Disciples as authorities within Matthew’s Christian-Jewish community

Patrick J Hartin

ABSTRACT

The Gospel of Matthew is situated in the horizon of the struggles within Judaism in the years following the events of 70 CE. Two groups, the Matthean community and that of ‘Pharisaic’ Judaism, are struggling for the heart of Judaism. Matthew’s Gospel reflects the confrontation in life and belief between these communities as they emerge from the matrix of sectarianism. Against this background the role that the disciples exercise within the Matthean community is analysed. They emerge from the Gospel as teachers who understand the law and have access to the interpretation of the law through the sayings and instructions of their teacher, Jesus. As such the disciples exercise an authority to teach as well as to expel those who do not accept their teachings. This role mirrors that which the Jewish leadership exercises outside the Matthean community. It reflects the response of the Matthean ekklesia to the authorities of the Pharisaic συναγωγή.

1 THE CONTEXT OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW WITHIN THE STRUGGLE FOR THE HEART OF JUDAISM

The Gospel of Matthew cannot be understood correctly if it is separated from the world of shifting allegiances that marked the period after 70 CE. From the ashes of the burnt temple and destroyed city two groups emerged that battled for the heart of Judaism: the community of Matthew and what has been termed ‘early formative Judaism.’

The events of 70 CE have more than just political significance. The destruction of Jerusalem and its temple brought with it the destruction of the very centre and heart of the religion of the Jewish people. The temple func-

1 The term ‘formative Judaism’ was first employed by Jacob Neusner (1980a; 1980b). This term is becoming an accepted way of referring to emerging Judaism after the events of 70 CE as is seen by the use of this term by J A Overman (1990). I shall use this term throughout this paper as it does capture the essence of the group that one is considering. As Överman (1990:35) states: ‘A new religio-cultural synthesis was now required if Judaism was to survive. The synthesis and the process of its construction and emergence in the post-70 period are referred to as formative Judaism. This term emphasizes the fluid nature of Judaism in this period, as well as the fact that for some time Judaism was in the process of becoming, that is, of consolidating, organizing, and obtaining a structure to ensure its existence.’
tioned as the symbol for the convergence of the world of the divine with the world of Israel. Its destruction required the religion of Israel to discover a new paradigm for explaining the interaction of the two worlds, the divine and the human. The Jewish world needed to come to terms with the events that had occurred by giving its religion direction and significance for the future. Against this background, these two Jewish groups, the heirs of Jesus (the Matthean community) and the heirs of the Pharisees ('formative Judaism') present two different interpretations of their traditions which give different directions forward.

The Gospel of Matthew has always been acknowledged as the most Jewish of the Gospels with a special interest in all things Jewish, such as in the law, in the frequent allusions and quotations to the Old Testament, in the picture of Jesus as King of the Jews and as son of David. At the same time, Matthew's Gospel contains fierce attacks against the Jewish leadership, particularly the Pharisees (Mt 23) culminating with the climactic statement on the occasion of the death of Jesus: ‘Then the people as a whole answered, “His blood be on us and on our children!”’ (Mt 27:25).

The attempt to harmonise these tensions within the Gospel has led to different viewpoints. Probably the most common position held by scholars has been the view that the Gospel of Matthew was written by a person who was Jewish, but had since become a Christian, and his anti-Jewish bias was attributable to his ('natural') reaction against his former allegiance to Judaism in support of his new found Christianity. As Sandmel (1978:58) expressed it: 'Christianity is conceived of as its own entity, different from Judaism.... For Matthew, as for later Christians, humanity was divisible into three distinct entities: Jews, Christians and Gentiles.'

This way of approaching the Gospel of Matthew focuses on dichotomies that fail to appreciate the historical context out of which the Gospel originates. Such a view operates with categories of Judaism and Christianity that are meaningful in the 20th century as designating two independent religions, but have no similar designation in the first century. Instead, the Gospel of Matthew emerged at a place and at a time when the Christian movement was still at home within the world of Judaism. In that context, it tried to define itself through its relationships to other similar groups that were emerging from those devastating events of 70 CE.

