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The Matthean Split: An Analysis of the Pharisees in the Gospel of Matthew

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Abstract

This dissertation is concerned with the acerbic relationship between the Matthean community and the Pharisees as shown in the Gospel of Matthew. It is the view of this study that texts reflect the world which created them and as such this dissertation uses historical and literary criticism to analyse the setting of the Gospel of Matthew by locating it within a specific time and place. Once this has been achieved the study moves to discuss and evaluate the impact that specific events such as the First Jewish War (66-73 CE) and the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (70 CE) had on the author and his contemporaries as he composed the text. A profile of the Pharisee will be established to base future analysis off.

The dissertation will then shift focus to analyse passages of the Gospel of Matthew involving the Pharisees and through careful exegesis will aim to identify possible causes in the split between the emerging Christian group of Matthew and the more established Jewish leadership of the Pharisees.

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

For almost two millennia, readers of the Gospel of Matthew have noticed how this text is the most Jewish version of the Gospel story and yet also the most critical of the Jewish leadership. Many will have wondered how a document that can promote Jesus in such Jewish terms can be so scathingly critical of the majority of the Jewry depicted in the text. Of the Jewish groups who suffer the First Gospel's opprobrium, none face criticism as harsh as the Pharisees. The relationship between the Gospel and the Pharisees is often bitter and at times vitriolic, thus the question, why?

It is the aim of this study to analyse the passages involving the Pharisees in the Gospel of Matthew and uncover what the author's treatment of this particular group says about the relationship between the emerging Christian group and the more established expression of Pharisaic Judaism. To do so the dissertation will argue that the Gospel was written by a Jewish community, living in Antioch in Syria, c. 90 CE. Key events of this period, especially the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE, will be discussed to uncover the likely impact that they had on the Matthean group when they composed the Gospel.

The dissertation will also look to create a profile of the Pharisees and will suggest that they originated from a scribal class of devout laymen during the Babylonian Exile which ended in 538 BCE and that the Pharisees in the period c. 90 CE would have had disparate practices and beliefs across the different areas of the Jewish diaspora. While the amounts of power and influence that the Pharisees exerted will also have varied in different locations, it will be argued that the removal of the ruling elites in the First Jewish War (66-73 CE) brought an increase to the power and influence that they had.

With an understanding of the period c. 90 and a profile of the Pharisees firmly established, the dissertation will shift to analyse the sections of the Gospel which feature this sect. The passages of Matthew's Gospel will then be analysed in three different sections, the first of which, Chapter Six, will argue that the synagogue was a significant area of disagreement between the Mattheans and the Pharisees and a site where the Mattheans were rejected by their Jewish community. Chapter Seven will argue that the Mattheans viewed the Pharisees as being hypocritical in their various acts and practices and will argue that the Mattheans looked to be more devout than their rival sects in order to lay claim to the pre-70 CE Jewish

heritage. Finally, Chapter Eight will argue that it is the Matthean's interpretation of the Law and their disregard for the oral traditions of the Pharisees that reveals the greatest detail about the likely reasons for the antagonism between this group and the Mattheans.

Chapter 2 – Methodology

2.1. - Introduction

It is the aim of this dissertation is to show through literary-historical and redaction criticism how the Gospel of Matthew's portrayal of the Pharisees can be used to highlight the issues that were facing the author of the text and the community to which they belonged. It is believed that by doing this, a better understanding will be gained of the issues that were likely the cause for one community dividing itself and travelling down the paths that would eventually lead to both Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism.

In order to achieve these aims, the dissertation will look to establish when this text was written. Once the composition of the text has been located to a specific period, the dissertation will look to try and establish who the author of the Gospel was and what type of environment they were writing in. After it has been established who wrote the text, when it was written, and to what type of community that the author belonged to, the dissertation shall then move to create a profile of the Pharisees from which analysis of the Gospel of Matthew and its depiction of this group can be based.

After this has been achieved, selected themes found in the Gospel involving the Pharisees will be analysed in order to better understand probable causes of tension between the two groups.

2.2 – When was it written?

Chapter Three of this dissertation will look to anchor the Gospel of Matthew in a particular time, although dating ancient manuscripts exactly can prove to be a difficult process. "Classical assumptions about Matthew were that it was the first Gospel written, was authored by the apostle Matthew, and was, therefore, written in Palestine. All these assumptions have been challenged" (Senior, 1983, p12). As will be explained in Chapter Three, the vast majority of more recent scholarship, starting from the nineteenth century onwards, regards the Gospel of Matthew as not being the first Gospel written. The dissertation will use modern scholarship and present the argument for why it agrees with the majority of modern mainstream scholars who regard the Gospel of Mark to have been

written first and to have been used as a source document for both the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Luke.

J. A. Overman states, “what one reads in a text such as Matthew’s Gospel is inevitably a product of the world in which it participated and from which it came” (1990, p2). While the Gospel of Mark will be shown to be dated to c. 65 CE, the Gospel of Matthew will be viewed to have a date c. 90 CE which significantly puts its composition after several key events which it is thought had a massive impact on the style and content of the text. By understanding the major events which effected Palestine and the Jewish diaspora communities throughout the Near Eastern region such as the First Jewish War (66-73 CE) and the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE, it is believed that a clearer understanding of the text can be reached. The salient example of this is how through analysing scholarship, the dissertation will establish that the Temple’s destruction in 70 CE is a watershed moment in the history of the Judaism, and subsequently the emerging Christian religion. E. P Sanders notes that the Judaism of this time was firmly rooted in acts of sacrificial practice as instructed in the Torah (1998, p49), since Deuteronomy 12.13 stresses the prohibition of sacrifices outwith the Temple. The Gospel of Matthew was written in a time when the Temple was already destroyed and the act of sacrificing was no more; this significantly altered the culture and the role of sacrificial acts that were at the core of Jewish practices and subsequently put the Judaism of this period into a state of crisis or, as Boyarin comments:

Once the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, however, all bets were off. Some Jews wished to continue sacrifices as best they could, while others rejected such practices entirely. Some Jews thought that the purity practices that were important were still to be practiced, while others thought that they were irrelevant. There were, moreover, different interpretations of the Torah, different sets of ideas about God, different notions of how to practice the Law (2012, p4).

In Chapter Three the dissertation will also address the impact that the First Jewish War had on the theo-political landscape of this period. Combined with the destruction of the Temple, it will be shown that the loss of the Jewish elite during this conflict further contributed to the crisis that Judaism found itself in. As Saldarini (1991, p39) eloquently states:

Looked at in this way the Gospel of Matthew (dating from 80-90s CE) fits not only into the development of Christian theological thought but also into the post-70 Jewish debate over how Judaism was to be lived and how that way of life was to be articulated in order to insure the survival of the Jewish community without the Temple and its related political institutions.

The dissertation will therefore attempt to establish as clearly as possible what life was like during this chaotic period of theological crisis for the author of the Gospel and better understand the type of issues that he and his community were dealing with when he produced the text.

2.3 – *Who wrote it?*

Although current scholarship is unable to say precisely who wrote the Gospel of Matthew, it is still important to try to understand the views of the author who produced the text in order to ascertain why they produced their version of the Gospel the way that they did. By trying to better understand the author and the issues that he and his community faced it is believed that a better understanding can be reached regarding the unique depiction which the Pharisees receive in the First Gospel. Numerous leading modern Matthean scholars such as Dale Allison, John Riches, and the previously mentioned Daniel Boyarin shall be consulted to provide a detailed portrait of the author and the community to which he was attached in order to locate the Matthean community somewhere within the transitory boundaries that define the Judaism of this period. To briefly highlight the Jewish nature of Matthew's Gospel using the three aforementioned Matthean scholars, in *The New Moses* (1993) Allison shows how the Matthean Jesus can be seen to conform to a Jewish typology in keeping with several of the Jewish prophets stretching back to the great Law-giver. In *Conflicting Mythologies* (2000) Riches shows how a Jewish identity permeates through the Gospel of Matthew by comparing it to the less explicitly Jewish and more culturally neutral Gospel of Mark. Completing our trinity of preeminent modern Matthean scholars who agree as to the unequivocal Jewishness of Matthew's Gospel, Boyarin's *Dying for God* (1999) shows the relationship between nascent Christianity and first century CE Judaism and frequently uses Matthew to highlight this bond. "Christianity is a movement which emerged

from within first-century Judaism” (Dunn, 1991, p2), and what is perhaps surprising for a document that is at the foundations of Christianity, is just how loud Matthew’s Jewish voice rings throughout the narrative. It will be shown that even with the belief in Jesus as the Messiah which puts the author of the text theologically at odds with some of the different Jewish factions, “Matthew considers himself to be a Jew who has the true interpretation of the Torah and is faithful to God’s will as revealed by Jesus whom he declares to be Messiah and Son of God... He seeks to promote his [Jesus’] interpretation of Judaism over that of the other Jewish leaders... In his own view, Matthew is simply Jewish” (Saldarini, 1991, p41).

The dissertation will also put forward that the primary intended audience for this text was Jewish by carefully analysing its content. Thus, Chapter Four will establish that the Gospel was written by a Jew and primarily for a Jewish audience and will therefore evaluate the likely effect that this had on the Gospel of Matthew’s treatment of the Pharisees.

The actual geographical setting for the site of composition for Matthew’s Gospel will also be discussed. It is the view of this dissertation that Judaism was not a single homogenous faith at this point in time and subsequently the Judaism of one area differed to a greater or lesser extent to that of another’s. Thus, while it will be said that Jews in different locales were likely to share certain core practices and beliefs, the dissertation shall suggest that a specific geographic location to which the author belonged would have had an impact on his writing of the Gospel.

2.4 – The Pharisees

After the focus of Chapters Three and Four being on locating the Gospel of Matthew within a theo-historical time-space and to a specific geographic location, the dissertation will look to provide a detailed profile of the Pharisees for the period c. 90 CE when it is thought that the Gospel of Matthew was written. By understanding their origins, their beliefs and practices and significantly the amount of power and influence that they had during this period, a clearer analysis of their role in the Matthean Gospel shall be achieved.

The Jewish scholar Josephus (c. 37-100 CE) who was contemporaneous to many of the events that the dissertation looks to cover is the main source of our knowledge for much of

this chapter. “Josephus is an unusually valuable historian: he actually lived in Palestine in the first century, knew most of the leading figures, and experienced firsthand not just its dominant culture but also its political and military crises” (Ehrman, 2004, p39). The strengths and weaknesses of this source shall be evaluated and yet while Josephus is a source not without flaws, J. A. Overman powerfully sums up the reason for utilising his writings when discussing the first century CE as, “what Josephus, has to say about the Pharisees is of interest when we consider the prominence of the Pharisees in the Gospel of Matthew and the world in which both formative and Matthean Judaism were a part. In terms of the various factions and parties that comprised the social world of Judaism in this period, it would be important to comment on what Josephus tell us about the Pharisees” (1990, p12).

2.5 – Analysis

At this stage, the dissertation will have established a sound historical base from which to embark on literary analysis of the Gospel. The analysis of the Pharisees in the Gospel of Matthew shall be divided into three chapters, the first of which will address the Pharisees and passages of the Gospel where “their synagogues” (or the singular) is referenced. The importance of the synagogue to Jews in this period after the destruction of the Temple will be discussed and subsequently the analysis of these selected passages shall give insight into the relations between the Matthean community and the Pharisees in this important religious and social forum. Redactional criticism will also be employed as the dissertation attempts to understand the reasons behind the Matthean author altering his Markan source.

The proceeding chapter (Chapter Seven) of the analysis will look at the accusation of hypocrisy which the Gospel of Matthew regularly levels at the Pharisees. The actions of alms giving, praying and fasting will be analysed as the dissertation looks to understand what it is about these acts of Jewish piety that the Gospel of Matthew finds hypocritical and why. The last part of this chapter is given to analysis of the polemic Matthew 23 where the Pharisees face extreme criticism. It is the view of this dissertation that the analysis of such

an important passage will reveal significant information regarding the likely cause of tension between the two Jewish groups.

The final section (Chapter Eight) in this trio of analytical chapters will focus on the Jewish Law and the relationship that the two groups have with this key aspect of the Jewish religion. Select passages of the Gospel of Matthew will be examined in order to look at the differing interpretations of Scripture that these two groups have and how this can be shown to be a probable source of conflict that contributed to the split between an emerging Christian community and a more dominant Jewish sect.

Chapter 3 – The Matthean Period

3.1 – Dating the Gospel

The dating of ancient manuscripts, especially where the original copies (*autographs*) are lost to history is a difficult enterprise that in many cases is not as precise as scholarship would like. The dating of the Gospel of Matthew has undergone rigorous academic enquiry and subsequently the dating for the composition of this document can be located to being within a reasonably well defined timeframe. When attempting to ascertain the latest time that the Gospel could be written, there exists the “overwhelming probability that Ignatius of Antioch, who died c. 107, knew the Gospel in written form. During his fateful journey to Rome to face martyrdom, Ignatius wrote a number of important epistles. These epistles... contain a number of clear references to the Matthean Gospel” (Sim, 1998, p32).¹ Less recent scholars such as Koster (1957) and Sibinga (1966) previously contested the use of Ignatius’ letters to date Matthew by proffering that it was an oral tradition that contained Matthean elements that the Church Father used or that he had access to one of the source documents that the author of Matthew used. The majority of more modern mainstream scholarship however, this dissertation included, agrees with prominent academics such as Kohler (1987), Overman (1990) and Senior (1997), who refute the redactional criticisms of Koster and Sibinga and view the Gospel as being composed no later than c. 107 CE when Ignatius was writing his epistles.

The earliest dating for the Gospel of Matthew relies on source theories which can initially be somewhat awkward to grasp.² A brief summation of the argument for the earliest dating for the Gospel of Matthew would be that since the Gospel of Mark is fully integrated into the Gospel of Matthew, the author of Matthew must have used the earlier Markan Gospel as a source document when composing his Gospel which logically must have been written later than Mark. The destruction of the Jerusalem Temple which will be discussed later in this chapter is also a marker for dating the Gospel of Matthew. In Matthew 22.7, the Gospel makes a reference that clearly alludes to the destruction of the Jerusalem in 70 CE. Mark’s Gospel makes no comment on the cataclysmic events of 70 CE and such was the magnitude of these events that to know of them and not include them seems implausible and

¹ An example would be Ignatius reference to Matthew 3.15 in Smyrn 1.1.

² See Senior, 1997, p19-33 for a fuller discussion on the source theories surrounding the Matthean Gospel.

consequently scholars take 70 CE as the earliest possible dating for the Matthean Gospel. The exegesis of Matthew from a minority of scholars has given rise to a number of weak arguments surrounding a possible pre-70 CE dating for Matthew that are genuine in their sincerity but tenuous in their credibility.³ Thus we have a confident deduction that the composition for the Gospel of Matthew occurred within a fairly narrow historical period and yet Sim (1998) goes further to narrow down the timeframe of Matthew's authorship nearer to the end of the first century:

While Matthew obviously knows of the destruction of Jerusalem, he is not preoccupied with this event. The fact that he describes it only once (Matt 22.7) suggests that it is not an event in the very recent past. This receives confirmation in the Matthean apocalyptic discourse of chapters 24-25, where the evangelist takes care to distance the fate of Jerusalem, from the other occurrences in his apocalyptic timetable. Secondly... the evangelist wrote as a response to certain historical and social conditions which came in the wake of the Jewish war, particularly the rise of formative Judaism... Since these developments did not take place overnight we must allow some reasonable length of time between the end of the Jewish war and the writing of the Gospel. A date somewhere between 85 and 95 appears to suit best the internal evidence of the Gospel and the relevant external evidence (Sim, 1998, p39-40).

Sim also concedes that while the narrower and more exact 85-95 CE dating is less certain than the wider dating of 70-107 CE, the main point is that a post-70 CE dating is established for the rest of his study. This is also the main point for this study as it moves forward; the dissertation will use the date c. 90 CE for the composition of the Gospel of Matthew yet the salient point is that the text is shown to written down after the fall of the Temple in 70 CE.

