

# HEBREW MATTHEW AND MATTHEAN COMMUNITIES

by

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(Under the Direction of David S. Williams)

## ABSTRACT

Shem-Tob's *Even Bohan* contains a version of the Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew. By comparing canonical Matthew to Hebrew Matthew, the present study shows that Hebrew Matthew displays tendencies to uphold the law, support the election of Israel, exalt John the Baptist, and identify Jesus as the Messiah during his ministry. These tendencies suggest that Hebrew Matthew reflects a less redacted Matthean tradition than does canonical Matthew. The conservative tendencies of Hebrew Matthew reflect a Jewish-Christian community with characteristics in common with other early Jewish Christianities. The significance of studying such communities lies in their importance for "the partings of the ways" between early Judaism and early Christianities.

INDEX WORDS: Hebrew Matthew, Shem-Tob, *Even Bohan*, Jewish-Christian Community, Jewish Christianity, Matthean Communities

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

### Canonized Texts

HB Hebrew Bible  
NT New Testament

### Ancient Versions

LXX Septuagint  
MT Masoretic Text

### Modern Versions

RSV Revised Standard Version  
YLT Young's Literal Translation

### Biblical Sources

Mic Micah  
Matt Matthew  
Mark Mark  
Luke Luke  
John John

### Scholarly Works and Journals

*ABD* *Anchor Bible Dictionary*  
*ASTI* *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute*  
*BRev* *Bible Review*  
*CBQ* *Catholic Biblical Quarterly*  
*HUCA* *Hebrew Union College Annual*  
ICC International Critical Commentary  
*JBL* *Journal of Biblical Literature*  
*JSNT* *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*  
*JSOT* *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*  
*JTS* *Journal of Theological Studies*  
*Sef* *Sefarad*  
*TC* *A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism*

## Chapter One, Introduction

There were many Judaisms in the first century and among these Judaisms were many Christianities, each with varying and/or differing characteristics. They differed in emphases, social contexts, and geographical contexts. They are remembered according to various textual references and material remains. Among the sources for information about various Judaisms and Christianities are the Gospels, themselves results of streams and pools of gospel tradition that represent unique and singular outcomes of divergent currents of oral and written material. The present study is concerned with streams of Matthean tradition. The Gospel of Matthew represents a snap shot of Matthean tradition. An additional snap shot of Matthean tradition may be reflected in Hebrew Matthew. Hebrew Matthew is a version of the Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew, which is present in a treatise from the fourteenth century. In order to compare motifs of Hebrew Matthew with canonical Matthew, we must first address characteristics of Matthew. There are generally accepted notions concerning the issues of date, location, and sources for Matthew.

Generally, scholars consider 85-110 C.E. to be a plausible window of dating for Matthew. The Gospel was known in Syria by 110 C.E., and it “bespeaks a mature theological development on such issues as salvation history, eschatology, and world mission.”<sup>1</sup> The Gospel also reflects a location with a prominent Jewish presence as well as an early Christian ministry. Considering economic, linguistic, and social factors, Antioch of Syria is considered a possible location for the

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<sup>1</sup> “The gospel ends with a resounding affirmation of a mission to all nations; with baptism (with a triadic formula!) instead of circumcision as the initiation rite into the people of God; and the commandments of Jesus, not the Mosaic torah, as the object of teaching (28:16-20). In some instances, the commands of Jesus involve not only a break with Pharisaic observances, but also the abrogation of laws in the Pentateuch...” John P. Meier, “The Gospel of Matthew,” in *ABD* 4: 623.



production of Matthew.<sup>2</sup> Scholars consider Matthew to have several possible sources: proto-Mark, Q or Qmt, M for Matthean tradition, and proto-Luke. None of these sources are considered to be static or fixed traditions, but rather, mutually influential.

The Gospel of Matthew is of particular interest to those with questions concerning relations among early Judaism and early Christianities. The author of Matthew did not write explicitly about himself, but many portray the author of Matthew as a pastor writing to his congregation, or a scribe writing an instruction manual for his school. Using established critical methods, scholars comb for reflections and glimmers of the author and community in the narrator's telling of events 50 to 80 years prior to the writing of the Gospel. The primary purpose of the Gospel of Matthew is to tell the story of the life of Jesus and therein to relay Jesus' teachings about how to live, how to observe Jewish law, and how to prepare for the Kingdom of God. While telling this story, the author exhibits his own interpretation of Jesus' life and teachings for the admonition of some community. Early historians and early readers or hearers of Matthean gospel material developed a tradition, whereby they understood the author as a disciple of Jesus and the early community as Christians coming from a Jewish heritage. Scholars have developed additional theories concerning the author and community as they have analyzed and questioned sayings, stories, titles, and theology within the Gospel.

Scholars perform an historical, sociological speculation when proposing to what type of community the author of Matthew wrote. This speculation is based on interpreting the content of the Gospel narrative with literary critical methods and the context of the Gospel with historical critical methods. In this investigation there are many questions, such as, could there have been one author responsible for the Gospel, a school of scholars, or many individual editors or redactors over a span of time? When was the material written? Over what time did the tradition

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<sup>2</sup> J. P. Meier, in R. E. Brown and J. P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, (New York: Paulist, 1983), 19-25.

develop? Many more questions abound. Scholars examine certain topics in Matthew in order to characterize the implied author, setting, and reader. Then they use these characterizations to suggest something about a real evangelist or final redactor and an historical setting and original community. The topics scholars often examine in Matthew's narrative include torah, election, and Christology. Scholars analyze verses to identify positions relative to these, and then they propose what type of community, author and/or setting those positions represent: Jewish or Gentile, with respect to heritage, and Jewish or Christian with respect to religious practice.

As I describe and compare various views about the communities of the Gospel of Matthew, I refer to the author of Matthew, but I am accepting that the conception of individual authorship is oversimplified. I am assuming the portrayal of Gospel authorship, as Krister Stendahl says, as a creative milieu of traditions, sayings, and stories, which all mutually influenced one another in a process of standardization.<sup>3</sup> The Gospels are results of processes of redaction, editing, translation, and compilation of oral and written tradition. They are still frame pictures of bodies of tradition that were in motion. Likewise, whatever type of setting or community is reflected in the narrative was also not static. The variety among scholarly portrayals and analyses of Matthew's community testifies to the hypothetical nature of this type of study. Whatever type of community the Gospel of Matthew had, the Gospel in the canonical form contains reflections of community and traditional change and development over the span of at least a few decades. These were decades in which much occurred in the social and theological and ecclesiastical contexts of early Christian communities.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and its Use of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 13.

<sup>4</sup> "It is questionable, however, whether we should think of M in terms of one fixed document in addition to Mark and Q, since M is simply an umbrella term used to designate any tradition in the gospel that cannot be traced to Mark, Q, or Matthean redaction. Thus M is isolated by a process of subtraction; it encompasses many different strata of tradition reflecting different theological positions. If M represents the traditions of the local church to which the author of the gospel belonged, then that church had a complicated history and was made up of a variety of contending groups." "The M material no doubt grew in liturgical and catechetical activity of the Church over

## Four Proposals for the Identity of a Community of Matthew

Four distinct views of the author and communities of Matthew are described by Graham N. Stanton: 1) Matthew, a disciple of Jesus, wrote before 70 C.E., for Jewish Christians in Palestine, in Hebrew; 2) the author of Matthew used Mark, wrote after 70 C.E., and both author and community see themselves as within Judaism; 3) the author wrote after 70 C.E., used Mark, and he and his community had just experienced a recent, painful parting from Judaism; and 4) Matthew was a Gentile Christian for whom the relationship of church and synagogue were not a prime concern, Israel has been totally rejected by God, and passages in which the author seems Jewish are pre-Matthean.<sup>5</sup> There are other variations as well, but these summarize the variety.

The first view is based on early references to Matthew, which understand the work as written for Jewish Christians in “Hebrew” language or style of speech. Papias is the earliest of these references, and later references seem to be dependent upon this one: “Matthew gathered together the matters (λογια) in Hebrew dialect and each interpreted these as he was able.” Tradition developed containing more specific knowledge about the author and community that are historically questionable. Origen, for example, commits to knowing that Matthew, the tax collector and apostle, wrote the first gospel for Jewish adherents, in Hebrew.<sup>6</sup> Modern scholars assumed Papias was mistaken or meant style of speech rather than language, since all material

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decades and was the living *Sitz im Leben* in which Mark and Q were understood long before the sources were brought together by Matthew. M, therefore, should be viewed as a dynamic oral tradition rather than some sort of primitive document.” “The true *Sitz im Leben* for this huge gospel was the entire life of Matthew’s church over decades: initial instruction of both Jewish and gentile converts, the more advanced education of church leaders in faith and church order, liturgical reading, missionary appeal, and debates with Pharisaic Judaism.” Meier, “Gospel of Matthew,” 622, 623.

<sup>5</sup> Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), 114-132.

<sup>6</sup> George Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1995), 155, 157. Howard cites Eusebius *H.E.* 3.39.16. and *H.E.* 6.25.4.

remains of Matthew are in Greek.<sup>7</sup> The first view also represents a traditional acceptance that Matthew contains an eyewitness account of the life of Jesus.

The second and third views are most similar. Notice that the question, which distinguishes these two views, is that of the “partings of the ways,” as discussed in my conclusion. Anthony J. Saldarini represents the second view. He uses sociological theory to speculate what relationship Matthew’s community had with Judaism. He interprets conflict and hostility as indicative of intra-group strife. Saldarini interprets the descriptions of Jesus, the disciples, and the Jewish authorities as representations of the struggles and situation of Matthew’s community. Saldarini interprets conflict in the narrative between Jesus or his disciples and Jewish leaders as conflict between Matthew’s community and Jewish leaders, but not between Matthew’s community and Judaism as a separate whole. Saldarini emphasizes the duration of Jewish-Christian relations and the slowness of rabbinic Judaism emerging as authoritative. He emphasizes that Matthew is “more Jewish” than other Gospels and New Testament (NT) writings concerning typology, use of terms, and theology.<sup>8</sup> W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison also represent the second view, and apply a sociological analysis to interpret Matthew as a pastor.<sup>9</sup> They differ from Saldarini in that they understand the rise of rabbinic Judaism as quite rapid.

The third view is well-represented by Stanton, who considers Matthew’s community to be parted from Judaism. He identifies distinctive features of Matthew’s narrative, which contributed to the “partings of the ways.” They each represent, for Stanton, an atmosphere of

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<sup>7</sup> W. G. Kummell, *Introduction to the New Testament* (rev.ed., trans. Howard Clark Kee Nashville: Abingdon, 1975), 49, 120-21. This view is countered below in reference to Jean Carmignac, “Studies in the Hebrew Background of the Synoptic Gospels,” *ASTI* 7 (1969): 64-93.

<sup>8</sup> Anthony Saldarini, *Matthew’s Jewish-Christian Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). Also see Stanton, *Gospel for a New People*, 118-124. This second view was shared by G. D. Kilpatrick, and initially, G. Bornkamm, and R. Hummel.

<sup>9</sup> W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, “Matthew: A Retrospect,” in *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel of St. Matthew* (ICC 3; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997): 692-727.

hostility with Judaism. These features include: increased anti-Jewish polemic, greater prominence of apocalyptic themes, the claim that the church is the true heir and interpreter of scripture, and defense of the Gentile mission. He also identifies elements of the narrative that function to promote internal cohesion for the nascent Christian community: calls for righteousness, concern for internal dissent, and warnings to prepare for the parousia. This internal cohesion would be needed amidst a perceived threat from Judaism, in order to delimit and legitimate the new community.<sup>10</sup>

Supporters of the fourth view consider the redactor of Matthew to be a Gentile Christian for whom the relationship of church and synagogue were not a prime concern and who believes that Israel has been totally rejected by God. According to them, passages in which the author seems Jewish are pre-Matthean. This assumes that Matthew's community was originally Jewish, but that at the time of the writing of the Gospel, it was entirely Gentile, with no discussion with or defense against Judaism. Scholars, such as John P. Meier, support this view by comparing the Gospel as it has been redacted with early strata of traditional material. He and others argue that the author betrays ignorance of Jewish parties and laws. They consider the author to portray Israel as rejected, such that the mission to Israel has been replaced by a mission to Gentiles. Finally, many scholars argue that the anti-Jewish polemic is so strong that the author could not be Jewish.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Graham Stanton, "Matthew's Christology and the Parting of the Ways," in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways AD 70-135* (ed. J. D. G. Dunn; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999). This third view is shared by Stendahl, Kummel, W. Trilling (sometimes), H. Frankmoelle, and D. R. A. Hare. See Stanton, *Gospel for a New People*, 125.

<sup>11</sup> Stanton, *Gospel for a New People*, 131-134. Stanton assesses this view as uncommon until recent decades in which scholars such as S. van Tilborg, R. Walker, K.W. Clark, P. Nepper-Christensen, G. Strecker, and W. Trilling (sometimes) uphold this view. Nepper-Christensen argues for a Gentile origin of the gospel; Trilling and Strecker see the final editor of the gospel in Gentile terms. Also see Stendahl *School of St. Matthew*, xi. Each of these arguments are well represented by J. P. Meier in the *ABD* entry on "The Gospel of Matthew." Meier, "The Gospel of Matthew."

## Theological Matters Used to Characterize a Community of Matthew

These hypotheses are based on analysis of Matthew's treatment of certain subject matter, specifically torah, election, and Christology. Torah represents scripture and law, and the Sadducees, scribes, and Pharisees are interpreters of the law. Election is the view of Israel as God's elect, relevant to which is the Gentile mission, the view of the temple, and anti-Jewish rhetoric. Christology includes the role of the Messiah, titles used for Jesus such as Son of God, Son of David, and Christ, and the roles of John the Baptist (JBap) as the precursor to the Messiah. These are the areas of concern for those characterizing a community of Matthew. It is necessary for the present study to address how scholars characterize Matthew's attitude toward these areas. Only after addressing characterizations of Matthew can we appreciate the significance of Hebrew Matthew's attitude toward these areas, which is proposed in chapter two.

The torah is considered a pillar of early Judaism, something common among the variations of Jewish belief and practice.<sup>12</sup> Those that consider the community of Matthew to be Jewish argue that Matthew's frequent quotation and reference to the Hebrew Bible (HB) reflects his Jewishness. They reason that Matthew uses biblical tradition and prophecy because he needs to connect his community's practice and belief to Judaism. They interpret Matthew's narrative to show that Jesus upholds the law and "intensifies" it. However, those that consider the community and author to be separate from Judaism interpret the narrative to show that Jesus abrogates the law and belittles Moses, the receiver of the law.<sup>13</sup> Ivor Jones analyzes Jesus' treatment of the law as parallel to that of Philo and Josephus, saying, "the principle of the law is affirmed but what the law requires may not be sustainable in practice." This reflects "a context in which Matthew and

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<sup>12</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways* (Philadelphia: Trinity International, 1991), 23-31.

