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Rethinking Early Jewish–Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic Intragroup Conflict

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Anyone interested in the religio-ethnic identity and social location of the community/communities that produced the Gospel of Matthew must contend not only with multilayered composition but also with the complex reception history of this text. While the Gospel was used by groups identifying themselves as Jew-

This study is a reworked version of a paper originally presented at the 2005 Calgary conference entitled “Common Judaism Explored: Second Temple Judaism in Context,” held in honor of Ed Sanders on the occasion of his retirement from Duke University. I would like to thank the participants of the conference, especially Ed Sanders and Adele Reinhardt, for numerous suggestions that have improved the text. I am also grateful to Stephen Westerholm and Michael Knowles for reading and commenting on the penultimate draft. I alone am responsible for the conclusions drawn and any remaining errors.

1 See the introductory statement regarding the early reception of Matthew by Graham Stanton, “Introduction: Matthew’s Gospel in Recent Scholarship,” in The Interpretation of Matthew (ed. Graham Stanton; 2nd ed.; Studies in New Testament Interpretation; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995), 1–26, here 1: “Matthew’s Gospel was more widely used and more influential in the early Church than any of the other Gospels.” Stanton does not discuss the fact that this reception meant widely different uses and interpretations of Matthew. Note, however, that the first question he lists as the subject of discussion over the past twenty years is whether the author of Matthew was a Jew or a non-Jew (p. 2). Regarding the relationship between text and community, see the contributions in The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences (ed. Richard Bauckham; London: T&T Clark, 1998) and the debate between Bauckham and Philip Esler in SJT (Richard Bauckham, “Response to Philip Esler,” SJT 51 [1998]: 249–53; Philip Esler, “Community and Gospel in Early Christianity: A Response to Richard Bauckham’s Gospels for All Christians,” SJT 51 [1998]: 235–48). The position taken here is that the gospel traditions and texts were transmitted and written down within—and served the needs of—specific communities as these groups interpreted their beliefs in specific cultural contexts and addressed specific problems and
ish, it also served the needs of people with a non-Jewish identity who actively opposed a Jewish understanding of "their" religion.\(^2\) Interestingly, these two seemingly irreconcilable uses of the Gospel of Matthew are reflected in modern theories regarding the identity of the community behind the text: some scholars argue that Mattheans were well within the boundaries of "Judaism" (\textit{intra muros}),\(^3\) oth-

\(^1\) situations within those contexts, using the Jesus traditions as vehicles for those interpretations. This does not contradict the hypothesis that, in our case, the author may also have had a broader audience in mind than the most immediate one, hoping to influence Jews and Christ-believers of other dispositions.


ers that the author was a non-Jew writing for a community that had parted ways with the "synagogue" (extra muros). 4 Within and between these two positions,

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there are numerous interpretations varying in both methodological approaches and conclusions.\(^5\)

The purpose of the present study is to outline a social-scientific approach to the question of the nature and status of the group(s) that transmitted, redacted, and wrote down the traditions included in the Gospel. I shall begin by noting some problematic terms and categories that, in my opinion, confuse the discussion and may lead to inaccurate conclusions. After having identified the type of religion evidenced by the text and having related that religious type to the question of ethnic identity, I shall examine tensions between the Mattheans and Jewish society generally, on the one hand, and between Mattheans and Pharisees more specifically, on the other. In order to proceed, it will be necessary to reconstruct and analyze first-century institutions of importance to the Mattheans from a social-scientific perspective: we need a body to locate a soul.\(^6\)

I will argue that, while Mattheans were initially part of the Pharisaic association, the community that authored the Gospel was in the process of leaving the larger collectivity after the war of 66–70 C.E. Tensions between the Mattheans and Jewish society generally seem to have been comparatively low, both before and after 70; relations between the Mattheans and other Pharisees, however, were more complex and negative, with tensions increasing drastically after 70 C.E. The final sections will provide detailed as well as more general arguments supporting this reconstruction of the Matthean community and its history. Essential to the present interpretation of the social location of the Mattheans is Ed Sanders’s well-argued case for a “common Judaism” in first-century Jewish society, as well as his and others’ insistence on the limited influence of the Pharisees in that society.\(^7\)

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\(^5\) Owing to divergent uses of terminology and different interpretations of how to apply social-scientific concepts and theories, it is not always easy to know where scholars stand in relation to each other. A brief discussion will therefore be given below, presenting the use of some key terms in the present study.

\(^6\) It is common to use the metaphor of body and soul in discussions of sociology and the NT; the importance of reconstructing the institutional framework in which people lived and which provided the stage on which the players enacted their identities and conflicts is, however, not always given appropriate attention. In human societies, “the body” is, to a large degree, constructed with the help of various collectivities, institutions, which tend to determine the formation of identities and the development of conflicts.

\(^7\) E. P. Sanders, Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 bce–66 ce (London: SCM, 1992). Common Judaism is described generally as “what the priests and the people agreed on” (p. 47). The concept thus refers to beliefs and practices of individuals, “ordinary Jews,” who did not belong to any specific party. This does not mean, however, that there would not have been considerable overlap between what ordinary Jews and people belonging to parties believed and practiced: such sim-
I. THE RELIGIO-ETHNIC IDENTITY OF THE MATTHEAN COMMUNITY

Theories regarding the religio-ethnic identity of the Mattheans are many and varied, from scholars who see their community as Jewish excluding non-Jews to those who argue for an exclusively non-Jewish community—and several positions in between. Since it is human to think in categories and concepts, and these tend to create boxes limiting our horizons, it is necessary to address the question of terminology in order to take the discussion further.

Most often, Matthean scholars speak of Matthean identity in terms of binary opposites, whereby Jesus and the disciples/the Mattheans/Christianity/the church are at one end of the spectrum, and Jews/Israel/Judaism/the synagogue at the other. A close reading of the Gospel, however, suggests that such distinctions are not found in the text, but rather imposed on it from other ancient or modern sources. Once such false opposites are removed and authentic opposites mapped, many of the tr

similarities include the Pharisees (pp. 415–16, 451). See also Jacob Neusner ("The Formation of Rabbinic Judaism: Yavneh (Jamnia) from a.d. 70 to 100," ANRW 2.19.2 [1979]: 3–42), who similarly talks about a common Judaism, defining it by referring to three main elements: Torah, temple, and the "common and accepted practices of the ordinary folk—their calendar, their mode of living, their everyday practices and rites, based on these first two" (p. 21). For a critical discussion of common Judaism, see Martin Hengel and Roland Deines, "E. P. Sanders' 'Common Judaism,' Jesus, and the Pharisees," JTS 46 (1995): 1–70. On Phariasic (lack of) influence, see Sanders, Judaism, 388–412, 448–51. Sanders refers to Morton Smith, Jacob Neusner, Shaye Cohen, and Martin Goodman as scholars sharing his "low' view of the authority of the Pharisees" (p. 401). We may add the part of the entry "Φαρισαϊκός" (TDNT 9) authored by Rudolf Meyer (pp. 11–35); see esp. p. 31, and note the emphasis on the heterogeneity of the Pharias movement (pp. 26–28, 35).

8 For a selection of contributions, see nn. 3–4 above.


10 "Synagogue" is usually treated as a phenomenon in the singular and as being in opposition to the "church." The "church," in turn, is often understood as an institution replacing "Israel," and so "Israel," third, is presented as something other than, and opposed to, Jesus and the disciples, with implications for the analysis of the community/-ies behind the text. Fourth, "Christianity" is often treated as if it were a homogeneous phenomenon and, as such, something that can be compared to and contrasted with "Judaism," which, fifth, is also understood in the singular.
ditional conclusions about the relationship between Mattheans and "others" in the Gospel are proved problematic.

Furthermore, the very terms "Jewish Christianity" and/or "Jewish Christians" must also be mentioned as problematic, since they tend to obscure what they intend to denote, namely, a belief in Jesus as the Messiah embodied in communities existing within the religious system of Judaism. Anthony Saldarini and others have argued that the general term indicating this religious type should rather be Christian Judaism(s). However, even if this is an improvement, "Christian" as a name for Christ-believers in the first century is problematic, since it carries with it many meanings from later centuries. In a forthcoming study, Mark Nanos and I have therefore suggested "apostolic Judaism" as a designation for this type of Christ-belief. There is still a need, however, to go beyond such generalizing terms in the analysis of specific theological and halakic expressions within apostolic Judaism: thus, within the general category of apostolic Judaism we might refer to distinct types of Christ-centered Judaisms, one of which is, it will be argued, Matthean Judaism.

11 This was noted already by Johannes Munck, "Jewish Christianity in Post-Apostolic Times," NTS 6 (1960): 103–16. See also Brown, "Matthean Community," 208–9; Sim, Christian Judaism, 25 n. 67. "Religious system" refers to thought patterns and rituals within what can be defined as a "religion" (the term has nothing to do with "systematic theology"). "Type of religion" refers to a larger "family" of religions (cf. the concept of language families), which display important similarities. The relationship between "religious system" and "religious type" is defined in table 1 below.

12 Saldarini, Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community. Before him, Gabriele Boccaccini made the same point (Middle Judaism: Jewish Thought, 300 B.C.E. to 200 C.E. [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991]).

13 Mark Nanos and Anders Runesson, Paul and Apostolic Judaism (in progress). As will be discussed in detail in the book, there are several advantages to this term, which, terminologically, parallels "Pharisaic Judaism," "Enochic Judaism" (cf. the recent study by David R. Jackson, Enochic Judaism: Three Defining Paradigm Exemplars [Library of Second Temple Studies 49; London/New York: T&T Clark, 2004]); see also Gabriele Boccaccini, Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways between Qumran and Enochic Judaism [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998]), "rabbinic Judaism," etc. It should be noted that "apostolic Judaism" as a term, just as "Pharisaic Judaism," is not meant to indicate uniformity in beliefs, nor a developed supra-local authority structure among "apostolic Jewish" communities. Rather, it denotes a variant of Jewish religion within which Jesus is accepted—in different ways and with different implications—as the Messiah. See further below.

14 This would solve the problem Sim (Christian Judaism) perceives in Overman's insistence on "Matthean Judaism" as the preferred term. It would also take seriously the specifics of the type of religion that is evidenced in Matthew, which should not be generalized to apply to all variants of apostolic Judaism. As to the general necessity of distinguishing and naming different Christ-believing groups in order to reflect these groups' self-perception, see, e.g., 1 Cor 1:12, where Paul mentions that his name, as well as Apollos's and Cephas's names, has been used by different factions among the Christ-believers to mark distinctive group identities.
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Christ-centered Judaism should be distinguished from non-Jewish variants of Christ-centered religion, which, while not being part of the Jewish religious system, are nonetheless examples of “Adonayistic religion.” The latter term functions well as a unifying category for all religious traditions, from antiquity until today, focusing practice and belief around the metaphors of God that originate with the Hebrew Bible and the communities that produced these texts.\(^{15}\)

These observations indicate that, prior to addressing the identity of the community, it is essential to decide if the sacred of that community represents or describes a Jewish or non-Jewish religious perspective.