3.2 – Significant Events

As it has now been shown that the Gospel of Matthew was likely to have been composed 85-95 CE (from now on referred to as c. 90 CE), it would be beneficial to know of the major

³ See Sim, 1998, p33-40 for a fuller discussion of the post-70CE dating.

historical events which occurred around this time that had the potential to influence the composition of the text. While a more exact location for the geographical setting of where the Gospel was written will be considered later in Chapter Four, this chapter will focus on the major historical and theological events which occurred around this time and which sooner or later would have a wider impact on the majority of Jews and proto-Christians living in Palestine and the Near Eastern diaspora.

From 63 BCE until the revolt in 66 CE, the Jewish territories like most of the lands that bordered or were in relatively close proximity to the Mediterranean were under the control of the Roman Empire. Maintaining strategic dominance in the Near East region was achieved through the military presence of troops garrisoned at various locations throughout the province. Economic hegemony also served as a means of suppression of the populace with Rome extracting increasingly severe taxes from her Jewish territories via her client Herodian kings and ruling Jewish elites. “Herod the Great claimed 25-33 per cent of the Palestinian grain within his realm and 50 per cent of the fruit from the trees. Direct taxation also included poll (head) tax in money. In addition, Herod imposed indirect taxation on transit trade and market exchanges... the temple establishment claimed ‘taxes’ in kind (sacrificial goods) and money (the half-shekel) on top of the rest” (Hanson and Oakman, 1998, p114). Thus a generation on from the death of Jesus when the Jewish people finally revolted against their suzerain overlord’s avaricious rule during the First Jewish War (66-73 CE), they felt the full force of the Roman legions who decimated this uprising before pillaging the lands and destroying the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE (Beard, 2015, p511).

Josephus comments that the First Jewish War also had consequences for diaspora Jews who lived within the Roman empire (*War*, 2.457-98). The outbreak of rebellion with Rome brought violent attacks on diaspora Jews living in Antioch and Alexandria as the Gentile majority in these communities carried out reprisals upon their Jewish neighbours (Goodman, 1989, p29). This reaction is something we in the current age can relate to when we hear of peaceful religious minorities being unjustly persecuted for the acts of other more radical members of that faith. Yet while these actions would at least have been just as upsetting and unfair in ancient times as they are today, other repercussions such as the tax which Rome forced Jews to pay after the war had a longer lasting effect on diaspora

communities and the ramifications of these actions and how they effected the Matthean community will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

The year 70 CE with the destruction of the Temple is truly the key event of this period, and is the axis around which all the other events move. The Judaism of this period was not an ossified monolith, rather it was a fluid exchange of ideas and beliefs that would be different among diverse Jewish groups and in different locations (Senior, 1997, p72). This period of seventy years or so either side of the life and death of Jesus exhibits profound factionalism within Jewish society and its leadership which, “was by no means a fixed group. Both those who were in power and those who felt oppressed and alienated changed often during this period. Throughout this period these sects were competing for control of and influence within Jewish society. Awareness of the factionalism characteristic of this volatile period in Israel’s history is crucial for properly understanding formative and Matthean Judaism” (Overman, 1990, p9).

E. P Sanders (1998, p315-491) gives a detailed and insightful account of the various different Judaisms that existed within the theological landscape of Palestine during the Roman occupation and while this dissertation will not address the various forms in which Judaism had expressed itself up until this point, it is suffice to say that within these accepted forms of Judaism (addressed more fully later in the chapter), the Temple was at the very heart of the religion, serving as the cultural as well as spiritual centre for the various forms of the religion that existed during this period. The sacrificing of offerings, which was prohibited from happening in any other location, was documented in Deuteronomy 12.13, and subsequently:

The destruction of the Temple and the obliteration of the priesthood and the Sanhedrin represent a catastrophic turning point in Jewish history. The sacrifices mandated in the books of the Torah could no longer be performed but could only be maintained in the memory of the Jewish people (Strambaugh and Balch, 1986, p29).

What is clear from this watershed moment is that when the Temple was destroyed by the Romans under the command of the future emperor Titus, the Jewish theological landscape was comprehensively and unequivocally altered and that the different factions were now

what we in the modern world might term an identity crisis as they searched for ways to express their faith and define their position without the Temple and without sacrificing:

Once the temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, however, all bets were off. Some Jews wished to continue sacrifices as best they could, while others rejected such practices entirely. Some Jews thought that the purity practices that were important were still to be practiced, while others thought that they were irrelevant. There were, moreover, different interpretations of the Torah, different sets of ideas about God, different notions of how to practice the Law. In Jerusalem, which had been refounded by priests and teachers (scribes) returned from the Babylonian Exile (538 B.C), new religious ideas and practices had been developed, many of them adopted by a group called the Pharisees, who were apparently rather aggressively promoting these ideas among Jews outside of Jerusalem who had different traditional practices, the so-called People of the Land, those who had not gone into Exile in Babylonia (Boyarin, 2012, p4).

Although the Pharisee sect will be discussed in Chapter Five, what is key to this study and is elucidated in the above quote from Boyarin is how the Pharisee sect looked to demonstrate their devotion by attempting to rise from the ashes of 70 CE and ground a post-Temple Judaism in their strict adherence to Torah and tradition by taking this message out of the cities and into more rural areas.⁴

While the Temple and the sacrificial cult had been the glue which had kept the different forms of Judaism together pre-70 CE, after the destruction this binding force was suddenly and violently removed, the hazy and shifting theological boundaries which had existed up until this point with relatively little significance became of paramount importance as Judaism looked to stabilise itself. “Boundary management becomes a mechanism of crisis management” (White, 1991, p221), and therefore as the previously powerful sects such as the Sadducees lost their influential positions and, for all intents and purpose disappeared out of history during the carnage of the First Jewish War, the Pharisees looked to mould post-Temple Judaism more in line with their own sectarian beliefs. This cataclysmic event

⁴ This point will be expanded upon when the dissertation focuses on the Pharisees in Chapter 5 and when it moves to analyse the Gospel of Matthew in Chapter 6.

marks the end of the relatively accepted plurality of Judaisms which had previously existed and starts a six-hundred year long process whereby “the system of Judaism that over centuries would attain normative status took shape; its canon Law and theology came to definition” (Neusner, 2009, pXI).

3.3 – *Formative Judaism and the Council of Jamnia*

In this period following year 70 CE we have shown how the Judaism of this time was a rope made of many different strands that was beginning to unravel without the binding force of the Temple and the elites who formed the Jewish leadership. In his excellent book *The Parting of the Ways* (1991), Dunn expertly details the theological factors that played a part in nascent Christianity breaking off from the established religion. This study disagrees with Dunn’s conclusion that the high Christology of Jesus found in The Gospel of John was the central issue which caused the parting of the ways between proto-Christians other more established forms of Judaism. As has been stated previously, Judaism was no homogenous monolith and subsequently this study holds the view that it would be unlikely that different communities in different areas would split over a single issue with a clean break occurring almost unanimously as Dunn implies. It is the view of this study that the split between Jewish proto-Christians and more established forms of Judaism would have occurred differently at different times and places and over a variety of possible theological reasons. This dissertation holds the opinion that the Gospel of Matthew offers insight into the likely causes of how just one community split off from more dominant religious expressions and does not try to speak in universal terms. The makeup of the Matthean community and where their belief in Jesus fitted within the hazy Jewish theological spectrum of this time will be discussed in Chapter Four. Dunn however makes the case that the plurality within Judaism at this time was, even after the Temple was destroyed, grounded in “covenantal nomism” (1991, p24-5). This can basically be summarised as pertaining to, “the belief in one God, the importance of the Jewish Scriptures, the observance of Torah” (Sim, 1998, p111).

With Judaism in crisis, “after the collapse of the revolt and the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple in AD 70, the Pharisees... were the group that began to knit Judaism back together” (Senior, 1997, p74). Knitting together the torn fabric of Jewish

society was a task that the Pharisees seized in part because out of the four different sects that Josephus mentions (*War*, 2.119-66), only the Pharisees manage to survive the pogrom of the First Jewish War and would go on to prosper, in large part due to the fact that their more Torah-centric view of Judaism was not as reliant on the Temple and the sacrificial cult as other groups who sought influence in the subsequent power-vacuum: “The loss of much of the national leadership in Jerusalem (the chief priest, wealthy families, Hasmoneans and Herodians) in 70 CE lead to confusion and competition for Roman favour and authority. Various groups manoeuvred for power, including the surviving priests, Herodians, and a variety of other, less influential groups” (Saldarini, 1994, p13).

Subsequently the cataclysmic events of the First Jewish War with the destruction of the Temple and the removal of the Jewish ruling elite, “a new religio-cultural synthesis was now required if Judaism was to survive. This synthesis and the process of its construction and emergence in the post-70 period are referred to as *formative Judaism*” (Overman, 1990, p35). Key to this process of formative Judaism is the Council of Jamnia⁵ where Pharisaic Judaism looked to codify the religion in the post-Temple world it found itself in. While there is significant scholarly scepticism over the historicity of this council that is supposed to have occurred not long after the fall of the Temple, it is put forward by the Mishnah (edited c. 200 CE) that, “at Jamnia, a Mediterranean town south of Joppa, and later at other sites in the Galilee region, the leaders of Pharisaic Judaism took up the work of consolidation that would ensure the Jewish survival after the trauma of the loss of the Temple and the Jerusalem aristocracy that had traditionally provided Jewish leadership. Here began the codification of Law interpretation and formalising the canon of Scripture” (Senior, 1997, p74). This legendary council which was led by Johanan ben Zakki and then Gamaliel II is seen by leading scholars (Saldarini, 1994, p14) as being an embellishment of smaller, more informal councils that would meet to discuss biblical Law and would not have the power to invoke nationwide precepts at this time.⁶ While this foundation myth is keen to promote Jamnia as being the moment where the authority of the religion was passed from the Temple and onto the Pharisees, what is held as true by the vast majority of eminent scholars in this field is that in the following centuries, the Pharisaic movement slowly and at different

⁵ Also known as the Council of Yavneh.

⁶ The power and influence of the Pharisees will be more fully discussed in Chapter 5.

rates across Palestine and the diaspora, grew in stature and power as it looked to fill the void left from the events of 70 CE. Thus what we witness in the Gospel of Matthew and will analyse later in the study, is how one form of Jesus-inspired Judaism has to compete to assert itself against a different and more dominant form of post-Temple Judaism within the uncertain theological landscape of the period.

3.4 – Summary and Conclusion

The main point of this chapter is to establish that the Gospel of Matthew was written at a time that was highly volatile and where there existed uncertain theological boundaries between different Jewish groups. From the writings of Ignatius of Antioch and from analysis of the text itself, a date of c. 90 CE has been suggested as being the likely time of composition.

The destruction of the Temple and the elimination of the Jewish ruling elite during the First Jewish War caused a power-vacuum and sent Judaism into a state of crisis as the different Jewish groups sought out how to continue expressing their religion without their spiritual centre.

One example of Judaism trying to codify itself in this period is the legendary Council of Jamnia which scholars such as Saldarini (1994, p14), take to be a mythical retelling of smaller councils that took place after the destruction of 70 CE. While the Pharisees would like to be able to present this council as the moment when authority passed from the Temple to them, it remains the view of this study that no single group had enough power and influence at this time to enforce edicts throughout the whole of Palestine. Rather the period of formative Judaism was a gradual process occurring over a six-hundred year period and happening at different rates in different places (Neusner, 2009, pXI).

A wider understanding of the volatile political events established and broader knowledge of the amorphous theological landscape in place will prove extremely useful during the analysis of the final chapters when a strong grounding of context is required to better understand selected passages. Moving forward, the dissertation will now look more specially at the Matthean community and the probable challenges that they faced.

Chapter 4 – The World of Matthew’s Gospel

4.1 – Introduction

As the last chapter sought to provide a historical context for when the Gospel of Matthew was written and sought to address some of the important and influential events that were occurring around this time, this chapter will look to provide information about who wrote this Gospel, where it was written and what kind of community this was. By understanding more about who wrote this text and their specific environment it is felt that a stronger reasoning for why the Gospel of Matthew encounters the Pharisees in its unique way shall be achieved during the analysis of the later chapters.

Key to this aim will be establishing the Gospel as being a Jewish text as this will show that the author and their community still see themselves as being a part of the wide and varied Jewish culture that existed c. 90 CE and where they thought that they fitted within this nebulous milieu.

4.2 – Authorship

The Gospel of Matthew never claims to be written by the apostle Matthew and the stark fact remains that after two millennia of biblical studies, no one can accurately say exactly who wrote this *good news*. While believers in Christianity might believe the author was Saint Matthew, the tax collecting disciple of Capernaum who was one of Jesus’ inner circle, mainstream scholarship (this dissertation included) makes no such claims.⁷ The fact is that the title, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, was added much later to this particular story of Jesus’s life and deeds (Davies & Allison, 1997, p7-9). As has been outlined in the previous chapter, the majority of mainstream academics in this area date the Gospel to c. 90 CE, however the earliest reference we have to the evangelist’s name ‘Matthew’⁸ being associated with this Gospel is from the early patristic period in the writings of Eusebius (260-

⁷ For ease the dissertation shall still refer to the anonymous author of this text as ‘Matthew’.

⁸ Or other versions of this name such as Mattias etc.

340 CE) who made comment that the earlier writings of Bishop Papias from the early second century CE had attached names to the four Gospels, Matthew included (Davies and Allison, 1997, p8-9).⁹

There are several other reasons to be sceptical about the disciple Matthew being the actual author of the text; the literacy for this period at under ten percent in the most urban and metropolitan of settings let alone rural backwaters such as Galilee is a stumbling block for the apostle Matthew being credited with authorship (Ehrman, 2004, p81-2). It has also been long established through linguistic analysis that the original copy of this Gospel known as the *autograph* would have been composed in Greek (Davies, 2009, p1). Consequently, this study views it as highly contentious that a Palestinian tax collector would have been able to write the complex theological message contained within Gospel even if he was, within the period of low literacy, granted to have had an above average literary skill set for the needs of his job. While it is possible that the actual Matthew could have been bilingual or somehow learned to read and write eloquent prose in Greek when the native language was Aramaic as well as living to around the year 90 CE when he would presumably been a geriatric in an age when life expectancy was as low, it is extremely unlikely.¹⁰ Additionally it can be argued that the apostle Matthew could have had a scribe write down his version of the Gospel for him, yet the extensive redactional activity which will be discussed later in the study when selected pericopes of Mark's Gospel are compared with their Matthean counterparts, clearly shows that this was not a dictated oral story that was transcribed, but rather a new version of the earlier Markan Gospel which was selectively edited by someone with considerable literary skill for this period.¹¹ The final nail in the coffin that this dissertation will offer for the Gospel of Matthew not being written by the titular apostle is that when Jesus meets Matthew in 9.9-13, Matthew is referred to in the third person which would seem very odd if it were he who was writing or dictating this Gospel. The view that

⁹ Eusebius' reference to the Gospel of Matthew, *History of the Church*, 3.39.14-19.

¹⁰ The high infant mortality rate of this period would bring down the overall life expectancy (Hopkins, 1985, p72). While persons surviving into advanced years is not unheard of in the ancient world, it is the view of this study to deem it beyond reasonable credulity that a contemporary of Jesus would have lived through the various persecutions that the early followers of Jesus faced (see Acts 7.54-8.2) and the tribulation of the First Jewish War to reach the age of approximately 90 years before finally committing his version of the Gospel to parchment.

¹¹ O'Leary (2006, p111-17) gives a detailed account of Matthew's reworking of his Markan source to make it more Jewish.

the Gospel of Matthew was written by the apostle Matthew suffers a death of a thousand cuts and falls down under the number of arguments against this position; yet if the apostle Matthew is not the author then who is? The truth is that from an exegetical point of view it does not actually matter exactly who wrote the Gospel of Matthew, what is more important is what we can understand about the author in order to gain a better perspective of their outlook and the challenges that they faced when composing this text.¹² While the following suppositions about the authorship and the community in which they lived are speculative, it is through careful detailed analysis of the Gospel of Matthew that the Gospel itself remains the best source that scholars have for working out information about the author of this text.

