke and that of Matthew. Thus, Schnackenburg helps us to understand that the SM, “localized by Luke to a level plain, is a Matthean composition that critically applies Luke 6.20-29, some materials derived from the sayings of Jesus’ source (Q) to constitute a programmatic discourse relevant to the Matthean community” (Schnackenburg 2002, 44). As far as repetitive-progressive inner texture is concerned, it seems that Matthew, the implied author, employed the Beatitudes as a climax of his teaching concerning righteousness. After repetitively applying adjectives and adjectival participles to outline the virtues (5.3-5) and behaviors (5.7-10) that manifest the character of one οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, he culminates his teaching with the ninth Beatitude 5.11-12. Some scholars question the originality of ψευδόμενοι, in the list of the activities of persecution outlined in verse 11, which refers to “attempting to mislead by lying or deception.”<sup>15</sup> Although the word is lacking in some ancient manuscripts such as D and in Luke’s Sermon on the plain (Luke. 6.22), internal reasons back its presence (Betz 1995, 148). The text seems rhetorically to create the impression that the official position of the Jewish Sanhedrin was to persecute followers of Jesus, as witnessed by John in 9.22, has never been demonstrated during the period in which the Gospel of Matthew was written. Matthew’s text seems to indicate that to justify persecution of the followers of Jesus by individuals or groups, it would have been quite natural to lie in order to taint the claims made about Jesus by members of the Jesus Movement.

Not only does the change from third (5.3-10) to second person (5.11) enable Matthew to

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<sup>15</sup>For instance, see the following articles: Konrad Kohler “Die ursprüngliche Form der Seligpreisungen” (1918, 158-163), Akira Satake, “Das Leiden der Junger um meinetwillen” (1976, 4-19) and Michael W. Holmes, “The Text of Matt 5.11” (1986, 283-286).

address his community directly, but  $\delta\upsilon\epsilon\iota\delta\iota\sigma\omega\sigma\iota\nu$ ,  $\delta\iota\omega\zeta\omega\sigma\iota\nu$  and  $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\pi\omega\sigma\iota\nu$   $\pi\tilde{\alpha}\nu$   $\pi\omicron\nu\eta\rho\delta\acute{\omicron}\nu$   $\kappa\alpha\theta'$   $\acute{\upsilon}\mu\tilde{\omega}\nu$  (5.11) also reify the kind of suffering that qualified his community for a righteousness to surpass that of the teachers of the law and scribes (5.20). It also exhorts the community to rejoice for a greater  $\mu\iota\sigma\theta\delta\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$  in heaven (Matt 5.12), replicating the condition for entrance to the kingdom of heaven (5.20b). How do we make sense of the exhortation to “rejoice” and “exult” in the context of suffering? Luz contends that “the reason for the joy lies in the reversal of the conditions that the future will bring” when the oppressed will receive their heavenly reward (Luz 2007, 199). Luz’s position underscores the acceptance of suffering by early Christians communities as God’s will.

In view of the text-reader interaction, I as the reader have employed repetitive- progressive inner texture, to understand Matthew’s Beatitudes as expressing virtues or behaviors and attitudes that, on the one hand elaborate Jesus’ declaration in 5.20, and on the other describe characteristics befitting a member of the kingdom of heaven. What kind of repetitive-progressive inner texture is signified by Jesus’ sayings on the law (5.17-20)? A brief flow chart of 5.17-20 prepares the way for observing the repetitive-progressive inner texture of this passage.

- |   |                                      |                      |             |
|---|--------------------------------------|----------------------|-------------|
| 17. νομίσητε  |                                      |                      |             |
| Μή  |                                      |                      |             |
| ὅτι ἦλθον   | καταλῦσαι τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφῆτας· |                      | negation    |
| ἦλθον   | καταλῦσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι[ τὸν νόμον]. |                      | validation  |
| οὐκ   |                                      |                      |             |
| 18. Ἀμὴν γὰρ λέγω ὑμῖν,                                   |                                      |                      |             |
| παρέλθῃ   | ὁ οὐρανὸς                            | παρέλθῃ              | elaboration |
| οὐ μὴ ἕως   | καὶ                                  | ἂν                   |             |
| ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου   |                                      | ἢ γῆ                 |             |
| ἰῶτα  |                                      |                      |             |
| ἢ μία κεραία  |                                      | ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται |             |
|   |                                      | ἂν                   |             |
| 19. Ὃς ἐὰν οὖν λύσῃ τῶν ἐντολῶν καὶ διδάξῃ τοὺς ἀνθρώπους |                                      |                      | condition   |
| μίαν  | οὕτως                                |                      |             |
| τούτων τῶν ἐλαχίστων                                      |                                      |                      |             |

ἐλάχιστος κληθήσεται ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν.	result: loss of honor
ὅς δ' ἂν ποιήσῃ καὶ διδάξῃ, οὗτος μέγας κληθήσεται ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν.	condition result: gain honor
20. Λέγω γὰρ ὑμῖν ὅτι ἐὰν μὴ περισσεύσῃ ἡ δικαιοσύνη τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων οὐ μὴ ὑμῶν πλεῖον εἰσέλθητε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν	protasis    apodosis

While the Beatitudes are mostly characterized by participles and adjectives, this passage, which pertains to the abiding character of the law from the point of view of Jesus' sayings, is primarily made up of eight verbs in the subjunctive mood. These subjunctive verbs are also accompanied by several negative particles posing as adverbs, so they can mostly be classified as emphatic negations or prohibitions (Wallace 1996, 463). Thus, they express the authoritative force of the sayings of Jesus in the Matthean community. We also see inner texture in this passage where the particle functions rhetorically as an adverb. For instance, *μὴ* and *οὐκ* modify *νομίζω* and *καταλύω*, respectively, in verse 17. In verse 18, a combination of *οὐ* and *μὴ* modifies *ἰδῶτα* and *κεραία*. The adverbs of *μὴ* that modify *περισσεύω* and the combination of *οὐ* and *μὴ* modifies *εἰσέρχομαι* in verse 20. Another repetitive pattern is noted in the form of conjunctions. For instance, the conjunction *γὰρ* appears in verses 17 and 20 to perform an explanatory function. Similarly, the phrase “λέγω ὑμῖν” is repeatedly mentioned in verses 18 and 20 to emphasize the speech performance of the sayings of Jesus. Further repetition is found in the use of the noun *βασιλεία*, which appears twice in verses 19 and 20, to emphasize teaching Jesus' sayings on the law to others, and in verse 20b to emphasize the result of practicing and teaching righteousness, which greatly surpasses that of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees.

In reference to the repetitive-progressive inner texture, the verbs play a crucial role in

executing the text-reader interaction. The following four semantic functions for building specific themes are observable. Firstly, this passage reveals the use of language expressing interest in religious authorities, as well as that regarding the earth as a sphere of religious activities just like the heavens. For instance, in 5.17 the phrase τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφῆτας like τοὺς προφῆτας in the Beatitudes (5.12), reveals the text's affinity with Israel's religious institutions. In the Beatitudes, the earth is an inheritance promised to the meek (5.5), just as the enduring nature of the earth (and the heavens) in Matt 5.18 is a confirmation of the endurance of the law.

Secondly, the text shows a repetitive pattern in terms of the kingdom of heaven as a sphere for granting either honor or shame. Consequently, Matt 5.19 promises honor or shame in the kingdom of heaven on account of obedience or disobedience when practicing and teaching others to practice Jesus' ἐντολή (command) on Torah obedience; in verse 17, he specifically mentions the law and the prophets. This is akin to the Beatitudes' declaration of inheritance of the kingdom of heaven as a result of being "poor in the spirit" (5.3). Both cases depict the kingdom of heaven as the sphere for granting honor. In the expression 'kingdom of heaven,' 'heaven' is always plural in Greek because the early Christians believed there were different levels of heaven, as Paul indicates in 2Cor 12.2 and 20.

Thirdly, the connection between the text's depiction of Jesus' declaration that οὐκ ἤλθον καταλῦσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι (5.17) and the demand for righteousness which surpasses that of the teachers of the law and Pharisees (5.20), reveals an interesting progression that culminates with a promise of entrance into the kingdom of heaven. Because of the technicality of this phrase, defining the key words is crucial. While καταλύω refers to "annul," "do away," or "abolish" (Danker 2000, 522), πληρόω refers to "bring into completion" (Louw and Eugene A. Nida 1988, 598). The τὸν νόμον ἢ τοὺς προφῆτας refers to sacred ordinance, law, the Pentateuch, and the

works of Moses (Danker 2000, 678). This expression also appears in the LXX (Septuagint) to refer to the development of the Hebrew canon (Zech 7.12; 2 Macc 15.9; 4 Macc 18.10). Betz correctly observes that Matt 5.17 stands as “a set phrase referring to the Holy Scripture of the Jews as a whole” (Betz 1995, 177). The interpretation of this verse has been a matter of debate among scholars, particularly regarding the question of whether Jesus’ sayings on the law in this verse nullify the Torah. For instance, Adolf von Harnack’s analysis supports this view.<sup>16</sup> Also noteworthy is that since γὰρ (5.20a) is a coordinate conjunction (Wallace 1996, 667), not only does it link the previous passages with 5.20, but it also seems, in this case, to introduce a conclusion. So, righteousness in 5.20 can be understood as a result of Jesus’ declaration in 5.17. Finally, λέγω... ὑμῖν belongs to the formulaic sayings of Jesus found also in Matthew 6.29.

Fourthly, it is noteworthy that 5.20 is a conditional sentence with two features that need to be taken account of: First, note that ὅτι, a subordinate conjunction, links 5.20a to 5.20b. Consequently, 5.20a presents a dependent conditional protasis clause which is grammatically dependent on the main clause. Thus, 5.20b presents a grammatically independent resultant apodosis standing as the main clause. Although the declaration οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν (5.20 a) is grammatically independent, in absence of 5.20b, rhetorically it remains incomplete because its meaning is completed by 5.20b. In other words, the declaration οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθητε εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν (5.20b) can only be true because one has not met the conditions stated in 5.20a. Thus, the explanation that the conjunction εἰ and adverb μὴ semantically stand together to emphasize the dependence of 5.20a on 5.20b and point out that

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<sup>16</sup> Some German scholars have researched extensively concerning the interpretation of Matt 5.17. For instance, Adolf von Harnack’s book chapter, “Hat Jesus das alttestamentlich Gesetz abgeschafft?” (1911) and his article “Ich bin gekommen: Die ausdrücklichen Selbstzeugnisse Jesu über den Zweck seiner Sendung und seines Kommes” (1912) Also see George Strecker’s monograph, *Die Bergpredigt: ein exegetischer Kommentar* (1985, 55-57).

5.20b, as a semantically independent clause presents the results whose condition is stated in 5.20a. This means that because Jesus has fulfilled the law (5.17) and therefore expects his followers to practice his commands and teach others to do the same, in this case, ποιήση καὶ διδάξει, like the behaviors and attitudes in the Beatitudes (Matt 5.3-12), describe actions associated with Jesus' sayings on the law, which in turn partly fulfill the demands for protasis (5.20a) and so signify the meaning of 'περισσεύση ὑμῶν ἢ δικαιοσύνη which "surpasses greatly" (περισσεύση πλεῖον) that of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees. This is how progression is set in this verse. Jesus' declaration in 5.17 has done two things; it expresses Jesus bringing the law to its completion, and also emphasizes the validity of the law—not in the spirit of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees—but in the spirit of Jesus' interpretation (briefly outlined in 5.21-43). The narrative goes on to indicate that although Jesus has brought the law to its completion, this does not nullify peoples' obligations to acts of righteousness. Rather, in the conditional sentence of 5.20a, access to the kingdom of heaven is predicated on the righteousness of Jesus' followers greatly surpassing that of the teachers of the law and the scribes. So, progression moves from completion of the law to setting new conditions for righteousness dependent on Jesus' teaching and demonstration of that righteousness in 5.21-43.

Thus, the text of Matt 5.17-20 semantically elaborates Jesus' authority when bringing the law to completion and declaring its endurance, which in turn marks the prerogative and pedagogical authority of Jesus' sayings envisioned by the Matthean community.

The next step is to observe the textual significance of Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer in the SM by examining the repetitive-progressive inner texture. The following sentence diagram will guide this semantic analysis.

9.	οὖν	προσεύχεσθε	ὕμεις			orientation
		Οὕτως				
			Πάτερ			familial/communal/household
			ἡμῶν			
			ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς,			transcendent sphere
			ἁγιασθήτω	τὸ ὄνομά		general action on earth
				σου.		
10			Ἐλθέτω	ἡ βασιλεία		
				σου.		
			Γενηθήτω	τὸ θέλημά	τῆς γῆς.	comparision in manner
				σου,	ἐπὶ	
					ὡς	
					οὐρανῶ	
					ἐν	
			καὶ			introducing specific action
11			δοξ	Τὸν ἄρτον	ἡμῖν	
			σήμερον	ἡμῶν		
				τὸν ἐπιούσιον		
12			Καὶ			
			ἄφες	τὰ ὀφειλήματα	ἡμῖν	
				ἡμῶν,		
			ὡς καὶ			
			ἡμεῖς	ἀφίεμεν	ὀφειλέταις	
					τοῖς	
					ἡμῶν.	
13			Καὶ			introducing dependence
			εἰσενέγκης	ἡμᾶς	πειρασμόν,	
			μὴ		εἰς	
			ἀλλὰ			
			ῥῦσαι	ἡμᾶς	πονηροῦ	
					ἀπὸ τοῦ.	

In this prayer, some nouns are repeatedly mentioned at different points. For instance, οὐρανός is mentioned twice (verses 9 and 10) as the abode of God and the realm where God's will is operational, respectively. It is noteworthy that the first heaven is in the plural form, while the second is singular. Although βασιλεία appears only once (v.10a) in this prayer, it is conspicuously set semantically to connect the petition for God's name to be sanctified (v.9) and his will to be done (v.10b). Elsewhere in the SM βασιλεία is associated with suffering for righteousness' sake (5.10), with prioritizing (6.33), and with discourse of the parables of the

kingdom (13.1-35). Moreover, in the Matthean Lord's Prayer, two nouns—ὀφείλημα and ὀφειλέτης—with similar meaning because they originate from the same root, are also mentioned. In these two nouns, one refers to the abstract notion of “debt” or “obligations,” hence the neuter plural (τὰ ὀφειλήματα), and the other to personal ones (τοῖς ὀφειλέταις), hence the masculine. Similarly, the first-person plural pronoun ἡμῶν is mentioned four times (verse 9, 11, 12) to express a familial or communal perspective of God, communal bread-provision, and communal debt/sins/offense. Thus, the repetitive pattern reveals a communal nature of the prayer. Noteworthy is the presence of the negative particle μὴ in 6.13 which modifies εἰσενέγκης.

Given the above sentence flow, the repetitive-progressive inner texture allows us to observe the thematic discussions concerning righteousness, God's household, and human obligations from the Lord's Prayer. Firstly, because the Lord's Prayer is introduced in 6.1 by a warning which prohibits the followers of Jesus from practicing (μὴ ποιεῖν) their righteousness in order to seek public honor (to be seen by people), it indicates that the reciting of the Lord's Prayer, like practicing and teaching of Jesus' commands (5.19) is an act of righteousness that can be classified as surpassing that of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees. Some progression is observable in this prayer. Here we see some repetitive-progressive inner texture which overlaps with Jesus' saying on the law (5.17-20), and his saying about the introduction to the Lord's Prayer (6.1). While righteousness in 5.20 declares in a general sense the condition for entering the kingdom of heaven, in 6.1 a particular action is introduced that provides the content for both verses (5.19, 20). Consequently, righteousness is crucial to the progression of thought; it introduces a general condition which is elaborated by the introduction of a particular action the (prayer that does not seek honor from the public) which in turn prepares the grounds for the

Lord's Prayer (6.9-13).

Second, it is noted above that the Matthean Lord's Prayer has seven imperative verbs that relate to entreating God. The act of praying refers to God as ἡμῶν Πάτερ, on account of this prayer being taught by Jesus to his disciples. It is very possible that ἡμῶν Πάτερ is grounded in the Jewish conception of God, particularly on account of Betz's suggestion that the Matthean Lord's Prayer belongs to liturgical material containing the type of prayer which, "derives, when it is written down, from oral tradition" (Betz 1995, 370). Jeremias argued that since, in Palestinian Judaism, God was understood to be unique, to address God either as "Abba," or "our Father" would have been disrespectful, although Jesus used it in order to express a special relationship with God (Jeremias 1967, 29-57, 62). Following Jeremias, Kittel contends that referring to God as Πάτερ would have sounded familiar, but disrespectful to Jesus' contemporaries, because although אבא was used in Jewish religious speech, it had to be accompanied by an addition to emphasize distance between man and God such as "who is in heaven" (Kittel 1964, 5). Davies and Allison, contrary to Jeremias and Kittel, say that the concept of "[our Father] is quite easily explained as being influenced by the Jewish liturgy," because it is found in Shimoneh Esreh's petition 4 and 6 and in Mishnah, *M. Sota* 9.15 and *Yoma* 8.9, as well in the Gospel of Mark 14.36 (Davies and Allison 1988, 600). The debate on the problem of the influence of Judaism on ἡμῶν Πάτερ does not begin and end with Jeremias, Davies, and Allison, but continues with other scholars such as Gza Vermes.<sup>17</sup> A reference to God whose abode is ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, on account of the semantic function of the expression ἡμῶν Πάτερ implies that the petitioner belongs to a family of the transcendent God who is also immanent since τὸ θέλημά σου, ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς indicates

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<sup>17</sup> See Vermes' two volumes; *The Gospel of Jesus the Jew* (1981, 210–211) and *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (1983, 39–43).

that God's will is requested for the earth in a similar fashion to the heavens. This also alludes to an eschatological immanence.

Thirdly, the imperative ἄφες and ὀφειλέταις in Matthew 6.12 which can be translated to “financial debt” and “debtor,” respectively (Danker 2000, 156), is probably used here metaphorically for a moral obligation to stress the importance of reciprocity in forgiveness as a means of fostering human relationships. The Lord's Prayer shows some repetitive-progressive inner texture in the context of entreating God to act on earth. The repetitive mentioning of ἐν οὐρανῷ in 6.10 in the context of the imperatives ἀγιασθήτω, ἐλθέτω and, γενηθήτω in verse 10 entreats God to act in a general way on earth in a similar measure as in heaven. Verses 11-13 employ imperatives δός, ἄφες, and ῥῶσαι and the subjunctive εἰσενέγκης to entreat God to act by making specific provisions. The personal pronoun ἐγώ, is mentioned six times in the plural, that is; each case twice in the dative, possessive, and accusative which describe the object of God's action on Earth. Finally, this progression moves from entreating God to act generally, act specifically and culminates in a declaration Ἀμήν, which according to Danker (2000, 53) declares the affirmation, “let it be so.”

Having addressed the reader's position of the SM in terms of repetitive-progressive inner texture, the next step is to engage the opening-middle-closing and argumentative inner textures to explain additional aspects of the text-reader interaction in the SM.

### 3.2.2 *Opening-Middle-Closing Inner Texture*

Before exploring the Beatitudes, the idea that the genealogy of Jesus played a significant role not only in Matthew's plot in the SM, but in whole of the Gospel will be considered. Jesus' genealogy is outlined in 1.1-17 with verse 17 mentioning the exile. Eloff contends that the exilic

motif summarized in Matthew 1.11-12 is a key to understanding Matthew's Gospel narrative. In the narrative, Matthew employs Jesus' genealogy to tell his story with Israel, in which Jesus is first identified as the Son of David, Son of Abraham. Eloff asserts that in Matthew's narrative, an exilic motif in the story shows that "Jesus as the Messiah brings resolution to the story of Israel" (Eloff 2004, 75-76). Matthew's Gospel narrative is a story by the implied author that intends to present some continuity of Israel's narratives in Jesus' message.

Craig Keener (2009, 166) thinks that 5.3 and 5.10 form an *inclusio* to frame the main section of the beatitudes with αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν. Consequently, Schnackenburg and Keener suggest the adjectival participle πενθοῦντες (5.4), and the substantive adjective πραεῖς (5.5) depict the characteristic attitude of the "poor in spirit," because the "meek" are precisely οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι (5.3), which refers to the broken-hearted or sorrowful (Schnackenburg 2002, 47; Keener 2009, 168, 170). This means the opening is simply 5:3 and the closing is 5:10. The change in form and subject in 5:11-12 seems to put it outside the *inclusio*. However, 5.11-12 seems to emphasize the virtues and behaviors outlined in 5.3-10, and therefore it constitutes the conclusion to the Matthean beatitudes. This is because 5.11-12 includes honoring of the bearers of these virtues outlined in 5.3-10, with μισθὸς in heaven and cites τοὺς προφήτας τοὺς πρὸ ὑμῶν to legitimate suffering on account of righteousness as a valid religious experience in the Matthean community.

If verse 18 depicts the progression of Matthew's thought, Jesus' teaching can be understood to manifest the eternal nature of the Mosaic Law, which in turn clarifies the meaning of πληρῶ in 5.17. Verse 19 adds further detail to this clarification of Jesus' declaration in verse 17. Three subjunctive aorist verbs λύση, ποιήση and διδάξῃ in verse 19 also play a significant role

in explaining the nature of this additional detail. The particle ἔάν introduces two independent (second-class conditional) clauses. Thus, the subjunctive λύση and διδάξη express a conditional protasis, while the future passive tense κληθήσεται presents a resultant apodosis. The subjunctives ποιήση (standing in apposition to λύση) and διδάξη introduces a second conditional protasis, which is expressed by a second future verb κληθήσεται, which presents a second resultant apodosis. Although Guelich and Morris suggest that verse 19 seems to advance the author's thinking by providing a commentary which concludes 5.17, 18 and which outlines the consequences of the validity of Jesus' interpretation of the law (Guelich 1982, 152; Morris 1992, 110), they seem to miss the point of Jesus standing as a teacher. This indicates two responses to the question on keeping the law. In short, it can be concluded that verse 18 is a statement about the abiding significance of the law which explains why Jesus cannot abolish it in his own time. The law can only pass away when ἕως ἄν πάντα γένηται, which has an eschatological element here. Verse 19 is about two types of people. The first type might think to abolish a commandment of the law, even the smallest commandment, is to lose one's place of honor ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τῶν οὐρανῶν. Second type believes that by way of contrast, someone who practices the law and teaches others to practice it, presumably like Matthew's community probably did, will receive great honor in the kingdom of Heaven. In the context of opening-middle-closing inner texture, the movement is from Jesus' role as one who supports the law and prophets to Jesus' declaration of the significance of abiding the law, to someone who might abolish a particularly insignificant commandment to the person who, like Jesus, practices and teaches others the law.

Guelich (1982, 150) rightly argues that Matthew (5.19) employs διδάσκω and ποιέω to heighten the contrast between breaking or annulling the law and doing or not doing. Although Guelich reads verse 19 in the context of the progression of Matthew's thinking in verse 20, he

wrongly concludes that verse 19 differs with 23.2-3 because he thinks that while the latter attempts to distinguish the action of the scribes and Pharisees from their teachings, the former concerns the difference between breaking and abiding the law. Contrary to Guelich, and in the context of verse 19, 20, and 23.2-3, the text has employed διδάσκω and ποιέω as clarifications (v19) by emphasizing the endurance of the Torah as distinct from such endurance in the traditions of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees that contradict the spirit of the Torah. Moreover, the text shapes the readers' understanding by stressing the importance of practicing the sayings of Jesus on law and teaching others to do the same as a way of receiving recognition in βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (the kingdom of heaven).

Consequently, 5.19 elaborates on the eschatological significance of πληρώω (5.17) as entailing the honoring of the status of one's identity (μέγας) on account of practicing and teaching the law from the point of view of Jesus' interpretation of it; doing the opposite, of course, entails a loss of an honorable identity (ἐλάχιστος) in the kingdom of heaven.

Verse 20 marks the closing of 5.17-20 by presenting the climax of Matthew's thinking. It is noteworthy that verse 20 is a Matthean redaction, probably of Mark 9.47. In his redaction of the Markan source (Mark 9. 47), Matthew shifts the metaphor's focus from the problematic plucking off the eye to the quest for righteousness that greatly surpasses that of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees as a condition for entering the kingdom of heaven.

Moreover, Matt 5.20 contains two clauses: an independent clause introduced by the conjunction ὅτι which semantically presents the protasis in the context of περισσέυση, an aorist subjunctive active indicating cause. Note that εἰσέλθητε, an aorist subjunctive verb concerning "entering" or "going in," is modified by the double negative οὐ μή (no, not) to semantically point out the result (of the cause). Thus, verse 20 does not rhetorically function as a summary of 5.17-

20 as Guelich (1982, 157) suggests. Rather, because the conjunction γὰρ introduces the verse and references the previous statements, it reflects on Jesus' Messianic authority (Evans 2012, 119) embedded in his demand for his followers to teach (διδάσκω) and practise (ποιέω) Jesus' sayings about the endurance of the law's commands. In this context it is the reference to ἐντολή in 5.19 which refers to Jesus' declaration in 5.17. By "teaching" and "practicing" Jesus' commands, his followers will be practicing righteousness which surpasses that of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees. But what is the content of this righteousness? The content of righteousness that Jesus demands in 5.20 is found in 5.21-48, 6, 1-8. Matthean Lord's Prayer (6.9-13) refers to another dimension of this righteousness which for reasons of showing some affinity to Judeo-Christian liturgical traditions, and piety in the Roman Empire, will now be investigated for its contributions to the semantic significance to the SM in terms of its opening-middle-closing inner texture.

Matthew's Lord's Prayer portrays a threefold literary structural content in the form of an open-middle-closing pattern. At its opening, the Lord's Prayer is marked by the inferential conjunction οὖν which indicates that what follows is an inference from the second clause in 6.8, which in turn refers to 6.1. Thus, Matthew's narrative presents the Lord's Prayer as an extension of Jesus' discussion in 6.1-8. Additionally, the opening of this prayer is further modified by the adverb Οὕτως preceding the inferential particle οὖν, marking a conclusion, and the future imperative verb προσεύχεσθε. Therefore, this introduction to the Matthean Lord's Prayer should be translated, "Therefore you shall all pray in this manner." Two crucial semantic functions of this introduction to Lord's Prayer are notable. First, in the section prior to the Lord's Prayer (Matt 6.7-8) Nolland observes that it, "displays a relaxed confidence about God's prior knowledge and his fatherly commitment" (Nolland 2005, 285). In contrast, Betz claims that it involves a chiastic "argument begun with the critique of wrong performance (vs 7a) and wrong theory (vs 7b), in

order then to turn to correct theory (v8), and now to the correct practice (vs 9a), exemplified by the Lord's Prayer (verses 9b-13)." Second, Betz says that in the context of the stated chiasm, the conjunction οὖν serves as affirmation of the theology of verses 7-8 (Betz 1995, 369). Thus, in this opening part of the Lord's Prayer, Jesus is presented as one who orients his disciples towards a group or communal prayer.

The middle of the prayer is divided into two. The section covered by verses 9b-10b has God as its focus in reference to evoking God's name to be sanctified; His kingdom and will to come into being. These two petitions which collectively constitute the middle of the prayer are related to each other. This petition invoking ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου, standing in the middle, ties the three petitions together and its semantic significance has provoked a debate among scholars. For instance, while Guelich asserts that this phrase indicates, "when God establishes his sovereignty, revealing himself as the holy one of Israel, his purposes and will among his people and his own earth are accomplished" (Guelich, R. A. 1982, 311). Betz argues that the phrase refers to the eschatological arrival of the kingdom of God, has and its complete victory over evil (Betz 1995, 390). Nolland, advancing Betz's eschatological aspect, says that the phrase ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου creates expectancy by pointing out that, "the kingdom of God was not only being announced as imminent by Jesus ... but also that Jesus' own ministry represented the present stirrings of the coming kingdom" (Nolland 2005, 287). Matthew's narrative seems to employ Jesus' sayings on prayer regarding the kingdom of God to emphasize Jesus' eschatological role as the Messiah as one who himself is a manifestation of the nature of God's kingdom on earth. The second part of the middle is marked by verses 11, 12 and 13. These three verses focus on human need considering daily provisions, forgiveness and seeking empowerment to overcome evil. Keener (2009, 224) tells us that the second part of the middle (verses 11-13) expresses

dependence on God for daily sustenance, promises God's grace commensurate with one's obedience in forgiving others, and pleads for God's protection in testing of one's faith in Jesus.

The Closing part of Matthew's Lord's Prayer ("Ὅτι σοῦ ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία καὶ ἡ δύναμις καὶ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. Ἀμήν: Matt 6:13b) is introduced in verse 13 by the conjunction "Ὅτι" which stands like a benediction, and is absent in some older manuscripts such as and X, B, D, Z and 0170, but is found in more recent manuscripts such as L, W, 0, 0233 and f13. The Matthean community must have used the section found in older manuscripts; the end of the Lord's Prayer for them may have been stated thus: Καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν, ἀλλὰ ρῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ (Matt 6:13a). Nolland has noted that this two-fold petition refers to two issues: one, πειρασμός and πονηρός are conceptually related, "the first part envisages God bringing the person into certain situation, while the second has in mind is rescuing a person out of situation" (Nolland 2005, 291). Nolland's notion suggests that God puts people into temptation and then delivers them, an idea refuted by Betz. Grounding his argument on Job 1.12; 2.6; 42.26, 7-17), Betz says that "God himself does not carry out temptation, but he leaves it to Satan" (Betz 1995, 407). Similar to Betz's interpretation, Lamprecht regards the phrase μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν in this sixth petition of the Lord's Prayer as indicative of "Yahweh's perfect plan for humanity," in which case temptation is to be understood as a means of God's wisdom by which he "leads his children to the destiny which he has appointed for them" (Lamprecht 2017, 22). Given that εἰσφέρω means to "cause someone to enter into certain...condition" (Danker 2000, 295), in view of Job's experiences stated by Betz, it seems this section of the Matthean Lord's prayer intends to emphasize the power of God in overcoming evil in comparison to the inability of humans to overcome evil in order to stress human beings' dependence on God.

From this opening-middle-closing literary structure, the progression of the prayer that

begins under Jesus' instructions continues by focusing first on exalting God on earth, attending to human needs on earth, then ending with affirming God's sovereignty is apparent. Thus, the prayer has a chiasm with the phrase *ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς* as its center in order to emphasize not only humankind's dependence on God but also to demonstrate the sovereignty of God over evil on earth:

v.9 οὕτως οὖν προσεύχεσθε ὑμεῖς  
 Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς·  
     Ἁγιασθήτω τὸ ὄνομά σου·  
     v10. ἐλθάτω ἡ βασιλεία σου·  
     γενηθήτω τὸ θέλημά σου,  
     **ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς·**  
     v.11 τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν τὸν ἐπιούσιον δὸς ἡμῖν σήμερον  
     v12. καὶ ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν,  
     ὡς καὶ ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν  
     13. καὶ μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ἡμᾶς εἰς πειρασμόν,  
 ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς ἀπὸ τοῦ πονηροῦ (NA 28 text)

From this chiasmus, the reader should notice that the main emphasis in the prayer is to evoke God's action on earth in order to establish his sovereign rule in the same measure as in heaven. This is expressed in a chiastic style, first by invoking God to act generally on earth as expressed by three imperatives: *Ἁγιασθήτω*, *ἐλθάτω* and *γενηθήτω*; second, in a C'B'A' characteristic, the prayer recognizes God's specific action on earth expressed by provision for bread (*τὸν ἄρτον ἡμῶν*), forgiveness from debt/sin (*ἄφες ἡμῖν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν*), and deliverance from evil (*μὴ εἰσενέγκῃς ... ἀλλὰ ῥῦσαι ἡμᾶς*). Thus, *ὡς ἐν οὐρανῷ καὶ ἐπὶ γῆς* plays a significant role of sustaining the chiasmus. This prompts the question; why was establishing God's sovereign rule on earth important to the Matthean community? Or, could the Matthean community have felt somehow marginalized or disenfranchised to the point of relying on God's, rather than man's intervention? Chapter 7 provides the answer to this question in terms of

employing a theory of Social Identity Political Theory (SIPT) to examine the relations of the Matthean community with the Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism and the Jesus Movement from the point of view of the semantic function of the Lord's Prayer in the SM.

### *3.2.3 Narrational Inner Texture*

The focus of this section is to explore the narrative discourse of the SM as presented by Matthew, the implied author. The aim of narrational inner texture is to explore Matthew's narration of Jesus' story in the SM. Before proceeding, it is important to know how the Gospel of Matthew was composed, in order to be familiar with Matthew's development of his plot. Shirley Jackson Case (1909, 391) tells us that Matthew wrote his Gospel to present the story of Jesus for "convenient form for ordinary use." Outlining the constituents of Matthew's Gospel narrative, Jackson states, "a Judicious selection of different types of material, Jesus' teachings arranged topically and distributed at regular intervals throughout the book, and a variety of subject-matter introduced, made a treatise particularly well adapted to meet the various needs" (Case 1909, 391). Jackson implies that in writing the SM, Matthew as the implied author deliberately employed the story of Jesus to address a variety of cultural needs in his audience. To explore how Matthew uses Jesus' story to address these needs, I shall focus on a narrational analysis of the Beatitudes (5.3-12), Jesus' sayings on the law (5.17-20), and the Matthean Lord's Prayer (6.9-13).

The SM is set between 5.1 and 7.28. Where τὸ ὄρος in 5:1, a mountainous area is the scene of an outstanding event (Danker 2000, 724), an imperfect passive tense ἐξεπλήσσοντο in 7.28, refers to being "greatly astounded" (Louw and Eugene A. Nida 1988, 312). This scenerio signifies Jesus' authority before his disciples, his followers, and the Jewish leadership that constitute the audience of the SM. Thus in between 5.1 and 7.28, Matthew's Gospel contains the

SM in the form of Jesus' sayings. When viewed from the immediate literary context (5.1-14), the Beatitudes show a plot, characterization, and a setting situated within a narrative composed of four scenes: The first is introduced by the narrator; Jesus in front of a crowd, and then ascending a particular mountain before sitting down. His disciples came to him, at which point he began teaching them (5.1-2). The second scene is a speech attributed to Jesus, declaring blessings to his disciples on account of their behaviours and attitudes (5.3-10). The third scene, though similar to the second, is characterized by Jesus' speech. This scene lacks, however, the declarations of honor (blessings), which bears Jesus' declaration that culminates in the promise of reward in the future (5.3-12). The fourth scene constitutes two speeches of Jesus, namely; "you are the salt of the earth" (15.13) and "you are the salt of the world" (15.14). These are parts of Jesus' speech which direct the disciples to interact with the larger society.

There are two observations that can be made from these four scenes that clearly demonstrate the development of a plot. First, although Davies and Allison contend that the mountain scene is to be understood as symbolic and of revelatory character in contrast to the scene at Mount Horeb in Deuteronomy 9.9 (cf. Exod 24.12-18) where Moses received the Ten Commandments, they observe that the Beatitudes are set in the first century Rabbinic traditions (Davies and Allison 1998, 423-425). We know very little about first century Rabbinic traditions, except through the second and third century Rabbinic accounts. Davies and Allison imply that in composing the Beatitudes, Matthew contested the Horeb/Sinaic-Hebraic background to mimic a Jewish background in order to introduce his narrative. In continuity of divine revelation with Horeb/Sinai, Matthew envisions the SM as mimicry of the Judeo-Mosaic traditions by the Matthean community. To connect Jesus with Mosaic authority, at the end of the Beatitudes

Matthew presents Jesus as a Moses-like authority, addressing the question of not breaking the law but rather assuring of its longevity as long as the earth and the heavens endure (5.17-18). Thus, in the Beatitudes the narrator characterizes Jesus as a Moses-like hero in terms of Hebrew and Jewish traditions.

Second, the attribution to Jesus' speech in the Beatitudes must have been of special importance to the narrator for developing the place of religious authority in the plot of the SM; the addressees of Jesus' speech are first referred to in the third person plural *ἐστί* (5.3-10) and then in the second person plural *ὐμᾶς* (5.11-12). This direct reference probably was meant to "invoke the reader as a friend" (Ewald 1988, 168-169), in order to communicate compassionate concern to the audience. Robbins tells us that early Christian discourse emerged in the Mediterranean literary context where "orality was dynamically at work in practices of writing" (Robbins 2009, 11) Thus, by attributing the speech to Jesus, it is probable that Matthew employs his narrative in the Beatitudes to demonstrate his conformity to the standards of rhetoric in his society.

What kind of rhetorical standards are these that Matthew aspired to conform to, and of what advantage would they be to his narrative? New Testament scholars (Ro 1999, 8; Viljoen 2013, 10), whose position differs from Robbins, claim that there were three types of classical rhetoric that dominated first-century Mediterranean society, namely: (1) Judicial rhetoric which focused on civil law and was applied mainly by advocates in courts to make decisions; (2) deliberative rhetoric which functioned in political assemblies and was applied by a leader of a community to persuade the assembled members of the community to take specific action and; (3) epideictic rhetoric which focused on civil ceremonies with the goal of raising blame or praise to specific persons in order to strengthen people's commitment to them. In order to achieve their

purpose, the rhetorical presentation was blended with a literary structure, in the form of an introduction, thematic statement, argument and conclusion. Quintilian (*Inst. Orat.* 2.15.37-38) regarded rhetoric as “the science of speaking well ... its end and highest aim is to speak well,” because it facilitated ways of communicating to communities during specific social events. Rhetoric was necessarily ideological because Aristotle (*Rhet.* 1.2.3) understood it to have the obligation of “putting the hearer into a certain frame of mind.”

What kind of rhetoric did Matthew appeal to in composing his narrative of the Beatitudes? Given the speech attributed to Jesus that dominates the content of the narrative and declaration of blessings in the context of showing compassion to the audience, yet encouraging them to adapt to particular behaviors (5.3-9) and attitudes (5.10-12) in the context of future reward, the Beatitudes show that Matthew was appealing to deliberative rhetoric. Thus, Matthew probably wanted the Beatitudes to encourage the audience to embody particular cultural norms, beliefs and values that encouraged his community to engage in a mission to the world around them (5.13-14). This appeal to engage in a mission was an act of righteousness because it was done in obedience to Jesus’ sayings that were probably regarded as declarations to the followers of Jesus. Robbins may not agree with this position, that the SM is a deliberative rhetoric, because he believes that the law courts, the public assembly, and the public ceremony are not the place where Christians developed their rhetoric. Rather, according to Robbins (1996b, 21-22; 2009, 3) social institutional-courts, political assembly, and civil ceremonies provided the “created problem, suffering, conflicts persecution...in the cities throughout the Roman Empire.” It was the “social interaction related to household, political kingdoms, imperial armies, imperial households, temples and individual bodies” that provided the context for the development of rhetoric of the

early Christians (Robbins 1996b, 21-22; 2009, 3). Robbins seems to suppress the influence of Greek culture in the Roman Empire. Bearing in mind that in the first century CE Roman culture consisted of the amalgamation of Greek and Roman Culture, hence the term “Greco-Roman Culture” (Rives 2009, 251-252; Williams 2009, 312,320), it means that classical institutional-courts, political assembly, and civil ceremonies, alongside the Roman social institutions of the household, political kingdoms, imperial armies, imperial households, temples and individual bodies presented the social context which shaped the rhetoric of the early Christian communities.

The narrational texture of 5.17-20 is characterized by a narrative with a *chreia* whereby the narrator attributes speech to Jesus to accomplish three things. First, the narrator depicts Jesus declaring his special authority of affirming the endurance of the law (5.17). Second, he employs λέγω to depict Jesus’ authority to secure the endurance of the law (5.18). And third, λέγω is applied to portray Jesus’ demand for righteousness, which surpasses that of the teachers of the law and Pharisees as a condition for entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven (5.20).

What did the implied author want to achieve by including a *chreia* in the Beatitudes by presenting Jesus’ speech in this way? Viewed in the literary context of Matthew 12.2, this passage (5.17-20) depicts Jesus countering the accusation of lawlessness. It is doubtful, as Keener claims, that this passage was applied by Matthew to counter accusations of lawlessness in the church (Keener 2009, 176). Rather, given the fact that Paul refers to fulfillment of the law in Romans 13.9-10 and Galatians 5.14 (Guelich, 1982, 141), most probably 5.17-20 envisions Matthew employing Jesus’ sayings to complement the teaching of other early Christian communities concerning the validity of the Mosaic Law in securing righteousness in the emerging Christian communities. Thus, Matthew was alluding to the practice and understanding of the Mosaic Law

in the Jesus Movement. This being the case, Ewald's view, that allusion functions in rhetoric to indicate "something about the audience's knowledge" (Ewald 1988, 170), is helpful in offering further insights.

Ewald's insight suggests that the Matthean community probably knew other communities of the Jesus Movement, such as the communities addressed in Paul's letter to the Romans (2.1; 3.1; 5.1) and Galatians (5.6), who in their teaching emphasized the importance of faith that seemingly replaced the law. But, did Paul teach that among the followers of Jesus, faith had replaced the law [Torah]? Or, did he teach that the Jesus Movement had replaced Judaism? Claiming that Paul's teaching on faith had replaced the law is tantamount to the view that Christianity stands as a new religion without any continuity with Judaism. Pamela Eisenbaum spends a whole monograph arguing that Paul was not a Christian.<sup>18</sup> Lüdemann, following Nietzsche, claims that Paul as the founder of Christianity, promoted a new religion with its own tenets that enabled it to grow its own roots.<sup>19</sup> The sharp contrast between first century Judaism and Christianity has the propensity to promote not only anti-Semitism but also interreligious conflict with social economic and political perspectives as confirmed by James D. G. Dunn.<sup>20</sup> A

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<sup>18</sup> Pamela Eisenbaum, *Paul Was Not a Christian: The Original Message of a Misunderstood Apostle*. New York: Harper Collins, 2009.