The first step is to discern the pattern of religion presupposed by the text.\(^{16}\) The importance of analyzing the pattern of religion in order to identify a text as belonging within a certain religious system can hardly be overestimated, especially when dealing with processes in which groups are splitting up and boundaries are being modified. This includes not only theological aspects but also descriptions of practices performed on a day-to-day basis, such as keeping the Sabbath, purity laws, tithing, attending festivals, temple ritual, and so on. In terms of identity formation, these practices may turn out to be more important than any underlying theological motivations for their performance.\(^{17}\) Furthermore, as James Carleton-Paget has argued, a praxis-oriented criterion for distinguishing Christ-centered Jewish texts (“Jewish-Christian” in Carleton-Paget’s terminology) is more effective than a theological/ideological or ethnic criterion.\(^{18}\) Combining an analysis of the theological pattern in Matthew’s Gospel and a broader mapping of the practices endorsed by


\(^{17}\) See Magnus Zetterholm, The Formation of Christianity in Antioch: A Social-Scientific Approach to the Separation between Judaism and Christianity (London/New York: Routledge, 2003). In his criticism of James D. G. Dunn’s approach to the problem of the so-called parting(s) of the ways, Zetterholm writes: “While ideological aspects certainly played a vital part in the process, it seems more correct to assume that what Dunn describes as the cause of the separation process actually represents the result of the separation defined in ideological terms. The reason for this assumption is that concrete cultural resources (e.g., church architecture, symbolic practices, liturgical forms) are more likely to be the object of contention, while abstract resources (e.g., ideas, ideologies, values) are easier to manipulate and often function as strategically mobilized resources in conflicts over other kinds of resources” (p. 4). Zetterholm refers to F. Kniss, “Ideas and Symbols as Resources in Intrareligious Conflict: The Case of American Mennonites,” Sociology of Religion 57 (1996): 7–23. See also the emphasis on practice in Sanders, Judaism.

the text will give us enough information to categorize it by and large as either Jewish or non-Jewish.19

This procedure, however, defines only the text, not the community. Jews in antiquity (as today) could and did choose different ways to worship—or not to worship at all—the God of Israel.20 Likewise, diversity was true with regard to believers in Jesus, whether they were Jews or non-Jews. The neat division between Jews and non-Jews in Acts, and the invention of a specific type of Christ-belief for the latter, was most certainly not acknowledged by everyone, as shown by the Pauline correspondence. Non-Jews sometimes preferred expressing their beliefs within the Jewish religious system (see Gal 2:14; 5:3), others outside it (Acts’ solution for non-Jewish converts), and Jews could also choose to live their faith as Gentiles (perhaps Hebrews can be quoted as an example of this position). Thus, an individual or group of non-Jewish ethnic background may well have composed or redacted a text that we would identify as Jewish.21 We therefore need to ask an additional set of questions of the text in order to clarify the ethnic identity of the author(s).22 Important here are aspects such as the general depiction and assessment of identifiable ethnic groups in the Gospel.

Space does not allow a full discussion applying this procedure to the Gospel of Matthew and the Mattheans: for this I will have to refer the reader to a forthcoming study.23 It seems clear, however, that the type of religion represented in

19 It is, thus, not enough to focus on some few isolated features such as alleged anti-Jewish statements, as, e.g., K. W. Clarke and Cook have done. See further below.


21 This is, e.g., Krister Stendahl’s view on the author of the Gospel of Matthew, as he presented it in personal communication with the author, June 1997.


23 Anders Runesson, The Gospel of Matthew and the Myth of Christian Origins: Re-Thinking the So-Called Parting(s) of the Ways between Judaism and Christianity (in preparation). This study gives a detailed analysis of the elaboration of divine judgment in the Gospel (as it relates to beliefs and practices) as well as the treatment of ethnic groups in the world of the text and the implications of both of these parameters for the ethnic identity of the community. For studies on Matthew...
Matthew’s Gospel is located within the Jewish religious system. The pattern of religion, analyzed by focusing on one of the fundamental structures of patterns of religion, the theme of divine judgment,\textsuperscript{24} indicates a Jewish understanding of divine retribution, punishment, and reward, as opposed to Greco-Roman ideas about judgment.\textsuperscript{25} Furthermore, the text accepts most of the practices central to Jewish identity, such as prayer (6:5–7), almsgiving (6:3–4), fasting (6:17–18), the Jewish law/the commandments (5:17–19; 19:17), dietary laws (15:1–20\textsuperscript{26}) and other purity laws (8:4, 5–13;\textsuperscript{27} 23:25–26), the Sabbath (12:1–14;\textsuperscript{28} 24:20), festivals (Passover [26:2, 17–35]), tithing (23:23), the temple cult and practices connected with the temple, including the temple tax (5:23–24; 12:3–5; 17:24–27; 23:19–21),\textsuperscript{29} and, most

and aspects of covenantal nomism, see, e.g., Benno Przybyski, Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought (SNTSMS 41; Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Kari Syreeni, The Making of the Sermon on the Mount: A Procedural Analysis of Matthew’s Redactoral Activity, Part 1, Methodology and Compositional Analysis (AASF, Dissertationes 44; Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1987). See also, more recently, Luomanen, Entering the Kingdom of Heaven.

\textsuperscript{24} As is commonly acknowledged, in the NT the Gospel of Matthew emphasizes divine judgment more than any other text. In the author’s perspective, the story of Jesus is understood only if and when God’s judgment permeates and explains the teaching, events, and conflicts described.

\textsuperscript{25} For a study of Greco-Roman thinking on divine judgment, see David Kuck, Judgment and Community Conflict: Paul’s Use of Apocalyptic Judgment Language in 1 Corinthians 3:5–4:5 (NovTSup 66; Leiden: Brill, 1992), 96–149. See also J. Gwyn Griffiths’s wide-ranging study of divine judgment, arranged thematically according to ideas about judgment occurring in history and after death respectively, discussing, apart from Israel, Greek, Roman, Egyptian, Hittite, Babylonian, Iranian, and Indian traditions: The Divine Verdict: A Study of Divine Judgment in the Ancient Religions (SHR 52; Leiden: Brill, 1991). Recent studies on the judgment in Matthew include Daniel Marguerat, Le jugement dans l’évangile de Matthieu (Le Monde de la Bible; 2nd ed.; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1995); Blaine Charette, The Theme of Recompense in Matthew’s Gospel, (JSNTSup 79; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992); Sim, Apocalyptic Eschatology.

\textsuperscript{26} Jewish food regulations are not rejected in Matt 15:1–20, which represents the author’s re-worked version of Markan material, where such regulations are explicitly rejected (Mark 7:19). This suggests that the Mattheans kept the dietary laws.


\textsuperscript{28} Far from abolishing the Sabbath, this passage is a clear example of a discussion of the weightier things in the law: see especially vv. 5, 7, 12. The inviolability of the Sabbath is confirmed in Matt 24:20.

\textsuperscript{29} The recognition of the temple is related to Matthew’s view of Jerusalem as the holy city (Matt 4:5; 5:35; 27:53): the city receives its holiness from the temple. The holiness of the city is thus connected to the God of Israel and the temple, not the leadership, which is also, however, related
likely, circumcision.\textsuperscript{30} As to religious type, then, we may locate Matthean religion in a table as represented on the following page.\textsuperscript{31}

When one is analyzing the relationship between type of religion and ethnic identity, it is of some importance to note that, although non-Jewish characters such as the magi (2:1–12), the Roman centurion (8:5–13), and the Canaanite woman (15:21–28) are portrayed positively, these individuals are described as exceptions to the general rule, which is that non-Jews are and do everything that Mattheans should avoid (5:47; 6:7, 32; 18:17). The non-Jewish nations are, furthermore, explicitly prophesied to hate and persecute the disciples/Mattheans (24:9). Jews, however, are never generalized negatively in the same way (negative statements are limited to specific individuals and groups). In fact, all the good things that Mattheans should be and do are parts of Jewish life accepted by other Jews as well.\textsuperscript{32} These and other features of the Gospel lead, in my opinion, to the conclusion that the group in which the Gospel originated was ethnically Jewish.\textsuperscript{33} Figure 1 on p. 106 includes some examples that may serve as a comparison to highlight the position of the Mattheans.

to the city and the temple but as the caretakers of holy things. Indeed, Matthew's perspective is that some groups, which he connects with the temple and the city, were corrupt; they were bad servants, or shepherds (see, e.g., Matt 9:36), or tenants (Matt 21:33, 45) and have thus caused the destruction of both. Note the location of Matt 23:37–24:2 following directly after the criticism of the "scribes and Pharisees." See further below.


\textsuperscript{31} This categorization differs from several previous attempts at defining especially varieties of Christianity, e.g., Raymond E. Brown, "Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity but Types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity," \textit{CBQ} 45 (1983): 74–79. Although this study is thought provoking, it suffers from not emphasizing the distinction between the Jewish and the non-Jewish religious systems.

\textsuperscript{32} I have listed some such practices above.

\textsuperscript{33} See the discussion and conclusion in Davies and Allison, \textit{Matthew}, 1:7–58.
Table 1. The religious system within which we find the Gospel of Matthew, compared to other variants of Adonayistic religions

34 This general distinction between Jewish believers in Jesus and “other parties” is adapted to the present study and is unsatisfactory as a general categorization, since it gives the impression that these other parties had things in common, which they did not necessarily have. More important, however, is that there were no neat divisions between these movements and parties, and considerable overlap could exist between the groups. See further below.

35 Samaritans should be regarded not as a Jewish sect but as an independent interpretation of Israelite religion: see Runesson, Origins of the Synagogue, 388–94, and references there, especially the studies by J. D. Purvis and R. J. Coggins. See also Oskar Skarsaune, In the Shadow of the Temple: Jewish Influences on Early Christianity (Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 128: “Samaritanism was not Judaism, for the simple reason that the Samaritans did not recognize the true center.” Cf. the conclusion of Martin S. Jaffee, Early Judaism (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1997), 138: “These parallels and contrasts lead to an unavoidable conclusion; the Samaritan’s religious world is an example of a Judaic world that, in its own view as well as in the eyes of the Jews, is not part of Judaism” (emphasis original). Jaffee discusses Samaritans under the heading “Israel but not Jews.” For useful introductions to Samaritan history, religion, and culture, see A Companion to Samaritan Studies (ed. Alan D. Crown, Reinhard Pummer, and Abraham Tal; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1993); Robert T. Anderson and Terry Giles, The Keepers: An Introduction to the History and Culture of the Samaritans (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2002).

36 I have included Islam here since current debate on “the parting(s) of the ways” extends into the seventh century and beyond. Thus, according to some scholars, Judaism and Christianity had, in fact, not fully parted ways when Islam emerged on the historical scene. See The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). This conclusion is dependent on how the metaphor “parting(s)” is defined; see, e.g., Judith Lieu, Neither Jew nor Greek? Constructing Early Christianity (Studies of the New Testament and Its World; London: T&T Clark, 2002), 11–29.

37 Sanders, Judaism, 47.
These conclusions find support in several recent studies on Matthew, perhaps most emphatically in the work of David Sim.38

II. PLACE AND DATE

Our source material does not permit any firm conclusions with regard to the location of the transmission of traditions included in the Gospel of Matthew or to the production of the text as we have it today. The following places have been suggested in the last half century or so: Jerusalem/Palestine, Caesarea Maritima, Phoenicia, Alexandria, east of the Jordan, Edessa, Syria, Antioch.39 Recently, however, several scholars have argued convincingly for the land of Israel—and, more


39 For a discussion of possible locations, see Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:138–47. Davies and Allison end up favoring Antioch, though being careful to point out the lack of evidence supporting this position. See also Graham Stanton, “The Origin and Purpose of Matthew's Gospel,” in *ANRW* II.25.3 (ed. Hildegard Temporini and Wolfgang Haase; Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1985), 1889–1951, 1941–42. Several scholars reckon with two distinct stages in the life of the community, the first being located in Palestine and the second in Antioch, after the community moved there (because of the Jewish war). These two stages serve an explanatory purpose meant to solve assumed tensions within the Gospel, which, it is argued, occurred due to the change of location: cf., e.g., Brown, "Matthean Community." In my opinion, this is an unnecessary hypothesis, and the tensions within the Gospel can be explained more easily in other ways, as we shall see.
narrowly, Galilee.\textsuperscript{40} Until we have further evidence, in my opinion the scales tip in favor of Galilee; a larger city such as Tiberias or, even more so, Sepphoris may well have provided the socioreligious setting that we see reflected in Matthew's Gospel.