4.3 – A Jewish Gospel

As previously stated, from linguistic analysis the version of Gospel of Matthew that is known to us was composed in Greek and yet even with this Hellenistic influence Matthew is very much a Jewish document for a Jewish audience (White, 1991, p222). Sim goes further in summing up the Jewish position of the Gospel when he states:

It has long been acknowledged that the Gospel of Matthew is the most Jewish of the four canonical Gospels and arguably the most Jewish of all the New Testament documents. Even in the ancient Christian church, Matthew was viewed as a distinctly Jewish text because it was considered to have been written by a Jew for other Jewish followers of Jesus (Sim, 2008, p1).

O’Leary (2006, p151) notes how the author of the First Gospel reworks his Markan source to include more references to Jewish Scripture presents a more *torahized* narrative and uses Mosaic allusions to amplify the Matthean Christology. The question that arises from the Gospel of Matthew’s Jewish heritage is, how does this text and the community in which it was produced relate to the nascent Christian religion? Does the Matthean community

¹² It is beyond reasonable belief that a woman would have composed this text when the subordinate role that women in ancient Judaism endured is considered. While careful not to appear sexist, it is taken by this study (and all others that this author has read) that the unknown author of the First Gospel is almost certain to have been a man.

therefore see itself as Jews who merely had an additional belief in Jesus as the Messiah or do they see themselves as something new?

As has been established in the previous chapter, the fall of the Temple in 70 CE was the catalyst for a new landscape where there were, “numerous Jewish sectarian communities that were hostile toward the emerging leadership, all of whom employed the Torah as a common battleground to legitimate their identity and to challenge other groups” (Balch, 1991, pXVII). Key to the argument for Matthew being a Jew who believes in Jesus as the Messiah is his regular use of Scripture. Within the Gospel of Matthew, the reader sees Jesus fulfil earlier Jewish Scripture multiple times and yet:

These fulfilment texts hardly exhaust Matthew’s use of the Old Testament. There is an abundance of other biblical quotations and allusions in Matthew, some of them very explicit, others detectable barely beneath the surface... In addition to such references to specific Old Testament passages or events, Matthew also uses a typology whereby characters within the Gospel are clothed in the mantle of significant Old Testament figures (Senior, 1997, p34).

Clearly one of the goals of the author of Matthew’s Gospel when writing his version of the story is to promote Jesus’ Jewish heritage. The promotion of Jesus’ Jewish heritage such as in his Davidic genealogy (1.1-17), his liberal quotations of Scripture (eg, 5.21 and 22.32-40), and his consistent allusions to Jewish motifs (eg, 2.14-23 and 4.1-5) unequivocally demonstrates that the community for which this Gospel was intended must surely have been primarily composed by Jews and those who were familiar with the Scripture of the Hebrews.¹³ Consequently, “the boundary markers for the Matthean community are still essentially of a Jewish character. No matter how Hellenised their language or their intellectual climate, they define a Jewish worldview” (White, 1991, p224). With this ‘Jewish worldview’ in mind, within the turbulent and nebulous theological landscape of this post Temple period, Matthew’s community is but one of the sects who are vying for the as-yet-to-be claimed right to post-Temple Jewish normativism; they are just a single small voice in

¹³ Davies (2009, p4) gives an extensive list of Jewish Scriptures and apocryphal writings which are referenced and alluded to in the First Gospel.

the loud conversation that rages in the years following 70 CE when Judaism is undertaking its formative period.

While the majority of scholarship may agree that the author of Matthew was “an intelligent, educated Jewish Christian steeped in the traditions of Judaism and concerned with the interpretation of those traditions in the light of his faith in Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God” (Senior, 1997, p81), there is however a Gentile element to the composition of the Matthean group which should not be ignored.¹⁴ As will be highlighted in the following section of this chapter, the Matthean community was experiencing challenges from more dominant forms of Judaism at the time of its composition. Thus, it would not be outwith the realms of possibility that even with Jews still suffering financial persecutions for the war with Rome, to think that they could have been looking to non-Jews for converts who could carry on the new message of Jesus (Saldarini, 1994, p7).¹⁵ Gentiles, although always cast in more supporting roles, feature prominently in the Gospel of Matthew and are often depicted in more favourable terms than the Jewish leadership as is the case of the contrasting ways that the Jewish Herod and the Gentile Magi in Matthew 2 are portrayed:

When Matthew’s Gentile material is stated in these general terms, it is difficult not to draw conclusions that the evangelist is completely pro-Gentile. He depicts Gentile characters in a wholly favourable light, and presumably intends to serve them to serve as role models for his Gentile readers. He readily supports the Gentile mission and envisions that Gentiles will find a place in the eschatological kingdom (Sim, 1998, p217).

Although speculative, it is the view of this study that the reason for this often positive portrayal of the Gentiles and indeed the amount of attention that Matthew’s Gospel gives to non-Jews means that they played a significant but subordinate role in his community.

In some stories, [Gentiles] symbolise the relationship of the later Matthean group with the non-Jewish world and offer hope that Gentiles will also become members of Matthew’s Christian-Jewish group. But they are so peripheral to the narrative and

¹⁴ For a fuller discussion on the role of Gentiles in the First Gospel, including the argument for the author himself being a Gentile, see Sim, 1998, p215-57.

¹⁵ The Jewish tax (*fiscus Judaicus*) was a tax Rome enforced on all Jews after the First Roman War. Discussed more fully in Chapter 6.

main characters that the thesis that the Gospel is predominantly orientated to awards a Gentile mission or a Gentile group is very unlikely (Saldarini, 1994, p68).

However, while the Gospel of Matthew can be viewed as being pro-Gentile and it is the view of this study to regard the Matthean community as having a small Gentile membership, the Gospel still exhibits a strong Petrine outlook with regards to the future mission as can be seen in Matt 7.6 when Jesus says, “Do not give dogs what is holy; and do not throw your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under foot and turn to attack you.”¹⁶ While this verse, like many in the bible, is subject to polysemy, the instructions of Matt 10.5-6 are far less ambiguous. Sim gives an excellent summary of the argument against a Petrine mission (1998, p236-47), including the views of respected scholars such as W. D. Davies and D. C. Allison who disagree with this position and cite pericopes such as Matt 22.8-10 as evidence for the contrary. The view that this study adopts however is that while the Mattheans were likely to be responsive to Gentiles who were interested in their beliefs – their theology remained focused on their fellow Jews, as is reflected in this Gospel being the most Jewish in nature – otherwise why include so many allusions to Jewish Scripture that would presumably go over the head of a potential Gentile proselyte.

4.4 – A Deviant Group

Having established that Matthew and his community are predominantly Jewish and are one of the many sects who look to lay claim to the pre-Temple heritage in the years following 70 CE when Judaism is looking to codify itself, the dissertation will now suggest how this Matthean sect may have related to the other Jewish groups of this period. The Gospel of Matthew clearly exhibits an increased tension with the Jewish authority figures that is not found in the other Synoptic Gospels. In Matthew’s Gospel there is clearly a simmering conflict between Jesus and his followers and those who represent the Jewish leadership, especially the Pharisees:

Matthew’s Christian Jews were locked in a struggle with this more dominant form of Judaism, whose members (as is acknowledged in Matt 23.2) claimed to be the

¹⁶ Cf. Matt 13.45-6 when Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to pearls.

guardians of the Mosaic legal tradition. But equally Matthew's community, though marginalised, had claims of its own and disputed fiercely the correctness of the Pharisees' interpretation. It sought to legitimate its own claims and to consolidate its own community, however threatened it may have felt by the more dominant forms (Riches, 2005, p1-2).

Consequently, the conflict which we see between Jesus and the Pharisees reflects one of the earliest examples we have of the fractious relationship between a proto-Christian group beginning to break away from the more established and traditional faith (White, 1991, p240). Although the Matthean community are in conflict with other more dominant forms of the religion as has been stated, they are not outside the theological milieu of their rival Jewish sects. The view of this study is in agreement with Saldarini who calls the Matthean community, 'deviant Jews':

They have been labelled deviant by the authorities and by members of the Jewish community in their city or area. Sociologically the Matthean community is a fragile minority still identified with the Jewish community by others and still thinking of itself as still Jewish" (Saldarini, 1991, p38).

While still within the normative Judaism of this period, the Gospel of Matthew offers a snapshot for how in one community, the cracks which we can see starting to appear would develop into fault lines which would, after centuries of codification, lead to the religions of Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism which we recognise today. During the period c. 90 CE however, it is the view of this study that, "the Matthean community, though regarded as deviant by dominant forms of Judaism at the time, should nevertheless be seen as an integral part of first-century Jewish society" (Riches, 2005, p2).

The Matthean community, through their belief in Jesus, can be viewed as trying to bring about a change to the more widely accepted beliefs within the Judaism of this period. In trying to bring about this Jesus-inspired change they are in conflict with the dominant authorities (Zetterholm, 2003, p183). Saldarini, an eminent scholar on defining the Matthean group as deviant Jews, notes that such groups "challenge conventional standards by which community members are measured, seeking to delegitimize the societal leaders who control the definitions of deviance and ultimately to change the social order" (Saldarini,

1994, p111). This is exactly the type of behaviour we see in Matthew's treatment of the Pharisees, especially in Matthew 23. Matthew's Gospel consistently contrasts what they view as their more righteous teachings over the less honest and perfunctory interpretation of the Law by the Pharisees. The fact that the Matthean group does not completely reject the teachings of the Pharisees but rather looks to advance their own interpretation of the Law over the Pharisaic application (as will be shown in Chapter Eight) shows that they are a deviant group that is operating in niche position within the normative sphere of the religion and who are clearly trying to exact influence and bring about change over the larger group. Significantly and furthermore, the author of Matthew has no name for his group:

He does not call it Israel or the people; he uses these terms either in their biblical setting or to designate the Jewish people whom Jesus and the Matthean community have tried to instruct and influence. These terms designate all Jews and provide no identifying distinctions among groups within Israel. Matthew does not even use the terms new or true Israel. Rather, members of the Jewish community who reject Jesus, especially the leaders, are excoriated, in prophetic mode, as unfaithful members of Israel, but still members (Saldarini, 1991, p42).

4.5 – Antioch

The aim of this chapter is to establish details about the author and the community that they were part of and how these surroundings impacted on the content of the Gospel of Matthew. The type of community that has produced the text and the factors that they were dealing with are of greater significance than establishing a precise locale. While the majority of this and the previous chapter has focused and will continue to focus on trying to locate the author of the Gospel of Matthew and his community within a socio-theological time-space, it would be remiss to overlook the role that the geographical location has had on the production of the text. As has been noted previously, different places had their own individual expression of Judaism, therefore by trying to locate the composition of the Gospel to a particular place the dissertation will be able disregard many of the disparate forms of the religion that existed and focus more accurately on one specific branch of the faith.

Scholarship is unable to say exactly where the Gospel of Matthew was produced yet Sim gives an excellent summary of the various possible locations suggested by scholars and their various merits.¹⁷ As has been previously noted, it is the view of this study that the Gospel of Matthew was written by a Jew in Greek, which was the lingua franca of the period and not the languages of Aramaic or Hebrew which were native to Palestine. Taking this into consideration it would be logical to suggest that the Gospel was therefore potentially written down somewhere there was a significant Greek-speaking Jewish community. A metropolitan setting for the composition of the Gospel is also advanced since, “Matthew refers to cities some twenty-six times and to villages only four times (by contrast Mark refers to cities eight times and villages seven” (Senior, 1983, p13).

Antioch in Syria has a claim to being the site of composition for the Gospel of Matthew, although while Antioch fits the previously stated criterion in that it would have had a significant Greek-speaking Jewish community within a metropolitan setting it is not unique and there are other possible settings. As was noted previously in Chapter Three, the Gospel of Matthew had an early association with Ignatius who was the Bishop of Antioch in the first century CE, and it is the view of this study that Antioch is the proffered location for composition when other factors are considered:

We know from other sources that circumstances of this prominent Syrian city harmonise with the kind of atmosphere reflected in the Gospel itself. Antioch was a large Mediterranean city, with a mixed population of Gentiles and Jews. We know from Acts and from Paul’s Letter to the Galatians that it was also the site of a significant Jewish Christian community (Senior, 1997, p82).

Antioch’s population in the first century CE has widely been accepted by scholars as being at around 300,000 people with some postulating a figure as high as 400,000 once slaves are considered, making it one of the most populous cities within the Roman empire (Haddad, 1949, p67-71).¹⁸ Of this general population believed to have been between 300,000 to 400,000 it is estimated that 22,000 (Meek and Wilkins, 1978, p8) to 45,000 (Kraeling, 1932,

¹⁷ Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 1998, Chapter 1, p40-63

¹⁸ Nixon and Price (1991, p160), and Roberts and Manchester (1997, p20-1) give a fuller discussion to the population of Antioch in the first century CE.

p136) of Antioch's inhabitants were Jews and thus the Syrian city was home to one of the largest diaspora populations at this time (Hedner-Zetterholm, 2002, p132).

The Matthean community, while primarily made up of Jewish proto-Christians, has long been viewed as having a significant Gentile element to its composition and this would fit in with what we know of the Antioch Church at this time (Sim, 1998, p216). It can also be reasoned that there would have been a significant Pharisaic presence in the city of Antioch at this time although there is no direct evidence to support this claim. The Jewish diaspora throughout the Near Eastern region and around the Mediterranean as a whole is well documented. The apostle Paul was a Pharisee (Phil 3.5) from the Syrian city of Tarsus. While he was potentially trained in Jerusalem (Acts 23.3) his example shows that the Pharisees were known throughout the diaspora and not just in Palestine:

After the Jewish War, many Jews left the decimated ancestral homeland in the hope of a better life, and many of these gravitated to the two greatest cities of the diaspora Jewry, Antioch and Alexandria. It is not difficult to believe that scribes and Pharisees were among these refugees; it can hardly be imagined that every scribe and every Pharisee who survived the war decided to stay and settle in Yavneh. These Pharisees in Antioch would doubtless have taken a keen interest in the developments in Galilee, and maintained close contact with their fellow Pharisees who were active there. Such contact was made possible by the excellent road system linking the two regions, and there is good evidence that some of the Galilean Pharisees travelled to the diaspora to appeal for financial and moral support. With its large Jewish population and its proximity to Galilee, Antioch would clearly have been a prime target for such activity (Sim, 2008, p61).

Therefore while not being able to say conclusively where the Matthean Gospel was composed, Antioch is an excellent candidate as a setting for the Gospel of Matthew to have been written as it is urban and with a community which is made up predominantly of Jewish proto-Christians supplemented with a smaller number of Gentile followers. Although circumstantial, there would have also been an extremely high chance that there would have been a Pharisaic presence in the city and therefore the stage is set and all the actors are in place for the conflict and drama that we see play out in the Matthean Gospel.

4.6 –*Summary and Conclusion*

It has been the aim of this chapter to provide details regarding social, theological and geographical setting for the composition of the First Gospel. This dissertation holds the view that the author of the Gospel of Matthew is not the apostle Matthew who was a member of Jesus' inner circle. Factors such as literacy being as low in the ancient world, the Gospel being composed in Greek and not Aramaic as well as not being committed to parchment until c. 90 CE push the belief that it was Saint Matthew who composed the text outside the realm of reasonable believability. What this dissertation, with its focus being on historical and literary criticism, deems of greater significance is trying to understand the outlook of the author through detailed analysis of the Gospel of Matthew itself.

By analysing the text, it has been suggested that the Gospel of Matthew is a firmly Jewish text. The author was clearly familiar with Jewish Scripture and motifs to the extent that he has Judaised his Markan source (O'Leary, 2006, p151). As previously mentioned, this is a Jewish text for a primarily Jewish audience and yet with the favourable representations that Gentiles such as the Magi receive, it is the view of this study that there was as small yet significant Gentile component to the composition of the Matthean community.