This paper, then, sees the Gospel of Matthew as emerging from a group within the world of Judaism for whom allegiance to Jesus and his interpretation of the Jewish traditions has become normative. This group distinguishes itself from other Jewish groups who interpret their traditions differently. In fact, the designation Christian-Jewish community would probably best define the community of Matthew, whereby the term 'Jewish' still defines its roots, its character, its world-view and its allegiance.
Further, interest in the Gentiles together with the mission to the Gentiles with which the Gospel concludes (Mt 28:18-19) are not to be envisaged as evidence for a gospel in the process of turning from Judaism to the Gentile world. Instead, the Gospel affirms its Jewish roots and identity while encouraging an openness to a mission that brings Gentiles into this Christian-Jewish community. The Gospel of Matthew continues the heritage of Judaism while bringing Gentiles as well to accept this heritage and its traditions, as Jesus, its teacher interpreted them.\(^2\) The Gospel of Matthew opens and concludes within the same framework: the world of Judaism where it continues to remain at home.

Studies on the nature of Judaism between 165 BCE (the Maccabean Revolt) and 100 CE (around the time of the Emperor Domitian) have shown more and more convincingly that the Judaism of that time was very fragmented, in fact it could rightly be characterised as sectarian in nature. (See, for example, Blenkinsopp 1981:1-26; and Simon 1967). Unity and uniformity did not exist within Judaism. Instead, a number of different sects existed, each vying for authority and importance, interpreting the traditions of the past in very different ways. The struggles between the Pharisees and the Sadducees in the first century BCE show how two groups were lobbying for power and influence sometimes even in a very violent way. The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947 furnished further proof for viewing the fragmentation of Jewish society more clearly. They provide evidence for the existence of yet another sect within Judaism, one that had separated itself from the rest of Judaism in an attempt to remain true to its traditions and understanding of its heritage.

The Matthean community emerges against this background of the sectarian nature of Judaism as another sect (Overman 1990; Saldarini 1994; Harrington 1991) that claims an authority to teach which is based upon the teachings of Jesus and for whom God’s authority is the ultimate justification (Saldarini 1994:121).

From this community emerged the Gospel of Matthew. Its witness to the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth formed the real basis for its distinctiveness and opposition to those other groups also emerging from within formative

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\(^2\) This is contrary to the views of Meier (1978:17): ‘The Kingdom was once given to Israel. But, because Israel has rejected the Son of God, the Kingdom has been taken from her and given to the new people of God, non-Israel, the church. Notice, by the way, that Matthew never calls this new people of God a “new Israel” or “the true Israel”. There is only one Israel, the historical Israel which rejected Jesus and has thus lost her privileged position as the chosen people. Consequently, Matthew does not urge any special mission to Israel as a special group—though individual Jews would still be included in the mandate to make disciples of “all the nations” (Matt 28:19).’
Judaism. In handing on traditions and in using sources (such as the Gospel of Mark, the Sayings Gospel Q and the material specific to its own community, M), the community of Matthew stamped them with a character of its own. The narrative that emerged from the fusion of these traditions within the world-view and character of the community can be read on two levels. On the surface level the narrative is about Jesus, about his teachings and about his interactions with individuals and groups from his own time and environment. However, on the deeper level the narrative that has ultimately been produced reflects and is influenced by the world of Matthew's community and the time when it was produced. The changes made to the traditions all result from the vision, the horizon and the interests of the community. As such the Gospel of Matthew becomes a window, not just onto the world of Jesus, but more especially onto the world of the Matthean community.

I turn now to examine the role of the disciples in Matthew's Gospel. This interpretation takes seriously the above understanding of Matthew's Gospel, namely as the product of a sect of post 70 CE Judaism.

2 THE ROLE OF THE DISCIPLES IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

In studies on discipleship it is the Gospel of Mark that has attracted the major scholarly attention (for example, Best 1977; 1978; 1981; Freyne 1968; Meyer 1968; Schmahl 1974; Stock 1975; Weeden 1968; 1971). Not much attention has been devoted to investigating the disciples' role in the Gospel of Matthew. The foundational article in this regard is by Luz (1971). This lack of interest in discipleship in Matthew's Gospel is all the more surprising given the fact that the term, disciple (μαθητής), occurs more frequently in Matthew than in any of the other Gospels. There are some 73 occurrences in the Gospel of Matthew, while forty-five of these are in Matthew alone with no parallels in Mark or Luke (Guelich 1982:52). These statistics show that Matthew's Gospel has far more interest in the disciples than the other Gospels do.

