

MATTHEW'S PARABLE OF
THE ROYAL WEDDING FEAST

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MATTHEW'S PARABLE OF THE ROYAL WEDDING FEAST

A Sociorhetorical Interpretation

Ruth Christa Mathieson



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Abbreviations

1QH	Hodoyot
1QM	War Scroll
1QS	Rule of the Community
4Q510–511	Songs of the Sage
4Q525	Beatitudes
11Q19–20	Temple Scroll
A.J.	Josephus, <i>Antiquitates judaicae</i>
AB	Anchor Bible
<i>Ab urbe cond.</i>	Livy, <i>Ab urbe condita</i>
<i>AcT</i>	<i>Acta Theologica</i>
<i>Alex.</i>	Plutarch, <i>Alexander</i>
<i>Anab.</i>	Arrian, <i>Anabasis</i>
Apoc. Ab.	Apocalypse of Abraham
ANF	Roberts, Alexander, and James Donaldson, eds. <i>The Ante-Nicene Fathers</i> . 10 vols. Repr., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994.
Ascen. Isa.	Ascension of Isaiah
<i>Aug.</i>	Suetonius, <i>Augustus</i>
ATR	<i>Australian Theological Review</i>
b.	Babylonian Talmud
<i>B.J.</i>	Josephus, <i>Bellum Judaicum</i>
Barn.	Barnabas
BBR	<i>Bulletin for Biblical Research</i>
BDAG	Frederick W., Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, and Felix Wilbur Gingrich. <i>Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> . 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
Bekh.	Bekhorot

Ber.	Berakhot
<i>Bib</i>	<i>Biblica</i>
<i>BibInt</i>	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BLS	Bible and Literature Series
<i>BSac</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
<i>BTB</i>	<i>Biblical Theology Bulletin</i>
<i>BZ</i>	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
<i>Cal.</i>	Suetonius, <i>Gaius Caligula</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CD	Damascus Document
<i>Comm. Matt.</i>	Origen, <i>Commentarium in evangelium Matthaei</i>
CP	<i>Classical Philology</i>
<i>CurBR</i>	<i>Currents in Biblical Research</i>
<i>CurTM</i>	<i>Currents in Theology and Mission</i>
<i>Bib. hist.</i>	Diodorus Siculus, <i>Bibliotheca historica</i>
DSD	<i>Dead Sea Discoveries</i>
<i>EDNT</i>	Balz, Horst, and Gerhard Schneider, eds. <i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . 3 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990–1993.
En.	Enoch
<i>Ep.</i>	<i>Epistulae</i>
<i>Epig.</i>	Martial, <i>Epigrams</i>
ESEC	Emory Studies in Early Christianity
<i>ExpTim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FC	Fathers of the Church
Gen. Rab.	Genesis Rabbah
<i>Gest. Pelag.</i>	Augustine, <i>De gestis Pelagii</i>
Git.	Gittin
Gos. Thom.	Gospel of Thomas
Hag.	Hagigah
<i>Haer.</i>	Irenaeus, <i>Adversus haereses</i>
<i>Hist. Rom.</i>	Appian, <i>Historia Romana</i> ; Dio Cassis, <i>Historiae romanae</i>
<i>Hom.</i>	Gregory the Great, <i>Homiliae</i>
<i>Hom. Matt.</i>	John Chrysostom, <i>Homiliae in Matthaeum</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
<i>HvTSt</i>	<i>Hervormde theologiese studies</i>

HvTStSup	Hervormde theologiese studies Supplement Series
<i>Inst.</i>	Quintilian, <i>Institution oratoria</i>
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
JAAR	<i>Journal of the American Academy of Religion</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JFSR	<i>Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion</i>
Jos. Asen.	Joseph and Aseneth
JSJ	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSQ	<i>Jewish Studies Quarterly</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
Jub.	Jubilees
Ketub.	Ketubbot
<i>Marc.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Adversus Marcionem</i>
<i>Men.</i>	Lucian, <i>Menippus</i>
Menah.	Menahot
<i>Metam.</i>	Ovid, <i>Metamorphoses</i>
Midr. Pss.	Midrash Psalms
Midr. Rab.	Midrash Rabbah
<i>Mos.</i>	Philo, <i>De vita Mosis</i>
MSJ	<i>The Master's Seminary Journal</i>
NAC	New American Commentary
<i>Neot</i>	<i>Neotestamentica</i>
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIDNTT	Brown, Colin, ed. <i>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i> . 4 vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975–1978.
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTM	New Testament Message
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
OTP	Charlesworth, James H., ed. <i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1983, 1985.
p.	peshet