In terms of dates, we need to distinguish between pre- and post-70 C.E. Matthean traditions.\textsuperscript{41} For the final text, I suggest, like the majority of scholars, a date in the 80s or 90s.\textsuperscript{42}

These conclusions, namely, that we are dealing with Jewish Christ-believers in a larger city in Galilee in the latter half of the first century, will serve as a basic point of departure for the reconstruction of the institutional setting and, by implication, for the analysis of the interaction between the Mattheans, the society in which they lived, and the groups that influenced the formation of their identity. In the following I shall treat social tensions (i.e., tensions between the Mattheans and Jewish society in general) separately from the conflicts these people experienced with spe-

\textsuperscript{40} Overman, \textit{Church and Community}, 16–19; he suggests Sepphoris or Tiberias. Eduard Schweizer suggests “Syria, or perhaps the neighbouring areas of Galilee” as the most probable supposition (“Matthew's Church,” in \textit{Interpretation of Matthew}, ed. Stanton, 149–77); Saldarini concludes that “[t]he Galilee, with its complex and cosmopolitan society and its tightly woven cultural network, could easily have supported the nascent rabbinic Jewish and Christian Jewish movements, as well as the other apocalyptic, priestly, messianic, revivalist, and revolutionary currents running through society” (“Jewish-Christian Conflict,” 26–27); see also Segal, “Matthew's Jewish Voice,” 26–29; Daniel J. Harrington, \textit{The Gospel of Matthew} (SP; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, Michael Glazier, 1991); Ekkehard W. Stegemann and Wolfgang Stegemann, \textit{The Jesus Movement: A Social History of Its First Century} (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 223–29. Aaron M. Gale concludes that Sepphoris is the best candidate (\textit{Redefining Ancient Borders: The Jewish Scribal Framework of Matthew’s Gospel} [New York: T&T Clark, 2005], 41–63).

\textsuperscript{41} Cf. the pre- and post-70 stages in the life of the Matthean community according to Brown, “Matthean Community.” Pace Brown, however, the hypothesis that the community moved to Antioch after 70 is not needed to explain the text of the Gospel.

\textsuperscript{42} This is the position of the overwhelming majority of Matthean scholars, and any commentary may be consulted for detailed arguments (see, e.g., Davies and Allison, \textit{Matthew}, 1:127–38, who list scholarly views since Grotius [11]). In the discussion of internal evidence, the Synoptic Problem has a primary place. If we do not accept Q (see Mark Goodacre, \textit{The Case against Q: Studies in Markan Priority and the Synoptic Problem} [Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2002]), Matthew would have to predate Luke, who would be using Matthew and Mark (this solution is, in my opinion, the only real competitor to the two-source hypothesis). Cf. the recent study by Benedict Viviano (“John's Use of Matthew: Beyond Tweaking,” \textit{RB} 111 [2004]: 209–37), in which he argues that the author of the Gospel of John knew Matthew, which would place Matthew in the 80s at the latest, if we accept a date for John in the 90s. Be that as it may, there are, in any case, several good arguments for placing Matthew in the late first century. One of the key passages always referred to is Matt 22:7, which is argued to convey knowledge of the destruction of Jerusalem. As to external evidence, quotations of or allusions to Matthew in early-second-century church fathers serve as a \textit{terminus ante quem}. The following texts are listed by Davies and Allison and are usually part of the discussion: Ignatius, the \textit{Didache}, Polycarp, the \textit{Epistle of Barnabas}, the \textit{Gospel of Peter}, and Justin Martyr. See also the discussion provided by scholars listed in n. 2 above.
cific groups. In order to do so, we need to reconstruct the first-century Jewish institutional setting and analyze Matthean attitudes to it. This will enable us to define the social status of the group in a two-step procedure.

III. SOCIAL TENSIONS, COMMON JUDAISM, AND THE PROBLEM OF THE “JEWISH MAJORITY”

Much research on the Mattheans builds on the assumption that there existed a dominant group in Jewish society (variously identified as the Pharisees, “formative Judaism,” “very early rabbinic Judaism,” or just “the Jews” or “Judaism”), in relation to which the Mattheans would be described as a sect. Most often, regardless of the assumed location of the Mattheans, the Pharisees have been said to be extremely influential in society. On the basis of careful analysis especially of Josephus, Sanders has argued convincingly against this majority view, and he is supported by an increasing number of scholars, though some variation exists regarding exactly how high or low the level of Pharisaic influence was. The discussion has centered mostly on the pre-70 period, leaving aside the time when Matthew’s Gospel was written down. Indeed, while older research tended to equate Pharisees and rabbis and claim a continuous and increasing influence of the Pharisees in the form of rabbinic Judaism after 70 C.E., more recent contributions have questioned such continuity in favor of more complex origins for rabbinic Judaism.

In this regard, Jacob Neusner’s identification of a “formative Judaism”—an emerging coalition of different groups and individuals, predominantly Pharisees, priests, and landowners, evolving after 70 C.E.—has played an increasingly important role in the discussion of the social context of the Mattheans. The basic idea

43 Proponents of a high level of influence of the Pharisees include Emil Schürer, Kaufman Kohler, Gedaliah Alon, and Louis Finkelstein, all mentioned by Steve Mason, “Pharisaic Domi-
nance Before 70 CE and the Gospel’s Hypocrisy Charge (Matt 23:2–3),” HTR 83 (1990): 363–81, here 363–64. Mason’s article itself provides a renewed attempt at arguing for a pre-70 dominance of the Pharisees. See also Peter J. Tomson, “If This Be from Heaven”: Jesus and the New Testament Authors in Their Relationship to Judaism (Biblical Seminar 76; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001), 50–55.

44 See Mason, “Pharisaic Dominance,” 363–67. There are basically three source groups available on the basis of which conclusions may be drawn: Josephus, the NT, and early rabbinic writings.

45 Jacob Neusner has discussed formative Judaism in several publications. See, e.g., “Forma-

46 Cf. Saldarini, who states that Matthew is “probably responding to the leaders of an early form of rabbinic Judaism who were competing with him for the loyalties of the local Jewish Community” (“Jewish-Christian Conflict,” 30–31 n. 22). See also Overman, who defines formative
is that, in order to explain the polemics of Matthew’s Gospel, a dominant force in society needs to be postulated, against which the Mattheans compete for power and influence in the power vacuum created after the fall of the temple. Scholars therefore describe the Mattheans as a sect, using the broader definition of this term and focusing on the wider society in which a group exists, rather than any specific religious body from which another religious group would deviate.47

The question is, of course, whether such a majority existed in the last quarter of the first century. The general tendency in societies undergoing major turbulence, as the war of 66–70 certainly produced, seems to be that people who enjoyed privileged positions and political power before the devastation in one way or the other continue to exercise influence and power after it. Only rarely are political elites completely displaced.48 There are, in fact, several problems with assuming an immediate rise to power of “formative Judaism.”

It is quite possible that the Pharisaic movement experienced an influx of sympathizers after the war and that, as a result, the group took off in a certain direction, negotiating and modifying certain Pharisaic traditions and customs to the new situation. Already before 70 the Pharisees seem to have been home to a variety of

Judaim as a precursor to rabbinic Judaism, which came to dominate Judaism in late antiquity (Formative Judaism, 2). Sim concludes that formative Judaism “was certainly cohesive enough and sufficiently influential in the society of the Matthean community . . . to stand as the parent body with which the evangelist and his group were in dispute” (Christian Judaism, 113–15; quotation from 115; my emphasis).

47 The latter is the traditional focus for the definition of sect, going back to Ernst Troeltsch, The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches (2 vols.; Library of Theological Ethics; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1992), originally published in German in 1931. Most scholars who refer to Troeltsch point out the need to revise his concepts and categories. See Bryan R. Wilson, Religion in Sociological Perspective (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), who distinguishes seven types of sects: coersionist, revolutionist, introversionist, manipulationist, thaumaturgical, reformist, and utopian. See also Bengt Holmberg, Sociology and the New Testament: An Appraisal (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 108–10; Petri Luomanen, “The ‘Sociology of Sectarianism’ in Matthew: Modelling the Genesis of Early Jewish and Christian Communities,” in Fair Play: Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity; Essays in Honour of Heikki Räisänen (ed. Ismo Dunderberg, Christopher Tuckett, and Kari Syreeni; NovTSup 103; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2002), 109–14; Benton Johnson defines a sect as a group that rejects the social environment in which it exists, in contrast to “church,” which refers to a group that accepts its social environment (“On Church and Sect,” American Sociological Review 28 [1963]: 539–49). We shall return to this discussion below. On a general note, it must be emphasized that even if the sociological terminology in itself is heavily influenced by Christian culture, the four basic categories being “sect,” “church,” “denomination,” and “cult,” I use these terms strictly technically as sociological terms, without Christian content, to describe and categorize socioreligious phenomena.

48 Cf., e.g., how Josephus managed to arrange not only for his survival after the war but also for a position from which he could continue to exercise influence. The same is true for Josephus’s enemy Justus of Tiberias, who after the war became the secretary/historian of Agrippa II: see Tessa Rajak, Josephus: The Historian and His Society (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 146.
subgroups, some of which, however, eventually left the movement.\textsuperscript{49} Furthermore, it is probable that Pharisaism, as a result of these changes, eventually developed into what we know as rabbinic Judaism. What is not clear, however, is whether even fully developed rabbinic Judaism had an influential position in Jewish society before the sixth century or even later.\textsuperscript{50} In other words, we know very little about the late first century that would enable us to talk about a powerful formative/early rabbinic Judaism in relation to which the Mattheans can be said to deviate. Saldarini was aware of this problem and therefore suggested that we are dealing with local influence of formative Judaism in the Galilean city where the Mattheans lived.\textsuperscript{51} It is not entirely apparent, however, whether he understands the Mattheans to be deviant in relation to a majority Judaism/Jewish society, or in relation to a specific leading group, which may or may not have had support among the majority of Jews. In any case, Saldarini defines the “leadership group” as a “reform/reformist movement.” A quotation from his 1992 article on Matthew 23 is clarifying:

In the late first century the very early rabbinic coalition was, like Matthew’s group, a reform movement. They and Matthew were rivals for influence and access to power in the assemblies and other institutions of the Jewish community. Each sought not to form a new sect, but to gather the disparate groups and forms of Judaism into one fold. At this stage of Judaism’s development, neither group was dominant in the Jewish community as a whole, but in Matthew’s city or area the rabbinic group’s program was more influential than Matthew’s Jesus-centered Judaism.\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{49} See Meyer, “Φαρισαίος,” 16–31. The basic point Meyer makes is well taken; however, some of his reconstructions display a somewhat optimistic approach to the many problems of the source material that is difficult to accept.

\textsuperscript{50} See Shaye J. D. Cohen, \textit{From the Maccabees to the Mishnah} (LEC 7; Westminster, 1987), 221–24; idem, “The Place of the Rabbi in Jewish Society of the Second Century,” in \textit{Galilee in Late Antiquity}, ed. L. I. Levine, 157–71; Lee I. Levine “The Sages and the Synagogue in Late Antiquity: The Evidence of the Galilee,” in \textit{Galilee in Late Antiquity}, ed. L. I. Levine, 201–22. Seth Schwarz makes a convincing case for understanding the (re-)construction of Jewish identity as partly a result of the Christianization of the Roman Empire in late antiquity \textit{(Imperialism and Jewish Society: 200 B.C.E. to 640 C.E. [Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001])}. Schwarz does not, however, see the rabbis as being particularly influential in this process, and he dates their rise to prominence in the early Middle Ages. Elsewhere I have discussed the fact that the lack of rabbinic influence prior to this date is further evidenced in the art of several fourth-century and later synagogue buildings (“From Integration to Marginalization: Archaeology as Text and the Analysis of Early Diaspora Judaism” [in Swedish], SEÅ 67 [2002]: 121–44, here 125–26). See also my “Architecture, Conflict, and Identity Formation: Jews and Christians in Capernaum from the First to the Sixth Century,” in \textit{Religion, Ethnicity, and Identity in Ancient Galilee} (ed. Jürgen Zangenberg, Harold W. Attridge, and Dale B. Martin; WUNT 201; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 231–57.

