

Yee Wan SO



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**„And Jesus Replied...” –
But what issues did Jesus address in his replies?!**

**The Reception of Conflict Narratives
in the Gospel of Matthew**

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Foreword

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Yee Wan SO

March 2015, Wuppertal.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Why Do We Need Another Study on the Conflict Narratives?

Christianity emerged out of conflicts and dialogues with contemporary religions. Their importance cannot be overlooked, even from the perspective of the composition of the New Testament.¹ Without these conflicts, our knowledge of the early Christians would be significantly reduced; removing the conflict narratives would shorten the present synoptic Gospels by a quarter. Without the need to address the conflicts in early Christian communities, slightly less than half of Paul's letters would not even have been written. Most conflicts were by-products of the expanding Christian ministry. According to Acts, the external conflict between the early church and the Jews takes place immediately following the first preaching success (Acts 4:1-3). The internal conflict between the Palestinian Jews and the Hellenistic Jews starts immediately after the first expansion of the Christian community (Acts 6:1). New conflicts arise before the old ones are settled (Acts 11:1-18, 15:1-35). How did the early Christians handle these conflicts? Was the shared faith in the risen Christ strong enough for conflict resolution? How instructive was the resolution of conflict by the earthly Jesus for settling fights beyond his time? These are not easy questions to answer. Both Paul and Luke quote Jesus' teachings on the resolution of conflicts sparingly. Paul only mentions the earthly Jesus' teachings five times in all of his letters to the church (1 Cor 7:10, 9:14, 11:23, 14:37, 1 Thess 4:15),² possibly because of his lack of acquaintance with the early Jesus. However, even though the memory of the earthly Jesus is vividly represented in his Gospel, Luke does not record a single incident in Acts in which Jesus' disciples refer to their Lord's teaching to settle their conflicts. Other second-generation Christians also do not use concrete sayings of Jesus, but only fondly remember a broad-brush account of his sufferings (1 Pet 4:12-19, 3 John 9-11).³ What was the function of the conflict stories in the Gospel for the early Christian community?

This study is about the conflict narratives in the Gospel of Matthew. As with any study of narratives in the Gospels, it can focus on either the historicity of the conflicts, the

¹ Rese thinks that the New Testament is a collection of writings that reflect a primarily Jewish *intra-muros* struggle. Rese, "The Jews in Luke-Acts. Some Second Thoughts" in *The Unity of Luke-Acts*, p. 195.

² Paul only quotes Jesus explicitly twice (1 Cor 7:10-11, 9:14). See Neiryneck, "Paul and the sayings of Jesus" in *Evangelia II*, pp. 511-568. Lindemann, "Paulus und die Jesustradition" in *Glauben, Handeln, Verstehen*, pp. 100-115, especially, pp. 114-115.

Pokorny points out that although Paul gives only a few literal quotations of Jesus' words, he uses Jesus' words anonymously in the name of his apostolic authority. Pokorny, "Words of Jesus in Paul" in *Handbook for the Study of the Historical Jesus*. Vol. 4. p. 3465.

³ John records an interest in remembering the earthly Jesus' teachings in John 14:26.

position of the historical Jesus regarding the conflicts, the identification of the literary layers of how Jesus' logia developed to their present form or the redaction of the narratives. This study focuses on the redaction of the narratives, determining how the conflict stories were retold and what they meant for the Matthean community.⁴

There is almost complete consensus that the author of the Gospel of Matthew was a Jewish Christian with a good knowledge of the Hebrew text, Targum and Jewish traditions.⁵ The author intended to write a Βίβλος.⁶ The immediate readership was Jewish Christian. However, the Gospel quickly spread across Jewish and Gentile Christian congregations.⁷ The Gospel was probably written in Syria after the destruction of the second temple in 70 AD but before the start of the second century.⁸ The destruction of the temple created a physical and religious vacuum for the Jews; many key religious concepts associated with the temple and its cult had to be reinterpreted in the new religious setting, such as sin, offering, atonement, purity, divine presence and priesthood. Many Jewish religious streams emerged in response. They competed with each other for the reform and revival of Judaism. The destruction of the temple prompted the Jews to reflect on their status as the "true Israel".⁹ The Matthean community was just one of the movements winding its way through the historical ruins exhorted by the Kerygma of the

⁴ See also Senior, "Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity: An Introduction Assessment" in *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity*, p. 7.

⁵ The author of the Gospel of Matthew is likely to have been of Jewish origin as they show relatively good knowledge of Jewish traditions. For example, the division of the Gospel into five sections imitates the Pentateuch. Matthew uses the formula: καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς τοὺς λόγους τούτους in Mt 7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1 and 26:1. In Mt 26:1, πάντας is added to the formula: καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς πάντας τοὺς λόγους τούτους, showing that the Passion is a new section. See Bacon, "The Five Books of Matthew against the Jews", *Exp* 25 (1918), pp. 56-66. The Gospel's language also shows Semitic elements, such as in Mt 9:13 and 12:5. The author's quotations of the Old Testament are nearer to the Masoretic Text (MT). Davies and Allison point out that Matthew and Mark quote the Old Testament 17 times in their Gospels. Mark follows the Septuagint Text (LXX), whereas Matthew's quotations are nearer to the MT in some cases, such as in Mt 24:21, Mt 24:29 and Mt 26:28. Mt 22:24 and Mt 24:31 more closely resemble the Targum or Jewish tradition. Of the 19 allusions to the Old Testament from the Q-source, Matthew rewrites six of them so that they are nearer to the Old Testament or Jewish tradition, i.e., Mt 5:3, 12, 10:35-36, 23:36, 38 and 24:28. See Davies and Allison, *Matthew I*, pp. 33-57 and Stanton, *Matthew*, pp. 38-43. Viviano suggests that the author was Matthew the tax collector, who knew Aramaic and Greek. Cf. Viviano, "Who Wrote Q?" in *Mark and Matthew II*, p. 81.

⁶ For a discussion of Βίβλος, see Doole, *Matthew*, pp. 181-183. Stanton suggests that the Gospel should be a βίος. See Stanton, *Matthew*, pp. 92-103.

⁷ Runesson, "Early Jewish-Christian Relation", *JBL* 127 (2008), pp. 95-96.

⁸ A verse from Didache e.g. *IgnSm* 1:1, whose content is highly similar to Mt 1:18-19, suggests that the Gospel could have been written in Syria. Mt 22:7, 21:41, 23:28 hint that the author knows the destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. See also Conzelmann, Lindemann, *Arbeitsbuch*, p 331, Schnelle, *Einleitung NT*, p. 238. Stanton suggests that the Gospel could have been written in places east of Jordan. See Stanton, *Matthew*, pp. 64-66.

⁹ Unlike the community reflected in the *Damaskus Schrift*, the Matthean community did not define itself by the claim to be the true Israel. See Bornkamm, "Enderwartung und Kirche im Matthäusevangelium" in *Überlieferung und Auslegung im Matthäusevangelium*, p. 36.

risen Christ. The movements later consolidated in competition between Judaism and Christianity (or between the synagogue and early church) over the place of the true bearer of Israel's mission, as destined by God.¹⁰

The Gospel of Matthew is both an exegesis and a *Midrash* to the Gospel of Mark and Q.¹¹ The Gospel of Matthew closely follows the order of narration in Mark's Gospel: (i) baptism, (ii) temptation, (iii) proclamation, (iv) miracles of healing, (v) the Beelzebul controversy, (vi) parable sessions, (vii) prophecies of the crucifixion, (viii) eschatological teachings, (ix) the passion and (x) the resurrection. This leads to another consensus on the study of Matthew: the Gospel was rewritten from its sources for the needs and struggles of the Matthean community.¹²

1.2 Matthean Community in Research

The composition, characteristics and identity of the Matthean community have been the focus of research into the Gospel of Matthew since 1970. Schweizer points out that the Matthean community was essentially a Jewish Christian community.¹³ Luz is of the opinion that the community's belief in Jesus as the Son of God led to an irreconcilable rift between it and its Jewish community.¹⁴ Most scholars, however, hold that the Matthean community was a relatively young and weak group, whose existence was rocked by its dominating Jewish counterpart. It remains controversial how Jewish the Matthean community was and how it related to its Jewish community. The degree of Jewishness may provide hints of answers to the conflict questions, as the greater the degree of the Matthean community's Jewishness, the more probable it is that the conflicts were *intra-muros* and the less probable that the community had separated from the larger Jewish community. The more Gentile Christians in the community, the more pressing the need for flexibility in the *halakha* and the more acute the conflicts. Most scholars note the tension between the strong representation of Jewish elements and the call for universal ministry by the risen Christ in Matthew's Gospel. Nevertheless, the conclusion is still unclear. Some scholars hold that the Matthean community was primarily Jewish but was peripheral to mainstream Judaism. It was almost ready to leave the Jewish community, so needed to justify its universal mission to the Gentiles.¹⁵ However, some researchers use

¹⁰ Iust. *dial.* 134:3. See also Konradt, *Matthäus*, pp.12-13, Overman, *Mt Gospel*, pp. 148-149.