The term disciple (μαθητής) refers to those followers of Jesus who are committed to him, who believed in him and who received a special teaching from him. Strecker (1962:191) has argued that for Matthew the disciples are identical with the Twelve. However, an examination of the texts, as Luz (1971:142ff) has done, shows that this is not the case. Certainly, in the pre-Matthean tradition the tendency there was to equate the two terms δώδεκα and μαθητής (especially in Mark). However, there are clear instances where Matthew replaces the term δώδεκα in Mark with μαθητής (Mt 13:10 and Mk 4:10). The term implies a master-pupil relationship: one that expresses a permanent relationship and not one that constantly fluctuates and changes. The exact origin of this term within the Christian world is unknown. Mat-
thew has taken it over from Mark, who in turn is following earlier traditions (Saldarini 1994:95). The term did not necessarily imply some formal or informal school, such as was common in the Greco-Roman world, that could serve as a model either for the way Jesus interacted with his followers, or for the way in which the community of Matthew endeavored to transmit its traditions about Jesus of Nazareth. Generally, in the world of that time it designated someone who was committed to a master whose way of life one had embraced. This is its meaning in the Synoptic Gospels, and in particular in the Gospel of Matthew: it illustrates the follower of Jesus who lives in a committed relationship whereby the follower embraces both Jesus’ teachings and way of life.

In the teacher-pupil relationship of the Greco-Roman world the teacher became the model according to which the students conducted their life. This is the model Paul uses in his correspondence with the communities that he has founded. Moral instruction is handed on not primarily through theoretical instruction, but rather through an appeal to an example, to one’s own life. Thus Paul points to himself and to his own life style for imitation. For example, 2 Corinthians 11:16-12:10 where Paul speaks about himself and how God’s grace has worked through him. In Philippians Paul uses a hymn which reflects on the person of Jesus as an opportunity to illustrate the type of life that the disciple is meant to adopt: ‘Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus.’ (Philp 2:5-11).

This same model operates in Matthew’s presentation of the disciple’s relationship to Jesus. Jesus serves as the model for the life that the disciple is to lead. A life commitment is established between the teacher and the disciple which demands total loyalty from the disciple (Saldarini 1994:98).

2.1 Discipleship in Matthew as compared with discipleship in the Gospel of Mark

In order to appreciate more fully the role of the disciples in Matthew’s Gospel it is necessary to make a comparison with the Gospel of Mark.

2.1.1 The Matthean disciples understand the teaching of Jesus

According to the generally accepted solution to the Synoptic problem, the Gospel of Matthew made use of the Gospel of Mark in constructing his Gospel. One of the most noticeable changes that the Gospel of Matthew introduced to the Gospel of Mark was in the picture that he presented of the disciples.

In the Gospel of Mark the narrator presented the role of the disciples in a progressively unfavourable way. A decided regression occurred from being
loyal supporters of Jesus, to followers who fail to understand his message and end up as an obstacle for him. This ambivalence pervades Mark's narrative: the disciples are on the side of Jesus, yet at the same time they fail to fulfill the task to which Jesus has called them (Rhoads & Michie 1982:123). Much of Jesus' teaching occurs through the way in which he takes issue with the disciples' response, or the way in which he corrects their understanding of (or failure to understand) his teaching.

Matthew on the other hand erases this theme of the disciples' failure to understand the teaching of their master. Luz (1971:148) has shown how Matthew has consistently 'corrected' the picture of the disciples so as to eliminate the disciples' failure to understand. For example, in Mark 9:32 after Jesus speaks about his impending death, the narrator comments: 'But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.' Matthew replaces Mark's reference with the statement 'And they were greatly distressed' (Mt 17:23), which implies that they did at least understand what Jesus was saying! Also in using Mark's account of the transfiguration Matthew has omitted two statements that refer to the disciples' lack of understanding (Mk 9:6,10). On a positive note Matthew deliberately inserts references to the understanding of the disciples: Jesus asks them: 'Have you understood all this?' They answered, 'Yes' (Mt 13:51; see also Mt 15:16f; 16:9-12; Frankemolle 1973:255).