\textsuperscript{51} Cf. Sim, who addresses the same difficulty, but in relation to Antioch, where he believes the Mattheans belonged (\textit{Christian Judaism}, 115).

It seems as if Saldarini here equates the Mattheans and "early rabbis" regarding their relationship to society at large: he labels both "reform movements" (according to Bryan R. Wilson's sevenfold definition of "sect," they would be defined as "reformist sects"), one being more successful locally—but not universally—than the other. If I understand Saldarini correctly, his conclusion is that the (reformist) sect of "very early rabbis"/formative Judaism is the local leadership group in Jewish society defining the parent body in relation to which the Matthean reformist sect deviated. There is no direct connection between the Mattheans and the Pharisees; the tensions are created in a struggle over influence in society. If this is correct, the obvious question would be: If the early rabbis were a reformist sect, in relation to whom did they, in turn, deviate? At this point we need to take into account common Judaism, as described by Sanders, before 70 C.E., as well as discuss the institutional framework of first-century Jewish society.

There are no indications that common Judaism ceased to exist immediately after 70 C.E., and the reason for this is connected with the role and function of public institutions beyond the Jerusalem temple. Therefore, it is crucial to the following discussion that "synagogue" be defined. Despite some recent statements to the contrary, the centrality of the synagogue(s) in first-century Jewish society cannot be doubted. The problem lies rather in identifying the nature of the institution(s) referred to by synagogue terms. In the first century, the term "synagogue" was not yet fixed to describe

57 It is clear that we are not, contra Kee ("Transformation"), dealing with informal gather-
only one type of institution: this is a later development that should not be read back into the first century. Συναγωγή, as well as other terms that were used synonymously, referred to two basic types of institution. On the one hand, in the land of Israel synagogue terms could refer to a public village or town assembly, a kind of municipal institution, or the building in which the meetings of such an institution were held. The functions of this institution included, apart from political and judicial procedures, the public reading of Torah on Sabbaths. No specific group, such as the Pharisees or "early rabbis," was in charge of this institution, neither before 70 nor immediately after, and leadership could vary from place to place. Rather, individuals and groups could use public meetings to promote their own understanding of religious traditions and Jewish law, and how they should be implemented in contemporary society.

The other kind of institution referred to by synagogue terms was of a voluntary-association type, similar to those that existed in Greco-Roman society generally, the collegia. An example of this type of institution is found in Acts 6:9, where a "synagogue of the Freedmen" is mentioned. These association synagogues provided a non-, or semipublic, institutional setting in which groups could maintain their specific religious and/or other identities. Philo reports that the Essenes had their own synagogue (Prob. 81); in the same way, the Pharisees and other Jewish

ings, as is shown, e.g., by the elaborate hierarchy of leadership indicated by titles used for individuals related to the synagogue: e.g., archōn (Josephus, Vit. 278, 294), archisynagogōs (Mark 5:22; CIJ no. 1404), presbutēs (IGRE [Jewish Inscriptions of Graeco-Roman Egypt: With an Index of the Jewish Inscriptions of Egypt and Cyrenaica (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992)], no. 24), presbyteros (Jdt 6:16; Luke 7:3–5), gērōn (Philo, Hypoth. 7.13), grammateus (Mark 1:22; CPJ no. 138), nakoros (CPJ no. 129), hypēretēs (Luke 4:20) or archiarchētēs (CPJ no. 138).

I argue this case extensively and discuss the evidence in Origins of the Synagogue; see esp. ch. 3. For a list of synagogue terms and examples where they occur, see pp. 171–73. Cf. Cohen, who prefers a three-part distinction between forerunners to the later synagogue (Maccabees, 111–15).

There are numerous general references in the Gospels to Jesus visiting, preaching, and healing in these synagogues. The judicial activities of public synagogues are mentioned, e.g., in Mark 13:9; readings and teaching of Torah are mentioned, e.g., in relation to the synagogues of Nazareth (Luke 4:16–30) and Capernaum (Mark 1:21–28). The closest modern institutional—and internal-architectural—parallel, excluding what we would call the religious component, would be the British parliament, thought of in local terms.

For a thorough study of the collegia of Asia Minor, including discussion of synagogues and (Christian) congregations as examples of collegia, see Philip A. Harland, Associations, Synagogues, and Congregations: Claiming a Place in Ancient Mediterranean Society (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); note especially the categorization of different types of collegia (pp. 28–53). See also Peter Richardson, "An Architectural Case for Synagogues as Associations," in Ancient Synagogue, ed. Olsson and Zetterholm, 90–117.

The Greek here is ambiguous. Either we are dealing with a synagogue of the Freedmen, which included members from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia, or the text refers to multiple synagogues. Apart from the synagogue of the Freedmen, we would then find, in Jerusalem, four more synagogues, serving the needs of Jews coming from the places mentioned.
groups, such as the Therapeutae (Philo, *De Vita Contemplativa*), would have made use of a similar institutional framework.

In addition to the synagogue(s), the Jerusalem temple and attitudes toward it must be taken into account, since the temple represented official religion in Jewish society before its destruction and continued to be a focal point for Jewish religious thinking. The temple was the center of the Jewish religious system as well as the heart of political affairs. The temple thus represented the state and "state religion"; therefore, it is crucial to analyze the attitudes of a specific group, or association synagogue, to the temple, since this will inform us about the distance perceived between the group in question and official religion, as well as about the nature of that distance.

The temple and the cult did not constitute a specific ideological force in society in the same way that the parties did: parties could be fighting each other, trying to influence political and religious events and structures in society, but still accept the cult and the authorities there. The temple had its ideological extension and social base in common Judaism among "ordinary Jews," and the overlap between Pharisaic (and other groups') beliefs and practices and those of common Judaism indicates that we are dealing with a phenomenon closely related to what sociologists have called civil religion. The fact that civil religion in the land of

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62 Two recent studies have argued forcefully, and successfully, that Philo did not invent this group but was describing an existing Jewish community: Joan E. Taylor, *Jewish Women Philosophers of First-Century Alexandria: Philo's 'Therapeutae' Reconsidered* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Mary Ann Beavis, "Philo's Therapeutai: Philosopher's Dream or Utopian Construction?" *JSP* 14 (2004): 30–42.


64 A conflict within the political and cultic establishment, however, could lead to separation of an association from the temple and thus from state religion and society at large, the obvious example being the Qumran community. See, e.g., the chart in Sanders, *Judaism*, 28. Other disputes over political and cultic control occurred with different outcomes: some would establish temples elsewhere, Leontopolis in Egypt being the most well known example. See Runesson, *Origins of the Synagogue*, 403–36.

65 Of the four types of civil religion that have been identified, we are here dealing with a case where a particular religion and the state are not differentiated: see Clifford Geertz, "The Inte-
Israel was not dependent on an exact match with the administrative and political boundaries of the area after Herod I requires some comments.

While the different areas of the land were governed independently, all relating to Rome and the Roman presence in the land, in terms of nation building\(^6^6\) Jerusalem and its cult played a major role for the national and religious identity of both “ordinary Jews” and the various parties. For the Jerusalem authorities, then, as well as for other groups, national identity extended beyond the immediate administrative and political borders resulting from Roman imperial\(^6^7\) strategies after the reign of Herod I. This situation goes back to and is explained by the Hasmonean creation of an independent Jewish state covering roughly these areas.\(^6^8\) The Hasmonean political strategy was to unify the country by nation building based on shared religious institutions and a centralized cult, a strategy that included forced conversion/circumcision of people in the annexed territories.\(^6^9\) This provided a foundation for Herod to reconstruct the state/nation, and the notion among the Jewish inhabitants of a single religio-political identity was strong enough to survive the splitting up of the state into several administrative units.\(^7^0\)

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\(^{66}\) Nation building refers to the construction of a sense of solidarity and identity as a collective defined by the limits within which the “state,” defined as the organization developed to run everyday business relating to a country’s internal and external affairs, operates.

\(^{67}\) “Imperial”/“imperialism” as well as “colonial”/“colonialism” are terms often used interchangeably. For a discussion of this terminology, see, e.g., Ania Loomba, Colonialism/Postcolonialism (New Critical Idiom; London: Routledge, 1998), 1–7: “Like ‘colonialism,’ this concept [i.e., imperialism] too is best understood not by trying to pin it down to a single semantic meaning but by relating its shifting meanings to historical processes” (p. 4). Imperial interests and exercise of power do not require direct political rule over a nation. In this sense, Roman “imperialism” fits the situation in both the Galilee and Judea pre- and post-70 C.E., while “colonial” should be restricted to Judea under direct Roman rule from 6 C.E. onwards—and then, of course, from Hadrian onwards applying to both regions.

\(^{68}\) Before Hasmonean expansion, the (secondary) state created by the Persians covered only Yehud/Judah: the national identity constructed around the Jerusalem temple at that time was limited to this province.

\(^{69}\) This strategy was used by several of the Hasmonean rulers, according to Josephus: Hyrcanus (A.J. 13.257–58); Aristobulus I (A.J. 13.397); Alexander Janneus (A.J. 13.318–19).

\(^{70}\) This does not mean that all areas and inhabitants of the state under Hasmonean or Herodian rule were Jewish: both Hasmonean and Herodian rule included territory that was not Jewish, and non-Jewish areas were distinguished from the Jewish in terms of how they were ruled: see E. P. Sanders, “Jesus’ Galilee,” in Fair Play, ed. Dunderberg et al., 3–41. The point made here is rather about the sense of identity in the Jewish population, which combines political, geographical, and ideological aspects, taken both from Scriptures read each Sabbath in the public assemblies and from recent and not so recent historical developments. The religious, or ideological,
Although the type of civil religion referred to above is, as Meredith McGuire notes, a less obvious form of civil religion because of its close relationship to one religion, it fits Jewish society especially well after the formation of the parties. These parties, while being thoroughly convinced of the truth of their own distinctive interpretations, traditions, and customs, nevertheless accepted national religion as expressed in the Jerusalem cult. In other words, common Judaism had its sociological roots in the Hasmonean period as part of the revolutionaries’ nation building, and it continued to have that function even after national independence and territorial unity had been lost.

To relate to civil religion was, therefore, to relate to national identity, and, by implication, to its ultimate ideal: the independence of a reunited state. For the parties and movements, most of which accepted civil religion, wanting to influence Jewish life in any specific direction, this meant that they were also endorsing a specific political, or national, “program.” Such acceptance of civil religion makes it difficult to speak of Pharisees (or, e.g., Sadducees) as a “sect” in the sense of the word used by Overman and Saldarini. These groups, on account of their acceptance of the Jerusalem cult and thus the religiously legitimate use of it by individuals other than their own members, should rather be understood as phenomena closer to the sociological category of denomination. This does not mean that the Pharisees did not wish to reform society—on the contrary. But such a wish does not change the overall classification, or categorization, of the group. In the case of the Pharisees, therefore, it is better to talk about a reform-oriented denomination.

Before relating the Mattheans to Jewish society and civil religion as evidenced in public institutions, we may summarize the above reconstruction of relevant institutions in the graph on the next page.