¹¹ See also Stanton, *Matthew*, pp. 22-23. According to Luz, the following narratives from Matthew's Gospel are from Q: Mt 3:2-17, 4:1-12, 6:20-49, 7:1-10, 9:57-10:16, 11:14-32, 11:39-52, 17:32-37. See also Conzelmann, Lindemann, *Arbeitsbuch*, p. 326, Luz, *Fiktivität und Traditionstreue*, p.177.

¹² See also the discussion in Stanton, *Matthew*, pp. 61-64, 97-103.

¹³ Schweizer, *Matthäus und seine Gemeinde*, pp.12-13.

¹⁴ Luz, "Fiktivität und Traditionstreue im Matthäusevangelium im Lichte griechischer Literatur", *ZNW* 84 (1993), p. 155, p. 159.

¹⁵ Hummel, *Auseinandersetzung*, p. 159 and Davies and Allison, *Matthew III*, p. 695.

the same evidence to conclude that the Matthean community had already left Judaism¹⁶ and that the Gospel was a collective reminiscence of its history and mission to the Gentiles

1.3 Conflict Narratives in the Gospel of Matthew: A Brief Overview

Conflict narratives have for a long time been defined from the perspective of form criticism. Conflict narratives describe encounters that end in animosity in which the behaviour or opinions of Jesus or his circle are criticised by their Jewish counterparts. The exchange of opinions on both sides is in direct speech. German scholars have proposed the term *Streitgespräch* (conflict dialogues/controversial dialogue) to categorise these narratives since the 1920s.¹⁷ They also point out that the term cannot describe the structure and development of the narrative precisely; the writer of the earliest Gospel, Mark, hardly ever retells the conflict narratives in the form of a debate. He uses συζητέω very seldom in the conflict narratives. Matthew and Luke simply omit it,¹⁸ preferring the neutral verb λέγω in the conflict narratives. There is no fair trading of opinions between Jesus and his critics. The backgrounds of the conflict narratives are not well-detailed. The counter-arguments of the critics are ignored.¹⁹ The sayings of Jesus alone form the climax of the narrative. This literary form is comparable to *chrie* or *apophthegmata*.²⁰ In this study, the term conflict narratives is used, primarily meaning the exchange of opinions between Jesus and contemporary Jewish leaders in a narrative setting. The term is neutral here. It acknowledges the dissension and even opposition between the two sides. However, the term does not presuppose that all verbal contests are hostile, nor does it restrict the narrative aim of the conflict stories to fanning animosity, or even to promoting Jesus' authority at the cost of his critics' credibility. The motive behind Matthew's retelling of the conflicts remains the subject of the study. No presupposition of motive or literary form was made at the start of the study.

¹⁶ Luz holds that the Matthean community had recently separated from a Judaism that was dominated by the Pharisees' teachings, Luz, *Matthäus* 3, pp. 362-365. Stanton holds a similar opinion. See Stanton, *New People*, p. 156. Overman thinks that the Matthean community was beginning to lose out to normative Judaism, Overman, *Mt Gospel*, p. 158.

¹⁷ *Streitgespräch* (*Schulgespräch*) describes both the narrative form and the direct speech in a scene. It is divided into exposition, dialogue and Jesus' teachings. Weiss, *Eine neue Lehre in Vollmacht*, p. 4.

¹⁸ συζητέω is used mostly in debates and discussions between people and the disciples (Mk 1:27, 9:10, 14, 16 and Lk 22:23). It is found only twice in the conflict narratives in the Synoptics, both of which are in Mark's Gospel (Mk 8:11 and 12:28). See Becker, "Die Markinischen 'Streitgespräche' in Plan des Evangeliums. Eine Kritische Relecture der Formgeschichtlichen Methode" in *Polemik in der Frühchristlichen Literatur*, p. 434.

¹⁹ Dibelius, *Formgeschichte*, pp. 64-65.

²⁰ Both *Chrie* and *Apophthegma* use the sayings of a famous person as the climax of a narrative. According to Strecker, *Chrie* emphasises the situation more and *Apophthegma* emphasises the person more. See Strecker, *Literaturgeschichte des Neuen Testaments*, pp. 202-203.

There are fourteen narratives of conflicts between Jesus and Jewish leaders in the Gospel of Matthew.²¹ All except the conflict in the temple in Jerusalem on the stoning of the praise of children are also found in the Gospels of Mark and Luke (Mt 21:15-16). Matthew follows the order, but not the narrative frame, of the conflict narratives in Mark's Gospel.²² He places the conflict narratives between two long speeches by Jesus, the Sermon on the Mount in Galilee (Mt 5:1-7:28) and the woes against the Pharisees and scribes in Jerusalem (Mt 23:1-39). The first and last conflicts both focus on questions about Jesus' authority. The first conflict starts with an unspoken question and the last ends with an unanswered riddle (Mt 9:3-6, Mt 22:41-46). The answer is, however, clear to the readers. Almost all of the conflicts take place in an open area or somewhere that the people can easily enter (synagogues or houses open to all), i.e., Mt 9:9-13, 12:9-14 and 12:22-45. The presence of the audience is mentioned in twelve out of the fourteen conflict scenes, but the audience's reaction is only recorded twice (Mt 9:8, 22:33).²³ The main scenes of conflict are clustered in two geographical blocks, in Mt 12-15 in Galilee, and in Mt 21-22 in Judaea, primarily in the temple in Jerusalem. The geographical blocks have similar numbers of conflicts.²⁴ There are indistinct traces of a growing intensity in the conflicts and in Jesus' critics' bitterness from Galilee to Jerusalem.²⁵ Each block is heavily loaded with Jesus' *logia* and each ends with his warning about the adverse effects of the Jewish leaders' teachings on the community (Mt 16:11-12, Mt 23:1-32). In both blocks, Jesus' deeds and words are central to the cause of almost all of the conflicts and his teachings are the climax of every conflict.²⁶

Matthew records only one incident in which Jesus takes the initiative, i.e., the dispute about the Davidic sonship of the Messiah (Mt 22:41-45). Jesus is depicted as defensive in the rest of the conflicts. However, it is implausible that the Jewish leaders behave

²¹ Mt 9:1-8, 9-13, 12:1-8, 9-14, 24-45, 15:1-20, 16:1-4, 19:3-12, 21:15-16, 23-32, 22:15-22, 23-33, 34-40, 41-46. The discussion between Jesus and the disciples of John about fasting is excluded from this study. Only six of the fourteen conflict narratives can be strictly classified as hostile conflicts. In these cases they involve negative or antagonistic reactions from the critics (Mt 12:1-8, 9-14, 12:24-45, 15:1-20, 21:15-16, 21:23-32).

²² Mark tends to use the conflict narratives as plots culminating in the Jewish leaders' intention to destroy Jesus (Mk 3:6, 11:18, 12:12).