Contrasted with the Markan disciples, who do not believe, are the Matthean disciples, who are more realistic, in that Matthew tempers the picture with a reference to 'having little faith (δεικτός)' (6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8). In the calming of the storm the Markan Jesus upbraids the disciples with the words: 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?' (Mark 4:40). The Matthean Jesus instead says: 'Why are you afraid, you of little faith?' (Mt 8:6). In order to strengthen their faith the Matthean Jesus instructs them on the meaning of the kingdom and of being a disciple.

Peter's confession also undergoes a decided transformation at the hands of Matthew. In Mark, Peter confesses Jesus: 'You are the Messiah' (Mk 8:30). This is immediately followed by Jesus' reference to his impending suffering and death because of Peter's misunderstanding of the nature of Jesus' Messiahship. In Matthew, on the other hand, Peter confesses: 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God' (Mt 16:16). This is immediately followed by Jesus' blessing of Peter and his acknowledgment that Peter had come to this understanding through the revelation of God. 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven' (Mt 16:17). Peter is brought to this understanding through his openness to the working of God in his life.

Matthew has deliberately altered the picture of the disciples in Mark because this does not conform to the role that both Jesus and the disciples are
meant to play within his Gospel. As the great teacher in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus must be able to communicate effectively with his disciples and he must bring them to a clear understanding of his message and of their relationship with him. The disciples in turn have the task of instructing others and of continuing the teaching of Jesus, as the ending of the Gospel demonstrates: ‘Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you’ (Mt 28:19-20). They could only effectively carry out this role by first understanding Jesus’ teaching. For this reason Matthew’s Jesus instructs the disciples at every opportunity (more frequently than in the other Gospels, for example, Mt 9:37; 11:1; 13:1-23; 19:23-20:19) and this instruction works its effect: they understand the message. Luz (1971:151) stresses this aspect of hearing by referring to them as ‘earwitnesses’.

2.1.2 The ministry of Jesus is a teaching ministry

The Gospel of Mark portrays Jesus as a healer and a worker of miracles. By contrast the Gospel of Matthew presents Jesus as a great teacher. In restructuring the Gospel around five great sermons (namely, the sermon on the mount, Mt 5:1-7:29; the missionary sermon, 9:35-11:1; the parables of the kingdom, 13:1-52; the sermon on the community, 18:1-35; the sermon on the end of the world, 24:1-26:1). Matthew has placed the emphasis on the instruction of Jesus’ disciples. While the sermon on the mount, for example, opens and closes with a reference to the crowds, a particular emphasis is placed on the disciples: ‘When Jesus saw the crowd, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying...’ (Mt 5:1-2). In Matthew 18:1 the focus is again on the instruction of the disciples who initiate the sermon: ‘At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?”’ (Mt 18:1). The emphasis on the instruction of the disciples is for good reason. While enabling Jesus to communicate his teaching effectively to them, these sermons also prepare them for the role they are to exercise as teachers who carry on the work of their master.

2.1.3 Jesus is a resident teacher rather than a wandering charismatic

The major sources that Matthew used, namely the Gospel of Mark and the Sayings Source Q, present Jesus in the role of a wandering charismatic. Matthew has deliberately reworked these sources so that this aspect of the ministry takes on less of an importance. Kingsbury (1978:62-68) takes issue particularly with Schweizer (1973; and 1974) who tried to describe Matthew’s disciples as embracing the lifestyle of wandering charismatic prophets. As
Kingsbury (1978:63) describes it: 'In a sentence, Schweizer's thesis is that the Matthean community comprised a group of Christians who, living in the border regions of Galilee and Syria, construed Jesus' call to discipleship in literal terms and, divesting themselves of familial ties and worldly goods, embarked upon a life "parallel" to his, viz. that of the wandering charismatic prophet.' Schweizer's description of Matthew's community in these terms is, as Kingsbury notes, very similar to that of the perspective of Theissen (1973:248–251) who argued that the transmitters of the Q Sayings of Jesus had adopted an itinerant lifestyle. However, it is very difficult to see how Matthew's Gospel fits into this mold. In fact an analysis of the Gospel shows a deliberate distanciation from this perspective. Jesus appears to live in Capernaum (4:13) which becomes the centre for his activity in Galilee. While Jesus moves all over Galilee, he never really leaves it (as happens in the other Synoptic Gospels). The picture that emerges from the Gospel is of a Jesus resident in Galilee and Capernaum to whom the crowds and people come, rather than the one who goes out to them. This conforms to the picture of Jesus, the teacher, that Matthew wants to inculcate. 'But it is from Galilee that the news of him spreads throughout all Syria (4:24), and it is to Galilee that the crowds from the Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and across the Jordan come to be with him (4:25)' (Kingsbury 1978:65).