<sup>19</sup> Gerd Lüdemann (2002, 215) had contended that Christianity as "[t]he new religion required a doctrinal unity and the authority to enforce it; this in turn called for vision (and perhaps a vision) and the supreme self-assuredness to insist on its truth; and those, of course, were the spark and the fuel which powered the immense missionary effort that made Paul the founder of Christianity."

<sup>20</sup> Dunn in his article "The Justice of God: A Renewed Perspective on Justification by Faith," JTS 43 (1992), 5 asserts that "[u]nfortunately, however, the further corollary was drawn: that Judaism was the antithesis of Christianity, what Paul had been saved from. Such a view, of course, had been prominent in Christianity at least since the Epistle of Barnabas, and fitted well with the strong strand of anti-Semitism which so disfigured Christianity's attitude to Jews and Judaism in the Middle Ages, an attitude which Luther himself expressed in characteristic forthrightness in his infamous *On the Jews and Their Lies* (*Von den Jüden und ihren Lügen*). Tragically, however, it reinforced Christian suspicion, not to say hatred of Judaism, which was to reach its horrific

plausible answer to the question concerning the content of Paul's teaching regarding the relationship between the law and faith is presented by Nathan (2016, 105), who maintains:

the emphasis is rather on Paul having found new meaning in Christ. Paul's writings, then, are read to measure the distance between Paul's new religion (Christianity) and his former religion, Judaism. His letters are therefore the writings of a Christian, someone who realized the futility of the Law to save (from sin).<sup>21</sup>

Paul's position on the relationship between the law and faith is that he does not reject the law outright. What he argues is that the law of Moses did not bring salvation because it was used by sin and the flesh to bring about condemnation. For this reason, Christ has set his followers free from the law of sin and death by fulfilling the just requirement of the law (Rom 8:1-8). This means, according to Paul, for both Jews and Gentiles who accept Christ, the law is still valid to them as a basis of their identity, provided they approach it from Jesus' interpretation. Esler (2003, 243) noted that Romans 8 exalts the character of the new identity by first laying down the essential attributes of the common in-group (Rom 3.21-31). Using Abraham as a prototype (Rom 4), identity is constructed through baptism (Rom 6.1-10) and the leadership role is portrayed as an exemplar for group values (Rom 6.15-7.25). The *crescendo al finale* of the new identity is shared by Judean and non-Judean audiences in Rome (Rom 8.1-39). Paul's teaching may have been offensive (a stumbling block) to Judeans who still held to an exclusive perspective of a pre-Jesus interpretation of the Mosaic law that presents a controversial figure of the Messiah (1Cor. 1.23).<sup>22</sup> This means, if Matthew was aware of the audience's knowledge concerning Paul's emphasis on

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outworking in the Holocaust.”

<sup>21</sup> See Nathan, 2016, 105.

<sup>22</sup> For Paul's presentation of a controversial view of Messiah see James D. G. Dunn (1993, 148-167; 1998, 199-200); J.J. Collins, (1995, 169).

faith in the Jesus Movement, Matthew wanted to balance this equation by applying 5.17-20 to rhetorically address the identity of his community in the context of intra-group relations between the Matthean community and other groups from the larger Jesus Movement.

The narrational inner texture of Matthew's Lord's Prayer presents the Matthean Jesus as the narrator of the prayer. Jesus introduces the prayer after warning them to "Beware of practicing your righteousness before men in order to be seen by them" (Matt 6.1). The shorter Lucan version of the Lord's Prayer has Jesus introducing the prayer to his disciples upon their request to Jesus, saying, "Lord teach us to pray as John taught his disciples" (Luke 11.1). If the Lord's Prayer in Matthew's Gospel narrative is viewed as a continuation of Jesus' warning on how not to practice acts of righteousness in public (6.1), then Matthew's SM presents the Lord's Prayer as an *expression* or *act* of righteousness acceptable to the standards set and proclaimed by Jesus himself. Thus, the teaching *chreia* in which the narrator attributes speech in the form of instructions to the disciples saying, "therefore pray like this" (Matt 6.9), characterizes Jesus as the one holding the power to authorize the prayer as an act of righteousness. The prayer portrays Jesus' religious power and authority because not only does he depict his authority by accommodating and mimicking Jewish prayers to fit a new situation, but he also, like John the Baptist (Luke 11.1), taught his disciples the Lord's Prayer as model of how to pray. Hence, by attributing speech to Jesus, the narrative creates the image of Jesus which presents him as a teacher of righteousness. Consequently, this presentation of him contributes to the understanding of the centrality of the figure of Jesus in the early Christian tradition in Mediterranean society.

This application of a narrational inner texture to read the SM presents Matthew's concept of righteousness as an ideology for promulgating his interpretative authority in his community.

The teaching of *chreia* in the Matthean Lord's Prayer has a Jewish background, because it shows some commonality with the Shimoneh Esreh, for instance. Thus, because Jesus' sayings provide a basis in this model of prayer, ideologically in Matthew's audience the Matthean Lord's Prayer which also sets forth another act of righteousness (6.1), presents a cultural model of prayer provided by Jesus which was relevant to Matthew's audience and complementary to Jewish prayers. Moreover, in terms of the speech of Jesus, not only does Matthew assume the authority to instruct his community to embrace behaviors and attitudes outlined in the Beatitudes, but he also encourages them to practice and teach Jesus' interpretation of the Torah and participate in acts of righteousness, such as forgiving other people's indebtedness (6.12), and generally acting as members of God's household (6.9; 12.50).

### 3.2.4 Argumentative Inner Texture

The repetitive-progressive and the opening-middle-closing pattern and the narrational inner texture of the SM explored here provide the impetus for explaining the argumentative texture of the Sermon on the Mount in light of the logical and syllogistic perspectives in terms of a two-fold structural analysis; the Beatitudes (5.3-12) and Jesus' sayings on the interpretation of the law (5.17-20) without the Lord's Prayer (6.9-13) which seems not to have an argument at all:

#### *A Logical Perspective*

1. *Thesis* (5.6):

Honored are the poor in spirit, those who mourn, the meek, those who hunger and thirsty for righteousness, the merciful, the pure in heart, peacemakers.

2. *Rationale*: They:            have been granted the Kingdom of Heaven (v.3)  
    shall: be comforted (v.4) inherit the earth (v.5) be satisfied  
    (v.7) receive mercy (v.8) will be called sons of God (v.9)

3. *Restatement of a thesis (v. 10a)*: honored are those being persecuted for righteousness sake
4. *Rationale*: they have been granted the Kingdom of Heaven (10b)
5. *Conclusion (5.12)*:
  1. Rejoice and be glad  
*Rationale*: for your reward is great in heaven (v.12a)
  2. *Illustration*: in the same way, they persecuted the prophets before you (v.12b).

This argumentative texture indicates that the text of the Beatitudes includes declarations in all the first dependent clauses from 5.3 to 5.10 (Case 1909, 391) which honor a certain type of person. Correspondingly, in each Beatitude, there is a dependent clause that states the rationale, showing why those types of people are honored. Then, 5.11-12 describes a two-fold conclusion. First, honor is declared to all types of people mentioned in 5.3-10 because they have been granted the kingdom of heaven (verse 11). Second, a conclusion is stated to exhort the same honored people for their great reward in heaven. Then, an example of prophets is stated (12). What is the logic of mentioning prophets in this argument? Betz sees this mention as a Jewish theological tradition borrowed by Christians to logically express divine justice to the honored people mentioned in 5.3-10 (Betz 1995, 153). Grounding their argument in Betz, Davies and Allison aptly contend that this verse should be read in reverse. They argue that “the historical verdict rendered in v.12c leads to the dogmatic judgment in 12d, and both together constitute the basis for the macarisms in v. 12a” (Davies and Allison 1988, 463). Nolland contends that the logic of this verse is based on the assumption that Israelite prophets did not suffer from failure, but as a “consequence of their obedience to God”, and their situation “parallels the situation of those prepared to suffer for their identification with Jesus” (Nolland 2005, 210). On account of identifying the honored people with the suffering of the prophets, ideologically the implied author employs this identification to legitimate the honored status of the type of person whose character

is described by each of the first dependent clauses in 5.3-10.

Moving on from the Beatitudes, the logical argumentative texture of 5.17-20 is characterized by a *chreia* situated in the literary context of a thesis, rationale and conclusion, as outlined below:

*A Logical Perspective*

*Thesis:* verse 17. Think not that I have come to nullify the law and the prophets; I have come not to nullify them but to fulfill them.

*A Three-fold Rationale*

1. verse 18. For truly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot of the letter from the law will pass away until all is manifested.
2. verse 19a. Whoever then nullifies the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven;
3. verse 19b ...but, whoever practices them and teaches others to do the same, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

*Conclusion:* verse 20. For I tell you, you may not enter the Kingdom of Heaven, unless your righteousness greatly surpasses that of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees.

From the logical argumentative texture, it can be deduced that the text presents Jesus teaching about the abiding validity of the law and the need to avoid abolishing the commands of the law (verse 17). Then the law and the prophets—have been validated and should be practiced and taught as they are manifested in Jesus' teaching (verses 18 and 19). The law here refers to the Pentateuch, or five books of Moses, which later is summarized by the Gospel of Matthew as love of God and love of the neighbor (22.37-40). It has not been set aside but its truth confirmed (Morris 1992, 107-108) by Jesus' interpretation. It is through this practicing and teaching others to keep the commandments of Jesus that the disciples are exhorted to participate in a righteousness which greatly surpasses that of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees (verses 20). Moreover, in a logical argumentative texture in pursuit of logical reasoning, a *chreia*, that is;

a narrator's attribution to speech or action to specific individuals (Robbins 1996b, 59), is employed by the narrator of Jesus' sayings to assign speech to Jesus in the text in order to accomplish two significant matters, as Talbert (2004, 66) observes. First, Jesus as the one who speaks is depicted as the true teacher of the law and the prophets, for he has all the authority granted to him by God (28.16-20). Second, Jesus as the one speaking is presented as the end-time judge with the authority to set and declare the standards of the Last Judgment. Consequently, the text of Matt 5.17-20 rhetorically functions as a means of uplifting the social status of Jesus through a demonstration of his authority to interpret the scripture and demand righteousness from his followers, which greatly surpasses that of the teachers of the law and the scribes as the standard of entry into his community.

A question that emerges from these observations and that needs to be answered is; if Matthew was addressing a community living in the late first-century, how deeply might his perception of 5.17-20 have been influenced by the literary, social-cultural and historical contexts of his time? To answer this question, it is important to investigate the inter texture perspectives of this passage in due course. Having now employed inner texture of the SM in terms of the repetitive-progression, opening-middle-closing, narrational and argumentative inter texture, it is time to engage the inter textual analysis of the SM in reference to the cultural, social and historical inter texture of the SM.

### 3.3 INTER TEXTURE OF THE SM

#### 3.3.1 *Cultural Intertexture*

Cultural inter texture employs *reference*, *echoes* and *comparisons* to contribute to socio-

rhetorical interpretation. Consequently, in the Beatitudes, “Blessed” (Matt 5.3-11) is an *echo* from Greco-Roman literary culture, also known as the epideictic rhetoric, in which μακάριοι was used to praise the deceased as if they had transitioned into divine status as mentioned in *Rhet. Alex.* 35,1440b. 20-23 (Keener 2009, xxxiii).

Greco-Roman philosophical schools present different views on mourning. The Cynics regard mourning as a kind of a folly and hypocrisy, because they believed that people should face death with courage instead of fear. The Epicureans claimed that death was not to be feared, and so when one is alive one should be happy and enjoy life as much as possible. They also regarded mourning to be a superstitious and erroneous practice (Betz 1995, 122-123). This implies that the characteristic μακάριοι in the Matthean Beatitude indicates that Jesus’s sayings in the Beatitudes are an example of how the SM functions in the Matthean community to contest some of the Roman cultural values and practices. Not only did the Beatitudes contest several Greek cultural values, but it also contested some Judaeian cultural beliefs and practices. For instance, according to the Mishnah (*Peah* 8.7), some rabbis preferred to be cursed to increase their heavenly blessings mentioned (Keener 2009, xxxiii). Thus, the Matthean Beatitudes reveal Matthew’s knowledge of the interaction of his community’s cultural practices with those of the Greeks and Judaeians who lived in the Roman Empire. This assumption will be explored further in chapters 5 to 7 by intertextual analysis to discuss Matthew’s use of the SM as a basis for reconstructing, legitimating and negotiating the cultural identity of his community in the Roman Empire.

On account of the rhetorical power of *comparison* to reveal the world of the implied reader (Ewald 1988, 170), the amplification of the Beatitudes that states καὶ εἴπωσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν καθ’ ὑμῶν [ψευδόμενοι] ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ (Matt 5:11) refers to the false accusation directed at

Matthew's audience just as it had happened to the prophets before them (5.12b). Could this comparison of suffering false accusation which connects verse 11 to 12 suggest a hypothetical statement in which the text attempts to create its own unhistorical reality, or would the text here be revealing the audience's awareness of their persecutors and even the specific means by which they inflicted this suffering? This assumption leads to the question: who are these people, and what institutions did Matthew have in mind that caused this kind of suffering to members of his community? These questions will be answered in the next chapter, when social identity theory will be engaged in order to read the Beatitudes considering the late first-century social setting of the Matthean community.

Also, Jesus' sayings have some reference to certain Greco-Roman cultural practices. For instance, in the Greco-Roman world, *righteousness* was understood to be a cardinal virtue just like prudence, temperance, and courage (Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 3.5.5-6). In Jewish culture, righteousness took the form of *tsedaqah*, which refers to human acts of piety such as almsgiving, performed in obedience to covenantal stipulations (Talbert 2004, 63). In Judaism, the Pharisees, who had also become the aristocracy, promoted acts of righteousness regarding tithing and payments of farm taxes for agricultural produce, but it was disputed whether such taxation was justified by scripture (Keener 2009, 550). Josephus regards the Pharisees to have been so articulate in interpreting the law that they were mindful of the need to fulfill it even in its smallest details (Josephus, *BJ*. 2.162). Similarly, a rabbinic saying (b. *shabbath* 116a-b) which was probably influenced by Jesus' declaration in Matt 5.17, declares; "I did not come to destroy the Law of Moses, nor did I come to add to the Law of Moses."<sup>23</sup> The Greco-Roman and Jewish

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<sup>23</sup>See Evans (2012, 115), who argues that the Rabbinic version cited here may have been

perspectives of righteousness were grounded on personal ability and covenantal decrees, respectively. In the case of Matthew (5.6, 10, and 20), righteousness refers to ethical behavior that is grounded in Jesus' sayings. These acts are grounded in Jesus' demands and sayings concerning the endurance of the Mosaic Law. For this reason, the SM indicates having fulfilled the law (5.17-18), the Matthean Jesus commands the Matthean community to adopt certain norms, values and beliefs in order to; (1) demonstrate the metaphorical aspect of righteousness as outlined in 5.20 as the basis for their cultural identity and; (2) to contest acts of righteousness by the Romans.

Consequently, the SM shows that Matthew's motive for characterizing Jesus as the one who completes and validates the meaning of the law, is in turn to back up his own presentation of himself (Matthew) as the most accurate interpreter of the law as a basis for the eschatological significance of righteousness. The difference between conception and practice of righteousness in the SM and Roman literature reveals the possibility of the creation of a "them-us" social stratification in the Roman Empire featuring porous social boundaries between the Matthean community with the Greco-Roman communities and Judaeans. Thus, given Ewald's view that a "them/us" dichotomy in written text reveals the notion of "those who think as the author does (which includes the implied reader) and those who don't" (Ewald 1988, 170), the SM offers a vision of the desired interaction with an outer group that the SM's writer proposes.

This outer group probably posed some social differentiation in terms of competing with or posing a cultural challenge to the Matthean community. The community's awareness of this

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influenced by the sayings of Agesilaus collected by Plutarch (35-125 CE) in his *Moralia* 214 ("Sayings of the Spartans," 73) that claimed, "I would not make a law giver to enact another set of laws, for in the present laws I would make no addition, subtraction, or revision." This indicates the prominence of inherited law in guiding the affairs of the first-century society.

social differentiation is signaled by the author's use of the personal pronoun  $\acute{\omicron}\mu\tilde{\iota}\nu$  (Matt 5.18, 20), which points to his audience, which also semantically functions as the object of Matthean Jesus' declaration in 5.17-20. To this end, it can be tentatively concluded that Matt 5.17-20 reveals the implied author's awareness of different acts of righteousness that prevailed in cultural groups within the larger Roman Empire and in the Jewish society. Which specific cultural groups did Matthew have in mind when he wanted to sensitize his community to their conception and practice of righteousness by composing the SM concerning Jesus' authority to interpret the law? This question will be answered in chapters 5 to 7 when I employ social-political identity theory to discuss the social setting of the Matthean community in the late first century Antioch. Now, the discussion turns to the inter texture in Matthew's version of Lord's Prayer.

The Lord's Prayer in Matthew's Gospel echoes the Aramaic Kaddish prayer. This means that it depicts some cultural inter textuality with this Jewish prayer. In its literary perspective, the Kaddish prayer declares:

Exalted and sanctified is God's great name (Amen) in the world which He has created according to His will, and may He establish His Kingdom in your lifetime and during your days, and within the life of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon; and say, Amen. May His Name be blessed forever and for all eternity.<sup>24</sup>

According to John J. Parson, cited above, the Kaddish Prayer is part of the Jewish liturgical tradition that was originally recited in the synagogue. It was later devoted to funeral events as a prayer addressing the mourners. But like Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer, Parson suggests that the Kaddish Prayer is "an ancient Jewish prayer" whose main intention was

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<sup>24</sup> John Parson, "Reciting Kaddish: Sanctifying the Name of God." In *Hebrews 4 Christians*. [http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Prayers/Daily\\_Prayers/Kaddish/kaddish.html](http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Prayers/Daily_Prayers/Kaddish/kaddish.html).

“to express a longing for the establishment of God’s Kingdom on earth.” Evans, grounding his argument on linguistic function, contends that Matthew’s version of the Lord’s Prayer depicts a more interactive picture of God because it refers to God in the second person, unlike the Kaddish that refers to God in third person (Evans 2012, 145-146). However, the Kaddish Prayer was intended to address mourners. The third person singular reference to God makes sense in a mourning context because the speaker, being a Judaeen who avoided direct mention of God’s name, probably intended to speak indirectly about God and more directly to the mourners. Thus, Parson observes that the Kaddish Prayer was recited to a mourner in the presence of a quorum, or a congregation of ten or more male adults, rather than to God. The prayer was originally recited in Hebrew and later practiced in the Christian community (Luke 11.2-4) before Matthew adopted it for his community use. Grelot suggest that from the point of view of the opening, “our Father” (Matt 6.9), Matthew’s Lord’s Prayer is influenced by “semitismes qui s’y rencontrent et celle du cadre culturel dans lequel la predication evangelique fut effectuee” (Grelot 1979, 299). Thus, Grelot suggests that Matthew probably valued the prayer<sup>25</sup> because it grounds the intra-cultural identity of the Matthean community in earlier Judaeen liturgical traditions.

Besides the Jewish Kaddish Prayer, Matthew’s Lord’s Prayer echoes Greco-Roman cultural practices of prayer. For instance, in his *Iliad* (3.320-325), Homer portrays human beings evoking Jupiter as “Father who rules from Ida’s height...most great glorious.”<sup>26</sup> Although similarities between Matthew’s version of the Lord’s Prayer and Jewish and Greco-Roman prayers from linguistic point of view can be noted, there is some difference. The main difference

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<sup>25</sup> See Parson, John. “Reciting Kaddish: Sanctifying the Name of God.” In *Hebrews 4 Christians*. [http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Prayers/Daily\\_Prayers/Kaddish/kaddish.html](http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Prayers/Daily_Prayers/Kaddish/kaddish.html).

<sup>26</sup> Smith, Edward Stanley. “Homer Iliad.” In Archive. <https://archive.org/stream/iliadhomerrende05/homegoog/page/n112/mode/2up>

between Matthew's Lord's Prayer and the Kaddish Prayer is not only based on second-person reference to God, but also that Matthew's narrative acknowledges Jesus as *Imma-nu-el*. That is; "God with us" (Matt 1.23), a reference which provides intra-cultural and a continual references to God in Judaeon and various local communities in the Roman Empire, respectively.

It is noted above that in composing the Lord's Prayer, Matthew alluded to Greco-Roman and Jewish cultural aspects of prayers to reveal his community's awareness of their existence. Ewald's (1988, 170) suggestion that in rhetoric, *allusion* reveals "something about the audience's knowledge" seems to confirm this. On account of Matthew's allusion to Greco-Roman and Jewish aspects of prayer, Matthew's Lord's Prayer reveals his contestation of them. This leads to the question: what did this contestation and accommodation of the existing prayers in the Greco-Roman and Jewish communities mean to the Matthean community? Did such contestation and accommodation of the existing prayers provide a challenge, or offer a vantage point as the basis for the cultural identity of the Matthean community? These questions will be answered in chapter 6, where I will employ social identity theory to explain Matthew's use of his version of the Lord's Prayer in negotiating the identity of his community in the Roman Empire.

### 3.3. 2 *Social Inter texture*

The traditional sayings of Jesus, which form the bulk of the Beatitudes, resonate with some Hellenistic culture in the sense that the sayings of leading figures were redacted by the student of the teachers to provide ethical guidance. For instance, in his *Enchiridion*, Arrianus, the student of Epictetus, composed the sayings (λογοί) of Epictetus as canons or rules (κανόνες) for "training" (μελατών) in living uprightly according to the Epicurean philosophy of ethics (Betz 1979a, 293-294). Similarly, Aristotle (Rhet. 2.6.3) reminds us that attitudes that encourage

fighting were regarded as virtues. Hence, attitudes such as meekness, mournfulness, mercifulness and peacefulness are viewed as vices that must be avoided, because unlike courage, violence and aggressive attitudes that were understood to promote honor in the Mediterranean culture caused shame. Thus, Epictetus and Aristotle's sayings collectively outlined the social norms and values in the Roman Empire. This indicates that Jesus' sayings in the Beatitudes, which also provided norms, beliefs and values of the Matthean community, contested the Epicurean philosophy of ethics as well as provided the basis for constructing the identity of the Matthean community in relation to the social norms of the Roman Empire.

A brief look at the *social* inter texture reveals some relation between Jesus' interpretation of Mosaic Law and other literary traditions in Antiquity. Matthew's presentation of the validity and endurance of the Law of Moses on the basis of Jesus' declaration that "not an iota, not a letter from the law will pass until all is accomplished" (5.18) echoes a first-century Greco-Roman social practice described by Dio Chrysostom (40-120 CE). Chrysostom's saying confirms the endurance of the Roman law. It states; "if anyone chisels out only one word from the official tablet, you will be put to death without investigating what the word was... and if anyone should ...erase one single syllable of a decree of the people, you will treat him [ruthlessly] just as you would any person who should remove a part of the Chariot" (Dio Chrysostom, *The Thirty-First Discourse*, 86). In this case, Jesus' saying shows some affinity with the endurance of the Greco-Roman legal practice. There is however some difference regarding how dissenters against Jesus' commands are treated. While the Greco-Roman practices cited by Dio meted out the death sentence to dissenters, the Matthean Jesus declares a loss of honor, because Jesus' saying declares that dissenters "shall be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven." Matthew's chreia in 5.17-18 alludes to some Greco-Roman legal conventions which reveal to us how Matthew employed Jesus' sayings on the

law (5.17-20) to contest Roman legal traditions in the Empire. Consequently, Matt 5.17-18, on account of its allusion to the Roman legal practice, probably reveals the interaction of the Matthean community with the Roman legal practices in the city of Antioch in the late first-century CE. What did Matthew want to communicate to his audience using the Jesus' figure in Matt 5.17-20? I will elaborate later in the thesis that Matthew intended to apply Jesus' speech and figure in the SM to legitimate his positing of an alternative, non-violent social ethic (5.21-48) for his community.

In the Greco-Roman world, not only did Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer have some inter-cultural affinity, but it also shows some social inter textual relations. For instance, in Homer's *Odyssey* (1.28) and in Virgil's *Aeneid* (1.65; 2.648; 10.2), Jupiter is recognized as "Father of gods and men," and "Father of gods and King of men," respectively. This recognition of the Greco-Roman principal deity had some social implications in the Roman Empire. The understanding of Jupiter as "Father" and "King" became the grounds for granting social honor and power to the Roman emperors.<sup>27</sup> Thus, rhetorically the narrator's indirect reference to the

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<sup>27</sup> Jupiter was regarded as the Supreme Patriarch and ruler of the cosmos, similar to the Roman emperor, who was also acknowledged as "Father of the Roman state." Although Keener claims that in his understanding of God as "Father," Jesus was most likely influenced by early Judaism and the Hebrew Bible rather than Greek language (Keener 2009, 217), the social influence of the Graeco-Roman cultural phenomenon on the Lucan perspective of God as "Father" should not be discounted (Luke 11.2). This suggests two scenarios. First, in his version of the Lord's Prayer, Matthew probably decided to redact Q's version of the Lord's prayer by adding the personal pronoun "our" to refer to God as "our Father" (Matt 6.9), in order to give the prayer a Jewish, rather than a Greco-Roman liturgical flavor, thereby strengthening the intra-cultural identity of the Matthean community. This was to emphasize more of the Judaeian aspect of the cultural identity of the Matthean community. The second scenario relates to the effect of Matthew's redaction. By adding the pronoun ἡμῶν, the narrative makes indirect reference to the audience, because Jesus' speech in the Lord's Prayer presupposes that Matthew's audience, rather than Jesus' disciples, are the ones being addressed. Ewald regards the effect of indirect referential use of pronouns in a narrative as invoking the nature of an implied audience rather than a real reader (Ewald 1988, 169).

pronoun “our Father” in Matt 6.9 reveals the narrator’s intentions to sensitize his community of their belonging to God rather than to Jupiter. This means, Matthew’s LP accommodates Judaeen liturgical traditions to contest Greco-Roman religious traditions. What did Matthew want to accomplish with his version of the Lord’s Prayer in respect to his contestation and accommodation of Judaeen and Greco-Roman liturgical traditions? It will be the main task of chapter 7 to answer this question by employing SIPT.

### 3.3.3 *Historical intertexture*

Unlike the social inter texture which focuses on social practices that occurred regularly as life events, the historical inter texture refers to experiences and events concurrent with the composition of a Biblical text. Consequently, the Beatitude concerning peacemakers (Matt 5.9) is reminiscent of the *Pax Romana*. According to Seneca (*De Clem* 1.4.1—3), the Pax Romana refers to unquestionable obedience by Roman citizens to Rome’s enforcement of order, security and prosperity under the emperor as the commander of Rome’s military power in the late first-century CE. Ironically, and as noted by Suetonius (*Ves.* 9) and Josephus (*BJ* 7.158-162) as promoters of the Pax Romana, Vespasian erected a temple of peace near the meeting place in Rome where he stored all the temple vessels and instruments confiscated from the Jerusalem Temple after the 66-73 Jewish war with Rome. Scott points out that three Roman emperors, Vespasian (69-79), Titus (79-81) and Domitian (81-96), in the late first-century CE minted coins to celebrate the manifestation of peace guaranteed by the Roman gods (Scott 1936, 25-26; 1936, 94-95). Thus, the Beatitude on peace (5.9) contests Rome’s strategies for enforcing peace in the Empire. While Matthew (5.9) envisions peacemakers as enacting God’s merciful reign as commanded by Jesus, the Roman Empire championed a kind of peace enforced by military power

and the will of the emperors to enforce the will of Roman gods. Collins argues that this depiction of the social-political power of the Roman Empire symbolized by the coins would be overthrown by God's intervention for being the eschatological adversary of the Jews (Collins 1983, 122-128). Collins' suggestion seems to indicate that Rome imposed the Roman religion on its subjects. This is not true, bearing in mind the religious freedom granted by Rome to all citizens under the watchful gaze of the socio-economic elites. However, in view of this religious freedom, Mathew's Beatitude reveals the implied author's effort in contesting Roman strategies for enforcing peace in the Empire.<sup>28</sup>

What does Matthew's Lord's Prayer have to do with inter texture? At several points, Matthew's Lord's Prayer provides references that reflect on the events associated with Rome's power. Carter suggests that the petition phrased "your kingdom come" (Matt 6.10) refers to the

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<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, it is noteworthy that historical inter texture provides the window through which the Biblical text might reveal some concrete historical experiences of the Jesus Movement. In Justin Martyr's *Trypho*, a Jewish character invented by Justin Martyr accuses early Christians of practicing lawlessness in their religious ventures (Martyr, Dial 10). Jesus' claims of fulfilling and not breaking the law (5.17-18) reveals a first-century CE event in which some Jewish people were accusing the early Christians of nullifying the significance of the Mosaic Law. Hence, when the Matthean Jesus claims that he came not to abolish the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them, not only does he confirm his faithfulness to the scriptures (Keener 2009, 177), but also depicts the accommodation of teachings of the Mosaic Law in the Matthean community in the late first CE. Interestingly, while the Matthean Jesus claims that he came, "not... to abolish the law and the prophets ...but to fulfill them" (5.17), the Pauline Jesus is seen as the "end of the law, that everyone who has faith may be justified" (Rom 10.4). Are Paul and Matthew opposed to each other in the position they hold concerning the relationship of the Mosaic Law and Jesus' advent? Luz's (1978, 398) view is that the only thing that can be derived from Paul and Matthew is "Jesu ...eschatologischen, dem kommenden Gottesreich entsprechenden." Luz suggests a solution collectively provided by Paul and Matthew in the first-century CE concerning the significance of the law in the Jesus Movement and the society at large. This solution reveals the intra-cultural relations between the Matthean and Pauline communities in Rome. In other words, on account of the intra-cultural identity of their communities, Paul and Matthew are indeed not opposed to each other, but provide complementary viewpoints to their audiences, and the Jesus Movement at large, that collectively emphasized the eschatological significance of Jesus' advent in society at that time.

establishment of “God’s empire as life giving, not an oppressive... to exercise authority over the Kingdom of the world ... including the Roman Empire” (Carter 2000, 165). Carter explicitly shows that Matthew’s Lord’s Prayer indirectly mirrors the power relations of the Matthean community in the Roman Empire in first-century CE. In this relationship, the Matthean community was probably experiencing some oppression by living under the socio-economic elites in the Roman Empire. Thus, Matthew’s narrative reflects Jesus’ arrest and harsh treatment by the early collaborators of the first-century Roman Empire, namely; Caiaphas, the high priest, and his security guards (Matt 26. 3, 57-62). In this case, rhetorically the narrative intends to communicate a continuity of similar oppression of the Matthean community in Syria in the late first-century CE by the Roman elites. Suetonius (Dom. 13.2) confirms that in the period 81-96 CE Domitian, the younger brother of Titus, asserted his oppressive rule by demanding the Roman citizens to address him as “our Lord and god.” However, Suetonius was writing in the post-Domitian era, which marked the end of the Flavian dynasty. At the time of his writing, he was hired as an Orator by Trajan. As such, his testimony may not be authentic and reliable. However, Matthew’s insistence on forgiveness of debts (Matt 6.12) reflects a late first-century application of the *prosbul*, which was intended to invert liberty from debt on account of the Jubilee covenantal decrees (Deut 15.1-3; Lev 25), and so draw attention to the unjust treatment of the poor by the wealthy in the society. Keener rightly observes that in the Gospel narrative of Matthew, “debt” could mean more than economic debt, it could also include sins (Keener 2009, 233). Thus, the historical inter texture of Matthew’s Lord’s prayer, on account of its emphasis on God’s Kingdom to come and forgiveness of debts, reveals that Matthew borrows from Hebrew traditions to contest Jewish aristocratic elites’ application of the *prosbul* to alleviate social oppression in the Matthean

community.

### 3.4 CONCLUSION

The application of inter textual analysis for reading the SM has indicated that Matthew applied the SM as an ideology to borrow from, or mimic or accommodate certain Judean traditions in order to contest certain social and cultural Greco-Roman traditions. This borrowing, mimicking, accommodation and contestation will prove to be important to the implied author's strategy for reconstructing, legitimating and negotiating the identity of the Matthean community in the Roman Empire, which will be discussed in detail in chapters 5 to 7. The next chapter will set out the social context of the Matthean community in reference to identity formation in Rome, Judaism and the Jesus Movement.

## CHAPTER 4

### IDENTITY IN ROME, DIASPORA JUDAISM AND THE JESUS MOVEMENT

#### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

For quite some time, Biblical Scholars have been employing Biblical text to infer the relations between early Christian movements and first century Judaism. This inference is used to decipher the relations between the Jesus Movement, which started in the Jewish homeland, early Christianity, and first-century CE Judaism. The focus on inferring relations between the Jesus Movement, first-century Judaism, and the Roman Empire using Biblical text, began to emerge at the beginning of the twentieth century. In his recent article, “The New Testament as Political Documents,” Jeremy Punt complains that, “the political nature of the NT documents is carefully hidden away in the folds of a centuries-long tradition of Christianising and spiritualising the NT...” (Punt 2017, 1). Punt points out the failure of Biblical scholarship to observe the entwining of socio-economic, political, and religious discourses as a source for communal identity in the world of antiquity. This leads to the question: how did the multivalent nature of religious discourse, in terms of its socio-economic and political perspective, influence communal identity formation in the Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism, and the Jesus Movement in the first century CE? To answer this question, the basis of identity formation in the Roman Empire needs to be studied before exploring its role in the formation of identity in Judaism and the Jesus Movement in the first century CE. Prior to doing this, a brief overview of current New Testament scholarship regarding the Roman Empire will be helpful for providing the context for this discussion of identity.

## 4.2 NEW TESTAMENT SCHOLARSHIP TRENDS REGARDING ROMAN EMPIRE

Classical work of Suetonius and the recent work of Duling and Esler provide a scholarly view that details some of the current concerns in New Testament studies regarding the development of a hybrid identity in the process of negotiating the Roman Empire as a dominant power during the emergence of the Jesus Movement.

In “Empire: Theories, Methods, Models,” Duling employs several theories, such as those proposed by Karl Wittfogel (1957), S.N. Eisenstaedt (1963), and Gerhard Lenski (1966), to define and explain the emergence of the term “empire” in order to illustrate both the vertical and horizontal dimensions of the hierarchy in Roman imperialism in the Gospel of Matthew. Duling’s research significantly contributes to the present discussion in two ways: First, his conclusion that the exertion of the Roman hegemonic power in the first century through the Jewish aristocracy provoked three forms of peasant resistance—millennial movements, peasant revolts, and everyday non-violent resistance (73-76), summarizes the kind of resultant hybrid identity expressive of the inherent power in the negotiation of the social and cultural values emerging from the Roman Empire. The resultant hybrid identity of the Matthean can be classified as a millennial movement that preferred a response of non-violent resistance to Rome. This is indicated by the fact that the Sermon on the Mount emphasizes forgiveness and love of one’s enemy (Matt 5. 43-48; 6.10). This non-violent attitude is grounded in the literary context of suffering for righteousness (Matt 5.10-12) and eschatological relief from suffering (Matt 24.30-31; 25,32-46). Second, Duling, following Carter (2000, 20-29), claims that in the Roman Empire, “[e]thnic self-identity was corroborated by Roman imperial theology” (Duling 2005, 73). He concludes that the Romans, particularly in the eastern part of the Empire, “believed that they [Romans] were God’s chosen people and that if their leaders, especially the emperor, maintained the appropriate virtue and

piety their mandate to rule the world was a mandate from heaven” (74). Duling suggests that the Romans believed that if they and their emperors remained pious and virtuous, they would continue to be chosen by the gods to rule over the world. Thus, Duling’s suggestion shows that the Roman imperial theology was applied in Rome as a motivation to maintain harmony in the Roman Empire. Duling also implies that Roman imperialism was a symbol of political ideology that attempted to construct, for the first time, a common identity for Roman citizens (this did not include the non-Roman people living in the empire) across a wide range of ethnic groups dispersed over thousands of kilometres.

In his study, Duling attempts to examine to what extent religious freedom granted by the Roman emperors contributed to the shaping of Matthew’s Gospel narrative, which introduces Jesus as having a special divine status as *Ima-nu-el* (God with us: Matt 1.23) before he is portrayed as greater than Moses in the SM (5.1-2). According to the SM, Jesus had the authority not only to interpret the Law (Matt 5.17-20) but to give instructions concerning almsgiving, prayer, and fasting (6.1-18). This special divine status accorded to Jesus in Matthew’s narrative provided a mode of identity formation for the Matthean community. Matthew’s negotiation with respect to religious freedom granted by Rome was a means to forge a common hybrid identity for his community. This shows how important it is to consider the Roman Empire as the historical context for early Christian discourse as reflected in the New Testament. The avoidance of references to the Roman Empire as the historical context for early Christian discourse by New Testament scholars has been noted by Richard Horsley (2016, 47):

The basic assumptions and controlling concepts of the field of New Testament studies obscured the Roman Empire as the historical context of Jesus and the Gospels. New Testament studies developed in Western Europe as the division of theology that interpreted the sacred texts of the Christian religion. Religion was understood as separate from political-economic affairs. Religion was also increasingly understood as individual

faith or belief. Correspondingly, New Testament books were defined as religious texts about religion, the Gospels viewed as merely collections of the sayings of and stories about Jesus, and Jesus understood as an individual teacher of individuals.

The ignoring of the Roman Empire as the historical context for early Christian discourse by some modern scholars has limited our understanding of the world in which Christianity emerged by presenting a monolithic view of religious discourse disinterested in the socio-economic and political experiences of the time.

Some classical writers, such as Suetonius, seem to give the wrong impression of how the Roman Empire featured in the emergence of early Christian discourse, particularly with reference to the Flavian dynasty. Suetonius' (Dom 13.2) misrepresentation of emperor Domitian creates the impression that the Roman Empire, particularly the Flavian dynasty, employed the emperor cult to enforce Rome's dominance in the Empire. Suetonius' misrepresentation of Domitian's reign and personality has been a subject of discussion among New Testament scholars, such as Leonard L. Thompson in his monograph, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire* (1990, 95-115), and Geoff W. Adam's article, "Suetonius and his Treatment of the Emperor Domitian's Favourable Accomplishments" (2005, 1-13).

Suetonius' false impression of the supposed excesses of Domitian and the Flavian dynasty, of which Domitian was the last member, is exacerbated by modern scholars such as Philip Esler and Dennis Duling. Esler (2005, 11-12) suggests that after their conquest of Greece, the Romans continued to sustain their political dominance through unmitigated military violence towards conquered cities and their people; they raped women and killed many or the entire population to sustain their political dominance in the Empire. Similarly, grounding his argument in Doyle and Woolf, Duling (2005, 73) asserts that to sustain its dominance, the Roman empire

employed an imperial ideology that combined Roman ethnicity and imperial theology to control people, beliefs, religions, laws and monetary systems. Not only did writers from antiquity such as Suetonius and some modern scholars such as Esler and Duling represent Rome as imposing its will on the citizens, but also they collectively promote a monolithic view of Roman religion, which in effect conceals the entwining of socio-economic and political issues with religious experiences in the Roman Empire.

Furthermore, in the Roman Empire religion was entwined with the socio-economic and political functions of the Empire whereby the interconnection between culture, identity, and power facilitated Rome's acceptance of the practice of various religious cults by the local communities, even though public religion in the provinces was administered by Roman officials. Thus, the aim of this chapter is guided by the question: how did the Roman emperors enforce their agendas in the Empire, and how did this approach impact on peoples' cultural identity? Consequently, in this chapter I argue that the Roman Empire employed the multivalent nature of religion. In this case, the socio-economic and political interconnectedness of religion provides the grounds for the formation of people's cultural identity and religious freedom.

In Antiquity, identity formation happened on account of one's relations to other people, places and things. Malina and Neyrey (1996b, 154-164) have observed that in Antiquity narratives of collective identity, rather than an individual's choice, were guided by belonging to a fictive family, a city dwelling, or political factions or coalitions, played a significant role in the formation of an individual's social identity. In Rome, the elite and local communities played a significant role in cultural identity formation in the Empire. I proceed by outlining Janet Huskinson's and Michael Mann's empire theories to provide a lens to help demonstrate the socio-

economic and political interconnectedness of religion in the Roman Empire. Then, I will outline the cultural identity formation of first-century Diaspora Judaism and the Jesus Movement.

### 4.3 IDENTITY FORMATION IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE

#### 4.3.1 Janet Huskinson's and Michael Mann's Empire Theories

In her essay, “Looking for Identity, Culture and Power,” Huskinson (2009a, 5) presents her theory of empire by first defining “culture” as “shared meanings” based on her conviction that when people belong to a particular cultural group they “share a set of assumptions and experiences ... expressed by following certain common practices or by employing accepted representations of mutual identity.” It is this aspect of a “shared set of assumptions and experiences” which can help detect cultural values in the Roman Empire in terms of Rome, the Roman elites, and local communities. Having defined culture in her theory of empire, Huskinson’s view of cultural diversity<sup>29</sup> plays a significant role in establishing the commonality of Roman culture in the Empire.<sup>30</sup> This commonality is also described as Romanization, a process by which Roman culture spread across the empire through assimilation, imitation and acculturation,<sup>31</sup> as explained via essentialist,<sup>32</sup> and relativist<sup>33</sup> perspectives. Although essentialism

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<sup>29</sup> Cultural diversity entails *common membership* in Roman culture, which is represented by shared values such as language, religion, names, dress, codes of morality, and ancestral customs (Huskinson 2009b, 7).