²³ No audience is recorded in Mt 16: 1-4, 22:15-20.

²⁴ Conflicts in Galilee are recorded in Mt 9:1-8, 9-13, 12:1-8, 9-14, 22-45, 15:1-20, 16:1-4. Conflicts in Judaea are recorded in Mt 19:3-12, 21:15-16, 21:23-46, 22:15-22, 23-33, 34-40, 41-46.

²⁵ Cf. Metzner. He argues that, "*Matthäus nutzt daher die Rückzugsnotizen als literarisches Mittel, sich wiederholende und steigernde Konflikte Jesu mit den Führern Israels darzustellen. Entsprechend wird die Bosheit der Gegner Jesu, insbesondere der Pharisäer, zunehmen, wenn sie in versucherischer, satanischer (Mt 4:1,3) Absicht an Jesus herantreten (Mt 16:1-4, 19:3, 22:18, 35)*" in Metzner, "Der Rückzug Jesu im Matthäusevangelium – ein literarisches Deja-vu-Erlebnis", *ZNW* 94 (2003), pp. 1-4.

²⁶ Jesus' deeds constitute nearly half of the causes of the conflicts (Mt 9:1-8, 10-13, 12:9-14, 22-43, 21:12-13, 14) and his words (Mt 12:9-14, 16:1-4, 19:3-12, 21:23-32, 22:15-22, 23-33, 34-40, 41-45) or their effect on the audience (i.e., both of his disciples in Mt 12:1-8, 15:1-20 and the people in Mt 9:1-8, 9-13, 12:22-45, 21:15-16) cause the other half of the conflicts.

aggressively without provocation. Their questions are actually a reaction to Jesus' unconventional deeds and words. The Jewish leaders from Galilee and Jerusalem are stirred by Jesus' challenge to their *halakha* (Mt 9:1-8, 9-13, 15:1-15, 19:3-12, 22:15-22, 22:23-33, 22:34-40, 22:41-46) and the perceived adverse influence of Jesus (Mt 9:1-8, 9-13, 12:1-8, 9-14, 22-45). The presence of the disciples is pre-supposed in the conflict narratives.²⁷ They are the "earwitnesses" of the earthly Jesus, the heirs to his teachings and the guardians of their continuity. Like Mark, Matthew reports two conflicts provoked by the disciples, the conflict on the Shabbat (Mt 12:1-8) and the conflict about the traditions of the elders (Mt 15:1-20).²⁸ Luke, however, reports that the disciples cause only the conflict on the Shabbat.

1.3.1 Distribution of the Conflict Narratives in the Gospel of Matthew

The conflict narratives do not exist in isolation but are part of the literary context of the Gospel. If the Gospel is about the good news and details of Jesus Christ, what literary role do the conflict narratives play? Matthew uses five formulae to divide the Gospel into five literary units (Mt 7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1, 26:1).²⁹ The conflict narratives are found in the second to fourth sections and are distributed almost evenly. They represent obstacles to Jesus' ministry, but they also call for a deeper reflection on his message. The conflicts cannot contain the spreading of the good news. The weight of the conflict narratives is balanced by the conversion stories, of which there are almost the same number.³⁰

The first section (Mt 4:18-7:27) reveals the origins of Jesus' ministry. Jesus' influence is first felt after his Sermon on the Mount. The tension between Jesus and the Jewish leaders is not yet expressed in terms of conflicts, but in the people's impressions. Although even King Herod acknowledges the authority of the chief priests and scribes (Mt 2:4),³¹ Jesus is described as having a teaching authority that surpasses that of the scribes (Mt 7:28). Jesus is already positioned as a rival to the established Jewish authority.

²⁷ Their presence is not mentioned explicitly in Mt 16:1-4.

²⁸ The school debate about fasting (Mt 9:14-17) is also provoked by the disciples, although the conflict is not between Jesus and his critics.

²⁹ Bacon, "The Five Books of Matthew's Gospel against the Jews", *Exp* 25 (1918), pp. 56-66. Some scholars point out that although there are five formulae at the end of five major discourses, there are six to seven major discourses in the Gospel. Does Matthew imitate the Pentateuch so as to present Jesus as the new Moses? The Gospel does not provide strong enough evidence to support this hypothesis. See the discussion about the structure of the Gospel of Matthew in Stanton, *Matthew*, pp. 23-27.

³⁰ There are no individual narratives of conversion to faith in the first section, nine in the second section (Mt 8:1-4, 8:5-13, 8:14-15, 8:28-34, 9:1-8, 9:18-26 [two stories], 9:27-31 and 9:32-34), none in the third section, two in the fourth section (Mt 15:21-27 and 17:14-19) and one in the fifth section (Mt 20:29-34, 21:14-15).

³¹ Konradt is of the opinion that the narrative points to the opposition against Jesus' role as the Messiah, Konradt, *Matthäus*, p. 110.

The second section (Mt 8:1-9:37) invites us to go with Jesus in his ministry. It ends with Jesus commissioning the disciples (Mt 10:1-42). In this section, three conflict stories from three groups of critics are recorded in the midst of ten of Jesus' miracles: Jesus' authority to forgive sin is questioned by the scribes (Mt 9:1-8). The problem of table fellowship with sinners is posed by the Pharisees (Mt 9:9-13). The practice of fasting is questioned by the disciples of John (Mt 9:14-17). The three questions raised by the critics are highly relevant to the disciples, who must answer three questions themselves before they are commissioned to do ministry: is their ministry legitimised and what authority are they given (Mt 9:8)? Are they allowed to mix with sinners during their peripatetic mission (Mt 9:13, 10:11)? What is the message of the mission and what attitude should they have when the earthly Jesus is no longer there? The conflict stories here prepare the disciples for their engagement in mission.

The third section (Mt 13:1-50) describes the emerging Kingdom of Heaven. It contains six of Jesus' parables (their ending is found in Mt 13:53), five of which are about the Kingdom of Heaven. In this section, three stories of conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees and scribes are recorded; two are about the Shabbat and one is about exorcism (Mt 12:1-8, 12:9-14, 12:24-45). The question of Jesus' authority is raised above the real issues of the conflicts. Jesus also makes reference to himself as the Son of Man three times in the debates (Mt 12:8, 12:32, 12:40). The conflict stories here reveal the Kingdom of Heaven to the audience: it is only by recognising Jesus' authority that the imminence of the Kingdom of Heaven can be realised (cf. Mt 16:19 in the fourth section). These are the toughest conflicts that Jesus has with the Jewish leaders in Galilee.

The fourth section (Mt 13:54-18:35) lays the ruling principles for the *ἐκκλησία*.³² In this section, only two conflict stories are found: the status of the traditions of the elders (Mt 15:1-15) and the illegitimacy of asking for a further sign (Mt 16:1-4). Here the teaching authority of the Jewish leaders is undermined twice (Mt 15:14, 16:11). Instead, the right of discretion with regard to the *halakha* is given to Peter (Mt 16:16-19) and the community (Mt 18:18).³³ The ruling principles for the church are stated (Mt 18:1-22). The conflict narratives serve here to disarm the rivals of the *ἐκκλησία*.

The last section (Mt 19:3-25:46) brings us to the eve of the Passion. Only two miracles are recorded in this section. Two blind people are healed on the way to

³² *ἐκκλησία* appears only three times in the Synoptics (see Mt 16:18, 18:17), although Luke mentions it often in Acts (Acts 5:11, 7:38, 8:1, 9:31 etc). Luz thinks that it is highly probably that Mt 16:18 comes from Jesus, although Mt 18:17 may not be. See Luz, *Matthäus 2*, pp. 454-459, 461-464.

³³ The words *δέω* and *λύω* in Mt 16:19 are from *אסר* and *הרהי*, which mean the enforcement or release respectively of *halakha* for a particular person. See Luz, *Matthäus 2*, pp. 458-459, 465-466, Davies & Allison, *Matthew II*, pp. 634-641.