<sup>13</sup> Meier, "Gospel of Matthew," 623.

his communities, like some Jews, were searching for a fresh understanding of the place of the law in a multi-cultural setting.”<sup>14</sup>

The Gospel narratives portray Jesus interacting with the Sadducees and Pharisees, debating aspects of the law. Those who argue that Matthew is still within Judaism interpret the conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees and Sadducees as representing conflict between the author of Matthew and contemporary Jewish leaders. James D. G. Dunn’s view is that Matthew portrays his community as more loyal to the law than the Pharisees. Saldarini considers the cursing of scribes and Pharisees to be an attempt to undermine tradition and the established leadership of Jewish community. In order to legitimate his own community, Matthew attacks his contemporary leaders through Jesus’ polemic. Saldarini emphasizes that Jesus attacks their personal integrity and the accuracy of their interpretation of the law, but Jesus does not attack Israel.<sup>15</sup>

Those who argue that Matthew’s community is no longer among Judaisms interpret the tension between Jesus and the Sadducees and Pharisees as representing Matthew’s tension with Judaism, not just contemporary Jewish leaders. Stendahl argues that the polemic against the scribes and Pharisees represents polemic against the synagogue “across the street” for Matthew’s community. He states that, for Matthew, the line between church and synagogue is drawn definitely, and Christianity is ethically superior to Judaism.<sup>16</sup> Those who argue that Matthew’s author was not Jewish emphasize an apparent ignorance of Jewish groups. The Pharisees and Sadducees are linked together five times in Matthew, but nowhere else in the NT or in other first century writings. Meier argues that no Jewish-Christian redactor would treat these groups

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<sup>14</sup> Ivor Jones, “Matthew,” in *Early Christian Thought in its Jewish Context* (eds. Barclay and Sweet; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 59-69, 63.

<sup>15</sup> Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 152,153. Saldarini, *Matthew’s Jewish-Christian Community*, 44-67.

<sup>16</sup> Stendahl, *School of St. Matthew*, xiii.

together.<sup>17</sup> Stanton counters this interpretation by arguing that the evangelist is historicizing when he mentions the Sadducees, not reflecting his situation. Both the Pharisees and Sadducees are in opposition to Jesus, and this similarity outweighs their differences from the evangelist's viewpoint.<sup>18</sup>

Many early Jewish groups considered the temple to be the locus of God's presence. The destruction of the temple in 70 C.E. affected even the most distant of the Diaspora.<sup>19</sup> However, there were many critical attitudes of the contemporary temple institution among early Jewish groups. As Saldarini describes, Jesus criticized, not the temple itself, but "business as usual" in the temple. However, the Gospel narrative is also interpreted as portraying Jesus attacking the temple. Regardless of Jesus' intentions or threats of destruction, Jesus states in Matt 12:6, that "something greater than the temple is here." Early Christians, specifically Matthew's community, considered Jesus to be this "something greater than the temple," Jesus replaced the temple as the locus of God's presence.<sup>20</sup>

The status of Israel as the elect, God's Chosen People, is foundational within Jewish history. Both the Essenes and early Christian groups referred to themselves as the true Israel, in sectarian fashion. In Matthew, scholars analyze the presentation of Jesus' earthly ministry in order to address the community's view or the redactor's view of Israel as compared to the Gentiles. Those who consider Matthew's community to be distinct from Judaism argue that Jesus shifts his ministry to the Gentiles and in so doing, shifts his ministry away from Israel. These scholars emphasize Matthew's qualifications "*their* synagogues" and "*their* scribes." Meier says

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<sup>17</sup> Meier, "Gospel of Matthew," 627.

<sup>18</sup> Stanton, *Gospel for a New People*, 136.

<sup>19</sup> John J. Collins, *Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 138-140.

<sup>20</sup> Stanton, "Matthew's Christology," 115.



that this qualification betrays a lack of desire to convert Jewish individuals and indicates that the synagogue is a foreign institution to Matthew's community.<sup>21</sup>

Much of the evaluation of Israel's election in Matthew is focused on Matt 28:19-20, the "Great Commission," and specifically, the phrase "all nations," *παντα τα εθνη*. Some consider Israel to have been rejected by God by this stage in the narrative, and they interpret the command to "make disciples of all nations" as not including Israel, but meaning "all the Gentiles." Meier includes both Jews and Gentiles in the *εθνη*, nations. However, he maintains the conclusion that Matthew's community does not consider itself in union with Judaism. Among his supporting evidence he emphasizes that the initiation described in Matt 28:19-20, is baptism with the triadic formula, rather than circumcision. Also, concerning Matt 21:43, "therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a people [*εθνος*] bearing its fruits," he considers this verse to indicate transference of the kingdom from Israel to a non-Israel, specifically, the church.<sup>22</sup>

Saldarini criticizes the interpretation of a rejection of Israel for supporting successionist theology. He prefers to analyze the portrayal of Israel, people (*λαος*), and crowds (*οχλοι*) in the narrative. He argues that no NT writer claims that those believing in Jesus were the "true Israel." Rather, in Matthew, Israel refers to the land, or the historical ethnic and religious group, or the Jewish community as a whole, or both the people and land. He argues that the terms Israel, people, and crowds only have theological significance when the group is in need of care. Hans Kosmala also evaluated the use of the terms for people and crowds in Matthew and in Jewish literature, specifically in regard to Matt 27:24-25. He argues that negative interpretations of

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<sup>21</sup> Meier labels "their": "a pointed linguistic opposition." Meier, "Gospel of Matthew," 625.

<sup>22</sup> R. E. Brown and J. P. Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 62, note 137. D. R. A Hare and D. J. Harrington translate the phrase as to all the Gentiles." Meier, "Gospel of Matthew," 623.

groups of Jewish people in Matthew are a result of later Christian theologians projecting anti-Jewish sentiment onto the narrative.<sup>23</sup>

The verses in Matthew that are interpreted as abrogating the law, as vilifying the interpreters of the law, and as rejecting Israel as God's elect have been used in anti-Jewish polemic. These verses are particularly sensitive considering early anti-Jewish rhetoric within Christian tradition and thereafter, within European states and colonies. Especially after the Holocaust, scholars and many clergy have recognized the necessity to address fodder for anti-Jewish rhetoric. Scholars must analyze verses in Matthew to determine if the verses are anti-Jewish in their original context or if they are anti-Jewish only when taken out of context. Those who consider Matthew to be the result of a Gentile redactor interpret the anti-Jewish material as indicative of a community quite removed from Judaism. They reason that a Jewish redactor could not allow such brutal language against one's own people. However, those who view the community of Matthew as close to Judaism, whether still within Judaism or recently parted, interpret the anti-Jewish sentiment as indicative of close relationships and intense anguish over differing views.

Stanton interprets the anti-Jewish polemic as part of Matthew's defense of his community from Pharisaic rivals. Saldarini interprets the anti-Jewish polemic as reaction from a deviant group, which is still within Judaism and still subject to the discipline of Jewish leaders.<sup>24</sup> Stanton lists anti-Jewish elements in Matthew: Jesus and JBap call the Pharisees a "brood of vipers," the scribes and Pharisees are called an adulterous and evil generation, the narrator portrays the Pharisees joining the chief priests as accusers of Jesus, the narrator refutes the rumor that the

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<sup>23</sup> Hans Kosmala, "His Blood on Us and on Our Children," *ASTI* 7 (1968): 95-126. "It is not our task here to investigate into the factors which led to this wild exaggeration of the actual meaning and value of those words... The words in their anti-Jewish interpretation became an important argument of Christians for their continued attacks against the Jews."

<sup>24</sup> Stanton, *Gospel for a New People*, 138, 139, 146-157. Saldarini, *Matthew's Jewish Christian Community*, 44-67.

disciples stole Jesus, the narrator states that this rumor is spread by Jewish elders, and the claims that Jesus fulfils Isaiah's prophecy lead to the portrayal of the Pharisees as blasphemers when they charge that Jesus is in league with the prince of demons.<sup>25</sup>

Michael Cook considers Matthew to be anti-Jewish and he criticizes the use of particular verses to argue otherwise. He analyzed four passages that are sometimes interpreted as "pro-Jewish," Matt 10:5-6, 15:24, 5:17ff, and 23:2.<sup>26</sup> These verses, Cook explains, are used not only to establish Jesus' loyalty to the Jewish people and law and to establish Jesus' affirmation of the scribes and Pharisees, but also, to propose an identity for the Gospel redactor as Jewish. He says that they are not, in fact, pro-Jewish and that the redactor was not Jewish. He considers the presumption that Matthew represents a Jewish community and/or redactor to be based on characterizations of Jewish thought as legalistic.

Though Matt 5:17ff argues for upholding, not abolishment of the law, and Matt 23:3 affirms the scribes and Pharisees as sitting on the "seat of Moses," Cook argues that these verses cannot be interpreted as representing the sentiments of a segment of an early Jewish church of Matthew or of a Jewish redactor, because each function as a preface for an anti-Jewish stance. The literary function is to aggrandize Moses in 5:17ff, so that it is more impressive when Jesus succeeds him. Following verses characterize Judaism of Matthew's day, but the characterizations are followed by, "but I say to you." Cook argues that Matthew's praise of the law is artificial, and is only an artistic prelude to law's denigration. Similarly, Matt 23:2 is followed by denunciation of scribes and Pharisees. Jesus is portrayed as approving them, and then censuring them as interpreters of the law. Likewise, Matt 10:5-6 and 15:24, which describe a mission to Israel only, are countered by the "Great Commission" to "all the nations," rather than only to

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<sup>25</sup> Stanton, "Matthew's Christology," 105-107.

<sup>26</sup> Michael Cook, "Interpreting 'Pro-Jewish' Passages in Matthew," *HUCA* 54 (1983): 135-146.

Israel (See above for other interpretations of “all the nations.”) and the omission of the opening of the Shema in Matt 22:37, which addresses it to Israel.

Matthew portrays his community as the eschatological people of God, and this is a claim that reflects Jewish tradition, but scholars disagree on the self-identification of Matthew’s community as a new people of God or as a righteous Jewish community. For Matthew’s community, Jesus takes the place of the temple, succeeds Moses as the law-giver, and has authority to criticize the interpreters of the law. Matthew’s community considers itself more faithful to the law than Jewish leaders, but scholars vary on whether the tension between Matthew’s community and Jewish leaders represents a lack of identification with Judaism or the strife of a deviant group within Judaism.

Christology is a prime area of study for those concerned with the development of early forms of Christianity. Christology developed over time, and at different rates in different early Christian settings. A discussion of Christology is concerned with the development of various roles applied to Jesus, including the role of Messiah and roles associated with various titles such as Son of God, Son of Man, and Son of David. An additional aspect of Jesus’ role as Messiah is the role of JBap as the precursor of the Messiah. Scholars use aspects of Matthew’s Christology to elucidate the orientation of Matthew’s community.

The role of Messiah was appropriated into Christian tradition and developed into a significant aspect of belief about Jesus. The role of Messiah is a Jewish one, but Jewish and Christian understandings of this term differ in light of Christological development. Early Christian traditions used this role, perhaps, to legitimate their tradition along side Judaism. Considering the tumultuous times in which early Judaism and Christianities developed, one may

consider various Messiahs and messianic themes, and compare them to those relating to Jesus in order to compare Jewish messianic ideas with the Christian development of these ideas.

In order to describe the Jewish expectation of Messiah, scholars first examine the HB. Evidence in the HB does not portray a uniform or coherent belief about the messianic role. The Messiah is described as a priest-king, but also as a warrior-judge, or a combination of both. A conglomerate description offered by Jacob Neusner lists characteristics of the Messiah as follows. The Messiah in early Jewish thought was 1) a man, 2) who at the eschaton, 3) brings salvation, 4) to Israel. Israel, he defines as “whatever Israel is for the social group addressed by the way of life and worldview of that Judaism.” Furthermore, all messianic writings are characterized by both address to Israel and reference to diverse passages from the HB.<sup>27</sup> Other descriptions include the purpose of the Messiah to “restore the harmony of Eden.”<sup>28</sup> It is difficult to strictly compare these roles to Jesus’ life since the Gospel accounts have an agenda to portray Jesus as the fulfillment of Jewish messianic expectation and in doing so have him fulfill biblical references to the Messiah.<sup>29</sup>

In order to analyze how early Jewish groups expressed messianic expectation, scholars examine Dead Sea texts for messianic expectation contemporary to early Christianities. As Lester L. Grabbe discusses, the *War Scroll* does not mention a Messiah, the *Damascus Document* mentions the “messiah of Aaron and Israel,” but does not describe the function of this/these Messiah(s), *Community Rule* mentions “Messiahs,” and *Messianic Rule* mentions a priestly Messiah of Aaron and a Messiah of Israel.<sup>30</sup> James H. Charlesworth concludes that there

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<sup>27</sup> Jacob Neusner, preface to *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*. (Eds. J. Neusner, W.S. Green, and E. Frerichs; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>28</sup> J. H. Charlesworth, “From Jewish Messianology to Christian Christology,” in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs*, 225-264, 225.

<sup>29</sup> Lester L. Grabbe, *An Introduction to First Century Judaism* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996). Grabbe, Neusner, Greene, and Sanders agree that messianism was varied, Horbury disagrees.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 3. Also see Shemaryahu Talmon, “Waiting for the Messiah: The Spiritual Universe of the Qumran

is no way to begin from Qumran messianism and develop Christian messianism.<sup>31</sup> Scholars also examine sources from the end of the first century such as 4 Ezra, which describes the death of the Messiah, and 2 Baruch, in which the messianic kingdom is the kingdom of God.<sup>32</sup>

There are also texts and material remains that portray other historical figures as messianic. Simon ben Kosiba, or Bar Kokhba is an intriguing figure for inquiry into early Jewish messianism. His name, “Son of the Star,” may be a messianic label based on Numbers 24 (one can compare this to Matt 2:2), and symbols on coins also seem to portray Bar Kokhba as a messianic figure. However, in letters and documents, he appears, without messianic titles, to be a normal leader concerned with banal affairs.<sup>33</sup>

Though Philo was a “Hellenistic” Jew, he lived during the lifetime of Jesus, and so offers a Jewish interpretation of the Messiah that is coeval with early gospel tradition. He understood the Messiah as symbolic, as an allegory for Logos. He emphasized a messianic age rather than an individual Messiah. The messianic age is a time of peaceful prosperity, in which there is no more Diaspora and Gentiles have come into Israel.<sup>34</sup>

William Horbury affirms the Jewishness of messianism, and also argues for coherence and prevalence of messianism in early Jewish thought. He argues that Messiah was a common term, so a paucity of the term in Jewish literature at the time of Jesus cannot cast doubt on the Jewishness of messianism. He considers the term Son of God to be specifically messianic and the term Kyrios Christos to be distinctly Jewish. Horbury considers even the incorporation of non-Jewish practices into Christianity to be a result of Jewish influence upon Christianity:

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Covenanters,” in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs*, 111-138, 123-5.

<sup>31</sup> Charlesworth, “From Jewish Messianology to Christian Christology,” 234.

<sup>32</sup> Grabbe, *An Introduction to First Century Judaism*, 68-69.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, ch. 3.

<sup>34</sup> R. D. Hecht, “Philo and Messiah,” in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs*, 140-151.

“Among Jews before and during the rise of Christianity a king or the messiah could be praised in terms shared with contemporary ruler-cults, and the Christians inherited and developed this traditional Jewish practice, themselves continuing to draw on the contemporary vocabulary of royal praise.”

Finally, he compares Christ-cult material to messianic praise in rabbinic and targumic biblical interpretation: the enthroned Messiah receives tribute, the Messiah has beauty and splendor, he leads the people to the holy city, he builds the temple, he judges, he is compared to Moses, he is exalted above Abraham, Moses, and the angels, and the messianic time is one of abundance.<sup>35</sup>

Willaim Scott Green disagrees with Horbury, arguing that use of messianism was very diverse, scant, and inconsistent. He says there is “little evidence of sustained thought” about the Messiah, who is an eschatological figure. This supports Grabbe’s analysis that there is evidence of eschatology in many documents from early Jewish times, but not necessarily of messianism. Green says that “Messiah” is all signifier with no signified. The term is indeterminate in early Jewish literature.<sup>36</sup>

George MacRae argues that with passing time, the matter of Jesus as the Messiah gained prominence, and the understanding of Messiah moved away from a traditional Jewish understanding of Messiah to a more traditional Christian understanding. As the role Messiah/Christ became more central to Christianity, the understanding of the roles of Messiah/Christ moved away from traditional Jewish understanding of the Messiah.<sup>37</sup>

Charlesworth clarifies the task of discussing Christian messianism. For Christians, Jesus is the expected Messiah. To trace the development of Jewish messianism to Christian messianism,

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<sup>35</sup> William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM, 1998), 113, 116, 118, 136.