<sup>30</sup> How did ‘Romanization’ as a process, whereby Roman culture was spread across the Empire take place? Huskinson suggests that *assimilation* is one of the means by which Roman culture spread. Assimilation could happen either through a pattern of *imitation* or *acculturation* whereby the non-Roman local elites adopted for themselves some of the Roman practices in order to leverage social status. Thus, Romanization involved the military, religious, legal, and administrative civil institutions, and their building projects and ceremonies (Huskinson 2009b, 21)

<sup>32</sup>According to Huskinson (2009b, 10), from an essentialist perspective, aspects such as ethnicity

forms an important part of Huskinson's theory, it is not a modern concept. Essentialism can be inferred from the significance of the concept of 'Romanization' because, as already noted by Huskinson, in the Roman world some indigenous groups claimed essential distinctiveness in terms of their past, usually as a survival strategy in the face of the dominant Roman culture. According to Huskinson, such distinctiveness was claimed "by promoting the myths" attached to the foundations of cities, and by presenting local gods or heroes in public ritual and art (Huskinson 2009b, 12). In Huskinson's theory, some aspects of power relations are present. While the perception of cultural identity is expressed through personification,<sup>34</sup> representation and self-representation, the motives for cultural identity, are ideologically demonstrated in the light of power relations in the Roman Empire (15–17). While Huskinson's theory is helpful in providing some insights on how essential cultural attributes, such as one's ethnicity and race, inform social identity, she has not clearly elaborated on how minority groups exert their social power in the context of a dominant cultural group.

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and sex, which from a biological point of view are non-negotiable, provide the basis for a definition of cultural identity.

<sup>33</sup> In terms of the relativist view, cultural identity in the Roman Empire was not understood as determined by biological attributes but was treated as a fluid category, determined by social context in which, for example, certain types of behavior or situations constructed identities of male or female. In reference to Roman cultural identity, the concept 'Romanization' borders on essentialism because Roman cultural identity is grounded in the argument that there was a homogenous and identifiable Roman culture (Huskinson 2009b, 10–11). Huskinson utilizes the concept of essentialism, which some modern scholars reject, alongside social constructivism and relativism to explain her perspective of cultural identity formation.

<sup>34</sup> How did the people in the Roman Empire perceive identity? Huskinson's view is that cultural identity is the perception of other people as with one's own perception. Huskinson says that in the Roman Empire, identity was perceived in terms of the provinces being included in the culture of the empire. This perception is communicated through personification. For instance, this is visible in the mosaic floor tiles in the depiction of Thysdrus, in modern El Djem in Tunisia. Africa is represented as a woman with idealized features such as wearing classical dress. Her ethnic features are symbolized by the elephant-skin headdress which emphasizes distinctiveness (Huskinson 2009b, 14).

In addition to Huskinson's theory, Michael Mann provides another theory of empire that supplements Huskinson's view of power by extending it to include military and political aspects in addition to ideological and economic ones. In Mann's view, these four sources of social power, that is; ideological, economic, military and political power, are not independent, they are entwined. That is, their interactions change one another's inner shapes as well as their outward trajectory (Mann 2012, 1–3). This in effect shows the multivalent character of social power that can also be applied to explain the nature of cultural identity formation in the Roman Empire. Consequently, Huskinson presents three concepts that are helpful in explaining the construction of cultural identity, namely; culture, identity and power. Mann's four subcategories; ideological, economic, military and political, are useful for elaborating these three major categories of cultural identity formation. This will be done in terms of the interaction between the place of Rome, provincial elites, the local communities, and the imperial cult in the formation of cultural identity in the Empire.

#### 4.3.2 *Rome*

The nature of Roman cultural identity is informed not only by the role of the Roman officials, but also through the conspicuous geographical, social, religious, economic and political functions of Rome, her provincial elite, and local communities. This focus on Rome leads to the question: what was the contribution of Rome in the formation of cultural identity in the Empire?

Rives (2009, 255) notes:

...in Rome ...public religion was organized and maintained by the political and economic elite: they made all the important decisions while the priests and magistrates (who were themselves senators) maintained the traditional religious prescriptions and performed the rituals. In this respect public religion was no different from foreign policy of governance of the city.

Thus, Rome seems to have been a center not only of political issues but also of religious and economic matters. This is most likely the reason that religion in the Roman Empire was embedded within economic, political and civic life.

In classical literature, Virgil, Columella, Josephus, and Tacitus have been selected among others such as the Psalm of Solomon, Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Horace, to provide the late-first century CE evidence regarding the role of Rome in shaping cultural identity in the Empire. Some scholars are known to have a certain mistrust of Josephus, because they argue that he was a puppet of the Flavian dynasty since he wrote under the patronage of Vespasian. To allay these fears and boost Josephus' evidence, it is crucial to consult other classical writers who write before Josephus, such as Virgil and, those who write around the same time with Josephus, such as Tacitus and Columella.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Josephus embarked on his career of writing the history of the Jews after Vespasian spared his life following his capture by Vespasian's soldiers during the 66-73 Jewish revolt. He settled in Rome to write the history of the Jews (see Josephus' Life). Josephus tells us that, in the pre-70 C.E. period, Rome was reasonably tolerant of local religions. Jewish priests were allowed to offer sacrifices and encourage the Jewish people to worship in Jerusalem, as long as some accommodation was reached that recognized Roman power by the Jews. This is one case that demonstrates Rome's tolerance of Jewish representation of their cultural identity in the light of the Jerusalem temple and its priesthood in the context of their monotheism and non-image-oriented worship. Although the Jewish chief priest was appointed by Rome, they were nevertheless obliged to guide the Jews in their socio-economic and religious activities. Not only did Rome provide a social environment conducive for worship and socio-economic engagement in Jerusalem, they also provided military security that ensured peaceful celebrations of Jewish festivals, which were often disrupted by seditious groups. By allowing the Jews to worship in Jerusalem according to Jewish traditions, and even providing them with security to counter any disruption, Rome assisted in creating a religious and economic environment whereby the Jerusalem temple, chief priests, and the festivals played a crucial role in facilitating norms, beliefs and traditions that significantly contributed to the maintenance of Judaeian cultural identity. In this context, Judaeian cultural identity means an identity of the Judaeians that was shaped by a focus on Jerusalem, with its priesthood at the center of people's socio-economic and political beliefs and practices.

Not only did Rome cater to the people's religious activities for the purposes of representing their cultural identity, but the Empire also facilitated the social aspect of religion. Religion in Rome was a social event that brought people from various ethnic, educational, and economic backgrounds to socialize together irrespective of their difference in religious affiliation. For instance, during the annual celebrations of the *Ludi Romani*, people came from all over the Empire to honor the god Jupiter Optimus Maximus by sacrificing to him and playing games.<sup>36</sup> Not only did these annual celebrations of the *Ludi Romani* festivals have a religious and social aspect, but the festivals incorporated certain ideological power relations. Because the celebration was performed in honor of Jupiter, the superiority of Jupiter and his worshipers over other gods and their local worshipers in the rest of the Empire was demonstrated. Not only did worshipping Jupiter legitimate a Roman cultural identity, it also likely provided a more prestigious basis of cultural identity in the Empire because of its connection to Rome, more than belonging to local communities that only worshipped local deities.

In addition to Josephus' narratives concerning cultural identity in Rome, Virgil is also a reliable source. Although Virgil (Circa 70-19 BCE) lived much earlier than either Josephus or Suetonius, his poetry, particularly the *Aeneid*, is a profound source of socio-economic and political narrative of the early Roman Empire. In his *Aeneid* (6.852 ) Virgil, in celebration of the power relations embedded in Rome's relations with the rest of the Empire and beyond, declared

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<sup>36</sup> During the annual celebration of the great *Ludi Romani*, the annual Roman games celebrated in honor of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, connected Rome to social events facilitated by the interaction of the people originating from different parts of the Empire coming together for the celebration in Rome. While the religious aspect of the *Ludi Romani* festival was demonstrated by the celebrations that began with an elaborate procession to the Circus Maximus composed of magistrates, performers, and statues of the gods, and climaxed in a series of sacrifices, the social aspect was composed of the continuation of the festivals for sixteen days after the sacrifices, when chariots races, athletic contests, and theatrical displays would take place (Rives 2009, 253–254).

that “you, Roman, be sure to rule the world (be these your arts), to crown peace with justice, to spare the vanquished and to crush the proud” (LCL 63:592-593). Huskinson attempts to explain the multivalent nature of the power relations between Rome and the rest of the Empire in her analysis of the El Djem Floor Mosaic, which depicts the goddess Roma in the center of the tiles, surrounded by six figures of deities which represent the provinces of the Roman Empire. Confirming the asymmetric nature of these power relations, as well as their effect in maintaining a distinctive Roman culture and political power in the Empire, Huskinson remarks that the foreigners of the individual provinces were kept separated and thus peripheral to Rome. This was not only to allow Rome to exercise control from the center, but also to curtail any threats of cultural contamination (Huskinson 2009b, 17-18). Thus, although Rome depended on the provinces for its survival, in the context of controlling its own influences in the Empire, it clearly occupied a more honorable and powerful place than the depiction of the provinces in the mosaic of El-Djem.

In the Roman Empire, religion was linked with economic activities which provided sources for maintaining cultural identity. Perkins defines economy from *Oikonomia* as “household or estate management” that can extend to a political economy. In this case, if political economy refers to, “the management of the resources and wealth of a people and of its government” (Perkins 2009, 83-184), given that in the Roman empire, religion encompassed all spheres of life, then some economic practices could point to religious convictions and norms of a particular group of people. Some economic practices found in the Roman Empire point towards certain religious beliefs of a community which are directly related to such economic practices. This idea is confirmed by Virgil (70-19 BCE), in his *Georgics*, a poem set in the countryside:

...and you, Silvanus, with a young uprooted cypress in your hand; and gods and goddesses

all, whose love guards our fields—both you who nurse the young fruits, springing up unsown, and you who on the seedlings send down from heaven plenteous rain! And you above all, Caesar, whom we know not what company of the gods, shall claim ere long; whether you choose to watch over cities and care for our lands, that so the great globe may receive you as the giver of increase and lord of the seasons, wreathing your brows with your mother's myrtle (LCL 63:100-101).

In this poem we see the intertwining of Roman religion with the economy. Virgil attributes the sources of Rome's economy to the agricultural products whose benefactor is the Emperor, understood to be the "giver of increase and lord of the seasons." The notion that the love of Roman goddesses and gods "guards [the agricultural] fields" connects the sources of the agricultural economy with the providential care of the Roman gods. Thus, Rome's economy, which is granted by the emperor as the benefactor, and the Roman goddesses and gods as protectors of the means of economy, indicates the political and religious sources of the Roman economy, respectively. By implication, this notion of the political and religious sources of economy constitutes the norms and traditions that are crucial in the formation and maintenance of Roman cultural identity. To be considered a Roman, it meant acknowledging that people's means of economic survival was bound up with Roman goddesses and gods. Thus, in the Roman Empire, not only was agriculture an important source of people's economic existence, but it was also a source for their cultural and religious identity. In the late first-century CE, agricultural economy as normative for the construction of cultural identity in the Roman Empire was noted by Lucius Columella (Circa 65 CE), a prominent Roman writer on agriculture. Columella's writing was influenced by Virgil. In his *On Agriculture*, Columella, insisting on an agricultural economy as normative to the cultural identity in the Roman Empire, commented:

For, even as Marcus Varro complained in the days of our grandfathers, all of us who are heads of families have quit the sickle and the plough and have crept within the city-walls; and we ply our hands in the circuses and theatres rather than in the grain fields and vineyards; and we gaze in astonishment by (LCL 361.12-13).

In this case, because agriculture was such an important aspect of the cultural identity in the Roman Empire, Columella laments the departure of the landholders from rural fields in search of work in the non-agricultural sectors of urban society, such as theatres and circuses in the cities. Similarly, people came from all over the Empire for the annual *Ludi Romani* celebrations, for which they would often stay for at least two weeks in Rome, which signifies the nature of Roman religion as a source for economic practices in Rome. During their stay in Rome for *Ludi Romani* festivals, visitors as well as Roman officials mutually benefited through exchange of commodities; olives, ivory, spices, citrus fruits, and clothes would form a better part of the trade that would be going on in Rome during *Ludi Romani*. The economic significance of Rome in the Empire is also illustrated in mosaic floor tiles. Again looking at the floor mosaic of El Djem, Huskinson (2009b, 17) says that with Rome in the center and Africa and Spain at the periphery, the mosaic represents Africa and Spain as economic partners with Rome who “had great economic power in respect of their exports of grain and oil.”

Besides an agricultural economy being a source for cultural identity in Rome, the three principal gods housed in Rome—Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva—also provided a source for cultural identity. The names of these gods could be evoked alongside those of the local communities in the various provinces of the Empire. So, why worship Jupiter along with the inferior gods of the local communities? Rives responds to this question, saying:

Romans were quite content to accept that things worked differently in cults from how they did in the myth even if that meant that a god would simultaneously be multiplied and singular, local and universal, that the public cults of Rome could serve as focus for Roman identity even when there were other cults of the same gods in other cities (Rives 2009, 258).

By allowing Rome’s principle gods to be evoked alongside with other local deities, not only was such evocation expressive of allegiance to the religion practiced in Rome, but it also

represented the transformation of religious practices and norms of the local communities through the socio-economic and political values and the beliefs (although the Romans did not have doctrines of belief systems save for cults and myths) associated with these three principal gods. In this case, evoking of the local deities along with Rome's principal gods accomplished two things concerning the supremacy of Rome. One, the evoking of the Rome's principal deities accomplished a political ambition whereby Rome's supremacy was eventually demonstrated over the cities that housed the local deities. Two, in the process of evoking of Rome's deities, even in the provinces, Rome's religious supremacy was achieved by expressing the supremacy of Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva over the local deities. However, this demonstration of the supremacy of Rome did not mean to impose to subjugation on local religious practices. On the contrary; some emperors were known to have been quite friendly to their subjects, including slaves. Tacitus noted the cordial economic relations that existed between Emperor Tiberius and the common people, saying:

[t]he city populace indeed suffered much from high prices, but this was no fault of the emperor, who actually endeavoured to counteract barren soils and stormy seas with every resource of wealth and foresight. And he was also careful not to distress the provinces by new burdens, and to see that in bearing the old they were safe from any rapacity or oppression on the part of governors. Corporal punishments and confiscations of property were unknown (Tacitus, *Annals* 4.6).

Tacitus shows how the philanthropic concern of Tiberius revealed his attempt to lessen the economic burden of the common people. For example, by compensating their agricultural failures, "with every resource of wealth" at his disposal. Perkins (2009, 196) claims that "this good practice by Tiberius is cited by Tacitus to establish his good conduct as an emperor using his imperial power for the economic benefit of citizens," which in effect demonstrates that the economic benefactors of Roman emperors were in many cases their subjects.

The place of Rome in procuring the socio-economic and political nature of the Empire was briefly discussed above. This socio-economic and political nature provided economic, social, and political norms and values of the Romans which in effect provided grounds for the formation of social identity of individuals and communities in relation to Rome. In this case, the multivalent function of Rome is demonstrated by the annual celebration of *Ludi Romani*, which formed a significant part of the emperor's connection to Rome's principal deities, and his beneficence in terms of meeting the needs of city dwellers and securing the agricultural economy. These are just some of the socio-economic and political values by which Rome provided the basis for people's identity; Rome was not merely a place for expressing these values through ritual but was also a center of authority for approving these values. In this strategy of a multivalent aspect of identity formation in the Roman Empire, the provincial elites also played a significant mediatorial role between Rome and the local communities in the provinces.

#### 4.3.3 *The Roman Elites*

Huskinson (2009a, 95) defines elite culture as “common ground ... in artistic and intellectual tastes of the elite.” Thus, elite culture refers to an almost uniform approach in effecting a mediatorial role between Rome and the local communities in the Roman provinces. The concept of “elite culture” is thus the perception that Roman elites, whether in the western or eastern parts of the Empire, were conduits for a common culture by which they collectively contributed to the process of Romanization. Huskinson's observation regarding Pliny's (*Natural History* 3.39) description of Rome's role in unifying and civilizing mankind points to the significance of the common culture of the elite in the Roman Empire in cementing cohesion and cooperation of the privileged classes (Huskinson 2009a, 107). Because of its unifying effect, elite

culture can be said to have had the ability to construct and maintain a local elite cultural identity in the Empire. Elites participated in Romanization of the Empire in several ways that had socio-economic and political dimensions, as exemplified by Virgil, Cicero and Columella and Agricola.<sup>37</sup> Huskinson suggests that Roman socio-economic elites propagated Roman culture,

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<sup>37</sup>First, Rome attempted to accomplish its socio-economic and political religious interest in the Empire through a special group of Roman elites who operated in the Roman colonies. Rives (2009, 260) describes these elites as self-governing communities of Roman citizens that emigrated from Italy to other parts of the Empire. These communities were supposed to be copies of Rome. They were governed by a town council, an equivalent to the Roman senate. These town councils were formed from the political elite with special religious authority. Thus, they were responsible for selecting and overseeing public cults. In these Roman colonies, public cults, like in the case of Roman enfranchised cities, were both Roman and local and so suited to a civic identity that was simultaneously Roman and local (Rives 2009, 260). So, by reduplicating Rome's culture, the Roman colonies employed the structures of town councils and public cults to maintain, at the provincial and local levels, a culture similar to Rome. By implication, these special elites in the Roman Empire would have found it much easier than any other groups annexed by the Empire from outside Rome to reduplicate Rome's socio-economic and political religious values because they were closely connected to Rome. Thus, to sustain their cultural identity to influence Romanization, the first-generation elites in the Roman colonies did not need to assimilate to any Roman culture, but simply needed to continue practicing religious culture (cult, language and other customs), albeit in new social environment. Second, Perkins (2009, 190-193) citing Virgil, Cicero and Columella, analyses a villa excavated near Cosa, a Roman Colony, to provide insights for the socio-economic cultural characteristics of Roman elite households. This villa contained two large rooms at its main entrance which housed agricultural machines; an olive mill, an oil press, and three wine presses. The villa is said to have contained all together fifty-two slaves, kept in the Villa to provide labour for the household (Perkins 2009, 190-193). In view of the slaves and agricultural machines, the villa is indicative of participation in an agricultural economy among members of the Roman elites. Not only were the elite mediators of Rome's political ideology, but they were also conduits of Rome's economic and ideological interests, values and conceptions. Third, besides passing on Rome's economic and ideological interests in the Roman colonies, elite culture was propagated through education and civilization inherited from Greece, particularly among the elites who were not Italians, but other ethnic groups in the western part of the empire. This process of spreading elite culture through assimilation is confirmed by Tacitus when he narrates how his father-in-law, Gnaeus Julius Agricola, performed a Roman imperial assignment in Britain. In this regard, Tacitus noted that while in Britain, Agricola, a member of the Roman elite "He likewise provided a liberal education for the sons of the chiefs [of Britain], and showed such a preference for the natural powers of the Britons over the industry of the Gauls that they who lately disdained the tongue of Rome now coveted its eloquence. Hence, too, a liking sprang up for our style of dress, and the "toga" became fashionable. Step by step they were led to things which dispose to vice, the lounge, the bath, the

which led to so-called Romanization. This process was in part instigated by the presence of imperial iconography in sculpture and coinage that, as a basis of social identity, caused people to identify with the emperor as the face of Roman culture and rule. In this, a connection between social power and the political interest found in elite culture is evident. By this kind of identification with the Roman emperor, not only did the elite manage to elevate their social status, but they were also able to demonstrate their political position and identity in the Empire as mediators of the emperor's political interests, a crucial feature of sustaining elite cultural identity. Moreover, given this brief exploration of elite culture, without being superficial about late first century CE Romanization, we can confidently conclude that in one way the spread of Roman

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elegant banquet. All this in their ignorance, they called civilization, when it was but a part of their servitude (Tacitus, Agricola 21).” Thus, Tacitus notes that Agricola’s conduct as a member of the Roman elite encouraged the Briton elites to assimilate to Roman culture. Agricola imparted social, economic, and cultural values through liberal education for the sons of those chiefs he conquered, embracing Rome’s culture, including elegant banquets and adopting the toga. Thus, Huskinson (2009a, 97) aptly observed that the example of Agricola by Tacitus “introduces themes of culture and status ...within a Roman elite identity, and how elite culture (of varying kinds) operated within the empire.”Fourth, elite culture was in certain places a blending of various cultures comprised of Greek inherited traditions, Roman traditions and local cultures. Huskinson (2009a, 108) has noted that individual communities could be mixed in their cultural makeup particularly in large cities, where a mixture of traditions gave individual communities a distinctive culture of their own. This would have likely been the case in Asia Minor and the Near East. Thus, in places like Syrian Antioch, which was part of the eastern empire, an elite culture which was a mixture of Hellenistic and Roman culture could be found (Huskinson 2009b, 108; Rives 2009, 253). The spread of Roman culture through assimilation was used to promote Roman hegemonic power in the Empire. The above example from by Tacitus about Agricola coupled with Huskinson’s observations regarding the multi-layered elite culture indicates that no force seems to have been used, save for people’s desire to embrace the new dominant culture in the context of their own inherited traditions. Fifth, besides mixed communities, Roman public places provided one of the best opportunities for construction of elite culture as an instrument of expanding Romanization. For instance, Huskinson (2009a, 109) notes that “[c]ertainly in provincial cities it must have been hard for anyone to move far from the elite qualities encapsulated in the imperial image. The dominance of this was unavoidable. The official images of the emperors and members of their family were circulated in an organized fashion throughout the empire. The portrait statues were erected in public places, including theatres and amphitheatres, and smaller images were presented as significant gifts. This was not only by official instigation; local elites also promoted the practice by setting up imperial images alongside their own.”

culture through assimilation has been used to promote Roman hegemonic power in the empire. However, the above example from by Tacitus about Agricola coupled with Huskinson's observation regarding the multi-layered elite culture, indicates that no force seems to have been used to expand elite culture; save for people's desire to embrace the new dominant culture in the context of their own inherited traditions.

It was important for the elites to stand as conduits for Rome's political, economic and cultural interests, while at the same time exuding social power over local communities in the provinces, especially on behalf of the political, religious and economic interests of the emperors and their families. In their social settings, then, elites throughout the empire were better placed to influence the masses than the Emperor, and they could choose to filter down imperial decrees or engage in propaganda to promote certain political ideologies. In this way, a significant feature of cultural identity in the Roman Empire was found in local communities.

#### 4.3.4 *Local Communities*

The way in which socio-economic elites mediated Roman culture between its emperors and local communities, while in the process creating a culture peculiar to an elite identity that granted them a special social status in the Roman Empire has been noted. In what follows, I will briefly explain how local communities received Roman culture to inform and maintain their own cultural identity. Not only did Rome employ assimilation to construct a cultural identity for and through the elite, but assimilation was also applied to transmit Roman culture to local communities.<sup>38</sup> In this case Rives indicates that Romanization as an official tool for assimilating

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<sup>38</sup> Tertullian (160-220 CE), a Christian writer from Carthage in North Africa who lived in the late second and early third century, offers us a depiction of what was going on in the Roman Empire

local communities to Roman culture did not always succeed in displacing local cultures. On the

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in the late second century and the early third century CE. He observed “Every province and city has its proper gods, as Syria the god Ashtaroth, Arabia has Disares, Bavaria Belinus, Africa the Celestial Virgin, and Mauritania their kings. Now these provinces (if I mistake not) are under the Roman jurisdiction, and yet I do not find any of the Roman gods in worship among them (Tertulian, *Apologetics*, 24.3-4).” Tertullian indicates that Rome did not impose its deities on the various Roman provinces. Despite Rome not imposing its deities in the provinces, Rome did implement *interpretatio*, the practice of identifying a provincial or local deity with Roman deities by superimposing a Roman name over the local one. To illustrate this process of Romanization, Rives (2009, 257-258) cites a case from two Roman provinces, Gaul and Africa. In Gaul, Rives says that *interpretatio* was commonly practiced. For instance, there were dedications of Mars Albiorix, Mars Belado; Mars Camulus, and Mars Giarinus. Rives further says that the effect of this kind of *interpretatio* involved a process of rendering an alien deity by equating it with Roman one. Consequently, this process of superimposing Roman belief systems over local ones, as Rives (2009, 257) confirms, “the native tradition was essentially buried underneath the Roman one.” This aspect of *interpretatio* was intended to eventually promote Roman religion in local cultures by displacing the local deities with Roman gods. Thus, *interpretatio* stands as another official Roman tool for effecting Romanization through a kind of assimilation that eventually intended to substitute Roman deities and their attendant socio-economic and political nuances for the local ones and their features. By attempting to substitute Roman deities for local ones, the process of *interpretatio* provided a pro-Roman set of norms for grounding the cultural identity of the local communities, albeit in their own local setting. *Interpretatio* did not always succeed in total assimilation to Roman culture by displacing local deities with a Roman god, as Rive’s second case study from the Roman province of Africa shows. Citing a case from Virgil’s *Aeneid*, Rives argues that although in Roman poetry the great goddess of Carthage was portrayed as Juno, this was largely ignored in actual cults of Roman Africa, and instead worshipers preferred to use the descriptive name “Caelistis” on its own (Rives 2009, 257-258). Compared to the case in Gaul, the case of the Caelistis demonstrates that *interpretatio* as a Roman policy of assimilation did not always achieve its intended goal of displacing the deities of local communities with Roman gods. Rather, some communities resisted such assimilation and preferred to pursue their local deities, effectively preserving their local cultural norms as the basis for their identity even as *Romanization* was taking place around them. Although Rome’s authority seems to have been challenged by such resistance, we do not see Rome enacting subsequent policies that forcefully imposed Roman culture on such dissenting groups. This shows that the policy of *interpretatio* was not forcefully imposed on local communities around the empire. The local communities had the freedom to accept or reject the practice of *interpretatio* as a political and religious tool for assimilating local communities into Roman culture. “Roman culture” here refers to a group’s predominantly practiced behavior and norms encouraged by Rome as the socio-economic and political center of the Empire. This resistance of Roman official decrees on Romanization was most likely to be true in the eastern part of the Empire as confirmed by Rives (2009, 251), who says that in the eastern empire “Greek myth was adopted and expressed in literature ... Romans even adopted some Greek rituals ... to be performed ritu Graeco, according to Greek rite ... public cults in the Greek world as in Rome were an aspect of civic life, closely associated with particular cities and serving to define and reinforce civic identity.”

contrary; in cases like the example of Greek culture and Caelistis in Africa, Rome's culture eventually seemed not only to have been resisted but even influenced by local cultures.

While the above exploration of Rome, Roman elites, and local communities has generally helped show how socio-economic and political experiences provided people's basis for cultural identity and social power, it is important to also look at a specific imperial dynasty. A brief look at the Flavian Dynasty will help us to see how in the late first-century, Rome, the socio-economic elites, and local communities provided sources of identity formation in the Empire, at a time when most of the New Testament books, including the Gospel of Matthew, were being composed.

#### 4.3.5 *The Flavian Dynasty*

Nilsson, following Hartland, claims that the Roman imperial cult, "lacked all genuine religious content...[and the cult's] meaning lay far more in state and social realms, where it served both to express loyalty to the rule of Rome and emperor and satisfy the ambitions of leading families" (Nilsson, M. P. 1948, 178; 1961, 385; Hartland, P. A. 2003, 119). Nilsson reiterates the centrality that Rome had in matters of identity in the Empire. The expression of loyalty to the Emperor and his family was an essential mark not only of being a Roman citizen or subject, but also of belonging to local communities acceptable to Rome. In other words; being a loyal member of a local community was tantamount to expressing and maintaining loyalty to the Emperor and his family. This expression of loyalty as a mark of identity in the Roman Empire was emphasized in the Flavian dynasty during the late first century CE. Flavian *lex Irnitana*, or municipal law, stipulates the oath for swearing into office of the town magistrate. This confirms Nilsson's claim regarding Roman law as a basis for identity, particularly an elite cultural identity, during the

Flavian dynasty. When taking the oath of office in the Flavian dynasty, *lex Irnitana 26*, cited by Cliff Ando, stipulated that every town magistrate must offer his vow saying in an assembly, “by Jupiter, the divine Augustus, the divine Claudius, the divine Vespasian Augustus, the divine Titus Augustus, the genius of Emperor Caesar Domitian Augustus” (Ando 2008, 95). While swearing in the name of Jupiter reveals the religious aspect of the ceremony, the connection to the chain of emperors from Augustus to Domitian shows the identification of the magistrate with a political and cultural tradition that legitimated the elite cultural identity of the one being sworn in.

Here there is a close connection between the religious and cultural aspects of identity. By virtue of being identified with this Roman tradition of oath-taking, not only does the swearing in reconstruct the elite social status, but also the connection to this entrusts some social power to the elite by granting him the power to arbitrate socio-economic and political issues of the local communities on behalf of Rome. This provokes the crucial question: what did Gaius Suetonius (Circa 71-135 CE) mean when he claimed that Domitian, the last and youngest son in the Flavian dynasty, demanded to be addressed across the Roman Empire as “Our Master and our God” (Dom. 13.2)?

Suetonius’ declaration suggests that not only did Domitian demand divine status, but he created the impression that the Flavian dynasty had imposed emperor worship in the late first-century CE Roman Empire. To answer the question posed here about Suetonius, two issues from other Roman writers that relate to the representation of Roman deities and whether the status of the Roman emperors was regarded as equal to that of Roman gods should first be considered. One such author is the Roman poet Virgil (70-19 BC E). Virgil noted in his *Aeneid* (1. 254), in conferring political authority on Romulus and the Empire, Jupiter declared to Romulus, “For

these I set no bounds in space or time; but have given empire without end ... lords of the world, and the nation ...” In this case Virgil’s myth confirms that not only did Jupiter, on account of his divine virtue, grant political power to the Roman empire, but he also sanctioned the Roman emperors to become masters of the world (but not gods). In other words, Virgil’s myth depicts Jupiter holding the highest supreme authority in the Empire. As a result, Jupiter grants to the emperors pious, socio-economic, and political powers to be masters of the world. Virgil writes his poetry almost 89 years before Suetonius was born. Although his poetry gives the general picture of the Empire, he does not address the Flavian dynasty.

Evidence provided by Roman authors during Domitian’s reign, such as Quintilian (Circa 35-100 CE) and Publius Statius (Circa 45-96 CE), is comparable in their representation of Domitian with those writing after Domitian’s reign, like Suetonius, Pliny the Younger (Circa 61-113 CE), and Dio Cassius (Circa 150- 235 CE). By examining these sources, it is possible to understand the motivation behind Suetonius’ representation of Domitian.<sup>39</sup>Consequently, these

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<sup>39</sup> Two issues emerge from this kind of reading. First, the authors writing during the reign of Domitian seem to praise Domitian for his achievements. Thus, in his *Institutio Oratoria*, praising Domitian for his governance exploits, Quintilian says “I have restricted my list of poets to these names, because Germanicus Augustus has been distracted from the study of poetry on which he had embarked by his care for the governance of the world, and the gods have thought it scarce worthy of his powers that he should be the greatest of poets (Inst. Orat 10.1.91).” In this case Domitian, referred to as “Germanicus Augustus”, is praised by Quintilian for his governance skills derived from the study of poetry. These granted him social recognition to be considered “the greatest of poets” which represents Domitian as an example to be emulated by the Roman society. Second, Thompson noted that while celebrating the Domitian’s seventeenth consulship in 95 CE, Publius Statius simply referred to Domitian as *vates* (poet) and *dux* (military chief), but never as either *dominus* or *deus* (Thompson, L. 1990, 105). These two examples clearly show that Statius and Quintilian collectively characterized Domitian as a modest statesman, ready to deliver on his role as a benefactor to his subjects. However, Tacitus, Suetonius, and Dio Cassius, who wrote in the post-Domitian period, represent Domitian in negative terms that seem to contradict Statius and Quintilian. Tacitus presents Domitian as the unfavored son of Vespasian in comparison to Titus, to whom his father entrusted the leadership of his army (Tacitus, Hist. 4.51). Suetonius describes Domitian as a violent man (Suetonius, Dom. 14.1), in similar terms as Dio

classical sources indicate that Suetonius vilifies Domitian in order to praise Nerva and/or Trajan as well as the senate. This is not only to preserve his job, and in a sense secure some political favors from the post-Domitian emperors, but also to satisfy Trajan's desire for a new order marked by anti-Domitian propaganda. Ironically, this propaganda was applied to promote Trajan's fame at the expense of Domitian character. This begs the question of the existence of an emperor cult during the Roman Empire. To answer this question, we turn to Chua and Hartland.

#### 4.3.6 *Emperor Cult*

New Testament scholars proposing imperialism as the historical context for the emergence of Christianity attribute the survival of the Roman Empire to religious pluralism and tolerance. Amy Chua (2007, xxi) contends, "For all their enormous differences, every single

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Cassius who vilified Domitian as "...not only bold and quick to anger but also treacherous and secretive; and so, deriving from these two characteristics impulsiveness on the one hand and craftiness on the other, he would often attack people with the sudden violence of a thunderbolt and again would often injure them as the result of careful deliberation (Dio, Rom. Hist. 67.2.1)." Thus, Dio Cassius and Tacitus, like Suetonius who wrote in the post-Flavian era, paint an extremely negative picture of Domitian. What is the significance of this contrast in the representation of Domitian, the last of the Flavian dynasty, of those Roman authors writing in the time of Domitian with those writing in the post-Domitian period, that is, in Nerva's (96-98 CE) and Trajan's era (98-117 CE)? Thompson says that this contrast serves Trajan's ideological purpose because, "the retrospective representation of Domitian and his reign serves as a foil in the present praise of Trajan." That is; "the opposing of Trajan and Domitian in a binary set serves overtly in Trajan's ideology of a new age as well as covertly in his praise" (Thompson, L. 1990, 115). Furthermore, not only did Suetonius negatively represent Domitian alone in his literary works, but recent New Testament scholarship indicates that he also negatively represented other pre-Domitian emperors such as Tiberius, Gaius, Claudius, Nero, and Vitellius (Townsend 1967, 91; Jones 1996, xv; Adams 2005, 1). What would have influenced Suetonius to negatively represent particularly Domitian in such unrelenting hatred? Adams (2005, 1-2) attributes this negative representation of Domitian by Suetonius to "senatorial influence" and Suetonius' own "damnatio memoriae evident in the literature of the period", and "Senatorial hatred of Domitian" occasioned by Domitian's "preference for pursuing his own ideals and standards and ignoring the suggestions of the senate."

world hyper power in history ...was, at least by the standards of its time, extraordinarily pluralistic and tolerant during its rise to pre-eminence ... just as strikingly, the decline of empire has repeatedly coincided with its intolerance, xenophobia, and calls for racial, religious or ethnic purity.” Chua suggests that Rome belongs among the hyper powers that received global recognition for participating in sanctioning of religious pluralism and tolerance. Complementing Chua’s claim, Hartland (2003, 122-123) outlines three levels by which the Roman imperial cult operationalized cultic associations. These levels in effect affirm Rome’s preference and support of religious pluralism and tolerance. The first level, noted by Hartland, is that of provincial cultic associations which were devoted to honoring the emperor in temples built by provincial councils. For example, those built in Asia Minor devoted to the goddess Roma and to Roman emperors, and Roma’s temple in Ephesus with the statue of Domitian. The second level is that of civic imperial cults whose goal was to attribute honor to the *Sebastoi* (members of the imperial family) through temples such as the ones devoted to Olympian *Sebastoi* gods in several locations, including Ephesus and Laodocia. Local shrines and monuments constitute the third level of the emperor cult which was devoted to unofficial honoring of the emperor by small groups, families and individuals. These three levels of cultic associations describe the good will of the Roman Empire in employing the emperor cult to attend to sanctioned religious pluralism and tolerance at various levels of social stratification in the Roman Empire. What is lacking in Hartland and Chua’s conceptions of the emperor cult is the socio-economic and political multivalent nature of the cult. These are signified by the three levels of honoring the emperors and their families.

Honoring of the emperors and members of their families provided certain social norms and traditions that correspondingly constructed three levels of cultural identities in the Roman

Empire: provincial cultural identity, civic cultural identity and local cultural identity. Underlying these three cultural identities is the theme of hierarchical power relations. At the provincial level, citizens' close association with the Roman principle deities and the emperors themselves provided the impetus for the members of the cult to achieve the highest social status. Members at the civic level, due to their freedom to honor the families of the emperors, ranked second. Finally, the local community, although they had their own freedom to explore private religion, they ranked lowest in terms of social power because they were distant from both the emperors and their families.

Participation in the emperor cult, whether at the provincial, civic or local levels, enhanced the social status of these communities by their association with the emperor and his family. The emperor cult in the Roman Empire was not merely a religious phenomenon, but it was also an economic, political and cultural tool for promoting imperial ideology and enhancing people's cultural identity and social positioning in Roman society.

This brief survey of identity formation in the Roman Empire has attempted to demonstrate the role of Rome, elites and local communities in representing, legitimating, and maintaining a cultural identity in the context of privileged power and the emperor cult. The focus on the Flavian dynasty has helped to show how classical authors like Suetonius could use their elitist position to employ propaganda to defend their cultural identity and the imperial privileges attached to such identity. This survey of representing, legitimating, and maintaining of cultural identity in the context of imperial propaganda by the elite and their acolytes leads to this question: How did first-century CE Judaism, the emerging Jesus Movement, and the Matthean community respond to the Roman Empire? To answer this question, hybrid identity negotiation during the emergence of first-century Judaism in the Diaspora will be explored before examining identity construction

and maintenance in the Jesus Movement and the Matthean communities in Antioch.

#### 4.4 NEGOTIATING JUDAEAN IDENTITY IN THE DIASPORA

In this section, I will explore the development of Jewish hybrid identity in the period of 66-70 CE to provide a context for discussing the negotiation of Diaspora Jews with Rome's strategy of assimilation in the Empire.

##### 4.4.1 *Jewish Identity in the 66-70 CE Period*

The exploration of the development of a hybride Jewish cultural identity in the Diaspora is introduced by Andrew Overman's *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism* (1990), and in Jacob Neusner's article, "The Formation of Rabbinic Judaism: Yavneh (Jamnia) from A.D. 70 to 100" (1979). These scholars provide a brief look at the preferential and unfavorable treatment of the Jews in the Diaspora in the first-century CE. In this section, not only shall I be drawing insights from Overman, but I will also be responding to some aspects of his research by pointing out some of the issues that are significant for the development of a hybride Jewish cultural identity in the Diaspora that have escaped Overman's attention. Viewed from the context of the aftermath of the destruction of the second temple during the first Jewish war with Rome, cultural identity and polytheism in the Roman Empire posed a challenge to Jewish monotheism. Diaspora Judaism responded by negotiating a Jewish identity through a process of recategorization. Focusing on formative Judaism, as Overman, Riches and Neusner discuss how the development of post-70 CE Jewish identity risks engaging a phenomenon of Judaeen community that could only be<sup>40</sup> realistic in the late second and early third century. That is, when Rabbinic traditions had

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<sup>40</sup> Drawn from the above discussion of ideological analysis and social identity theories, is my own

paved the way for determining normativity in post-70 Judaism. Also, the main sources appealed to, for instance by Overman, to defend the case for formative Judaism, are mostly from the second and early third century CE. Thus, this discussion will focus on post-70 Diaspora Judaism instead of formative Judaism in order to analyze negotiation of a Judaeian identity in the Diaspora during the period in which the Matthean community emerged. Post-70 Diaspora Judaism is preferable to formative Judaism because the term “Diaspora Judaism” encompasses a variety of Pre-and Post-70 Jewish sectarian groups operating outside Jerusalem, and “post-70 Diaspora” Judaism is a category that would include second century formative Judaism.

By referring to post-70 Judaism as “formative Judaism,” Neusner, Overman and Riches seem to underestimate the multivalent nature of post-70 CE Judaism and the role that assimilation with Roman culture played in development of a hybrid Jewish identity in the post-70 CE period. It is noteworthy at this juncture to consider the preferential and unfavourable treatment of the Judaeans in the Diaspora in the first century, and to broaden the spectrum on some of the challenges that the Judaeans faced during this period.

Prior to the 66-73 CE Jewish revolt, Rome had not always been hostile to Judaeans. The preferential treatment in the earlier days before the turn of first-century CE was remarkable for Rome’s philanthropic treatment of the Judeans. For instance, the Judadeans were exempted by the Roman imperial edict from military conscription. They also continued to possess the right of

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attempt for a reconstruction of a model for explaining group relations in this thesis, namely; Social-Identity Political Theory (SIPT). The SIPT draws from the above study in terms of a notion of ideology provided by Weber (1968, 248-254), Berger (1969, 27-51), Thomson (1990, 56-57), Robbins (1996b, 36, 195), and Wanamaker (2003b, 200-201). Some aspects of SIPT are drawn from a social identity theory proposed by Faulkner (2005c, 6-61), Esler (2016, 164-171), Kuecker (2016, 69-75), and Baker (2016, 107-118). Moon’s (2012, 13501364) aspects of identity politics also provide insights for SIPT.

assembly for religious purposes granted in the time of Hyrcanus III, which continued in the time of Augustus (Josephus, *AJ* 14.213-225). Furthermore, Josephus (*BJ* 16.16) testifies to Rome's special treatment of the Jews. During and after the first Jewish war with Rome in 66-73 CE, this favor seems to have been withdrawn, particularly as demonstrated in the period of Flavian dynasty. Margaret Williams tells us that the first brutal treatment of the Jews happened in 19 CE, when Tiberius, the adopted son of Augustus, expelled about 25,000 Jews from Rome, while 4000 male Jews were conscripted. Those who refused to leave Rome or join the military suffered summary execution (William 2009, 328). According to Suetonius, another punishment against the Jews in the Diaspora happened in 41 CE, when Emperor Claudius revoked their right of assembly for religious purposes. Claudius later expelled the Jews from Rome for their involvement in constant riots in the city (Suetonius, *Claud.* 25.4; Acts 18.1-2). Following the 66-73 CE Jewish revolt against Rome, the Flavian dynasty, particularly Vespasian and Titus, employed measures that were meant to demonstrate total subjugation of the Jews in the Diaspora.