Jerusalem (Mt 20:29-34) and one lame person is healed in the temple (Mt 21:14). Both healings are an allusion to the restoration of those who are hindered by the Pharisees' *halakha*. Seven conflicts take place in Judaea in this section, six of which are found in Jerusalem. The conflicts are on divorce (Mt 19:1-9), the healing in the temple (Mt 21:13-17), Jesus' authority (Mt 22:23-27), paying tax to Caesar (Mt 22:15-22), the resurrection (Mt 22:23-33), the greatest commandment (Mt 22:34-40) and the relationship between David and the Messiah. The conflicts end with a lengthy reproach (i.e., the seven woes) against the Pharisees and scribes and Jesus' appeal for repentance (Mt 23:37-39). The conflict narratives dethrone the Jewish authorities and call for their eventual repentance.

1.3.2 Critics

The Pharisees are Jesus' most important dialogue partners in the Gospel of Matthew.³⁴ They are mentioned twenty-nine times, (nineteen of which are with another group). Matthew mentions them more frequently than any other New Testament writer. In fact, Matthew mentions the Pharisees five times at the cost of other groups or anonymous inquirers in the conflict narratives. Furthermore, he intensifies the malignancy of their motives.³⁵ It is likely that Matthew deliberately chooses the Pharisees as Jesus' major critics (cf. Lk 7:36, 14:1). The scribes are the second major group of critics, but appear only four times alone. With the Pharisees, they are involved in 13 of the 14 conflict stories in Matthew's Gospel.³⁶ Both groups appear faceless; their counter-arguments to Jesus' opinions are recorded only once, in Mt 19:7. Their reactions, which are all negative, are recorded in less than half of the conflicts.³⁷ The recorded reactions serve to support the author's negative portrayal of the critics, that they are not learned enough (Mt

³⁴ Pharisee (פָּרִישֵׁי) means be separated or to separate oneself from, cf. Lev 24:12, Weiss, "Pharisäer I, II", *TRE* 26, pp. 473-477. Many of the New Testament scholars (Wellhausen, *Pharisäer und die Sadducäer*, p. 11, pp. 21-39, Schürer, *History* II, pp. 338-403, especially p. 389, pp. 398-402) hold that the Pharisees were an elitist religious group that had a strong influence over the Jews. However, Gedalyahu points out that the Pharisees were not an elitist group, but represented the majority of the Jews. They were relatively active in politics, for example since the time of the Hasmoneans, cf. Jos., *Ant*, 13:401-404. Their mission was to promote welfare and improvement in the society, involving at times the suppression of the Torah. Although Josephus mentions only six thousand Pharisees at the time of Herod, there may have been more of them, see Jos., *Ant*, 17:42. Only six thousand of the Pharisees were bold enough to refuse an oath to loyalty to Herod. See Gedalyahu, *Jews, Judaism*, pp. 20-22. Luz holds similar opinions. He points out that the Pharisees were the most important Jewish group that influenced the devoutness of the Jews before 70 AD, but that the Pharisees were scattered among the Jews and did not form a separate group themselves. See Luz, *Matthäus* 3, pp. 362-365. Not all hold that Pharisees were good (cf. the reproach against seven types of Pharisees in b. *Sota* 22b).

³⁵ The Pharisees are mentioned at the cost of others in Mt 9:9-13, cf. Mk 2:13-17; Mt 12:22-45, cf. Mk 3:22-27; Mt 22:34-40, cf. Mk 12:28-34; Mt 22:41-46 and cf. Mk 12:35-37.

The negative motives of the Pharisees are intensified in Mt 9:1-8, cf. Mk 2:1-12, Lk 5:17-26; Mt 12:1-6, cf. Mk 2:23-28, Lk 6:1-5, Mt 22: 15-22, 35-37, cf. Mk 12:13-17 and Lk 20:20-26.

³⁶ They are not involved in the conflict about the resurrection (Mt 22:23-33).

³⁷ Mt 12:1-8, 9-14, 22-45, 15:1-20, 21:15-16.

22:46) and are resentful of criticism (Mt 12:14, 15:12, 21:15). Their authority is acknowledged once (Mt 23:2), but this single instance of praise is outnumbered by the many narratives on their incompetence. They are thrice warned of future judgment (Mt 12:22-45, 15:1-20, 21:45-46) and again at great length at the end of all of the conflicts (Mt 23:1-39). However, the critics add merits to the Gospel. Without their challenges and questions, the identity of Jesus and the deeper dimension of Jesus' teachings would not be made transparent to the audience. Jesus makes direct or indirect references to himself in four of the conflicts.³⁸ The disciples are given extra lessons twice, after the conflict about divorce in Mt 19:10-12 and after the conflict about a request for a sign from heaven in Mt 16:5-12. The conflict stories include not only challenges raised by critics, but also questions central to the Christian community. The way Jesus' answers are received in the narrative shows that the conflicts were primarily written for believers who were ready to accept all that Jesus says as convincing, not for the critics.³⁹

Matthew's Jesus is not consistent in his teachings. He talks about loving one's enemies and unlimited forgiveness, but his reproach of the Jewish leaders never softens. He is ontologically and theologically critical of the Pharisees. Their motives are twice described as malicious (Mt 12:10 and 22:15) and three times are depicted as testing (Mt 16:1, 19:3, 22:35).⁴⁰ He uses Jewish derision of the critics' competence in four conflicts (Mt 12:3, 5, 7, 19:4, 21:16, 22:31). He reproaches them metaphorically with ὑποκριτής eight times (Mt 15:7, 22:18, 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29), with γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν three times (Mt 3:7, 12:34, 23:33) and compares them to barren trees three times in his Gospel (Mt 3:10, 12:33, 21:43).⁴¹ These strong reproaches may show that the Matthean

³⁸ Mt 9:1-8, 9-13, 12:1-8, 24-42.

Yieh suggests that Jesus, as the one teacher of God's will, had polemic, apologetic, didactic and pastoral tasks. His duties corresponded to the Matthean community's four crises, Jewish hostility, group identity, community formation and church maintenance. See Yieh, *One Teacher*, p. 274.

³⁹ Repschinski thinks that the conflict narratives carry a *rhetorische Überzeugungskraft*. They are written for the readers, aiming not to convince Jesus' opponents but to illegitimatise them. Repschinski, "Literarische Form der Streitgespräche" in *Polemik in der frühchristlichen Literatur*, pp. 429-430.

⁴⁰ In Matthew's Gospel, πειράζω means testing of one's competence in an area (Mt 4:1, 3, 16:1 and 19:3). Only in Mt 22:18 does it carry a negative meaning, determined by the introduction τότε πορευθέντες οἱ Φαρισαῖοι συμβούλιον ἔλαβον ὅπως αὐτὸν παγιδεύσωσιν ἐν λόγῳ in Mt 22:15.

⁴¹ ὑποκριτής means the discrepancies between the outward behaviour and inner inclinations of the leaders in Matthew's Gospel. The same meaning is also used by Paul against Peter when he behaves differently at table fellowship in the presence of James' followers (Gal 2:13). Contemporary Jewish literature distinguishes between two types of Pharisees and reproaches one type for being hypocrites. See b.*Sota* 22b.