Even with the small Gentile membership attached to the community, the Matthean Gospel remains stridently Petrine in its outlook as is attested to in Matt 10.5-6 when Jesus unequivocally says, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."

This chapter has also shown that the Mattheans, while still within the Jewish theological milieu of the period, are regarded by this study as being a deviant group who are pushing the boundaries of accepted Judaism and creating tensions with more dominant forms of the religion such as the Pharisaic sect.

Finally, although it is currently impossible to say definitively, the dissertation believes that there is enough circumstantial evidence to view Antioch in Syria as the likely place where the Gospel was written. Through Ignatius there is an early connection to the Gospel of Matthew and this metropolitan setting with a large Jewish community was also likely to have had a significant Pharisaic presence due to its close proximity to the Pharisaic power-base of Galilee.

This chapter has therefore provided a significant amount of background information that will be extremely useful to the dissertation as it looks to analyse the Gospel of Matthew and understand how this emerging Christian community related with more established Jewish expressions such as the Pharisees.

Chapter 5 – The Pharisees

5.1 – Introduction

Before it is possible to analyse the treatment of the Pharisees in Matthew’s Gospel, it is important to establish an understanding of who the Pharisees were and where they fitted into first century Jewish society. In researching for this dissertation, it becomes clear just how fluid and fluctuating the different beliefs are and thus how difficult it is to pin down a particular dogma or set of views onto a specific group at one time; the beliefs of the different groups present within the spectrum of first century Judaism all seem to be nebulous, and while the differences between Christianity and Judaism may now be terra firma, understanding the amorphous theological landscape of this period is precarious territory. Jacob Neusner, a scholar who credits his involvement in publishing over a thousand books on ancient Judaism puts his *yad* on the problem of establishing details on the Pharisees when he states that, “while every history of ancient Judaism and Christianity gives a detailed picture of the Pharisees, none systematically and critically analyse the traits and tendencies of the sources combined to form such an account. Consequently we have many theories, but few facts...” (Neusner, 2009, p3).

Although the scholarly opinion may not be settled regarding some of the more precise theological and historical details of the Pharisees, it is the goal of this chapter to form a bedrock understanding by answering some of the more basic and less disputed questions around this ancient sect which causes such academic ambivalence and in doing so create a profile which we can use to judge Matthew’s depiction.

5.2 – Origins

The Pharisees evolved from a scribal class of devout laymen from the Babylonian Exile (ending in 538 BCE) who sought to deal with the challenges of this time by following the Law to the fullest extent and by developing an oral tradition (later known as the *Mishnah*) to better understand and maintain obedience to the Law of Moses (Boyarin, 2012, p4). As the believers in this particular theological strand began to be known to follow more traditions

and interpretations of Scripture that distanced themselves from the regular mainstream Jewry they became known as 'separatists' or *Perushim* in Hebrew (*Pharisaioi* in Greek, ergo *Pharisees* in English) for their adherence to the Law and their respected efforts at keeping ritual purity.

From the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus (37-c. 100 CE) we first discover that the Pharisees, along with the other sects of the Sadducees, the Essenes and the Zealots were born from the chaos of the Maccabean Revolt (167-160 BCE) (*War*, 2.119-66). While these other sects are not greatly relevant to our analysis of the Pharisees, a brief outline of their profile is required. The Sadducees, we learn from Josephus, were the main rivals to the Pharisees in the period before 70 CE although none of their own writings has been discovered for scholars to evaluate. They were an elitist and aristocratic party and their main theological focus was the sacrificial cult and they are consequently closely associated with the Temple and the High Priest. It is because of this control over the Temple and the priesthood they had the most influence during the Roman period before the destruction of the Temple (*Ant*, 18.15). The Essenes were an apocalyptic and ascetic sect who modern scholarship credits with producing the Dead Sea Scrolls. They are not mentioned in the New Testament and have for the most part isolated themselves in their own community in the wilderness at a settlement called Qumran (Sanders, 1998, p345). The final group Josephus identifies (*Ant*, 18.1.6) are the Zealots, who Josephus terms the "fourth philosophy" and are a collection of groups who look to end the occupation of foreign domination by violent means. They are resistance fighters and could be viewed as ancient freedom fighters/terrorist depending on one's own position on the geo-political spectrum.

The second chapter of Steve Mason's excellent *Flavius Josephus on the Pharisees* (2001) offers a fully comprehensive and detailed account of various scholarly interpretations of Josephus' testimony on the Pharisaic sect. It is worthwhile pointing out that while Josephus aligned himself to the Pharisees party (*Ant*, 18.1.6), scholars such as Mason do not believe that he actually was a member of this sect, rather he merely said this as he was writing at a time when the Pharisaic sect were growing in power, c. 90 CE. Thus when scholars are evaluating the merits of his works we must take into account his own personal agenda and pro-Roman bias. Josephus clearly tried to promote the Pharisees and the Jews as a whole,

as a noble and righteous people while at the same time he was also keen to show to his new Roman masters that they could be loyal and not reject the newly enforced Roman authority which they were subsequently under. An example of this is noted in E. P Sanders' (1998, p380) evaluation of the conflicting depictions of the same event as described in *Antiquities* (13.288-98) and *War* (1.67-9) concerning the Pharisee Eleazar and an uprising during the reign of John Hyrcanus (135-104 BCE). Sanders notes how from this example we can see how, "Josephus tried to down play or even eliminate the possibility that they were prone to revolt. It is by no means farfetched to think that there was a revolt (as in *War*) and that the Pharisees played an appreciable part in it (hinted at in the *Antiquities*)" (Sanders, 1998, p380). Therefore, when considering the differing testimonies, we must consider their limitations by taking into account the differing purpose and context of the individual works.

In *Antiquities* (13.171) when Josephus mentions the Pharisees we learn that they can be said to have been active at the beginning of the Hasmonean period that occurred immediately after the Maccabean Revolt during the High Priesthood of Jonathan Apphus (161-143 BCE). It is during this period of national and theological uncertainty in which the new Hasmonean dynasty, lacking the authority of a Davidic heritage, that we first have documentation of Jewish society becoming fragmented into different sects with different views on how to best cope with the period's inherent political and religious quandaries. In the aftermath of the Maccabean Revolt (167-160 BCE), "it was obvious that definite decisions concerning the moot questions of national policy could no longer be delayed. If a Jewish state was to be created, its foundation would have to be in the plebeian interpretation of the Torah" (Finkelstein, 1940, p74).

5.3 – *Practices and Beliefs*

While the Pharisees and the other sects that were previously mentioned agreed on the basic tenets of the Jewish faith (outline previously in Chapters Three and Four), they had diverse and disparate views with regards to more specific theological understandings. Indeed, within the Pharisaic sect itself there are examples of different beliefs, practices and traditions within various sub-groups who took their cues from the panoply of Jewish leaders

whose views and traditions were not static but evolved and developed over a period of time (Neusner, 1971, p6).¹⁹

However while it would be difficult, if not impossible to say what different individual Pharisaic communities believed at this time, we can lay out a sketch of what would be considered more established belief:

Theologically the Pharisees shared common Jewish orthodoxy (they believed in one God, the election of Israel, the divine origin of the Law, and repentance and forgiveness). The Pharisees, like most other first-century Jews, also believed in some form of existence after death, an idea that is hard to find in the Hebrew Bible (the only clear reference is Daniel 12.2). Moreover, they developed a substantial body of non-biblical ‘traditions’ about how to observe the Law” (Sanders, 1993, p44).

The “non-biblical ‘traditions’” which the Pharisees followed adroitly, would continue to grow until the Mishnah was written down in c. 200 CE, yet scholarly opinion is split between just how much of the pre-70 CE oral tradition it contains. It is however the Pharisees’ precision in keeping the Law and adherence to these traditions which primarily sets them apart from the rest of Jewish society and shall be shown in Chapter Six, “the New Testament confirms the importance that the Pharisees attached to ‘tradition’ by having Jesus criticise them on that very point” (Sanders, 1998, p422), and yet it is because of their dedication to following the Law and their dedication to the Jewish way of life that the people respected them as much and regarded them, to a varying degrees, as being teachers and leaders.

5.4 – Power and Influence

Again we turn to Josephus as our primary source when trying to ascertain the amount of power and influence that the Pharisees had over the populace. *Antiquities* (17.42) states

¹⁹ Sanders (1998, p47-279) gives an excellent and detailed outline of the basic tenets of the Jewish faith in the period before the destruction of the Temple. Riches (2000, p1-38) provides a detailed account of Jewish practices for the years following this destruction when Judaism was in a state of flux, and Zetterholm (2003, p34-41) provides further examples that were specific to the diaspora Jews of Antioch which this study believes was the location where the Matthean Gospel was written.

that at the time of Herod (37-4 BCE) there were approximately 6,000 Pharisees. While an estimate for the total number of Jews in the world at this time can best be guessed at being around three and a half million (Ehrman, 2004, p42), the focus is not on their multitude or its lack of, but the amount of influence that they had over Jewish society in this period.

It is during the time of the Hasmoneans, particularly under the reign (76-67 BCE) of Salome Alexandra that the Pharisees enjoyed their most influential period (*War*, 1. 110); however, as mentioned previously, because Josephus himself claimed to be a Pharisee (*Ant*, 13.171-73), modern scholarship must often be wary to believe his grand claims regarding the power and influence of the Pharisees at this time:²⁰

[The Pharisees] are.... extremely influential among the townsfolk; and all prayers and sacred rites of divine worship are performed according to their exposition. This is the great tribute that the inhabitants of the cities, by practicing the highest ideals both in their way of living and their discourse, have paid to the excellence of the Pharisees (*Ant*, 18.15).

What is more likely to be true is that they held the popular goodwill of the people, no doubt in some small part because the Essenes had for all intents and purposes removed themselves from Jewish society to the isolation of Qumran, whereas the Sadducees who often possessed more influence were elitists and aristocratic in nature. Although the name Pharisee is derived from 'separatist', it would appear that out of the three sects mentioned in the New Testament that the Pharisees did the least to distance themselves from the average Jew on the street. The goodwill that they enjoyed however does not necessarily correlate directly to power and influence:

Josephus treats the Pharisees and Sadducees as known organised groups with influence... The Pharisees are influential on the townsfolk or citizenry which indicated that they are most probably a specialised sub-class, based in cities and town, politically and socially active, and powerful or influential in restricted areas...

²⁰ While Josephus does claim to be aligned with the Pharisee sect he is openly hostile to them (eg. *Ant*, 13.400-32 and 17.41-45).

The Pharisees are not the governing class, but part of a retainer class, subordinate to the governing class (Salardini, 1989, p114).

By the time Herod came to power via Roman appointment in 40 BCE the power and influence that the Pharisees had previously enjoyed was brought to a halt and there is no evidence from Josephus that they ever managed to influence his actions in any way and the Pharisees were treated with the same irreverence as the rest of his subjects (Sanders, 1998, p392). Minor acts of rebellion from the Pharisees to the rule of Herod are documented, such as the refusal to take an oath of loyalty to the king in c. 20 BCE where they were fortunate not to have suffered lethal reprisals for their actions, yet clearly if the Pharisees had the power over the masses that Josephus assigns to them then they would have been more heavily involved in the history of this period rather than resigned to the bit-part role that they had to settle for. During this period, they had to make do with what they had and wait for a more opportune moment to gain influence:

The Pharisees had no public responsibility during the rule of Rome's governors. The high priest and his advisers were the responsible parties in the eyes of Rome. The Pharisees, however, were still around and they still commanded public attention... When conditions were right – when they were no longer held in check by Herod or Rome – the Pharisees stepped forward to play a substantial role in Israel's political and military affairs. But during Jesus' lifetime, they must be regarded as principally *religious* teachers and experts, deservedly popularly respected (Sanders, 1993, p46).

The First Jewish War (66-73 CE) changed the theo-political landscape of Palestine dramatically. Other than the Pharisees, all the other sects had been eradicated in the chaos and carnage of the aftermath of a bloody Roman victory. The destruction of the Temple, one of the last strongholds of the Jewish resistance, had not only devastated the central focus of Jewish worship, it also removed the Sadducees and the associated aristocratic class from being able to influence present and future events in Jewish history. The Essenes at this time also vanish in the fog of war and after a brave final stand at the fortress of Masada, the Zealots were also ruthlessly exterminated (*War*, 7.268). Therefore at the time of the writing of Matthew's Gospel c. 90 CE, only the Pharisees have survived the tribulation of the First Jewish War and subsequently without their other sectarian rivals, they are now in a stronger position to influence post-Temple Judaism. The Pharisees that Jesus would therefore have

encountered c. 30 CE would be a very different party to the one that Matthew and his community would have dealt with who were now operating in a far less cluttered and less competitive theo-political arena c. 90 CE and as such we need to address how this shift in power dynamics affected their outlook in the post-Temple period.

It has been established in Chapter Three of this study that Judaism was not a single monolithic faith and that different groups would have different ideas in different places. However, while not being a single homogenised group at this time, the various groups of Pharisees throughout Palestine and the diaspora likely saw the power-vacuum that this cataclysmic war created as an opportunity to gain more influence and control than before since they now had no sectarian rivals to compete with for the hearts and minds of the people of Israel. They alone are now presented with the opportunity to shape a new post-Temple Judaism for a new Israel. After this war the victorious Romans had no interest in replacing the infrastructure of Palestine with Romans, their primary goal after securing areas that were militarily strategic was to extract taxes from conquered provinces and in doing this they required local help. While the Pharisees cannot be said to have collaborated with their Roman rulers directly in tax collecting, they certainly were given greater authority by their Roman overlords than they had before the catastrophe of the war and subsequently the Pharisees pre-70 CE were in a more subordinate role than they were after the Temple was destroyed.

5.5 – Summary and Conclusion

To conclude this chapter on the Pharisees, we have established the key details about them and their relevant beliefs in order to provide a basis for future analysis regarding the Gospel of Matthew's portrayal of this sect. The Pharisees, although they have a heritage stretching back to the return from the Babylonian Exile, were born mostly as a result of the period of uncertainty after the Maccabean Revolt along with the other sects. Josephus is our main source from this period but we know that he can be unreliable and is an author who clearly interprets events to suit his own situation. The Pharisees were the only party to survive the First Jewish War, this is perhaps why Josephus venerates them over the other eliminated

sects and why he is so keen to portray them as uninvolved with any insurrection, less the last major bastion of Jewish theo-political agency be regarded as a seditious force by his Roman overlords.

While the Judaism of this period was fluid with different groups having differing beliefs, it is the oral traditions which the Pharisees alone follow and their indefatigable adherence to the Torah that sets them apart and wins them the respect of the rest of the more mainstream Jewish society of this time. This precedence which the Pharisees have for the oral traditions will be suggested as being an area that brought them into conflict with the Mattheans when the dissertation analyses selected passages of the Gospel in Chapter Eight.

It is important to not fall into the trap of painting the Pharisees as a single homogenous group during this period. Although Josephus would have his readers believe that Pharisees wielded great power and influence throughout Israel this was rarely the case, especially before the Temple and the other parties were destroyed by Rome in 70 CE and any power would primarily be held at a local level. Even when in a position where they could gain power, it has been shown that this was fleeting and points to more indirect influence and only then more often concerning religious matters rather than affairs of state. After the cataclysm of the year 70 CE however, with the Temple and the other parties, especially their main rivals the Sadducees all being eliminated, the Pharisees were free and unrestricted to grow in power and influence. We therefore have a significant difference between the Pharisees of Jesus time c. 30 CE who were restricted by their sectarian competition and had to be content with having limited indirect power to exert and the Pharisees of Matthew's time who had stepped into the power-vacuum created by the war and who were growing in strength and looking for a more dominant role in the post-Temple period. The power and influence which they did when influencing members of the Jewish community will further be discussed in Chapter Six when the dissertation analyses the relationship between the Matthean community and the synagogues of Antioch at the time c. 90 CE.