Not only is the emphasis placed upon a Jesus who is a resident teacher, but the image of the disciples is also one that is very restrained in its consideration of their missionary activity. They never venture out on their own to perform a ministry. Instead, they remain with Jesus imbibing his instruction. On those occasions when the disciples do not understand, they are brought to understanding through Jesus' explanation (Luz 1971:149). An analysis of the missionary sermon (Mt 10) is very instructive, particularly in comparing it with its sources (Mt 3:13–19 and 6:7–13). While preaching and healing are an essential feature of the ministry of the disciples in the Gospel of Mark, this receives far less importance in Matthew. In fact, their preaching ministry in Matthew is confined to after the death and resurrection, not before. This can be deduced from a comparison of the conclusion of the mission sermon in Matthew 10:42 and Mark 9:41:

* Mark 9:41: 'For truly I tell you whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ will by no means lose the reward.'
* Matthew 10:42: '...whoever gives a cup of cold water to one of these little ones in the name of a disciple—truly I tell you, none of these will lose their reward.'

This change in Matthew's Gospel from 'in the name of Christ' to 'in the name of a disciple' is deliberate. While the Markan disciples have a ministry during the life of Jesus, Matthew has transposed that ministry to the time of his own
community. In that community he knows of a mission whereby missionaries are sent out by the disciples. Matthew has changed the time element to reflect the world of his own community.

This is in effect what happens throughout the Gospel of Matthew. The centre of concern lies not with presenting an historical account of the ministry of Jesus. Matthew remembers that ministry, but he describes it in terms that impact on the life of his own community. This community directs and dictates the story and the events that occur therein. So, for example, the memory of the itinerancy of Jesus and his disciples, as occurs in the sources of Q and Mark, is rewritten to reflect the urban life of Matthew's community which is now reflected in the Gospel account. In this way the Gospel of Matthew provides a window onto the community of Matthew.

Any text that is produced always emerges from a particular context and is influenced by that context (Hirsch 1967). While Matthew's Gospel is a story about Jesus and the origins of the Jesus movement and is based on sources that record those origins, he is writing from a particular community and within a particular context and is indeed influenced by that community and its concerns. This was illustrated in the changes noted above with regard to sending out missionaries 'in the name of the disciples.' In reading the Gospel of Matthew one must be aware of the influence that the community is exercising in retelling the narrative. It is retold for the sake of the community and the message is directed specifically to that community. The narrative must then reflect the concerns and issues of that community.

2.2 The authority of the disciples

I would agree with Overman (1990:135) who argues that the term '(d)isciple is the designation for a Christian in the Matthean community'. The use of the term 'brother' throughout the sermons (5:22, 24, 46; 18:15, 16, 35) supports this understanding. The disciples in Matthew's Gospel become models for the life of every believer. In effect every believer is to be a disciple, a student who learns the teachings of Jesus and in turn hands these teachings on to others.

One feature that emerges clearly from the above is that the disciples are teachers entrusted with a teaching ministry. Jesus had prepared them for this ministry. As Overman (1990:127) says: 'Teaching and education have become the primary substance of the ministry of the disciples in Matthew' (Overman 1990:127). Why was there this need to emphasise the teaching ministry of the disciples? The context out of which the Gospel emerged provides the answer. The Pharisees, the chief opponents of the Matthean community, are understood as the true teachers of Judaism. In like manner Matthew demonstrates that his community also has teachers with an authority no less
equal to that of the Pharisees. These disciples exercise a teaching ministry that goes back to their master, Jesus.