In LXX, ὑποκριτής appears twice in Job 34:30 and 36:13. Both uses have ambiguous meanings, either meaning someone who does something inconsistently, hiding his true intentions (Job 34:30), or someone who harbours anger (Job 36:13). ὑποκριτής is near to ἥρη, which means godless in the sense of leaving the original faith or perverting or diverting from the truth or justice. ἥρη appears 26 times in the Old Testament. It is used to both reproach and to urge for repentance. See Knierim, "ἥρη" in Jenni and Westermann, Eds., *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum AT*, pp. 598-599. ὑποκριτής is also found as words of reproach against the Jews in Didache, e.g. *Did* 2:6, 8:1, 2 and *Barn* 21:4. In a Greek context, ὑποκριτής does not necessarily

community was so at odds with its Jewish community that they wish to be clearly differentiated from them. However, the use of the strong grumble to attack critics is not uncommon in Biblical narratives. Uncivilised as the reproach may appear to the readers, it may simply reveal the great difficulty of converting critics to one's own side.⁴² The scheme of the seven woes against the Pharisees and scribes (Mt 23:1-38) resembles the composition of Amos, who also ends his book with a call for repentance (Amos 9:7-10).⁴³ Proximity also breeds dissent. The severest conflicts of the Old Testament are within the same family, such as the conflict between Cain and Abel, between Esau and Jacob, between Solomon and his half-brothers, and even between colleagues of the same or different prophetic schools, such as Amos against his priestly colleague Amaziah (Amos 8:10-16) and Jeremiah against the contemporary prophet Hananiah (Jer 28:1-17). These indicators appear to suggest that the conflicts were *intra-muros* rather than *extra-muros*.⁴⁴

Given the strong aversion of Matthew's Jesus to the Pharisees, it has already long been discussed whether the Pharisees were the historical critics of Jesus or whether they

carry a negative meaning, meaning one who behaves exactly as he is required to in a role in a theatrical play. (Plato *Leg.* 668c, 817c).

Vahrenhost points out that ὑποκριτής appears mostly in the later LXX writings, which have no corresponding text in the Hebrew Bible. It means either deeds whose true intentions are hidden when used in the wisdom literature, e.g. *PsSal* 4:6, 20, 22, or role play when used in 2 Macc 5:25, 6:21 and 4 Macc 6:15, 17, Vahrenhost, *Nicht schwören*, pp. 331-338.

The meaning of γεννήματα ἐχιδνῶν is unclear in the three contexts in Matthew's Gospel. Of the three places where ἐχιδνῶν is used in Matthew's Gospel, only Mt 3:7 has a parallel in Lk 3:7. However, Luke uses it against the people, not the Pharisees. ἐχιδνῶν (ῥῥῡ) appears four times in the Old Testament (Isa 11:8, 14:29, 59:5 and Jer 8:17). Discarding Isa 14:29, the other three uses relate the word to evilness and the object of accusation is not the Israelites. The use of vipers in ancient literature is often symbolically related to the murder of one's own parents. Nevertheless, the Pharisees and the Sadducees are said to be too confident of the tradition of the Patriarchs rather than too resentful of it. Obviously their understanding of the Patriarchal tradition is very assertive. However, from the point of view of Matthew's Jesus, the Pharisees, who claim to be the children of Abraham and the prophets, betray their own traditions in their deeds (Mt 23:23). The usage of the word in Mt 12:34 points clearly to their evilness. Matthew's usage can mean both their evilness and their role as traitors of their own traditions.

⁴² Repschinski believes that the conflict narratives in Matthew's Gospel show that the author did not seek reconciliation between the opponents, but to sharpen the conflicts between the parties and to show their competition. Repschinski, "Die literarische Form der Streitgespräche" in *Polemik in der frühchristlichen Literatur*, p. 428.

⁴³ Both Mt 23:1-35 and Amos follow a composition scheme of 7+1. In Matthew's Gospel, the woes against the Pharisees and scribes start with the formula Οὐαὶ δὲ ὑμῖν, γραμματεῖς καὶ Φαρισαῖοι ὑποκριταί. The seven woes end with the climax of the crime of persecuting the messengers of God (Mt 23:33-36) and the call for repentance (Mt 23:37-39). Amos' judgments are made against (i) Aram, (ii) Philistine, (iii) Tyrus, (iv) Edom, (v) Ammon, (vi) Moab, (vii) Juda and (viii) Israel. The climax is the judgment upon Israel, to whom the book is addressed (Amos 1:3-2:16).

⁴⁴ See also Lehnert, *Provokation*, p. 294. Axel von Dobbeler, "Die Restitution Israels und die Bekehrung der Heiden. Das Verhältnis von Mt 10:5b, 6 und Mt 28:18-20 unter dem Aspekt der Komplementarität. Erwägungen zum Standort des Matthäusevangeliums", *ZNW* 91 (2000), pp. 42-44, Grundeken, "Community Formation in Matthew: A Study of Matthew 18,15-18" in *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity*, pp. 454-455, 458-459.

only represent a literary means to demonstrate Jesus' teachings.⁴⁵ Similarly, are the narrative conflicts in Matthew's Gospel historical conflicts or are they a means to establish the catechism of the Matthean community?⁴⁶ Some scholars suggest that the conflicts show that the Matthean community was fighting a war on two fronts, as Matthew criticises the Pharisees, but still shows great respect for the Torah. As the community was a *corpus permixtum*, it is possible that Matthew writes for both a Torah-faithful Jewish group and an emerging group of Gentile proselytes who had difficulties in following the Pharisees' *halakha*.⁴⁷

1.3.3 Hypothesis of the Separation of the Matthean Community from Judaism

Few themes in the Gospel of Matthew have attracted more research attention than the relationship between the Matthean community and Judaism. Did the Gospel predate or postdate the separation between the community and Judaism? The traditional argument for the separation of the Matthean community from Judaism is the phrase συναγωγῶν αὐτῶν, which may hint that the Matthean community was no longer a part of the synagogue.⁴⁸ Matthew's closer proximity to the synagogue is obvious. His sources (Mark and Q) mention the synagogue only once, but Matthew mentions synagogues seven times in his Gospel.⁴⁹ Despite this frequency, nowhere in the Gospel is συναγωγή αὐτῶν set as

⁴⁵ Berger maintains that the conflicts between Jesus and the Pharisees do not only describe past conflicts but also reflect the same kind of conflicts which took place between the Christian community and the Pharisees in the Diaspora. For Berger, the conflict stories are *chrie*, which provides an answer to the critical questions raised. Some of the *chrie* are defensive and apologetic, such as the Shabbat conflicts and the conflict about purity. But others are offensive. Berger, *Formen und Gattungen*, p. 148.

⁴⁶ Overman, *Mt Gospel*, pp. 154-160.

⁴⁷ Barth, "Das Gesetzverständnis des Evangelisten Matthäus" in *Überlieferung und Auslegung im Matthäus Evangelium*, p. 138, pp. 149-154, Hummel, *Auseinandersetzung*, pp. 66-71, 140-142, 157-158.

⁴⁸ συναγωγή is a Greek political term which means the gathering or congregation of people. συναγωγή may also mean a physical building, such as in Lk 7:6, or a congregation, such as in Rev 2:9. The existence and function of the synagogue in Palestine are found in the Theodotus inscription (CIJ II 1404). See Kloppenborg, "The Theodotus Synagogue Inscriptions and the Problem of First Century Synagogue Buildings" in *Jesus and Archaeology*, pp. 236-282. In LXX, it means the congregation, such as in Exod 12:47, Lev 4:13 and 2 Chr 5:6.

The argument is first put forward by Kilpatrick, *Origins of Mt*, 1946, pp. 110-111. He argues that the genitive attribute of synagogue in the Gospel of Matthew is forced or far-fetched in its syntax. His argument is used by Hummel, Stanton and Luz. See Hummel, *Auseinandersetzung*, pp. 56-72, Stanton, *New People*, p. 119, Luz, *Matthäus 1*, pp. 70-71 and Levine, "Matthew's Portrayal of the Synagogue and its Leaders" in *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity*, pp. 182-186. Konradt maintains that the phrase hints that the Matthean community had distanced itself from the synagogue but does not necessarily mean that it had separated from the synagogue. See Konradt, *Matthäus*, pp. 382-8. The Sermon on the Mount is further evidence for the separation, as it shows that the Matthean community had a different ethic from the Jewish community. See Davies and Allison, *Matthew I*, pp. 504-509, *Matthew III*, pp. 695-699 and Stanton, *New People*, pp. 320-325. A survey on the discussion can be found in Stanton, *Matthew*, pp. 30-43.

⁴⁹ Mk 12:38-39. Mt 23:6-7, Lk 11:43 [Q].