With an outline of the Pharisees and the contents of the previous chapters now firmly established, the dissertation now shifts focus from the more historical analysis that has dominated the previous chapters and will use the profiles that have been established to

analyse selected passages within the Gospel itself. Through the use of the profiles of the Matthean community, the Pharisees and the events which occurred in the latter half of the first century CE, more precise analysis of the text within its context can be achieved.

Chapter 6 – Their Synagogues

6.1 – Introduction

As outlined in Chapters Three and Four, it has been the view of this dissertation to agree with the majority of mainstream scholarship and to regard the Matthean community as one of the bricks that was available to formative Judaism as it looked to rebuild itself following the cataclysmic events of the First Jewish War, the culmination of which was destructive climax of the fall of the Jerusalem Temple in 70 CE. While still a part of Jewish society, it will be proposed that the Gospel of Matthew documents how this deviant Matthean group was in the process of being disregarded in the reconstitution of post-Temple Judaism by those in authority. The Mattheans wanted to rebuild Judaism yet they were discarded by the more dominant Pharisaic overseers. Subsequently, and unintentionally, this Matthean brick which had intended to rebuild Judaism somewhat ironically went on to become a cornerstone in the founding of the emergent Christian Church.

The treatment of the Pharisees in the Gospel of Matthew gives the reader of the text an insight into some of the key issues that the author of this Gospel and his community were facing. As has been previously established, the Matthean community was primarily made up of proto-Christian Jews with a minority of Gentile followers. “We cannot assume that the early Christians ever lost sight of their Jewish heritage, nor were they conscious of being anything other than Jews” (Rowland, 1985, p76), and in relation to this issue of identity it has been shown previously that the Matthean group were within the wide spectrum of what has been called Jewish normativism (Zetterholm, 2003, p55-6). Although the Matthean community has been placed within the mutable and nebulous theological landscape that defined the normative Judaism of this period, clearly there are tensions that exist between the Matthean community and the synagogue.

This chapter will create a profile of what the synagogue was for Jews in this period and the likely role that it served to the community in Antioch. The case will also be made that the term *their synagogues* refers to synagogues that have a strong Pharisaic influence and are places where the Matthean community find themselves no longer welcome.

6.2 – *The Synagogue*

It is significant at this point to establish what the synagogue of this period was. In Antioch with a Jewish population of somewhere between 22,000 and 45,000 (see Chapter Four), several synagogues would be required. In Rome, which had a comparable Jewish population to Antioch in the first century (Binder, 1999, p320-10) as many as thirteen synagogues have been discovered by archaeology (Hedner-Zetterholm, 2002, p137). It is therefore logical to presume Antioch as at least having a similar figure with some scholars guessing that the Syrian city could have had as many as twenty or thirty synagogues at this time.²¹

Regarding the internal organisational structure of the synagogues in Antioch, unfortunately there is little evidence for scholars during the first century CE period, yet evidence exists for other diaspora synagogues in Alexandria and for other Jewish communities throughout the eastern Mediterranean (Zetterholm, 2003, p39). It would be sensible to assume that each individual synagogue would have its own unique idiosyncrasies and reflect the diversity found in the Judaism of this time (Williams, 1994, p124-41), and thus it would be logical to presume that some synagogues were more open to new ideas than others (Zetterholm, 2003, p92). Binder states however that there is no reason to assume that Antiochian synagogues were radically dissimilar the other diaspora synagogues which there is evidence for. These synagogues were modelled on the hierarchical structure of the Temple in Jerusalem which had a high priest and a council of elders in positions of authority (Binder, 1999, p265), and subsequently it is the view of this study that this was the type authoritative hierarchy that the Matthean community found itself at odds with. Although speculative, what is likely is that, “outside Palestine, and probably in those cities in Palestine with a mixed population of Jews and Gentiles, the synagogue would have been the focus of religious and national identity, with the elders of the synagogue being leading members in the local community (Rowland, 1985, p44). Diaspora Jews such as those in the Matthean community, would not have been able to visit the Temple before its destruction as regularly

²¹ Zetterholm (2003, p 38) states that a population of approximately 22,000 diaspora Jews would require between twenty and thirty synagogues although he does concede that his methodology for calculating this figure is speculative.

as their Palestinian counterparts and thus the synagogue would serve as an ancillary option for diaspora communities at this time (Sanders, 1998, p47-8).

The synagogue of this period would have been a place of learning with teachings and readings being performed in part by the priests but also in a more informal capacity by *Wise Men* or Rabbis (Sanders, 1998, p200-2). Yet as well as theological debate and religious activities, the synagogue also had a clear social function for the community that it served (Levine, 2000, p134). Within this less formal function for the synagogue it is easy to imagine ideas being exchanged among the congregation and in this respect, it makes sense to regard the synagogue as being a frontline of the battle of ideas between the differing Judaisms in this period of codification. Before looking at examples of the tensions that exist between the Matthean group and the synagogue within the Gospel, it is significant to remember that Gentiles also were attached to synagogues at this time and subsequently we can see how a select minority of non-Jews were involved in what would become the Matthean version of nascent Christianity.²²

6.3 – *Their Synagogue?*

Key to the Gospel of Matthew's treatment of the Pharisees is the phrase, "their synagogue(s)" which is used six times throughout the text.²³ The term, *their synagogues*, is notably ambiguous and the meaning of this phrase has divided scholarly opinion. While some have argued that *their* refers broadly to the rest of the people of Israel, that is the rest of the Jewry that is not part of the Matthean group, it is the position of this study to view *their* as referring to those synagogues which are under the influence of the Pharisees. The reason for this is to be found in the fact that never in the Gospel of Matthew does the reader see Jesus or his followers directly criticising the people; the Gospel's opprobrium is targeted far more precisely at the *blind guides*, those who lead rather than "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10.6).²⁴ The scorn that the Gospel shows were *their synagogues* meant to mean the rest of the people of Israel would therefore be out of sync with the

²² See Rowland, 1985, p 45-6 for Gentile association with synagogues in this period.

²³ Matt 4.23, 6.2, 9.35, 10.17, 12.9 and 13.54.

²⁴ For *blind guides* see Matt 15.14, 23.16 and 23.24.

Gospel's focus of hostility being located firmly upon the Jewish leadership rather than the lay people as is shown in 9.36-8, where again the lack of suitable leadership for the people is criticised.²⁵ Even when Jesus is condemned by the people in their decision spare to Barabbas rather than him (27.20), they are seen (rightly or wrongly) to be under the influence of the insidiously conniving Jewish leadership and thus even as dooming the Messiah to crucifixion, they are not fully culpable for their actions.

Scholarly opinion is split between whether or not the Matthean community are still members of the synagogue or if their relationship has been broken and they have been expelled.²⁶ Antioch was a city with many synagogues as has already been noted and thus it would be hasty to presume that they had been banned from each and every one of these institutions and Pharisaic influence is, as has also been noted, unlikely at this time to be able to influence all the synagogues in a city the size of Antioch. Thus it is the view of this dissertation to take the compromise position that the Matthean community are now unwelcome in several synagogues in the city but still remain attached to Judaism as a whole. This could seem contradictory as it has been previously stated that the synagogue was a strong focal point for diaspora Jews and although this is still maintained to be true, it is the view of this study to view the Matthean group as still attached but with a strained relationship with the more accepted Jewish orthodoxy of this period. They have not yet been excluded from the House of Israel but they are nonetheless in the hall, walking towards the door and, as we will see in Chapter Seven and Eight, exchanging heated words. This semi-partition has caused them to harden their position against those members of the wider Jewish community who are in greater positions of dominance, i.e. the Pharisees. The study therefore takes the stance *their synagogues* refers to synagogues that are under Pharisaic influence and are the type of synagogue that the Matthean community finds itself excluded from.

²⁵ For a fuller discussion of Matthew's attacks on Jewish leadership see, Saldarini, 1994, Chapt 3.

²⁶ For a summary of the scholarly debate on this issue, see Senior, 1983, p9.

6.4 – Teaching and Rejection

In Matt 4.23, 9.35 and 13.54 we have examples of how Jesus looked to take his message into synagogues that were under the influence of the Pharisees. It is important to this study to highlight that the Matthean author thought that it was key to show that in his Gospel, Jesus is seen to be taking his message into *their synagogues* far more than his Markan source which only uses the term twice (Mark 1.23, and 1.39), both in the first chapter. The Matthean author is also keen to show as has already been noted, that it is not the people who reject Jesus' message but the leaders who spurn him and turn the flock of Israel against him, as can be seen in the escalation of rejection that Jesus faces across these three examples. In the first two of these instances (Matt 4.23 and 9.35) which are almost identical, Jesus teaches, preaches and heals the sick; clearly the author wishes to portray Jesus as more of a sage teacher than his Markan sources who in contrast depicts Jesus as an exorcist while in *their synagogue*. After teaching, preaching and healing in 4.23, Jesus' fame spreads and he acquires a following of *great crowds*. In the second example of preaching, teaching and healing found in 9.35 which occurs significantly after the Pharisees accuse him of performing exorcisms via the authority of Satan, there are no *great crowds* who decide to follow him and subsequently he feels sorrow that the flock of Israel is like sheep without a shepherd (9.36), and that the harvest, which although plentiful, lacks the labourers required to bring it in and subsequently it is left to waste (9.37-8). The message is unmistakable in that it is the leadership that is at fault and not the people.

The last instance where Jesus is teaching in *their synagogues* occurs in 13.54 and is the culmination of the rejection which we have seen develop over the previous two examples. The same pericope is found in Mark 6.1-6, however significantly the Matthean author has altered his Markan source and subsequently decided to place these events as happening more specifically in *their synagogues*. While Jesus's detractors are *astonished* at the level of his *wisdom* and his *mighty works*, they none the less excoriate him and adopt a somewhat supercilious attitude towards this mere son of a carpenter. This pericope is valued as being of high historicity since it exists in all the canonical Gospels and contains what would be called in the modern vernacular, 'inconvenient truths', yet the redactional actions of the Matthean author in situating the pericope in *their synagogues* sharpens the barb and

focuses the location of the rejection that Jesus suffers as being in *their synagogues*.²⁷ The Markan source of this pericope had Jesus being unable to perform his healings due to the unbelief of the people yet this is again changed by the author of Matthew's Gospel who softens the impotence of the original by merely stating that he *did not* do mighty works as opposed to that he *could not* do them and subsequently he shifts the blame away from the Jewish laity again. While this pericope may contain a high level of historical authenticity, from a redactional perspective the author of the First Gospel has evidently decided to place it at such a stage in the narrative as to show how the rejection intensified until Jesus was finally rejected in his own homeland, and also how the unbelief he faced from the people was instigated by the snobbish and cavillous objections that the Pharisees raised in order to turn them against him. This is the final time that Jesus teaches in *their synagogues* and yet he still teaches, preaches and heals members of the Jewish laity as he encounters them at numerous other stages through the remainder of the narrative. This would suggest that the author of this text, despite the opposition and hostility that Jesus has found in *their synagogues* feels like the people of Israel should not be abandoned even if the synagogues are no longer fertile soil for the Jesus message to flower as it is their leaders who have prompted his rejection and that consequently a new synthesis is required as set out in unmistakably in 16.13-20 (Davies and Allison, 1994, p455).

6.5 – Persecution

As well as being the site for the rejection of Jesus's teachings, *their synagogues* are also the location for this rejection turning into violence, or more precisely, the future violence that is forewarned by Jesus. In the first example (10.16-19), Jesus warns his followers (who he refers to as sheep as has been shown in the previous analysis on 9.36) to beware of the wolves who represent the Jewish leadership, especially the Pharisees since it is they who are the main aggressors towards the Matthean community. Jesus gives his flock advice to be wise and innocent however he also prophesises that they will still face persecution from their lupine oppressors. Compared to the Markan source (Mark 13.9-13) the author of Matthew's Gospel expands upon the theme of persecution throughout this chapter, and

thus it is reasonable to infer that the Mattheans faced a significant level of persecution and maltreatment at the hands of more dominant members of the wider Jewish community and that this occurred in *their synagogues*. Consequently it is the view of this study that the author of Matthew writing c. 90 CE is retrojecting a warning for the mission back into the time of the narrative of Jesus in c. 30 CE.²⁸ The fact that the Mattheans are suffering such persecutions at the hands of more dominant Jewish groups suggests somewhat ironically that they are still a part of the wider Jewish community. Were this not seen as a fraternal dispute and were the Matthean community regarded as being outside of wider Jewish community they would have been unlikely to be in the synagogues in the first place and subsequently Jewish authorities would have no jurisdiction for the authoritative measures that this dissertation believes the Matthean group suffered. This 'tough-love' approach is cogent with Davies, (2009, p89) view of how synagogue authorities would discourage deviant behaviour through floggings.²⁹

The Matthean mission is in the Petrine tradition (See Chapter Four) as it is clearly targeted at Jews and not Gentiles as can be seen in Matt 10.5-6. Since it is their fellow Jews are the main focus of the Matthean community's proselytising this would further imply that they have not completely broken off from mainstream Judaism. The author of the First Gospel reminds the reader that Jesus has warned of how families will be torn apart as the emerging proto-Christian movement looks to establish itself and carve out a niche in the Jewish landscape. It can therefore be extrapolated that formativisation for Judaism and proto-Christianity was an extremely difficult, divisive and painful process at an individual level and to the wider community as families and social groups were divided about which of the similar, yet ultimately divergent, theological path to take during the post-Temple uncertainty in the years after 70 CE.

The final foretelling of future persecutions of the righteous at the hands of the scribes and the Pharisees occurs in 23.34-39. The leadership of the Pharisees and those in Jerusalem, assumed to mean the Sadducees and High Priest, are seen to be the cause for the wrath of God that resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE and subsequently the laity are not held to be responsible yet again. This motif of persecution that has run through the theme

²⁸ For an analysis of how Matthew 10.16-25 can be applied to Gentile oppressors, see Davies, 2009, p89.

²⁹ See Deut 25.1-3 and 2 Cor 11.24 for Old Testament examples.

of *their synagogues* is concluded with Jesus offering redemption to all those who believe in him and subsequently the Matthean author is promoting Jesus, and not Pharisaic Judaism, as the true way in which the House of Israel can be rebuilt after the desolation.

6.6 – Summary and Conclusion

Through the analysis found in this chapter, the study has established that the synagogue was of this period a hub for social interaction and a focal point for diaspora Jews such as the Mattheans. With the destruction of the Temple and removal of the ruling class associated with it in 70 CE, the synagogue would increasingly have become a forum for the different Jewish sectarian views to be exchanged and debated as the various expressions of Jewish thought looked to assume positions of dominance in this period of shifting boundaries which characterises the process of normativism which the Gospel of Matthew offers a window into.

This study holds the view that *their synagogues* refers to the synagogues in which the Pharisees have achieved a position of dominance and have subsequently excluded their rival Matthean sect from the debate that this study believes to have existed during this transitory period about how to continue the religion without the Temple and the previous ruling elite. By examining selected passages (4.23, 9.35 and 13.54) it has been shown that the Gospel of Matthew is keen to promote Jesus as a Messiah who tried to take his message into the hostile territory of *their synagogues* and try to teach and heal there only to be rejected. Neither the Gospel of Mark or Luke focus as much on this theme of rejection and as such this study believes that this was an issue of far greater significance for the Matthean community and subsequently this is why this theme has been intensified within the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew's Gospel has altered his Markan source (6.1-6) to locate the site of rejection that Jesus suffered to be happening in *their synagogues* (13.54) and consequently from this redactional activity the study assumes that this is because the synagogue was a battleground for the theological clashes between the Matthean community and their Pharisaic opposition. This view is reflected in the importance that the Matthean author gives to focusing events within this locale.