<sup>36</sup> William Scott Green, “Introduction: Messiah in Judaism: Rethinking the Question,” in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs*, 1-14.

<sup>37</sup> George MacRae, “Messiah and Gospel,” in *Judaisms and Their Messiahs*, 169-186, 174.

however, is difficult because there was no definable messianic belief that was widespread or normative. Though Jewish followers of Jesus applied this title to him, the title cannot be assumed to be evident in Jewish literature. “It must be emphasized that the cessation of the ceremonial act of anointing of the priest, or high priest, and the collapse of the kingship meant that *there was no anointed one among God’s people*” (his italics).<sup>38</sup>

Matthew uses the role of the Messiah without reference to liberation of the Jewish people from foreign domination, and only refers the spiritual qualities of the Messiah. Matthew also develops a double parousia. Stanton attributes the beginning of the idea of a double parousia to Matthew. He explains that some Jewish people chose to address the “painful facts” that Jesus’ life was unsuccessful in that he was not a Davidic Messiah type, but rather, had died. They responded to these disappointments by positing a double parousia. The first is Jesus’ earthly life as the Son of David, and the second is a later life as the triumphant Christ figure.<sup>39</sup>

Titles ascribed to Jesus have been completely amalgamated by some, but punctiliously distinguished by others. Though each title carries distinct meaning, it is impossible to know the exact use in various historical contexts between the HB and the Gospels. Horbury considers the titles Son of God, and Saviour (σωτηρ) to be messianic titles. He concludes that Jewish messianism influenced Christology during both the ministry of Jesus and later when the NT books were written and that there was also independent development of biblical messianic material in early Judaism and early Christianity in a shared Greco-Roman context.<sup>40</sup> In Matthew, the titles Son of God and Son of David are most prominent. Matthew seems to respond to accusations that Jesus was a magician and a deceiver of Israel. The title Son of God does not

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<sup>38</sup> Charlesworth, “From Jewish Messianology to Christian Christology,” 225.

<sup>39</sup> Stanton, “Matthew’s Christology,” 112-114.

<sup>40</sup> Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, 87, 147.



provoke hostility from the Jewish leaders. The title Son of David does provoke hostility.<sup>41</sup>

Finally, the term Christ is used 17 times in Matthew, but since the term was also used as a name for Jesus among early Greek speaking Christians, it might not have reference to its etymology every time.

The role of Jesus as Messiah in traditional gospel narrative often begins with the role of JBap, as the precursor to Jesus as Messiah. When scholars investigate the role of JBap, they find very positive views of him, but also they also find verses that counter the exaltation of JBap compared to Jesus. In Matthew's narrative, their parallel experiences suggest assimilation, but Jesus is also differentiated from JBap, who is subordinate to Jesus. Both are portrayed as prophets who find a fate similar to the persecuted prophets to Israel.<sup>42</sup> JBap is an integral part of the development of Matthew's Christology, JBap refers to Jesus as "the coming one" in 3:11, a phrase that has been interpreted as meaning "the Christ," based on 11:2-3, in which Jesus answers JBap's question, "Are you he who is to come?"

JBap is exalted in several ways. In Matt 3, JBap is among the four characters introduced with a title. He is presented calling for repentance and proclaiming the kingdom of God, to which the people respond positively. In Matt 3:3, the narrator portrays JBap as fulfilling the prophecy regarding the one who calls the people to prepare the way of the Lord. His clothing is patterned after Elijah's, and his diet is ascetic. JBap has credibility from the narrator's perspective, and following, when he speaks positively or negatively about others, he reflects the author's view. JBap shares a privilege with Jesus and the narrator in knowing others' thoughts. Also, JBap once uses the phrase, "I say to you," in Matt 3:9. Jesus often uses this phrase and it is interpreted as a

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<sup>41</sup> Stanton, "Matthew's Christology," 108-112.

<sup>42</sup> Gary Yamasake, *John the Baptist in Life and Death: Audience Oriented Criticism of Matthew's Narrative* (JSNT Supplement Series 167; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press), 30. Also, Meier, "Gospel of Matthew," 630.

parallel to “Thus says Yahweh,” a phrase used by the prophets. JBap announces judgment in 3:10, threatening the Jewish leaders.

JBap’s view of himself in 3:11 reveals his ministry of baptism with water and his mission of repentance. He contrasts himself to the “one coming after me,” who is greater and who will baptize with fire. For the narrator, Jesus is the “one coming after me” who will baptize with fire in a role of judgment. JBap baptizes Jesus, but with hesitation, Gary Yamasake finds this to be the first of several indications from the narrator that JBap misunderstands Jesus’ timing. JBap is imprisoned as Jesus goes into the desert, so JBap’s ministry ends as Jesus’ ministry begins in 4:12. Though JBap is in prison, his disciples still represent him in the narrative, but they are in opposition to Jesus’ disciples. As Matthew’s narrative continues, the differences between JBap and Jesus increase, and eventually the narrator aligns JBap with the Pharisees.<sup>43</sup>

According to the narrator, Jesus views JBap as more than a prophet in Matt 11:7, “Yes, I say to you, and more than a prophet!” and in 11:10, Jesus confirms that JBap fulfills prophecy. In Matt 11:11, Jesus says that there is no one greater than JBap, born of women, but, this is qualified with the statement that the least in the kingdom will be greater than he. Davies and Allison suggest that 11:9 might include JBap in the Kingdom.<sup>44</sup> Even though JBap appears to misunderstand Jesus, especially his timing, he is the only one who understand Jesus role as judge.<sup>45</sup>

The execution of JBap completes his prophetic career. At the same time, Jesus is being rejected in his hometown. Simultaneously, the narrator labels Jesus and JBap as prophets. JBap,

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<sup>43</sup> Yamasake, *John the Baptist*, 73, 81, 87-93, 96, 103, 104-106. JBap also misunderstands the lack of fasting among Jesus’ disciples, because he regards Jesus as an eschatological judge, making fasting for repentance appropriate. Finally, JBap’s misunderstanding is also evident when he questions Jesus’ identity.

<sup>44</sup> Davies and Allison, “Matthew: a Retrospect,” 252, note 76. First is Jesus, second is anyone now in the kingdom, which excludes JBap, and third anyone when the kingdom actually comes. Another explanation is the use of “little ones” to mean disciples.

<sup>45</sup> Yamasake, *John the Baptist*, 128.

as forerunner of Jesus and as a parallel prophetic hopeful, provides a foreshadowing of their common experiences, which Yamasake lists as follows: 1) arrest, bondage, imprisonment, 2) escape from execution due to a captors fear of the crowds, 3) each is ordered to be executed with the reluctance of his captor, 4) both die as criminals, and 5) both are buried by their disciples. They are alike enough that Herod thinks Jesus is JBap arisen from the dead. JBap is repeatedly and exclusively identified with the prophets, he is like Elijah, Jeremiah, and “one of the prophets,” therefore he has the fate of a prophet. Jesus, though a prophet, is exalted above JBap and the prophets, since he is also called Messiah and Son of God.<sup>46</sup>

#### Matters of Language Used to Characterize a Community of Matthew

Other than theological characteristics of Matthew, there are several aspects of Matthew that scholars analyze to characterize the Gospel. Among these aspects of Matthew, original language and the formula quotations are significant for the present study. Proposals for an original language of Matthew include Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic, and most scholars support Greek. Many scholars, however, posit a Hebrew or Aramaic source for Matthew. The original language bears on the background of the author or redactor of Matthew. Meier supports the hypothesis that the redactor of Matthew was a Gentile Christian who belonged to the Antiochene church, but who preserved the Jewish-Christian traditions within the church. He considers this hypothesis to explain Matthew’s Semitic characteristics better than a hypothesis for a well-educated Hellenistic Jewish-Christian redactor. He notes that Mark has the greatest number of Semitisms and Semitic words and that Matthew tends to drop Aramaic words and improves the Semitic Greek of Mark.<sup>47</sup> Studies that support an Aramaic background for Matthew emphasize agreements between Matthew and the Masoretic Text (MT) against the Septuagint (LXX).

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 121, 118, 133.

<sup>47</sup> Meier, “Gospel of Matthew,” 626.

Charles C. Torrey posited an Aramaic Matthew with quotations from the HB in Hebrew.

“Torrey’s retroversion of Matthew’s text into Hebrew, however, is scarcely supported by a single case in which this hypothesis yields a striking explanation of Matthew’s text form,” according to Stendahl.<sup>48</sup>

Jean Carmignac supports a Hebrew background for the synoptic Gospels. He reminds us that in light of the Qumran scrolls the possibility of a Semitic background for the Synoptics cannot be dismissed without discussion, because they attest that Hebrew was fluently spoken and written in Palestine.<sup>49</sup> In his study he adopts a position “based on the assumption that there did exist a primitive or ‘presynoptic’ text in Hebrew.” More specifically, he argues for a Qumran style of Hebrew from which the Gospels were translated into Greek, rather than biblical or Mishnaic Hebrew. He supports his arguments by analyzing mistranslations, verbal plays, visual omissions, and synoptic variants. He shows that the mistranslations, omissions, additions, and variants are best explained by use of a Hebrew text. Among the mistranslations, only one is found in Matthew.<sup>50</sup>

Specifically concerning Matthew, Carmignac supports the veracity of early statements that Matthew had a Semitic background. Eight early writers stated this tradition over thirty times between them, and he argues that these writers would have been able to distinguish Hebrew from Aramaic and vice versa. Furthermore, there are recoverable scraps of Matthew listed by Kurt Aland in the *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum*, some of which are clearly Hebrew. Carmignac

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<sup>48</sup> James A. Montgomery, “Torrey’s Aramaic Gospels,” *JBL* 53 (1934): 79-99. Stendahl, *School of St. Matthew*, 152.

<sup>49</sup> Carmignac, “The Semitic Background of the Synoptic Gospels,” 63-93. Also see J. A. Emerton, “The Problem of Vernacular Hebrew in the First Century AD and the Language of Jesus,” *JTS* 24 (1973): 1-23.

<sup>50</sup> Carmignac, “The Semitic Background of the Synoptic Gospels,” 63-93. Of the Hebrew word plays, there are four unique to Matthew, four shared by Matthew and Mark, two shared by Matthew and Luke, one shared by all three, and sixteen in Mark alone. There are six visual omissions in Matthew that are easily explained if Matthew used a Hebrew source. Matthew contains more additions to Mark than does Luke from the Hebrew source. There are nine variants between Mark and Matthew, and six of these are common to Matthew and Luke. Carmignac attributes the variation to confusion between Hebrew consonants and confusion concerning what vowels were appropriate.

considers his research and the research of others, especially Alfred Resch, to show that “there must have existed on original Matthew in Hebrew.”<sup>51</sup>

Stendahl does not support the hypothesis of a Semitic background for Matthew. He is specifically concerned with the formulaic quotations in Matthew. Though other scholars have used them as evidence of a Semitic source, Stendahl does not. He describes Matthew’s use of the quotations as adaptation of narrative to quotation or of quotation to narrative. He considers this adaptation to be a feature of Matthew that is indicative of scholarly work within a church setting. Stendahl considers Matthew to be the product of a school. He compares the formula quotations to the commentary on Habakkuk from the Dead Sea Scrolls and to the *Manual of Discipline* from Qumran.<sup>52</sup>

Stendahl considers the formulaic quotations to be an advanced form of Hebrew exegesis. He rejects the hypothesis that they were taken from a Jewish-Christian source, but also admits to characteristics of Matthew that “seem Jewish” and even rabbinic. Stendahl considers the Hellenistic setting of the Gospel to be evident from its language, its interest in ethics rather than *halakhah*, and its familiarity with “Hellenistic Christology.” He also considers the Jewish setting to be evident from the quotations, from “stylistic peculiarities,” and from “the intense preoccupation with those Jews, who had not accepted Jesus as the Messiah of whom the Scriptures spoke.” He proposes that Matthew’s church grew out of Hellenistic Judaism, but still had contact with Jewish learning in at least one member. He views Matthew’s community as completely separate from the local Jewish community. He considers the author of Matthew to be Jewish with Jewish training in Palestine, but belonging to a Hellenistic community that included

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 86, 87. Concerning the other gospels, though there are no scraps of them in Hebrew or statements by early writers that they were in Hebrew. Carmignac posits four groups of pre-synoptic Hebrew documents: pre-Mark, documents shared by Matthew and Luke, documents used by Luke only, and documents used by Matthew only.

<sup>52</sup> Stendahl, *School of St. Matthew*, 183-202.

Gentiles. He concludes that Matthew is evidence of a smoother transition from Judaism to Christianity than we usually suppose.<sup>53</sup>

#### Description of Following Chapters

Using these descriptions of scholarly characterizations of Matthew, we can analyze characteristics of Hebrew Matthew. The next chapter contains a comparison of Hebrew Matthew and Matthew in regard to torah, election, and Christology. The purpose of this comparison is to show that Hebrew Matthew reflects a less redacted Matthean tradition than Matthew. My findings show the following tendencies. Concerning the torah, Hebrew Matthew upholds the law where Matthew seems to abrogate the law. Hebrew Matthew is critical toward Pharisees and Sadducees as interpreters of the law, but unlike Matthew, they still have an opportunity to repent. In regard to election, Israel is the primary target of mission and ministry in Hebrew Matthew, and there is no mission to the Gentiles. The Christology in Hebrew Matthew is less developed than that in the canonical Gospel. This is especially evident in two of the text's distinct motifs. First, Jesus is not identified as Messiah/Christ until late in his career. Second, JBap has an exalted role as a salvific figure. These tendencies show Hebrew Matthew to be a less redacted Matthean tradition. My findings agree with text-critical studies of Hebrew Matthew. These studies show that the text reflects an early Matthean tradition rather than a translation from the Middle Ages.

After comparing characteristics of Matthew and Hebrew Matthew, it is also possible to compare what types of communities are reflected by these Matthean streams. The third chapter discusses communities, both early Jewish-Christian communities and Matthean communities as Jewish-Christian communities. First, I compare the type of community represented by Hebrew Matthew with the four types of Jewish-Christian groups described by Raymond E. Brown.

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., i-xiv.

Second, I compare the type of community represented by Hebrew Matthew with descriptions of early Jewish-Christian groups described in the NT and in early Christian writings. Hebrew Matthew represents a Jewish-Christian community sharing common traits with other Jewish-Christian groups. Third, I will speculate about Hebrew Matthew's community in relation to Matthew's community. Since Hebrew Matthew reflects what seems to be a less redacted Matthean tradition, or an earlier stream, can investigation into Hebrew Matthew's community support any hypotheses about Matthew's community? Though we cannot prove an historical link between a community of Hebrew Matthew and a community of canonical Matthew, we can speculate about the social situation of the communities. Some hypotheses about Matthew's community are supported in such a speculation. Finally, in my conclusion, I address the importance of study of Matthean communities for the larger investigation into "the partings of the ways." Matthean communities are significant in the study of early Judaisms and therein, early Christianities, because they represent Jewish-Christian communities.