Konradt thinks that the Matthean community was still within Judaism. The community was intensively engaged in conflicts with the synagogues in its region, which were dominated by the Pharisees. Konradt,

an antithesis to Jesus or his circle.⁵⁰ Matthew appears to use συναγωγή to describe a public place where Jesus teaches and heals. συναγωγή is used in Mt 4:23, 6:2, 5, 9:35, 10:17, 12:9 and 13:54. In only Mt 12:9 is there a direct relationship with the Pharisees and scribes.⁵¹ A synagogue is also a place where healing can take place (Mt 12:9). It is not consistently negatively depicted in the Gospel.

The arguments for the Matthean community's continued bond with Judaism are weightier. Hummel summarises four pieces of evidence supporting this position: the avoidance of

“Die vollkommene Erfüllung der Tora und der Konflikt mit den Pharisäern im Matthäusevangelium” in *Das Gesetz im frühen Judentum und im neuen Testament*, p. 130.

⁵⁰ ἡ ἐκκλησία (ܠܗܩܩܝܘܬܐ, ܦܪܘܘܬܐ) is often used as a synonym or in parallel to συναγωγή (ܠܗܩܩܝܘܬܐ, ܦܪܘܘܬܐ) in the LXX, which refers to a gathering of the Jews. Cf. Lev 8:3, Num 20:8, Prov 5:14 and Joel 2:16.

It was used by first and second generation Christians as a self-designation. It refers to the community of Christians on earth and the apocalyptic and eschatological Christian community at the end of time. In the Gospel of Matthew, ἡ ἐκκλησία is a self-reference to the Christian community, separate from the Jews who do not believe in Jesus Christ (Mt 16:18 and 18:17). Luke uses the phrase to refer to the Christian community only in the post-Easter period (Acts 5:11, 7:38, 8:1, 3, 9:31, 11:22, 12:1, 5, 15:4 and 22). See also Rom 16:1, 4, 1 Cor 1:2, 4:17, Gal 1:2, 22 and James 5:14.

For a summary of this discussion, see Trebilco, “Why did the early Christians call themselves ἡ ἐκκλησία”, *NTS* 57 (2011), pp. 440-460. See also Roloff, ἐκκλησία in *Exegetisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, pp. 998-1011.

⁵¹ Of the appearances of συναγωγή (Mt 4:23, 6:2, 6:5, 9:35, 10:17, 12:9 and 13:54), the genitive attribute αὐτῶν is only applied in the five cases in which Jesus teaches and heals (Mt 4:23, 9:35, 10:17, 12:9 and 13:54). In Mt 6:2 and 6:5, the synagogue and hypocrites are compared to real religiosity in Jesus' speech. Although Jesus associates the place with superficial or false religiosity, he does not stop teaching there. What is reproachable in Mt 6:2 and 6:5 is the behaviour, not the place. Matthew inserts αὐτῶν after 'synagogue' in Mt 12:9 (cf. Mk 3:1). From the narrative flow in Mt 12:1-14, it seems more probable that the expression describes a transition of the scene from an open field to a synagogue. Mt 10:17 is Matthew's Sondergut. The verse refers to the future persecution of the Christians by their Jewish counterparts. The genitive attribute refers more to the people Προσέχετε δὲ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων in Mt 10:17a. Likewise, the genitive attribute of ἐδίδασκεν αὐτοὺς ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ αὐτῶν in Mt 13:54b refers more to the people of his own country καὶ ἐλθὼν εἰς τὴν πατρίδα αὐτοῦ in 13:54a. In both cases, the genitive attribute appears to refer more to a plural subject or object in the previous verses than to an indication of a demarcation between oneself and others. The strong semantic resemblance between the use of the phrase in Mt 4:23 (cf. Mk 1:39) and Mt 9:35 may suggest that they come from the same *Urtext*. However, some ancient textual witnesses, e.g. P¹²⁰ (P.Oxy 4402), B (k), C*, sy^{s.p.h.}, s¹, D and f¹, provide a reading for Mt 4:23 that does not contain ἐν ταῖς συναγωγαῖς αὐτῶν. They supply the reading (ὁ Ἰησοῦς διδάσκων) ἐν ὅλῃ τῇ Γαλιλαίᾳ. See Min, *Die früheste Überlieferung*, p. 220. Even if what is provided by NA²⁷ in Mt 4:23 and 9:35 is correct, both verses stress that Jesus is very busy, going from place to place, from synagogue to synagogue. The terms refer more to the geographically located synagogue which Jesus visits. συναγωγᾶς ὑμῶν (your synagogue) appears only once in Mt 23:34, but the place here is also doubtful as P⁷⁷ supplies a reading without the genitive attribute in this verse. See Min, *Die früheste Überlieferung*, p. 195. A genitive attribute in Mt 23:34 would refer to the Pharisees and scribes, whom Jesus has already addressed as ὑμᾶς in Mt 23:34a. The expression is more a grammatical coherence than a sign of separation. The synagogue in Mt 23:6 does not have a genitive attribute, so refers more to an open place.

Some researchers say that Mt 9:18-26 provides a hint that Matthew distanced himself from the synagogue. See Stanton, *New People*, p. 129. In Mt 9:18-26, Matthew makes the president of the synagogue who seeks Jesus' help for his dying daughter anonymous (cf. εἷς τῶν ἀρχισυναγωγῶν in Mk 5:22-43, ἄρχων τῆς συναγωγῆς in Lk 8:41-56). However, given the strong criticism of Matthew's Jesus of the leaders, it may be his high position that makes Matthew uneasy, not his relationship with the synagogue.

Vahrenhost also analyses 'your synagogue' in his study. See Vahrenhost, *Nicht schwören*, p. 6.

the use of ἀφορίζω (Mt 5:11, par Lk 6:22 Q),⁵² the teachings about the future persecution by the Jews, which presuppose that the church was still within Judaism (Mt 10:17, 23:34-35),⁵³ the recognition of the teaching authority of the Pharisees and scribes, although Matthew warns of future judgment of the discrepancy between their teachings and their deeds (Mt 23:2) and the payment of the temple dues, etc. (Mt 17:24-27).⁵⁴ Allison even suggests that Matthew, through his construction of parallels between Jesus and Moses, wrote his Gospel to prohibit the dissociation of Christianity from Judaism.⁵⁵ Whether the conflicts were *intra-muros* or *extra-muros* is a self-assessment of the relationship with the Matthean community's Jewish counterpart.⁵⁶ As the risen Jesus' commandment of mission to all nations does not exclude Israel (Mt 28:19), the argument for the parting of the community from Judaism cannot be fully substantiated.⁵⁷

However, even if the argument for the community's continued bond with Judaism is stronger, the numerous differences between them were not necessarily overcome. Both were faithful to the Torah, but the Matthean community represents a differentiation within Judaism through its interpretation of the Torah and its acknowledgement of Jesus as the Lord. However, the latter is not the only decisive criteria for eligibility to the Kingdom of God. The concrete doing of the Will of the God is the decisive criterion (Mt 7:21b-23, his *Sondergut*).⁵⁸ Matthew does not deny salvation to the Jews, even when they do not accept Jesus as the Messiah.

⁵² Hummel points out that Mt 5:11 does not use the same expression of ἀφορίζω (separate) and ἐκβάλλωσιν τὸ ὄνομα ὑμῶν (denounce your names) as Lk 6:22 [Q]. These words are the Hebrew or Aramaic equivalents of כְּדַבַּר, which means exclusion from a community in the Old Testament and in Qumran. Hummel, *Auseinandersetzung*, p. 30.

⁵³ Mt 10:13, 23:34 imply the disciplinary measures taken within the Jewish community. See Cohn, "Flogging", *EJ*, vol.7, pp. 78-80.

⁵⁴ Hummel, *Auseinandersetzung*, pp. 29-31, p.159. See also Bornkamm, "Enderwartung und Kirche im Matthäusevangelium" in *Überlieferung und Auslegung im MtEv.*, pp. 36-37. Konradt, *Matthäus*, pp. 9-13.