Analyzing the Mattheans and their relation to society, we need to assess the evidence of the Gospel text with regard to its attitudes to the temple and the public synagogues. Doing so, we shall continue to discuss the relationship between the Mattheans and other Jewish groups, understanding them as associations, and focusing on the Pharisees.

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component of the vision of a unified nation is quite clear from the strategy of forced circumcision applied by the Hasmoneans (above n. 69).

71 See n. 65 above.

72 The Qumran community would be one obvious exception.

73 I define denomination as pluralistic in terms of self-conceived legitimacy, and positive in terms of society tension. See McGuire, Religion, 119; cf. Loumanen’s discussion of Overman and Saldarini in this regard (“Sociology of Sectarianism,” 109–13). Luomanen correctly points out that it is misleading to designate the Pharisees as a sect (p. 124).

74 The political aspirations of the Pharisees—and their failure to achieve the power and influence they aimed for—is described by Sanders, Judaism, 388–412.
The Gospel of Matthew indicates that its author and its immediate audience acknowledged the Jerusalem temple and its cult while the temple still stood, and continued to revere both Jerusalem and the temple after 70 C.E. (5:23–24; 12:3–5; 17:24–27). Jerusalem is the holy city before as well as after the death of Jesus (Matt 4:5; 5:35; 27:53), and there are no indications of any other event that would have changed this attitude. Contrary to the view of Saldarini,75 the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, of which the final redactor was aware, does not affect the holiness of, or respect for, the temple itself. Rather, the destruction is used to blame the leaders who had been appointed by God but who had used their position in ways contrary to God's purposes.76 The city receives its holiness from the temple. The holiness of the city is thus connected with the God of Israel and the temple, not the leaders, who are also, however, related to the city and the temple but as the caretakers of things holy. Matthew's perspective is that some groups, which are connected with the temple and the city, were corrupt and acted as bad servants, or shepherds (see, e.g., 9:36), or tenants (21:33, 45), and had thus caused the disastrous destruction of both temple and city.

In relation to the Jewish state and state religion as represented by the temple, and thus civil religion, it seems as if the Mattheans were not taking a sectarian

76 This is why the temple needed to be cleansed (Matt 21:12–13). The fact that Jesus is regarded as something greater than the temple (12:6) is not meant to reduce the significance of the temple, but to enhance and emphasize the status and position of Jesus as God's Messiah.
stance. Indeed, by locating 23:37–24:2 directly after and thus in conjunction with the severe criticism of the Pharisees in ch. 23, the author in fact limits the responsibility of the Jerusalem leadership and attempts to transfer the guilt of the destruction of Jerusalem to the Pharisees, who, obviously, were not in charge of political affairs at the time. The same effect is aimed for when the author, alone among the Synoptics, introduces the Pharisees in the passion narrative after the death of Jesus. This creates the impression that the Pharisees were part of the leadership handing Jesus over to the Romans while, in fact, the “original” passion narrative lacks any references to the Pharisees. In conclusion, the text indicates tensions between Jerusalem authorities (the chief priests, as well as references to Jerusalem as a metaphor for religio-political leadership) and the Mattheans, but these tensions are less emphatic than those between the Mattheans and the Pharisees. The political establishment—and thus the state—is not (most likely contrary to the attitude of the historical Jesus) the primary target of Matthean hostile rhetoric: the group referred to as Pharisees is.

Several scholars have pointed to the references to “their/your synagogue(s),” which have few parallels outside Matthew’s Gospel, arguing that this expression reflects a situation extra muros, or beyond “synagogue”/“Judaism,” on the part of the Mattheans. However, locating these statements in their “body,” the institutional setting of first-century Palestine, will yield a very different, indeed opposite, conclusion. In table 2 on the next page, I sort and summarize the passages in question and then comment on each instance of the expression.

First, it is clear that we cannot generalize the meaning of αὐτῶν in relation to synagogues. It is sometimes used to indicate public institutions in specific places that Jesus visited (4:23; 9:35; 13:54). That these institutions are public may be inferred from the fact that the reference is to large geographical areas or specific cities or villages: synagogues as public institutions represent the inhabitants of these places. When the reference is general, the evaluation is neutral; when the reference is specific (Jesus’ hometown [13:54]), the evaluation is mixed or negative. One may conclude that the negative reaction is the exception and the neutral, nonhostile reaction is the rule. Second, supporting this conclusion is the fact that the general references to synagogues (without αὐτῶν [6:2, 5; 23:6]) indicate that the Mattheans regard the public synagogue as the normal or accepted place for worship in local

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78 The references in Mark 1:23, 39 are sometimes explained as non-Markan insertions, possibly by a copyist influenced by the Gospel of Matthew. See George Dunbar Kilpatrick, The Origins of the Gospel According to St. Matthew (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946), 111. Although this is a possibility, it is an unnecessary hypothesis since the meaning of “their” may shift both within Matthew, and between Matthew and Mark. Cf. the one instance in Luke 4:15, and see further below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Verse</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>&quot;Their/your Synagogue(s)&quot;</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Neutral/Negative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>4:23</td>
<td>Καὶ περιήγησεν ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Παλαιστίᾳ διδάσκαον ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν καὶ κηρύσσαν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας καὶ (\text{θεατρεύον λάνθος καὶ πάθος μαλαικίαν ἐν τῷ λαῷ.})</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>9:35</td>
<td>Καὶ περιήγησεν ἐν Ἱεροσόλυμῳ τὰς πόλεις πάσας καὶ τὰς κώμας διδάσκαον ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν καὶ κηρύσσαν τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας καὶ θεατρεύον πάθος νόσου καὶ πάθος μαλαικίαν.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching</td>
<td>13:54</td>
<td>καὶ ἔλθεν εἰς τὴν παράστασιν αὐτοῦ ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοῦ εἶναι συναγωγῇ αὐτῶν, ὡστε ἐκπλήρωσεντει αὐτοῦ καὶ λέγειν πόθεν τοῦτο ἡ σοφία αὐτῆς καὶ αἱ δυνάμεις;</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Specific</td>
<td>Neutral/Negative Mixed reaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship and alms</td>
<td>6:2</td>
<td>ὃταν οὖν ποιήσῃ ἐλπισμοῦνην, μὴ σαλιστής ἐμπροσβῆνεν σου, ὅσπερ οἱ ὑποκρίσαι πουδούν ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς καὶ ἐν ταῖς δύσεις, ὅπως δοξασθοῦν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων ἀμήν λέγειν ὑμῖν, ἀπέχουσιν τὸν μισθὸν αὐτῶν.</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worship and alms</td>
<td>6:5</td>
<td>καὶ ὅταν προσεύχησε, οὐκ ἔσσεσθε ὡς οἱ ὑποκρίσαι, οτι φιλοῦσιν ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς καὶ ἐν ταῖς γυναικαῖς τῶν πλατειῶν ἐπτῶτες προσεύχησατο, ὅπως φανερώσω σοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἀμήν λέγειν ὑμῖν, ἀπέχουσιν τὸν μισθὸν αὐτῶν.</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assembly (not spec)</td>
<td>23:6</td>
<td>φιλοῦσιν δὲ τὴν πρωτοκλησίαν ἐν τοῖς δεῖστοι καὶ τὰς πρωτο-καθεδρίας ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς</td>
<td>General</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healing</td>
<td>12:9-10</td>
<td>Καὶ μεταβὰς ἔκειθεν ἥλθεν εἰς τὴν συναγωγὴν αὐτῶν καὶ ἔδω ἀνθρώπος χείρα ἔχον ἐξαραν. καὶ ἐπηρώτωσαν αὐτὸν λέγοντες· εἰ ἔξεστιν τῷ σάββατῳ θεατρεύει; ἢνα κατηγορήσασιν αὐτοῦ.</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Group or location</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishment</td>
<td>10:17</td>
<td>Προσέχετε δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων παραδώσωσαν γὰρ ὑμᾶς εἰς συνέδρια καὶ ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν μαστιγώσωσαν ὑμᾶς·</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punishment</td>
<td>23:34</td>
<td>Διὰ τοῦτο ἐδώ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω πρὸς ὑμᾶς προφῆτας καὶ σφόντες καὶ γραμματέας· εἰς αὐτῶν ἀποκεντεῖτε καὶ σταυρώσετε καὶ εἰς αὐτῶν μαστιγώσετε ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς ὑμῶν καὶ διώκετε ἀπὸ πόλεως εἰς πόλιν</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. The portrayal of “synagogues” and events in “synagogues” in the Gospel of Matthew
public contexts.79 These synagogues are public since the rhetorical point in all passages is the public or open nature of the space referred to, where “hypocrites” play out their religious devotion in order to enhance their status among the people (6:2: synagogues and streets; 6:5: synagogues and street corners). In 23:6 “the scribes and the Pharisees” are said to use public space to boost their status in the eyes of people not belonging to their own group, be they “ordinary Jews,” Mattheans, or members of other parties.80

We shall save the other passages for the discussion of Matthew’s relationship to semipublic association synagogues and the Pharisees. For the purposes of the present section, we may now conclude that references in Matthew’s Gospel to public synagogues support the point I noted above, namely: although tensions may exist in certain locations, the Mattheans recognized and interacted positively with public institutions. Indeed, the public synagogues provided an institutional and spatial setting in which the Mattheans carried out a mission to the people of the land.81 The “crowds” in the Gospel of Matthew play an important role in this regard, as a literary character representing the object of Matthean missionary activities, that is, people not belonging to any specific parties, people whom we would call “ordinary Jews,” adhering to common Judaism.82 A literary analysis of their function in the narrative shows that extreme tensions between them and Jesus/the disciples are lacking. “The crowds” are not among the groups being judged in Matthew’s Gospel. They are sometimes portrayed positively, sometimes less positively, but they are never condemned.83 To be sure, certain places are judged col-

79 The fact that the Mattheans are admonished to perform their private prayer at home does not invalidate this conclusion. On public prayer in synagogues, a disputed issue, see my Origins of the Synagogue.
80 “Pharisees” are thus not said to operate the public synagogues, but to use them for promoting their own status in society.
81 We shall return to the issue of mission below.
82 For a recent, in-depth study of the crowds in Matthew, see J. R. C. Cousland, The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew (NovTSup 102; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2002).
83 Great crowds followed Jesus (4:25; 8:1); Jesus has compassion on them, since they lack proper leadership (9:36; cf. 14:14); he preaches to them and heals them (5:1; 12:15; 19:2); they are astonished and praise the God of Israel for Jesus’ ministry (7:28; 9:8, 33; 15:31; cf. 22:33), wondering whether he could be the Messiah (“the son of David” [12:23—in contrast to the reaction of the Pharisees, 12:24]; 21:9). The chief priests and the Pharisees are said to want to arrest Jesus, but they hesitate out of fear of the crowds, who regarded Jesus as a prophet (21:46; cf. 21:11), just as they had John the Baptist (21:26, exchanging Pharisees for elders; cf. 14:5). The sometimes ambivalent reactions of the crowds, as well as their suffering, are blamed on the lack of proper leadership (9:36). The accusations against the Pharisees and their scribes are framed as warnings directed to both the disciples and the crowds (23:1). It is sometimes argued that “the crowds” are portrayed as shifting their allegiance in the passion narrative, on account of their role in the arrest and trial of Jesus. However, the chief priests and the elders are said to plan to arrest Jesus in a way that would avoid upsetting the crowds (26:1–5), and “the crowds” arresting Jesus are specifically mentioned as being sent by the chief priests and elders (26:47), avoiding generalization. Indeed,
lectively (without references to "the crowds"), such as the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida (Matt 11:21), and this would probably refer to encounters in public assemblies of these cities. The specificity in this case, however, should be compared to the general treatment of "the crowds" (and general references to public synagogues), which does not involve categorical rejection. Thus, as might be expected, depending on the local context, certain places would be less favorable to the messianic proclamation. This does not, however, mean a general rejection by the people who represent Jewish practice and belief more broadly—ordinary Jews—who interacted positively with Mattheans in public assemblies and other public places.