Throughout this study, I use the following terms in the following ways. I use Hebrew Matthew to refer to the Matthean tradition in Hebrew that is contained in Shem-Tob's treatise. I am not suggesting that Hebrew Matthew is an original Hebrew version of the Gospel. Shem-Tob used some Hebrew source that might represent a primitive Matthean tradition. I use Matthew, canonical Matthew, or Greek Matthew to refer to Matthean tradition in its canonized form. By community, I mean a hypothesized historical community for which the Gospel was written. The Gospel would reflect at least several generations of some community. This also applies to a hypothesized community of Hebrew Matthew. I may refer to Matthean communities in order to speak about the various historical communities related to any Matthean tradition. By author, I mean the final redactor of Matthean tradition, and this is distinct from the narrator who speaks

within the narrative for the author. The present study uses the term Jewish-Christian to refer to a spectrum of groups or belief characterized by some level of adherence to Jewish law, and also some level of belief in the importance of Jesus in adhering to Jewish law.



## Chapter Two, Hebrew Matthew

Many scholars have investigated the sources behind the canonical Gospels. Currently, scholars accept a portrayal of Gospel sources as a “creative milieu” or streams of tradition, which mutually influenced one another.<sup>54</sup> Each Gospel has unique aspects and many shared aspects with other gospel traditions. Each Gospel has several sources, which mutually influenced one another. However, the sources are distinct enough that scholars portray them as streams of tradition. The canonical Gospels are snap shots of those streams. This chapter considers a potential snap shot that clearly contains tradition from Matthean streams, but its exact courses of flow are unknown. Considering the possibility of, not an alternate, but an additional snap shot of Matthean tradition should elucidate investigation into the setting of Matthean tradition. This additional snap shot is contained in Shem-Tob’s Hebrew Matthew.

### Context and Characteristics of Shem-Tob’s Treatise

Shem-Tob ben-Isaac ben-Shaprut, or Ibn-Shaprut, was a Jewish physician in the late fourteenth century. He was born in Tudela in Castile and practiced medicine in Tarazona in Aragon. He wrote a polemical treatise, completed in 1380, but he later revised it several times. The twelfth book of this treatise contains a gospel that is clearly Matthean tradition.<sup>55</sup> He wrote

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<sup>54</sup> Stendahl uses the phrase “the creative milieu of the gospels,” in the second section of his chapter “The School,” in *School of Matthew*, 13-19.

<sup>55</sup> There are two recensions of the work, one containing fifteen and the other, sixteen books; a third, seventeen-book form was used by Alexander Marx who considered this third form to be the completed revision of the work. Horbury disagrees with this analysis of the third form and supports using all the manuscripts available and considers the first and second forms as the two recensions. Horbury supports Marx’s teacher, M. Steinschneider, who only had access to the first and second forms. He also discusses the chapter development among the three forms of the book and relationship of the work with other polemics. W. Horbury, “The Revision of Shem Tob ibn Shaprut’s *Eben Bohan*,” *Sef* 43 (1983): 221-246. It is from the basis of this article that Horbury criticizes Howard in his review of Howard’s first edition of his translation and analysis of Hebrew Matthew. Horbury considers Howard as following Marx in distinguishing Shem-Tob’s work from other versions of Matthew in Hebrew, and criticizes Howard for not

the *Even Bohan*, “The Touchstone” in Hebrew, and therein, he copied the Gospel of Matthew from some text of Matthean tradition also in Hebrew. His polemical commentary shows that he was not making a fresh translation from a Greek or Latin text, as other polemicists sometimes did. George Howard shows that Shem-Tob’s text is not equivalent to nor a translation of various gospel texts available in the Middle Ages. He also shows that Hebrew Matthew has substantial similarities to ancient texts to which Shem-Tob would not have had access.<sup>56</sup>

Other polemics analyzed the NT in order to critique how NT writers quoted the HB. They also used the NT to argue that Christians were not faithful to their own scriptures. Jacob ben Reuben noted a few errors in Matthew, in the eleventh chapter of his *Milhamot HaShem* (1170), and his is the first extant critique of the NT. There are other polemics that reflect knowledge of all the Gospels. Matthew was probably used because of the abundance of quotations from the HB in Matthew and its apparent accessibility to Jewish writers.<sup>57</sup>

Though debate between Jewish and Christian leaders is as old as Christianity, it was not until the twelfth century that Jewish writers produced treatises that were totally dedicated to polemic against Christianity. Jewish polemical arguments were of three types: exegetical, historical, and rational. Exegetical arguments interpreted verses from the HB, the NT, or the Talmud. Jewish writers sometimes denigrated the NT stories and often showed that its writers quoted the HB incorrectly. Historical arguments compared statements in scripture with “real world” history. Christians argued that the Jewish people were obviously not the chosen people, because their experience in history and at the present time was one of suffering and dejection.

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stating clearly where he attained access to the total of eight manuscripts he uses, for not indicating the varied character of the manuscripts, and for not mentioning “the place of the manuscripts in the transmission” of the treatise in differing forms. W. Horbury, review of G. Howard, *The Gospel of Matthew According to a Primitive Hebrew Text*, *JTS* 43 (1992): 166-169.

<sup>56</sup> Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, xi.

<sup>57</sup> David Berger, *The Jewish-Christian Debate in the High Middle Ages: A Critical Edition of the Nizzahon Vetus with an Introduction, Translation, and Commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1979), 21, 28, 30, 31.

Jewish writers argued that if the criterion for being chosen was worldly success, then Christians should reassess their own status in light of the success Muslim empires. Rational arguments invoked reason and logic. There were many polemical treatises that dealt with arguments about virgin birth, the trinity, incarnation, the Messiah, and resurrection. Shem-Tob's treatise deals with scriptural verses, discusses Talmudic haggadah, contains a version of Matthew in Hebrew, contains a refutation of Christian dogma, discusses the Messiah and resurrection, and contains a refutation of a critique of an earlier polemical treatise.<sup>58</sup> The present study is solely concerned with Shem-Tob's version of Hebrew Matthew. Though his polemical comments are pertinent to his purpose, the present study is concerned with the content of Hebrew Matthew, not his commentary.<sup>59</sup>

Shem-Tob's Hebrew Matthew has been confused with other texts of Matthew originating in the Middle Ages. Thus, until recently it was not considered significant in studies of Matthean textual development.<sup>60</sup> Sebastian Münster, in 1537, published a Hebrew version of Matthew and Jean du Tillet, in 1555, published another. Both said that they received the Hebrew texts from Jewish communities.<sup>61</sup> In 1690, Richard Simon identified Shem-Tob's Hebrew Matthew with

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<sup>58</sup> David J. Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics Against Christianity in the Middle Ages* (New York: Ktav Publishing House Inc., 1977), 2, 3, 7, 15, 19. Lasker describes each polemic succinctly and in the bulk of his book, he discusses topics of debate, noting which polemical work includes what arguments. Berger identifies only two types of polemic, genuine and exegetical. Berger, *Jewish-Christian Debate*, 9.

<sup>59</sup> Shaye Cohen criticizes Howard for not including Shem-Tob's polemical comments in his translation of Hebrew Matthew and argues that one cannot conclude that the Hebrew Matthew preserves "primitive" readings without "study of Shem-Tob's polemical use of the Gospel." See Cohen, review of Howard's *The Gospel of Matthew According to a Primitive Hebrew Text*, *BRev* 4 (1988). Though the comments should be analyzed along with the content of this version of the Gospel, they are not necessary for Howard's project, nor are they necessary for the present project. Howard is using text critical tools to compare Hebrew Matthew to other ancient works and to canonical Matthew. Once Howard concludes that some difference between canonical Matthew and Hebrew Matthew does not support Shem-Tob's polemic, he does not need to include the polemical comments in his translation of Hebrew Matthew. As Robert F. Shedinger comments, replying to Cohen's review, "it is unfortunate that the polemical comments which Shem-Tob interspersed through his gospel text are not yet available in published form. However, we can begin identifying and analyzing potential primitive readings in Shem-Tob's text on text-critical grounds alone." See Shedinger, "A Further Consideration of the Textual Nature of Shem-Tob's Hebrew Matthew," *CBQ* 61:4 (1999): 686-695.

<sup>60</sup> Shedinger, "A Further Consideration," 686-695.

<sup>61</sup> Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, 161. Howard cites Sebastian Münster, *Evangelium secundum Matthaëum in*

these versions.<sup>62</sup> In 1879, Adolf Herbst argued that these versions were later editions of Shem-Tob's Hebrew Matthew. He also argued that Shem-Tob translated the Latin Vulgate into Hebrew. Howard counters this argument with examples of Shem-Tob's commentary in which he criticizes the use of certain Hebrew verb forms. If he was making a fresh translation, he would not criticize his own choice of verb form in his own commentary.<sup>63</sup> Robert F. Shedinger, based on his text-critical work, supports the assertion that Hebrew Matthew is not a translation from the Latin Vulgate. However, for about 60 years after Herbst's work, many mistakenly identified Shem-Tob's Hebrew Matthew as a composition or translation performed by Shem-Tob and later republished by others.<sup>64</sup> Alexander Marx, by 1929, had determined that this was not so,<sup>65</sup> and Howard also has concluded that both Münster and du Tillet are not later editions of Shem-Tob's Hebrew Matthew.<sup>66</sup> Howard considers du Tillet to be a revision of an earlier Hebrew version of Matthew and a harmonization of this Hebrew to Greek and Latin texts.<sup>67</sup> Howard concludes that the versions of Matthew produced by Münster and du Tillet are based on an earlier Hebrew version of Matthew that is more corrupt than the Hebrew Matthew, which Shem-Tob used.<sup>68</sup>

Howard also compares Shem-Tob's Hebrew Matthew with early Jewish and anti-Christian writings, which quoted excerpts of Matthew in Hebrew. These works include the following: the Book of Nestor, perhaps dating between the sixth and ninth centuries; the *Milhamot Hashem* by Jacob ben Reuben from 1170; the *Sepher Joseph Hamekane* by Rabbi

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*lingua Hebraica, cum versione latina atque succinctis annotationibus* (Basiliae, 1537) and lists resources for du Tillet's version as well.

<sup>62</sup> Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, 161. Howard cites Richard Simon, *Histoire Critique des Versions du Nouveau Testament* (Rotterdam: R. Leers, 1690), 231.

<sup>63</sup> Howard, "The Textual Nature of Hebrew Matthew," *JBL* 108 (1989): 239-257, 240, see note 6 and *Hebrew Gospel*, 161-162.

<sup>64</sup> Shedinger, "Further Consideration," note 5.

<sup>65</sup> Horbury, review of Howard, *The Gospel of Matthew According to a Primitive Hebrew Text*, *JTS* 43 (1992): 167.

<sup>66</sup> Howard, "The Textual Nature of Hebrew Matthew," 239. Also, Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, 162.

<sup>67</sup> Howard, "The Textual Nature of an Old Hebrew Version of Matthew," *JBL* 105 (1986): 49-63.

<sup>68</sup> Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, 164.

Joseph be Nathan Official from the thirteenth century; and the *Nizzahon Vetus* from the late thirteenth century. He concludes that these early quotations, which contain excerpts of Matthew, represent early evolution in the Hebrew Matthean tradition. He considers Shem-Tob's Hebrew Matthew to be later along the evolution of Hebrew Matthean tradition, followed by du Tillet's version. He also concludes from these comparisons that "a Shem-Tob type Matthean text goes back at least to the ninth century (Nestor) and, in one instance, to the fifth (Gemara), being reflected sporadically by early Jewish and antichristian writings."<sup>69</sup>

Howard concludes that the Matthean tradition reflected in Shem-Tob's text is part of an already existing (before the fourteenth century) Hebrew tradition, but how early this tradition began is unknown. To shed light on this unknown, Howard compares the text of Hebrew Matthew with many early Christian and Jewish writings, including: the Codex Sinaiticus, manuscripts used by Eusebius in Caesarea, the Old Syriac and the Old Latin versions, the Lucan version of Q, the Gospel of John, the Coptic Gospel of Thomas, the Pseudo-Clementine writings, the Tol'doth Yeshu, and the *Protevangelium of James*. He finds significant textual affinities between the Hebrew Matthew and these "diverse ancient traditions," dating as early as the fourth century. He again concludes that Shem-Tob's Hebrew Matthew predates the fourteenth century, and may preserve gospel traditions from the "early centuries of the Christian era."<sup>70</sup>

It is a romantic question to wonder if this Hebrew Matthew represents some original Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew, written for a Jewish Christian community. However, no one, not even Howard, is claiming that Shem-Tob's Hebrew Matthew is an original gospel. Horbury concludes that the earliest possible dating of Hebrew Matthew is the eleventh century.<sup>71</sup> What

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<sup>69</sup> See Howard's notes 13-16 for sources of these polemics, *Ibid.*, 160-161, 162, 173.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 190-212.

<sup>71</sup> Horbury, "The Hebrew Text of Matthew in Shem Tob ibn Shaprut's *Eben Bohan*," Appendix to *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary of the Gospel of St. Matthew* (ICC 3; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 729-738.

may be earlier is a Shem-Tob type text, representing early Jewish-Christian tradition.<sup>72</sup> It is useful for the study of Matthean communities to consider the Matthean tradition reflected in Shem-Tob's text, because it appears to be a less redacted Matthean tradition than that in canonical Matthew.

What might Hebrew Matthew contribute to studies of Matthew's community? In the following pages, I consider each of the areas, which scholars use to characterize Matthew, in light of additional information from Hebrew Matthew. In brief, Hebrew Matthew upholds the law, and though Jesus criticizes the Pharisees and Sadducees' interpretation of the law, they still have a chance for repentance. Hebrew Matthew lacks the command for the disciples to go to "all nations," *παντα τα εθνη*, and maintains a mission directed only toward Israel. There is no claim that Jesus supercedes the temple, and most identifications of Jesus as the Messiah are absent. Finally, in Hebrew Matthew, JBap maintains a heightened role as a salvific figure and his baptism is the only baptism.

#### Theological Matters within Hebrew Matthew

First, in regard to the law, there are important differences between Hebrew Matthew and canonical Matthew that relate to the law and the Pharisees and Sadducees as interpreters of the law. The noteworthy differences show that Hebrew Matthew generally expresses support for the law and a less harsh attitude toward the Pharisees and Sadducees than does canonical Matthew. Matthew 5:17-48, which contains a general statement about the law, followed by the antitheses, is usually the focus of analysis regarding Matthean attitude toward the law. Verses 17-19 portray Jesus supporting the law in full. Following, verses 21-48 portray Jesus addressing law concerning divorce, swearing, killing, and adultery. In canonical Matthew, Jesus restates, or

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<sup>72</sup> Shedinger, "Further Consideration," 686-695.

“radicalizes and internalizes” law concerning killing and adultery. Law concerning divorce and swearing, however, Jesus seems to revoke. In Hebrew Matthew, Jesus does not revoke the law at all, but only comments on it. Though some dispute that Jesus ever revoked the law, the Hebrew is more conservative in restating the law than the canonical text. In canonical Matthew, Jesus says that all divorce, except provoked by unchastity, makes the wife an adulteress, while in Hebrew Matthew Jesus restates that, as the law says, “everyone who leaves his wife is to give her a bill of divorce,” thus permitting divorce in agreement with the law (Matt 5:31-32). In canonical Matthew, Jesus forbids all swearing, not just false swearing as in the law. However, in Hebrew Matthew, Jesus affirms that swearing falsely is the problem, whether in God’s name or by anything else (Matt 5:33-37).<sup>73</sup>

Concerning the Pharisees and Sadducees as interpreters of the law, Hebrew Matthew portrays Jesus criticizing them, but the overall critique is less harsh than in canonical Matthew. The following are examples of critique from Matthew and Hebrew Matthew, and in general Hebrew Matthew is less condemnatory than Matthew.