Williams (2009, 329) noted that to destroy the major basis for Jewish cultural identity in Diaspora, after the fall of Jerusalem, Vespasian destroyed the Leontopolis temple in Egypt. He also imposed upon all Jews over three years of age an annual tax payable to Rome to support the services of Jupiter Capitalinus. Although Josephus (*BJ* 7.421-436; *AJ* 13. 62-73) discusses construction activities of the Leontopolis temple, Metron Piotrkowski, discounting Josephus' account, argues that "Josephus used an Oniad founding-legend for both his narratives on Onias and his temple, but skewed this source polemically, in accordance with the respective main themes of the Judaean War and the Antiquities" (Piotrkowski 218, 4). Contrary to Piotrkowski, Williams observed that Titus, like his father Vespasian, implemented two kinds of actions against

the Jews. One, to remind the Jews of their defeat in a more spectacular way, Titus erected in all major cities of the Empire monuments commemorating the defeat of the Jews by the Flavian dynasty. He also erected the arch of Titus at the main forum in Rome, bearing a depiction of the triumphant Roman soldiers holding the looted temple treasures (William 2009, 330). In this arch, a seven-branched candle stand, trumpets and a table lain with shewbread are depicted (William 2009, 331). These items represent not only the defeat of the Jews, but also the subjugation of the temple of Jerusalem, which was a cradle of cultural identity with its attendant religious, economic, and political implications. Ideologically, the arch of Titus is meant to represent asymmetric power relations in which Rome's supremacy against Jerusalem and the whole of the Jewish nation is represented by the positional erection of the temple vessels at the main entrance gate to Rome. Further denigration of the social power of Jerusalem was demonstrated by the mounting of the golden cherubim from Jerusalem at the city gate of Antioch on the Orontes in Syrian Antioch (William 2009, 330).

Viewed in the context of the above humiliation meted out to the Jews by the Roman Empire in the late first-century CE, and in the absence of the Jerusalem temple, how did the Jews in the Diaspora negotiate Roman policies of assimilation? Tentatively proposed here is the argument that in the absence of the temple, its rituals, and priesthood, some Jews succumbed to Rome's strategy of assimilation and integrated with Greco- Roman culture. The symbolic focus on monotheism enabled many Jews in the Diaspora to preserve a Jewish cultural identity. To this end, SIPT will be revisited to orientate the lens that will be used to explore the facilitation of Jewish hybrid identity through cultural assimilation and the maintenance of some Judean cultural practices in the Diaspora.

At this juncture, it is important to reiterate that the Social-Identity Politics Theory operates under the following three premises: (1) group identity reconstruction takes shape through recategorization and depersonalization in order to transcend limitations caused by negative aspects such as racism, ethnicity and geographical limitations. (2) Ideology is applied to legitimate a group's identity by identifying a superior identity to help create a superordinate identity in order to esteem the self-image of the minor group. (3) Ideology is applied to maintain a group's identity by subordinating the oppressive group in order to empower a marginalized or oppressed group. The first and second principles of SIPT are pertinent in elaborating the assimilation of the Judaeans into Roman culture and the development of a Jewish hybrid identity in the Diaspora.

#### 4.4.2 *Cultural Assimilation through Romanization*

Rome, the elites, and local communities played a significant role in the Roman imperial strategy of effecting assimilation into Greco-Roman culture. It is not surprising that many Jews in the Diaspora had succumbed to this assimilation program. The political, religious and economic aspects of assimilation meant that its impact was felt in all spheres of life. In this case, the first maxim of SIPT, which dictates that a group's identity construction takes shape through recategorization and depersonalization in order to transcend limitations caused by negative aspects such as racism, ethnicity, and geographical limitations, is evident. Assimilation to Roman culture was affected among Jews in the Diaspora through language, military conscription, education, elite culture, slavery, and employment, among other socio-economic and political aspects. In this case, assimilation, according to John G. Barclay (1999, 92), refers to "social integration (becoming similar to one's neighbours): it concerns social contacts, social interaction

and social practices.” Thus, assimilation was a Roman imperial socio-economic and political strategy of integrating people into Roman culture.

Williams noted that Greek and Latin language effected the assimilation of the Jews to Roman culture. However, Greek language enjoyed more currency than Latin, not only because it was the language of everyday speech in the east, but also because proceedings in synagogues in the Diaspora were conducted in Greek. This had been the case of Diaspora Jews in the early Hellenistic period so much so that Hebrew, the original language of Jews, no longer was sufficiently intelligible to many Diaspora Jews. In late third century BCE, the Jews in Egypt translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek, creating the Septuagint. Furthermore, Jewish use of Greek was not restricted to the synagogue but was also employed in their everyday social interactions. The literary works of Philo of Alexandria and Josephus testify to the wider use of Greek language in the Roman Empire in the late first-century CE, throughout the Flavian dynasty and beyond (Williams 2009, 316).

Besides language, assimilation to Roman culture could have happened to the Jews through military conscription, and via the education system of the time. Josephus testifies to the fact that the Ptolemies settled large numbers of Egyptian Jews in Cyrenaica (modern-day Libya) as military colonists (Josephus, *Ag. Apion* 2. 44). According to Williams (2009, 322) Gymnasial education provided the means of assimilation to Greco-Roman culture by which people like Philo of Alexandria, Josephus, and Jews in the eastern part of the Empire derived deep knowledge of Greek literature and culture. Other Jewish people may have been completely assimilated to Roman culture by adopting elite culture. One such person was Tiberius Julius Alexander, the nephew of Philo, the Jewish Philosopher about whom Josephus says:

Then came Tiberius Alexander as successor to Fadus; he was the son of Alexander the Alabarch of Alexandria, which Alexander was a principal person among all his contemporaries, both for his family and wealth: he was also more eminent for his piety than this his son Alexander, for he did not continue in the religion of his country (Josephus, *AJ* 200.100).

Josephus' comment that Alexander Tiberius, who was procurator (governor) of Judaea under the emperor and prefect of Egypt under Nero (William 2009, 323), "did not continue in the religion of his country," indicates that Tiberius abandoned Jewish monotheism to embrace Roman pantheism. It is also reflective of Tiberius' assimilation to Roman culture. Williams (2009, 323) observes Joseph's comments as speaking "dispassionately of Tiberius Alexander's abandonment of his ancestral practices," comparing him unfavorably with his pious father, Alexander, one of the people that had successfully sustained Judaeian piety in the Diaspora.

Slavery to a Gentile master was another one of the ways that facilitated Judaeian assimilation to Greco-Roman culture. Williams (2009, 302) claims that "foreign captivity must have caused some Jews to abandon their ancestral ways. It is hard to see, for instance, how isolated [Judaeian] slaves with unsympathetic Gentile owners can have managed to obtain kosher foodstuffs or observe the commandment against working on the Sabbath."

Consequently, what can be noted from this process of assimilation is that it was important for the Jews who assimilated to Roman culture to first undergo depersonalization. As a reminder, in the social sciences, depersonalization describes the process by which an individual categorizes themselves by subsuming the characterization of a group category to access an identity of deindividuated groups (Esler 2016, 169; Kuecker 2016, 71). This is to say, while allowing one to maintain essential characterization of identity (such as ethnicity, racism, etc), depersonalization effects a process of socialization that enables the beholder to reconstruct a new social identity by embracing new norms, beliefs, and values that shape one's thinking and decision-making in

society. As a result, the Judaeans in Diaspora embraced new norms, beliefs, and values due to the cultural identity construction being offered in the Roman Empire. These norms, beliefs, and values were attached to the means of effecting assimilation such as language, military conscription and becoming a slave to a Gentile master. In this case, depersonalization as a process of effecting Jewish hybrid identity does not entail losing Judaeans ethnicity, but rather the suppression of certain indications of Judaeans cultural identity (such as language, dietary restrictions, rituals, etc.) in order to embrace a new culturally constructed hybrid identity that is more inclined towards Roman than Judean cultural identity.

This process of assimilation in effecting a hybrid entails the adoption of a new culturally constructed identity without losing some of the essential ethnic identity in order to become accepted in a new social setting. However, it is a mistake to assume that the truth of Judaeans cultural hybrid identity in the Diaspora was that all the Judaeans in the Diaspora ended up being assimilated into Roman Culture. There are some cases that suggest the opposite, as some Judaeans strived to maintain of a more Judaeans cultural identity than a Roman one. This shall shortly be discussed when answering the question: how did the Jews who resisted assimilation to Roman culture manage to overcome the temptation to total assimilation and maintain more of a Judean than a Roman cultural identity?

#### *4.4.3 Development of Jewish hybrid Cultural Identity through Jewish Traditions*

Even before the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, Josephus tells us that Judaeans felt that they needed to advocate for amaintenance of the source of their cultural identity. Noting the appeal of the Jews to Rome for the purposes of maintaining Judean religious laws while in Diaspora, Josephus says:

But now, when Agrippa and Herod were in Ionia, a great multitude of Jews, who dwelt in their cities, came to them, and laying hold of the opportunity and the liberty now given them, laid before them the injuries which they suffered, while they were not permitted to use their own laws, but were compelled to prosecute their law-suits, by the ill usage of the judges, upon their holy days, and were deprived of the money they used to lay up at Jerusalem, and were forced into the army, and upon such other offices as obliged them to spend their sacred money; from which burdens they always used to be freed by the Romans, who had still permitted them to live according to their own laws (Josephus, *AJ* 16.27-28).

Josephus reveals some concerns of the Judaeans in the Diaspora regarding their ethnic cultural identity in the pre-70 CE period. In this case, Judaeans are noted by Josephus as requesting Agrippa I (41-44 CE), King of Judaea, to petition for their grievances in Rome concerning the application of Judaeans law instead of that of the Romans to prosecute cases for Judaeans in the Diaspora. The importance of Judaeans law over Roman law for the Diaspora Judaeans is based on their belief that the former does justice to the distinctiveness of their cultural identity. Similar concerns for Judaeans ethnic cultural identity are noted by Josephus regarding the request by Diaspora Judaeans for Rome to grant them permission to send money to support the temple services in Jerusalem:

Marcus Agrippa to the magistrates, senate, and people of Cyrene, sendeth greeting. The Jews of Cyrene have interceded with me for the performance of what Augustus sent orders about to Flavius, the then praetor of Libya, and to the other procurators of that province, that the sacred money may be sent to Jerusalem freely, as hath been their custom from their forefathers, they complaining that they are abused by certain informers, and under pretense of taxes which were not due, are hindered from sending them, which I command to be restored without any diminution or disturbance given to them. And if any of that sacred money in the cities be taken from their proper receivers, I further enjoin, that the same be exactly returned to the Jews in that place (Josephus, *AJ* 16. 169-170).

The proposition here is that representation of a symbolic connection to monotheism provided the ideology that enabled post-70 CE Judaeans in the Diaspora to maintain their cultural identity through identification with Israel. This identification enabled Judaeans in the Diaspora to

create a superordinate identity that was more of a Judean than Roman cultural identity that in turn enabled them to claim self-esteem for their community. Given the polytheistic environment in the Roman Empire, both of Josephus' comments here indicate how important Jerusalem was in maintaining the traditions of the Judaeans in the Diaspora. In the aftermath of the destruction of the Second Temple in the late first-century, how did the Judaeans in the Diaspora maintain their cultural identity? It is the task of the next section to answer this question, guided by the second premise of SIPT, supplemented by Scott's hidden scripts of resistance. In his book, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, James Scott (1990, 36-37) outlines the resistance of a minority against the dominant group, claiming:

It is plain enough thus far that the prudent subordinate will ordinarily conform by speech and gesture to what he knows is expected of him even if that conformity masks a quite different offstage opinion. What is not perhaps plain enough is that, in any established system of domination, it is not just a question of masking one's feelings and producing the correct speech acts and gestures in their place. Rather it is often a question of controlling what would be a natural impulse to rage, insult, anger, and the violence that such feelings prompt. There is no system of domination that does not produce its own routine harvest of insults and injury to human dignity-the appropriation of labor, public humiliations, whippings, rapes, slaps, leers, contempt, ritual denigration, and so on.

Scott suggests that when a subordinate group is violently treated by a dominating group, they employ non-violent response not only to suppress their anger and bitterness, but also to foster coexistence with the dominating group. Pre-70 Judean violent response to Rome's imperial policies earned an equal or even greater violent response from Rome, culminating in the destruction of the second Jerusalem temple. The post-70 Judaeans in the Diaspora would likely have chosen a non-violent response to Rome in order to control what Scott (1990, 37) calls "natural impulses to rage, insult, anger and violence that such feelings prompt." Consequently, the interpretation of Judaeans first-century apocalyptic literature by Judaeans contributed to the maintenance of Judean cultural identity in the Diaspora in the context of expressing non-violent

resistance against Rome's domination. Although 2 Baruch (85.3-5) describes the Torah as decrees of "the Mighty One," he represents the Torah as a political narrative for waging a divine war against Rome. Not only does the concept "the Mighty One" represent the superiority of the God of the Diaspora Judaeans over Jupiter, but politically it stands as a force superior to Roman imperial rule that inverts the Emperor's political power. The laments in 4 Ezra 10.21-23, that "our sanctuary which has been destroyed... [to the effect that] Levites have gone into captivity" and, "our young men have been enslaved," resonate with Josephus' (*BJ* 7.96) comment that "Now Titus Caesar ...removed, and exhibited magnificent shows in all those cities of Syria through which he went, and made use of the captive Jews as public instances of the destruction of that nation." Josephus, like 4 Ezra, recounts Titus' subjugation of Judaea in 70 CE, when vessels of the second Jerusalem temple were confiscated, and Judaeans were taken into captivity by Rome.

Thus, although 4 Ezra most likely recalls the political domination of the Judaeans during the Flavian dynasty, it is most certainly a political rhetoric of resistance against the Flavian emperor. Consequently, 2 Baruch's (2 Baruch, 5.1) description of the sacking of the Jerusalem sanctuary by Titus as "haters who will pollute your Sanctuary," fits well with Scott's "hidden transcript" as a nonviolent response by a minority group against a dominant political one. In addition to the apocalyptic literature, further political responses by the Judaeans in the Diaspora are mirrored in the interpretation of the Torah.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup>Because the Judaeans regarded the Torah as having an eternal significance, even though the temple was destroyed, Jews must have believed that the law would continue to be applicable in the society, although perhaps in different linguistic forms. Thus, as a political tool that was intended not only to subvert Roman law, but to preserve a Judaeian cultural identity, the Torah requirements on marriage prohibited inter-marriage between Judaeans and Gentiles (Gen. 34.14; Deut 7.3-4). Faulkner (2005a, 4-5) observes that the prohibition on intermarriage with Gentiles, just like the insistence on the belief in monotheism and the food laws, implies that in the Diaspora this tenet of the Torah, although a conspicuous mark of Judaeian identity, exacerbated the isolation

Given the above exploration, it has been noted that in the late first-century CE, Torah interpretation was crucial for providing; (1) a political response against Rome's domination, (2) maintenance of communal norms of a Judaeian cultural identity, and, (3) establishing fixed boundaries of identity with outsiders. These functions of the Torah not only empowered the Judaeian communities in the Diaspora to resist Roman assimilation, but also provided a political narrative that attempted to maintain more of a Judean than Roman hybrid identity by symbolically connecting the Judaeans in the Diaspora with the law of their homeland, Judaea.

In addition to Torah interpretation, Sabbath observance had become a tool for expressing economic preference to maintain a Judaeian cultural identity in the Diaspora. In his *Embassy to Gaius*, Philo noted that during Emperor Gaius Julius Caesar's rule, whenever the distribution of food supplies in Rome coincided with the Sabbath, Judaeans preferred to collect their grain supply a day later than compromise their observance of the Sabbath. Thus, Philo claims:

Moreover, in the monthly divisions of the country, when the whole people receive money or corn in turn, he never allowed the Jews to fall short in their reception of this favour, but even if it happened that this distribution fell on the day of their sacred sabbath, on which day it is not lawful for them to receive anything, or to give anything, or in short to perform any of the ordinary duties of life, he charged the dispenser of these gifts, and gave him the most careful and special injunctions to make the distribution to the Jews on the day following, that they might not lose the effects of his common kindness (Philo, *Embassy to Gaius* 158).

The economic perspective of Diaspora Judaism can clearly be seen. Philo's comment poses a challenge which tests the allegiance of Diaspora Judaeans to the Sabbath observance

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and marginalization of the Jews. In effect, this exclusive application of the Torah seems to have promulgated fixed boundaries of identity between members of Diaspora Judaism and outsiders. Esler (2005, 28) concludes that 2 Baruch bears "the major theme of right and wrong cultic direction", and points to the application of cult and ritual alongside the Torah in first century Judaism to emphasize fixed boundaries between the Judaeans and outsiders. The problem is that the Judaeans, who followed Jesus as their messiah, like those of Matthew's community, had formed simultaneous movements.

against economic benefits granted to them through the benefaction of either the emperor and/or Roman elites. The fact that the Judaeans observed the Sabbath rather than accept imperial supplies of money and food is a silent act of resistance. It also indirectly demonstrates their monotheistic belief in God whom they regarded both as creator and provider of their needs such as food, as exemplified in the provision of manna to the Israelites while in the wilderness (Numbers 16.1-24). Here it is important to remember that the Books of Moses, or the Torah, form an important part of the religious texts of the Jews beginning with the time of exile (circa 520 BCE). For those who believed in Jesus as their messiah, the time of the composition of Matthew's Gospel marked a shift in importance of the Torah. Similarly, the demonstration of the importance of Jewish observance of the Sabbath was expressed by peoples' readiness to forfeit lawsuits when court appearances coincided with the Sabbath. Josephus (*AJ* 16.163) noted that:

...it seemed good to me and my counsellors, according to the sentence and oath of the people of Rome, that the Jews have liberty to make use of their own customs, according to the law of their forefathers, as they made use of them under Hyrcanus the high priest of the Almighty God; and that their sacred money be not touched, but be sent to Jerusalem, and that it be committed to the care of the receivers at Jerusalem; and that they be not obliged to go before any judge on the Sabbath day, nor on the day of the preparation to it, after the ninth hour.

By implication, insistence on observing the Sabbath instead of attending a court proceeding shows that Judaeans gave precedence to their religious obligations over the legal requirement of Rome's judicial system, at least from the perspective of the Judaeans in the Diaspora. Besides Sabbath observance, circumcision also formed an important source for Judaeans' cultural identity in the Diaspora.

Just like the observance of the Sabbath, circumcision was an important religious ritual among Judaeans that expressed political resistance to Rome, especially by Judaeans in the

Diaspora. Williams' comment that for Judaeans, the rite of circumcision, "... was symbolic of their [Jewish] covenant with God and hence their status as chosen people" (William 2009, 325), indicates the political importance of the Judaeans' observance of the rite of circumcision among the Diaspora. Although Greeks and Romans viewed circumcision as barbaric and no different to castration (William 2009, 325), to the Judaeans, circumcision defined the Diaspora in terms of Israel as God's own chosen nation. It also symbolically connected them to fellow Judaeans back at home in Judaea. To the Judaeans, belonging to God's covenantal people, which was only accessible to Jews, indicated an alternative to Roman citizenship. Josephus (*AJ* 6.1-18) speaks of the political significance of covenant whereby God fights against the Philistines on behalf of the Hebrews, the ancestors of the Judaeans, to repossess the Ark of the Covenant from the Philistines. Thus, Jewish rhetoric of covenant symbolized by circumcision was political in the sense that it expressed contestation of the Jewish people against Roman citizenship, particularly when it was expected to be acquired through total assimilation to Roman culture. This non-violent resistance was important to Diaspora Jews because it empowered them to maintain more of a Judaeans than Roman identity by contesting against assimilation to Roman culture. In other words, belonging to God's covenant, symbolized by circumcision, contested Roman citizenship because it expressed one's more loyalty to Israel's covenantal traditions than to the Roman Empire.

The other Jewish Practice which had a more direct political and economic function is the Kaddish prayer:

Exalted and sanctified is God's great name [Amen] in the world which He has created according to His will, and may He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and during your days, and within the life of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon; and say, Amen. May His great Name be blessed forever and for all eternity. Blessed and praised, glorified and exalted, extolled and honored, elevated and lauded be the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He, beyond all the blessings and hymns, praises and consolations that are spoken in the world; and say, Amen. May there be great peace from heaven, and life, for

us and for all Israel; and say, Amen (Parson).<sup>42</sup>

According to Parson, the Kaddish is an ancient prayer originally written in Aramaic. Kaddish in Hebrew, קדוּשָׁה, literally means “sanctification,” or “holiness.” Parson is emphatic about its political function because it expresses a petitioner’s longing to establish God’s Kingdom on earth. Parson goes on to say that initially the Kaddish prayer was cited by the rabbis to conclude the sermon and later was developed and used for mourning. Furthermore, according to records in the Jewish Virtual Library, the Kaddish can be dated back to the second Jerusalem temple. It was developed over a period, eventually to be used by rabbis and even modern Jews.<sup>43</sup> Thus, because of its connection to Judaeen traditional authorities such as the Jerusalem temple and rabbis, it was crucial in grounding Judaeen cultural identity in the Diaspora. The Kaddish Prayer may have been used by Diaspora Jews in the first century CE.

The political function of the Kaddish prayer understood in the context of this thesis is that by mentioning “house of Israel” and “Israel,” the prayer attempts to symbolically connect the petitioners to the God of Israel. It also underscores the religious and national traditional aspects of Israel to promote Judaeen monotheism against the hierarchical character of the Roman pantheon. By implication, invocation of the Kaddish prayer for Israel’s God to establish his Kingdom on earth, assuring “great peace from heaven”, denigrates the role of the *Pax Romana* in ensuring enduring peace and Roman political dominance in the world. Similarly, the “Name of the Holy One, blessed be He, beyond all the blessings”, is a political expression with an economic dimension because it acknowledges the benefaction of God as “beyond all the blessing” which is

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<sup>42</sup> See John Parson, [http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Prayers/Daily\\_Prayers/Kaddish/kaddish\\_Intro.pdf](http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Prayers/Daily_Prayers/Kaddish/kaddish_Intro.pdf).

<sup>43</sup> See John Parson, [http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Prayers/Daily\\_Prayers/Kaddish/kaddish\\_Intro.pdf](http://www.hebrew4christians.com/Prayers/Daily_Prayers/Kaddish/kaddish_Intro.pdf)

granted either through the benefaction of the emperor or the Roman elites. Consequently, the Kaddish prayer bears a hidden political script that enforces resistance among the Diaspora Judaeans in the Roman Empire to enforce and maintain cultural identity by symbolically identifying the community with Israel's God and Israel itself. Malina claims that in Antiquity "persons ... define themselves almost exclusively in terms of the group in which they<sup>44</sup> are embedded" (Malina 1996, 158). Consequently, the "for us and for all Israel" indicates that the Kaddish prayer emphasizes a maintenance of group as opposed to individual identity.

The conception and practice of righteousness in the aftermath of the destruction of the second Jerusalem temple also significantly contributed to the maintenance of Judaeans cultural identity in the late first century CE. In the Greco-Roman cultural sense, righteousness denotes a customary or social standard. In the Judaeans sacred text (or Hebrew Bible, though the phrase is ambiguous since the LXX was a Greek version of the Hebrew Bible), it is reflective of the Judaeans perception of the quality of righteousness either directly derived from God, or from the behaviour of the Israelites in obedience to covenantal obligations.<sup>45</sup> Thus, in Greco-Roman

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<sup>44</sup> See <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/the-mourners-kaddish>

<sup>45</sup> According to the *New International Dictionary of the New Testament Theology and Exegesis* (2014) edited by Moises Silva, the concept of righteousness is derived from the Greek root word δίκη, which refers to custom, law, judgement, punishment, which dates to 6th century BCE. Silva suggests that in the *Odyssey*, Homer used δίκη to refer to someone who is careful in observing accepted social customs, a reference which is in some ways equivalent to a civilized or moral person. Furthermore, Silva thinks that Aristotle (*Politics*) suggests that δίκη refers to the quality of a righteous person or standard. A judge is required to uphold justice in his judgment, that is; judicial justice, or a cardinal virtue (Silva 2014, 723). In the Greek reference, righteousness could occur as an abstract noun. In the Old Testament it does not simply refer to custom but expresses a covenantal relationship with Yahweh. For instance, in Exodus 23.7, Yahweh warns the Israelites not to kill the רצדקי הצדיק (the innocent and the righteous). This shows that Yahweh's righteousness denotes the kind of justice he instructs the Israelites to uphold. Thus, in the Old Testament, divine righteousness is personified, for example, by the expression the Lord loves righteousness and justice in Psalm 33.5 in the LXX.

culture, the religious, economic and political freedom granted under acceptance and practice of Roman religion in the Empire provides the content of righteousness according to Roman socio-economic and political standards. Contrary to the Roman Empire, in first-century CE Judaism, as already discussed in the light of Torah, observance of the Sabbath, and circumcision, righteousness is more of a presentation or demonstration of lifestyle determined on account of one's Torah compliance than a mere social phenomenon. To Judaeans, righteousness refers to a lifestyle that is manifested in the beholder's acts of mercy and a morality, reflective of God's gracious acts.<sup>46</sup> Due to the exclusive nature of observance of the Torah, the Sabbath and circumcision, in the context of the absence of the temple and its cultic priesthood, in the post 70 CE, Judaeans in the Diaspora contextualized Judaeans observance of righteousness to emphasize group cohesion and fixed boundaries of identity. Consequently, to most Judaeans in the Diaspora, righteousness had a political function because it was derived from God's gracious mercy. It was applied to the life of the Torah-compliant Jew, as opposed to a non-Torah compliant person or group. Of course, Torah non-compliant persons of the day would be those Judaeans who had totally assimilated to the Roman culture, and who had allowed the polytheistic socio-economic and political values of the Empire to inform their lifestyle. In other words, Torah-conditioned righteousness as a cardinal marker of Jewish identity conditioned all political, religious, and

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<sup>46</sup> Jewish sectarian groups applied three categories of words to describe righteousness. These are: צדק, צדקה, צדקה. While צדק as witnessed by the Dead Sea Scrolls – for instance, 1 QH 7.26-33; 1QH 4.38; 7.12 – is an adjective referring to people who are properly religious, or one who lives by the covenant rules, and is also contrasted to the wicked – one who is rebellious against the covenant rules. Because צדקה is absent in the 1Q M, Przybylski thinks in this document —sons of light represents צדקה to refer to the —righteous ones. In Lev 21.3; 7.15, the noun צדקה refers to righteous as a quality of life due to an act of mercy, which a person possesses because of performing a good deed. For instance, Moses was reckoned as צדקה (righteous) for taking the bones of Joseph as they departed from Egypt to bury them in a valley (Exod 11.19 (Przybylski 1980, 32, 34).

economic engagements of the Judaeans in the Diaspora. It is for this reason that the observance of kosher food, the Sabbath, and circumcision remained important to the Judaeans in the Diaspora. Thus, practicing righteousness, for instance in the name of practicing circumcision, Sabbath observance, became a model for maintaining a Judaeans cultural identity in the Diaspora. In other words, all other categories of identity formation in Judaism, such as Sabbath observance, circumcision and Kaddish prayers, were primarily valued because they collectively participated in sustaining this Judaeans righteous life. Thus, righteousness is a cardinal marker of Judaeans identity. Because it was manifested through prayer and safeguarded through social interaction, it was effective in sustaining Judaeans resistant movements<sup>47</sup> in response to Roman imperial policies.

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<sup>47</sup> Three factors related to oppressive political leadership are said to be responsible for the emergence of the Jewish resistance movements. In his monograph, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering what happened in the Year Immediately After the Execution of Jesus* (1999), John Dominic Crossan outlines a two-step theory that explains how the aristocracy in the first-century Roman empire subjugated the rights of peasants to impose their hegemonic power. Crossan refers to a traditional agrarian empire where the aristocracy took the agricultural surplus from the peasants, a system that consumed the agricultural industry and productivity of the peasants. He also refers to the aristocracy's engagement in commercializing of the agrarian empire, a system in which the aristocracy took the land itself from the peasants, and by doing so it obliterated the very identity and dignity of the peasants (Crossan 1999, 157). Crossan observes that this aristocratic system created a hegemonic power that perpetuated poverty among the peasants, because it converted the peasant from a scale freeholder to a tenant farmer to a day-labourer to a beggar or bandit (Crossan 1999, 158). Systematically, the aristocracy relegated the peasants to the group with the lowest social identity in the Roman social strata. Second, alongside the peasants' resistance movement were the millennialists. The millennialists believed that the Roman Empire was an oppressive system, and this called for a cataclysmic event to end the oppressive structures and create a utopia which would replace the current oppressive system (Duling 2005, 67–68). The oppressive system of the aristocracy denied the people basic rights, and thus not only marginalised them but also prompted them to become anxious and desperate for a renewed world order. The *Testament of Moses*, an English translation of Charles, a first-century Palestinian Jewish writing, testifies to the existence of a millennial movement that may have been prompted by subjugation of peoples' rights by oppressive systems, such as the aristocracy: And His Kingdom shall appear through His creation, and then Satan shall be no more ...the high mountains shall be moved low ...and He will appear and punish the Gentiles ...and will look on high to see your enemies in Gehenal (Charles, R. H.). This text has eschatological undertones associated with themes such as the Kingdom of God that are found in the narrative of the Gospel of Matthew.

The role of righteous, law compliance and promotion of Judaeen Messianic hopes had already been witnessed in the Psalms of Solomon, a mid-first century BCE Judaeen apocalyptic text:

Why are you sitting in the council of the devout, you profaner? And your heart is far from the Lord, provoking the God of Israel with law breaking; excessive in words and appearance above everyone, he who is harsh in words condemns sinners at judgment. His hand is the first one against him, as if in zeal, yet he himself is guilty of a variety of sins and intemperance... May God remove from the devout those who live in hypocrisy; may his flesh decay and his life be impoverished (Ps. Sol. 4.1-5).

The expressions “sitting in the council of the devout,” and, “may God remove from the devout,” indicate that by evoking this first-century BCE Psalm, the Judaeans in the Diaspora revealed the political role of the Judaeen conception of righteousness via reinforcing group cohesion in first century Judaism. Consequently, these two expressions reveal people’s longing for God’s intervention to deliver them from a Judaeen despotic leadership. Such Judaeen leadership was regarded as having profaned the name of God by departing from God’s law. A Diaspora Judaeen reciting this Psalm might have had in mind in the late first century that the Jewish elite and aristocracy had colluded with the Roman officials to enforce Roman imperialism in Judaea. These Judaeen leaders may have been involved in facilitating the religious and political ideologies of the Roman emperor cult. Thus, they are collectively being described as “profaners” and their action as “provoking the God of Israel.” This is reminiscent of the *fiscus Judaicus* (a post-73 CE temple tax) imposed on the Jews by Rome during the Flavian dynasty to support religious activities at Jupiter’s temple at Capitoline in Rome. As already noted earlier, by

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Contrary to the *Testament of Moses*, the Gospel narrative emphasized missions to reach out to the Gentiles (Matt 28. 19-20) rather than longing for their destruction.

practicing righteous activities such as almsgiving (  $\eta\kappa\alpha\tau\alpha\lambda\epsilon\upsilon\sigma\epsilon\iota\varsigma$  ), not only were Judaeans in the Diaspora demonstrating their belonging to God rather than to Jupiter or Zeus, but they were also politically expressing their non-violent resistance against Rome. Thus, although the Psalm of Solomon is a mid-first century BCE Jewish text, like the Torah, rhetorically it demonstrates the effectiveness of Jewish traditional religious norms in enforcing a political stance to preserve a Jewish identity both in Israel and in the Diaspora.

The above exploration of Jewish cultural traditions in the Diaspora in reference to the Jewish negotiation of the Roman assimilation has shown that the post-73 CE hybrid identity leaning more towards Judean cultural identity instead of totally succumbing to Roman assimilation was facilitated via Judean cultural practices. These had the power symbolically to connect the Judeans in the Diaspora to ancient Israel's cultural practices including circumcision, Sabbath observance, purity regulations, and belief in monotheism. This prompts the following question; given the option to either succumb to Roman assimilation or imitate Diaspora resistance to Roman culture, which way did the Jesus movement go during its emergence? To answer this question, the identity formation in the Jesus Movement in terms of its primary instigators, such as Paul, Peter, James, and John, will be considered. The importance of these individuals in this study is because they provided prototypical exemplars for their community on how to respond to Roman imperial policies. This discussion is guided by the works of Westfall (2011) and Porter (2011).

#### 4.5 IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE IN THE JESUS MOVEMENT

In the case of the Jesus Movement or early Christian communities, I speak of construction of identity because the Jesus Movement emerged in the mid-first century CE, as an offshoot of

Judaism. Faulkner (2005b, 1) comments that “the early Jesus movement began as a sect within Judaism. However, within a few decades of its origin (40-50 CE), it began to attract Gentiles to its communities, especially in the Diaspora.” Faulkner postulates that the Jesus Movement was not monolithic, but was a heterogeneous community consisting of several subgroups. The emergence and movement of the Jesus Movement has been explained as beginning in Galilee and spreading to Antioch through Jerusalem by scholars such as May (1962)<sup>48</sup> and Meeks (1985).<sup>49</sup> Although Meeks depicts the emergence of Christianity in three categories, namely; Jewish Christianity (Matthean communities), Gentile Christianity (Pauline communities), and Hellenistic (Johannine Communities), he does not describe the strategies that were used to spread these three types of

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<sup>48</sup> Herbert May notes in his *Oxford Bible Atlas* the beginning of early Christianity in Jerusalem under the leadership of Peter and others (Acts 2-11). It soon spread as far as Antioch, the capital city of the Roman province of Syria. According to May (1962, 90–92), from Antioch early Christianity spread further eastward to Syrian-speaking Edessa. While making Antioch his centre, Paul of Tarsus spread Christianity further west to the Roman province of Galatia to Rome, the headquarters of Roman Empire.

<sup>49</sup> In his article, “Breaking Away: New Testament Christianity’s Separation from Jewish Communities,” and grounding his views on Josephus, Meeks employs a social-science approach to reconstruct the emergence and spread of Apostolic Christianity from the Gospels of John, Matthew and Paul’s letters. Meek asserts that John indicates that Christianity began as a Jewish sectarian community, because the followers of Jesus of Nazareth first worshipped in the Synagogues, and later after breaking with Judaism (Jn. 9.22), continued in private homes (Meeks 1985, 100–104). Moreover, Meeks observes that, unlike Johannine communities, which were first based on Synagogues, Pauline Christianity (Meeks 1985, 100–104) was primarily and characteristically a pluralism of “households.” In other words, while Johannine sectarianism was based in Jewish Synagogues, Pauline communities were mostly situated within Christian movements. Paul focused on building a “household of God” that united Jews and Gentiles, particularly as presented in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians 2.11-12 although its Pauline authorship is contestable among New Testament scholars. Meeks thinks the Matthean community emerged from intra-sectarianism, that is; it was born out of conflict with its main opponents, who were the Pharisees and Scribes. Meeks claims that the Matthean community began as a Galilean Jewish sect, before the 66-73 CE revolt. After this revolt, the Mattheans later joined existing Christian household communities at Antioch (Meeks 1985, 113) and interacted with both Jews in the Diaspora and Gentiles found there. By taking this position on the emergence of the Matthean community from Galilee that finally settled in Antioch, Meeks illustrates why the narrative in the Gospel of Matthew (Matt 10.5-6; 28.19-20) shows such an interest both Jews and Gentiles.

Christianity in the first century. McKnight in his monograph, *A Light to the Gentiles*, addresses this and explains how early Christians adopted the evangelistic approaches of proselytizing to Gentiles through *integration* and *resistance* (McKnight 1991, 102-117) as an approach for consolidating the communities of early Christianity. It is noteworthy that Hann complements Meeks' theory of the emergence of early Christianity by providing some information about the Ebionites as part of the early Christian community. In his article "Undivided Way", Hann tells us that the Ebionites (Greek: the "Poor Ones") were a first-century CE Judeo-Christian community in Palestine and Asia Minor. Although the Ebionites regarded Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah, they generally rejected his divinity. They also preferred the Epistle of James to the Pauline letters, and adopted two conflicting positions towards Mosaic Law; a pro and anti-Torah stance.<sup>50</sup> Consequently, the so-called Jesus Movement, or Early Christian community, was a heterogeneous community comprised of people of Jewish and Gentile origins. Understanding the Jesus Movement as a heterogeneous community is important not only because it allows for the use of the Social-Identity Political Theory to explain the relations between the Jesus Movement and Diaspora Judaism, but also because it provides the impetus for explaining the role of Jesus in the communities addressed by Paul, James, John, and the first book of Peter. While Paul provides the example for Gentile Christianity's response to Rome and Diaspora Judaism, James, Peter and John provide that of Jewish Christianity.

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<sup>50</sup> On the one hand, there were anti-Jewish Ebionites who, while describing themselves as followers of Jesus of Nazareth, did not regard the Law of Moses as necessary for salvation and allowed fellowship with gentiles. On the other hand, there was a Jewish group who, though describing themselves as followers of Jesus of Nazareth, emphasized the necessity of Mosaic Law for salvation. According to Hann, the Ebionites were a multi-ethnic community that included Jewish and Gentile converts but they were not part of the Gentile Church (Hann 1977, 245–246). Could the pro-Jewish and pro-Gentile stance in the Gospel of Matthew be taken as a criterion to indicate that the Matthean community were indeed Ebionites?

#### 4.5.1 *Paul*

The significance of Paul's writings, particularly his letter to the Romans, has been a matter of debate concerning the place of Paul in the Jesus Movement. This debate shows the evolution of Pauline studies, whereby early scholars argued that Paul addressed topics ranging from questions of human existence, to relations between Jews and Gentiles, and even Paul's connection with the Roman Empire. For instance, James Dunn (1998) regards the letters of Paul as revealing a multi-layered narrative theology that grapples with the "supreme questions of the reality and human existence." This is especially exemplified in Paul's letter to the Romans (Dunn, 1998, 17-18, 25). Talbert claims that Paul wrote his letter to the Romans to address a conflict caused by differences between the returning Jews exiled by Claudius and Gentiles in the city of Rome regarding their contrasting outlooks on the Mosaic Law in the Jesus Movement. The Jews returning from exile at the time of Nero had been expelled in 49 CE by Emperor Claudius for causing disturbances in the public order in Rome. According to Talbert, while the returning Jewish Christians preferred to keep some aspects of the Mosaic Law as part of their Christian faith, the Gentile Christians in Rome had developed some antipathy towards the Mosaic Law, seeing it as unnecessary for their Christian identity (Talbert 2002, 6-8). Talbert claims that Paul wrote the Romans in a call for unity by addressing the conflict caused by the difference in attitudes and views of the Gentile-Christians and Jewish-Christians. In line with Talbert's suggestion, Adeyemo contends that Paul wrote the letter to the Romans to "address problems in the church in Rome, including reconciling Jewish and Gentile believers and exhorting them to unity" (Adeyemo 2006, 1347).

A noticeable shift in Pauline studies is related to Paul's concerns regarding the Roman Empire, rather than Gentile-Jewish Christian relations in Rome. This shift has been expressed by

Richard Horsley (1997; 2000; 2016) and Porter (2011, 192-193). Their outlook contributes to the modern trend of connecting Paul with the Roman Empire. Grounding his argument on Paul's letter to the Romans and First and Second Corinthians, Porter argues that Paul replaces the reign of Caesar with that of Jesus. In First and Second Corinthians, Paul replaces the Roman hierarchy of obedience based on privilege with structures inaugurated by the instigation of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Although this shift has the advantage of collectively presenting Paul's concern for amicable relations between Gentile and Jewish Christians and his concern for the place of Rome, the separation of Paul's interest with Judaism has the disadvantage of misrepresenting the trajectories of the relations that Paul was addressing in his letters. In his letters, particularly Rom 13.1-7 and 2 Corinthians 8, not only did Paul want to address the relations between Jewish and Gentile Christians, but he also wanted to produce a set of cultural norms, beliefs and values in order to empower his community to resist the Roman Empire and Diaspora Judaism. Besides these two texts, in Romans 4 Paul argues that Gentiles could become heirs of Abraham, the father of Jewish people, by trusting God as Abraham did. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul resisted the Judaizing Christianity that sought to make the Galatian Gentile Christians into law-abiding Christians.

Porter's analysis of Rom 13.1-7 provides helpful insights regarding the role of Paul's letter to the Romans in the construction, maintenance and the purpose of the narrative. Porter (2011, 171-173) claims that Paul's letter to the Romans is reflective of two narratives: (1) the narrative of the emperor cult, emphasizing the divinity of the emperors and (2) a narrative constructed by Paul regarding Jesus as Son of God. Before he juxtaposes these two narratives to show that the narrative in Romans is employed by Paul to replace the claims of divinity associated with the Roman emperor cult, Porter outlines calendrical inscriptions erected in Asia

by Paulus Fabius Maximus, governor of Asia in 10/9 BCE. These calendrical inscriptions venerate the Roman emperors as god, son of god, creator, lord, and so forth, beginning from Julius Caesar to the time of Nero. Porter (2011, 173) concludes that because these calendrical inscriptions were widely spread in Asia and in places Paul had travelled during his three missionary journeys, it follows that “Paul was familiar with the wide-spread use of the terms that divinized the Caesar when he wrote his letter to the Romans.” Comparing Paul’s narrative in Romans with the emperor cult narrative represented in the calendrical inscriptions, Porter concludes that Paul was “styling himself as the new erector of a new inscription to the true Lord Jesus Christ” (Porter, 2011, 174). Furthermore, Porter’s analysis of Rom 13.1-7 presents the political aspects of the Jesus Movement as represented by Paul’s thoughts in his letter to the Romans. Porter aptly observes that Romans 13.1-7 concerns two issues, namely; (1) taking the Roman authorities into account, and (2) imploring the Christians in the Roman empire to recognize the Lordship of Jesus Christ in a manner that does not necessarily result in unqualified obedience to Rome (Porter, 2011, 186). By implication, the political nature of Paul’s rhetoric is based on the notion that Jesus’ Lordship replaces the authority of the emperor in the Roman Empire. In other words, Paul displaces the political authority of the Emperor’s with that of Jesus, the Son of God (Rom 1.3). A further political aspect of Paul’s rhetoric in Romans 13.1-7 is emphasized by the semantic relationship of the phrase ὑποτασσέσθω in Romans 13.1. This is discussed in the following section.