⁵⁵ Allison, *The new Moses*, p. 290.

⁵⁶ Konradt, *Matthäus*, p. 387.

⁵⁷ See also Konradt, *Matthäus*, pp. 14-15, 399-401. Vahrenhorst points out that all *halahka* discussion of the Gospel are within Judaism. Vahrenhorst, *Nicht schwören*, p. 410. Senior, "Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity: An Introduction Assessment," in *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity*, pp. 10-15, Kraus, "Zur Ekklesiologie des Matthäusevangeliums" in *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity*, pp. 204-205. Cf. Levine, "Matthew's Portrayal of the Synagogue and its Leaders" in *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity*, pp. 177-186, Luz, *Matthäus* 4, p. 451.

⁵⁸ See also Kraus, "Zur Ekklesiologie des Matthäusevangeliums" in *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity*, pp. 233-234. Vahrenhorst, *Nicht schwören*, p. 25.

1.3.4 Question Leading to this Study

This study's research questions arise from the end of the Gospels. If the priority of Mark is accepted as a working hypothesis for the study,⁵⁹ then we can note that Mark and the later Gospel writers end their Gospels quite differently. Mark ends his Gospel with the silence of the women upon hearing the news of Jesus' resurrection (Mk 16:8a). Matthew ends his Gospel with the risen Jesus's commands. Luke ends his Gospel with the return of the disciples to Jerusalem, the same place where he begins the Gospel (Lk 1:8) and where he starts his sequel (Acts 1:4). The problem of unconvinced Jews disturbed the later Gospel writers. Matthew writes frankly that even some of the disciples were doubtful (Mt 28:17). Luke writes that the disciples return to the temple to praise God, but it is also the place where the toughest critics of Jesus and the early Christians are found (Lk 20:1-7, 19-44 and Acts 4:1). Did those who were unconvinced during Jesus' lifetime come to faith after his resurrection? How does Matthew handle this problem in his Gospel? Do the conflict narratives in Matthew's Gospel reflect the hurdles he encountered in his attempts to convert the Jews and, at the same time, his attempts to consolidate the converted? What conflicts in the time of the earthly Jesus were still rocking the Matthean community?

⁵⁹ Doole and Häfner provide a recent defence on the Gospel of Mark as one of the most important sources of the Gospel of Matthew. See Doole, *Matthew*, pp. 10-12, 79-80, 128, 175-196. Häfner, "Das Matthäus-Evangelien und seine Quelle" in *The Gospel of Matthew at the Crossroads of Early Christianity*, pp. 25-71. See also Stanton, *Matthew*, pp. 19-23.

Methodology

There is no shortage of narratives about conflicts, nor of instructions for their resolution, in the New Testament. In retrospect, conflicts had both negative and positive functions in defining Christianity. Conflicts split the early Christians from their Jewish neighbours. However, it was also through living with and resolving conflicts that Christianity emerged and gradually distinguished itself from its Jewish roots. It was through the resolution of the conflicts within the Christian community and between Christian communities that solidarity within and between Christian communities was strengthened.¹

This dissertation studies the conflicts between Jesus and the Pharisees and scribes in the Gospel according to Matthew. This study not only investigates the conflicts per se, it also tries to identify Matthew's redactional concerns, to determine whether Matthew includes the post-Easter conflicts of his community with his retelling of the conflicts during the time of the earthly Jesus (pre-Easter era).² As there is little external evidence of the conflicts between the early Christians and their Jewish counterparts during the time the Gospels were written, around 70 AD, this study on the conflicts in the pre- and post-Easter eras is investigated primarily through the internal evidence of the Gospels, internal references in the non-Gospel writings in the New Testament and external evidence from contemporary Jewish and Greco-Roman literature. The investigation is mainly conducted on two levels: Matthew's redaction in the Gospel and a comparison between the ways Matthew and his contemporary Luke handle the same conflict themes in their writing. The methods used are primarily form and redaction criticism.

Research into the conflict stories in the Gospel of Matthew through form and redaction criticism started a century ago and is still ongoing. Form criticism has consensus on at least three issues: the conflict narratives in the Gospel do not fit the literary category (*Gattung*) of *Streitgespräch* (dispute or controversy dialogue). The

¹ Berger names five types of conflicts in the New Testament: (i) the conflicts between Jesus (and his circle of disciples) and the Jewish and Hellenistic authorities (in the Gospels and Acts), (ii) the conflicts between the Christian communities and the opponents of Jewish Christians (Acts 15 and Gal, pastoral letters and Col), (iii) The conflicts between the Christian community and the opponents of Gentile Christians (1 Cor 15:12, 2 Pet, Rev 2 and Jude), (iv) the conflicts between the Christian community and the Gentiles (1 Pet), and the conflicts between different groups of Christian missionaries (2 Cor 11), (v) conflicts between the Christian communities and the Roman authorities. See Berger, *Einführung*, pp. 255-256.

² Through the retelling of the stories about Jesus, an imaginative, communicative platform is unfolded between the past and the present, where the audiences or the readers of the Gospel are in direct encounter with the earthly Jesus themselves.

retelling of the conflict stories was not for the conflicts per se. The arguments of the other partners are not given the same weight as those of Jesus and they are not given a fair avenue for expression in the conflict narratives. The literary form of the conflict stories is very similar to the speech-form of contemporary, prominent figures, which serves the purpose of self-promotion or propaganda. Despite this consensus, however, New Testament scholars have different views on the degree to which the literary forms of the conflict stories resemble contemporary Jewish school debates or Greek self-promotion.

Redaction criticism has reached consensus on two issues based on the assumption that Matthew was a Jewish Christian theologian, not a historian, even according to contemporary standards: Matthew relies more heavily on the Gospel of Mark than his other sources, such as the Logien-Quelle (Q) source and his *Sondergut*. The weight that he puts on the writing of a Gentile Christian, Mark, shows the more enthusiastic reception of the Christian faith by the Gentiles than the Jews in the first century and the positive assessment and widespread reception of Mark's Gospel in his time. Matthew does not intend to write a more informative biography of the earthly Jesus but a *Midrash* to it; he follows Mark's sequence quite faithfully.³ He leaves many missing details of Jesus' biography unfilled in his Gospel, but he does insert Jesus' genealogy and the narrative of his birth to argue for his role as the Messiah of Davidic origin. Matthew is clearly more interested in Jesus' teachings. By remembering the earthly Jesus' words and deeds, Matthew tried to respond to the needs of his Christian community, which had strong Jewish elements.⁴ Also Matthew, like the other Christian Gospel writers, wrote his Gospel under the *kerygma* of the risen Jesus. Both form and redaction criticism take into consideration the deciding influence of the *kerygma* of the risen Jesus on both the form and content of the conflict narratives. The historicity of the conflicts in the time of the earthly Jesus is therefore put into doubt, as all of the Gospel authors write their Gospels with the unflagging theological zeal of the post-Easter era. Equally uncertain is the nature of the Matthean community. Although New Testament scholars have used very similar methods (form and redaction criticism) in their research, different conclusions about Matthew and his community have been reached. The conclusions may reflect not only the different social, religious or cultural facets of the Matthean community, but also the difficulties involved in reconstructing the identity of the readers for whom the Gospel was first written.

³ See also Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu*, p. 317. Luomanen, "From Mark and Q to Matthew" in *Mark and Matthew II*, pp. 72-73.

⁴ Schmidt, *Der Rahmen der Geschichte Jesu*, p. 317. Loumanen ascertains that Matthew's Gospel serves to consolidate the social identity of the growing movement. See Luomanen, "From Mark and Q to Matthew" in *Mark and Matthew II*, pp. 64-66.