In particular their teaching authority is reflected in Matthew 18:18: ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’ In this context Jesus is speaking to the disciples (18:1) who are to be identified with the members of the Matthean community. What is said of the disciples in Matthew is in effect said of the Matthean community which is a continuation of that community of disciples around Jesus. Earlier the same statement (Mt 18:18) was made to Peter (in 16:19). This parallel statement both to the disciples and to Peter emphasizes the communication of a teaching authority both to the disciples, and to those who exercise that authority on behalf of the community. Claims for a teaching authority of the disciples are distinctly missing in the Markan portrait of the disciples.

As a consequence of this teaching authority the realms of heaven and of earth are brought together. The authoritative decisions made by the disciples on earth are at the same time reflected in heaven. The two worlds mirror each other. The underlying belief is that God’s will is to be carried out here on earth in the same way that it is carried out in heaven. This is the thrust of the statement of the Lord’s Prayer: ‘Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven’ (Mt 6:10). The disciples ensure that God’s will is in effect carried out here on earth. This is an enormous claim made for the authority of the disciples, and is one that does not find its counterpart in the Gospels of Mark and Luke. The disciples of Matthew (who are in effect the community of Matthew) are the ones who possess this full authority to bring about God’s will here on earth.

This authority of the disciples is further illustrated on a number of other occasions in the Gospel. In particular Matthew’s Gospel attributes to them an authority to forgive sins. The healing of a paralytic whose sins Jesus forgives occurs in all three Synoptic Gospels (Mt 9:2–8; Mk 2:1–12 and Lk 5:17–26). A comparison of their conclusions is most significant:

* Mark ends with the statement: ‘They were all amazed and glorified God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this!”’ (Mk 2:12).
* Luke concludes in a similar way: ‘Amazement seized all of them, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, “We have seen strange things today”’ (Lk 5:26).
* Matthew’s ending is strikingly different: ‘When the crowds saw it, they were filled with awe, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to human beings’ (Mt 9:8).

Of significance here is the comment by the crowd in Matthew’s Gospel that the authority to forgive sins has been given by God to ‘human beings'
(plural: ἀνθρώπους), not just to Jesus. The presumption is that forgiveness of sins is also exercised by the disciples, by the community. As Harrington (1991:124-125) says: 'It is possible that the last line in the story ("and glorified God who gave such power to human beings") presupposes that forgiveness of sins was practiced within the community.' The forgiveness of sins as exercised by the community is also implied in Matthew 16:19 and 18:18, as well as in another tradition, James 5:15.

Teaching is the key aspect of discipleship in the Gospel of Matthew and it is the key task of the members of the community, whether it be receiving instruction oneself or passing that instruction on to others. Within the community individuals exercise the role of teachers for new members, or for those whose understanding is wavering or weak. The significance of this teaching authority serves to distance the community from the opposing group of Pharisees and scribes who themselves make claims to authority. This stress empowers Matthew's community to see itself as possessing an authority that is in no sense lesser than the authority claimed by the Pharisees.

In effect roles develop within the Matthean community that reflect similar roles within the wider community of the Judaism of that time. This is evident from an examination of the role of scribes in the Gospel of Matthew. There are many instances where Matthew has removed the term 'scribes' from the Markan phrase 'scribes and Pharisees' (see, for example, Mt 9:11; 12:24; 17:14; 21:23; 22:35; 26:3, 47; 27:1). In this way, Matthew deliberately identifies his opponents as the Pharisees, while retaining a more positive approach to the scribes. On the other hand, chapter 23 does contain very harsh denunciations of both the 'scribes and the Pharisees.' What Matthew is intent on doing here is to show that his denunciations are directed against 'their scribes', that is the scribes of the Pharisees. He demonstrates this very clearly when he says earlier: 'For he taught them as one having authority, and not as their scribes' (7:28). This is different from the Markan version, which has: 'They were astounded at his teaching, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes' (Mk 1:22). Matthew has introduced the pronoun into the Markan version, which demonstrates that he sees that there are scribes who belong to the Pharisees, and scribes who are part of his own community. In effect the Matthean Jesus upholds the function that the scribes exercise, even those of the Pharisees: but it is the way they exercise that role which falls under the spotlight of criticism: 'The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practise what they teach' (Mt 23:2-3).