By regarding himself as a “slave of Christ” (Rom 1.1), calling for “obedience” (Rom 13.1) to a government which is from God, Paul rhetorically suggests that Christian obedience to earthly political authority is conditional on the fact that such an authority must be acceptable to God. Porter’s claim, that in Romans 13.1-13 Paul calls for qualitative obedience, rather than positional

authority, where qualitative authority refers to political authorities that are just in their conduct of business on earth (Porter 2011, 188-189), is useful for elaborating on the political nature of Paul's rhetoric in Romans 13. Paul was emphatic that Rome, as part of the political authorities of Paul's time, should only be obeyed not on all matters but when meting out justice. According to Paul, this justice should be determined by Jesus' teaching. Thus, Paul's or his disciples' (Tertius in Rom 16.22) description of Jesus as "the Son who is the image of the invisible God" (Col 1.15) not only demonstrates the superiority of Jesus over and above the Roman emperors, but also his emphasis on the reliability of Jesus' teaching concerning justice as desired by God.

In Rom 13.1-7 Paul outlines the beliefs, norms, and values concerning the political obligations of the followers of Jesus to the Roman Empire. By positioning himself as a "slave of Jesus Christ," Paul was engaging in political rhetoric to resist the authority of the emperor cult on behalf of Christians in Rome. These norms, beliefs, and values and the attendant non-violent political resistance were important in shaping the cultural identity of the Jesus Movement in the sense that they contributed to the construction and maintenance of the cultural identity of Pauline communities that were part of the Jesus Movement.

If Paul's letter to the Romans provides an example of the political aspects of Pauline communities, then 2 Corinthians 8 illustrates the economic aspects of the Pauline communities during their emergence. In this context, Perkins' definition of economy is useful. He defines economy "as a range of activities to do with the production and supply of material needs and the careful management of the resources required to satisfy those needs" (Perkins 2009, 184). Based on this definition, it is possible to see Paul's interest in involving the church in Corinth with contributing financially to alleviate poverty among the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8) as an economic activity grounded in his conviction of Christian social values. Paul

received financial contributions from the Christians in Macedonia, although they were a poor community (2 Cor 2.1-5). He then appeals to the Macedonian Christians by using the example of Christ sacrificing himself for the world (2 Cor 8. 9). Like the Macedonians, Paul encouraged the Corinthian Christians to give financial support to the Jerusalem Church. This he did by saying to the Corinthians, “for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.” With the view that Jesus was wealthy, “yet for your sake he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich” (2 Cor. 8.9), Paul attempted to encourage the Corinthians to become interested in economic matters.

Two economic principles can be derived from Paul’s concern for giving. First, by citing the Macedonian example, Paul wanted to lay down a belief system for the early church, emphasizing that for their economic survival, church members had to support one another. Second, by referring to Jesus, Paul suggests the beneficence of Jesus to his church. So, there is some economic narrative in 2 Corinthians 8 which is connected to the beneficence of Jesus Christ as the Jewish Messiah. Porter observes that there is a clear “hierarchy of beneficence” in 2 Corinthians 8.9, “one that begins with the Lord Jesus Christ and passes through Paul to the believers in Corinth and then to the believers in Jerusalem” (Porter, 2011, 192).

2 Corinthians 8 shows that Paul engages in a nonviolent protest of the economic system that kept the Emperor at the top and was mediated by the elites, with the local communities at the bottom. Thus, to the Jesus Movement, Paul pointed out that if they saw themselves as beneficiaries of Jesus Christ’s grace, they in turn had the responsibility to become mutual benefactors. Consequently, by outlining an economic beneficence system which was dependent on Christ’s grace and not Rome’s economic power, Paul provided a normative framework for the early Christian community, whose practicing in effect impacted on the maintenance of the cultural

identity of the Jesus Movement in the first century CE. The more any Christian community practiced the type of beneficence system outlined in 2 Corinthians 8, the more they demonstrated their belonging to the Jesus Movement. Not only did Paul discuss the political and economic concerns for his community, but he also had in mind certain religious ideas, particularly about Diaspora Judaism.<sup>51</sup> In view of the debate regarding the parting of the ways between Jews and Christian, Paul's letter to the Romans and 2 Corinthians 8, supports the argument that in the mid-first century CE, Gentiles had joined Jewish Christian communities, particularly in Antioch. This is based on information in Gal 2.12-17. The movement to Antioch probably necessitated separation of Jewish believers in Christ from Judaeans (who did not believe in Christ). Although this separation between Jewish-Christians and Judaeans was probably due to the understanding of Jesus Christ as the Messiah. This was more of a religious than merely a social separation, because during the last half of the first-century CE, Judaeans and Jewish-Christians were still socially integrating in the Diaspora, for instance; in Rome, Alexandria and Syrian Antioch.

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<sup>51</sup>A religious aspect (though not separated from economic and political) of the Jesus Movement concerned the debate on whether first-century CE Christianity and Judaism had yet parted ways. Consequently, the following question becomes important: did Judaism and Christianity part ways in the first century CE? In his monograph, *The Conflict of the Church and Synagogue* (1969), James Parkes' discussion regards the parting of ways as a reference to the social separation of Christianity from Judaism. James J.G Dunn, in his monograph, *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways* (1992) suggests that parting of the ways involved the social separation between the Jews and Christians, particularly how and when Christological claims made social separation between Judaism and Christianity inevitable (Dunn, J. D. 1992, 368). In his article, "The Ways that Parted: Jews, Christians and Jewish-Christians ca 100-150 CE" (2013), Shaye C. Cohen discusses two issues regarding the parting of the ways. Cohen is of the view that in the second-century CE, Gentiles, Jews (both did not believe in Christ) and Christians (Gentiles who believed in Christ) constituted separate communities, each with its own identity, rituals, institutions, authority-figures and literature. Cohen also says that by around 100 CE, Christian communities were distinct from Jewish, not only on account of the Hebrew writings of sages of Roman Palestine, but also on account of the evidence provided by the Greek-writing Jewish communities of the Diaspora (Cohen, 2013, 30-31).

When Paul's description of himself as δούλος Ἰησοῦ χριστοῦ (Rom 1.1) is viewed in the context of his conversion to Christianity, in which he still values the Torah (Rom 7.12-16) and the figure of Abraham (Rom 4. 1-3), it shows that Paul deliberately wrote his letter to the Roman Christians in order to point out the rootedness of Christianity in Judaism because the Torah and the figure of Abraham are such important markers of Judaeans identity, hailing back to Israel's covenant with God (Gen 17. 1-27; Exod 20. 1-26; Jer 34.8-22). Paul approached the issue of Abraham and the Torah from the point of view of their role in directing the audience to Jesus. By doing so, he was at the same time constructing a Christian cultural identity for the Jewish Christians in Rome. At that time, the Judaeans in Rome were mainly Judaeans in an ethnic sense. Those who had accepted the belief that the messiah had come in the form of Jesus, for example Priscilla and Aquila (Acts 18.2-3), seemed to belong to a distinct form of Judaism. Thus, early Christianity (the Jesus Movement) was first a form of Judaism. The reason for this is elaborated in Rom 4, when Paul attempts to show that Gentiles, through trust in God, were offspring of Abraham. In other words, Judaeans who accepted Jesus as messiah had acquired a superordinate identity; their acceptance of Jesus as messiah entailed transition to a complex identity that, although essentially shaped by cultural norms, beliefs, and values of the Jesus Movement, at the same time it encompassed Judaeans ethnic identity. Essentially, belief in Jesus the Christ was added to their Jewishness.

Furthermore, on account of Rome's official grant to the Judaeans of the right to practice their monotheistic religion, this meant that both Judaeans and Jewish Christians, who were all ethnic Judaeans because of their connection to Judaism, Rome classified them as one community in specific localities. For instance; in Rome, Antioch, Alexandria, etc, they were Jewish

communities. Although Jewish Christians were socially integrated with other Judaeans who did not believe in Jesus as the Messiah, in terms of religious practice, they were two different groups. Jewish Christians were practicing a kind of Judaism that focused on accepting Jesus as the Messiah, and not Judaism grounded only in Israel's ancient cultural traditions. Ideally, the superordinate identity of Judaeans should have enforced social cohesion among the Judaeans in the Diaspora despite their differences in attitude regarding acceptance of Jesus as a messiah.

It is noteworthy that Paul views the churches in Macedonia as endowed with God's grace, even though he claimed that they were living in "extreme poverty." He still recommended they contribute financially to support the Jerusalem church, saying that they "gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability" (2 Cor. 8. 8-13). Here again the role of a superordinate identity within the Jesus Movement is apparently contributing to the social integration between a mostly Gentile Christian congregation of Macedonia, and a mostly Judaeans Apostolic church in Jerusalem. In terms of ethnic composition, these two Christian congregations were different, also separated by a significant distance. From a religious perspective, particularly in reference to their Christian identity, they are symbolically united by their gift of thanks for the financial support from the Macedonian churches. The same support was probably received by Judaeans Christian communities in Jerusalem. Thus, this act of giving performed the religious role of re-enforcing social cooperation between Gentile and Jewish Christians in the Jesus Movement. This financial support underpinned a normative framework for social support among its members. This in turn became an important way of maintaining a common Christian cultural identity in Antiquity, despite the distance that separated the early Christian communities.

Having looked at Pauline communities as sources of cultural identity in the Jesus

Movement, the other communities that constituted the Jesus Movement will also be analysed. This analysis is limited to the congregations addressed by James, Peter and John. While James provides economic examples, Peter and John provide examples for the social and political dimensions of the Jesus Movement.

#### 4.5.2 *Other Early Communities in the Jesus Movement: James, Peter and John*

Several debates surround the best approach for reading the letter of James.<sup>52</sup> Westfall (2011, 231,136) analyzes James from an economic perspective. She regards James to be a critic of the rich and advocate of the poor against the local Jewish elite. James also denounces exploitation by the Roman Empire. In her analysis of the varied responses of early Christian communities (that is, the Jesus Movement) to the Roman Empire, Westfall is guided by three sets of questions: First, what is the author's intention? Did the author intend to interact with the Roman Empire either by accommodating or confronting what was written? Second, what is the perception of the audience? Would the recipients read a given passage or phrase as a negotiation or confrontation of Empire? Third, what is the relationship to the Roman authorities? Would they perceive a passage or phrase as offending their authority, or consider it subversive to the Empire? (Westfall 2011, 230). Westfall's method is pertinent in interpreting the discourse of the Jesus Movement not only because it helps to provide an understanding of the effect of the implied author on two audiences—the church readers of the text and the Roman authorities—but it can also help to

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<sup>52</sup> See for instance, John Painter (1999). He regards James as one who epitomized righteousness and justice and one who mediated between Paul and the Jewish Christians who opposed Paul (Painter 1999, 1, 8). Elsa Tamaz (2002), reading James from a liberation theology perspective, understands it as a subversive discourse attacking the exploitative landowners and the carefree life of the merchants in James 5.1-6 and 4.13-17 (Tamaz 2002, 1).

conceive the fact that every given text has at least three layers of meaning; authorial intention, immediate audience, and the larger audience-conditioned meaning. With this approach in mind, the function of the authorship of James, Peter and John (in the Book of Revelation) in shaping the cultural identity of parts of the early Jesus Movement will be explored.

James begins by pointing out the deplorable economic conditions of the people in the local communities in comparison to the rich elites in the Roman imperial social strata. The people mentioned by James belong to the lowest rung of the social ladder, classifying them as “poor men in filthy clothes,” and as brothers or sisters without clothes or daily food (Jam 2.2, 15). The exploitation of the poor by the rich is characterized by the denial of wages to poor farm workers after they mowed and harvested the fields of the rich landowners, and the condemnation and murder of the poor by the rich (Jam 5.4, 6). Thus, in 4.13-17 and 5.1-6, James addresses the arrogance of the perpetrators of unjust treatment of poor local communities. Westfall (2011, 234) claims that in 4.13-17 and 5.1-6, James addresses merchants and wealthy landowners in the Roman Empire. Moreover, in James (2.6), the author noted the failure of the judicial system to defend the plight of the poor when the rich dragged them to court. Verse 2.6 according Westfall (2011, 235) “[James] depicts a corruption of the Jewish courts by the Roman practice, presumably through the collusion of the local elites.” Given the above exploration, it can be argued that James wrote his letter to confront exploitation in the Roman Empire by the elites and Jewish aristocracy. This confrontation is important in shaping the cultural identity of the Jesus Movement, as it outlines a belief system which encourages adherents to adopt a stance of non-violence to fight economic injustice, perceived as exploitation, by the readers of the letter. Thus, the Roman Empire most likely would have perceived the Letter of James as promoting confrontation against economic systems operational in the Empire. Thus, James should not be understood as anti-

Pauline as suggested by some scholars, but rather supplementary to Paul due to his emphasis on non-violent confrontation against injustice and exploitation as aspects that ought to accompany faith in Jesus Christ.

The significance of 1 Peter to the early Christian community is debated among New Testament scholars. Views range from seeing 1 Peter's principal concern to be redemption, to a response to Rome's colonizing presence, to identity formation.<sup>53</sup> 1 Peter also represents a reflection of the early Christian economic situation. The author of 1 Peter outlines three issues that seem to be sources of suffering for Christians: (1) rejection and public disgrace (1 Pet 3.8-4.19); (2) harsh treatment of slaves (1 Pet 2.18-25); and (3) vulnerability of women and threats towards their marital status (1 Pet 3.1-17). To address these anomalies, Peter advocates first that slaves submit to their masters in order to model Christ-like suffering to the community at large, and to seek God's favor when accepting this suffering (1Pet 2.18-25). Second, women are to submit to their husbands in order to win favor with Christ (1 Pet 3,1-6). This kind of submission, which is connected to Christ's submission, had some purpose in depicting Christ to the larger community. Westfall says that in a culture where women were despised for being fearful, men were honored for being courageous. Slaves were denigrated by virtue of being slaves. Thus, the culture implored women and slaves to be submissive to their husbands and masters. "[Peter] reversed the honor-shame language in such a way that he has shown that women in the Christian

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<sup>53</sup>Mason and Martin (2014, 9) argue that Clement of Alexandria and Didymus of Alexandria understood 1 Peter to be a letter about redemption, conversion, and its consequences. Joel B. Green (2007, 1), claims that the letter was written to address Rome concerning its sanctioned religion and its imperial, colonizing presence and practices. Paul Trebilco (2017, 80-81) regards 1 Peter's functionally as a tool for identity formation in early Christianity by differentiating the believers in Christ from those standing outside Christ.

communities are to be the social peers of men” (Westfall 2011, 243). Essentially, Peter employed a non-violent approach to resist the social honor-shame value system in the Roman Empire.

Honor and shame were dependent not on the Roman imperial expectation, but on Jesus’ tradition. This is supported by Jesus’ saying; “whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant” (Matt 20:26 NIV). This provides a non-violent resistance against Rome, which in turn provides a normative framework for Christians based on the value of honor. 1 Peter provides the Jesus Movement with yet another means of maintaining their Christian cultural identity through resistance to the social honor-shame continuum of the Roman Empire. While James and Peter provided the criteria for economic and social responses, John’s Revelation is a political response to the Roman Empire.

The Book of Revelation, attributed to an otherwise unspecified author, is said to have been written towards the end of the first-century CE (Adeyemo 2006, 1543-1544; Westfall 2011, 251). It mirrors the political reign of the Flavian dynasty, particularly the political tenure of Domitian (81-96 CE). Like the book of Daniel, the Book of Revelation belongs to the apocalyptic genre and so it communicates its message through symbolism and imagery. The problem being addressed in the Book of Revelation, according to Westfall, is that of Jewish Christianity which “[is] caught in the crossfire of hostility from Jews, the official actions and policies of the Roman empire towards both Christians and Jews, and unofficial public hostility” (Westfall 2011, 251). Consequently, Revelation shows serious concern for seven churches that are symbolically represented under pressure from a myriad of challenges, ranging from poverty (Rev 2.8-9), to materialism (Rev 3.17-18), attacks through slander, rejections, persecution, imprisonment, martyrdom (Rev 2.9-10,13) to idolatry (Rev 2.14, 20) and sexual immorality (Rev 2.14, 20-23). Westfall (2011, 253) claims that the issues outlined in Revelation are addressed through prophecies that predict the

future destruction of the Roman Empire, and the victory and sovereignty of God and Christ. Westfall's suggestion creates the impression that Revelation infers Rome's enmity against Christians. Thompson (1990, 174; 195) contends that the language of the narrator indicates an "attitude towards Judaism rather than Jewish actions against Christians." Its audience is part of Roman society, "as a group of people who understood themselves as a minority that continuously encounters and attacks the Christian community and even larger Roman social order." Thus, given Westfall and Thompson's views, Revelation functions as an apocalyptic narrative, and a reflection of the a Jewish-Christian narrator's contest against Rome's socioeconomic and political activities such as emperor worship and other perceived forms of injustice emanating from Rome to common person.

From Revelation 6.1 to 8.1, God responds to this injustice with a series of destructive acts, symbolically communicated through seven seals; earthquake, fire, plague, famine, conflict, and violence. All these events have Christ as the commander of the army of destruction. Eventually, ultimate defeat of Babylon happens: "With a mighty voice the angel shouted: 'Fallen! Fallen is Babylon the Great!' She has become a dwelling for demons and a haunt for every impure spirit, a haunt for every unclean bird, a haunt for every unclean and detestable animal" (Rev. 18:2 NIV). When comparing Rev 18 to Rev 21. 24 (concerning honoring of the city by the Kings of the earth), Fiorenza claims that the author of Revelation "contrasts the splendour and power of the Roman empire with that of the empire of God and Christ ...to encourage readers to resist the murderous power of Rome" (Fiorenza 2006, 267).

The symbolic imagery of Jesus as the commander at the helm of the defeat of Babylon was probably politically understood by Roman authorities as a subversive rhetoric intending to overthrow Rome's political influence in the Empire and replace it with a political figure

represented by Jesus Christ as the Jewish Messiah. Consequently, to the Johannine audience, Revelation symbolically communicates the victory of the Jesus Movement over the prevalence of Rome's political ideology and its influence in the Empire, observed by David Barr (2006, 201):

Reading the visions of Rev 12-13 together with the traditions of the combat myths about Python and Seth-Typhon and the claim for divine status for the emperor, who is also considered a personification of the dragon's opponent, would imply the utter deconstruction of this Roman imperial ideology.

In his work on the symbolic transformation of the world in Revelation, Barr inverts Rome's political power by making the oppressed Christians the winners, and the Roman authorities the losers.

By focusing on Jesus Christ as the head of the army that eventually defeats Babylon the Great, John outlines a belief system for his communities that formed part of the Jesus Movement. Jesus in this system was regarded as the Jewish Messiah, which also set a tradition that regarded him as a politically authoritative figure that overcame the evil in Roman society. The belief outlined by John crystalizes the norm among the Jewish Christians to regard Jesus as the ultimate righteous one who has the power to overcome all political enemies of the Judaeans people. This belief and its attendant norms are thus important in the construction of the cultural identity of the Jesus Movement, because they provide instructions for political engagement.

#### 4.6 CONCLUSION

How was identity shaped in Antiquity? Rome seems to have set the pace for identity formation among both Diaspora Judaeans and adherents of the Jesus Movement. Just as Rome's imperial system was multivalent in nature in the formation of cultural identity, so was the response from Diaspora Judaeans and the Jesus Movement. While this multivalent response was

important for enforcing resistance against Rome for the maintenance of the hybrid identity of the Judaeans in Diaspora, to the Jesus Movement it provided the impetus for constructing and maintaining a distinct Christian cultural identity. This complex process of identity-formation prompts the following question: given the path of identity formation pursued by the Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism and the Jesus Movement, how did the Matthean community negotiate their cultural identity? The next chapter will answer this question.

## CHAPTER 5

### IDENTITY FORMATION IN MATTHEW'S COMMUNITY

#### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the context of the Roman imperial assimilation program, the emergence of the Jesus Movement, and the maintenance of Jewish hybrid identity in the Diaspora, how does Matthew's Gospel shape the identity of the Matthean community? To answer this question, the research findings of Overman and J. P Meier on Matthew's Gospel will be explored. Then, the social setting of the Matthean community as an explanation for the function of Matthew's Gospel narrative in the formation of identity in the Matthean community will be considered.

In his monograph, Overman applies a sociology of knowledge theory to study the relations of the Matthean community with formative Judaism from the point of view of the Gospel of Matthew. Overman's theory is derived from E.D. Hirsch and includes the premise that social constructions and developments evident within a community are caused by developments and events of "their life-world" or the "horizons" of a community (Overman 1990, 150). Overman suggests that the community of Matthew was born out of the conflict with formative Judaism (154). Overman understands the Matthean community as belonging to one of the late first-century Jewish sectarian communities that was competing with formative Judaism. Given the fact that the first-century Jesus Movement (which includes Matthew's community) had parted ways with Judaism, Overman's position on formative Judaism as part of first-century CE Judaism is faulty. His view constitutes a very different understanding of the emergence of Rabbinic Judaism in the late second and early third century.

Overman outlines five key issues that he thinks shaped the social world of the Matthean community as an offshoot of formative Judaism. First, Overman has noted that the Matthean community emerged at a time when there were debates in society concerning exclusive

application of the law and its proper interpretation. The debates between Jesus and the Pharisees in Matthew's narrative were duplicated throughout Palestine by many competing groups and communities (Overman 1990, 23-30, 150). Second, Overman (1990, 19-23, 151) also argues that the Gospel narrative indicates a harsh and judgmental accusation that Judaeen leadership failed to lead the Judaeen people properly in sectarian groups in which Matthew also participates (Matt 21.43; 23.1-39; 27.25). Third, according to Overman, at the time there was a general concern regarding the failure of Judaeen leadership, which created the desire for new leadership. This concern in effect led individual Jewish sectarian groups to consider themselves to be God's true people, claiming superiority over other competing sects. Matthew shared this concern, which is indicated in his style of leadership in the following ways: (1) he regarded his community as people who "bear fruit" (Matt 21.43) and focused on restoring God's will and Kingdom in the community (Overman 1990, 30-34, 151-152); (2) he emphasized the place of the household in opposition to Jewish gathering places ("their synagogues"); (3) he was concerned with the role of disciples, who emerged as teachers of the law and with civil authority, "to bind and loosen," analogous to that of the Pharisees in contradistinction to the rabbis (Overman 1990, 43-71, 152); and (4) Matthew's narrative describes Simon Peter as being a divinely inspired, guided leader with authority and insights from God. Peter's role in the narrative legitimates the role of the leaders of the Matthean community as a Jewish sectarian community (Overman 1990, 153) (153). In this case, Overman suggests that in Matthew's Gospel, Peter occupies a similar leadership role to that of the priests, Rabbis, or Sages in pre- 66-73 Judaism.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Having outlined the so called "horizons" that characterized the social setting of the Matthean community, Overman draws a number of conclusions, three of which are important for this thesis: (1) stressing the separation between the Matthean community and formative Judaism, he is resolute that Matthew does not create rigid boundaries within formative Judaism, asserting that Matthew does not significantly offer a way out of the conflict with formative Judaism because there is no grounds for reconciliation or mutual understanding between the two groups; (2) because Matthew believed that his community was Jewish, he believed that they also had a higher level of commitment to the law. Not only that, they had a Jewish messiah as their leader

Two issues stand out in Overman's conception of the Matthean community. Overman observes that the Matthean community emerged from within a Jewish environment characterized by debates surrounding the interpretation of the Torah and concerns on future Jewish leadership. However, there are two main weaknesses in his conception of the relations of the Matthean community with of the Jesus Movement. Overman gives the impression that post-70 CE Judaism was not polyvalent—having only a monovalent religious function—and necessarily in conflict with Jewish-Christianity. Overman also fails to see the other two trajectories that may have been responsible for the emergence of the Matthean community; the Roman Empire and the Jesus Movement. This failure also ignores the multivalent character of Judaism, that is; the socio-economic and political relationship between the Matthean community and Diaspora Judaism. Carter (2012, 145), however, observes “that the gospel [of Matthew] is not an exclusively Jewish religious text but one that constructs identity more broadly in relation to socio-political (imperial) structures.”

Five years before Overman, Schoedel suggested that because of the tradition from which Matthew developed, the Gospel material still loomed large beyond Antioch long after Matthew

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(Overman 1990, 158-159). Thus, Overman's theory resonates with Matthew's presentation of Jesus as part of a genealogy that stays inside Judaism (Matt 1.1-16). This is unlike Luke's genealogy that goes beyond Abraham, the father of the Jewish people, to the son of God (Luke 3. 23-38). This shows that Matthew was part of a movement that contested the heirs of Moses and presumably Abraham. Furthermore, Overman suggests that Matthew's narrative presents Jesus as accomplishing the aspirations of God's Kingdom, which is the reason he regards Matthew's narrative as claiming, “quite explicitly to be the heir of God's Kingdom and God's true people over and against formative Judaism” (Overman 1990, 153-154). As already suggested, during the appearance of formative Judaism in the late first-century CE, Matthew in his Gospel was contesting other forms of Judaism, including the development of what would eventually become Rabbinic Judaism. In other words; Overman's notion that Matthew was confronting formative Judaism acknowledges what the late second and early third-century rabbis wanted us to believe, not what happened in Matthew's day when the existence of plurality of truth claims were not clear to most people. (3) Furthermore, Overman (1990, 158-159) concludes that the sectarian language and the imagery of Matthew's narrative suggests that the Matthean community was in Palestine, in a Galilean city.

had composed his. Ignatius probably knew the “M” tradition from which the Gospel originally developed, using this earlier version rather than the Gospel in its current form (Schoedel 1985, 129, 175-176).<sup>55</sup> Meier (1991, 186) argued that “that Ignatius knew and used Matthew, which he may actually refer to at times as εὐαγγέλιον.” Schoedel presents a more plausible argument than Meier regarding Ignatius. Like most scholars, Schoedel assumes that Matthew made use of Q material which he incorporated along with some of the Markan material. These materials provided the main basis for the progression of his narrative. When Ignatius (circa 35-107)<sup>56</sup> became bishop of Antioch around 50-60 CE, about twenty-five years before Matthew composed his Gospel, he encountered the Q tradition, common to both Matthew and Luke—which is not the Gospel of Matthew in its current form. There is also the contribution of the special ‘M’ material that is neither found in Mark nor Luke.<sup>57</sup> Ignatius probably did not encounter this material either. These traditions may have included both pro-Jewish and pro-Gentile preferences (Matt 10.5-6; 28.19) that Matthew incorporated into his narrative for the purpose of addressing group relations in his community.

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<sup>55</sup> In “Matthew and Ignatius: A Response to William R Schoedel” (1991), John. P Meier sought to refute Schoedel’s doubts about the testimony of Ignatius’ letter concerning the reception and use of the Gospel of Matthew in its present form in Antioch. In response to Schoedel, Meier (1991, 186), basing his argument on Ignatius’ letter (Smyr 1.1-2), begins by focusing on the birth narrative of Jesus. Meier’s exploration is guided by his desire to investigate two issues: (1) the legitimacy of using Ignatius’ letters to depict the state of the church in Antioch, the location for the audience of Matthew, and (2) the influence of the “gospel tradition” on Ignatius, such as that found in the Gospel of Matthew. Meier (1991, 186) concludes his exploration on the sources for the Gospel of Matthew by referring to his earlier book chapter, “Locating Matthew’s Church in Time and Space,” to state that, “the simplest and most obvious solution is that Ignatius knew and used Matthew, which he may actually refer to at times as εὐαγγέλιον.”

<sup>56</sup> <https://www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/martyrs/ignatius-of-antioch.html>

<sup>57</sup> See Mark Goodacre’s discussion of the two-source hypothesis for the synoptic Gospels in <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/tools/ask-a-scholar/q-source>.

## 5.2 ANTIOCH: THE SOCIAL SETTING OF THE MATTHEAN COMMUNITY

Following the evidence within Matthew's Gospel, including Jesus' genealogy, the missionary focus on Jews and Gentiles,<sup>58</sup> and the external evidence from writers such as Ignatius,<sup>59</sup> the provenance of Matthew's Gospel can be identified as Antioch. Josephus suggests that Antioch had a sizable Jewish population that enjoyed some imperial privileges.<sup>60</sup> Rodney Stark, in his description of the socially deplorable condition of Antioch, paints a picture of a city

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<sup>58</sup> Similarity between Ignatius' virginal birth report and Matthew's genealogy further explains the significance of Jesus' genealogy (Matt 1.1-11), the missionary focus on Jews (Matt 10.5-6) and ἔθνος (the nations: Matt 28. 19-20) as crucial indications of the ethnic identity of the Matthean community in Antioch. Kuecker tells us that in Antiquity, there were three main categories that described ethnicity. These are ἔθνος which was reserved for non-Greeks, γένος which referred to Greeks, and ὁ λαός which was reserved for Israel. There were also other categories for small tribal groups, such as Pliny's reference to 112 tribes in Northern Italy, 49 *gentes* in parts of the Alps, 150 *populi* in Macedonia, and 30 peoples in Crimea (Kuecker 2016, 62–64). Esler contends that ἔθνος and γένος can be used as a reference that categorizes these groups in terms of blood and birth. The term Ἕλληνες was used in the Roman Empire to refer to Greeks (from the Roman word *Graeci*), or people who originated from *Graece* (Esler 2003, 54–55). Similarly, Ἰουδαῖοι refers to people who originated from Ἰουδαία (Judah) and associated themselves with the temple in Jerusalem, although some of them were scattered around the Mediterranean world (Esler 2003, 63–65). When the concepts such as Ἕλληνες, Ἰουδαῖοι, and ἔθνος and ὁ λαός are used, they are referring to superordinate categories comprised of sub-groups like the Jesus Movement, which was comprised of several sub-groups, referred to as early Christian communities.

<sup>59</sup> The letters of Ignatius are important in providing more insight into the character and identity of the early Christian communities found in Antioch in the late first-century CE.

Ignatius' (*Smyr.* 1.1-2) references to the virginal birth of Jesus and the proclamation of universal salvation for both Jews and Gentiles confirms the presence of the Gospel of Matthew, because these bear similarities to Matthew's genealogy of Jesus (Matt 1.18-22). Ignatius' (*Smyr.* 1.1–2) references to the virginal birth of Jesus and the proclamation of universal salvation for both Jews and Gentiles confirm the presence of the Gospel of Matthew, because these bear similarities to Matthew's genealogy of Jesus (Matt 1.18-22). Josephus (*BJ.* 7.43) insinuates that by the mid-first century CE the Jewish population in the city of Antioch ranged between 25,000 and 60,000 people. Religious rights for the Jews in Antioch were granted by the Roman government under the privileges of political state with the fraternity of Roman Empire. These religious privileges included freedom to keep Jewish Sabbath, exemption from conscription and permission to perform other Jewish religious practices (Josephus, *AJ.* 12. 119; *BJ.* 7.43).

experiencing social chaos because of its overcrowded population with concomitant health hazards that would have caused despair and danger to a city in desperate need of revitalization.<sup>61</sup>

A revisit to superordinate identity will help us to explain the rhetorical role of Matthew's Gospel in creating the identity of the Matthean community in Antioch. A superordinate identity entails embracing a socially-constructed identity alongside an essentialist identity (such as an ethnic or race-based identity) and thus supersedes all other identities. Limited to one category (Baker 2016, 6-7), a superordinate identity has the potential to reduce ethnic-based tensions and conflicts. However, this does not mean that superordinate identity should be glorified. When embracing the "in-group" and "out-group", there might be conflict, which can be attributed to the dynamics of embracing the in-group and out-group to become one community.

Therefore, after one has joined a superordinate group, the situation of interacting with other groups, which might produce nostalgic feelings for the previous identity, should not be overlooked. The case of Jews who became Christians but did not want to lose their Judaeian ethnic identity is a good example of this (Gal 2. 15-16). The solution proposed for this problem is the re-categorization of the superordinate group to include both the in-group and out-group (Faulkner 2005, 7-10; Esler, 2016, 29-30). Given the multi-ethnic composition of Antioch, the following

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<sup>61</sup> Rodney Stark provides some insights into the social environment of the Matthean community in Antioch. According to Stark, the Matthean community formed part of the multi-ethnic society in Antioch that ranged from retired soldiers, Jews from Palestine, Syrian natives, slaves of diverse origin, Gauls, and Germans, among others. Life in Antioch posed a high risk of epidemics and social tensions, because it had a population density of 205 persons per acre, poor sanitation, poor water supply, a high mortality rate, and an average life span of less than 30 years. Because of the miserable social-economic environment in Antioch, Stark concludes that "Christianity provided a revolutionary response that revitalized a Roman world groaning under a host of miseries" (Stark 1991, 191-200). Going by the socially deplorable environment of Antioch in the late first century, not only did early Christianity become a factor in revitalizing life and hope, but because it operated as a superordinate group of the Jesus Movement that was not ethnically bound, it provided a new communal identity and a place of belonging in Antioch.

questions are important; how did the Jesus Movement attempt to handle the multi-ethnic composition of its communities? Would the re-categorizing of the community into a superordinate group work well for all sub-ethnic groups, or were there intra-group conflicts within the superordinate category that required further recategorization? What about Matthew? Was he attempting to categorize the community at a superordinate level?

McDonald's summary describes the nature of early church ministry in Antioch during the late first century CE. He observes that the church in Antioch accepted Nicholas, "a proselyte of Antioch", to perform the church ministry (Acts 6.7) just as Paul and Barnabas were doing. By so doing, the "church at Antioch [had] initiated the first international ... mission" (McDonald 2000, 35). McDonald suggests that although the church in Antioch belonged to the Jesus Movement, in its outreach programs it was mindful of its own multi-ethnic composition; Paul was mostly focused on the Gentile mission, while Peter was focused on the Jewish one (Gal 2.7-8).

The variegated ethnic composition and the myriad of social and economic challenges that the people faced, according to Rodney Stark's analysis of the social setting in Antioch, required different ways of approaching Christianity. From the time of Paul, Peter, and later Ignatius, there were three main approaches to Christian missions in Antioch. First, from the point of view of Gal 2.11-14, 15-21 the apostolic mission represented by Paul was relevant because it mostly addressed a Christian community with less Ἰουδαῖοι but more τὰ ἔθνη. According to Paul, Peter was eating with τὰ ἔθνη, and living ἐθνικῶς (like a Gentile/in contrast to the Jewish: Gal 2.14 NA 28). Second, Peter's (and to some extent James') approach pro-Ἰουδαῖος, which looked as if it was proselytization of τὰ ἔθνη, was pertinent because it appealed mostly to Jewish Christians. Thus, before followers of James arrived, Peter withdrew because of the circumcision faction. This

likely refers to Jewish Christians who wanted Gentiles to undergo circumcision to be full members of the Jesus Movement. Circumcision of Gentile Christians was important in meeting Rome's requirements of Judaeon identity for Christians. Winter, following Robinson, claims that Christians in Galatia were compelled to circumcise Gentile Christians "to escape possible prosecution in the Roman province of Galatia", because "the circumcision party would have to be able to show they qualified as a legitimate Jewish association" (Winter 2015, 243). The third approach was provided by Matthew's Gospel, which focused both on 'Ιουδαῖοι' (Matt 10.5-6) and τὰ ἔθνη communities (Matt 4.24; 28.19-20).

Besides a Jewish populace, there were also three predominant forms of Christianity in Antioch in the late first-century: apostolic, gnostic and Jewish Christianity. These three forms of early Christianity most likely provided three corresponding perspectives that informed the formation of Christian identity, which flourished within the city of Antioch. First, Eusebius (*Ch. His.* 3.3.5; 36. 2-3) who was active in the late third and fourth century CE suggests that apostolic Christianity started to take root in Antioch after Paul's death. Second, gnostic Christianity, which denied the full divinity of Jesus Christ, remained part of the early Christian community in Antioch even though Paul and Ignatius (*Mag* 8.1; *Trall* 10.1; *Smyr* 2.1-4.1) discouraged its presence. Third was Jewish Christianity (Ignatius, *Mag.* 8.1; 10.2-5; *Phil* 6.1). In *Magnesians* 10, Ignatius was trying to suppress Jewish Christianity by attacking Judaizing motives. Because of these three forms of Christianity, it is not surprising to learn that Paul's letter to the Galatians, the Gospel of Luke, and the Gospel of Matthew, which McDonald (2000, 35) believes were composed around 75-90 CE, were all produced in Antioch to address the concerns of the apostolic, gnostic and Jewish communities.

The above observations help illustrate the social setting of the Matthean community. However, very little attention is paid to the role of the Roman Empire in shaping the discourse of the Matthean community, an issue which has been addressed by Warren Carter. Carter (2011) argues that vertical exertion of Roman power through the elites was responsible for the horizontal, verbally communicated violence in the Gospel of Matthew. He argues that the existence of a synagogal-Matthew conflict attests not primarily to a religious strife but elite or imperial pressure. Imperial negotiation or elite-non-elite status supplies the primary axis for understanding of the Gospel's context and content of this conflict (Carter 2011, 286). Compared to Meier and Overman, Carter provides a better approach, regarding the Gospel of Matthew as a reflection of the socio-economic and political Roman imperial strategy of assimilation to which both Diaspora Judaeans and the Jesus Movement were responding. To be noted here is Carter's use of the word "negotiation." According to him, he uses the term "not to mean formal face-to-face discussions between Christian leaders and imperial leaders, but to refer to making one's way or shaping an appropriate way of life and identity in the midst of the Roman Empire" (Carter 2011, 287). Guided by this definition of negotiation, Carter summarizes the Gospel of Matthew as reflective of the negotiation of Roman imperial power via four contested dimensions, namely: (1) Matthew's genealogy (Matt 1.1-17) that makes several claims against the Roman empire; (2) God's sovereignty, blessings and will (Matt 1.2;4.17; 5.3-12) by which Matthew discredits synagogue communities; (3) practices of crucial self-definition, such as Sabbath observance (Matt 12. 3-5), which echoes Hosea 6.6, insisting on a transformative claim, and (4) Matthew legitimates leadership that interprets the tradition by affirming Jesus' authority as God's faithful agent (Matt 1.18-25; 3.13-17; 4.1-11) while discrediting various Jewish leaders and synagogues

(Matt 5.20; 23.1-34). This reveals an extensive, intensive, and competitive internal contest over the power of the tradition (Carter 2011, 308-309). Carter's concept of negotiation, along with four additional categories; mimicry/imitation, contest, accommodation, and acculturation, will be combined with Social-Identity Theory derived from Tajfel and Turner, Hogg and Mullin, and Baker,<sup>62</sup> to elaborate on Matthew's polemical approach to the construction of identity in his community. This interpretive approach is also useful for advancing some of Overman's and Meier's findings. The overall argument advanced here is that the narrative of the Sermon on the Mount depicts the author's perspective on identity politics. Matthew employs the Gospel narrative for ideological purposes which helps negotiate the socio-economic and political issues emerging from the Roman Empire among Diaspora Judaeans and members of the Jesus Movement. This negotiation is achieved through mimicry/imitation, contest, accommodation, and/or acculturation. The purpose of this negotiation is to construct a distinct cultural identity for the Matthean community.

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<sup>62</sup> Tajfel and Turner observe that belonging to a group is enough to trigger intergroup discrimination favoring the "in-group" (Tajfel 1986, 13). This indicates the conviction that identity formation is shaped by intergroup relations. People express self-understanding in contrast to an out-group. Thus, social identity indicates that group relations are significant for enforcing identity formation in the context of an "us-them" binary. Furthermore, proponents of social identity theory propose two reasons for which people seek to achieve positive social identity: (1) people seek positive social identity in order to foster self-esteem and (2) the functions of norms in group belonging helps avoid uncertainty about entrenched behavior. Consequently, adherents of social identity theory propose that the process of identity formation involves a three-fold recategorization process: (1) a process of *depersonalization* facilitated by group norms, in which case personal identity is subsumed by the characteristics of a group category; (2) *identification* with a superior group to maintain self-esteem and reduce subjective uncertainty (Tajfel 2001; Kuecker 2016, 70-71) and (3) a two-fold *social memory* theory constituted of a *communicative memory* characterized by face-to-face experiences of an event, and a *cultural memory* communicated to future generations through text, rituals and images (Baker 2011, 14-15; Baker 2016, 109-112).

The construction of identity in Matthew's SM in relation to post-70 Diaspora Judaism, like the case with the community's relations with the Roman Empire and the Jesus Movement, identity concerns form the majority of how Matthew presents and constructs a version of Judaism. This method, as it shall be demonstrated shortly, is a mixture of polemics, indebtedness, distancing, aligning, borrowing and differentiation. The relationship between Matthew's community and post-70 Diaspora Judaism, the Jesus Movement and the Roman Empire is sometimes negotiated in the context of conflict. For instance, the nasty attacks of 6:2, 5 (cf. ch 23). There is also the context of interpretation as in 5:17-20, 21-48; and borrowing from Judaism, such as in 5:3-12 and 6:1-18. This borrowing is seen, for instance, from Psalm 37 and from three common practices of Jewish righteousness, namely; almsgiving, prayer and fasting. Matthew's use of ideology to construct his community's identity is not monolithic and relentlessly oppositional, but as with Roman power and structures and the Jesus Movement, there is multivalent negotiation going on in Matthew's ideological strategy of identity construction. With this, I will turn to the analysis of the Sermon on the Mount (SM). The SM is selected for this analysis because of the author's emphasis on righteousness (5:6, 10; 6:1, 33) which shows the author's ideological interest, as I shall elaborate in the following section as well as in chapters six and seven.

### 5.3 MATT 5:3-12: A READING OF AN EMBATTLED AND CONTESTIVE-ACCOMMODATION IDENTITY POLITICS FROM THE BEATITUDES

Since the late twentieth century, ethics (Betz 1995, 97), eschatology (Guelich 1976, 415-418; Talbert 2004, 47), and identity formation (Carter 2000, 130) have been collectively proposed as significant in explaining the Beatitudes as a basis for grounding the identity of the Matthean community. However, this kind of interpretation neglects the important role of the Beatitudes in elaborating the ideological nature of righteousness applied by Matthew to negotiate the identity of

the Matthean community. This interpretation is important because righteousness is crucial in understanding the Christian identity of the Matthean community in the context of identity politics. Thus, the question I intend to address is as follows: How does the author of the Gospel of Matthew employ the Beatitudes to address his community? In this chapter I will argue that Matthew presents the Beatitudes as an embattled and contestive-accommodation mode of identity politics to reconstruct, legitimate and negotiate the Christian identity of the Matthean community. He undertakes this negotiation in relation to the socio-economic and political aspects of the Roman Empire, post-70 Diaspora Judaism, and the Jesus Movement.