<p>Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous, saying, “If we had lived in the days of our fathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the</p>	<p>Woe to you, hypocrites, Pharisees, and sages because you build the tombs of prophets and glorify the monuments of the righteous. You say: If we had been in the days of our fathers we would not have permitted them to put the prophets to death. In this you bear witness</p>
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<sup>73</sup> Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, 213. However, in Matt 19:9, in Hebrew Matthew, as in canonical Matthew, Jesus says again that “everyone who leaves his wife and takes another, if not for adultery, commits adultery; and he who takes her who has been divorced (commits adultery),” see *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, 93. Here, outside the context of the antitheses, Jesus’ words support the canonical attitude about adultery. Perhaps, this highlights the desire of the community of Hebrew Matthew to maintain the law in 5:31-32, regardless of the content being stated in the mouth of Jesus.

prophets.” Thus you witness against yourselves, that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers. You serpents, you brood of vipers, how are you to escape being sentenced to hell? (Matt 23:29-34)

against yourselves that you are sons of those who killed the prophets. You behave according to the deeds of your fathers. Serpents, seed of vipers, how will you escape the judgment of Gehenna if you do not turn in repentance? (Hebrew Matt 23:29-34)<sup>74</sup>

Hebrew Matthew maintains the woes, but Jesus’ concluding remarks differ such that they are still in a position to repent! In Matt 22:34, in the Hebrew it appears that the Pharisees join the disciples after Jesus stumps the Sadducees, while the Greek is usually translated as if the Pharisees just joined together around Jesus.

“and the Pharisees, having heard that he did silence the Sadducees, were gathered together unto him.” (Matt 22:34YLT)

“when the Pharisees saw that the Sadducees had no answer, they joined his servants.” (Hebrew Matt 22:34)<sup>75</sup>

Finally, in Hebrew Matthew 23:15, Jesus criticizes the Pharisees, but his critique in Hebrew Matthew is less harsh than in canonical Matthew.

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you traverse sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.” (Matt 23:15)

“You encompass sea and land to bind the heart of one man to your faith and when he is bound he is doubly worse than before.” (Hebrew Matt 23:15)<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 117.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 115.



Attitudes toward the law and toward the Pharisees and Sadducees as interpreters of the law are less harsh in Hebrew Matthew than in canonical Matthew. This suggests that the context of Hebrew Matthew is characteristically “more Jewish” or at least, more conservative than canonical Matthew in this area. However, the antitheses and woes are still present. Jesus still has authority to comment on the law and criticize the Pharisees’ and Sadducees’ interpretation of it. Hebrew Matthew reflects a context in which the law is very important, but it is Jesus’ commentary on the law that is authoritative. This suggests a Jewish-Christian context.

The status of Israel as the elect, God’s chosen people, is foundational within Jewish history. Both the Essenes and early Christian groups referred to themselves as the true Israel, in sectarian fashion. Does Hebrew Matthew reflect a view of Israel as elect? Or, has the community of the gospel replaced Israel? In regard to canonical Matthew, scholars analyze the narrative presentation of Jesus’ earthly ministry in order to ascertain the communities’ view or the redactor’s view of Israel as compared to the Gentiles. The appropriate questions are the following. Does Jesus shift his ministry to the Gentiles? And, does Jesus shift his ministry away from Israel? Briefly put, the answer to these questions is no.

A related topic is the status of the temple as the locus of God’s presence. There were many critical attitudes toward the temple among early Jewish groups. Some traditions and scholarship interpret Jesus’ actions regarding the temple to be an attack. Regardless of his intentions or threats of destruction, in Matthew, Jesus says that there is something present that is greater than the temple, perhaps himself. According to Stanton, early Christians, specifically Matthew’s community thought that Jesus replaced the temple as the locus of God’s presence.<sup>77</sup> Hebrew Matthew does not consider Jesus to replace the temple.

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<sup>77</sup> Stanton, “Matthew’s Christology,” 99-116, 115.

“Or have you not read in the law how on the Sabbath the priests in the temple profane the Sabbath, and are guiltless? I tell you, something greater than the temple is here.”  
(Matt 12:5-6 RSV)

“Also in the Torah have you not read that the priests in the Temple sometimes profane the Sabbaths and are without sin? Truly I say to you that **the temple is greater than this.**”  
(Hebrew Matt 12:5-6)<sup>78</sup>

In Matt 23:38, after criticizing Jerusalem for killing and persecuting prophets, Jesus, in Matthew, says, “Lo, left desolate to you is your house.” This is interpreted as referring to the destruction of the temple and portrays the view that the temple is destroyed *because* Jerusalem kills prophets. Hebrew Matthew, however, reads, “Therefore you will leave your houses desolate.” Though this may still refer to the destruction of Jerusalem, the plural “houses” is not explicitly the temple, Jerusalem’s one “house.” In Hebrew Matthew, Jerusalem is blamed for killing the prophets, but this is not linked to the desolation of “your house,” the temple, but only to the desolation of “your houses,” which cannot be interpreted as referring to the destruction of the temple.

With the acceptance of Israel as God’s elect, Jesus’ mission was, at least initially, targeted toward Israel. According to Gospel redaction, his mission shifted to the Gentiles. As Saldarini discusses, this shift supports successionist theology. Historically and ideologically, successionist theology fueled the *Adversos Judaios* tradition, general anti-Jewish sentiment, and eventually anti-Semitic rhetoric. We can contrast the continued mission to Israel and lack of mission to Gentiles in Hebrew Matthew with the canonical, potential rejection of Israel as God’s elect and the mission to Gentiles.

Hebrew Matthew 9:13 uses the word “restore” rather than “call,” indicating that Jesus came to “restore” those among a group that has already been chosen by God, rather than to “call”

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<sup>78</sup> Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, 53.

additional people. Hebrew Matthew 13:38 lacks the implication that Jesus mission is universal. As Howard explains, in the Greek, “The field is the world,” implies a universal mission. However, the Hebrew, “The field is **this** world,” is invoking an idiom in which “this world” is the present age and “the world to come” is the messianic era. Most significant is the case that Hebrew Matthew does not contain the command for the disciples to go “to all nations,” rather, only Israel is inferred in the shorter ending of Hebrew Matthew. Hebrew Matthew also lacks the description of a Christian baptism using the triadic formula.

<p>And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. <u>Go therefore and <b>make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,</b> teaching them to observe all that <b>I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age.</b>” (Matt 28:18-20)</u></p>	<p>Jesus drew near to them and said to them: To me has been given all power in heaven and earth. <u>Go and teach them to carry out all the things which I have commanded you forever.</u> (Hebrew Matt 28:18-20)<sup>79</sup></p>
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Another significant passage is Matt 24:14-16, in which canonical Matthew expresses that the gospel will be preached to the whole world and all nations before the end and before the desolating sacrilege. In Hebrew Matthew, the statement “appears to mean” that the desolating abomination *is* the act of preaching to “all the earth” before end times. All of these examples show that there is no current Gentile mission proposed. Rather, a Gentile mission is appropriate

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<sup>79</sup> Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, 151.

only at the end of the present era when the Son of Man comes (Matt 25:32-34) and in judgment (Matt 12:41-42). This corresponds theologically to the HB and later Jewish literature.<sup>80</sup>

In addition, Hebrew Matthew does not support successionist theology and therefore, cannot be read in an anti-Jewish manner. We can compare specific verses that contribute to anti-Jewish rhetoric and successionist theology. Specifically, concerning Israel, Matt 10:5-6 and 15:24 are not countered by the call to “all nations.” However, Hebrew Matthew, like canonical Matthew (22:37) and Luke (10:27), does not preserve the Shema as Mark (12:29) does. Concerning the law, 5:17 is not countered with denigration of the law. Concerning the Pharisees and Sadducees, 23:3 is countered by the woes, but there is still hope and possibility for repentance for these interpreters of the law. Generally, Hebrew Matthew still reflects tension with Jewish authorities, but the critiques of Jewish institutions are less harsh.

Hebrew Matthew does maintain verses representing actions taken by Jewish authorities to persecute or censure Matthew’s community.

Because of this, lo, I send to you prophets,  
and wise men, and scribes, and of them ye  
will kill and crucify, and of them ye will  
scourge in your synagogues, and will pursue  
from city to city. (Matthew 23:34)

At that time Jesus said to the crowds  
of Jews: “Therefore, behold I am sending to  
you prophets, sages, and scribes. Some of  
them you will kill, some of them you will  
afflict in your synagogues and you will pursue  
(them) from city to city. (Hebrew Matt  
23:34)<sup>81</sup>

Saldarini interprets the authoritative measures recorded in Matthew as showing that the community was still part of the Jewish community. If Matthew’s community was not Jewish,

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 115, 214-216.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 117.

then Jewish leaders would have no authority or motivation to censure Matthew's community. Saldarini's analysis seems appropriate for Hebrew Matthew as well.<sup>82</sup>

Christology in Hebrew Matthew differs significantly from the canonical text. Howard found that with the exception of 16:16, Jesus is never identified as Messiah/Christ in Hebrew Matthew.<sup>83</sup> In canonical Matthew, Jesus is identified as Christ 13 times, but in unclear ways or by a character, rather than the narrator. Five times the narrator of Matthew identifies Jesus as Christ, these five identifications are absent from Hebrew Matthew. The word Messiah/Christ is not present in Hebrew Matthew 1:1, 1:17, 1:18, 11:2, or 16:21. Thus, the narrator of Hebrew Matthew never identifies Jesus as Messiah/Christ. As Howard states, in 2:4, 22:42, 23:10, 24:23, 24, the title is used in an abstract way with no clear identification. Hebrew Matthew 26:63 has the title used in a question by one who does not identify it with Jesus, and Jesus responds enigmatically. In Hebrew Matthew 26:68, a mob calls Jesus Messiah. In 1:16 and 27:17, 22, the phrase "Jesus who is called Messiah" occurs, but this does not necessarily reflect belief in the claim.<sup>84</sup>

In Hebrew Matthew 24:5, Jesus says that deceivers say "I am the Messiah," but it is not clear whether the deceivers are claiming to be Messiah or whether the deceptive claim is calling Jesus the Messiah.<sup>85</sup> In Hebrew Matthew 16:20, Jesus tells the disciples not to tell anyone that he is the Messiah. In Matthew, this is usually interpreted as the Messianic secret, but in Hebrew Matthew, he tells them not to say that he is the Messiah at all.

Then he strictly charged the disciples to <u>tell</u>	Then he commanded his disciples <u>not to say</u>
<u>no one</u> that he was the Christ. (Matt 16:20)	that he is the Messiah. (Hebrew Matt 16:20)

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<sup>82</sup> Saldarini, *Matthew's Jewish-Christian Community*, 43-52.

<sup>83</sup> Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, 216-218.

<sup>84</sup> As Howard explains, Josephus also uses this phrase in the *Antiquities*. Ibid., 217.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 217.

Jesus does accept the messianic title in Hebrew Matthew 16:16, from Peter who says, “You are the Messiah, that is Christ.” Concerning Hebrew Matthew 16:16, Howard originally published that Messiah and Christ were added to the manuscript, which may have originally identified Jesus only as the Son of God (this reading has parallels in a few sources). The additions would be considered harmonizations.<sup>86</sup> However, Howard later published that he considers his initial analysis wrong and now supports the identification of Jesus as Messiah/Christ in Hebrew Matthew 16:16. In the narrative of Hebrew Matthew, this identification of Jesus as the Messiah/Christ occurs during his adult career. This correlates to Ebionite thought, which considers God elevating Jesus to the status of a Christ in his adult life because of his virtuosity and adherence to the law.<sup>87</sup>

Various titles applied to Jesus in the Gospels are often used to analyze what status he holds for the narrator. In reading Hebrew Matthew, the Hebrew word for teacher and master, *rab* is used where canonical Matthew uses the Greek words for teacher and master in addition to a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew word *rabbi* (my teacher/master).<sup>88</sup> In canonical Matthew, the word *rabbi* is transliterated into Greek as  $\rho\alpha\beta\beta\iota$ , and it occurs only four times: 23:7, 23:8, 26:25, and 26:49. In verse 23:8, in both canonical and Hebrew Matthew, Jesus states that *Rabbi* is not an appropriate title for the disciples. In canonical Matthew, the verses continue and Jesus clarifies that the roles of *rabbi*, teacher, and master are only appropriate for the Messiah/Christ. In Hebrew Matthew, only the words  $\text{רַבָּנִי}$  (plural, *rabbani*) and  $\text{רַבִּי}$  (your *rab*) are used where the Greek uses *rabbi*, teacher, and master distinctly. Thus, in Hebrew Matthew it is clear

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<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 218.

<sup>87</sup> Howard, “Shem-Tob’s Hebrew Matthew and Early Jewish Christianity,” *JSNT* 70 (1998): 3-20, 15.

<sup>88</sup> In these paragraphs, I am using *rabbi*, not capitalized, to denote the role of teacher or the Hebrew word. I am using *Rabbi*, capitalized, for the use of the word *rabbi* as an honorary title. This distinction coincides with standard use of capitalization to distinguish between other phrases that are sometimes honorary titles, such as “son of God” and “Son of God.”

that the title Rabbi is not appropriate for the disciples because it is only appropriate for the Messiah.

<p>But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren. And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven. <u>Neither be called masters, for you have one master, the Christ.</u> (Matthew 23:8-10)</p>	<p>But as for you, do not desire to be called Rabbi. One is your Rabbi and all of you are brothers. Call no man upon the earth father. One is your father who is in heaven. <u>Do not be called Rabbi, because one is your <b>Rabbi</b>, the Messiah.</u> (Hebrew Matt 23:8-10)</p>
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After this injunction, Judas calls Jesus Rabbi, in Matt 26:25 and in 26:49. In the first scene, each disciple is asking Jesus if he is the betrayer, and the second occurrence is the scene of the final betrayal. Obviously, Judas is not a hero in the story, and thus, the traditional interpretation of his use of the word rabbi is a negative one. Scholars argue that the narrator discourages using the title (through Jesus' words), because it is a Jewish term used for Jewish leaders, of whom Matthew's community disapproves. In Hebrew Matthew, however, it would be inappropriate to interpret Rabbi as a negative title if the Messiah/Christ is to be called Rabbi. In the narrative of Hebrew Matthew, it is possible that after Jesus clarified the term, Rabbi had a messianic connotation and thus, political implications. If so, it is possible that Judas' use of the title when he betrays Jesus shows that Judas was betraying him specifically as a potential cause of political unrest, rather than only distinguishing Jesus from those present in the betrayal scene.

The title is used an additional four times in Hebrew Matthew (one of the additional four is contained in the verses quoted above). Three times Jesus is called rabbi in Hebrew Matthew where "master" or "teacher" is found in the Greek. These occurrences are Hebrew Matthew 22:16, in which he is addressed by the men of Herod, Hebrew Matthew 22:16, in which he is

addressed by the Sadducees, and in 22:36, in which he is addressed by the tempting sage. In each of these occurrences, the address is used by characters whom the narrator considers to be untrustworthy. Thus, one could interpret them to support conclusions that the narrator discouraged identifying the church leaders with Jewish leaders. However, these additional occurrences of the word *rabbi* could also merely be a matter of vocabulary. *Rabbi* is the word used for teacher and master in Hebrew. The writer of the Greek text chooses to use *ραββι*, *διδασκαλος*, and *καθηγητης* distinctly. Either the writer of the Greek was using parallel words for stylistic reasons, or he was motivated to distinguish between these words for some reason. If the use of *rabbi* in Hebrew Matthew is as an honorary title for the Messiah, then perhaps the writer of canonical Matthew wished to avoid this association. Whatever the motivation for the word choice in Greek, the writer of Hebrew Matthew either did not share this motivation or was limited by his Hebrew vocabulary. A more in depth study of the use of these words in Hebrew and Greek texts of the time would certainly yield more reliable conclusions, but it seems that in the context of Hebrew Matthew the word *rabbi* was used as an honorific title that was specifically appropriate for the Messiah. Such a context would be a Jewish-Christian context.