IV. GROUP TENSIONS: THE MATTHEANS AND THE PHARISEES

In sharp contrast to "ordinary Jews" and common Judaism, the Pharisees are repeatedly singled out for categorical condemnation in a way that leaves no room for exceptions. The threat of divine judgment is applied to its fullest extent, including both their removal as leaders (21:33–45; we shall return to the sense in which they would have been regarded as leaders) and their exclusion from the world to come (5:20). The intensity of the criticism of the Pharisees in Matthew's Gospel (as opposed to other NT texts84) has always attracted researchers' interest, resulting in

the crowds in the passion narrative seem to be representatives of people in the capital rather than the land as a whole, acting together with the leaders in a way that, in the author's eyes, condemns them both—the people of Jerusalem and the leaders together (switching to the inclusive λαός [27:25]). In other words, what the passion narrative shows are tensions between different areas of the land and the populations of those areas: whereas Galilee is home of and supports the prophet, would-be Messiah Jesus (with the exception of some specified towns; cf. Matt 11:20–24; 13:55–58), Jerusalem, from where the Messiah must rule the restored Israel, rejects him as the chosen one in order to protect its own—according to the author—corrupt, leadership. These tensions between a Galilean popular leader and the political establishment of the capital are most likely historical with regard to Jesus in the 30s. By inserting the Pharisees into the passion narrative (27:62) and in other ways connecting the Pharisees with the political leadership in Jerusalem, the Gospel of Matthew transfers the conflict—and the guilt—to apply also (and therefore more) to the Pharisees, thus extending, symbolically, the reach of Jerusalem's power and corruption geographically and chronologically to apply to Pharisees of the Galilee in the post-70 period of the Mattheans. A further piece of evidence supporting this hypothesis is the reference to Ἰουδαίοι in Matt 28:15, which should be translated not "Jews" but "Judeans," referring to the geographical area. This may be a general reference, but since the Pharisees are introduced together with the chief priests in 27:62, it may well be that the author refers to Judean Pharisees, as opposed to his own Galilean community. For the presence of Pharisees in Galilee, see, e.g., Richard Horsley, "Conquest and Social Conflict in Galilee," in Recruitment, Conquest, and Conflict: Strategies in Judaism, Early Christianity, and the Greco-Roman World (ed. Peder Borgen et al.; Emory Studies in Early Christianity 6; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 129–68, here 157; Segal, "Matthew's Jewish Voice," 27. See further below.

84 Cf. Wolfgang Reinbold, "Das Matthäusevangelium, die Pharisäer und die Tora," BZ 50
a variety of explanations as to possible reasons for such antagonism. For our purposes, it is important to locate this criticism within the institutional framework described above and to do a close reading of relevant passages taking into account insights from contemporary cross-culturally tested social-scientific and social-psychological theories. I begin with the former and then, distinguishing between pre- and post-70 C.E. periods in the life of the Matthean movement, identify their changing socioreligious location. As we shall see, in the words of L. Michael White, “[t]he tension of the Matthean community with other Jewish groups (or to be more precise, the Pharisees and ‘their synagogues’) was born of proximity rather than distance, of similarity rather than difference.”

The expression “their/your synagogue(s)” (see table 2 above) will provide us with information often neglected because of the lack of a careful definition of “synagogue.” Beginning with Matt 12:9, it is possible that we have a reference to a Pharisaic association synagogue. In 12:1–8, Jesus is debating with the Pharisees (v. 2), accusing them of not knowing the law (v. 5). He then enters “their synagogue” (v. 9) and heals a person. The people (“they”) who ask Jesus whether it is right to heal on the Sabbath are clearly Pharisees, since (a) no other group has been introduced in the story since 12:2, (b) it is said to take place later on the same day as the debate in 12:1–8, (c) the topic of discussion is the same (the definition of “work” on the Sabbath), and (d) the conclusion of the episode is that “the Pharisees went out and conspired against him, how to destroy him” (v. 14). “The crowds” join Jesus only after he has left the synagogue and the area (ἀνεχώρησεν ἐκείθεν [v. 15]). This means that, according to Matthew, Jesus intentionally seeks out and relates to Pharisees in their own assembly building. If this is correct, it is evidence of a specific association synagogue, belonging to a particular group, and the reaction is negative. This conclusion is strengthened by a consideration of the remaining passages on synagogues.

The author of the Gospel provides two passages that deal with punishment of followers of Jesus/Mattheans in, or through, synagogues. Interestingly, both texts specify these synagogues as “their” or “your” synagogues: ἦν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν in 10:17 and ἦν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς ὑμῶν in 23:34. Since these are the


87 This may be compared to the practice recorded in Matthew’s Gospel to send “prophets, sages, and scribes” to the Pharisees, as witnessed by 23:34, a passage to which we shall return. Cf. Luke 7:36, where Jesus accepts an invitation to the home of a Pharisee who wants to eat together with him. In Matthew’s Gospel, however, the initiative comes from Jesus.
88 If ἦν is taken as instrumental; see Davies and Allison, Matthew, 2:183.
89 It has been suggested that the mention of “Gentiles” in Matt 10:18 may be taken as an indication that this verse refers to a Diaspora situation. It is more likely, however, that the text is
only passages that deal with punishment in synagogues, and since 23:29 states that ὁμῶν in 23:34 refers to the Pharisees and their scribes,90 10:17 should be read from the perspective of 23:34, suggesting that αὐτῶν in 10:17 relates the synagogues in question to Pharisees. There are, then, two possible interpretations of these passages: (a) the term “synagogues” refers to Pharisaic association synagogues generally, or (b) the term refers to public synagogues in specific places where the Pharisees were influential and had power to affect the decisions of the public assemblies (cf. above on Matt 11:21; however, no Pharisees are mentioned in relation to these places).

In favor of alternative (a) the following can be said with regard to 10:17. We know that public synagogues functioned as local courts (which is the meaning of συνέδρια here).91 Matthew does not further define these courts by calling them “their” courts, as in the case of the synagogues three words later, and so implies a common judicial institution for Mattheans and those who accuse them. These courts, then, refer to judicial activities taking place in public synagogues. The next thing to note is that people referred to as ἀνθρώπων will be handing over followers of Jesus to these courts, which are public and not controlled by any specific group. These people are the same as those in charge of the synagogues mentioned: αὐτῶν refers to the nonspecific τῶν ἀνθρώπων, as does the subject implied in παραδώσουσιν. As we noted above, the parallel in 23:34 indicates that these people should be understood as Pharisees.92 Once the reader has finished the whole Gospel and knows about 23:34, the interpretive result with regard to 10:17 is two-fold: first, the Pharisees are said to hand Christ-believers over to be judged in Jewish courts; second, it is prophesied that the Pharisees will flog Christ-believers in their own association synagogues. The latter point needs some elaboration.

Voluntary associations in the Greco-Roman world (including the land of Israel)93 made up their own rules and had the right to impose punishment in case

90 While not all scribes would have been Pharisees, some would. I understand the combination of “scribes and Pharisees in the Gospel of Matthew to refer to scribes who belonged to the Pharisaic party; this does not exclude the existence of scribes outside of that community. On scribes, see Sanders, Judaism, esp. 179–82. See also Neusner, “Formation of Rabbinic Judaism,” 39, referred to by Luomanen, “Sociology of Sectarianism,” 123.


92 The general warning Προσέχετε δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, rather than a specific warning against the Pharisees, is motivated by the fact that the passage begins within the Jewish people but extends beyond it to non-Jews. The warning cannot, then, be limited to a specific group or people.

93 It is somewhat ironic that one of the groups that isolated itself most from outside influences, the sect at the Dead Sea, shows very clear signs of outside influences in their organizational pattern; see further n. 95 below.
of disobedience to those rules.\textsuperscript{94} In terms of the relationship between members and the association, on the one hand, and the public courts of society, on the other, it would have been a punishable offense for a member who had been attacked or beaten by another member of the association to turn to public courts and sue the offender. The victim was required first to consult the leaders of the association (in the case of the \textit{Iobacoi}, the priest or the arch-bacchus), who would then settle the case and prescribe appropriate punishment (cf. Matt 18:15–18). The punishments in an association would vary according to the character of the offense, but would almost always range from fines and/or expulsion for certain time periods to permanent expulsion from the association.

As I noted above, there were several associations in first-century Jewish society, the organizational pattern of which was adopted by the parties described in Josephus, Philo, and other sources. A comparison between the organization and the penal codes of the Qumran community and Greco-Roman associations strongly supports the conclusion that we are to understand the Qumranites, too, as an association.\textsuperscript{95} In the same way, the Pharisees would have had their own penal codes within their association synagogues. The question with regard to the passages under discussion, Matt 10:17 and 23:34, is whether flogging (the term used in both passages is \textit{μαστιγών} [cf. LXX Deut 25:1–3]) could be a punishment imposed by an association. No evidence in favor of such punishment exists with regard to any known voluntary associations in the Greco-Roman world.\textsuperscript{96} However, as Deut 25:1–3 indicates, it would be a type of punishment fitting the context of public courts (cf. \textit{m. Mak.} 3:12).

Does this mean that Matt 10:17 and 23:34 refer to public institutions, despite everything said up to this point against this interpretation (and its sociopolitical implications)? I think not. Matthew uses hyperbole—and does it “symmetrically.” In 23:34 we are told that Jesus says that he will send prophets, sages, and scribes to the Pharisees and their scribes, and, as a result, the latter will “kill and crucify” some of these learned people. Others will be flogged “in their synagogues.” We know that execution/crucifixion was a punishment that could be imposed only by

\textsuperscript{94} The most famous and fullest description of penal codes in associations is the statutes of the \textit{Iobacoi} (Athens, 176 c.e.), translated by Wilhelm Dittenberger in \textit{SIG}; translation provided in Weinfeld, \textit{Organizational Pattern}, 51–54.

\textsuperscript{95} So Klinghardt, “Manual of Discipline”; cf. Weinfeld, \textit{Organizational Pattern}, esp. Appendix E, 71–76, his response to Lawrence Schiffman, \textit{Sectarian Law in the Dead Sea Scrolls: Courts, Testimony, and the Penal Code} (BJS 33; Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1983). Unfortunately, Klinghardt argues that the identification of the Qumranites as an association contradicts their categorization as a sect. Associations could have different views on society; some of them would qualify as sects, others as denominations. The designation “association” does not dictate the “content,” but rather the (organizational) “form.” This is further evidenced in Roman imperial treatment of different \textit{collegia}, some of which were banished while others, old enough to have proven their loyalty to the empire, were allowed to continue business as usual.

\textsuperscript{96} I am grateful to Philip Harland for discussions of this issue.
the Roman imperial power. Yet Matthew, in order to increase the guilt of the Pharisees, turns them into the executioners, thus transforming them into the likeness of the (political) authorities in Israel's history who, according to the Hebrew Bible, executed prophets sent to them (23:29–33). In order to achieve this portrait and transfer of guilt, the author has to make use of images of Israel's past political authorities as well as of the current Roman authorities and their power to impose the capital punishment. Then he has to transfer this power—not to Jewish political authorities of his own time (which would have been the chief priests) but to the nonofficial group he has selected as primary target, the Pharisees. The result, obviously, has nothing to do with sociohistorical or political realities in the late first century.