Matthew 13:52 identifies another positive role for the scribe within the Matthean community: 'And he said to them, "Therefore every scribe who
has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old." The scribe trained for the kingdom of heaven is to be identified with the teachers within the Matthean community as distinct from the scribes of the Pharisees. As scribes, the disciples are teachers who learn from Jesus and are given a special authority to communicate their interpretations to the members of the community. Within the community of Matthew the scribe will become a leader who uses his gifts and instructions for the good of the community; opposed to him would be the scribes of the Pharisees who would be leaders within their own group who used their authority to shackle and oppress their members. Two parallel groups emerge each exercising a function within their own respective groups.

While the Matthean community demonstrates evidence of roles within the community, the community continues to uphold an egalitarian nature. This is emphatically stressed in Matthew 23: 'But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all students. And call no one your father on earth, for you have one father—the one in heaven. Nor are you to be called instructors, for you have one instructor, the Messiah. The greatest among you will be your servant. All who exalt themselves will be humbled, and all who humble themselves will be exalted' (Mt 23:8-12).

Here Matthew distances himself from any titles that might be addressed to those who are exercising the functions of teacher within the Matthean community because this would run counter to the egalitarian nature of the community. In Matthew, only Judas uses this title to refer to Jesus (26:51), a clear demonstration that Matthew distances himself from this title. Evidence for the usage of the title ‘Rabbi’ to refer to an office within rabbinic Judaism is only found from the end of the second century. However, its usage as a title of honour and respect is evidenced from the end of the first century (Schanks 1968:152-157). This shows the development that the title ‘Rabbi’ underwent over the course of a century (between the first and second centuries CE) from a title of honour to one that designated an office or function. In criticizing the usage of this title, as well as other titles, the Matthean Jesus shows an awareness of this developing tendency to give more and more importance to those who exercise these functions, while deliberately distancing himself from these developments and tendencies.

This honorific title is to be avoided by the followers of Jesus because they have only one teacher, and he is Jesus. They in turn are all brothers and

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1 Many sarcophagi from Galilee have been excavated dating from the end of the second century. This is the earliest evidence we possess for the usage of the title rabbi to refer to an office (Myers & Kraabel 1986:180-181).
sisters. In this way the Matthean community once again distinguishes itself from emerging rabbinic Judaism as is evident in the communities around the Pharisees. This egalitarian nature of the Matthean community is further emphasised by Jesus' reference that the members of the community must be servants of one another. They are all equal and no one is to lord it over another.

While teaching and instruction are functions exercised by members of Matthew's community, they do not confer honorific status as occurs in the wider community. The bottom line for all members of Matthew's community is that they are all equal, they are all 'brothers.' In this way Matthew further distinguishes his community from the communities of emerging rabbinic Judaism. A new life has begun for the members of Matthew's community who are to share and to participate in this community in an equal and full way. As Harrington (1991:323-324) says: 'The members of Matthew's community have broken from their network of family and friends, and begun a new, non-traditional community. Matthew's attack on the Jewish authorities tends to weaken their legitimacy for the Matthean community and establishes the authority of the community's own leaders.'

2.3 Peter

Peter's role within the community of Matthew has always been the subject of intense discussion particularly along confessional lines since the time of the Reformation. Since 1952, with the appearance of Oscar Cullmann's (1952) study on Peter, the investigation has tended to become both more open and less confessional. I shall focus on a few points that reflect the type of authority that Peter exercises within the community.

The key passage that expresses Peter's role within the community is Matthew 16:16-20. This passage reflects the point where the separation between the two groups, the community of Matthew and the emerging rabbinic communities is becoming more inevitable. The title ἐκκλησία indicates the Matthean community as distinct from the Pharisaic communities identified as συναγωγή (6:5; 23:6). This passage reflects a special position that Peter