The rejection which Jesus faced when teaching and healing in *their synagogues* was instigated by the Jewish leadership, whom Jesus criticises as *blind guides* several times throughout the Gospel and it is they who are to blame for turning the people of Israel away from Jesus as has been shown in 9.36-38.³¹ When Jesus is rejected for the final time in *their synagogues* (13.54) he still teaches and heals in various other locations so while the synagogue no longer became suitable for winning the hearts and minds of the Jewish laity, the Matthean author can be viewed as still hoping that the people of Israel can be responsive to the message of Jesus when not under Pharisaic influence. By focusing as much blame onto the *blind guides*, it would be that the people of Israel are mostly absolved of any responsibility or blame for rejecting Jesus's message in *their synagogues*. This study feels that it would have been unlikely that the majority of the Jewish laity who turned away from the Jesus message of the Mattheans did so because they passively and unequivocally acquiesced with the Pharisees as the First Gospel implies. Since it has already been established that the Pharisees were unlikely to have held sweeping powers of influence at this time, what this dissertation holds to be more likely is that the author of the text overemphasised the role of the Pharisees in turning the laity away from Jesus's message and has demonised the Pharisees and turned them into a scapegoat so as to free the laity (and potential future converts!) from any blame.

The Matthean Jesus also warns that *their synagogues* will be the site of persecution for his followers (10.16-19). This persecution which Jesus forewarns shows redactional intensification when compared to the Markan source (13.9-13) and thus this study reasonably assumes that persecution was a greater issue for the Mattheans. Ironically the persecution that the Mattheans suffer highlights that this community is still attached to Judaism as the synagogue would not have been the location for non-Jews to be punished and subsequently while the Mattheans are being persecuted they are still attached to the wider Jewish community. Thus the turmoil that we see in the Gospels is the result of an intensifying sectarian dispute rather than a feud between the two distinct religions that these sects would eventually become.

³¹ *Blind guides* referred to in 15.14, 23.16 and 23.24.

The dissertation has suggested *their synagogues* as a significant arena for where the tensions between the Matthean community and the other more dominant forms of the Jewish faith played out. The following two chapters will now look to try and uncover more precisely what it was about Matthean's views that caused such friction with the Pharisees and vice versa.

Chapter 7 – Hypocrisy

7.1 – Introduction

One of the accusations that the Gospel of Matthew repeatedly levels at the Pharisees is the charge of hypocrisy. The author of Matthew uses the term *hypocrites* fourteen times throughout his version of the Gospel which is a notable increase in usage when compared with the single use in Mark (7.6) and the double usage in Luke (12.56 and 13.15).³² As has already been established, the authors of Matthew and Luke used the earlier Gospel of Mark as a source when creating their Gospel, however there is another hypothetical source that these authors consulted which is known as Q. Q is the material found in the Gospel of Matthew and Luke which is not found in the Markan source but is still shared in the two later works.³³ Since neither Mark or Luke's Gospel do not use the term *hypocrites* with anything close to the same regularity as Matthew's Gospel, it can be reasonably deduced that this intense use of *hypocrites* is uniquely Matthean and not a motif acquired from either Mark or the Q source and, subsequently it can be inferred that this is a term that the author uses not without purpose. By studying the use of *hypocrites*, dissertation will therefore reveal more specific areas of theological disagreement between the Matthean community and the Pharisees.

7.2 – Giving Alms, Praying and Fasting

When attacking the Pharisees, Matthew's Jesus denounces them often as *hypocrites* and as such, the question arises as to why the author regards them in this way. It is in Matthew 6 that we first encounter the use of this term when Jesus is talking about giving alms, praying and fasting. Giving alms, praying and fasting were common Jewish practices and concerns for this period (Davies and Allison, 1997, p575), and thus it can be viewed as a further example of how Matthew's community are still attached to the wider Jewish community but also how this group is trying to relate to it and influence it in a specific way. Matthew's

³²*Hypocrites* are referred to in Matthew 6.2, 6.5, 6.16, 7.5, 15.7, 22.18, 23.13, 23.15, 23.23, 23.25, 23.27, 23.29, 24.5 and 24.51. The use of *hypocrites* in Matthew 15.7, 22.18 and 23.23 will not be feature in the analysis of this chapter as these verses shall be discussed in Chapter 7.

³³ For a fuller reading of Matthean source theories and the Q source see Stanton, 1993, 32-6.

Jesus is not critical of *what* the Pharisees do in these examples but *how* they do it. The examples that Matthew 6 offers allow the reader of the text to see that the author of Matthew views the ostentatious way in which the Pharisees enjoy being seen to be pious as hypocritical.

Using the hypocritical Pharisees as a foil, the author of Matthew shows how the followers of Jesus should enact these basic expressions of Jewish piety with more righteousness than the Jewish leadership and thus he sets out a standard of practice for his group to follow. Alms giving is taken as a natural expression of the Matthean's piety and yet they are instructed to do so in a far less grandiose style than their rival Pharisaic sect (6.2-4). By giving aid to the poor in a more discreet manner, the author is promoting the integrity of his group over the Pharisees. Praying (6.5-14) is the second expression of devotion that the Matthean author is keen to revise. Matthew's Jesus regards it as being performed in a pretentious manner by the Pharisees since it is happening in public, non-religious space where the behaviour will be on show. Contrasting this more type of showy behaviour is Jesus who regularly prays in solitude throughout the Gospels.³⁴ In Matthew 6.6 we have it made explicit that this is how followers of Jesus should pray also; prayer for the Mattheans requires no audience, it is a deeply personal interaction between the human and the divine and thus it should be done privately without peer acknowledgement. The final action which Matthew's Jesus challenges in this chapter is the hypocritical way in which he views the Pharisees method of fasting (6.16-18). Again, Matthew accuses the Pharisees of making a show of this action by drawing attention to themselves to gain recognition for their praise-seeking behaviour. From these three examples (6.2-4, 6.5-16 and 6.16-18), we can clearly see that Jesus is not against the actions but rather he is being explicitly critical of the motivation that lies behind their undertaking. This adds credence to the view of this study that the Matthean community are still attached to Jewish society but that they are trying to force it in a new way. In order to do this they are attempting to promote a more righteous and honest application of these three practices from the more established form of the religion. By doing this the Matthean community are defining themselves against the Pharisees and creating boundaries and standards that the group can recognise itself by through being more righteous than their rivals (White, 1991, p223). Although this study has previously

³⁴Jesus praying in solitude: Mark 1.35, 6.46, 14.32-42; Luke 5.16, 6.12, 9.18, 9.28-9.

established (see Chapters Three and Five) that there is evidence that the Pharisees were held in high regard by their fellow Jews through their acts of piety, it is insignificant to this study to say whether or not the historical Pharisees were indeed *hypocrites* as Matthew would have us believe. What is of more salient is that the author of the text is actively seeking to promote his version of post-Temple Judaism, Matthean proto-Christianity, as being the more righteous and veritable expression of Judaism.

The fact that the author of Matthew's Gospel regards his community as being more righteous than the Pharisees is again displayed in 7.1-5. In this passage, the author addresses the hypocrisy of the Pharisees, who are ready to judge the faults in others without regard for their own larger and more serious faults. Worthy of note is the fact that the Matthean author uses the term "brother" (7.3) when referring to the relationship between the disciplinarian and the party being chastised. This would suggest that there is still a familial bond between the two rivals as has previously been established.

7.3 – Woe to the Pharisees

The enmity that the Gospel of Matthew has for their rival sect reaches its damning climax in the brutal denunciation of the Pharisees of Matthew 23. The whole of the chapter is entirely given over to attacking them and their hypocritical ways and thus the reader of this text gains a clear insight into the opinions of the author. Much of the material in this passage originates from the Q source but Matthew's Gospel expands upon this and pronounces harsher and more vitriolic judgements than are found in Luke's Gospel (Senior, 1997, p157).

Matthew 23 is the closest thing we have in the New Testament literature that could be described as propaganda.³⁵ It is a polemic against those who the author of Matthew's Gospel view as a threat to their particular version of Judaism and not, it is significant to note, the Jewish authorities who are responsible for the death of Jesus. Jesus's death is far more the responsibility of the chief priests, Caiaphas (26.57) and ultimately Pilate, a Gentile, whom the Gospel attempts to strip of any blame (27.11-26). It is the view of this study that the

³⁵ The Book of Revelations with its strident fear-inducing message is another New Testament text which could be said to be propaganda.

reason that the Gospel of Matthew focuses on the Pharisees during this polemic and not those who it is reasonable to regard as having more of a hand in his death is because after the events of the First Jewish War (66-73 CE), the priesthood, Caiaphas and Pilate are all gone and are not players on the Jewish theo-political stage around the time of 90 CE when the Gospel of Matthew is likely to have been composed. With so many of the various Jewish leadership eliminated during the war years it is the Pharisees who represent the biggest threat to the Matthean community and their unique form of Christian Judaism and thus this is why they bear the brunt of the Matthean Jesus's ire. It is also worthwhile noting at this juncture that with literacy being low in the ancient world, this proclamation which Jesus gives against the Pharisees would in turn be read out to other Jewish Christians and potential proselytes. The oratory quality of this piece should be noted as it attempts to bring a narrative set c. 30 CE into Matthew's present of c. 90 CE and affect the current conditions which Matthew's community face.

Matthew 23 begins with Jesus addressing the crowds and his disciples and not the scribes and Pharisees who are the subject of the invective.³⁶ Jesus acknowledges the Pharisees as the heirs to Moses' authority and teachings through their rigorous study of Torah (as discussed in Chapter Five); however from the beginning of this chapter, gone is the gentle Jesus meek and mild whom many would recognise today, and in his place is a more angry and scathing Jesus who readily passes judgement on his opponents. The Pharisees are depicted as hypocrites in the early verses (23.3-13) which links back to the earlier discourse of Matthew 6 where the motives of the Pharisees are questioned if not the actions themselves. They are again criticised for their ostentations and their need to be acknowledged for their piety. The first instance of the term *hypocrites* occurs in 23.13 when the Pharisees are accused of not only rejecting Jesus's offer of salvation, but keeping others from attaining it. This would therefore suggest as has previously been established (see Chapter Five) that the Pharisees hold a significant influence over the people of Israel in religious matters and as such can turn them away from the Jesus message. The next use of the term is in 23.15 and deals with proselytes who Matthew's author believes are being converted to the wrong form of Judaism since Pharisaic Judaism is lacking Jesus at its core.

³⁶ For a summary of the scholarly debate regarding the composition of "the crowds", see Davies and Allison, 1997, p268.

It has been noted that at the time following the year 70 CE, Judaism as a whole was not significantly active in attracting converts to its faith, no doubt in part because Rome demanded a tax from all Jews as punishment for the First Jewish War.³⁷ Subsequently 23.15 must be discussing the small but significant number of *God-fearing* Gentiles who are attached to the synagogues which would be cogent when viewed alongside Jesus's outline for the mission in 10.5-6 where he instructs his followers to stay away from the Gentiles and stick to ministering to the *lost sheep of Israel*.³⁸ The fact that Matthew's community are still looking inward towards their own faith and not out towards trying to actively attain converts from Gentiles shows that they are again still very much attached to more mainstream Judaism and have not given up the fight for a space in the post-Temple theological milieu.

The use of *hypocrites* in 23.25 refers to an outwardly pure but inwardly unclean motif that is an accusation Matthew's Jesus has levelled at the Pharisees in Matthew 6, as yet again the Gospel looks to question the motives for the actions of the Pharisees and portray them as being less righteous to the listeners and readers. This outwardly pure, inwardly corrupt dichotomy is again repeated in 23.27 where the Pharisees are compared to clean looking "whitewashed tombs", since although they appear clean they contain the unclean bones of the dead. This analogy would be an evocative use of imagery for a Jewish audience of this period as they would be familiar with the purity Laws found in the Torah and the various edicts prescribed regarding the deceased and the negative effects that this has on ritual purity.³⁹ The author of the text has been keen to convey how fond the Pharisees are of drawing attention to themselves for their supercilious shows of piety; whitewashing draws attention to a building, especially in the sunny climes of the Mediterranean and Near Eastern region which we are dealing with and thus the author of Matthew is telling his audience that although the Pharisees may stand out from the rest of the people the way in which a whitewashed building may appear resplendent in the sunshine, they are to be

³⁷ This *fiscus Judaicus* as the tax was known, was a punishment exacted on practically all Palestinian and diaspora Jews. Zetterholm (2003, p185-93) gives a detailed account of how this tax would have affected Antioch's Jewry and potential Gentile converts.

³⁸ Davies and Allison, 1997, p288-9.

³⁹ See the Book of Numbers (especially Num 19) for numerous purity Laws.

avoided as they are impure and the Matthean community is being strongly advised to take heed of the fact that all that glitters is not gold.

23.29 is the final mention of *hypocrites*, and in this verse and those following it, the Gospel of Matthew offers one of the most damning indictments of all the accusations that the Matthean Jesus levels at the Pharisees. While the Pharisees would claim that they would have done differently if they had lived in the times of their forefathers (23.30) the Pharisees are hypocrites for being the descendants of those who murdered the prophets of old. In this passage, one would reasonably infer that in this instance Jesus is referring to prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel who were all murdered by their own people, just as he himself is soon to be. By admitting that their forefathers played a part in the death of these figures of Jewish Scripture, the Pharisees are guilty via the Old Testament edict of children being guilty for the sins of the father.⁴⁰ It is the view of this study that the author of Matthew's Gospel is making the point that the Pharisees are therefore not the rightful heirs of the Jewish heritage that existed before 70 CE.

It would however be remiss not to acknowledge that it is written in the Books of Jeremiah and Ezekiel, who notably were two of the murdered prophets of Hebrew Scripture that each individual is responsible for their own actions.⁴¹ Thus the point that this dissertation judges Jesus to be trying to convey in this passage is that a heritage of sacrilegious murder, which the text obviously views the Pharisees as having committed does not need to be damning on the current generation if they are willing to be held to account for their own actions and see Jesus for who he is. It is the view of this study to see this passage as Jesus, in somewhat ironic fashion, offering the Pharisees a way out of their hereditary debt and yet since they are too blinded by malice and hypocrisy they cannot grasp the olive branch that Matthew's Jesus offers. Subsequently they are doomed to hell (23.33) for repeating the sins of their forefathers for persecuting the new breed for Jesus-inspired prophets who will spread the new version of Judaism that Matthew's Gospel advocates (23.34). The idea that the Pharisees are doomed is made evident in the final use of *hypocrites* in the Matthean Gospel which occurs in 24.51 and which has an eschatological focus regarding the Tribulation, the

⁴⁰ Exodus 34.6-7; Deut 5.8-10; Deut 24.16; Lev 29.39.

⁸ Jer 31.30 and Ezek 18.20.

Second Coming and Judgement Day. The reference to the *hypocrites* comes after a parable about the Faithful or the Unfaithful Slave where Jesus teaches his disciples who shall be rewarded and who shall be punished when the Son of Man comes. While the details of the punishment that the unfaithful shall receive is made explicitly clear, it is worthy of note that those who will face the extreme sentence that these verses prescribe shall do so along with the *hypocrites* and thus it would appear that for the author of this text that the fate of the Pharisees is sealed.

7.4 – Summary and Conclusion

The analysis of this chapter has found that the term, *hypocrites*, while not unique to the Gospel of Matthew is used with a frequency not found in the other Gospels and thus the intensity in which the author has decided to use the term is significant. The Gospel of Matthew uses the term to attack the Pharisees over the way in which they give alms, pray and fast; these basic acts of Jewish piety are considered to be executed by the Pharisees in a hypocritical way and consequently the Matthean author is demanding that his community achieve a higher level of righteousness by carrying out such actions with purer motives than the rival Pharisaic sect. The Gospel of Matthew believes that the Pharisees carry out these pious acts in a disingenuous and insincere manner since they are seeking recognition for such virtuous acts and in contrast the author sets out guidelines for his community to perform such actions with more authentic and less attention-seeking intentions. It is by relating to the Pharisees that the Matthean community can better define who they are as they attempt to promote their unique version of post-Temple Judaism over that of the Pharisees.