Step 2 is to transfer the power to impose a punishment that was possible in Jewish society (in the public courts), flogging,97 to the same group—the Pharisees. In this way, Matthew achieves a connection, as complete as it can be on all levels of (unjust) punishment, between a contemporary group without judicial power in society and the prophet-killing political authorities of the Hebrew Bible. This allows the author to state in 23:35–36 that the Pharisees and their scribes shall be held responsible for all unjust punishment throughout Israelite history (including, by implication, punishments that may be imposed on Mattheans by Roman authorities!). Again, this carefully planned rewriting of history, which fuses it with the present, has nothing to do with sociopolitical realities either before or immediately after 70 C.E.

If we return to Matt 10:17, the pattern becomes clear. “Their synagogues” indeed refers to Pharisaic associations, but the punishment mentioned is taken from another judicial context in order to increase the guilt of the Pharisees. What was considered possible in Israel's past history in terms of punishment in Jewish society was, in the first century, divided up between two political bodies, the Jewish courts and Roman imperial legislation. The author of Matthew fuses these two judicial contexts, creating an image for his own time reflecting earlier Israelite society, and then substitutes the Pharisees for the political leaders of his time.

It would seem, therefore, that despite the author's creative use of Israelite history when interpreting his own time, the historical fact was that the Pharisaic synagogues (“their/your synagogues” in 10:17 and 23:34) did have judicial power over the Mattheans, even if punishments were less severe than the Gospel wants us to believe. This situation created, and explains, the frustration the Mattheans—contrary to other groups in the Jesus movement who were not involved institutionally with the Pharisees—felt with the Pharisees, a frustration that permeates the Gospel from beginning to end and results in repeated and violent rhetorical attacks. Indeed, one of the keys to the origins of the Gospel of Matthew and the Matthean community lies in this observation. If the Mattheans did not belong within the Pharisaic associations, they were certainly considered by the Romans to be no less religious or political than any other groups, even if their synagogues did not have judicial power.
saic associations, these extreme tensions would be difficult to explain sociologically. At the same time, however, some passages seem to indicate that a schism between some Mattheans and the Pharisaic associations had occurred when the Gospel was written down and redacted. In light of this, the hypothesis I am proposing unfolds as follows:

The Mattheans were urban-based\textsuperscript{98} Pharisees who became convinced, most likely after the death and resurrection of Jesus had been proclaimed to them by missionaries, that Jesus of Nazareth was Israel’s Messiah,\textsuperscript{99} confirming their Pharisaic belief in the resurrection of the dead as well as their hope for a restored Israel.\textsuperscript{100} Seeing their hopes soon to be fulfilled, they formed a movement within Pharisaism that engaged in a mission to “ordinary Jews,” proclaiming that the end of the present age—and the suffering it implied—was near.\textsuperscript{101} Doing so, they constantly referred to holy scripture, accepted as such by the wider movement, but subjected it to a specific interpretation.\textsuperscript{102}

\textsuperscript{98} See Stegemann and Stegemann, Jesus Movement, 227–28. I would, however, think of an urban context of somewhat larger size than they suggest for several reasons, among which are language and evidence of a mixed population.

\textsuperscript{99} Even if there may have been people within the movement that had met Jesus, the urban setting suggests a lack of direct continuity, since Jesus focused his ministry and missionary activity on rural areas.

\textsuperscript{100} This was before the consolidation of believers of Jesus in a single group with a supralocal leadership organization: at this time, many Christ-believers belonged within other parties and did not interpret their new beliefs as necessitating the creation of a new association. People previously not belonging to an association, however, most likely joined together forming new associations in an early stage of the history of the Jesus movement (cf. the Jerusalem-based group referred to by Paul in Galatians, and by the author of Acts, which seems to have achieved a leading position by the middle of the first century).

\textsuperscript{101} Rituals specific to the Christ-believers, such as the Eucharist (Matt 26:26-29—regardless of whether this was celebrated on a weekly or an annual cycle), would have been performed in meetings that did not involve non–Christ-believers. It is not uncommon for subgroups within larger groups to develop/maintain rituals not practiced by the majority; for different types of subgroups and possible relationships between subgroup and larger collectivity, see n. 109 below. We see a similar phenomenon when Pharisees and other groups—but not the Qumranites—develop rituals practiced only by their own group (in their associations) but not to the exclusion of participation in the Jerusalem temple cult. The same pattern is found in Acts 2:46, where the distinction between temple worship and worship in private homes is described not as mutually exclusive but as complementary.

\textsuperscript{102} In this way, one could say that the reform movement was “conservative” in that it focused on traditions, of which they claimed they had the true interpretations, as opposed to wholly new phenomena that would override shared traditions. In the same way, Jesus becomes a teacher like those of the Pharisees and their scribes, with the difference that he would be the only one. In Matthew’s Gospel the emphasis is on knowing the traditions and interpreting them correctly: see Matt 9:13; 12:3–7; 21:16, 42; 22:29, 31. See Freyne, “Vilifying the Other,” 120–21. Jesus’ teaching takes on the same importance, since his instruction is indispensable both for interpreting the sacred texts and for knowing the truth about what was happening in the Mattheans’ own time (see
Every reform movement causes tension to appear within the larger collectivity. The larger Pharisaic community remained unconvinced about the identification of this—now dead—individual as the Messiah, which caused open conflicts in public synagogues as well as internal strife between messianic believers and the majority. With the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 C.E., probably predicted by the historical Jesus or, in any case, predicted by the earlier Markan communities, to whose Gospel traditions the Mattheans had access, the majority of Mattheans experienced tremendous “real-life evidence” that the coming kingdom was within reach. This spurred a never-before-witnessed missionary outreach on the part of the majority of the Matthean reform movement. This movement ultimately expanded beyond the Jewish people, since, at the dawn of the new age, the Gentiles must come to Zion. Previously, by contrast, more “theoretical” eschatological expectations had anticipated non-Jews coming to the people of God and their Messiah of their own accord.

This development within the Matthean reform movement happened coterminously with an increased influx of people to the wider Pharisaic denomination. These sympathizers and new members were most likely, as described by Neusner, landlords and priests, who were of a relatively high status in Jewish society. Thus, they had less interest in a radical movement proclaiming the imminent coming of the end; the Mattheans, on the other hand, at this stage likely recruited more people from the lower strata of society. The result was increased tension within the Pharisaic associations, based on both ideological and social factors. Together these factors created a schism in which the majority, but not all, of the Mattheans left

Matt 7:24–29 [cf. Prov 10:25; 24:35]—two aspects, past and present, old and new, that are inseparably interwoven. Indeed, a Matthean is best identified as a scribe combining new and old (13:52: “Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old”). One must also note that, for the Mattheans, acknowledging Jesus’ teaching in and of itself will help no one: “only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven” will enter the kingdom (Matt 7:21; cf. v. 24).

Thus, the common assumption that the missionary zeal and eschatological expectations were intense in the beginning of the movement and then faded is turned on its head.


Neusner, “Formation of Rabbinic Judaism.”


When a reform movement within a denomination parts from the parent body, those who leave will not be able to convince all members of the movement to go with them. See the example noted by Philip Esler (Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology [SNTSMS 57; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987]), 53,
the Pharisaic denomination and became, in relation to the Pharisees, a sect. The group, whom we may call the separatists, authored and redacted the Gospel of Matthew as we have it today. The reason why they wrote it was basically twofold: to consolidate their own emerging association, providing a foundation for their particular identity, and to attempt to convince Mattheans who had remained within the Pharisaic association to join them.

These reasons explain the polemic and exaggerations regarding possible punishments Mattheans may suffer within the Pharisaic association, as discussed above. They also account for the relationship between Matt 23:1–3 and the rhetorical attacks that follow: the author, a former member of the Pharisees, a scribe with a modified self-understanding, takes as the point of departure the shared and long-held conviction and self-definition that the Pharisees sit on Moses’ seat. It is likely that this was an expression used by pre-70 Pharisees, including Mattheans. In the new situation experienced by the separatists, such acknowledgment was probably intended to gain the sympathies of the Mattheans still within the Pharisaic association before introducing the complete and final delegitimation of the (non–Christ-believing) Pharisees using ad hominem arguments and accusing them of perverting rituals and customs that they all shared (e.g., making use of/wearing

where 10 percent of the members of a reform movement remained within the parent body as the others left; see also the discussion in Holmberg, Sociology, 102–3. A main reason for the schism could be indicated in Matt 23:13, where Pharisees and the scribes are said to “lock people out of the kingdom of heaven”: this may refer to an active attempt by leading Pharisees to prevent people—including other Pharisees and sympathizers—from joining the Matthean reform movement.

Thus the focus on community building and the establishment of rules for the new association (Matthew 18; cf. the transfer of leadership in Matthew’s version of the parable of the vineyard, including the concluding comments, adding the Pharisees [21:33–46]). See Dennis Duling, “The Matthean Brotherhood and Marginal Scribal Leadership,” in Modelling Early Christianity: Social Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context (ed. Philip Esler; London: Routledge, 1995), 159–82; and Richard Ascough, “Matthew and Community Formation,” in Gospel of Matthew in Current Study, ed. Aune, 96–126. I would emphasize, however, that the Matthean association, pace Ascough (p. 125), is, at the time of the writing of the Gospel, still in the process of formation. Important to note regarding the definition of “sect” is that the more traditional understanding going back to Troeltsch, focusing on relationships between (religious) groups rather than between groups and society at large (see n. 46 above) is, pace Overman and Saldarini, better suited for the analysis of the Matthean community. See the similar position in Luomanen, “Sociology of Sectarianism,” based on Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, A Theory of Religion (New York: Peter Lang, 1987). (I do not, however, agree with Luomanen on the characterization of the Mattheans as a cult movement [pp. 129–30].) See the discussion in Esler, Community and Gospel, 46–70.

This means that within our Gospel are preserved not only non-Matthean traditions from before 70 c.e. (from Mark and Q, if Q is accepted) but also Matthean traditions antedating the war.

There is an almost endless flow of articles and sections in books that attempt to solve this problem. One of the best studies, including a comprehensive discussion of most theories, is Mark Alan Powell, “Do and Keep What Moses Says (Matthew 23:2–7),” JBL 114 (1995): 419–35.
phylacteries and fringes [23:5]; attending public synagogues [23:6]; tithing [23:23]; pronouncing oaths in relation to the temple [23:16–21; but cf. 5:33–37]). The reference to the "outside" that Pharisees are said to make look righteous (23:28) may also be an indication of halakic positions shared by Mattheans and other Pharisees.112

The repeated assertions that the Pharisees who do not acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah are not going to be part of the coming kingdom (23:33, 36; cf. 5:20) are meant as a warning to Mattheans remaining within the Pharisaic denomination that they have nothing to gain and everything to lose by choosing to stay. Indeed, leaving means joining those who have the keys to the kingdom (Matt 16:18–19) and the power to exclude others from "what really matters."

These assertions show that the Matthean separatists had left the Pharisees and, in relation to them, constitute a sect. Joachim Wach has described the coexistence of conflicting orientations within the same collectivity—what he terms ecclesioae in ecclesia—and identifies three basic types: Collegium pietas, Fraternitas, and the Order.113 Common to all types, apart from the fact that they most often try to reform the larger collectivity, is the acceptance of a dual standard of religiosity, one for "the masses" and one for the virtuosi. While we find such a position in pre-70 Matthean tradition (Matt 19:16–22),114 the denunciation of Pharisees combined with repeated condemnations resulting in their ultimate exclusion show that a schism had taken place at the time of final redaction.115 Indeed, the definitive accusation that the Pharisees are guilty of all innocent blood in the history of Israel, the

112 The lawlessness of the inside is the opposite of the law-abiding of the outside; that is, there is agreement on the basic halakic requirements that take the form of external signs of identity. This does not mean acceptance of all Pharisaic customs by the separatists. For example, Matt 15:1–9 retains the basic criticism of Mark's Gospel (7:1–13), even though disagreeing with Mark's conclusion (Mark 7:23; Matt 15:20).