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4 Cf the excellent Roman Catholic-Lutheran joint study of Peter in the New Testament by Brown, Donfried, & Reumann (eds) (1973). Kingsbury (1979:67-83) has identified two recent approaches toward the role of Peter in Matthew's Gospel. The one follows the views of Reinhart Hummel (1963:59-64) which sees Peter as the 'chief rabbi' exercising a position analogous to that of Pharisaic Judaism: to him Jesus has entrusted the authority of teaching. The other view is that of Strecker (1962:205) who sees Peter's role within the Gospel of Matthew as providing a 'type' of what the individual member of the church should be like.
exercises within the community of the ἐκκλησία. The image, 'I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven' (16:19), is an image taken from the prophecy of Isaiah addressed to Shebna that Eliakim will replace him and will become chief steward over the royal household: 'I will place on his shoulder the key of the house of David; he shall open, and no one shall shut; he shall shut, and no one shall open' (Is 22:22). Just as Eliakim is given authority over entrance into the royal palace, so Peter is given authority to admit into the kingdom (Harrington 1991:251). The role of Peter may be analogous to the role that the Jewish rabbis exercised within their synagogues. This is further supported by the fact that the images of 'binding and loosing' are technical rabbinic expressions (Meier 1978:113-114). Even more, this role of Peter is seen to replace the authority of the scribes and Pharisees. In Matthew 23:13-14 they are condemned because they act in a way totally opposite to that now entrusted to Peter: 'But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you lock people out of the kingdom of heaven. For you do not go in yourselves, and when others are going, you stop them.'

This passage (Mt 16:16-19) shows connections with many other passages in the Gospel. The revelation to Peter by the Father that Jesus is the Son of God (16:16) corresponds to the revelation of the Father by the Son to the 'infants' (11:27). The confession of Peter that Jesus is the Son of God (16:16) also corresponds to the confession of the disciples in the boat in 14:33. The authority to bind and to loose given to Peter in 16:18 corresponds to the same authority given to the disciples in 18:18. In many ways what is said of Peter is said of the other disciples.

The role of Peter within the Gospel of Matthew is presented in a twofold way: Peter is both unique and at the same time typical of all the disciples. As a type of disciple he is presented in very human terms: he both confesses Jesus (16:16-20) and denies him (26:69-75) and ultimately repents (26:75). At the same time the uniqueness of Peter shines through the Gospel narrative. This uniqueness stems from his special relationship with Jesus: he is the first of the disciples to be called by Jesus and as such bears witness to his unique relationship with Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels.

Within this thought framework the picture of Peter emerges as the authority to lead the community. Possessing an authority that comes from God, Peter gives justification to the teachings of the community. In the struggle between the two groups Matthew's community has the assurance of God's support. Their leader, Peter, was designated as such by Jesus with an authority that replaces the authority of the scribes and Pharisees. At the same time he is the recipient of God's revelation which enables him to perceive who Jesus was. This gives the assurance of God's help.
3 CONCLUSION

The Gospel of Matthew presents us with a window onto the world of post 70 CE when two groups were struggling for the heart of the Judaic traditions, namely the Matthean community and Pharisaic Judaism. The development of the Matthean community was to a large measure a reaction to the opponents of this emerging formative Judaism. The picture that has been drawn of the role of the disciples as well as the role of Peter reflects the response of the Matthean ἐκκλησία to the authorities of the Pharisaic συνεργών. For the Matthean community their important function rested essentially upon teaching and learning—these are the hallmarks of a disciple of Jesus. All the offices or roles or functions within the community are directed toward this end. This task of teaching is to be exercised in the spirit of brotherly equality (Kingsbury 1979:71).

Both movements, the Matthean and emerging rabbinic Judaism, make claims to be representative of true Israel. However, the future sees the two movements moving farther and farther apart with little hope of reconciliation. The Gospel of Matthew is a record of one attempt to present a way forward within the traditions of Judaism. This way would ultimately be rejected by formative Judaism. In the process many Gentiles had been brought into the community, people who were to exercise a radical influence on the emerging Christian church’ (Saldarini 1994:123). The enduring validity and influence of the Gospel of Matthew rests not with its origin and home within Judaism, but with its future home within Christianity. Emerging formative Judaism rejected this attempt, while emerging formative Christianity was to embrace it.

WORKS CONSULTED


Kingsbury, JD 1978. The verb 'akolouthein' ('to follow') as an index of Matthew's view of his community. *JBL* 97(1), 62-68.


Professor P J Hartin, Religious Studies Department, Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington 99258-0057, USA.