### 5.3.1 *Some Scholarly Trends Regarding the Significance of Beatitudes*

Following Eduard Schweizer, Robert A. Guelich (1976) applies form, literary and source criticism to the study of the Matthean Beatitudes. Guelich contends that they are primarily a form of Jewish wisdom literature that can be classified as declarative rhetoric with a “hortative and parenetic tone” (Guelich 1976, 415-416, 418).<sup>63</sup> Writing ten years after Guelich, Allison underscores the hortative and parenetic tone of the Beatitudes by claiming that instead of making demands, they offer comfort to shape, encourage, and console the Christian reader (Allison 1987,

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<sup>63</sup> Further, Guelich contends that the Beatitudes belong to eschatological blessings that characterize the faithful for two key reasons. On the one hand, the Beatitudes are eschatological because they contain simple adjectives (“the poor”) or participles (“who are hungry/weeping) that point to future promises in the context of being declared “blessed.” On the other hand, the eschatological perspective is based on the notion that on account of Jesus’ word, “[T]he hearer becomes a new person through Jesus’ summons,” and in effect “the future Kingdom comes even now to the one who responds” (Guelich 1976, 415-416,418). Consequently, Guelich suggests that the descriptions of the attitudes, such as being poor in spirit, mourning, meekness (Matt 5. 3-5), and behaviours such as acting with mercy, acting with purity in heart, and making peace, as outlined in Matthew’s Beatitudes (5.7-9), describe the behaviours of the members belonging to the Kingdom of God in the context of the eschatological function of Jesus’ sayings. Although Guelich suggests the literary role of the Matthean Beatitudes in depicting the character of the Matthean community in the eschatological context of God’s Kingdom, he does not tell us how these characteristics functioned in informing the identity of the Matthean community.

430). Similarly, Talbert disputes the notion of the Beatitudes as entrance to the Kingdom of God requirements, confirming that they are “promises of eschatological blessings” (Talbert 2004, 47). In his commentary, *The Sermon on the Mount* (1995), Hans Dieter Betz regards the Beatitudes as connected to ethics and morality.<sup>64</sup> Neyrey (1998, 164-165), as if answering the questions raised by Betz concerning neighbouring communities to the Matthean community, analyzes the Matthean Beatitudes in the context of the first-century Mediterranean cultural values of honor and shame, attempting to answer the question, “how would the Sermon on the Mount be heard in a world whose pivotal values are honor and shame?” Neyrey states:

Jesus then ...changed the way the honor game was played and redefined the source of honor, namely, acknowledgement by God, not by neighbors. As a result, by conforming to the image of the Master, disciples are shamed in the eyes of their peers and become

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<sup>64</sup>To explain this connection, Betz contends that “by revealing a new way of life, the Beatitudes affect moral behavior and demand an ethical awareness.” In addition, Betz suggests that in pursuit of their ethical objectives, they stand as identity-descriptors to Matthew’s audience, because the audience of the Beatitudes “can identify and indeed are supposed to identify themselves with conscious attitudes, actions and thoughts” outlined in the text. Resonating with Guelich’s eschatological perspective, Betz regards them as empowering in character-formation of the Matthean community. However, Betz brings insights concerning the political power aspect of the Beatitudes that challenge popular social and cultural values. Thus, he conceives the Matthean beatitudes as, “not as common but exceptional and contrary to what is regarded as conventional standards of behavior” (Betz 1995, 97). However, caution must be taken regarding the empowering effect of the beatitudes. Conceiving the beatitudes as a source of political power should be construed as suggestive of self-determinism. Rather, the political empowering effect of the beatitudes suggested here takes place under divine enabling in terms of Jesus’ declaration. Betz claims that these attitudes, actions and thoughts underscored by the beatitudes do not refer to earthly salvation. Rather they are “fruits of insights to God’s ways”, similar to what Paul regards as the “fruits of the Spirit” in Gal 5.22 (Betz 1995, 97). Furthermore, Betz seems to construe the discourse of the beatitudes in terms of an “outer group,” namely; a Hellenistic community. Betz suggests that the beatitudes borrow from Greek literary styles and function as the *exordium*, or introduction to the Sermon on the Mount and hence circumscribe the way of life of the faithful disciples of Jesus (Betz 1995, 97), and by extension that of the Matthean community. Betz suggests that a Hellenistic community that preferred Greek language were probably neighbors of the Matthean community during the composition of the beatitudes. It is noteworthy that although Betz aptly describes the characteristics of the beatitudes as ethical, and whose moral implication seems to be located in Matt 5.21-48, he has not told us specifically of the other group that can be inferred from the beatitudes and whose social and cultural values are being challenged by them.

least and last before their neighbors. But ... Jesus honors them himself with a grant of reputation and respect that far surpasses what could be hoped for in the public arena of the village (Neyrey 1998, 164-165).

Neyrey suggests that the Matthean beatitudes outline Jesus's own criteria for according honor to his followers' criteria. This contravened the social values of honor in the larger Mediterranean world which was largely dominated by the Roman Empire. By translating μακάριος to "honoring", Neyrey views Jesus' declarative rhetoric in the beatitudes, characterized by μακάριος, as stating "how honourable are those who suffer a loss of honor."<sup>65</sup> Neyrey aptly observes that in his Beatitudes, Matthew attempts to apply Jesus' declaration of honor in a manner that inverts the social values of the Roman Mediterranean world. In other words, Neyrey advances Guelich's notion of the Beatitudes' portrayal of the Matthean Jesus as providing the Matthean community with norms of honor that contrast with the popular social values of honor and shame in their society. Moreover, Neyrey complements Guelich's deficiency of not telling us how the norms outlined in the beatitudes functioned in Matthew's community with his position that the beatitudes aimed at granting honor to the Matthean community. Despite this insight, Neyrey fails to mention the types of political strategies the Roman Empire employed, being the superpower of the time that prompted the composition of the beatitudes as a response.

Warren Carter (2000, 167) grounds his study of the beatitudes on K.C. Hanson and K.

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<sup>65</sup> Despite the Roman domination in the Mediterranean world, the specifics of honor-shame were determined by local cultures, not the culture of the Roman Empire in general. Following Hanson, Neyrey translates the main concept of the beatitudes, that is, μακάριος not as blessed but "honoring." Consequently, after translating μακάριος, to "honoring," Neyrey views Jesus' declarative rhetoric in the beatitudes, characterized by μακάριος, as stating "how honourable are those who suffer a loss of honor." Moreover, Neyrey thinks that Matthew's overall goal in the beatitudes is to indicate that "honor ... is being bestowed on people who are not acting according to accepted [conventional] wisdom and those who are not acknowledged as favoured by their neighbors" (Neyrey 1998, 167).

Wengst's work in order to describe the beatitudes as "affirming conditions and behaviors which God regards as honorable or esteemed." Carter, like Neyrey, sees the function of honor in the Matthean Beatitudes, but goes beyond Neyrey to see the Beatitudes as describing the identity of the Matthean community on two fronts. First, Carter suggests that the Beatitudes stand like religious rituals for the Matthean community, because he insists that the conditions and behaviours outlined in them "are to be practiced by the audience," namely; the Matthean community. Viewing the Beatitudes in the context of Isaiah 61, Carter contends that the Beatitudes "describe not personal qualities but oppressive situations of distress, which are honored ... because God's reign reverses them." These oppressive and distressful situations, according to Carter, are experienced by the audience of the Beatitudes as, "terrible consequences of Roman Power" (Carter 2000, 131). Carter further suggests that the Matthean Beatitudes are a response to the Roman Empire's socio-economic and political strategies of assimilation in the empire. Second, Carter suggests that the Beatitudes impact on the Matthean community because they "mark the features of a faithful and favored blessed group." Consequently, Carter's notion of the Beatitudes as constituting, affirming, and challenging "a community's distinctive identity and practice" (Carter 2000, 130) illustrates the functional role of the Beatitudes as a source of norms for shaping the cultural identity of the Matthean community. Furthermore, Carter describes the Roman regime, as further nuanced by Neyrey, as oppressive. Carter's study argues that the Matthean Beatitudes are indicative of the oppressive and distressful conditions under Roman rule, which is also the cause of the discourse in the Beatitudes. Carter (2000, 131) does not specifically describe the Roman political strategies that caused these oppressive conditions. However, by engaging with social identity political theory as a method for analyzing the Beatitudes in the

context of Esler's recent research, and by looking back at the social setting of the Matthean community in chapter four, it is possible to describe the specific oppressive and distressful conditions highlighted by Carter. It also provides an explanation for the type of identity politics evident in the discourse of the Beatitudes. To this end, the discussion now turns to an exploration of the Beatitudes in shaping the identity of the Matthean community.

### *5.3.2 Ethics for Defining and Defending Identity*

To address the question of identity construction, first principle of SIPT is useful. The first principle of SIPT is premised on the presupposition that a groups' identity construction takes shape through recategorization and depersonalization in order to transcend negative aspects such as racism, ethnocentrism, and geographical limitations. This principle of SIPT is entwined with Moon's aspect of embattled mode of identity politics to constitute the lens for reading Matthew's Beatitudes. In his article, "Who Am I and Who Are You? Conflicting Narratives of Collective Selfhood in Stigmatized Groups" (2012), Moon defines the embattled mode of identity politics as a response by a group that, upon realizing that their dominant narrative is threatened with self-destruction, "respond[s] by defining and defending explicit, fixed boundaries, foreclosure negotiation and eventually reify boundaries" (Moon 2012, 1350). Moon produces four concepts that help to advance Esler's (2016, 166) view of the Beatitudes as presenting group norms to demonstrate the embattled mode of identity politics of the Matthean community. These four concepts are: definition, defence, boundaries and negotiations.

The embattled mode of identity politics of the Matthean community is first and foremost indicated by the capacity of the Beatitudes to define and defend the identity of the Matthean

community. Grounding his view on the work of H. Windisch and George Kennedy, Ernst Baasland suggests that the Beatitudes belong to the epideictic rhetoric that has interwoven both ethical and eschatological “entrance requirements” (Baasland 2015, 46). Contrary to Esler, the Matthean Beatitudes are to be understood as epideictic rhetoric that combines both ethical and eschatological perspectives to honor the Matthean community in terms of their relations to the Kingdom of God. This position is guided by two considerations. On the one hand, there is the ethical perspective. This is based on the conviction that the Matthean Beatitudes outline certain attitudes (Matt 5.3-6) and behaviors (5.7-12) as principles that convey cognitive components (Baasland 2015, 159) pertinent in constructing the identity of the Matthean community. These principles communicate knowledge concerning the identity of the Matthean Community. In their capacity as cognitive components, the Beatitudes have a heuristic role that provides an understanding of the identity of the Matthean community in terms of their existential experiences in relation to out-groups.

The moral perspective s of the ethical principles expressed in the Beatitudes is outlined in Matt 5.21-48. Thus, in Matthew’s Beatitudes, the “poor in spirit,” “those who mourn,” and “the meek” (5.3-5) collectively represent the community’s “hungering and thirsting for righteousness” (5.6) and provide the ethical criteria for constructing the identity of the Matthean community. They also point to the fact that the Beatitudes were intended to guide the community’s response in addressing their existential challenges, as briefly highlighted in Matt 5.21-48. Jeffrey T. Nealon (1998, 37) noted from Gardiner’s comments about Bakhtin and Levinas’ work that “each of them argues that ethics is constitutively linked to corporeality, the direct experience of lived time and place, and our affective and meaningful relations with concrete others.” Thus, Gardiner’s view of

ethics enforces the notion that the Beatitudes are indeed a set of ethical principles, because they are reflective of the experiences of the Matthean community as members of God's Kingdom in relation to other groups. Furthermore, Matthew employs the phrase *γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων* (5.20). Although in Jesus' time it referred to the teachers of the Law and Pharisees, in Matthew's Gospel it is to be understood as metaphorically referring to other groups, or the forces of oppression that caused public loss of honor to the Matthean community (Neyrey 1998, 167; Carter 2000, 131).

Because the Beatitudes present a set of ethical principles for the Matthean community, in effect they portray a definition of the community in terms of the non-violent attitudes they ought to have embraced. By implication, the Beatitudes in Matt 5.3-6 are a kind of guideline for character formation in what Pierre Janet (1928, 321) refers to as “une activite plus ou moins grande de la pensee interieure”; an emotional activity conditioned by inner thoughts subjected to obedience to Jesus' declarations and commands. The attitudes described effectively define the identity of the Matthean community, because they underline the ethical principles by which they ought to derive self-knowledge of who they are and how they want to be known by others. In effect, the Beatitudes in Matt 5.3-6, through a process of depersonalization, have categorized the Matthean community with a new identity, known only by the attitudes outlined therein. In this case, a depersonalizing effect is experienced in the sense that it is not biological attributes or cultural norms, but the attitudes outlined in 5.3-6 that constitute group membership. In other words; depersonalization here means the adherents of the Matthean community have subordinated their individual ethnic identities in favour of the new identity reconstructed by the Beatitudes in 5.3-6. The attitudes outlined in 5.3-6 have thus become identity-markers for the Matthean

community. Consequently, the Beatitudes have the capacity to enforce unity and integration through a process of recategorization imparted through depersonalization of the group members. As a result, by embracing the attitudes of “being poor in the spirit”, “mourning”, and “being meek” (5.3-5), not only will the group members employ these attitudes as norms for their superordinate category of identity that transcends racial, ethnic and geographical limitations, but they also have to necessarily suppress negative aspects of racist, ethnocentric or geographically-conditioned prejudices of identity markers in order to become and remain members of the superordinate category, which in this thesis will be referred to as “the Matthean category.”

Viewing “the Matthean category” as a superordinate identity was important because attempting to create unity and integration was key to consolidating the community that had been dispersed by the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple following the first Jewish revolt against Rome in 66-73 CE. Creating a superordinate identity in the late first-century CE also provided an appropriate method of consolidating people from different ethnic groups affected by the widespread of persecution in the Empire (Matt 10.17-23). Understanding “being poor in spirit,” “mourning” and “being meek” in Matt 5.3-5 as expressive of “hungering and thirsting for righteousness” (5.6), and “being merciful,” “being pure in heart,” and “being peacemakers” in 5.7-9 as depicting the response to being “persecuted for the sake of righteousness” (5.10) it becomes clear that the Beatitudes are presenting a set of group norms for the Matthean community as claimed by Esler.<sup>66</sup> These norms defend and secure the identity of the Matthean

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<sup>66</sup> As norms of a community they effectively participate in the formation of the identity of the community in two related ways. As Esler (2016, 166) claims, norms impact the identity of the community by instructing “members how they should think and feel and how they should behave if they are to belong to the group and share its distinctive identity.” They also inform the identity of the community by representing and encapsulating “the central tendencies of the category ...

community through a motif of contrast in terms of their relations with other groups.<sup>67</sup> So, how would the Beatitudes have functioned to facilitate a defensive criterion as a means of identity construction in the Matthean community?

Wanamaker contends that in pursuit of constructing a social identity, “one socially constructed and maintained world is rejected in favor of another” (Wanamaker 1987, 20). From Wanamaker’s position, it is evident that the process of acquiring an identity involves a defensive approach in the context of an insider vis-a-vis the outsider group. An embattled mode of identity politics as a response to threats against a community’s dominant narrative of identity prompts the question: What kind of threats and oppressors did Matthew have in mind as he composed his Beatitudes as the basis for an embattled mode of identity politics? It is by attempting to answer this question that this chapter develops Esler’s findings on the Matthean Beatitudes. Without relating the Beatitudes to the Roman Empire, Esler (2016, 166) claims that Matthean Beatitudes

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that defines one group and distinguishes it from other groups” (Esler 2016, 166). Thus, functioning as a set of group norms, the beatitudes (5.3-6) express attitudes that ought to shape the thoughts and feelings of the community (6.7-10). They present behaviours that empower the community to relate to other out-groups. This is to say, the capacity of the behaviors outlined in 5.7-10 are meant to empower the Matthean community to relate to the world and in effect defend their identity as defined by their non-violent attitudes in 5.3-5. Thus, the beatitudes refer to “enscripturalized identity” (Punt 2002, 122-123) that sketches out the character and attitudes of the Matthean community to portray them as disciples of Jesus (Talbert 2004, 57) in relation to other outer groups, including other Christian groups, that together with the Matthean community make up the Jesus Movement.

<sup>67</sup> It is crucial to refer to the immediate literary context of Matthew’s narrative to get a glimpse of the opponents of the Matthean community in order to elaborate a defensive perspective. This approach is important because it resonates with Moon’s notion that the embattled mode of identity politics is deployed as a response by a group that has realized that “their dominant narrative is threatened with self-destruction” (Moon 2012, 1350) supposedly by an oppressive group. Moon implies that for a marginalized group, an oppressive group seems to be the cause of an embattled mode of identity politics. Consequently, besides the place of definition in the reconstruction of identity, an embattled mode of identity politics requires a defensive criterion if the narrative for their identity is threatened by an out-group.

presents group norms rhetorically presented as “the central tendencies of the category ... that defines one group and distinguishes it from other groups.” Given that Matthew was writing his Gospel for a community in the city of Antioch, a city in the Roman province of Syria in the late first-century CE, it is most likely that Matthew had in mind the humiliating treatment of the Judaeans of the Jesus Movement, who probably constituted a majority of his audience, and the treatment that the Jerusalem temple and priesthood had received from the Flavian dynasty during the Jewish revolt against Rome in 69-73 CE.

As witnessed by Josephus, it must have been a humiliating experience for the Judaeans in Antioch to have been paraded in the streets as prisoners of war by Titus alongside the booty (Josephus, *AJ* 12. 119-124; Josephus, *BJ* 7. 103, 106-111, 118, 123-157). The parading of the <sup>68</sup> 700 Judaeans in Rome and was probably used as a political strategy by the Flavian dynasty not only to demonstrate the total defeat of a political foe, but also to demonstrate the conquest and destruction of Jerusalem by Rome. Baasland correctly suggests that the Beatitudes from the Gospel of Thomas<sup>69</sup> echo the three-fold mention of persecution in Matt 5.10-12. The Beatitudes, which connect persecution to being blessed for knowing the Father, “seem to reflect real persecution” in the Roman Empire (Baasland 2015, 62). Thus, *μαστιγῶω* (to scourge or beat with a lash) in Matt 10.17 is likely applied metaphorically in the narrative to remind the people of the recurring nature of the dishonorable treatment of the Jewish people by the Sanhedrin in order to

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<sup>69</sup> See John Dominic Crossan’s (1986, 25) publication the *Sayings Parallels: A Workbook for the Jesus Tradition*. According to Crossan, the Gospel of Thomas, which was written after the Gospel of Matthew and probably used Matthew as one of its major sources, seems to be a witness for Christian persecution in the late first-century CE. This is based on the beatitude in the Gospel of Thomas that states, “Blessed are those who have been persecuted within themselves. It is they who have truly come to know the Father” (GTh. 69.1).

help the Matthean community understand the religious and political reasons for their current suffering and dishonorable treatment under the Flavian dynasty.

This persecution, however, does not mean that the Flavian dynasty always wished to relentlessly dominate the Jewish people. According to Josephus (*BJ* 7.103-109), although Titus had paraded the Jewish prisoners in Antioch, he had resisted the peoples' demands to expel the Jewish residents or withdraw their Rome-granted religious rights. He told them that Jewish people did not have a country, because it had been destroyed during the 66-73 Jewish revolt. Neither do the Beatitudes depict persecution against the followers of Jesus as officially sanctioned by Rome. The kind of persecution committed by the Flavians may have been taking place in Israel before the revolt. As Luz suggests, it replicates itself in Nero's time (Luz 2007, 199), and therefore it could have still been happening against followers of Jesus in other areas of the Roman Empire in late first-century CE.

Whether the persecution was happening to the Jesus Movement at large, or specifically to the Matthean community in Antioch, the most interesting thing is that Matthew's Beatitudes have a political function in the Gospel narrative. Matthew intended to negotiate the identity of the Matthean community by contesting the use of political power by individual Roman emperors, such as Titus and Vespasian and the Judaeen elites, to subjugate the Jewish community, which included members of the Jesus Movement in Antioch. Robbins' inter-textual texture becomes useful in helping to understand how classical authors in the first century provided social, cultural and historical insights to elaborate the discourse of early Christian communities. Josephus (*BJ* 7.47-59) describes Antiochus, a Roman acculturated Jewish leader in Antioch who accused the Jews of planning to burn the city of Antioch. He compelled the Judaeen in Antioch to join him in

sacrificing to the city gods. He also abolished Sabbath observance, incited violence against Jews, and threatened to kill those who dissented.

The Beatitudes grant public acknowledgement of worth and honor in respect to public expectations (Esler 2016, 166). Viewed in the context of the Flavian dynasty, the Beatitudes outline group norms that, while honoring the community of Matthew, also ideologically function as a source of non-violent political power that Matthew employs to subvert the political values, such as use of violent force against one's enemies, enforced by the Roman Empire. In composing the Beatitudes, the implied author of Matthew's Gospel intended to use Roman imperial collaborators, the elites, the Judaeian aristocracy, and the military rhetorically to create the impression of Roman political imperial structure as being responsible for the oppression directed at his local community.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>70</sup>The presence of soldiers, governor's absolute power, and the image of Caesar on the denarius in Matt 22.15-22 probably present the picture of the oppressor that the beatitudes addressed. To this end, the στρατιώτης (Roman soldiers) in Matthew's narrative are organized into σπεῖρα (cohorts) and legions (26.27, 53). Weaver's observation that cohorts and legions were composed of 600 and 6000 men, respectively (Weaver 2005, 109), indicates a heavy military presence in the neighbourhood of the Matthean community. These Roman soldiers operated under the command of the governor; 27.27-38 carrying out official punishments such as arrest and binding (14.3), flogging (20.19; 27.26), beheading (14.10), and crucifixion (27.27-38, 5154). In the narrative, the Roman governors in Syria seem to occupy the apex of hierarchical power by possessing both military and political power. A good example is that of Pilate (27. 26; 28.11-15). Judea had governors who were under the governor of the province of Syria which included Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. Pilate is addressed with the honorific title of κύριος in 27.63 by the Jews. Because appeals were made to him, prisoners were presented to stand trial before him (10.18; 27.19). During the Passover festivals in Jerusalem, the governor had military command over a cohort (27.27). His power incited fear both among the Jewish masses and the Roman soldiers (28.14). Weaver (2005, 112) correctly observes that in Matthew's narrative, "the Roman governor has ultimate power of command, a power both acknowledged by his supplicants (27.64) and confirmed by his own actions (27.58)." Although the Roman emperor mainly ruled from Rome, his presence among the Matthean community was communicated symbolically through coins that bore his image. The δηνάριον (Latin 'denarius') which provided the form of coin for taxation (22.19), bore the image and the title (22.20) of the Roman emperor. The denarius is one of the

Although the Beatitudes represent an embattled mode of identity politics of the Matthean community, because the SM was written to address not only a monolithic political context, but also economic and social issues being experienced by the Matthean community, there is a social aspect of it that Matthew included as he negotiated the identity of his community in terms of borrowing from earlier Jewish traditions. The inter-textual relations between Psalm 37 and the third Beatitude declaring, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matt 5:5 NIV), are crucial in elaborating how Matthew employs the Beatitudes to legitimate the social status of his community in late first-century Antioch.

So far, the superordinate identity of “the Matthean category” has been described. Yet to be defined is the nature of this category in terms of whether it is Judaeen, Christian, Gentile Christian, or some combination of Jewish Christian and Gentile Christian. Exploring how the identity of the Matthean category is legitimated provides a good position to describe the identity category to which the Matthean community belongs. So, how do the Beatitudes legitimate the identity of the Matthean community?

To address the issue of legitimation, this section and the next will engage the second assumption of SIPT, namely; that ideology is applied to legitimate a group’s identity by identifying a minor group with a superior one to create a superordinate identity to esteem the image of the minor group. Legitimation is an ideological process mostly achieved through universalization, rationalization, or identification with superior authority (Wanamaker 2003b, 200-201; Kuecker 2016, 70) to secure the self-esteem of an oppressed or marginalized group. In the case of the legitimation of the identity of the Matthean community, Jesus, Israel, and John the Baptist play crucial roles.

Although Keener (2009, 171), separates Matt 5.3-9 and 5.10-12, saying that they present

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forms of currency used during the Flavian dynasty. Thus, in the wider literary context of Matthew’s Gospel, when Matthew composed the Beatitudes, he had his mind on the exertion of Rome’s political power over the local communities through the elites (Matt 5.10-12).

Jesus' address to Jews and to his disciples, these two sections function complementarily in the formation of the identity of the Matthean community, as discussed in chapter 3. To separate 5.3-9 from 5.10-12 because of Jesus' address to the Judaeans and his disciples is to ignore Matthew's use of Jesus' sayings in his narrative. While the Beatitudes in 5.3-6 have been noted to present the attitudes that describe the norms for constructing the identity of the Matthean community, those in 5.7-12 ideologically present archetypes that empower the community to relate to the external world, namely; the Roman Empire and post-70 Diaspora Judaism. For the sake of brevity, a discussion of the spectrum of the relations of the Matthean community will be limited to post-70 Judaism, just as the above analysis was limited to the Roman Empire. How did Matthew, in 5.11-12, facilitate the legitimation of the Matthean community's identity in relation to the Roman Empire?

### *5.3.3 Legitimizing Identity through Borrowing and Accommodation*

To explain Matthew's application of the Beatitudes in 5.11-12 to legitimate the identity of his community, these Beatitudes need to be viewed in the context of Matthew's borrowing from three important aspects of Israel's covenantal traditions, ultimately accomplishing his ideological purposes. First, Matthew introduces his Gospel narrative in a brief genealogy of "Jesus Christ, the Son of David, Son of Abraham" (1.1). By introducing Jesus in the literary context of David and Abraham, Matthew grounds the identity of Jesus in two key figures in Israel's covenantal history; Abraham and David. In order to present Jesus, as Carter (2000, 3) suggests, as an "agent of God's saving purpose." Matthew borrows from Jewish tradition to accomplish two important tasks. First, to locate Jesus within God's covenant with Israel (Genesis

17; 2 Samuel 7). By locating Jesus' identity in Israel's covenant, not only does the narrator, borrowing from Hebrew traditions, delegitimize the salvific claims of the cult of the emperor based on the conception of benefaction and the emperor's divine status associated with the cult, but he also legitimates the identity of the Matthean community by identification with the person of Jesus as the Messiah and Savior of the People of Israel.

Second, the shaping of the cultural identity of the Matthean community through political and social functions and the Beatitude concerning the "poor in the spirit" (Matt 5.3) informs the sub-cultural status of the Matthean community. An inter-textual comparison of the Matthean (Matt 5.3-12) and Lukan (Luke 6.20-26) Beatitudes shows that while the Beatitude about the "the meek", who are promised the earth is found in Matt 5.5, it is totally lacking in the Lukan version of the Beatitudes. In both texts, Beatitudes concerning the "poor" occur. In contradiction to Matthew, Luke seems to emphasize material poverty (Luke 6.20), while Matthew stresses the spiritual aspect (Matt 5.3). Davies and Allison (1988, 442) noted that "in spirit" is a Matthean redaction where *πτωχός*, in the nominative masculine plural, as part of religious macarisms, overturns "a popular secular sentiment... Blessed are the rich," refers to the needy, those dependent on others, and beggars. Riches (2000, 189) claims that *πτωχός*, along with other Beatitudes (Matt 5.5, 7. 8 and 11), refer to ethical character because they describe a specific mode of behavior related to certain deeds and consequences for which a reward is promised as motivation.

These differences and commonalities indicate the cultural Christian identity of the Matthean community. If both Luke and Matthew redacted materials from Q for their independent use, then the commonality between Matthew's and Luke's versions of the Lord's Prayer

underscores Matthew's accommodation of earlier traditions of the Jesus Movement. The differences stress the distinctive concerns of the Matthean community. Because of its ethical function, the Beatitude on *πτωχός* performs the function in the Roman empire of inverting the social value that viewed wealth as the cardinal value, earning the elites honor in the society as benefactors, ranked second only to the emperors and their families, as presented in chapter four. Belonging to *ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν* (Matt 5:3) emphasized the role of the Beatitude in contesting the social function of the Roman empire for securing values of honor, including benefaction in the form of according the Kingdom of heaven rather than the earthly kingdom represented by the Roman empire.

Third, the Beatitude on the meek (5.5) which Gundry says alludes to the poor, Isa 61.1 is reflective of "but the meek will inherit the earth [land]" in Psalm 37 (Gundry 1982, 69) indicates Matthew's mimicry of this concept of meekness in Israel's wisdom narratives. Psalm 37 was written in the time of Babylonian empire, around 600 BCE. This enabled Matthew to see the situation of the Matthean community as similar to Israel's exile from Babylon. This would have also enabled Matthew to use Psalm 37 in order to advance both a political and social function of the Beatitude on meekness (Matt 5.5) in Antioch. Consequently, inter textually, the application of Psalm 37 in the post-70 context enabled Matthew to contest Roman domination of the land in Syria, while at the same time promising an eschatological reversal whereby God, rather than the Roman emperors and elites, would take control of the land, promising victory against the enemy. Virgil's myth in *Aeneid* 1.280-281 affirms the eternal status of Rome by claiming that Jupiter appointed Romulus founder of the empire, whereby he declared "For these I set no bounds in space or time; but have given empire without end... [to the] lords of the world" (LCL 63: 280-

281). Viewed in this context, the Beatitudes in Matt 5.5 as an allusion to Psalm 37, would ironically be an imitation or mimicry of Roman domination of the land, but enacted by God who would eclipse Rome's political power.

Matthew borrows Μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς· ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν (Matt 5:5) from a Jewish tradition embedded in Psalm 37 in his third Beatitude. Inter-textually the Beatitude declaring “Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt 5.5) echoes Psalm 37:

Trust in the Lord, and do good, so you will dwell in the land, and enjoy security ... Yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look well at his place, he will not be there. But the meek shall possess the land and delight themselves in abundant prosperity (Ps 37.3, 10-11, NRSV).

In this Psalm the “meek” can be characterized as the righteous who shall inherit the earth because of their humility in contrast to the wicked, who shall perish because of their wickedness. It is the “meek” who provide the paradigm of borrowing in Matthew's Beatitude. This borrowing locates the Matthean Beatitude in relation to Jewish tradition (of Psalm 37) as an element of continuity. Deployment of this Judean tradition in the Matthean community informs their social identity in proximity to Judaeian tradition. By providing a set of norms for the behaviour of the Matthean community, Psalm 37 emphasizes the accommodation of a quasi-Judaeian identity in the Matthean community. It seems possible that in proselytizing to Gentiles, the expectation may have been that the converts would become Judaeian followers of the messiah. This quasi-Judaeian identity had the cultural potency of strengthening the superordinate identity in the Matthean community, whereby Judaeian traditions, such as a transformed Sabbath observance (Matt 12.35), would have still been practiced as part of the community's normative behavior that enhanced social cohesion. Carter's observation of a multitude of Greeks attending an Antiochene synagogue explains the “hybrid” identity of the Diaspora Jews and is “an indication of some

openness to and participation in the city's life" (Carter 2011, 292). This accommodation reiterates the social function of Matthew's emphasis on a quasi-Judaean identity in his community, an issue which escaped the scrutiny of Overman and Meier who could only see a religious, not social or civic function in the Gospel of Matthew.

The above discussion on the Beatitudes about "poor in spirit" (Matt 5.3), the "meek" (5. 5) and acceptance of suffering as exemplified by the prophets (5.11-12), goes beyond Davies and Allison's conception of their religious function of the Beatitudes. Accordingly, these Beatitudes invert non-monotheistic values on riches to demonstrate identity politics instigated by Matthew (whereby he constructs the cultural identity of the Matthean community). This is in the light of the contestation of politics in the Roman Empire, and in the mimicry of and identification with Israel's covenantal traditions. Viewed in relation to the socio-economic and political strategies of assimilation in the Roman Empire, this provided the political opportunity for the Beatitudes to negotiate the cultural identity of the Matthean community in the empire. The legitimation of the Matthean community in relation to the Diaspora Judaeans and the Jesus Movement was important not only because of the social capacity to enforce the acceptance of both Judaeans and Gentiles in the Matthean community as followers of Jesus, but also because of the social function of the Beatitudes in negotiating the cultural identity of the community in the context of the Roman political strategy of assimilation. Matthew's engagement in the fifth Beatitude with the construction and legitimation of the cultural identity of the Matthean community speaks to the socio-political and economic factors of righteousness in 5.20. Since Matthew was addressing a community in Antioch in the late first-century CE, his call to his community to practice a righteousness that exceeded that of the teachers of the law (Scribes) and the Pharisees required

him to outline a political, social and economic program that empowered his community without attempting to assimilate them into Roman culture as Judaeans and Gentile elites did. This required them to adopt humble attitudes, represented by “poor in the spirit” and “the meek”, rather than violent attitudes as normative behavior for relating to Judaeans and other members of the Jesus Movement, and the Roman elites. Incidentally, this also presented the socio-economic and political potential to surpass the role of the elites in attending to the needs of a desperate community in Antioch.

#### 5.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has attempted to unpack Esler’s findings on the Matthean Beatitudes as a framework for group norms of the Matthean community on two main fronts. First, while Esler does not give us the semantic justification for the archetypes of the Beatitudes, this study has indicated that Matthew’s demand for a righteousness that greatly surpassed that of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees (5, 20), was the main cause for composition of the Beatitudes. This is to give the community a set of norms and archetypes with which they could relate to the Roman Empire, the Diaspora Judaeans and members of the Jesus Movement. Second, while Esler does not provide the concrete situation that occasioned the call for composition of the Beatitudes, this chapter has argued that the Roman socio-economic and political strategies of assimilation were the major cause for the Matthean composition of the Beatitudes. Matthew’s aim was to articulate an embattled and contestive-accommodation mode of identity politics and outline the political and social strategies for negotiating the cultural identity of his community in the Roman Empire. The Beatitudes include the declaration of the Matthean Jesus in Matt 5.20, to the Matthean community a concept of righteousness *περισσεύση ... ἡ δικαιοσύνη πλεῖον τῶν γραμματέων καὶ Φαρισαίων* (“which surpasses greatly that of the teachers of the law and Pharisees”), as part of their character

formation (5.3-12). The attitudes and behaviours outlined in the Beatitudes and exemplified especially in the third Beatitude (Matt 5.5) represent the author's ideology by which he intends to shape the Christian character of the community, in effect elaborating on the significance of Jesus' demand for righteousness in Matt 5.20. Thus, the Beatitudes describe the Christian identity of the Matthean community. They also ideologically empower the community to politically and socially relate to the Roman Empire, the Judaeans in the Diaspora, and members of the Jesus Movement. Besides an embattled and contestive-accommodation mode of identity politics, the Matthean Lord's Prayer prompted a humanistic and contestive- accommodation of identity politics, as will be demonstrated in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 6

### MATT 5.17-20: A READING OF HUMANISTIC AND CONTESTIVE- ACCOMMODATION IDENTITY POLITICS

#### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

What is the significance of Jesus' sayings in Matt 5.17-20 for the identity formation of the Matthean community? In this chapter I will argue that Jesus' sayings on the interpretation of the Law shows that Matthew employs mimicry, imitation, and contestation to present his concept of righteousness as an ideology for reconstructing and legitimating a humanistic and contestive-accommodative identity politics for his community. This takes place in the context of negotiating the socio-economic and political aspects of the Roman Empire, post-70 Diaspora Judaism, and the Jesus Movement. To this end, the identity issues identified in this chapter center on the Pauline and the Matthean responses to the socio-economic and political challenges in Antioch. I shall first briefly explore scholarly trends regarding the significance of Jesus' sayings on the Law in Matt 5.17-20. I will then unpack the responses of Matthew and Paul in terms of the function of 5.17-20, 6.2-3, and of Galatians, Respectively, in reconstructing and legitimating the Christian cultural identity of the Matthean community in order to explain the ideological significance of Matthew's concept of righteousness.

#### 6.2 SOME SCHOLARLY TRENDS REGARDING JESUS' SAYINGS ON THE LAW

Jesus' sayings in Matt 5.17-20 have triggered debate among New Testament scholars for decades. This section of the SM is said to depict Jesus as the New Law Giver (Davies 1966, 108), to assure the audience that Jesus taught the will of God (Carter 2000, 140), to portray Jesus as the

interpreter of the Torah 152 (Viljoen 2006, 152), and to protect against any interpretation suggesting that Jesus is cancelling the observance of the Law and the prophets (Talbert 2004, 59). Thom thinks this portion of the SM refers to the interpretation and application of the Law (Thom 2009, 327). All these scholars rightly observe Matthew's central focus, to depict Jesus as interpreting the Torah in order to address a new situation in Matthew's society and community in the late first century CE. However, they do not show the connection between Jesus's interpretation of the Torah and the significance of righteousness for Matthew and his community, as highlighted in Matt 5.20. Beyond these scholars, I shall explore in detail the findings of WD Davies and DC Allison on the significance of Jesus' sayings in Matt 5.17-20. Davies and Allison are the best candidates for this study because they have extensively studied the SM in both its Jewish and Christian settings. They also provide nuance showing how Matthew employed his concept of righteousness to shape the Christian identity of his community.

### 6.2.1 *Davies and Allison (1988)*

Davies and Allison employ source and redaction criticism to study Jesus' sayings on the Law in Matt 5.17-20. In their study, Davies and Allison (1988, 442) begin by noting how Jesus' sayings on the Law in Matt 5.22-27 are in continuity with Israel's past religious traditions but also add a new element which goes beyond certain demands of the Torah.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> They further claim that three issues can be derived from Jesus' sayings in Matt 5.17-20. First, in the context of 5.18, they maintain that Jesus' sayings in 5.17-20 should not be viewed as antithetical but as presenting "Jesus upholding the law so that between him and Moses there can be no real conflict" (Davies and Allison 1988, 442). Second, in the context of 5.20, Jesus indicates that what he demands from his followers goes beyond the religious practices of the scribes and Pharisees. Third, because these sayings of Jesus on the Law depict Jesus as the Messiah, they in turn indicate the continuity of his teaching with the past traditions of Israel. In view of 5.21-48, Jesus' sayings on the Law bring some new elements that transcend the letter of the law. Furthermore, Davies and Allison suggest that Jesus's sayings on the Law (5.17-20) demonstrate that Matthew adopted traditions from the early Christian communities to address a

Davies and Allison have noted how the phrase οὐκ ἤλθον καταλῦσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι in Matt 5.17 plays a significant role in elaborating Jesus' sayings on the Law. They point out that πληρῶ is redactional just like καταλύω, and together they form a synonymous parallelism in this verse. The phrase οὐκ ἤλθον καταλῦσαι ἀλλὰ πληρῶσαι indicates that for Matthew, Jesus came to fulfil the Torah. That is; Jesus establishes or validates the Torah. They further contend that this fulfilment motif in Jesus' sayings on the Law in 5.17 accomplishes three things: (1) through his coming Jesus enables others to meet the demands of the Torah; (2) he brings the new righteousness, which is the new spirit of love; and (3) his fulfilment is eschatological because Jesus as the Messiah brings the realization and intentions of the Law which transcend the Mosaic law. This is to say, Jesus' sayings extend "new demands" as portrayed in 5.21-48 (Davies and Allison 1988, 485-486). Davies and Allison (1988, 492) also outline three attitudes of the early

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new situation. Regarding the Q source, Davies and Allison contend that while Mark omits Jesus' sayings on the law, because he never accessed Q as Matthew and Luke did, Matthew (5.17) includes it by editing the tradition followed by Luke (16.17). The omission of Mark and the editing of the Q tradition by Matthew confirm the priority of Mark in the synoptic Gospels (Davies and Allison 1988, 442). Matthew's editing of Q directs us to two crucial issues: First, his redaction points us to the existence of three other communities besides the Matthean community as part of early Christian communities; a community which produced a discourse as reflected in Q, a community from which Luke and Mark wrote their Gospels, and a third community in the first audience of Matthew's Gospel. Second, my own suggestion is that Matthew's redaction points to the possibility that Matthew employs the sayings of Jesus to recruit members from the first of these three groups, to form his own community. Consequently, the Matthean community emerged from a group that was Jewish but followed the messiah Jesus. Matthew saw his community as Jewish because they followed the messiah long promised by their sacred texts and kept the Torah. This was one stream, the earliest in the Jesus Movement. The notion that it was not Jewish-based stems from the belief that the parting of the ways (Christianity from Judaism) happened in the late first century. Bruce Winter (2015, 227) aptly observes that because the Jesus Movement emphasized conversion to embrace Jewish identity, Paul's Letter to the Galatians shows that "Gentiles were under great pressure to embrace an ethnic Jewish identity as proselytes." Thus, Winter's reading of Paul's letter to the Galatians could be referring to the Matthean community.