113 Joachim Wach, Sociology of Religion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), 173–86; cf. McGuire, Religion, 127–29. These groups may be described as sectarian or cultic dissenters within a church or denomination.

114 Other passages indicating an intra-Pharisaic location include, e.g., Matt 13:52 (identifying the Mattheans as scribes) and 23:34 (showing signs of their being actively involved in trying to reform the Pharisaic denomination). To this should be added the evidence of shared institutional context discussed above. In terms of virtuoso religion in Matthew's Gospel, see the comments on celibacy (19:10–12) and perfection (5:38). The author's attitude to "sinners and righteous" is also stated as avoiding premature judgment and allowing for a corpus mixtum (13:24–30; cf. 22:11–14). Contrary to the example of 19:16–22, however, the sinners are, ultimately, not going to enter the kingdom.

115 I take the inclusivity of Matt 5:17–19 to be addressed to Mattheans still remaining in the Pharisaic association, expressing willingness to modify their religious outlook. The exclusion of Pharisees from the kingdom in 5:20 serves as a warning aimed at preventing such adjustment. In addition, it assures them that the separatists uphold a strict law observance, despite the type of Gentile mission in which the latter are now involved (28:19–20).
implicit claim that they are to blame for the destruction of Jerusalem (23:35–24:2),
their insertion into the passion narrative (27:62), implying that they took an active
part in the arrest, trial, and death sentence of Jesus, as well as the institutional evi-
dence of the first stages of a separate Matthean association (ch. 18; 21:33–46)
strongly suggest that the separatists, while having belonged to the Pharisees, had,
at the time of the final redaction of the Gospel,116 parted ways with them.

On the basis of the above considerations, one must recognize the diversity of
traditions in the Gospel and distinguish among different Matthean groups, each
displaying its own perspective and interpretation of the traditions.117 In this regard,
time is a crucial factor, and the events of 70 C.E. play an important role for the trans-
forming (eschatological) identity of the Mattheans. These Christ-believers at first
existed as a “little church within the church,” with the goal of reforming the Phar-
isaic denomination but focusing their mission on “ordinary Jews.” Their group
likely included prosperous people and their retainers.118 This should not surprise
us, since, sociologically, a denomination, the nature of the larger collectivity of
which the Mattheans were a part, tends to attract people who are well established

116 A Pharisaic origin for the Mattheans has been suggested by, e.g., Freyne, “Vilifying the
Other,” 138. See also Reinhart Hummel, Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kirche und Judentum
in Matthäusevangelium (2nd ed.; BEvt 33; Munich: Kaiser, 1966).

117 On the plurality of Matthean communities—but without the conclusions drawn here—
see Graham Stanton, “The Communities of Matthew,” Int 46 (1992): 379–91. See also Elaine M.
Wainwright, Shall We Look for Another? A Feminist Rereading of the Matthean Jesus (Bible and Lit-
erature Series; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1998), 41–45. Although my conclusions differ from
Wainwright’s in many regards, her insistence on and sensitivity to different voices in Matthew’s
Gospel are a valuable contribution to the interpretation of the Mattheans and their text. I have
emphasized two basic communities, the split occurring after 70, constituting the institutional
frames within which interpretations of Jesus traditions were made. However, we must not over-
look the fact that within these two communities, respectively, we must reckon with some diver-
sity. This does not mean that every tradition would have come from a separate (Matthean)
community, only that the Matthean material is best explained by not theorizing about too homo-
genous a setting in which it was kept, transmitted, and redacted. Other communities, consisting
mainly of non-Jews, would soon adopt Matthew’s Gospel as their preferred text, a fact that should
make us even more cautious about postulating too much regarding possible readers of Matthew.
In the monograph mentioned above (n. 23), The Gospel of Matthew and the Myth of Christian
Origins, I deal in more detail with different layers in the Gospel and the criteria used for distingui-
shing pre- and post-70 layers.

118 See Stegemann and Stegemann, Jesus Movement, 230 (they do not, however, distinguish
between different periods in the life of the Mattheans). As to the Mattheans’ status within the
denomination, according to Rodney Stark’s definition of cult (The Rise of Christianity: How the
Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in
a Few Centuries [San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997], 33), Mattheans before 70 would have
constituted cultic type dissent (introducing a new aspect but referring conservatively to shared
traditions), within the Pharisaic denomination.
in society. However, at this stage the Mattheans also included some people from lower social strata. 119

As a result of the socioeconomic changes brought about by the war, 120 the majority of people in the sect separating itself from the larger collectivity (and from Mattheans choosing not to follow them) would have been from nonelite lower-stratum groups, which partly explains the egalitarian emphasis of the final redaction of the Gospel (see 18:1–4; 23:8–11). 121 In addition to the increased intensity of eschatological expectations, the separatists brought about, as a result of the former, a change in missionary strategies, introducing an active Gentile mission. 122

The post-70 changes, both social and theological, resulted in the fierce polemic in Matthew’s Gospel against the Pharisees. 123 Taken out of its sociohistorical context and applied to the Jewish people as a whole, this polemic has had disastrous consequences in the history of Jewish–Christian relations. Originally, however, the denunciation of the (non–Christ-believing) Pharisees was meant for the ears of Mattheans and “ordinary Jews,” whom the separatists hoped would join their community now when the end of time was nearer than it was when they had first embraced a faith in Jesus of Nazareth as the risen Messiah. 124

119 Stegemann and Stegemann, Jesus Movement, 230, 232.

120 Regarding socioeconomic changes as reasons for sects to emerge, see McGuire, Religion, 131.

121 For characterization of the social status of sect members, see Stark, Rise of Christianity, 33; also McGuire, Religion. See the discussion of egalitarianism among Mattheans in Ascough, “Matthew and Community Formation,” 99; see also Duling, “Matthean Brotherhood.”

122 On the question whether this mission included the circumcision of male converts, affirming that this was likely the case, see Brown, “Matthean Community,” 218; A. J. Levine, Social and Ethnic Dimensions; Anthony Saldarini, “Jewish–Christian Conflict”; idem, Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community; Sim, Apocalyptic Eschatology; idem, Christian Judaism.


124 Sociologically, this phenomenon is similar to what we see in John Chrysostom’s extreme polemic against the Jews. It is quite clear that this polemic was meant to be heard by Christ-
V. Concluding Remarks

Few scholars, with some notable exceptions, have understood the Matthean communities as Pharisaic communities. Indeed, a glance at any presentation of the history of scholarship of the NT will show that the Pharisees (often equated with “Judaism”) have been presented as the absolute opposite of the Jesus movement (or “Christianity”), which, in turn, is most often understood as a homogeneous entity. Still, in addition to the evidence discussed above regarding Matthew’s Gospel, there are clear indications in the ancient sources, supported by social-scientific theories based on contemporary empirical studies, that suggest a much more complex situation with considerable overlap between and within Jewish movements in the first century, including the Jesus movement and the Pharisees.

We know from Acts 15:5 that in the late first century there were Pharisees who, without leaving their identity or institutional belonging behind, had accepted a belief in Jesus as the Messiah. Indeed, according to Acts, Paul never ceased to regard himself a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). It seems that the earliest Jesus movement was rather loosely joined together institutionally. It included Christ-believers who retained their basic group identity and institutional affiliation but related in dif-

believers, who did not perceive their identity as Christians to exclude participation in activities provided by the synagogue. By delegitimizing the group that attracted members of his church, Chrysostom hoped to establish his own institution as the only viable alternative for Christ-believers and to prevent “dual memberships.” See Robert L. Wilken, John Chrysostom and the Jews: Rhetoric and Reality in the Late Fourth Century (Transformation of the Classical Heritage 4; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983). See also Leonard V. Rutgers, “Archaeological Evidence for the Interaction of Jews and Non-Jews in Late Antiquity,” AJA 96 (1992): 101–18, here 115–16.

125 See the conclusion by Wolfgang Roth, “To Invert or Not to Invert: The Pharisaic Canon in the Gospels,” in Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals (ed. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders; JSNTSup 148; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 59–78, here 76: “One seeks Matthew among Jesus-affirming Pharisees, much like Saul of Tarsus or Nicodemus of Jerusalem. His (still intra-Pharisaic) polemic is at times stinging, betraying a passionate involvement.” See also Freyne, “Vilifying the Other,” 138, who suggests a Pharisaic origin for the Mattheans.

126 Acts 15:5: Ἐξενέστησαν δὲ τινες τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς αἱρέσεως τῶν Φαρισαίων πεπιστευκότες λέγοντες ὅτι δὲι περιτέμνειν αὐτοὺς παρασχέειν τε τῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ νόμον Μωϋσέως. While the passage recounts an event taking place in the middle of the first century, the author, writing in the late first century, seems to have no problem with the fact that some Pharisees were believers in Jesus, remaining in a group within which the majority would not share that belief.

127 Note the present tense: ἔγὼ Φαρισαῖος εἰμι, υἱός Φαρισαίων, περὶ ἐλπίδος καὶ ἀναστάσεως νεκρῶν [ἔγω] χρίνομαι. I believe that this self-understanding attributed to Paul reflects his own view, and, consequently that Phil 3:5–11 should not be read as contradicting a Pharisaic identity, but rather as emphasizing the importance of Jesus as Christ transcending specific group identities, without necessarily abolishing them.
ferent ways to an independent leadership body located in Jerusalem, which func-
tioned as a centripetal force for the formation of a messianic identity (cf. Gal 2:9).
It is important to distinguish between the self-perception of the Christ-believers
who remained within their original associations, on the one hand, and the pers-
pective of those sharing institutional affiliation with them but who did not accept
Jesus as the Messiah. A Christ-believing Pharisee may or may not have been
accepted as a Pharisee by other Pharisees, depending on which particular Pharisaic
group we are dealing with. The tensions that would follow as Christ-believers estab-
lished themselves as “subgroups” within larger groups, or associations, would lead
to strife and, undoubtedly, suffering on the part of the minorities, eventually result-
ing in schisms between the parent body—in our case the Pharisees—and the reform
movements.

The Pharisees themselves, in existence since the Hasmonean period (Jonathan
[161–143 B.C.E.]), whom we have defined sociologically as a denomination, had
among them diverse groups that at times exhibited schismatic tendencies.128 It was
similar with the rabbinic movement. This diversity calls into question the (anachro-
nistic) tendency among many scholars to understand christology to be the distin-
guishing factor behind intragroup tensions that resulted in the parting of ways
between people who originally belonged within the same institutional context. The
career of Rabbi Akiva in the rabbinic movement is telling, especially when com-
pared to the story of the fate of Rabbi Eliezer. The former was ridiculed by some for
his support of Bar Kokhba as the Messiah, but he still remained a celebrated author-
ity in the rabbinic community; the latter was excommunicated as a result of a dis-
pute with the majority over a halakic issue (b. B. Meši’a 59a–59b). In other words,
it seems indeed that halakah was more central for Jewish identity than dogma. If
christology is of prime importance in our own time in the shaping of separate Jew-
ish and Christian identities, we must nevertheless acknowledge that social location
and identity formation may have functioned quite differently within the institu-
tional framework of Jewish society in the first centuries of the Common Era.

In conclusion, the Gospel of Matthew provides us with early evidence not only
of an inner-Jewish parting of the ways, but of an inner-Pharisaic split between
groups, a process very different in character from the developments that much later
would lead to the establishment of “Christianity” as a religion independent of “Juda-
ism.” Indeed, the use of the Gospel of Matthew by non-Jewish Christ-believers as
a resource in that later process of identity formation is a fascinating and hermeneu-
tically complex problem that deserves further study.

128 See the discussion above and Meyer, “Φαρισαϊός.”