In addition to roles of Jesus as Messiah/Christ and titles ascribed to Jesus, the analysis of a gospel's Christology includes the roles of JBap as precursor to Jesus as Messiah. In Matthew, though JBap is exalted, he is portrayed as misunderstanding the timing of Jesus' activities. In Hebrew Matthew, JBap maintains an exalted role, and there are no statements, which counter his importance as there are in the canonical Gospels. JBap even acquires some messianic traits, though he is never identified as the Messiah. Howard lists the following examples: Matt 11:11, 11:13, 17:11, and 21:32. In Matt 11:11, JBap is described as the greatest among those born of



women. Hebrew Matthew lacks the qualifying phrase found in the Greek that counters this high status by raising “the least in the kingdom of heaven” above JBap. Canonical Matt 11:13 states, “For all the prophets and the law prophesied *until* John,” but Hebrew Matthew states, “For all the prophets and the law prophesied *concerning* John.” Matthew 17:11 follows the narrative role of JBap as Elijah, in the Greek, Elijah will “restore all things,” but in the Hebrew, he “will save all the world.” In Matt 21:34, Jesus criticizes those who did not believe John and repent. This is addressed to the chief priests and elders in the Greek, but to the disciples in the Hebrew. As Howard concludes, these verses describe JBap in a salvific role, one traditionally applied to Jesus. This view of JBap is present in the polemics contained in the Gospel of John and the Pseudo-Clementine writings. Their polemics suggest that some communities exalted JBap in a manner similar to the exalted role and status that is present in Shem-Tob’s text. It seems that the authors of the Pseudo-Clementines were sometimes reacting to a Shem-Tob type text that contained material, which supported the elevation of JBap.<sup>89</sup>

If JBap, rather than Jesus, is portrayed in a salvific role, then the following verse also seems significant.

<p>For I say to you, ye may not see me henceforth, till ye may say, Blessed is he who is coming in the name of the Lord. (Matt 23:39)</p>	<p>Truly I say to you, you will not see me henceforth until you will say: Blessed is our savior. (Hebrew Matt 23:39)<sup>90</sup></p>
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Though Jesus speaks about the blessed one in the third person in both verses, Hebrew Matthew seems to portray Jesus as being among those who declare the savior blessed, rather than as the

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid., 219, 221-223. See note 82, in which Howard adds that two Lucan manuscripts also omit the qualification, “but the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he,” agreeing with Shem-Tob’s reading. This reading is also “inferred by the Pseudo-Clementine writings.”

<sup>90</sup> Ibid., 119.

savior. Matthew, however, uses the phrase, “he who is coming,” which is generally interpreted as a messianic reference based on JBap’s use of the term in Matt 11:3.

The portrayal of JBap in Hebrew Matthew is clearly different from that in Matthew. Other differences, to summarize, are in the areas of law, election of Israel, and Christology. Hebrew Matthew upholds the law and still considers Pharisees and Sadducees to have a chance for repentance. There is no command for the disciples to go to “all nations,” *παντα τα εθνη*, but rather Jesus’ mission is only to Israel. Hebrew Matthew lacks the claim that Jesus replaces the temple and lacks most messianic titles for Jesus. Finally, JBap has an exalted role and his baptism is the only baptism. Each of these distinct motifs in Hebrew Matthew reflect a Jewish-Christian theology that is “more Jewish” than canonical Matthew.

#### Matters of Language for Hebrew Matthew

In addition to characteristics of Matthew’s theology, there are other aspects of the Gospel that scholars use to characterize Matthew’s community. For the present study, the two most significant of these aspects are the formula quotations and the language of the text. The formula quotations are distinct to Matthew, and they are often considered characteristic of the Jewishness of Matthew. The quotations of the HB that are particular to Matthew are also present in Hebrew Matthew. According to some, the quotations indicate a synthesis of Jewish learning and Christian scribal tradition. Meier characterizes the redactor of Matthew as responding to a crisis of church identity and moral authority by seeking to “retrieve tradition.” Particularly, Meier views the formulaic quotes as hermeneutic. He describes the process as the Hebrew biblical text being “manipulated according to the measuring rod of the Christ event.” His example is canonical Matthew’s insertion of “by no means” into Mic 5:2 in Matt 2:6.<sup>91</sup> Hebrew Matthew

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<sup>91</sup> Meier, in Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 56-59.

does not include the “by no means,” but is more accurate to Micah.<sup>92</sup> Similarly, 3:3, 13:35, and 27:9-10 quote Hebrew biblical material with more accuracy than canonical Matthew. In these four cases, Hebrew Matthew maintains the verses as they are in the HB, and canonical Matthew differs from both the HB and LXX.

In Matthew, there are 12 quotations of Hebrew biblical material that are introduced by sayings such as, “to fulfill what is said in the prophet Isaiah,” that are unique to Matthew. There are also 9 quotations unique to Matthew that are in the voice of Jesus and introduced by the familiar “it is written,” which occurs in Luke and sometimes in Mark. There are two quotations of Jesus common to Matthew and Mark that are introduced by “as in the prophets,” and one common to Matthew and John (Matt 13:14-15). I compared the formulaic quotations in Hebrew Matthew to those in canonical Matthew. Following, I compared both Matthean versions to the HB and LXX. The purpose of this comparison was to elucidate how Hebrew Matthew and Matthew might differ in their use of Hebrew and Greek versions of biblical texts.

Of the 12 formulaic quotations, in the above mentioned four (2:6, 3:3, 13:35, and 27:9-10) canonical Matthew differs from the HB and LXX, but Hebrew Matthew does not. There are no formulaic quotations in which both Matthean traditions follow the LXX over the HB. There are four (2:15, 2:18, 4:16, and 8:17) in which the Matthean traditions agree with HB rather than the LXX. There is one case (Matt 1:22, 23) in which canonical Matthew agrees with the LXX, but Hebrew Matthew agrees with HB. However, this may be excusable because the phrases, which differ, are idiomatic. When the same sense is expressed idiomatically in Greek and Hebrew, of course, the Greek versions have the Greek form of the idiom and the Hebrew versions have the Hebrew form of the idiom. The one quotation of Jesus, which is common to Matthew and John (Matt 13:14-15), follows the LXX in canonical Matthew, but Hebrew

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<sup>92</sup> Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, 7.

Matthew follows the HB. There is one case (Matt 21:5) in which both Matthean traditions differ from LXX and HB. Finally, there are two cases (2:23 and 12:18-21) that are inconclusive. A much more in depth study of the formulaic quotations (accompanied by a study of the sayings of Jesus that use “it is written”) would be more conclusive. In general, when Hebrew Matthew differs from canonical Matthew in the formulaic quotations, it agrees with HB. In other words, the process of hermeneutic interpretation, which canonical Matthew shows, is less evident in Hebrew Matthew, suggesting that it is a less redacted form and that the context for this version of the Gospel privileged the HB over the LXX.

These comparisons of Hebrew Matthew’s theological motifs and formula quotations to those of Matthew would have been much more difficult if the texts of Shem-Tob’s Hebrew Matthew had not been compiled and finally published by text critical scholars. Nearly all the material published concerning Shem-Tob’s Hebrew Matthew has been text critical work. Most text critical scholars use their research to attempt to locate the sources of Hebrew Matthew or the Shem-Tob type text in its historical context. Various text critics differ on the dating of Hebrew Matthew. Horbury considers the earliest possible date to be the eleventh century.<sup>93</sup> William L. Petersen considers the text to have originated in the Middle Ages, based on his comparisons with the Liège Harmony.<sup>94</sup> Howard has published numerous articles comparing the textual nature of Hebrew Matthew with various early Christian texts and considers the Hebrew Matthew to testify to a Hebrew substratum for the Gospels and to represent a primitive tradition of the Matthean Gospel. Shedinger supports this view based on his comparisons of Hebrew Matthew with

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<sup>93</sup> William Horbury, review of Howard, *Gospel of Matthew According to a Primitive Hebrew Text*. Also, Horbury, “Hebrew Text of Matthew.”

<sup>94</sup> William L. Petersen, “Some Observations on a Recent Edition of and Introduction to Shem-Tob’s ‘Hebrew Matthew’.” *TC* 3 (1998). Or Petersen, review of Howard, *The Gospel of Matthew According to a Primitive Hebrew Text*, *JBL* 108 (1989): 722-26.

Byzantine texts and the Vulgate.<sup>95</sup> Howard proposes an early dating for the Shem-Tob type text, which testifies to a Hebrew substratum for Matthew. This evidence is found in the type of Hebrew used, literary devices, and textual affinities with early Christian texts rather than with texts from the Middle Ages.

Howard found the language used in Hebrew Matthew to be “BH (biblical Hebrew) with a healthy mixture of MH (mishnaic Hebrew) and later rabbinic vocabulary and idiom.”<sup>96</sup> Specifically, he analyzed the consecutive tenses of BH and non-consecutive tenses of MH; uses of the prepositions כ and ב compared to כִּבֵּן; the infinitive absolute; the form of prohibition; and use of הִיָּה. He also analyzed pronoun use and vocabulary, again, showing that the language is a mixture of BH and MH. The most significant aspect of the unique vocabulary of Hebrew Matthew is the use of the Tetragrammaton. Howard found that there are 19 instances where the symbol for the Tetragrammaton occurs. He argues that a Jewish translator would not have inserted this into his translation when the canonical version lacks it.<sup>97</sup>

Howard also shows how the text is revised and modified to harmonize with Greek and Latin texts of the Middle Ages and to improve style, including transliteration for clarification, scribal substitution, and revisions absent in the commentary. Howard considers literary characteristics present in the Hebrew text that are specific to the Hebrew text and absent from the Greek. These literary characteristics do not support Shem-Tob’s polemic. Specifically, Howard identifies puns, word connections between narrative sections, and alliteration.<sup>98</sup> The textual characteristics of Hebrew Matthew support the proposals that Shem-Tob did not translate

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<sup>95</sup> Shedinger, “A Further Consideration.”

<sup>96</sup> Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, 178.

<sup>97</sup> Howard, “Shem-Tob’s Hebrew Matthew and Early Jewish Christianity” (1998): 5, also, see note 6. And, Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, 229-232.

<sup>98</sup> Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, 182-190.

canonical Matthew into Hebrew, but rather copied from a Hebrew version of Matthew, which contains reflections of early Matthean tradition.

Shedinger avers Howard's proposal of a Hebrew substratum for Hebrew Matthew by offering a text critical analysis comparing Hebrew Matthew with the Byzantine text type and the Vulgate finding that the text of Hebrew Matthew "has roots going back to a much earlier time" than the fourteenth century. In fact, Hebrew Matthew 6:26 "may well retain a form of this saying earlier than any others found in extant Matthean textual witnesses." Furthermore, the variation in this verse can be "easily understood as the result of confusion over a Hebrew Vorlage."

Shedinger also challenges Petersen's very negative review of Howard's research by comparing his findings to the Liège Harmony, which Petersen considers necessary. Shedinger concludes by affirming Shem-Tob's text as an important witness in the textual development of the Matthean Gospel.<sup>99</sup>

This chapter focused on Hebrew Matthew as reflecting a stream of Matthean tradition with which to compare canonical Matthew, specifically, concerning attitude toward the law, the Pharisees and Sadducees, election, mission to the Gentiles, the temple, Christology, and roles of JBap. In summary, Hebrew Matthew generally expresses support for the law and a less harsh attitude toward the Pharisees and Sadducees than does canonical Matthew. Hebrew Matthew supports the election of Israel and lacks a mission to the Gentiles. Hebrew Matthew maintains the status of the temple, lacks identification of Jesus as Christ until the middle of his career, and contains heightened roles for JBap. These comparisons, as well as the differences in the formulaic quotations and the language of the Matthean traditions show Hebrew Matthew to be a less redacted form of the gospel rather than a translation performed the Middle Ages.

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<sup>99</sup> Shedinger, "A Further Consideration." And, Petersen, "Some Observations."

### Chapter Three, Jewish-Christian Communities

Beginning in the fourth century B.C.E., Jewish populations endured pressures of Hellenization, with varying degrees of resistance. The diversity among Jewish populations, which resulted from this resistance, must be considered when studying the spread of early Christianity and when characterizing its mission to Gentiles. Brown states that scholars formerly spoke of Jews and Gentiles as solely separate, but this portrayal is outdated compared to views that benefit from the use of a sociological approach. When scholars accepted the notion of interaction between Jewish and Gentile populations, the portrayal of early Jewish-Christian groups became more complicated. Now, we must consider “what faith in Jesus implied by way of Jewish observances.”<sup>100</sup>

The terms Jewish-Christian or Jewish Christianity refer to individuals, belief, or practice characterized by some level of observance of Jewish law and belief in the importance of Jesus’ authority to interpret this law. Many scholars have criticized the use of the term Jewish Christianity to denote a theological and ecclesiastical stance opposed to Gentile Christianity. Brown is among critics of this usage, and he argues that these terms describe only the ethnic origins of the Christians in mind. This is an inadequate distinction, because it assumes a homogenous Jewish Christianity that was distinct from a homogenous Gentile Christianity. However, the first Christians were all Jewish Christians, and there was diversity among their attitudes toward the law, Gentiles, and Christology. As Brown argues, each type of Jewish Christianity made Gentile converts. These converts shared in the level of law observance

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<sup>100</sup> Brown, in Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 1-2.

required by the particular Jewish Christianity. When he identifies types of Jewish-Christian groups, he is including within these groups their Gentile converts.<sup>101</sup>

Among Jewish-Christian groups, all experienced effects of Hellenization, but some were “more Hellenized” than others. In Acts, the terms Hellenists and Hebrews both refer to Jewish believers, who differed in some way. Brown proposes that they differed according to language, culture, and/or attitude toward the temple. Perhaps, they differed in language, and the Hellenists spoke only Greek compared to the Hebrews speaking Hebrew and/or Aramaic. Perhaps, they differed in culture, and for example, those more acculturated to Greco-Roman culture had names that reflected this, whereas those less acculturated continued to have Hebrew family names. Perhaps, they differed in attitude toward the temple, such that Hellenists did not believe that God dwelt only in the temple. Both Hellenist Jewish Christians and Hebrew Jewish Christians converted Gentiles, the latter producing several types of Jewish (and Gentile) Christianity. The various Jewish Christianities are represented by Paul, Peter, and James. These early leaders argued about the necessary levels of adherence to the law for Gentile converts.<sup>102</sup>

Brown identifies four types of Jewish Christianity that are described in the NT. There may have been more types, but there were at least four. The first type of Jewish Christians (along with their Gentile converts) fully observed the law, including circumcision. They originated in Jerusalem. The second type of Jewish Christians (along with their Gentile converts) did not insist that circumcision was necessary for salvation of Gentiles, but they did require some purity laws. This type also originated in Jerusalem and was represented by James and Peter. Their views initially dominated the church at Antioch. The third type of Jewish Christianity (along with their Gentile converts) did not insist on circumcision or purity and food laws for Gentiles. It is

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<sup>101</sup> Brown, “Not Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity but types of Jewish/Gentile Christianity,” *CBQ* 45 (1983): 74-79.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, 74-77.



possible that they enforced purity laws forbidding marriage among kin. This type originated in Antioch with Paul. These Jewish Christians did not break with cultic practices of Judaism, nor did they impel Jewish Christians to abandon circumcision and the law. The fourth type of Jewish Christianity (along with their Gentile converts) may be called Hellenist. They did not insist on circumcision or any level of law observance, nor did they uphold the Jerusalem temple. This Hellenist Jewish Christianity began in Jerusalem and eventually spread to Antioch. This fourth type did not consider traditional Jewish cultic practices to be part of its own religion. It is the spread of this Hellenist Jewish Christianity that led to the ultimate “partings of the ways.”<sup>103</sup> If Matthean communities were at Antioch, then they experienced the interactions of these various types of Jewish Christianities.<sup>104</sup>

Howard performed a comparison of the characteristics of Hebrew Matthew with descriptions of early Jewish-Christian groups. He began with a comparison based on Brown’s descriptions of at least four variations of Jewish-Christian groups, and then he compared the theological motifs unique to Hebrew Matthew with descriptions of specific Jewish-Christian groups found in the NT and in early church writings. Howard compared the distinctive theology of the Shem-Tob type Hebrew Matthew with theologies of early Jewish-Christian groups in hopes of elucidating the date of a Shem-Tob type text. Howard assumes that Shem-Tob’s Hebrew Matthew is the work of a Jewish-Christian, since its theology corresponds to Jewish-Christian theologies and because it was written in Hebrew.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 77-79. This material and discussion is also published in the introduction of Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 2-9.