Jesus Movement towards the Torah that created different groups within the movement. These groups are: (1) the so called Judaeans, who according to Paul's letter to the Galatians (6.13), Acts (15. 1,5; 21.21), and Justin Martyr in *Dialogue with Trypho* (47.3), expected Gentiles to become Jews by upholding the Torah; (2) a most likely Pauline Christian group that believed that the Law was replaced or set aside by Jesus' teaching, and so there was no need to submit to it; and (3) a group between these two positions who believed in the freedom of the Gentiles from compliance with the Torah, at the same time expecting the Jews to obey the law. The third possibly also represented Pauline communities. Davies and Allison (1988, 493) suggest that Matthew's community belongs to the third of these options. This implies that Matthew wrote his Gospel probably to address an intra-group conflict between Judaeans and non-Judaeans in the Jesus Movement, and a larger conflict with the Antiochene society at large. These intra-group conflicts were probably caused by these two groups' differences in attitudes towards the Law. According to Davies and Allison, Matthew employs Jesus' sayings on the interpretation of the Law to address an intra- Christian conflict between Christians of Jewish origin and Gentiles.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Finally, Davies and Allison (1988, 499) have observed that Matthew's "catch word" περισσεύω links 5.20 with 5.21-48 to emphasize that discipleship entails doing more than the Torah demands. This link implies that Jesus' sayings on the Law emphasize the participation of the Matthean community in social actions to advance the values of God's Kingdom embodied in Jesus' sayings on righteousness in 5.20. McIver (2012, 129) noted that "[i]t is the three themes—of the permanence of the law, fulfilling of the law, and righteousness that exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees [5.20]—that are illustrated in the antithesis that follow Matt 5.17-20." McIver, like Davies and Allison, can clearly see a link between Matt 5.20 with its antithesis in 5.21-48. Although McIver (2012, 127, 131) says that the heart of the SM is the Law (Matt 5.17-20), he seems to concede the centrality of righteousness by stating, "implicit in this interpretation of the law is the command that the righteousness of the disciples must exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees (5.20)." Consequently, emphasizing the centrality of righteousness (Matt 5.20) in the SM, and focusing on the semantic function of *colno* (a reference to superior quality in 5.20), Davies and Allison (1988, 499) define Matthew's concept of righteousness as a reference to

There are two shortcomings in the argument of Davies and Allison (1988, 501) which need attention. First, although Davies and Allison contend that Matthew's righteousness in 5.20 does not look backwards to the Beatitudes but rather introduces 5.21-48 (Davies and Allison, 1988, 501), they fail to notice an important connection between the Beatitudes and Matthew's concept of righteousness in 5.20. It is important to see a connection between these because this connection underlies Matthew's concern for character formation and conduct of his community. In the definition of righteousness proposed by Davies and Allison, its significance and content is best elaborated semantically by the behaviour and attitudes outlined in the Beatitudes (Matt 5. 3-12). This connection shows that the Beatitudes (5.3-12), like 5.21-48, provide the content for and the meaning of 5.20. Talbert's (2004, 54) suggestion that the Beatitudes bear two-fold content, namely; "promises of eschatological blessings and a portrait of the recipients of these blessings," emphasizes its role in shaping the cultural identity of the Matthean community. On the one hand, receiving comfort and inheriting the earth (5.3-5) express the eschatological blessings as part of experiencing the promise of entering the Kingdom of heaven (5.20b). On the other hand, the "poor in spirit," the "meek," and those who "hunger and thirst for righteousness" portray the characteristic identity of the adherents of the Matthean community. Davies and Allison conception of Matthew's Gospel as reflective of only a Jewish-Christian religious relation is a serious flaw that evades its multivalent function delivered in the context of the socio-economic and political relations of the community with the Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism, and the early Jesus Movement. In view of the shortcomings of Davies and

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"Christian character and conduct in accordance with the demands of Jesus' right intentions, right word, right deed." Of course, these demands of Jesus are outlined in the Beatitudes (5.3-12) in the forms of alms giving, prayer, and fasting (6.1-18).

Allison, this chapter attempts to answer the following question: How does Matthew use the sayings of Jesus on the interpretation of the Law to address the social, economic and political relations between the Matthean community and the Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism, and the Jesus Movement? This question is answered in the next section.

### 6.3 RECONSTRUCTION AND LEGITIMATION OF IDENTITY

Faulkner (2005b) citing Gal 2.1-10 and Acts 15, employs Social Identity theory and Self-Categorization theory derived from Henri Tajfel and John Turner's work to explain how Judaeans law created a conflict in a predominantly Judeo-Christian community. In her article, Faulkner addresses the question of the inclusion of circumcised Gentiles into the early Christian community located in Syrian Antioch (Gal 2.11-19). The problem in Antioch resulted from the Apostles and other Judeo-Christians transgressing the boundaries of Judaeans identity by eating meals with Gentile believers. To solve this social problem, Faulkner says that "[a] provision had to be made to maintain Jewish boundary markers by establishing a superordinate group" (Faulkner 2005b, 1-2). The previous separation of Judaeans from Christians became a problem when both accepted and converted to the Christ-faith movement. It was particularly Judaeans who were disturbed by the implications of Gentile converts, since part of their group identity was based on separation from outsiders, especially in social interactions such as meals. It is noteworthy to mention that the problem in Gal. 2:11-19 was after the Jerusalem conference decision (Gal 2.1-11).

This conflict within the Jesus Movement was probably compounded by two factors. One, in the Jesus Movement some Judaeans stuck to the practices and beliefs of Israel's covenant

enforced by the Torah (Dunn 1993, 99; Faulkner 2005b, 13). Two, some τὰ ἔθνη had previously been members of associations in the Roman Empire such as cults to Roman gods, funerary groups (Kloppenborg 1996, 7) or philosophical associations. Paul addressed them all, saying that the Gospel of Christ is rendered void by perpetuating these traditions (1 Cor 1.21-25; 3.18.20; Rom 1.22; Col 2.8). Some of the members of these associations likely remained true to their pre-Christian beliefs and practices, even though they had become members of the Jesus Movement. The result of this conflict is that it affected unity and integration. For some Gentiles, acquiring a Christian identity was probably less challenging, especially when circumcision was not required, than for some Jews who had strong social boundaries in place to keep Gentiles out of Diaspora Judaism. Consequently, Faulkner observes that a double identity in the Jesus Movement made intimate fellowship problematic in the church in Antioch (Gal 2.11-14). To address the problem, the Jerusalem council, mentioned in Gal. 2.1-10, had to sanction a superordinate identity in the Jesus Movement which allowed two separate missions—one to the non-Judaeans and the other to the Judaeans believers (Faulkner 2005, 13-14). Faulkner notes the value of this superordinate identity in solving intra-ethnic conflict, claiming:

The understanding gained from Social Identity and Self-Categorization Theories suggest that maintaining pluralism by affirming the identity of both sub-groups within the superordinate groupings of the Early Church was likely to provide the most satisfactory solution.

The Jesus Movement in mid-first century Antioch had a conflict which was exacerbated by the preference to hold a dual identity; a previous identity and the new identity acquired by belonging to the Jesus Movement. Faulkner envisages that during the time of the Matthean community in Antioch in the late first-century CE, intra-faith conflict, compounded by the Torah,

had either resuscitated itself or had prevailed through the mid to late first-century CE. Faulkner's main shortcoming, like Davies and Allison, is that she presents a monolithic perspective of the Jesus Movement in reference to a Jewish-Gentile ethnic conflict, leaving out the social, economic, and political concerns of the community. In Antiquity, religion was intrinsically part of social, economic, and political experiences. Assuming that in the Matthean community remaining Torah compliance was still a problem, what kind of solutions does Jesus' sayings on the interpretation of the Law (Matt 5.17-20) offer? To answer this question, the function of Jesus' sayings on the interpretation of the Law in 5.17-20, as a reflection of a humanistic-contestive and accommodation mode of identity politics within the Matthean community in Antioch in the late first-century CE will be examined.

In the section that follows, the analysis of Jesus' sayings on the Law is guided by the application of recategorization to analyze identity formation. This will enable the use of social identity theory to help explain the humanistic mode of identity politics which underscores the discourse of a given community. Drawn from Moon's (2012, 1355) notion of identity politics, a humanistic dialogue mode of identity politics is defined in this thesis as a reference to a category of identity politics which focuses on "shared humanity," causing social change by encouraging the "breaking down of boundaries between the self and the other." This facilitates dialogue between two or more competing or hostile communities. A humanistic dialogue mode has the advantage of mitigating the possible violent outcome of an embattled mode of identity politics.

### 6.3.1 *A Humanistic Mode of Identity Politics Response*

A humanistic dialogue mode of identity is evident in Matt 5.19. Jesus' sayings on Law (5.

17-20), intended for Antioch in the late first-century CE, are approached by Matthew from two directions. That is; in terms of intra-group relations within the Matthean community and inter-group relations with other groups that formed part of the Jesus Movement. Matthew established a superordinate group which allowed for both Judaeans and Gentiles by focusing on the commonalities between these two groups. Luz suggests that by embracing a righteousness that greatly surpassed that of the scribes and Pharisees [Matt 5.20], Matthew defines himself ...over against the leaders of common Judaism” (Luz 2007, 222). Luz attributes the model of an in-group prototype leadership to Matthew, who in terms of a humanistic dialogue mode of identity politics encouraged a sense of shared identity. The in-group model represents a shared or common identity because, as Baker (2016, 12-13) contends, in superordinate in-group identity, an in-group model of a leader stands as a “representation of a person that embodies the identity of the group.” In his Gospel, Matthew as the implied author acquires this prototypical status which is based on the narrative’s presentation of Judaeans (10.6) and Gentiles (Matt 12.21; 25.32; 28.19). This ought to have depicted Matthew as the embodiment of cultural values and Christian religious values of both Judaeans and Gentiles.

Matthew valued a dual cultural identity that embraced Gentiles and Judeans within Christian identity. As part of the superordinate characteristics of the identity of the Matthean community, Christian identity constituted a superior identity, while the cultural identities of both Judeans and Gentiles represent subordinate identities. The acceptance of both Judaeans and Gentiles in Matthew’s community, as shown in chapter four, implies porous boundaries of identity between the Matthean community and members from other early Christian communities. Consequently, Matthew’s superordinate identity further accomplished the major aspiration of a

humanistic identity politics, namely; breaking down rigid boundaries of identity and creating porous ones. In this case, between the Matthean community and the out-groups that was part of the Jesus Movement.

Consequently, Matthew's redaction of his Markan source shows that Matthew valued the discourse of other groups in the Jesus Movement. This is the reason for which he employed them to compose his own narrative as a basis for the identity for his community. This further show that the extent to which the Christian sources used by Matthew helped reconstruct identity was probably owing to the work of Matthew as an author who incorporated his sources into the story that he wanted to tell. Matthew's Judeo-Christian beliefs and practices make them part of the Jesus Movement before Matthew constructs his own account of Jesus' life and ministry. His redaction of the earlier sources indicates his attempt at identifying his community within the Jesus Movement. This identification accomplishes two crucial things for the superordinate identity of the Matthean community. First, identification with the Jesus Movement warrants a positive esteem by legitimating its Christian cultural identity. Second, regularly practicing and teaching Jesus' instructions (Matt 5.19), drawn from other earlier Christian communities and contextualizing them in the Matthean community, the Matthean narrative attempted to promote the ideals of a humanistic dialogue mode of identity politics. Moon (2012, 1355) contends that adherents of the humanistic dialogue mode of identity politics focuses on affecting lasting political transformation by allowing people across politicized boundaries to develop a consciousness of the deeper values shared by the people from all sides. Matthew's insistence on practicing and teaching Jesus' instructions under the principle stated in Matt 5.17- 20 entails a pedagogical role for the Matthean community. By inculcating the significance of Jesus' saying on

the Law, viewed in the content provided in 5.21-48, and in the context of Jesus' commissioning in Matt 28.19, the Matthean community sought to develop deeper values shared with other members of the Jesus Movement. A common shared value among members of the Jesus Movement was to extend Jesus' teaching to the world (Rom 1.15; Mark 16.20; Acts 1.18).

In the context of a subordinate identity embracing former cultural values alongside a superordinate identity, Matthew seems to have offered a more stable solution to the ethnic conflict in Antioch than the one offered by the Jerusalem, council because the former provided unity in diversity. When Jesus' sayings on Law in 5.17-20 are viewed in the wider literary context of love and forgiveness in Matthew's narrative (Matt 5.21-43; 6.12), the narrative provides an opportunity for solving, through dialogue, any recurring intra-group conflicts within the Matthean community.

### *6.3. 2 Matt 5.19 ποιέω and διδάσκω and Matt 6.2-3: Contestive-Accommodation Mode of Identity Politics*

In Jesus' sayings on the Law in 5.17-20, verse 19 plays a crucial role in shaping the identity of the Matthean community. To demonstrate the social, economic and political functions of this passage, it is crucial to analyze its function in the Matthean community in relation to Matthew's concepts of: (1) righteousness (5. 20; 6.1), (2) social justice (5.21-48), and (3) almsgiving (6.2-3). This verse prohibits breaking Jesus' commands (5.19) while encouraging practice and teaching of them (5. 19 c, d). In this way, the verse seems to portray certain characteristics of group norms. Esler (2016, 165) defines norm as "regularities in attitudes and behaviors that characterize a social group and differentiate it from other social groups." In effect,

Jesus' sayings in 5.19 indicate that the two verbs— ποιέω and διδάσκω—semantically reveal the normative perspective of this section of the SM concerning Jesus' sayings on the Law. These two verbs reveal the normative nature of the Law for the Matthean community, particularly in the context of the debatable ἕως ἄν (5.18). Viewed in context, the two verbs— ποιέω and διδάσκω — ἕως ἄν (“until heaven pass away... until all is accomplished”) in 5.18 refers to “God’s empire underway but not yet accomplished” (Carter 2000, 142). Luz suggests that this refers to “end time” (Luz 1989, 266), while Cuvillier says it affirms the validity of the Law (Cuvillier 2009, 151). Still another perspective is that this affirms the endurance of the Law to the Matthean community, but as interpreted by Jesus. While ποιέω indicates the praxis of Jesus' sayings on the Law to address social, economic, and political issues in the society, διδάσκω envisions the pedagogical responsibility of the Matthean community to articulate it (ποιέω).

Not only were Jesus' sayings on the Law expected to address socio-economic and politics issues, but they were also expected to shape the way the members of Matthew's community thought about whom they were and how they ought to relate to among themselves and the society in which they lived. These two verbs collectively reveal the ethical perspective of the Jesus' sayings on the Law. This is to say that ποιέω and διδάσκω underscore the normative function of Matt 5.17-19 in terms of regulating peoples' behaviour and attitudes through regular practising and teaching of Jesus' sayings on the Law (Matt 5.17-20).

What is the content of Jesus' teaching that Matthew had in mind in 5.19? The content of Jesus' sayings is important because 5.19 is more of a metaphorical principle, just like righteousness in 5.20. The teaching envisioned in 5.19 is outlined in 5.21-48 and resonates with McIver's (2012, 129-132) suggestion that this passage (5.21-48) illustrates Jesus' teaching in 5.19

in the context of Matthean special material. For instance; “You have heard it said that ...but I say to you.” According to McIver, this presents a new element that “radicalizes and transforms the Law.” An example of this radicalization is; “do not murder.” In Matthew, this has the new elements; “do not be angry” (5.21-22), “do not commit adultery,” “do not lust.” Another example is (27-28) “an eye for an eye”, a reference to vengeance, which corresponds to the new element, “do not retaliate.” McIver concludes that underlying this kind of interpretation of the law, “is the command that righteousness of the disciples must exceed that of the Scribes and the Pharisees” (Matt 5.20; McIver 2012, 131). As a result, it seems that Matthew employs Jesus’ sayings in 5.21-48 to mimic a setting of local Jewish legal system in a local court (Josephus, *AJ* 4. 214). In addition, Matthew was attempting to contest the legal dimensions in “earthly courts [that] could not judge such offenses as displaying of anger,” save for defamatory words (Keener 2009, 182) in the Roman Empire to argue that in light of the righteousness demanded of the Matthean community (5.20), even thinking “angry” thoughts, something much less serious than murder, was worthy of serious punishment in view of God’s kingdom.

In 5.19, 21-22, Matthew was not transforming a Jewish tradition to address a single ethnic or religious conflict, but rather to attend to a multitude of socio-economic and political issues of that time. These issues included the Roman Judiciary system and its attendant political implications that valued the vengeful execution of Roman political enemies in Antiochene society. According to the Romans, execution was a political solution administered against those understood to be threats to the Roman elite’s interests and to order in the society. According to Josephus (*BJ* 5.449-451), around 71 CE Titus unwillingly administered crucifixion against Jewish soldiers. This is a good example of a vengeful political response against political enemies (i.e.

Judaeen soldiers) of the Roman Empire. This example illustrates that the ideas put forward by Matthew in 5.19 and 5.21-22 as transformation to the Jewish tradition addressed the political situation in Antioch. In this way, Matthew contested the most popular political strategy used by the Roman elites to eliminate their political enemies.

The Practice and teaching mentioned in 5.19 additionally depicts the ritual perspective of Matt 5. 17-20. Platvoet's defines ritual as:

[an] ordered sequence of stylized social behaviour that may be distinguished from ordinary interactions by altering its qualities which enable it to focus the attention of its audience ... as well as wider public ... and cause them to perceive it as a special event, performed ... with a special message (Platvoet 1995, 41-42).

Because of their normative character, ποιέω and διδάσκω in 5.19 semantically depict the ritual function of Jesus' sayings on the Law (5.17-20) by providing pragmatic norms for addressing certain socio-economic and political challenges. Matt 5.21-22 also demonstrates the significance of Matthew's concept of righteousness outlined in 5.20. Matthew's rhetorical demands that his followers engage in acts of righteousness that surpasses that of the teachers of the Law and Pharisees entailed accommodating some of the Jewish traditions in light of Jesus' teachings, in order to use them to contest some of the Roman political strategies. The content of Jesus' instructions that put more emphasis on ritual aspects can be found, specifically about almsgiving in 6.2-3 in which these are expressive of one's righteousness (6.1). Nel (2017, 107-110) explains that in Matthew's Gospel we do not have access to the rituals themselves, the textual references that command regular actions such as almsgiving, penitential prayer, and fasting point us to the ritual perspectives in Matthew's narrative. Nel provides insights from Matt 5.19 regarding rituals that re-enforce the significance of Matthew's concept of righteousness in

5.20, with reference to the social and pragmatic function of Jesus' sayings on law. For instance, according to Nel it is appropriate to regard the almsgiving mentioned in 6.2-3 as part of Matthew's accommodation of Jewish traditions. Consequently, this accommodation of Jewish traditions had an economic function in Antioch, namely; it was a method of contesting the Roman beneficence strategy of mediating wealth via the elites to local communities in Antioch.

The economic function of 6.2-3 escaped Morris and Adeyemo in their analysis. They regarded the passage as reflective of true acts of righteousness, or "service to God" (Morris 1992, 136), similar to rabbinic acts of righteousness (Adeyemo 2006, 1122), respectively, it also escaped the scrutiny of Talbert to regard 6.2-3 as "promoting honorable virtue and opposing honorable precedence" (Talbert 2004, 107). Carter (2011, 294-295) comments that "the hierarchical and exploitative imperial structure marked by alliances between Roman officials and Antiochene elites ... continued at the expense of non-elites whose production, skills and labor serviced the elite's way of life." This indicates that despite their beneficent role in uplifting the economic status of the local communities, in Antioch the elites had become an economic burden to the local communities. Consequently, Matthew's emphasis on pragmatic social involvement (5.19), viewed in the context almsgiving (6.2-3) accomplished both the elaboration of the meaning of Matthew's concept of righteousness in 5.20, while at the same time performing the economic function of contesting the Roman beneficences by replacing them with members of the local community to become mutual benefactors.

This brief discussion on the political, economic and social function of Jesus' sayings on the interpretation of the Law demonstrate that Matt 5.17-19 and 6.2-3 borrow from Jewish traditions to contest Roman political and economic strategies. These passages also present a

superordinate identity of the Matthean community whereby both Judaeans and Gentiles identified with traditional Judaeian culture. This means that Judaeian traditional culture became important aspect of shaping the cultural identity of the Matthean community because in a way it prevented total assimilation into Roman culture. Matthew, however, did not want his community to be seen as simply an extension or co-participant in culture, he also wanted to create a separate identity through the radicalization of the demands of the Law, by giving it a new element that exuded its endurance.

### *6.3.3 Matt 5.18-20: Legitimation of a Christian Identity through Identification.*

In this section, analysis of Jesus' sayings on the Law is guided by the SIPT premise that identity formation requires a humanistic-accommodative mode of identity politics underlying the discourse of a given community. It is noteworthy to reiterate that the twofold goal of identification in social identity is (1) to maintain positive self-esteem and (2) to obtain a measure of security through the reliance on and endurance of group norms (Kuecker 2016, 70-71).

As noted, Wanamaker claims that during its emergence in the first-century, the Jesus Movement entailed the formation of new social communities that rejected the "social and racial distinction of the dominant society" in order to emphasize instead the teaching of the new beliefs of the Christian communities (Wanamaker 1987, 6). The Jesus movement, to remind ourselves, refers to the "various phenomena of Jesus-following in the land of Israel ... the Jerusalem primitive church and the churches of Judea mentioned by Paul—and to the messianic groups in Israel in the period after the destruction of the second temple in 70 CE" (Stegemann and Stegemann 1999, 1). This is instructive in explaining the inter-group relations of the Matthean

community in Antioch. Carter (2000, 279) views the ἀδελφός in Matt 12.50 as a concept that redefines the Jewish conventional household as a community centered on Jesus and committed to God’s will. Differentiating themselves from a dominant society that constituted various ethnic groups, members of the emerging Jesus Movement attempted to develop deeper shared values through cooperation of local groups. Matthew’s Gospel demonstrates the identification of the Matthean community with the Jesus Movement in two ways. First, by his redaction of the earlier sources and in employing his Gospel narrative to complement the subject matter of the Jesus Movement, Matthew attempted to identify his community with the earlier communities of the Jesus Movement. Consequently, 5.18 seem to be Matthew’s redaction of Mark 13.30-31. Mark articulated the saying of Jesus, declaring:

30. Ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν  
 ὅτι  
 ἢ γενεὰ παρέλθῃ μέχρῃς πάντα οὗ γένηται.  
 αὕτη οὐ μὴ ταῦτα μέχρῃς

31. ὁ οὐρανὸς  
 καὶ παρελεύσονται,  
 ἢ γῆ  
 δὲ οἱ λόγοι παρελεύσονται  
 μου οὐ μὴ

Mark’s purpose in focusing on this saying of Jesus was probably to reflect on the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple and the persecution that followed. His motivation was likely to encourage the followers of Jesus to remain firmly focused on maintaining cooperation among themselves in their post-70 CE missions. However, Matthew redacts this saying by inserting it between Jesus’ saying on fulfilling the Law (5.17) and the affirmation of its longevity (5.19). It is

evident that Matthew borrowed and accommodated Jesus’ sayings from Mark. In his version of the Markan redacted saying, Matthew combines the two verses from Mark (13.30-31); deleting “generations” and adding “the Law”, among others, to emphasize Jesus’ focus on the Law instead of destruction of the temple, as in Mark. This redaction provides evidence for Matthew’s borrowing. Matthew maintains a textual meaning of the sayings of Jesus which, is far removed from Mark but is much closer to that of Luke (21.32-33). Luke’s redacted version of Mark reads:

δέ  
 ἔστιν τὸν οὐρανὸν  
 καὶ παρελθεῖν  
 τὴν γῆν  
 εὐκοπώτερον  
 ἢ μίαν κεραίαν πεσεῖν.  
 τοῦ νόμου

Luke’s sayings about Jesus, like that of Matt 5.18, emphasize the endurance of the Law. Neither Luke nor Mark gives details like Matthew, who expounds thoroughly on the sayings of Jesus on the Law. Davies and Allison are right in noting that Matt 5.18 is redacted from Jesus’ tradition, “to give it a traditional form familiar to him” (Davies and Allison, 1988, 489). In attempting to elaborate the significance of the Jesus’ sayings on the Law, Matthew added to the themes in Mark 13.30-31 about the Kingdom of God and righteousness (Matt 5.19-20). Guelich’s observation that Matt 5:19 “reflects the monistic nuance of a strict Jewish-Christian community who may well have shaped the tradition of 5:17, 18 and added 5:19 as a commentary” (Guelich 1982, 152) implies that Matthew’s redaction of the earlier sources was motivated by his desire to sustain continuity of the strict observance of Jewish law in the Matthean community in the late first CE. However, Guelich fails to take note of *μαστιγῶω* in Matt 10.17, 23 and 34, which suggests a level of vulnerability of the missionaries who may have been resisted by their

opponents.

Responding to Guelich, Viljoen (2011, 385-401) argues that Matthew presented the sayings of Jesus on the law as a “foundational statement about the continuing validity of the Torah”, to address concerns regarding righteousness in the Matthean community. Viljoen further maintains that Matthew appropriates Jesus’ sayings on the Law to encourage his community to engage in qualitative acts of righteousness in obedience to Jesus’ instructions. Their deeds were intended to surpass the qualitative works of their opponents. What evades Viljoen’s observation is that in 5.17-20 Matthew borrows from Jewish traditions on the Law in order to demarcate the boundaries of his community’s identity, saying that only a certain type of obedience is acceptable in the community and the kind of practice by the scribes, Pharisees, and their supporters is inadequate and defective. By engaging in social and economic activism, the community of Matthew was participating in a form of identity politics facilitated by borrowing from earlier traditions of the Jesus as a way of accommodating Jesus’ sayings on the Law. This accommodation indicates that in the SM, Matthew was not contesting Paul’s concept of justification by faith, but instead was complementing Paul by emphasizing the acceptance of the freedom of the Gentiles not to keep the Law, while at the same time accepting the Jewish indebtedness to it.

#### 6.3.4 *Intra-Group Conflict in Antioch*

Despite Scholarly doubt regarding the authentic historicity of Acts 15, J. Louis Martyn (2010, 229-230) suggests that Galatians 2.14 “reflects his [Paul’s] determination to connect his account of the Antioch incident to the situation in Galatia ... [in order to recount] the incident [in

Antioch] for the sake of its impact on the crisis in Galatia.” Martyn implies that the Jerusalem council in Acts 15 was probably an event that happened around the time of the writing of Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Matthew’s responses to the Jerusalem council and to Paul are briefly explored. Here we see the example of the relevance of inter textual analysis between Acts 15 and Gal 2.14 in revealing a late first century situation in Antioch. Further exploration of the place of Paul in these first century writings can help to clarify the situation in Antioch. Before we come to Paul, it is important to briefly explore Matthew’s response to the intra-conflict situation in Antioch.

#### 6.3.4. 1 *Matthew’s Response to Intra-Ethnic Conflict.*

Guided by Martyn’s assumptions on Gal 2.14 as reflective of the situation in Acts 15, I will argue that Matthew’s depiction of Jesus’ sayings in 5.17-19 is reflective of an alternative solution to the Antioch Crisis. This came after the solution provided by the Jerusalem council, which seemed not to have worked in reinforcing cohesion within the Jesus Movement in the late first century. This argument is further reinforced by R.T. France’s (2005, 218) view that Matt 5.17 is reflective of “... Jewish polemic ... at times sought to dismiss Christianity as an upstart religion seeking to overturn the ancestral Laws of the Jews.” This suggests that Matthew’s narrative is a Christian polemic that intended to address a situation of conflict in a community that included both Judaeans and Gentiles as part of the Jesus Movement.

The date of Paul’s letter to the Galatians, between 51-52 CE, which was during Paul’s third journey, is guided by the findings of Bruce. He argues that Galatians was probably written after the Jerusalem conference in Acts 15 (Bruce 1982, 401). This means that the crisis in Antioch reflected in Galatians may have taken place some thirty years before Matthew wrote his Gospel. In reference to this dating of Galatians and Acts of the Apostles, not only did Jesus’ sayings on the interpretation of the Law in Matt 5.17-19 have a political and economic function in the

Matthean community, but it also performed a social function in the Antiochene society. The prevailing conflict prompted by the Torah in Antioch (Gal 2.1-14) in the mid-first century CE, led the Jerusalem conference to attempt a twofold solution. First, the conference granted the Gentile believers in Antioch freedom from the Jewish law of circumcision (Acts 15.1-22). Winter, commenting on the imposition of Jewish cultural values on Gentile Christians in Galatia upon converting to Christianity says:

Gentile Christians were under pressure to embrace an ethnic Jewish [Judaean] identity as proselytes. This manipulation came not from without but from within the Christian community. The Letter to the Galatians records a summary of the arguments that some Christians had mounted in order to pressure all Gentile Christians to undergo the rite of circumcision. Jews had skilfully adapted to the reality of their Roman conquerors by offering up a daily sacrifice to their God in their temple in Jerusalem for the emperor's safety that was within the parameters of their sacrificial system ... Diaspora Jews did the same by showing loyalty to the Caesar in their synagogues (Winter 2015, 227).

Winter suggests that proselytization of Gentiles compelled them to assimilate to Judaean culture as part of their Christian identity. However, Paul's role in the Acts of the Apostles and the events narrated in them are not necessarily historical. Reference to Paul in the Acts of Apostles is reflective of a rhetorical construction that sought to deal with an issue that was ongoing in the communities that Luke sought to address. It follows that although some Gentiles may have wanted to become members of the Jesus Movement, assimilation to Judaean culture imposed the extra demand of accepting Judaean traditions. Second, the conference prohibited these Gentile believers in Antioch from eating food sacrificed to idols, including the blood and meat of strangled animals (Acts 15. 1-5; 22-30). This, provided by the Jerusalem council, only affected Gentiles. Judaean believers continued to operate under their own food laws (*Kosher*). Over a period of time, this solution may have started to lose ground in encouraging social cohesion

which had been threatened by this Gentile-Judaeian conflict. Thus, on seeing their Jewish counterparts practicing their food and circumcision laws, the Gentile Christians may have felt nostalgia for their former foods prohibited by the Jerusalem conference. This nostalgia may have tempted the Gentile believers to return to their former life by softening some of the sanctions of the Jerusalem conference on food and meat (Acts. 15.29). Thus, in the Acts of Apostles, Luke employs a mood of nostalgia, which is reflective of his attempts at cultural accommodation of the traditions of the Jesus Movement, in order to construct a superordinate identity for the communities he was addressing.

After a period of thirty years, the solution that had been provided by the Jerusalem conference to solve social conflict caused by religious and ethnic differences started waning. As a result, intra-group conflict, whose solution had been provided by the Jerusalem conference some thirty years previously, was being experienced in the Matthean community and the larger Jesus Movement in Antioch in the late first century CE. To address this problem, Matthew attempted to apply Jesus' sayings on the interpretation of the Law in Matt 5.17-20 to accommodate and contextualize the sanctions of the Jerusalem conference (Faulkner 2005, 11- 14). In this case the notion that Matthew's Gospel was written in the 80s and that Paul's Jerusalem visit, mentioned in Gal 2.1-10, occurred in the 40s are important to note. Thus, Matthew composed his Gospel in order to reconstruct a superordinate group befitting the social challenges faced by his community—as already noted previously in this thesis, the difference between the Matthean superordinate group and that of the Jerusalem conference is that the latter created two parallel missions for the Jesus Movement (Faulkner 2005, 14). Matthew's superordinate group is not a creation of a parallel mission, but of a community that accommodated non-Judaeans and Judaeans

on account of their commonality as believers of Jesus, although with a subordinate identity that allow its members to obey some attributes of their former identity, which did not threaten the unity of the superordinate group. Thus, in his Gospel, Matthew values both a mission to τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἀπολωλότα οἴκου Ἰσραήλ (Matt 10.6) and the mission to ἔθνος / τὰ ἔθνη (Matt 12.21; 25.32; 28.19).

#### 6.3.4. 2 *Matthew's Response to Paul*

The objective of the humanistic dialogue mode of identity politics, namely; developing deeper values shared with other members of a group, in the case of the Matthean community is further demonstrated by Matthew's attempt to co-opt Judeans traditional material to build a story of Jesus which was supportive of his version of the Jesus Movement. A good example is that of complementing Paul's notion of justification by faith not by works. Because Paul had his missionary base in Antioch (Gal 2.9-21; see also Acts 13.13-52; 15.1-2, 35), most likely the Matthean community had encountered his discourse regarding the law. Pauline discourse in Antioch survived for more than twenty-three years after Paul's death (until about 85 CE), when Matthew composed his Gospel, probably through Paul's associates or workers. Paul in his missionary journeys that began in Antioch and extended to other parts of the Roman world, was accompanied by associates such as Barnabas, Silas, and Timothy.<sup>73</sup>

There has been a debate among scholars for some time over the relationship between Paul's notion of law and Matthew's view of the sayings of Jesus on the Law in 5.17-20. For instance, Mohrlang has noted that Jesus' sayings in 5.17-20 seem to condemn Paul's laxity

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<sup>73</sup> See [http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Pauline\\_Associates.htm](http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Pauline_Associates.htm) (Just)

towards the Law (Mohrlang 1984, 42-47). Mohrlang's position should be rejected for the reason that from a semantic point of view Matthew seems to complement rather than contradict Paul. According to Silva, ἔργων νόμου in Gal. 2.16, refers to deeds performed in compliance to self-righteous Judaeen legalism in order to encourage faith in Jesus (Silva 2014, 739). Silva's "self-righteous Judean legalism" presents a Christian stereotype of first century Judaism which had been contested by some scholars such as E.P Sanders and J.J Harrington, among others.<sup>74</sup> Paul's view that "Circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law" and that "a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart" (Rom. 2:25, 29 NRS) resists the attempt to restrict divine favor to Judaeen ethnic grounds. Furthermore, Matthew similarly seems to subordinate Judaeen works of righteousness to a version of righteousness contingent on Jesus' fulfilment of the Law and his declarations regarding entering the Kingdom of heaven (Matt 5.17, 20). Viljoen also noted that Matthew complements rather than condemns Paul by his suggestion that Matthew and Paul focus on the ethical and forensic perspective of righteousness (Viljoen 2011, 402).

The sayings of Jesus on Law in Matt 5.17-20 demonstrate Matthew's efforts at employing existing early Christian traditions to identify his community within the wider Jesus Movement in order to legitimate the Christian identity of his own community. This identification with the Jesus

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<sup>74</sup> Contrary to Silva, *Paul and Judaism* (2012), edited by Reimund Bieringer, Didier Pollefeyt, presents a collection of essays addressing the continuity of Judaism in Christianity. Most of the authors negatively argue against the conception Judaism contemporaneous to Paul as a religion based on works of righteousness. Similarly, "Covenantal Nomism" a view aptly discussed by E.P. Sanders in his monograph, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (1977), is said by J.J. Harrington to emphasize the response of first century Jews to God's grace rather than being accorded divine favor. Consequently, he claims that "613 precepts in the Torah represent the proper response of God's people to the covenant fidelity that God has so abundantly shown in its early history" (Harrington 2010, 5)

Movement entailed a commitment on the part of the Matthean community to teach the shared values of Pauline communities, a significant aspect of accomplishing the objectives of a humanistic dialogue mode of identity politics. The proponents of the humanistic dialogue mode of identity politics believe that “teaching” and “active listening to the other with love” leads to social cohesion among groups because it has the potential to penetrate the hidden layers of fear and barriers which carry the core of compassion that comprises the self (Moon 2012, 1356, 1358). Viewed in the context of Matthew’s motif of ἀκούετε in the wider narrative of his Gospel (Matt 10.27; 11.4; 13.17; 15.10; 17.5), it is no wonder that the values of teaching and active listening were attempts to foster cordial and complementary relations between the Matthean community with their Judeo-Christian and Gentile neighbors in Antioch, particularly with other members of the Jesus Movement.

Jesus’ sayings on the Law in 5.17-20 demonstrates the humanistic and contestive-accommodation identity politics, emphasizing the role of the Matthean community as ἐκκλησία, not as part of formative Judaism as proposed by Overman (1990, 152) and Viljoen (2016, 8) but as part of the larger Jesus Movement in the city of Syrian Antioch in the late first century CE. Matthew’s purpose for this humanistic and contestive-accommodation mode of identity politics was to encourage social cohesion in the Jesus Movement in Antiochene society. This conclusion amends Viljoen’s conception of the religious function of the SM and Morhlang’s misconception of Matthew in conflict with Paul’s notion of the Law, by elaborating the social function of Jesus’ sayings on interpretation of the Law in 5.17-20.

## 6.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter was guided by the question: how does Matthew's Gospel employ Jesus' sayings on the Law in 5.17-2 to solve the conflicts resulting from ethnic differences in the early Christian communities in Antioch? The Matthean Jesus declared to his disciples in Matt 5.20, "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven." This posed a socio-economic and political challenge to the Matthean community to embrace a lifestyle in tune with Jesus' instructions which at the same time supersedes the performance of Judaeans, non Judaeans and Roman elites in establishing justice in the society. This entailed embracing political, social and economic activities that demonstrated the values of the Kingdom of God as promulgated by Jesus. These political, social and economic activities of the Matthean community had to exceedingly surpass the socio-economic and political practices of Rome, which were mediated to the local communities by the elites, by contesting, borrowing and accommodating some of the practices of the Romans, the Diaspora Judaeans and the Jesus Movement's practices. To enable his community to accomplish these values, Matthew presents righteousness in 5.20 as an ideology for accomplishing a humanistic and contestive-accommodation identity politics for the Matthean community. Meanwhile, post-70 CE Diaspora Judaism and the Jesus Movement were mostly interested in contextualizing the Torah in order to maintain a post-70 renewed Judaeans community.

The concept of righteousness in Matt 5.20 probably motivated Matthew to act beyond the focus of Diaspora Judaism endeavouring to employ Jesus' sayings to consolidate a community which comprised of Judeans and Gentiles. To this end, it was incumbent on Matthew to attend to two ideological aspirations. First, Matthew focused on Jesus' sayings on the Law (5.17-20) which

allowed him to identify his community within the Jesus Movement. Not only did the identification with the Jesus Movement legitimate the status of identity of the Matthean community to the Christian category, but it also empowered the community to stand on its own as a group within the Jesus Movement. Second, Matthew had to recategorize his community into a superordinate identity. By this recategorization, Matthew became a prototypical leader, which enabled him to enhance his role in the Matthean community. For instance, by presenting Jesus' sayings on Law to initiate dialogue and to foster co-existence between Judaeans and Gentiles as members of one community. Not only does the SM depict a humanistic and contestive-accommodation mode of identity politics, which helped to elaborate Matthew's concept of righteousness in enforcing political, economic and social concerns in the Matthean community, but there is still a third category of identity politics, which is the social evangelistic and contestive accommodation mode, which will be discussed in the next seven.

## CHAPTER 7

### MATTHEW 6.9-13: A READING OF SOCIAL EVANGELISTIC- CONTESTIVE- ACCOMMODATION IDENTITY POLITICS

#### 7. 1 INTRODUCTION

New Testament scholars have long grappled with the origin and semantic function of the Matthean Lord's Prayer. The Lord's Prayer is either described as an ideological intervention (Tilborg 1972 a, 95-96; Tilborg 1986, 114-123) as enjoining the remission of every exploitative debt (Nel, M. J. 2013, 102) or that it commands debt and sin forgiveness (Drake 2014, 233). However, these scholars do not elaborate their understanding of Matthew's Lord's Prayer from the standpoint of its connection with Matthew's concept of righteousness and its socio-economic and political connectedness to the world of the Roman Empire and the Jesus Movement. In a wider literary context (6.1-18), Matt 6.1 indicate that Jesus required from his followers a certain type of righteousness that was not directed at achieving honor via others. This type of righteousness led Jesus to teach his disciples to recite the Lord's Prayer as expressive of the righteousness approved by him.

In this chapter I will answer the question: what was the significance of the Matthean Lord's Prayer to his community in the late first-century CE? Building on the research conducted by Tilborg (1986), Nel (2013), and Drake (2014), I shall argue that Matthew employs his version of the Lord's Prayer to recategorize his community into a superordinate identity through identification with Jewish religious traditions, through contesting Roman political and economic claims of benefices, and through accommodating the liturgical traditions of the Jesus Movement.

Tilborg, Neil and Drake have been selected for this study because their ongoing research on the significance of Matthew's Lord's Prayer offers the possibility of reflecting on the inter-group and intra-group relations of the Matthean community in Antioch. The goal of analyzing this recategorization and identification is to explain the role of the Matthean Lord's Prayer in negotiating the cultural identity of the Matthean community in the Roman Empire. At the same time, this analysis will highlight the community's social evangelistic and—contestive accommodation mode of identity politics. In the process, the ideological function of Matthew's concept of righteousness will be elaborated. I will first explore some scholarly trends regarding the Matthean Lord's Prayer before explaining the social evangelism and contestive-accommodation mode of identity politics as an outcome of the reconstruction and legitimation of the identity of the Matthean community.

## 7.2 SOME SCHOLARLY TRENDS REGARDING THE MATTHEAN LORD'S PRAYER

To set the current findings of this study in the on-going context of Matthean scholarship, I shall briefly examine the research works of Sjeff van Tilborg, Marius J. Nel, and Lyndon Drake regarding the semantic function of Matthew's Lord's Prayer. The purpose of this brief survey is to find the gap in knowledge regarding the role of Matthean Lord's Prayer in shaping the identity of the Matthean community.

### 7.2.1 *Tilborg (1986)*

Tilborg employs Althusser's philosophical theory of ideology to analyze and defend his argument that "the individual sayings of the Sermon on the Mount are always seen as ideological

intervention in the context of an existing social practice” (Tilborg 1986, 1).<sup>75</sup> It is noteworthy here that Tilborg rightly sees the author’s ideological connection between sin- forgiveness and debt-cancellation as an aspect of empowerment to the community. However, Tilborg ignores two important aspects of the prayer. On the one hand, he does not clarify that the group determinant and group exclusion regarding the petition “our Father who art in the heavens” (Matt 6.9) points to identity formation. Tilborg also does not tell us whether the cancellation of debts in 6.12 refers to all or only some types of debts. However, Nel addresses this ambiguity on the types of debts.