2.1 Major Research Outcomes of the Conflict Stories in the Gospel of Matthew

2.1.1 History of Research

Form and redaction criticism belong to the same family of research methods for written productions. Both suppose that a primitive tradition is always in the process of transmission and reception in different historical (and also readership) contexts. The transmitter (the authors and redactors), the receivers (the readers) and the historical context of both interact with each other to keep the tradition renewed and relevant to the readers of the time.

Form criticism supposes that authors and redactors are collectors of fragments of oral or written traditions.⁵ They preserve or reformulate them in the literary forms in which the intention and meaning of the messages can be transmitted best.⁶ The form and content of the tradition are supposed to be closely related in an ideographical way, which affects its interpretation.

Form criticism is concerned with two issues:

- i. Trace how the oral units of primitive traditions evolve and settle in written forms over time.⁷
- ii. Identify the literary genre of a tradition and investigate into its relationship with other traditions of a similar genre. Study the function of the literary genre and the category of literary forms or *Gattung* to which it belongs, in relation to the other available literary forms (*Gattungen*) of its time.

Unlike form criticism, which presupposes that the Gospel writers were the collectors of individual traditions, redaction criticism presupposes that the Gospel writers were redactors who made use of the traditions collected to write their own texts.⁸ The process

⁵ Given the relatively stable word order in the parallel narratives in the Synoptics, Jesus' words should not be an invention *ex nihilo*. Some of them should be historical. Nevertheless, the opinion of New Testament scholars on this issue remains divided, cf. Bultmann, *Theologie des Neuen Testament*, pp. 29-32, 34, Conzelmann, "Gegenwart und Zukunft in der Synoptischen Tradition" in *Theologie als Schriftauslegung*, pp. 46-47, Theissen and Merz, *Der historische Jesu*, p. 45.

⁶ Berger, *Einführung*, p. 20.

⁷ The result of the method depends on the successful identification of certain oral or language indicators or elements which are typical of a certain literary form. In the second phase, the analysis of the elements could show the history of how the traditions were transmitted by different literary forms over time, Berger, *Einführung*, pp. 23-29.

⁸ Marxsen, *The Evangelist Markus*, p.10.

of redaction is an ongoing process of interpreting traditions for immediate readers. An author's redaction is only a part of the growing influence of an earlier literary or theological impulse, not the final piece.⁹ The redaction detected can be so overwhelmingly strong that it suggests the redactor's subjective understanding of the events, rather than being an objective report of the historical reality.¹⁰ It can be said that even the historicising tendency of a redaction is not for the sake of historical fact per se, but to add weight to the authenticity of the redactor's viewpoint.

Redaction criticism is concerned with two major questions with respect to tradition and innovation in a text:¹¹

- i. Determine the alterations made to the traditions or theology that the redactor inherits and the way he places his alterations in the composition. It is often not easy to discover the extent of the redactor's innovation when all of his sources cannot be identified with precision.
- ii. Determine the central motives of the redaction with respect to the historical and theological origin of the author. They can be identified if the redactor displays consistency in his alterations.

The Gospel is a written product. It is a result of the reception of traditions whose most primitive form is fragments in free circulation.¹² The use of form and redaction criticism in the study of the Gospels is a response to questions about the historicity of the sources and the reception of the traditions about Jesus.¹³ The sustained efforts of more than a century of research have firmly entrenched that the *pericopae* in the Gospels and Acts are literary narratives coloured by *kerygma*. Their historicity is still under test.¹⁴ When a minimalist approach is taken, the Gospels can be regarded as giving a broadly chronological account of events, despite their tendency to theologise the events unfolding.

Form criticism of the conflict narratives in the Gospel was carried out in the early twentieth century. The church historian Jordan named a category of *Streitschrift* (dispute) in one of his works published in 1911.¹⁵ However, he did not go into details of the *Streitschriften* in the Gospels. The discussion of form criticism went on most feverishly among the New Testament scholars Fiebig, Albertz, Dibelius and Bultmann from 1920 to

⁹ Berger, *Exegese*, p. 203.

¹⁰ Berger, *Exegese*, p. 202, Perrin, *Redaction*, pp. 1-9, p. 34.

¹¹ Berger, *Exegese*, pp. 204-5, Stanton, *Matthew*, p. 15

¹² Gassmann, "Rezeption I" in *TRE*, pp. 131-142, Taylor, *Gospel Tradition*, p. 13.

¹³ Berger, *Einführung*, p. 19.

¹⁴ Bultmann, "Kirche und Lehre im neuen Testament" in *Glauben und Verstehen*, pp. 172-173.

¹⁵ Jordan, *Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur*, pp. 262-307.

1930. They debated the relationship between the literary form and authenticity of the accounts.

Fiebig compares three conflict narratives in Mark with the Jewish literary form of the school debate. He identifies three stages of conflict narrative – direct speech, question and dialogue – in which the last phase often ends with a question calling for the reader’s decision.¹⁶ His method is significant. Not only does it stress the continuity (and hence the interpretative frame) of the narratives in the New Testament with Jewish contemporary texts, but also how it stimulates the future study of the theological motives hidden in the texts. Through their form of speech, the authors of the Gospel identify the central characters in their narratives with the legitimate messengers authorised by God – prophets and teachers.¹⁷ A similar trend is found later in the comparison of the literary forms of the conflict stories in the Gospels, contemporary Jewish stories and Hellenistic literature, such as the *progymnasmata* and its sub-categories, *chreia* and *apophthegmata*.

Albertz writes on synoptic conflict dialogues and their form criticism, naming them *Streitgespräche* (disputes) and distinguishing between *versucherische Streitgespräche* and *nichtversucherische Streitgespräche*. He studies the conflicts in their places of origin, Galilee and Jerusalem. Albertz holds that at least seven or nine conflict narratives existed before Mark compiled his Gospel.¹⁸ He points out that the use of direct speech between two partners to frame the Lord’s words (*Herrenworte*) was an attempt to convey their authenticity to the readers.¹⁹ He also tries to trace how the oral tradition gradually settled into the literary form of a *Streitgespräch* and how the *Streitgespräche* vary in the hands of different redactors in the Synoptics.²⁰ Albertz suggests that dispute dialogues were used as apologies by the early churches in their proclamation of the Gospel in the

¹⁶ Fiebig’s comparison covers the categories of individual sayings (*Aussprüche, Einzelsprüche*), parables (*Gleichnisse*), events (*Vorkommnis –ma’aseh*), and Prayers (*Gebete*). He compares the form of conflict stories in the Gospel with the form of a conflict of Rabban Gamliel (100 AD) with a philosopher in *Mekhilta Par Jethro*, par 6. He points out that there are three stages in the dispute (*Direkte Rede, Frage und Wechselgespräche*). Each stage leads to the next in an escalating manner. The last phase often ends with a question needing a decision, or it is supplemented with a parable in the dialogue. The conflicts he studies are Mk 2:23-28, 7:1-23, 12:18-27. He regards them as comparable to rabbinic school disputes and events. See Fiebig, *der Erzählungsstil der Evangelien im Lichte des rabbinischen Erzählungsstils untersucht. Zugleich ein Beitrag zum Streit um die Christusmythe*, pp. 107-126.

According to *Mekhilta*, the structure of a rabbinic debate consists of four parts: (i) quoting the opponents’ interpretation of a biblical verse, (ii) raising critical questions concerning its interpretation, (iii) citing another relevant verse to suggest different interpretations, (iv) presenting one’s own interpretation. Cf. *Mekhilta de Rabbin Jishma’el* on Exod 12:2,5. The structure of conflict stories in the Gospels resembles this but the quoting of the opponents’ view is much briefer.

¹⁷ Similar to Albertz’s finding, see Albertz, *Die synoptischen Streitgespräche*, p. 31.

¹⁸ Albertz, *Die synoptischen Streitgespräche*, pp. 58-59.

¹⁹ Albertz, *Die synoptischen Streitgespräche*, p. 59.

²⁰ Albertz, *Die synoptischen Streitgespräche*, pp. 117-140. Similar to Fascher’s position, *Die formgeschichte Methode*, pp. 87-89.