<sup>104</sup> Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 15-27, 45-72.

<sup>105</sup> Howard, “Shem-Tob’s Hebrew Matthew and Early Jewish Christianity,” 4, 5. Howard includes, in note 5, a description of his definition of Jewish Christianity, and he includes a lengthy list of sources for various definitions of the same.

Recall the theological motifs in Hebrew Matthew that are not present in canonical Matthew: Jesus' mission is only to Israel, Gentiles are not a present focus, Jesus is identified as the Messiah late in his career, JBap is an exalted, salvific figure, and the baptism of JBap is the only baptism. These theological motifs are characteristic of early Jewish-Christian groups, though no one group has a description that fits completely with every theological motif of Hebrew Matthew. The first of the four types of Jewish Christianities is characterized by the requirement that Gentile converts fully observe the law. Otherwise, they did not envision a mass inclusion of Gentiles in the present age. Hebrew Matthew shares this view concerning Gentile converts and concerning the time when Gentiles en mass may be included. Brown's types do not have any other distinct features shared with Hebrew Matthew, therefore it most closely resembles the most conservative of the four types.<sup>106</sup>

More substantial is the comparison of motifs found in Hebrew Matthew with characteristics of various groups described in the NT and in early church writings. In the NT there are two groups who only knew JBap's baptism. The group represented by Apollos and the twelve men whom Paul encountered at Ephesus did not know of a separate Christian baptism. Likewise, in Hebrew Matthew the baptism of JBap is the only baptism. In the lack of a distinctly Christian baptism, JBap's baptism continues to be significant for the group.<sup>107</sup>

The Ebionites believed that Jesus was a man whom God adopted because he observed the law. The adoption took place at baptism, after which Jesus was a Christ. Though the Ebionites used Matthean tradition, their Christology cannot be supported with canonical Matthew. Hebrew Matthew, however, identifies Jesus as Messiah as an adult. The Ebionites insisted on circumcision for Gentiles, and therein, they repudiated Paul. Hebrew Matthew also maintains the

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 13.

importance of circumcision, whereas canonical Matthew cannot be used to support this characteristic. Though Howard has argued that the Ebionites had access to a Shem-Tob type text he does not propose that the Ebionites are responsible for Hebrew Matthew. The Ebionite views differed from the views represented in Hebrew Matthew concerning the virgin birth, the status of Jesus as Son of God, the physical stature of Jesus, frequency of the Eucharist, use of the HB, and attitude on marriage, divorce, and eating meat. Finally, the Ebionites did not exalt JBap or accept the continued importance of his baptism, but rather depreciated the roles of JBap.<sup>108</sup>

Though descriptions of the Nazoraeans vary, they were certainly Jewish-Christian. They used both Testaments and read a Hebrew gospel. They observed the law and may have required Gentile converts to do so as well. They believed that Jesus was God's son and accepted Christological developments. The Nazoraeans originated in Jerusalem, but were later located near Antioch. Howard considers their observance of the law to be similar to that in Hebrew Matthew. His text-critical work shows that Hebrew Matthew is not the Gospel of the Nazoraeans, though fragments of their gospel show a dependence on Matthew.<sup>109</sup> Davies and Allison support the suggestion of a connection between the Nazoraean and Matthean Christianity. They suspect that Matthew was translated into Aramaic or Hebrew for use in Jewish-Christian services. Perhaps, they posit, the Matthean Christians referred to themselves as Nazoraeans.<sup>110</sup> Howard also compares the Mandaean emphasis on JBap with that in Hebrew Matthew. However, otherwise, they rejected circumcision and Sabbath, and they viewed Jesus as a false Messiah.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 15, 16. Another unique view of Ebionite Christology was the belief that others who fully observed the law could be Christs. Also see Howard "The Pseudo-Clementine Writings and Shem-Tob's Hebrew Matthew," *NTS* 40 (1994): 622-28.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., 17-18. Also see Howard, *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, 158,159.

<sup>110</sup> Davies and Allison, "Matthew: A Retrospect," 725.

<sup>111</sup> Howard, "Shem-Tob's Hebrew Matthew and Early Jewish Christianity," 19, note 42.

These comparisons show that the motifs found in Hebrew Matthew are similar to motifs found within various Jewish-Christian groups, the Apollos group, the Ebionites, and the Nazoraeans. Jewish Christianity during the first four centuries of the Christian era embraced many different beliefs. Interestingly, the distinct motifs in Hebrew Matthew are generally represented within this multifaceted segment of the church. But, since no single group mirrors all its distinctive motifs, none is a good candidate for producing Hebrew Matthew. Following this conclusion, Howard dates the Shem-Tob type text “somewhere within the first four centuries of the Christian era,” and he again proposes that it was produced by a Jewish Christian or a Jewish Christian group.<sup>112</sup>

Though Hebrew Matthew reflects a Jewish Christianity of the most conservative type, the text still contains elements that represent tension with Jewish leaders. In Matthew, these verses are interpreted by many scholars as showing the rejection of Israel, therefore in Hebrew Matthew, they present a tension in the narrative. For example, in the healing of the captain’s son in Matt 8:5-13, verse 12 in Hebrew Matthew foretells, “the sons of the kingdom will be cast into the darkness of Gehenna.” Also, in the parable of the sower, Hebrew Matthew 21:43 warns, “Therefore I say to you the kingdom of heaven will be torn from you and given to a nation producing fruit.” Again, in the parable of the wedding feast, the poor guest without a proper garment is cast into hell in 22:11-14. It is difficult to discern whom the narrator is condemning and for what reasons. Generally, these verses in canonical Matthew are interpreted to represent tension with Jewish leaders. It is possible that a proposed community of Hebrew Matthew was also in tension with Jewish authorities.

Hebrew Matthew seems to reflect a less redacted Matthean tradition, in which a Jewish-Christian community observed the law and believed Jesus to be the Messiah half way through his

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid., 20.

ministry. If we highlight the differences between Hebrew Matthew and canonical Matthew, in some ways it emphasizes the redaction process, and by comparison canonical Matthew seems “less Jewish” than Hebrew Matthew. Meier speculates about the development of the Antiochene community, using Matthew to represent the second generation, from 70-100 C.E. In his presentation of the Antiochene church, he speculates about how the church developed through the meeting and debate of the various types of Jewish-Christianity. This speculative development seems applicable to Matthean communities, and might elucidate the changes within Matthean communities that are reflected in the differences between Hebrew Matthew and canonical Matthew.

The James and Jerusalem group (type two) are reflected in early strata of Matthew. The Jamesian wing might have sheltered the more conservative, “right wing extremists” (type one). If Hebrew Matthew reflects these “right wing extremists,” then perhaps Hebrew Matthew reflects this part of the Antiochene community. If so, then based on Meier’s speculation about the church at Antioch, they could no longer remain within the church after James’ martyrdom. Meier speculates that the Jamesian wing (type two) waned without the authority of James, which tied this part of the church to Jerusalem. After James’ martyrdom, they left Antioch to preserve James’ tradition. Meier speculates that when the Jamesian wing left, the most conservative Jewish-Christians may have broken away and become the Ebionites and other marginal Jewish-Christian heretical groups. He speculates that the negative portrayals of Jewish leaders in Matthew might have been targeted against these proto-Ebionites.<sup>113</sup> If Hebrew Matthew’s community fits into Meier’s speculation, then Hebrew Matthew might represent their version of Matthean tradition, which reflects their own, more conservative views. Hebrew Matthew could

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<sup>113</sup> Meier, in Brown and Meier, *Antioch and Rome*, 41, 47.

have been compiled either while the group was sheltered among the Jamesian wing or after splitting from the Antiochene church as an “other marginal Jewish-Christian heretical group.”

A very different possibility is that the Hebrew Matthean tradition was preserved by one of the conservative (type one) groups in Jerusalem and that the development of the canonical Gospel in Antioch (or elsewhere) was totally, geographically, linguistically, socially, and theologically separate. Whatever the context of Hebrew Matthew was, the text does represent conservative Jewish Christian attitudes toward the law, Israel’s election, a Gentile mission, and Christology. Saldarini criticizes the practice of pulling apart Matthean layers of redacted tradition, because this lends scholarship to salvation-historical models or successionist theology.<sup>114</sup> However, a comparison of the distinct elements of Hebrew Matthew with the canonical Gospel shows Hebrew Matthew to be a “more Jewish” Matthean tradition. The tradition in canonical Matthew is moving away from Jewish observance of the law, moving toward a mission directed to Gentiles rather than only Israel, and accepting Christian Christological developments.

When Saldarini analyzes Matthew’s community, he applies sociological theory to the final narrative, and he considers it to be a Jewish-Christian community. If Hebrew Matthew is a less redacted Matthean tradition, then it certainly supports a Jewish Christian identity for early Matthean communities. When, then, would Matthew ever represent a Christianity that is not Jewish? Matthew would represent a Christianity that is not Jewish, only after Christian church tradition interpreted Matthew to be anti-Jewish, and only after rabbinic authority emerged to the extent that it could reject even conservative Jewish-Christian belief and practice. The Western church gradually “forced” Jewish Christianity into a characterization of heresy in the end of the second and beginning of the third century. The Eastern church, however, in the third and fourth

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<sup>114</sup> Saldarini, *Matthew’s Jewish-Christian Community*, 6, 7.

centuries, still acknowledged Jewish Christianity as complex and not reducible to the status of heresy.<sup>115</sup>

Matthean narratives show that Matthean communities experienced tension with Jewish authorities. Jewish sectarian movements, as discussed by Shaye Cohen, expressed their feelings of alienation in polemic. He includes early Christian groups in his description of Jewish sectarian movements. Jewish-Christians felt “alienated from the larger [Jewish] community,” because of their belief in the importance of Jesus. The polemical expression of this alienation attacked “the central institutions of society (notably the temple), its authority figures (notably the priests), and its religious practices (notably purity, Sabbath, and marriage law).”<sup>116</sup> Hebrew Matthew is critical of these central institutions, but is more conservative than canonical Matthew.

We cannot prove an historical link between a community of Hebrew Matthew and a community of canonical Matthew, because a discussion of the origins of Hebrew Matthew is entirely speculative. One must at least acknowledge several possible backgrounds for Hebrew Matthew. It is possible that Hebrew Matthew is a result of conservative Jewish-Christians who were mitigating the critical attitudes of their contemporaries. Thus, Hebrew Matthew would be derivative of a Matthean stream that is similar to canonical Matthew. It is equally as plausible that liberal or Hellenistic Jewish-Christians increased the mildly critical attitude of conservative Jewish-Christians and developed the polemical expressions contained in canonical Matthew.

Jewish-Christian communities experienced tension with Jewish authorities and with the church. They also experienced an internal tension in seeking to remedy the tension with authorities. J. Neville Birdsall discusses the Clementine community as a Jewish Christian community. The community had close contact with Jewish culture, but they developed language

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<sup>115</sup> Georg Strecker, “On the Problem of Jewish Christianity,” in *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (ed. Walter Bauer; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 241-85, 283, 284.

<sup>116</sup> Shaye Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1989), 168.

that discouraged Jewish behavior, such as the forbiddance of observing dietary laws.<sup>117</sup> Hebrew Matthew's community would have experienced similar pressures and internal conflict. Davies and Allison argue that it would be difficult to "leave Judaism," for social, cultural, and familial reasons. They argue that the Matthean community emulated the parent community, which suggests that the relationship between the community and Judaism was parthenogenic. Davies and Allison say the group's organization seems to show a reluctant and incomplete separation from Judaism.<sup>118</sup> Hebrew Matthew reflects a community that is not as far along in the separation process as the community reflected by canonical Matthew. There might have been no historical connection between their communities, but a comparison of their gospel traditions certainly reflects historical changes that Jewish-Christian communities experienced and theological developments that Jewish Christianities cultivated.

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<sup>117</sup> J. Neville Birdsall, "Problems of the Clementine Literature," in *Jews and Christians*, 348-61, 60-61. "We are dealing with a center where there is a community of Christians of Jewish extraction and self-identification within the Church, and where the attitude towards the Jewish people is irenic, but where nevertheless, there is concern at the continuation of some aspects of Jewish religious practice. This is in marked contrast to the generally strident antagonism to the Jews and Judaism which increasingly prevails in Christianity as the centuries pass." Birdsall compares John Chrysostom's anti-Jewish rhetoric, which discourages Jewish behavior to the Clementine language, which does the same, but in an entirely different context. A similar comparison can be made between the use of Matthean tradition in anti-Jewish polemic and Matthew's criticisms of Jewish institutions.

<sup>118</sup> Davies and Allison, "Matthew: A Retrospect," 695-705. Davies and Allison use a sociological approach and interpret Matthew's narrative as expressing concern for his community. For example, they propose that the Sermon on the Mount is an answer to "Jamnian Judaism." They explain several parallels between Matthew and traditions about Johannan ben Zakkai (use of Simeon the Just's three pillars, common use of Hos 6.6, openness to Gentiles, the interpretation of defilement as a matter of the heart, eschewing violent revolt, and use of a parable). They interpret Matthew's debate between church and synagogue as between rabbinic scholars and Matthean scribes. They defend the portrayal of rabbinic Judaism quickly rising to authority by citing quick responses to trauma at other times in history.