In Matthew 23 of the Gospel the study has shown how the term *hypocrites*, is used in a sustained and powerful invective to further besmirch the Pharisees whose dominant position is attested in their ability to attract proselytes (23.15) even if the author of the Gospel views these recruits as joining the wrong Jewish sect. The accusation that was discussed earlier when the motives, if not the actions of the Pharisees was questioned during the analysis of giving alms, praying and fasting is again levelled at the Mattheans' rivals when they are more unambiguously and more harshly judged for being inwardly

corrupt while appearing outwardly pure when being compared to “whitewashed tombs” (23.27). The final and most severe use of *hypocrites* is used to place the ancestral blame for the death of the prophets upon the Pharisees (23.31), before the Matthean Jesus predicts that the Pharisees will continue this practice of murdering the righteous prophets (23.35) and in doing so the author of this Gospel is clearly promoting the opinion that this sect are not deserving of the pre-70 CE heritage as the Matthean community try to reinforce their position by slandering the opponents. This position is summed up succinctly by Davies and Allison:

The text proposes that the scribes and Pharisees should know better: they were hypocrites in the full sense of the word. The presupposition was possible because the scribes and the Pharisees, like those in Matthew’s community, were heirs to the Jewish tradition. Matthew’s Jesus accordingly argues as a Jew to Jews, and his case amounts to this: his listeners have been unfaithful to their own heritage (Davies and Allison, 1997, p262).

Such a vitriolic attack shows that the Matthean community have not given up the fight for a position within the theological milieu of this period as they look to claim this heritage from their rivals through questionable tactics. What is unequivocal is that from the analysis of the term *hypocrites*, we see the Matthean community attack a rival of a relatively similar perspective and then try and define themselves by widening the gaps between the (often small) areas in which they and their opponents differ. Through the use of the term *hypocrites*, the author is attempting to increase the division between his version of Jewish practices against what he perceives to be the less righteous practices of dominant Pharisaic sect in the post-Temple period in order to create boundaries for his community at the expense of his adversaries.⁴² Judaism has a heritage of brotherly power struggles and with the othering that is achieved through the use of *hypocrites* we see a direct and sustained attack as familial ties unravel when two fraternal claimants try to obtain the heritage and authority that is up for grabs in this formative period.

⁴² While Matthew is keen to highlight the unrighteous actions of the Pharisees, Davies notes, “there is no evidence that scribes and Pharisees were ‘Lawless’; quite the contrary, as the Mishnah bears witness.” (2009, p184)

Chapter 8 – The Law

8.1 – Introduction

The analysis of the treatment that the Pharisees received in the previous two chapters has established that the Matthean community are still within the normative Judaism of this period but that relations between them and the rest of the Jewish community are strained due to the more dominant Pharisaic opposition. It has also been established that the Mattheans have in part used the Pharisees to better define their own Jesus-centric position within the shifting boundaries that define the Jewish theological landscape of the post-Temple period. Subsequently the dissertation will now more precisely consider the Law and the Matthean community's interpretation of it and how this Matthean interpretation can be viewed to be a probable cause of the tensions between them and the Pharisees that would, for the Antiochian Jewish community, lead to a split between what would over decades develop into nascent Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism.

The analysis found in the previous two chapters has established that the Matthean community were still a thread within the weave of post-Temple Jewish fabric and yet it is the Gospel of Matthew's interpretation to the Jewish Law that is the significant area of disagreement between the Mattheans and the Pharisees. The Gospel of Matthew is the only Gospel which has Jesus state, "Think not that I have come to abolish the Law and the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them" (5.17) and yet even with this declaration, the Matthean Jesus can be viewed as having a rather peculiar relationship with the Jewish Law as can be seen a few verses after this declaration (5.21-48) where his opinions can upon first impressions seem to jar with the instructions of the Torah.

8.2 – Controversial Interpretations

The Gospel of Matthew has been keen to promote Jesus as an authentically Jewish Messiah for a predominantly Jewish audience. This is achieved through the use of fulfilment citations and multiple allusions to biblical motifs which the author in part uses to validate and strengthen Jesus' position as a divinely chosen leader within the Jewish paradigm,

reinforcing the claim that the Matthean group have on a pre-Temple Jewish heritage.⁴³ The Matthean Jesus' relationship with what Christians today would call Old Testament Scripture can however be regarded as controversial when viewed from a first century Jewish perspective. Fresh from declaring that he has come to fulfil the Law in 5.17, Jesus tells his followers in 5.20 that, "For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven", and then proceeds in the rest of the chapter (5.21-48) to give his interpretation of certain precepts found in the Torah that will make his followers be more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees.

In the following section (5.21-48) Jesus gives six new interpretations of how the Torah should be understood and expanded upon for his followers.⁴⁴ In the period in which the author of Matthew's Gospel composed the text following the First Jewish War and the destruction of the Temple it would appear that after the social, political and cultural changes that these cataclysmic events brought that a new theological synthesis of the Torah was required for the new age in which the Matthean community found themselves in c. 90 CE. The first verse (5.21-26) from this section in which the Gospel of Matthew has Jesus give a new interpretation of Scripture focuses on the crime of murder. Jesus strengthens the precept not to commit murder by adding that whoever has anger toward their brother or insults them is deserving of punishment and whoever calls people, "You fool!" is also guilty of a sin and for these feelings of enmity the perpetrator, "shall be liable to the hell of fire" (5.22).⁴⁵ In 5.25, Jesus also instructs his followers to reconcile with accusers and subsequently this passage can be seen to promote actions that go beyond the teaching of the Torah and instruct the Mattheans to be righteous both outwardly and inwardly – something the Matthean Jesus criticises the Pharisees for failing to do as has been noted in the previous chapter. In the following verse which deals with adultery (5.27-30), the Matthean Jesus offers a similar interpretation to that which he has given on the sixth commandment and again similarly intensifies the Old Testament Scripture, this time regarding sexual infidelity which now includes those who have lustful thoughts. Thus in this

⁴³ Fulfilment citations located at 1.22, 2.6, 2.15, 2.16, 2.23, 4.15-6, 8.17, 12.17-21, 13.14, 13.35, 21.4 and 27.9-10.

⁴⁴ Six interpretations found at 5.21-26, 5.27-30, 5.31-32, 5.33-37, 5.38-42 and 5.43-48.

⁴⁵ For a fuller discussion about the translation and meaning of "brother" in this context see Davies and Allison, 1997, p512-13.

example the Matthean Jesus is again moving beyond the edicts of the Torah and demanding a higher level of righteousness from his followers.

Following on from the verse on adultery is the passage on divorce (5.31-32) in which Jesus pronounces that everyone who divorces except on grounds of infidelity is committing adultery when they remarry. This point is clarified later in the Gospel (19.8) when Jesus, challenged on his interpretation by the Pharisees, explains that Moses only allowed divorce, “For your hardness of hearts.” By comparing this “hardness of hearts” which the Pharisees suffer with the purity of heart that Jesus is demanding from his followers, it is clear that the Matthean group are attempting to promote a stricter interpretation of the Law than that of the Pharisees who are themselves strict adherents to the Law and thus would appear therefore that in this instance, Matthew is trying to beat the Pharisees at their own game (strict adherence to Law) and therefore a attempt to stake a better claim to the pre-70 CE heritage.

In addition to this stricter adherence to the Law, it is the view of this study (as noted in Chapter Four) that this community had a small but significant Gentile following. In this respect this additional prohibition to the Old Testament material on divorce may also have been to address any heretical marriage practices which they had and bring them more in line with the new Matthean behaviours that the author has been trying to establish as was discussed in Chapter Seven.⁴⁶

The second part of this section in which Jesus gives interpretations of Old Testament Scripture begins at 5.33-37 and focuses on the giving of oaths. While there is no proscription on this practice in the Old Testament, the Matthean Jesus impresses upon his followers a prohibition regarding this subject. Davies and Allison (1997, p535) contextualise the anti-oath stance of many classical Greco-Roman authors to highlight that this sentiment did exist in the ancient world and yet with the Petrine outlook of the Matthean community, it is believed by this study that such Gentile opinion had little influence on a stridently Jewish author when he was composing the text for a Jewish target audience; rather it is the position of this study that the Gospel of Matthew’s somewhat unusual position on oaths is

⁴⁶ Amy-Jill Levine (2006, p139-43) gives a detailed account of how this Matthean view on divorce has been used to negatively stereotype Judaism and on how Gentile views on divorce could have impacted the early Christian Church.

that they are made redundant by the Mattheans' intention to be pure of heart which one would reasonably assume involves dedication to the truth in all matters. While the Pharisees and other non-Matthean Jews might have used oaths to the point of bombast, for the Matthean community there is no need as truthfulness should be taken as a given, especially when there are so many things that are outside personal, and indeed human control that could cause an oath to inadvertently to be broken or go unkept (5.36). The next verse in this section (5.38-42) is one of the most widely known Christian teachings and deals with retaliation. In this paragraph the teachings recently given to the followers in 5.7-12 are reinforced through the contextualisation that occurs in this latter passage. When dealing with attacks, Jesus instructs his followers not to retaliate and to leave retributive punishments for God to decide. In the verses that follow, Jesus instructs his followers to take a pacifist position on legal issues regarding the seizure of personal property (5.40), forcing people into work (5.41) and the loaning of money (5.42). In all of these teachings, the Gospel of Matthew gives instructions that people today would still view as admirable, and the core of the Matthean Jesus' message regarding the Law becomes explicit: love for each other is paramount. The final verse (5.43-48) of this section anchors this message as Jesus instructs his follows to, "be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (5.48).

With the focus of this study being what does the Gospel of Matthew's treatment of the Pharisees reveal about the Matthean community and their split from other forms of Judaism, the following section (5.21-48) reveals a vast amount of information on how the community view themselves and where they think they belong within the theological and political milieu of the period. While these guidelines that the Matthean Jesus gives can be viewed as being quixotic since he himself is unable to follow his own rules, as is the case in 23.17 when he calls the Pharisees, "fools" and thus goes against the earlier statement of 5.22, the author of the text intends in this first section (5.21-32) to show the Matthean Jesus strengthening the edict of the Torah and demanding a higher and better-intentioned level of righteousness from his followers. The reason this study again takes for this view it that this higher righteousness allows the Matthean community to lay claim on the Jewish heritage.

In the second part (5.33-48) we see something similar, but what is key is the deeper insight that these interpretations give us into the material conditions that the Mattheans faced. When dealing with the Law of Talion in 5.38, it is the view of this study that the damaging

and humiliating conditions caused by the First Jewish War which practically all Jews endured, combined with the persecution from the Pharisees (as documented in Chapter Five) that the Matthean community are experiencing likely influenced the author of this text in a way that he sought to offer guidance to his group through his version of Jesus. This study agrees with the scholarly opinions of Davies and Allison (1997, p424) that via Jesus, the author of the text is giving practical advice to his followers in how to deal with persecution. By also offering guidance on how to comply with their Roman overlords the author is trying to protect his community from further reprisals so as not to go, with the exception of the Pharisees, the same way as the other Jewish sects, especially the Zealots who were ruthlessly exterminated by Rome's legions when they attempted to resist Roman imperialism.⁴⁷ Where the views of the Mattheans which this section has been discussing become problematic with regards to their relationship to the Pharisees is that in following the warning found in 5.20 where the followers are cautioned against the consequences of failing to be more righteous than the Pharisees, the Matthean Jesus expounds a more loving and altruistic theology which questions and denigrates the more established halakhah of the Pharisees.

Historically it would be unfair and untrue to characterise the Pharisees as being an uncaring legalistic sect with a warped sense of halakhah. This however is the caricature which Matthew's Gospel creates as a foil in order to promote a juxtaposition and contrast his own theological views against the strawman of the Pharisees.

8.3 – Mercy versus Sacrifice

In Chapter Four it was noted that the Pharisees were ardent students of the Torah and yet the analysis in Chapter Six revealed that in the eyes of the Matthean community their interpretation of Scripture and the motives behind their acts of piety were specious. Within the Gospel of Matthew, the author through redactions of his source document Mark, is keen to highlight examples of Jesus' focus on love over the oral Law of the Pharisees. The Gospel of Matthew in 22.37-40 contains the pericope found in Mark 12.28-34 where Jesus

⁴⁷ Compliance with Rome is made explicit in 22.21.

unequivocally states that the greatest commandments are to love God totally (Deut 6.5) and to love your neighbour as you love yourself (Lev 19.18). A key redactional difference between the two versions is that in the Markan account there is no mention of the Pharisees and thus the Matthean author has altered his Markan source in order to focus the message of love for God and for fellow human beings more pointedly at his Pharisaic rivals. While the point that love is more important than certain traditions comes towards the end of the Gospel of Matthew, the message can be found in other examples throughout the text.

In Matthew 9.1-8 we have an example of Jesus healing a paralytic, and although it is the scribes who have issues with this miracle that Jesus performs and not the Pharisees, the scribes are often associated with the Pharisees as is the case in the following examples of 9.9-13 and 9.14-17 which immediately follows this act of thaumaturgy.⁴⁸ Jesus, by forgiving the man of his sins gives the former paralytic the ability to now walk and yet this act of kindness only draws ire from the scribes who accuse Jesus of blasphemy. By comparing this pericope with the Markan version (Mark 2.1-12) it can clearly be seen that the scribes believe that Jesus has overstepped his authority by forgiving sins as this is an act that only God can carry out (Mark 2.7). However, in the Matthean version of this pericope, upon completion of the miracle Jesus states, "But you may know that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins," (Matt 9.6), and consequently the author of Matthew is clearly emphasising that Jesus has divine warrant (Matt 9.8).

In 9.9-13, Jesus is excoriated for eating with tax collectors and sinners. This pericope shows very little redactional activity from the Markan source (Mark 2.14-18) although while Mark's version has Jesus questioned by the scribes of the Pharisees in 2.16 (a point which adds credence for the justification for including Matt 9.1-8 in the analysis), the Matthean version has Jesus opposed solely by the Pharisees themselves so as to remove any doubt as to who his main detractors were.⁴⁹ Jesus answers his opponents, who are supposedly zealous students of the Torah, by instructing them to "Go and learn what this means, 'I desire

⁴⁸ Matthew 23 offers an excellent example of the scribes being grouped together with the Pharisees for condemnation. Consequently, the scribes who are mentioned in 9.2 will be treated as being associated with the Pharisees of 9.11 and 9.14.

⁴⁹ Mark 2.16 refers to "the scribes *of* the Pharisees", yet the RSV of the bible notes that some ancient sources of this Gospel refer to "the scribes *and* the Pharisees". Either wording still displays that the scribes mentioned are clearly still very much associated with the Pharisees.

mercy, and not sacrifice” (9.13). The Pharisees’ lack of understanding of this instruction derived from Hosea 6.6 is also repeated in Matthew 12.7 when Jesus declares himself Lord of the Sabbath after his followers eat grain on that holy day. This again adds credence to the point previously made that the Mattheans are trying to claim the pre-70 CE heritage; it is not the Pharisees, who are more widely regarded in the period following the destruction of the Temple as being the eminent interpreters of Torah, rather it is Jesus (ergo the Matthean community) who possess the true interpretation of Scripture.

Matthew 12.9-14 offers another interaction where Jesus and the Pharisees disagree over the right to heal on the Sabbath. Nowhere in Scripture does it say that it is unlawful to heal on this holy day and yet the Pharisees are portrayed as firmly against this action. Like the verses involving eating grain on the Sabbath, this tale about healing on the Sabbath promotes a kinder and more humanistic interpretation of the Jewish Law that puts people before legalistic interpretation. While Jesus could easily have cured the man on a different day, the author is keen to show Jesus as having no consideration for non-Scriptural traditions and cures the man on the Sabbath and in *their synagogue* to hammer home the nail home that Jesus has the authority over Pharisaic halakhah. Amy-Jill Levine (2006, p31) articulately details how this episode during the Sabbath is historically inaccurate as and that the view of Jesus being the one who overcame the legalistic Jewish interpretations which existed during this time as a canard. Levine states that Rabbis of this time, Pharisaic or otherwise, would always apply the precepts of the Torah with the good an individual being the intention. The dissertation agrees with Levine as regarding the stereotype which Matthew creates of his rivals as baseless, nonetheless the text still highlights one of the ways that the author hopes to promote his own group at the expense of the rival Pharisees by showing their oral traditions to be weak and fatuous.