### 7.2.2 *Nel (2013)*

Nel, using a combination of socio-historical approach, literary theory and argumentative textual analysis, attends to the question; “whether the fifth petition of the Lord’s Prayer (Matt 6.12) considers the remission of the monetary debt of others as a precondition for receiving the forgiveness from God” (Nel 2013, 87). Advancing beyond Tilborg’s failure not to elaborate or state the importance of the connection between the forgiveness of sin and debt cancellation, Nel rightly asserts that answering the question of debt and forgiveness in the Lord’s Prayer helps to understand the socio-economic ethics of Matthew’s gospel regarding debt and interpersonal

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<sup>75</sup> Tilborg further claims that the Lord’ Prayer is an ideological intervention, because it opens the way to understanding the connection between mythology and ideology as understood by Matthew (Tilborg 1986, 41). Tilborg raises three main categories within this claim: place, time and remittance of economic debts. First, regarding place, Tilborg claims that because of the phrase Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (Matt 6.9), the prayer creates opposition between two places—the heavens as the mythological place of God, and the earth as a place where men who recite this prayer live (Tilborg 1986, 116). Second, with regards to time; because the prayer is reformulated to and personified in the concept of, “our Father who is in the heavens,” the prayer connects the mythological transcendence of God and the presence of those who recite the prayer to emphasize the nearness of family relationships, group determinants, and group exclusion (Tilborg 1986, 130). Third, because ἄφεσις ἡμῶν τὰ ὀφειλήματα ἡμῶν (6.12), a reference to remittance of “debt,” is set in the context of the financial condition of the Matthean community, it prevents us from taking refuge too quickly in the spiritual sense of forgiveness and enjoins us to forgive our neighbour’s debts as the condition for receiving God’s forgiveness (Tilborg 1986, 122).

relations (Nel 2013, 87).<sup>76</sup>

Nel advances the findings of Tilborg on two fronts. First, he does this through an argumentative analysis that rejects the Jubilee year as a hermeneutical key for interpreting the Lord's Prayer. Nel rejects the notion that the Jubilee year provided a reason to justify the demands for remission of debts in Matthew's Lord's Prayer. Nel claims that regarding the Jubilee as a motivation to remit exploitative debts could lead to the misinterpretation that the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer as "demanding the unqualified forgiveness of all monetary debts", an idea not supported in Matthew's narrative (Nel 2013, 92-93; 102-103). Nel contends that it is the motif of reciprocity in Matt 6.14-15, instead of the Jubilee year, that fits as the hermeneutical key for interpreting the forgiveness of debt. By this suggestion, Nel elaborates Tilborg's view of righteousness in 6.1 as the hermeneutical key for explaining the fifth petition of the Lord's Prayer.

By appealing to the socio-historical context of the Matthean community to reconstruct its social-economic status in first century CE Palestine and Syria, not only does Nel engage social

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<sup>76</sup> Thus, on the question of the relationship between forgiveness and debts, Nel claims that "while the demand for the remission of every exploitative debt [or all moral transgression]" would fit Matthew's monetary demand for righteousness (Matt 6.33), the remission of all monetary debts does not, as Jesus neither forbade loans nor demanded a cancellation of every debt" (Nel 2013, 102). Nel grounds his claim on three premises: the historical context of *prosbul*, the rejection of the Jubilee year interpretative lens, and the semantic role of debt in the narrative. First, Nel suggests that the *prosbul*, a pharisaic doctrine practiced in Palestine and Syria that transferred debts to the law courts to be paid beyond the Sabbatical Year, points to the cancellation of exploitative debt, but not all debt, fitting Matthew's demand for righteousness (Nel 2013, 90-93). Second, he disputes the Jubilee interpretative context of Matt 6.12 for three reasons: (1) Nel claims that Matt 6.12 does not refer to Leviticus 25, where the details of the Jubilee year are set out, but instead it refers to Isa 61.1-7; "the release of prisoners without specifying that they were held captive because of debts"; (2) Nel further claims that when Matt 6.12 is considered in relation to Matt 18. 23-35, it stresses forgiveness of both the people to whom one is indebted, unlike the Jubilee year in the Hebrew Bible which refers only to the release of debtors from their own debt (Nel, 2013, 92). (3) Engaging Jubilee to interpret Matt 6.12, Nel says that forgiveness needs to refer to cancellation of all debts instead of only exploitative debts (Nel 2013, 92). Matt 5.25-26 envisions a conflicting understanding in which debt repayment is required without cancellation (Nel 2013, 94).

history as a new lens to study the Lord's Prayer, but he also reconstructs the underlying issues such as *prosbul* (transfer of personal loans by rich land owners to a court so as to remain repayable even after a Sabbatical Year). Moreover, by this approach, Nel presents the Matthean community as a wealthy urban community. He also effectively presents the argumentative function of Matthew 6.14-15, which allows Nel (2013, 102) to elaborate Tilborg's view of the fifth petition. This elaboration is based on Nel's conclusion that the fifth petition indicates that "while a demand for the remission of every exploitative debt... would fit Matthew's demand for righteousness (6.33), the remission of all monetary debts does not, as Jesus neither forbade loans, nor demanded the cancellation of every debt, nor the rebellion against exploitative economic practices in the Matthean Parables" (Matt 5.25-26, 40, 42; 18. 23-35).

From this brief investigation, two crucial points are observable. First, we see that Nel does not regard the Lord's Prayer as an ideological intervention as Tilborg does. Nonetheless, Nel's assertion that the fifth petition (Matt 6.12) demands the remission of every exploitative debt that fits Matthew's demands for righteousness (Tilborg 1986, 102) inadvertently supports the understanding of the fifth petition as an ideological intervention in support of the poor or marginalised, by suppressing the forces of oppression in the first century CE Palestinian and Syrian society. Even though Nel connects forgiveness and Matthew's righteousness, unfortunately he rejects the interpretive role of the Biblical Jubilee in expounding the Matthean notion of forgiveness of sins and debts. In the year of Jubilee, it was declared to all Hebrews:

And you shall hallow the fiftieth year and you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you: you shall return, every one of you, to your property and every one of you to your family (Lev. 25:10 NRSV).

This declaration to Hebrews guaranteed that those who had sold themselves as slaves to their fellow Hebrews would gain freedom. Thus, inter-textually, forgiveness in Matt 6.12 mimicked the year of Jubilee to grant forgiveness that had an economic dimension in that it

allowed people to possess the land. It also had a social dimension, because such forgiveness reconciled those who had been slaves to their families. Consequently, such forgiveness would automatically mitigate the excess of *prosbul* upon the people by restoring economic liberty to them, which was denied by the Jewish elites or aristocrats under the *prosbul* arrangements. Besides Nel, the other person that addresses the issue of forgiveness in Matt 6.12 is Lyndon Drake.

### 7. 2.3 Drake (2014).

Drake engages inter-textual and discourse analysis to study forgiveness in the Matthean Lord's Prayer. Contrary to Nel, Drake argues that, "the historical Jesus chose the terminology of debt to enjoin his followers to forgive monetary debts, as well as sins" (Drake 2014, 233). Why did Jesus join sin and debt in his prayer? Drake (2014, 233) argues that Jesus connected the two to oppose the Pharisaic innovation of the *prosbul*. This connection rhetorically subverted the economic significance of the Jubilee year (Deut 15. 1-6; Exod 21.2-6; 23.10-11; Isa 61.1; Jer 34.8-17; Ezek 46.17).<sup>77</sup> Consequently, Drake claims that Matthew added the clarifying statement in 6.14-15, "to ensure that all intended readers would understand that 'debt' in prayer includes sin as well as money debts" (Drake 2014, 241).

Because Nel and Drake seem to agree that forgiveness in Matthew 6.12 was intended to

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<sup>77</sup>Drake briefly points out three reasons besides opposition of the *prosbul* to justify his argument. First, in 6.12, the prayer is asking for God's forgiveness based on having already forgiven our own debtors (ἡμεῖς ἀφήκαμεν τοῖς ὀφειλέταις ἡμῶν). Thus, a comparison is created between "small forgiveness/ release practiced by Jesus' followers that included all kinds of debts: money, obligation and sins, to a larger forgiveness/ release that only God can wield" (Drake 2014, 234). Second, inter textually, Josephus (BJ. 2.427) claims that the Jewish revolt against Rome in 66-73 CE was partly caused by the *prosbul* that had contributed to the debt crisis which ignited the revolt. Third, according to Drake, the wider literary context of the SM (5.12; 6.19-24) suggests that the Matthean redactor understood Jesus to have debt in view as well as sin (Drake 2014, 240).

prohibit the exploitative application of *prosbul*, they imply that Matthew composed the Lord's Prayer to address the economic injustices of the common person by the Judaeen elite in Syrian Antioch in the late first-century CE. Drake and Nel's make a similar suggestion that Matt 6.14-15 provides the leverage for explaining the semantic function of the Matthean Lord's Prayer, particularly the fifth petition. Contrary to Nel and Drake and in support of Tilborg, Matthew's use of righteousness, particularly in 5.20 and 6.1-33, provides the leverage not only for explaining the semantic function of the Lord's Prayer, but also gives a vantage point for elaborating the social evangelistic and contestive-accommodation mode of identity politics for the Matthean community. This will be discussed in the next section with reference to Baasland and Du Toit.

### 7.3 RECONSTRUCTION AND LEGITIMATION OF A CHRISTIAN IDENTITY

Baasland and Du Toit show that the Matthean Lord's Prayer played a significant role in shaping the identity of the Matthean community. Baasland noted that the content of the Matthean Lord's Prayer elaborates on the concept of righteousness in terms of character formation. He claims that the immediate literary context of the Matthean Lord's Prayer, 6.1-18:

...is more about what one should avoid, and about a new pattern of thought... to promote an attitude of devotion [and] the very essence of giving alms, prayer and fasting, that is, purification, loving your neighbour and devotion to God... [to which] Matt 5.20 ...is the key: the righteousness that surpasses that of the Pharisees and Scribes (Baasland 2015, 313-314).

By connecting almsgiving, prayer and fasting with Matthew's concept of righteousness, Baasland hints at a very important aspect of identity formation in Matthew's Gospel narrative. His connection of the Lord's Prayer with righteousness presents its function as a presentation of the

content of Jesus' declarations of righteousness, which is a principal requirement for entrance to the Kingdom of God (5.20; 6.33). The Lord's Prayer participates in character formation because it outlines beliefs and practices that provide the basis of this formation within the Matthean community. Du Toit seems to develop similar nuances as Baasland concerning the function of the Matthean Lord's Prayer in identity formation, though he makes no reference to Baasland in his article.

Du Toit suggests that the Lord's Prayer is reflective of the authority of the historical Jesus addressing conflict in the Matthean community. Like Baasland, Du Toit locates the Matthean Lord's Prayer in the triadic literary context of almsgiving (6.2-4), prayer (6.5-15) and fasting (6.16-18). Following Josef Kurzinger and Ulrich Luz, Du Toit similarly regards this position of the Lord's Prayer in Matt 6.7-15 either as post-Matthean or Matthean interpolation. Siding with Luz's position regarding Matthean interpolation, Du Toit contends that Matthew inserted 6.7-15 into his version of the Lord's Prayer, because "he regarded it as vital to the Christian understanding of prayer and that to him, as a careful redactor, the insertion made good sense in spite of the disproportionate bulkiness it created" in the narrative (Du Toit 2016, 86). In this case, Du Toit highlights a new perspective on the Lord's Prayer which is lacking in Baasland, namely; that Matthew inserted 6.7-15 to give the prayer a Christian flavor. Not only does the interpolation of 6.7-15 allow the implied author of Matthew's Gospel to use the Lord's Prayer to present the content of a righteousness that contrasts it as inculcated by Jewish leadership (6.1-2), but also it encourages the Matthean community to seek honor not from the public but from God.

Moreover, Du Toit (2016, 86, 88) regards the Matthean Lord's Prayer as addressing concern for communal freedom. Du Toit thinks that the Matthean Lord's Prayer bears three "we"

petitions which mainly provide “the evident back-to-back relationship” between the requests that people should not be led into temptation but be delivered from evil. This, he points out, signifies that that, “our entanglement in sin and our existential need to be freed from evil.” However, Du Toit did not note the contribution of the pronoun ἡμῶν in stressing the communal perspective of the prayer in 6.9, which also reflects the liturgical setting of the prayer. In this case, the importance of ἡμῶν denotes the Matthean community as part of the household of God, because of reference to God as their Father. Finally, Du Toit (2016, 87) concludes, “the life situation of Matthew’s Syrian, real world receptors influenced his redaction and presentation of the SM to a noticeable degree”, in order to affirm, “the special identity of Jesus’ new, end time community.” Du Toit’s conclusion adds weight to the argument that the composition of the Matthean Lord’s Prayer as part of Matthew’s Gospel was shaped by concerns for reconstructing and legitimating the Christian identity of the Matthean community. Du Toit’s conclusion leads to this question: How does Matthew go about employing his version of the Lord’s Prayer to reconstruct and legitimate the Christian identity of his community in Syrian Antioch in the late first-century CE? To answer this question, some aspects of the social identity political theory (SIPT), will be engaged. Namely, recategorization and identification will be used to analyze the Matthean Lord’s Prayer in order to explain the social evangelistic and contestive-accommodation mode of identity politics envisioned by Matthew for his community in Antioch.

### *7.3.1 Reconstructing a Christian Cultural Identity Through Recategorization*

It is important to think of the function of Matthean Lord’s Prayer in reconstructing rather than constructing the identity of the Matthean community. In other words, Matthew felt that the

community had an identity that he for some reason felt was inadequate and therefore needed to be changed through a process of reconstruction.

#### 7.3.1.1 Mt. 6.9 Πάτερ ἡμῶν.

In his redaction of the Q source, Matthew probably added the personal pronoun ἡμῶν (Matt 6:9) since the original Q probably only had the vocative masculine singular Πάτερ that is retained in the shorter Lucan Prayer invocation (Luke.11.2). With respect to the redactional activity of Matthew, two issues in the Lord's Prayer stand out. The first issue has to do with the shorter Lukan version. Both Luke and Matthew used the Q source independently, and, therefore, redacted it from Q for their respective gospels. Both prayers begin by invoking God as Πάτερ (Rodgers and Rodgers 1998, 135). This Prayer is witnessed by ancient manuscripts such as 8, p,<sup>75</sup> B, 1., 700, pc vol Syr (Nestle-Aland 1898 and 1979, 195) showing that it is the earliest form of the phrase. Second, Matthew's longer version of the Prayer witnessed by, W, Z, and f,<sup>1</sup> from the point of the text of the Greek New Testament<sup>78</sup> includes a later version of the phrase whereby the prayer begins with a possessive case Πάτερ ἡμῶν. Because of the plural form of ἡμῶν in the address of God a Πάτερ, Matthew's version of the Lord's Prayer is characterized as a community prayer (Osborne 2010, 227) that regards God as the metaphorical father of the community, and by implication the members of the community as part of God's family. The literary function of ποιῶ (6.1) is action, or praxis-oriented. Thus the imperatival προσεύχομαι (6.9) signals the ritual characteristics of the Matthean Lord's Prayer. Nel (2017, 120) noted that in Matthew's version, "rituals function in a complex manner... existing rituals... serve to reinforce them, while others

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<sup>78</sup> See Nestle-Aland, *Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelstiftung, 1898 and 1979).

reinterpret, and even nullify.” Thus, the Matthean Lord’s Prayer reflects Matthew’s appropriation of Jesus’ interpretation of earlier Jewish Prayers to provide a cultic perspective. This cultic aspect is important in reconstructing the Christian identity of the Matthean community. Firstly, in its political function, whereby the prayer mimics the *pater-patria* status of the Roman emperors. Porter cites a late first-century BCE calendrical inscription from the Roman province of Asia that honors Augustus in terms of “father Zeus and savior of the universe.” This was a tradition that was applied to honoring the divine status of subsequent Roman emperors, including Nero, who was described in Athens as “good god Asclepius Caesar ... and Apollo in Athens” (Porter 2011, 170,173). Thus, in the Roman Empire, *pater-patria* was an ideological and political strategy that was applied by either the senate or individuals to honor the divine connection of the surviving emperor. It also provided an important aspect of delineating the peoples’ identity by symbolically connecting them with the legacy of Caesar Augustus.

By imitating the Roman political use of the term *pater-patria*, the Matthean Lord’s Prayer assumes a politic function that ironically contests and symbolically inverts the political power of the Roman emperor by emphasizing the political power of God as taught by Jesus in the Prayer. The phrase Πάτερ ἡμῶν ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (Matt 6.9) is intended to shape the community’s self-understanding or sense of identity. This identity-forming role of the prayer is communicated in two ways. First, from a ritual perspective, Matthew intends to preserve a twofold communal memory. According to Baker, memory has two phases by which it reconstructs and maintains social identity. The *communicative* phase is characterized by face-to-face circulation of facts and information, while the *cultural memory* phase focuses on the past and is comprised of reusable texts, images and rituals (Baker 2011, 14-16; 2016, 110-112). By revising material from the Q

source to appropriate Jesus' interpretation of Jewish prayer, Matthew depicts the communicative characteristic of the Lord's Prayer, by which he intends to present its ritual nature to his immediate audience. Moreover, the act of composing the Lord's Prayer indicates that Matthew attempted to preserve the cultural memory of the prayer for future generations of Christians.

Second, by redacting Q source through adding the pronoun ἡμῶν in Matt 6.9, Matthew employs the Lord's Prayer to reconstruct a Christian cultural identity of his community by recategorization. This is attained not only through communication and cultural memory, but also through the depersonalizing effect achieved in the recitation of the Prayer by both Judaeans and Gentile followers of Jesus. Thus, to reinforce group cohesion, the narrative of the Gospel of Matthew depicts Matthew, the implied author, as a prototypical in-group leader of the community. This depiction to the community ideologically entailed subordinating previous ethnic identity to the superordinate category created and maintained by the memory prompted by oral recitation of the Lord's Prayer.

Third, Neyrey following Malina, comments on the political function of the Lord's Prayer in reference to the Roman patron-client strategy. He says that the phrase Πάτερ ἡμῶν in Matt 6:9-15:

fully acknowledges the basic patron-client relationship [between the Matthean community] and God. God-patron earthly clients render honor by acclaiming God as heavenly father, whose name is most praiseworthy and whose power and sovereignty should be acknowledged (6.9-10). Once they have paid their dues of honor to the Patron, clients may ask for benefaction, such as food, deliverance from debt, and protection (6.11-13)" (Neyrey 1998, 110).

Neyrey's comment implies that the narrator of Matthew's Gospel employs the phrase Πάτερ ἡμῶν in the Matthean Lord's Prayer to contest the beneficence of the emperors and elites

to render irrelevant the political power of Rome, which was secured through the client-patron strategy in the Matthean community. Thus, regarding God as their father in heaven whose kingdom should come to earth is to replace the role of the Roman emperor and the elites with the invisible God as the father of the Matthean community.

Fourth, in respect to the relations between the Matthean community and Diaspora Judaism, the Matthean Lord's Prayer accomplishes two important tasks. First, Matthew accommodated earlier Judaeen liturgical traditions. In addition to the invocation of the original, the Q prayer resonates with the Judaeen אָבִינֵינוּ (our Father) in the Kaddish and Shimoneh Esreh types of Jewish prayers. These were likely significant in the formation of Jewish identity among the Judaeans in the Diaspora, as highlighted in chapter four. Consequently, not only did Matthew edit what he found in the Q tradition, but he accommodated Jewish traditions of prayer so as to provide a belief system for his community when constructing a cultural identity as a family of God in similar terms as first-century Judeans sectarian communities understood their identity. As mentioned, either the Matthean community was a Judaeen sectarian group regarding itself as part of true Israel or, unfortunately, a deviant Judaeen group struggling with other Judaeen sectarian groups in contextualizing traditional Judaeen religious sources to constitute a new community in the post-70 CE period (Overman 1990, 5), or even worse still, a deviant Judaeen group within formative Judaism that sought to legitimate its religious identity. It is also more unfortunately commonly claimed that it was a deviant Judaeen community seeking to establish a new symbolic universe without denying the way it was previously understood (Saldarini 1994, 66-68; Riches 1996, 61, 64), or as one form of middle Judaism with a distinct synagogue-derived identity (Talbert 2004, 6). Underlying all these assumptions is a conception of the Matthean community relations with

## Diaspora Judaism.

In view of the above scenarios, there are three reasons which suggest that during the composition of the Gospel of Matthew, the Matthean community was in the process of separating from Diaspora Judaism to strengthen their belonging to the Jesus Movement. At the time, full separation of the Matthean community with first-century Diaspora Judaism had not yet taken place. (1) Matthew regarded the crowd as potential members of the Matthean community because he was sympathetic to them while at the same time vilifying the Judaeen leadership (Matt 5-7; 23); (2) Matthew's narrative shows commonality with other members of the Jesus Movement regarding baptism as the entrance rite (3.10; Luke 3.9; Mark 1.8; Acts 1.5; 2.37-38; Rom. 6.4) as well as a complementary position regarding Paul's position on works of law (Matt 5.17; Gal 2.6); and (3) Matthew's text (10.17) creates the impression (not necessarily a historical event) of the flogging of members of the Jesus Movement by Jewish synagogue leadership. Given these three reasons, the best position would be to regard the Matthean community as experiencing a liminal Judaeen identity. That is; an identity that is at the intersection of Judaeen cultural identity and a pro-Jesus Movement identity. At the time of the composition of the Gospel of Matthew, the Matthean community was gradually losing grip of their Judaeen ethnic identity, while at the same time getting acquainted with a sub-cultural Christian identity that they are learning to accept. In other words, the relationship between the Matthean community and Diaspora Judaism is like that of independent siblings, who, although they have the same parents, nonetheless they are gradually acquire their own independent homesteads for their families. This resonates with McIver's position that the Matthean community continued to show a positive attitude to the Law, circumcision, dietary purity, Sabbath observance, etc. McIver claims that by maintaining a

positive attitude to Judaeian cultural beliefs and values, the Matthean community was part of mainstream Christianity, not some marginal community living in the past (McIver 2012, 160-161). How does Matthew's Lord's Prayer participate in legitimating the Judeo-Christian identity of the Matthean community? In what follows, I attempt to answer this question.

### *7.3.2 Legitimizing A Christian Identity Through Identification*

Matt 6.10 depicts the reconstruction and legitimation of the Christian identity of the Matthean community in relation to Judaeian and Roman understandings of Kingdom, to communicate to the Matthean community why Rome and all earthly power possessed by elites should not be regarded as important for the Matthean community where God's Kingdom and God's will would prevail.

#### *7.3.2.1 Matt 6.10 βασιλεία*

The question of the function of βασιλεία in Matt 6.10) has been a matter of debate among New Testament scholars. Osborne (2010, 228) views the second petition, Ἐλθέτω ἡ βασιλεία σου (Matt 6.10), as an eschatological element of the Lord's Prayer that requests "God [to] end this present order and bring the Kingdom in fullness." Osborne is right in so far as he regards the prayer as establishing the sovereignty of God on earth through Jesus' sayings. This is in line with Christian interpretation of the Isaian prophetic narratives, according to which Isaiah prophesied the birth of Jesus as a royal child, saying: "For to us a child is borne, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa 9.5-6).

Osborne fails to notice how Matthew borrows from Jewish traditions to mimic Roman imperial political influence. Josephus noted the confession of King Agrippa II (circa 27-100 CE), saying to his fellow Judaeans, “What remains, therefore, is this, that you have recourse to Divine assistance; but this is already on the side of the Romans; for it is impossible that so vast an empire should be settled without God’s providence” (Josephus, *BJ* 2.390). Coupled with the understanding that Jupiter sanctioned the founding of Rome, Agrippa’s words confirm the mythical belief surviving in the late first-century CE of the divine status of the Roman Empire. So, while inter textually Isaiah (9.5-6) testifies to Matthew’s borrowing from Hebrew traditions, even though it is never quoted, such borrowing was intended to emphasize the political function of the Lord’s Prayer by contesting popular belief in the divine origin of the Roman empire. Carter aptly claims that Matthew 6.10 “underlines the importance and longing for God to recreate the world” by changing the devil’s claims symbolized by the Roman Empire (Carter 2000, 165).

Matthew 6.10 indicates Matthew’s borrowing from Hebrew and Judaeon traditions regarding God as King to boost the political function of the Lord’s Prayer, to identify his community with these traditions and to outline beliefs for his community concerning God’s Kingdom. In Hebrew traditions, for instance in Isaiah 6.5 God’s Kingdom signifies his reign or authority which in the light of Rabbinic Mishnah traditions (*Sifra A. M pq* 13.194.2.1; *Sifre Deut* 313 .1.3; 323.1.2) signifies God’s present rule. God’s future rule where he will rule unchallenged is outlined in Isaiah 9.6-7; 24. 23; 52.7; *Sifra Behuq. pq.* 8.269.2.3 (Keener 2009, 68). This present and future rule of God is attested in the Kaddish Yatom and Shimoneh Esreh briefly explored in the previous sections. Viewed in the context of heaven (Matt 6.9) to imply “Kingdom of heaven,” the Matthean Lord’s Prayer further contests citizenship granted by Roman political authority, to boost peoples’ honor as supported by Keener, citing Rom 8.23, Eph 1.13-14 and Heb

6.4-5, to say that:

The present significance of the future kingdom in early Christian teaching was thus that God's people in the present age were citizens of the coming age, people whose identity was determined by what Jesus had done and what they would be, not by what they had been or by their status in the world (Keener 2009, 69).

In this case, identification with Hebrew and Judaeen tradition provided a basis for setting out a belief system for the Matthean community in reference God's Kingdom. This belief system created a basis for legitimating cultural status of the identity for his community. Not only did Matthew apply his version of the Lord's Prayer to emphasize the political aspect of the prayer, but he also intended to stress the economic aspect of it, as will be discussed from the point of view of Matt 6.11 in the following section.

#### 7.3.2.2 *Matt 6.11 ἄρτος*

Davies and Allison (1988, 609) regard 6.11 as reflective of Jesus' teaching rather than a reference to the manna from heaven (Exod 16). The eschatological beliefs of some Judaeans (2 Baruch 29.8) and the Jesus Movement (Matt 8.11; Luke 22.28-30) suggest an "anticipation of the eschatological banquet." Davies' and Allison's refusal to see a connection between manna and ἄρτος is refuted in the discussion that follows, in order to maintain a connection between 6.11 and manna. The Judaeen eschatological expectation is because "the material bread which God gives today transparently symbolizes and foreshadows the eschatological bread [manna], which will bring lasting satisfaction." While Davies and Allison aptly observe the eschatological function of ἄρτος they fail to see the economic function of this prayer. Coupled with ἀφίημι (6.12), which Nel (2013, 102) says in Matthew's Lord's Prayer refers to "demands for remission of every

exploitative [economic] debt.” In the context of the beneficence role of the Roman emperor and Roman elites, Matthew’s Lord’s Prayer had an economic function in his community for the Jesus-believers; God is a more reliable patron or more beneficent than the emperor or the Roman elite. As noted by Luke (13.14; Acts 18.18), ἀρχισυνάγωγος refers to a synagogue ruler. In the Roman Empire, not only were the elites charged with political authority, but they also had to dispense beneficence, just like the emperor, in order to meet the economic needs of the local communities. In their article, “Archisynagogoι: Office, Title and Social Status in the Greco- Jewish Synagogue” (1993), Tessa Rajak and David Noy observe the role of the non-Judaeans’ status requirements for Synagogue rulers to accomplish their elite role in the diaspora. They argue that:

The archisynagogos was a patronal figure. With his wealth, his high standing, and the advantage of a title which the outside world could recognize instantly, he had the wherewithal to act as a mediator for community. It is conceivable, indeed that you did not have to be Jewish to be an Archisynagogos. It may have been enough to take patronal interest in a Jewish community (Rajak and Noy 1993, 88).

Rajak and Noy indicate how in the post 66-73 Jewish war, Roman elites in pursuit of their mediatorial role usurped the authority of the Sanhedrin in providing social, economic and political leadership to the Judaeans in the Diaspora. This observation is reflective of the replacement of the traditional qualifications for synagogue rulers. In other words, for one to qualify as a ruler of a synagogue, they were required “to exercise beneficence and patronage in the Roman society,” as noted by Cater (2011, 289). The qualification was not necessarily Judaeans’ ethnicity, but one’s “elite social standing.”

Matthew employs a two-way approach to contest the beneficence found in the Roman Empire supported by imperial rule. On the one hand, and contrary to Davies and Allison (1988, 609), he borrowed from Hebrew tradition about the miraculous provisions of manna (Exodus 16). On the other hand, he accommodated traditions of the Jesus Movement such as Mark 6.37-42;

Luke 11.1-4; 9.13-17, to contest the beneficence strategy of the Roman Empire in order to emphasize the economic function of his Lord's Prayer. Through this borrowing, Matthew accomplished two important economic goals that were significant in legitimating the Judeo-Christian identity of his community. One, the borrowing from Judaeen and Jesus traditions was intended to mark the continuity of Judaeen beliefs regarding the providence of God, which was carried over to the Jesus Movement. This belief was important for legitimating both a Judaeen and a Christian identity in the Matthean community. Two, by emphasizing the request for God's daily provision of bread, the Matthean Lord's Prayer subordinates the economic aspect of the Roman imperial use of beneficence to God's economic provisions as petitioned in the Lord's Prayer. Matt 6.25-33 helps in elaborating the significance of 6.11 because "do not worry" in Matt 6.25 is an attempt to forbid anxiety which is ordinarily provoked by socio-economic and political injustice (Kingsbury 1988, 45-59; Barton 1994, 140-155; Carter 2000, 176). In order to urge trust in God (Carter 2000, 176), this passage (6.25-33) attempts to contest some injustices arising from the Roman Empire. Literarily, the connection of petition for ἄρτος in 6.11 to righteousness is facilitated by 6.25-33 to emphasize God's care for his people in opposition to Roman beneficence. This connects striving for the Kingdom of God, and God's righteousness that leads to God giving the necessities of life to the followers of Jesus.

Matt 6.9-12 has enabled an outline of the accommodative and contestant aspect of Matthean identity politics. The group relations emerging from the exploration of Matthew's Lord's Prayer provide some insights for Matthew's social evangelistic and contestive-accommodation identity politics. There are two purposes regarding the accommodation of the Jewish traditions and accepting the traditions of the Jesus Movement that collectively elaborate the social evangelism identity politics of the Matthean community. First, through accommodating Jewish traditions to contest Roman political power (6.9-10), the narrator hopes to accomplish some aspects of social evangelism related to the transformation of individuals. Given the violent

response to Roman oppression in the first Jewish revolt, which led to the destruction of the second temple, the hearers of the Gospel of Matthew were persuaded to focus on God's intervention by praying for the Kingdom of God to come (6.10). The discourse of the Matthean Lord's Prayer was attempting to initiate a process of transformation of the violent attitudes of some Judaeans towards Roman rule. According to Josephus (*BJ* 2.342-344) during the beginning of the war in 66 CE, some Jews resisted violence, and instead preferred to use a diplomatic approach to resolve their grievances with Rome. The goal of this process was to adopt a non-violent, pacifist attitude towards matters of conflict. Similarly, proponents of social evangelism hope to achieve the transformation based on a "fluid conception of the self" (Moon 2012, 1369) which emphasizes the possibility of shifting personal inclination towards violence to a non-violent stance on account of one's personal decision. Thus, by employing the concept of βασιλεία to focus people's attention on the sovereignty of God, the Matthean Lord's Prayer aimed at recruiting a community from both ethnic Judaeans and Gentiles that would see themselves as having been transformed from unredeemed to redeemed selves by joining the Matthean community. The role of Matthew's concept of βασιλεία, in accomplishing this transformation agenda of social movement evangelism is further rationalized by the narrative's focus on "the lost sheep of Israel" (Matt 10.6) and missions to the surrounding nations (Matt 28.18-20).

Second, given the legitimation of the Judeo-Christian identity of the Matthean community, Overman's (1990, 5) claim that the Matthean community regarded itself as "the true Israel" becomes plausible. Identification with Israel ideologically empowered the Matthean community to employ social movement evangelism. The social evangelism mode of identity politics, according to Moon, is premised on the argument that in the society there are two options, either of the good or bad (proponents of social evangelism identity politics see themselves standing on the good side). Members conceive themselves as having the social responsibility of helping people to choose to reject the bad side in order to follow the good side. By regarding

themselves as “the true Israel”, the Matthean community sought to reclaim Israel’s covenant privileges. Given the status of “true Israel”, by which the Matthean community “set themselves over against those they believed to be false covenant people and false leaders who lead the people astray” (Overman 1990, 5), the community attempted to accomplish social evangelism by perceiving the failed Judaeen leadership as fundamentally evil, while at the same time understanding themselves as righteous, and therefore, regarding themselves as God’s true people.

Matthew’s addition of ἡμῶν to his Lord’s Prayer shows his intention to appropriate prayers interpreted by Jesus to his disciples, to advance some aspects of his social movement evangelism mode of identity politics in creating a superordinate identity. Because ἡμῶν gives Matthew the advantage of creating an inclusive community, it reveals Matthew’s attempts to transform Judaeen perceptions of a household of God. Since Matthew’s social evangelism focused on recruiting the ὄχλους (5.1; 8.18; 9.36; 13.36; 21.46), τὰ ἀπολωλότα οἴκου Ἰσραήλ (10.6) and τὰ ἔθνη (12.21; 25.32; 28.19), he likely decided to include ἡμῶν in his Lord’s Prayer to emphasize the inclusive rather than the exclusive perspective of his community as God’s household. This perspective, in stressing the inclusive aspect of the Lord’s Prayer, transforms not only the perception, but also the practice of the exclusive lifestyle of households in Diaspora Judaism.

Thus the narrator’s application of the Lord’s Prayer to meet concerns of social evangelistic and contestive-accommodation refutes Overman’s notion that during its emergence, the Matthean community was “concerned with world maintenance” and was interested in “community formation,” but “not primarily world transformation” (Overman 1990, 154). The social evangelism mode of identity politics on its own gives a sort of monolithic interpretation of the Lord’s Prayer. The contestive-accommodation perspectives, already explored above, effectively supplement the social evangelism mode to present a multivalent aspect of the Lord’s Prayer. This multivalent aspect has the advantage of highlighting the socio-economic and political

issues emerging from the Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism, and the Jesus Movement that provided the basis for the formation of the Matthean community and its identity. Consequently, the multivalent aspect of the Lord's Prayer and its function in securing a social evangelistic mode of identity politics presents the Lord's Prayer not only as contesting and accommodating socio-economic and political norms and values in the Roman Empire, but this contestation and accommodation entailed a transformation of these norms and values. This demonstrates the interest of Matthew to employ his version of the Lord's Prayer to transform late first century Greco-Jewish world.

#### 7.4 CONCLUSION

The function of the pronoun ἡμῶν and the concepts βασιλεία of God and ἄρτος in the Matthean Lord's Prayer demonstrate the ideological significance of Matthew's concept of righteousness in Matt 5.20 as elaborated in 6.25-33. By employing these three concepts, Matthew's narrative attempted to construct a superordinate identity category for the Matthean community that facilitated what the Jewish prayers, particularly, the Kaddish, and Shimoneh Esreh, could not accomplish. Ideologically, the Kaddish and Shimoneh Esreh prayers facilitated a limited vision of God's household, one which was limited to Judaeans and in which Gentiles were regarded as outsiders and unrighteous people. The function of Matthew's Lord's Prayer was to affect a social evangelistic and contestive-accommodation mode of identity politics. By focusing on both Judaeans and Gentiles, Matthew's Lord's Prayer demonstrates the ideological function of Matthew's concept of righteousness in 5.20. In reference to the Matthean Lord's Prayer, the efficacy of Jesus' prayer was intended to affect the aspirations of a social evangelistic contestive-

accommodative mode of identity politics that focused on an inclusive household of God. This in turn provided socio-economic and political power to negotiate the cultural identity of the community in the Roman Empire. The socio-economic and political aspects of the Matthean Lord's Prayer ideologically exuded the potency of a righteousness which surpasses that of the teachers of the law and Pharisees in Antiochene society.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSION

Driven by the quest to understand the significance of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew's Gospel, this study has focused on examining the semantic function of Matthew's concept of righteousness as a hermeneutical key for explaining the significance of the Sermon on the Mount in reconstructing and legitimating Judeo-Christian identity of the Matthean community. The guiding argument of this study has been that Matthew composed the Sermon on the Mount to provide norms, beliefs and values for shaping the Judeo-Christian identity of his community in relations to the Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism and the Jesus Movement. In what follows, the findings of this study are briefly summarized.

#### 8.1 SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

In short, this thesis has employed SRI's inner texture and intertexture analysis to demonstrate that Matthew applied his concept of righteousness in the SM as an ideological construct. While chapter one has briefly presented the context of the research question in terms of Matthew's use of the concept of righteousness in the SM, chapter two has explored trends in the New Testament scholarship regarding approaches that have been employed to explain the significance of Matthew's concept of righteousness in the SM. Consequently, chapter two has found that since mid-twentieth to early twenty-first century CE, New Testament scholars have been shifting from applying biblical criticism alone to social sciences approaches to study the discourse of early Christian communities from the biblical text point of view. By engaging the

text-implied author-implied audience interaction in the context of inner texture and inter texture, chapter three has demonstrated how the Beatitudes (5.3-12), Jesus sayings on the law (5.17-20) and the Lord's Prayer (6.9-13) expound the meaning of Matthew's concept of righteousness as an ideological construct that emphasizes the power of the text and that of Matthew, as the implied author of the SM. This interactive reading demonstrates the assumption that the SM reflects contestive relations of the Matthean community with the Roman Empire, and an accommodative one with the Jesus Movement and Diaspora Judaism in the late first century CE. Thus, this assumption provoked two questions: What could have caused these types of relations between the Matthean community and the Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism and the Jesus Movement? To this end, it has been noted from the social setting of the Gospel of Matthew in the antiquity whereby in chapter four the socio-economic and political function of the emperors, elites and the empire at large, provoked a multivalent response from the Diaspora Judaism and the Jesus Movement. Roman Empire, Diaspora Judaism and the Jesus Movement provided the impetus for the composition of the SM presented in the narrative as the implied author's ideology to negotiate for the Judeo-Christian identity of the Matthean community in the empire. Because the Judean and Gentile elites were conceived by the Matthean community as imperial puppets through whom Rome affected its strategy of assimilation, a relation characterized by tensions and suspicion prevailed between the Matthean community and the leadership of Diaspora Judaism. Furthermore, given the social setting of the Matthean community in antiquity this study has established three ideological perspectives of Matthew's concept of righteousness that expound the semantic function of the Sermon on the Mount in promoting identity politics of the Matthean

community.

First, in reference to the Beatitudes found in Matt 5.3-12, I have noted that because the attitudes and behaviours outlined in the Beatitudes collectively inform the Christian character of the Matthean community, in effect they elaborate the significance of Jesus' demand for righteousness in Matt 5.20. Thus, the Beatitudes describe the Christian identity of the Matthean community and ideologically empower the Matthean community to contest Roman Empire in the context of accommodating Hebrew traditions and beliefs and practices of the Jesus Movement.

Second, in reference to the Jesus sayings on the law in 5.17-20 it has been shown that Jesus' declaration to his disciples in Matt 5.20 that their righteousness should exceed the righteousness of the teachers of the law and the Pharisees, had posed a challenge to the Matthean community to embrace a life style in tune with Jesus' instructions. These instructions entailed embracing social activities that demonstrated the values of the Kingdom of God promulgated by Jesus. To enable his community to accomplish these Kingdom of God values, Matthew viewed righteousness in 5.20 as an ideological expression for accomplishing a humanistic dialogue mode of identity politics for the Matthean community. Furthermore, not only did the identification with the Jesus Movement legitimate the connection between the identities of the Matthean community with the wider Jesus Movement, but also it empowered the community to stand on its own as a legitimate group within the Jesus Movement through a process of recategorization into a superordinate identity. By this recategorization, the author of the Gospel of Matthew acquired for himself the powers of a prototype which enabled him to discharge his leadership role in the Matthean community, for instance, by presenting the Jesus' sayings on law to initiate dialogue

and coexistence of Judaeans and Gentiles as members of two ethnic groups that constitute one community, the Matthean community.

Third, in reference to Matthew's Lord's Prayer in 6.9-13), the function of this prayer to affect a social evangelistic and contestive accommodation to recruit both Judaeans and Gentiles demonstrates the ideological function of Matthew's concept of righteousness in 5.20 in two ways. The presence of the social evangelistic and contestive-accommodation shows the impetus within the Matthean Lord's Prayer through the literary functions of the terms ἡμῶν, βασιλεία and, ἄρτος to reconstruct and legitimate an inclusive Judeo-Christian identity of the Matthean community as a household of God in line with God's prophetic vision in Isa 61.3-4 for other nations coming to the light.

Thus, in reference to the Matthean Beatitudes (5.3-12), Jesus sayings on the law (5.17-20) and the Lord's Prayer (6. 9-13) taken collectively demonstrate that Matthew employed his concept of righteousness as an ideological construct for elaborating the significance of the SM in shaping the Judeo-Christian identity of the Matthean community through identification with the wider Jesus Movement and the ancient Israel and recategorization of his community into a superordinate identity that embraced Judaeans and Gentiles. The embattled and contestive-accommodation, humanistic and contestive-accommodation and social evangelistic and contestive-accommodation modes of identity politics have been instrumental in elaborating the socio-economic and political characteristics of the relations of the Matthean community with the Roman empire, Diaspora Judaism and the Jesus Movement. This has led to the establishment of the following principle: when dominant community attempts to assimilate the marginal

community, chances are that some members of the marginal community may concede to such a strategy in order to elevate their social status of honor but the dissenting members of the marginal group may accommodate traditional beliefs and values of another friendly group to contest the narratives of the dominant group as a means to reconstruct a cultural identity for themselves.

## 8.2 SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

From this study, three questions emerge which suggest possibilities for future research that could advance the findings of this thesis: How can we employ Socio-rhetorical analysis and Social-Identity Political Theory (SIPT) to engage the Gospel of Matthew in order to further; (1) create a university course outline for “Identity Formation” covering sources, processes and goals of social identity formation; (2) create a three to five-year project that investigates identity formation and community integration. For example, in Stellenbosch the Archdeaconry of the Anglican Church of Southern Africa could be a good location; (3) Study and/or facilitate interfaith dialogue, for instance, between the Anglican Church of Kenya and other Christian denominations on matters of identity.

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