## Chapter Four, Conclusion

Shem-Tob preserved a reflection of Hebrew Matthew in a polemical treatise. His *Even Bohan* is one of many polemical treatises from the Middle Ages. Jewish writers did not publish polemical treatises until the twelfth century, which was a time of great oppression.<sup>119</sup> The polemicists were not trying to convert Christians, but rather, they were responding to Christian polemical challenges, providing support for Jews under pressure to convert, and ministering to apostate Jews. In other words, polemicists “were not trying to effect a change in Christianity. Their main goal was to prevent Jewish apostasy to Christianity.”<sup>120</sup> However, throughout the Middle Ages, Christian polemic against Judaism was present at a much greater level than the threat of Judaism to Christianity. Christian polemic often answered Christian questions about the relationship of Christianity to Judaism and Christianity’s interpretation of the HB. Christian polemic, therefore, was addressed more to itself than to Judaism. Debate between Jewish and Christian thinkers was not held on equal political, social, or economic grounds. Jewish polemicists were certainly in a position of defense and self-preservation.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> Berger, *Jewish-Christian Debate*, 7,8, 18-20, 32. Berger discusses the context of Jewish polemic in his introduction to a publication of the *Nizzahon Vetus*, another polemical treatise. Clearly, the context is one of oppression. A specific example of oppression is the case that at least two polemics resulted from public disputations. General examples of oppression include social pressures of fiscal exploitation and the *servi camerae* status. Berger argues that the social experience of Jewish communities is evident in the polemics. He also discusses types of responses to persecution other than polemic. Also interesting were the roles of Jewish converts to Christianity as sources of polemic, especially against the Talmud. Though he focuses on Ashkenazic experience, his discussion elucidates Sephardic experience or persecution, as well.

<sup>120</sup> Lasker, *Jewish Philosophical Polemics*, 165.

<sup>121</sup> Christian polemic, which was as old as Christianity, sometimes answered questions that Christians may have asked in regard to the HB in seeking to justify a Christian allegorical interpretation of it, rather than a literal interpretation, which would not support Christian readings of many verses about Jesus as Messiah, Mary as the virgin/young woman, and Christians as Israel. In light of this, Berger reminds us that Marcion’s canon would have avoided these problems. Berger, *Jewish-Christian Debate*, 5-7.

Self-preservation was also the context of early Jewish opposition to Christianity. In the first four centuries of the Common Era, rabbinic Judaism was emerging as authoritative, and simultaneously, early Christianity was defining itself as distinct from Judaism. The relationship between these early traditions is the subject matter of discussion concerning the “parting of the ways,” articulated in the questions: how, when, why, where, and at what rate did Christianity and Judaism cease to have a part-whole relationship. This discussion developed out of NT studies, and specifically from the development of historical criticisms.

Historical criticisms assume the value of using a text as a window to the historical setting of the text, even if the window is murky. This criticism also uses accepted historical knowledge to highlight the context of a text. As scholars studied “the historical figure of Jesus,” interest in first-century Judaism developed. NT scholars began to dialogue with Jewish scholars, especially after the Holocaust made paramount the necessity of a scholarly re-evaluation of anti-Jewish rhetoric in Christian scholarship. As the field of NT studies was thus developing, archeologists were uncovering material remains and textual sources that showed variety within Judaism. Subsequently, many scholars refer to Judaisms. Early Christianity, comprising early Christianities, is among early Judaisms.

If there were many Judaisms in the first century and therein many early Christianities, the question arises: what happened? How, when, why, where, and at what rate did Christianities and the spectrum of Judaisms cease to have a part-whole relationship. More accurately, how, etc. did some stream(s) of Christianities, and some streams of Judaisms part ways to an irreversible degree? Some scholars prefer to refer to the “partings of the ways,” because it is agreed that these partings occurred at different rates, in different places, and under the influence of a variety of social, political, theological, geographical, and cultic factors. For example, after the

destruction of the temple there were many social, political, and religious movements within the Jewish community. For example, Saldarini's list includes: resentment and resistance to Rome, apocalypticism, mystical movements, messianism, and early Rabbinism.<sup>122</sup> Davies and Allison list paganism, Gnosticism, the Jesus movement, and Jewish representations of the Jesus movement.<sup>123</sup> In order to seek out evidence of how the partings occurred, scholars examine the Gospels, epistles, extra-canonical sources, and ancient historical documents for traces of the experiences of communities. Many scholars agree that as long as a Jewish-Christian community existed that the separation was incomplete.

Many scholars consider debate and conflict between early Jewish and early Christian groups to be evidence of a continued relationship between Judaism and Christianity. However, as these scholars address continued debate and conflict throughout the centuries, it becomes problematic. If debate and conflict represent a part-to-whole or even sibling relationship, then even today, Christianity would be "a Judaism." This extension leads to the argument that at some point it is necessary to consider the perspectives of adherents to Judaism and Christianity in classifying the relationship of the two.<sup>124</sup> This extension and counter-argument may be avoided by clarifying the initial statement thus. Debate and conflict between early Jewish and early

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<sup>122</sup> Saldarini, *Matthew's Jewish Christian Community*, 16.

<sup>123</sup> Davies and Allison, "Matthew: A Retrospect," 694.

<sup>124</sup> Gabriele Boccacini classifies Christianity as a type of Judaism in his introduction to *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism*, (Michigan: Eerdmans, 2002). In an early publication, *Middle Judaism*, he begins this classification, which others view as controversial. Boccacini states that the law was the emphasis for rabbinic Judaism, and that early Christianity differed in its interpretation of obeying the law because of Jesus. He argues that Christians and Jews argue that Christianity is no longer a Judaism as a consequence of confessional bias. In avoiding a confessional bias, he concludes that rabbinic Judaism and Christianity are different Judaisms. He argues that all Christian documents are obviously Jewish. Similarly, Alan Segal refers to the religions as Rebecca's children, "Christianity and Rabbinism are the two most successful Judaisms of all times," in *Rebecca's Children: Judaism and Christianity in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1986). Segal and Cohen aver that Christianity ceased to be Jewish when it stopped upholding Jewish law. See Cohen, *Maccabees to the Mishnah*. Charlesworth, in the foreword to *Middle Judaism* argues that the distinction between present-day Judaism and Christianity should be observed. See Boccacini, *Middle Judaism*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), xiii-xix. It seems that Charlesworth's critique may also be applied to works that, though not categorizing present-day Christianity as "a Judaism," conclude their studies by expressing hopes that in the future Christianity and Judaism will un-part their ways. See Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways*, 247-251.

Jewish-Christian groups is evidence of a continued relationship between Judaisms and Christianities. This is more appropriate because, from the perspective of emerging rabbinic authorities, any authoritative measures were targeted, not toward Christians, but toward Jewish-Christians.<sup>125</sup> This was a position of defense and self-preservation, and their actions were targeted toward apostate Jewish-Christians who still participated in Jewish cultic observances and who still observed the law.

We cannot ask first or second century Jewish-Christians their views, because at some point the ways did part. Jewish-Christians either repented and conformed to the emerging rabbinic Judaism, or abandoned the law, or diminished through several generations under pressure from emerging rabbinic Judaism and pressure from an increasingly Hellenistic, or non-law-observing Christianity. Evidence of this process can be gleaned from strata of gospel tradition, the NT, and some early church and early Jewish writings. As described in chapter one, studies of Matthew involve speculation about the Jewishness of the communities of the Gospel and the Jewishness of the author. Much initial scholarship on the “partings,” in fact, began with Stanton’s studies of the Gospel of Matthew. With a paucity of representations of Jewish-Christianity, it is important to investigate potential sources of additional information. The present study has attempted to do so.

Hebrew Matthew is clearly Matthean and seems to represent a less redacted form of Matthean tradition. Following, it is useful to consider how it highlights the proposed orientation of Matthew’s community or at least portrays a Matthean tradition that represents Jewish-Christian theology and fits within characteristics of Jewish-Christian groups described in the NT and early church writings. After considering scholarship on Matthew and the Matthean material

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<sup>125</sup> Paul Alexander, “‘The Parting of the Ways’ from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism,” in *Jews and Christians*, 1-27.

reflected in Shem-Tob's Hebrew Matthew, I support the hypothesis that early Matthean communities were Jewish-Christian communities, who still considered themselves to be within the spectrum of Judaisms and whom Jewish authorities considered to be under the covenant.

There are several characterizations of early Judaism to avoid as one considers "the partings of the ways." One must not equate rabbinic Judaism with first century Pharisaic Judaism and then portray Christianity moving away from some normative Judaism. One must not characterize early Judaisms as homogenous and reducible to one defining feature and then evaluate Christianity in regard to that feature. Rather, most scholars currently prefer to select characteristics that many Jewish groups shared and then analyze early Christian views of these things. This allows one to locate early Christian groups within the spectrum of early Jewish practice.<sup>126</sup>

Paul Alexander avers the following. (1) Rabbinic Judaism was not normative Judaism before the third century, but one must keep in mind that it did become normative eventually. (2) The multiple events and movements that contributed to "the partings" were caused by varying political, social, and theological developments. (3) Jewish Christianity should be the focus of study, because it was Jewish Christianity at which rabbinic policy was aimed. For Alexander, it is "the triumph of Rabbinism and of the failure of Jewish Christianity to convince a majority of Palestinian Jews of the claims of the gospel," which finalized the separation.<sup>127</sup>

Alexander explains that rabbinic policy considered Jewish identity to depend upon *halakhah*. This was an identity that was irreversible. However, he explains that rabbinic Judaism could also define its community by labeling heresies. This rabbinic use of *halakhah* and labeling

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid., 2. Also, E. P. Sanders discusses covenantal nomism as a defining feature of Jewish groups in *Paul and Palestinian Judaism* (London: SCM, 1977). Dunn, however, proposes four pillars of Judaism in *The Partings of the Ways*: monotheism, election, temple, and torah.

<sup>127</sup> Alexander, " 'The Parting of the Ways' from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism," 3.

of heresies cannot be anachronistically attributed to first century Judaism. However, Alexander suggests that the rabbis would have considered Christians as either Israelites who followed *halakhah* or non-Jews who were not under the covenant. He stresses that the rabbis were concerned with the Jewish Christians who were still under the covenant.

He considers the *Birkat ha-Minim* to be a prime example of Jewish authoritative measures against Jewish-Christians. He argues that the labeled *minim*, heretics, was applied to Jewish-Christians in order to try to exclude them from cultic meetings and to ostracize them socially and economically. Scholars not only disagree on the efficacy and impact of the *Birkat ha-Minim*, but also on whether it refers to Christians at all. Alexander certainly considers it to refer to Jewish-Christians.<sup>128</sup> Saldarini disagrees, arguing that if the rabbis did write such a thing as the *Birkat ha-Minim*, then it would have been little more than a gesture because they did not control synagogues.<sup>129</sup> Davies and Allison also deflate the impact of the *Birkat ha-Minim*. Though they view the emergence of rabbinic authority as quick, they accede that submission to rabbinic authority was still voluntary in most areas. They explain that the punishment for not saying the *Birkat ha-Minim* was only lack of permission to lead prayer. This ban would encourage repentance, not exclude one from Judaism.<sup>130</sup> Alexander also argues that no Jewish-Christian could participate in the Eighteen Benedictions, because they affirmed messianic expectation, longing for the restoration of the temple, and a desire for statehood. These desires reflect a nationalism that, Alexander says, contrasts sharply with the generalized language of early Christian statements such as the Pater Noster.<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>128</sup> Ibid., 4-6.

<sup>129</sup> Saldarini, *Matthew's Jewish-Christian Community*, 18-20.

<sup>130</sup> Davies and Allison, "Matthew: A Retrospect," 696, 700. Concerning the emergence of rabbinic Judaism, they argue for a rapid change based on the traumatic nature of the destruction of the temple and they cite other historical reformations or response to trauma that were very rapid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., 6-11.

There were many social pressures placed on Jewish-Christians by rabbinic authority. They rejected the Gospels, other Christian writings, and even the Christian Torah scrolls as sources of defilement. Rabbinic Jews were forbidden to eat with Jewish Christians, to read their books, or to accept their “witchcraft.” It was “better to die than be healed by a *min* in the name of Jesus,” according to Rabbi Eleazar ben Damah. Alexander concludes that the rabbinic authorities did not know the details of Christian doctrine, but spread polemics and anti-Christian propaganda in order to discourage apostasy. The story of Rabbi Joshua ben Perahich and Yeshu, charges Jesus with magic and “deceiving Israel,” but it also depicts Jesus as simple minded. His sins are partially caused by Rabbi Joshua’s strong rebuke. Perhaps, Alexander suggests, this story functioned to advise rabbinic authorities not to ostracize Jewish-Christians so harshly that they could not repent.<sup>132</sup>

Alexander’s depiction of “the partings” does not allow any assertion that Judaism could have reconciled Christianity within itself or that Christianity is still a Judaism. Alexander’s point of view portrays a more realistic picture of groups misunderstanding one another and trying to legitimate and defend their positions. Alexander addresses the “widening rift” from a rabbinic perspective. He says opposition from the Jewish community was wide spread geographically and temporally for manifold reasons. The Jerusalem entry and “attack” on the money changers in the temple could have suggested Jesus to be a dangerous revolutionary. Also, antinomian Christian teaching and lifestyle would have “outraged” Jewish zeal for the law. The idea of a crucified Messiah would have been oxymoronical. Only a few Jewish intellectuals would have been able to recognize any similarities between highly developed Christology and esoteric

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<sup>132</sup> Alexander, “ ‘The Parting of the Ways’ from the Perspective of Rabbinic Judaism,” 11-19.

Jewish texts or doctrine. Alexander says that Christianity was far from Christianizing Jewish society in that it was a marginal, radical group.<sup>133</sup>

With the emphasis on *halakhah* being central to the law, Christianity and other groups in opposition to the rabbinic currents were marginalized. Jewish Christians would have felt the pressures of rising nationalism and therein messianism. The more Hellenistic Christians whose missions to Jewish peoples were unsuccessful would have placed additional pressure on Jewish Christians, since the church was increasingly Gentile in ethnicity and increasingly liberal in regard to the law. Alexander describes the completion of “the parting” as Rabbinism’s “triumph” in the Palestinian Jewish community and subsequent dissipation of Jewish Christianity. Alexander speculates that if Jewish Christians had “won” Israel rather than the rabbinic authorities, then the Christian tradition may have separated into the “Gentile Church” and the “Jewish Church.”<sup>134</sup>

The slow emergence of rabbinic Judaism is comparable to the homogenization of orthodox Christianity. Early Christianity was not characterized by unity or even stability. They had to draw from Jewish tradition. As discussed above, there was selective observance of Jewish law among early Christians. Saldarini mentions that Christians were attracted to synagogues, and that Jewish groups proselytized until the fourth century.<sup>135</sup> During these first four centuries of Christianity, the church was defining itself as distinct from Judaism. As with rabbinic Judaism, Christian heresies were not immediately evident, but authorities decided upon them for several centuries. The Western church did not consider Jewish Christianity to be a heresy until the second century, and the Eastern church did not until the fourth century. The existing Jewish-Christian groups used gospel tradition to interpret the law according to Jesus’ authority. It is the

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<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 19-20.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 19-25.

<sup>135</sup> Saldarini, *Matthew’s Jewish-Christian Community*, 18-20.



Matthean Gospel that was rumored to be used by such groups, but in some defective form.

Hebrew Matthew does not represent a Matthean tradition that would lend support to all Jewish-Christian groups, but it does represent some Matthean tradition, which shares characteristics with descriptions of Jewish-Christian groups. Either an original or derived conservative Jewish-Christian gospel would certainly be much like Hebrew Matthew.

The importance of investigation into Matthean communities lies in its contribution to the discussion of “the partings of the ways.” Meier says that this Gospel “stands on the borderline between the Jewish and Gentile worlds.”<sup>136</sup> The characteristics of Jewish-Christian groups show that the distinction between Jewish and Gentile is not synonymous with the distinction between Jewish and Christian. However, in Matthean communities these elliptical boundary lines intersect. It is this junction that the present study attempts to elucidate by considering Hebrew Matthew as a less redacted Matthean tradition, but nonetheless part of a Matthean stream that was heading toward one of the many parting junctions.

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<sup>136</sup> Meier, “Gospel of Matthew,” 624.

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