The Matthean Jesus’ final altercation with the oral traditions of the Pharisees occurs in 15.1-20 and centres on the custom of washing hands before eating and a type of sacrifice known as *korban*.⁵⁰ When Jesus and his followers are accused of breaking the tradition of washing hands, Jesus in turn accuses the Pharisees of transgressing the weightier commandments

⁵⁰ “A man could declare something *korban*, ‘an offering’ dedicated to God but maintain the use of it during his own life. Jesus is said to rebuke the Pharisees for abusing this device by using it to shelter goods or money from other claims while retaining it for their own use.” (Sanders, 1998, p422)

that are found in Scripture. Although the historicity of this pericope has been disputed and the frequency with which diaspora Jews carried out the practice of ritual hand washing is not known, it is thought likely that Jews in different areas would have their own specific regional rules regarding these non-Scriptural traditions (Sanders, 1998, p237).⁵¹ From the critical perspective of this study it is only significant to try and show the point that the Matthean author was likely intending to make; that the precepts of Scripture are of more importance than the myopic non-Scriptural traditions of the Pharisees.⁵² Jesus attacks the non-biblical tradition of *korban* and highlights the hypocrisy that in following these oral traditions that would later be written down to form the Mishnah, Jesus has accused the Pharisees of neglecting the more central teachings that come from Scripture, in this case the Fifth Commandment. Subsequently from this example it has been demonstrated that Jesus' earlier teachings in 9.13 and 12.7 of mercy being more important than sacrifice holds true; "the *korban* vow is supposed to be service to God. Such service, however, can never be isolated from service to fellow human beings. If the *korban* vow does nothing save deprive the needy, then it is not in accord with service to God, which demands as its invariable corollary love thy neighbour" (Davies and Allison, 1994, p525). It is not difficult to imagine that the Pharisees with an oral tradition which they believed stretched back to the time of Moses taking issues with an upstart group of Jews who promote the scriptural interpretations of a recently executed troublemaker over their own ancient traditions. In preferring the halakhah of Jesus and denigrating the oral traditions of the Pharisee, the Mattheans have likely created a rod for their own back.

From these examples it can be gleaned that the Matthean Jesus has knowledge and understanding of Scripture that outweighs that of his rivals, an important point considering the Gospel of Matthew's Petrine outlook, and that the care for people comes before the stringent following of the non-Scriptural material that would compromise this humanistic view which Matthew's Gospel promotes even if this is, as Levine states, historically untrue. In the post-Temple period in which the Mattheans are located, they have developed a new theology that has evolved to fit the circumstances of post-sacrificial Judaism and attempted

⁵¹ See Davies and Allison, 1994, p518 for a discussion of the tradition-history of the Matthean source.

⁵² Levine (2006, p21-33) gives a thorough account Jesus' interaction with oral Law and how different groups of Pharisees held contrasting interpretations and thus there was at this time no one homogenous universal Pharisaic view on a number of issues.

to replace the void that the ritual of sacrificing has left with the merciful interpretation that Jesus has offered; this and the Matthean community's denunciation of the Pharisaic traditions which Jesus has shown to be futile is likely to have been a major source of conflict between them and the rival sect of the Pharisees.

In the next passage where Jesus is challenged (9.14-17), the disciples of John ask Jesus why he and his followers do not fast as they and the Pharisees do. It is significant to note that in the Markan version of this pericope (Mark 2.18) it is the disciples of John *and* the Pharisees who enquire as to Jesus' lack of fasting and thus it begs the question that why would a text which is clearly so anti-Pharisee omit them from the Matthean version of the verse? All four of the canonical Gospels attest that Jesus was baptised by John and since he did not begin his ministry (4.17) until after the arrest of John it has been suggested that the historical Jesus had been a disciple of the Baptist who had at that stage acquired a large enough influence that he had become a threat to Antipas (Mark 6.20).⁵³ Upon a closer reading of the passages involving John the Baptist it is clearly inconvenient for the Matthean author that he has to include atavistic details which infer that Jesus was his follower and subsequently the author tries to conceal these troublesome points with verses such as 3.14. If the view of this study is correct and it is accepted that Jesus had been putatively regarded as a disciple of John the Baptist, then it makes sense for the author of Matthew when reworking his Markan source to use the pericope found in Mark 2.18 and remove the main and ubiquitous threat of the Pharisees (for whom there will be plenty of future opportunities to criticise) and focus on distancing Jesus and his message from the problematic and antecedent eschatological message promulgated by the Baptist. The answer which Jesus gives as to why he and his followers are not currently fasting is cogent with a softer eschatological theology that distances the Matthean followers of Jesus from earlier Baptist movement and thus the Matthean community have used this as an opportunity to better define themselves within what has already been established as a transient and cluttered theological landscape.

⁵³ For a more detailed outline of Jesus being a disciple of John the Baptist see Sanders, 1993, p94.

8.5 – Summary and Conclusion

From the analysis found with this chapter it can clearly be seen that the Law was an area of major conflict between the Matthean community and the Pharisees and from the first section of this chapter it has been shown that the Mattheans regard the Law as hugely important as is affirmed by the statement found at 5.17. The Matthean Jesus (5.21-48) strengthens the precepts of the Torah and adds additional instructions for his followers which act as practical guidelines for the Matthean community to follow as has been noted with the commands for meekness when dealing with the prevailing powers of Rome (5.41). As has been noted previously in Chapter Seven, the First Gospel demands a higher standard of righteousness from the Matthean Jesus' followers, however what is significant from the analysis and what is believed to be an issue that is the heart of the antagonism between these two rival sects is that in promoting a more humanistic interpretation of Scripture, regardless of how historically true this can be said to be, the Gospel shows a blatant disregard for the non-scriptural traditions of the Pharisees and depicts them as short-sighted, legalistic and impractical.

In the second section of this chapter it has been shown that through redactions of Mark 12.28-34, the Matthean version of this pericope (22.37-40) focuses the message of love for God and for each other squarely at the Pharisees and the author of the text has underlined this point by deliberately showing Jesus' interpretations of the Torah supersede the non-biblical traditions of the Pharisees on several occasions.⁵⁴ From this analysis we can see that these interpretations from the Matthean community as being a likely to have brought them into conflict with the Pharisees because of their disregard for the "traditions of the elders" (15.2), in favour of the promotion of Scripture. Not valuing the traditions which would later be written down to form the Mishnah, is an area of probable conflict between the Mattheans and the Pharisees. Another important area of probable conflict that the analysis of this chapter has shown is the Matthean follower's adherence to a kerygma that the son of a carpenter who was summarily executed expunged a halakhah that trumps the inveterate ancient beliefs of the Pharisees that are supposed to date from the time of

⁵⁴ 9.11-13, 12.1-8, 12.9-14, 15.1-20.

Moses. In attempting to turn the people of Israel away from the ancient precepts of the oral traditions which are viewed as hypocritical as in 15.1-20 where the tradition of *korban* can be seen to contradict the Fifth Commandment, and by promoting the far more recent interpretations of Scripture by Jesus we have uncovered the likely cause for a major fracture that would widen into a fault line between the emerging Christian group of Matthew, the Pharisees, and subsequently the mainstream Judaism of this period.

Finally, the redactional activity of Matthew 9.14-17 alters the source (Mark 2.18) to remove the Markan reference to the Pharisees when Jesus is being criticised for his lack of fasting. While it is unusual for the Matthean author to omit the Pharisees when they are clearly the primary focus of his criticism, it is the view of this study that the author does this in order to use this pericope as an opportunity to distance the Jesus movement from the antecedent Baptist movement that was led by John.

Chapter 9 – Conclusion

It has been the aim of this dissertation to study the passages in the Gospel of Matthew involving the Pharisees in order to better understand the issues which lead to one emerging Christian group splitting off from the more established Jewish society. To be able to achieve these aims the dissertation has been able to anchor the Gospel's composition to a well-defined time frame of c. 90 CE. This date for the composition of the text mean that it was written after the cataclysmic events of the First Jewish War and the destruction of the Temple. These two events drastically altered the theo-political landscape of Palestine as the Jewish elite and the Temple cult were exterminated. Judaism had up to this point had not been a single homogenous faith, various different communities expressed their Jewishness in different ways (Dunn, 1991, p24-5), the Temple had however been one of the glues that bound these different forms of the religion together but with it gone, post-70 CE Judaism was in a state of flux as different communities looked for ways to express their faith without the uniting force of the Temple. The Gospel of Matthew is therefore born into, and for, a Jewish world in crisis.

Once the Gospel was located to a specific time, the focus then moved to identifying who produced this text. The dissertation holds the view that is shared by the majority of scholars that it was not the apostle Matthew who wrote this text and a number of different arguments for this viewpoint were offered. While scholarship is currently unable to say exactly who produced the text, an exegesis of the Gospel provides insight into the type of person who produced the text. The Gospel of Matthew has a strong Jewish focus and uses numerous Jewish motifs and allusions to Scripture as has been discussed in Chapter Four. This familiarity with Jewish Scripture lead the dissertation to conclude that the author of text was himself a Jew and examples of this viewpoint from eminent scholars who share this view was provided to buttress this opinion. Through redactional criticism and the scholarship of O'Leary (2006, p111-17) it was shown that the author of the text had Judaized his Markan source document which lead the dissertation to the view that this text had been produced for a Jewish audience. The positive representations of Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew lead the dissertation to conclude that the Matthean community likely had a small Gentile following yet this did not detract for the Petrine outlook of the text as seen in Matthew 10.5-6. It was further noted that the Jewish author of the text, writing with a

Petrine outlook for a Jewish audience did not see themselves in anything less than Jewish terms and the belief in Jesus as the Messiah, while a deviant view, did not put them outside of the busy and complex theological milieu of this period. Finally, this section of this dissertation made the case for Antioch in Syria being the likely site of composition for the text. This was significant as with as many disparate expressions of Judaism existing in this period, it was deemed important to anchor the Gospel to a specific place due to the regional fragmentation which characterised Judaism at this time and examples of academic work which shared this viewpoint was used to add credibility to this stance.

With the Gospel of Matthew now located in a specific place and time and the hazy theological environment into which it was created established, the dissertation shifted focus to create a profile of the Pharisee that would be used to better analyse the passages in the Gospel of Matthew which feature this sect. The origins of the Pharisees which stretches back to the Babylonian Exile ending in 538 BCE was established (Boyarin 2012, p4), and it was noted that this sect too could not be viewed as a single homogenous group. The first century CE writings of Josephus, were evaluated and used to understand the practices and beliefs of this sect. The dissertation disagreed with the view of Josephus that the Pharisees held significant power and influence before the destruction of the Temple (*Ant*, 18.15) and sided with Saldarini (1989, p114), and Sanders (1998, p392) who agreed that any power and influence they had at this time would be purely at a local level and even then was likely to be only on religious matters while the twin powers of Rome and the Herodians held them in check. After 70 CE though with the rest of the sects eliminated and a power-vacuum at the top of the Jewish theo-political world, they tried to exert more influence and assume positions of dominance. Thus the point was made that the Pharisee party which existed c. 30 CE when Jesus was likely to be alive, and the party that existed post-70 CE would have had different amounts of influence to wield.

At this point the dissertation then moved to analyse the passages in the First Gospel involving the Pharisees. Chapter Six sought to better understand the complex relationships between the Matthean community and the Pharisees by analysing the passages in Matthew's Gospel that involve the phrase, *their synagogues*. An understanding of the synagogue of this period was established and the previous evaluation in locating Antioch as the site of composition of the Gospel proved highly useful as this allowed the dissertation to

be able to build a clearer profile of this institution at this time. It was argued with examples that *their synagogues* referred to synagogues where the Pharisees had influence over the congregation as the scorn of the Matthean Gospel is focused primarily at the leadership who are referred to often as *blind guides*. It was also found that the synagogue of this time was not only a place of religious activity but also a social hub, especially for diaspora Jews who would have been minority groups when living in foreign cities such as Antioch. From the exegesis of the passages involving *their synagogues* it was discovered that rejection was a recurring theme and subsequently it was inferred that the synagogue was likely the location for much of the Matthean's Jesus-centric message being rejected. Through redactional analysis of the source document Mark (6.1-6), it was seen that in the same pericope (Matt 13.54), the author of the First Gospel had moved events to locate them as occurring in *their synagogues* to strengthen the point that this was a battleground for theological ideas and the place where the Mattheans believed that Pharisees led the people of Israel astray.

Chapter Seven of the dissertation looked to passages where the charge of hypocrisy was levelled at the Pharisaic sect. The Gospel of Matthew criticises the Pharisees for the way in which they give alms, pray and fast. While the Matthean author does not criticise the Pharisees for carrying out these basic acts of Jewish piety, he strongly critiques the way in which they execute these actions. The Gospel accuses the Pharisees of being hypocritical since they want to be seen to doing these pious act and thus they lose some of the virtue out of these acts for their immodest intentions. The author is trying to instil a higher level of righteousness in his community and by demanding a better standard we have an example of the community trying to create new boundary markers (White, 1991, p223). The invective of Matthew 23 was also analysed in this chapter and it was significant to note that in this stinging polemic, the Pharisees and not Caiaphas, Pilate or the chief priests are blamed for the murder of Jesus. The conclusion that was reached for why this was, was because while Caiaphas, Pilate and the chief priests were positions of influence at the time of Jesus' death, at the time the Gospel was written, around sixty years after these events, none of these individuals or groups were around and subsequently the Matthean author uses this as an opportunity to attack those who are in a position of power when he is composing the text, namely the Pharisees. Thus we have a clear example of how the

author's situation impacted on his telling of the text. It was also suggested that the criticisms which this chapter of the dissertation presented were examples of how the author has not given up the fight for the pre-Temple Jewish heritage that his group and the Pharisees are competing over.

The final chapter of the analysis (Chapter Eight) focused on the differing views that the Matthean community and the Pharisees had to the Jewish Law. The Law, it was presented, was likely to have been a major source of conflict between the two groups. From Matthew 5.17 we can see how important this issue is to the Mattheans and subsequently the level of gravitas they have for this topic shows that they see themselves still very much belonging to Judaism. As in Chapter Seven, Chapter Eight of this dissertation shows the author of the text demanding a higher standard of righteousness than that of the Pharisees from his followers when he strengthens the Law on some key issues. However, the salient point that this chapter's analysis of the text uncovered was how the Mattheans regard their interpretation of Scripture to supersede the oral, non-Biblical traditions of the Pharisees. As documented in Chapter Eight, the author of the Gospel shows Jesus' more humanistic understanding of Scripture supplant the oral traditions as is the case when Jesus heals on the Sabbath in Matthew 12.9-14.

It is the view of this dissertation that one of the main reasons that is likely to have been a cause for why this Matthean community split off from its the other more established forms of the religion was the Matthean view that their humanistic interpretation of Scripture (historically accurate or otherwise) superseded the oral traditions of the Pharisees. This Matthean group clearly wanted to show that the mercy offered by Jesus rather than the sacrifice to the stereotyped legalistic traditions that the Pharisees of the text are seen to exhibit. It is no stretch of the imagination to believe that in portraying the interpretations of a carpenter's son who died ignominiously as a criminal over the traditions that claim to derive from the time of Moses, that the actual Pharisees (and not the Pharisees of the text) were greatly offended and enacted any influence that they had in places like the synagogue to extricate what they would likely consider to be such heretical beliefs. Thus we have a probable reason why this group was punished and a reason for a split that would gradually lead into two different faiths.

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