Pesah.	Pesahim
<i>Pan.</i>	Epiphanius, <i>Panarion</i>
<i>Paen.</i>	Ambrose, <i>De paenitentia</i>
<i>Phaedr.</i>	Plato, <i>Phaedrus</i>
<i>Procat.</i>	Cyril of Jerusalem, <i>Procatechesis</i>
<i>Proof</i>	<i>Prooftext: A Journal of Jewish Literary History</i>
Pss. Sol.	Psalms of Solomon
Qoh. Zut.	Qoholeth Zuta
Rab.	Rabbah
Res gest. divi Aug.	Res gestae divi Augusti
<i>RevExp</i>	<i>Review and Expositor</i>
<i>RevQ</i>	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
RRA	Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity
Sanh.	Sanhedron
<i>Sat.</i>	Juvenal, <i>Satires</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
<i>Scorp.</i>	Tertullian, <i>Scorpiace</i>
<i>Serm.</i>	Augustine, <i>Sermones</i>
Shabb.	Shabbat
Sifre Deut.	Sifre Deuteronomy
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>Somn.</i>	Philo, <i>De somniis</i>
SNT	Studien zum Neuen Testament
SNTSMS	Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SR	<i>Studies in Religion</i>
SymS	Symposium Series
T. Gad	Testament of Gad
T. Jud.	Testament of Judah
T. Levi	Testament of Levi
t.	Tosefta
<i>TDNT</i>	Kittel, Gerhard, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> . Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.
<i>ThTo</i>	<i>Theology Today</i>
TNTC	Tyndale New Testament Commentaries
<i>TynBul</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
VC	<i>Vigiliae Christianae</i>

WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WGRWSup	Writings from the Greco-Roman World Supplement series
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
y.	Jerusalem Talmud

Translation of Matthew 22:1–14

Once more Jesus spoke to them in parables, saying:

- 2 The dominion of heaven may be compared to a man—a king who gave a wedding feast for his son.
- 3 He sent his slaves to call the invited ones to the wedding feast, but they were not willing to come.
- 4 Again he sent other slaves, saying,
“Tell those who have been invited:
Look, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fatted calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast!”
- 5 But disregarding it they went away,
one to his own field, another to his business,
- 6 while the rest seized his slaves, maltreated them, and killed them.
- 7 The king was enraged. He sent his troops, destroyed those murderers, and burned their city.
- 8 Then he said to his slaves,
“The wedding is ready, but those invited were not worthy.
- 9 Go therefore into the main streets and invite everyone you find to the wedding feast.”
- 10 Those slaves went out to the crossroads and gathered all whom they found, both good and bad, until the wedding was filled with dinner guests.
- 11 But when the king came in to see the people dining, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothing,
- 12 and he said to him,
“Friend, how did you get in here without wedding clothing?”
And he was silent.
- 13 Then the king said to the attendants,

“Bind his feet and hands, and throw him out into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

14 For many are called, but few chosen.

Introduction

The parable of the royal wedding feast (Matt 22:1–14) concludes with the king commanding his attendants to bind the feet and hands of a guest not wearing wedding clothing (ἔνδυμα γάμου) and to cast this individual into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is a shocking consequence for not being dressed for a wedding, especially as this individual was among those invited into the wedding feast without much notice (Matt 22:8–10). Joachim Jeremias notes the expulsion scene in this parable has “long-troubled” expositors, and Klyne Snodgrass considers it “still troublesome.”¹ The severe consequence of not wearing the required ἔνδυμα γάμου (22:11–13) stresses the importance of such attire at the heavenly wedding feast (22:2) without any corresponding clarity as to what the wedding clothing represents. Over the last two millennia, a number of possibilities have been proposed, and there is no current consensus: Jeremias concludes that the wedding garment symbolizes repentance and imputed righteousness; Snodgrass describes it as representing adequate preparation for the wedding feast; Ulrich Luz considers it an indication of good works; and W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison describe it as the eschatological robe awarded to the righteous.²

This book explores the expulsion of an individual from the wedding feast in the parable of the royal wedding feast and what this narrative may imply about a dress code for heaven. In this introductory chapter, I explain *why* I have undertaken this study; I discuss the nature of *what* is being

1. Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 3rd ed. (London: SCM, 1972), 65; Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent: A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 321.

2. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 189; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 321; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, trans. James E. Crouch, Hermenia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 59; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988–1997), 3:206.

explored (a parable); I outline the history of interpretation of the ending of the parable of the royal wedding feast; I explain *how* this parable will be explored using sociorhetorical interpretation as a framework; and I provide an itinerary of *when* I consider Matt 22:1–14 from different perspectives.

Why Explore the Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast?

My motivation for exploring the parable of the royal wedding feast is three-fold. First, it is personal. I want to meet the requirements for the dominion of heaven, and to do this, I need to know the “dress code.” There is, however, such a lack of consensus as to the meaning of ἔνδυμα γάμου that Snodgrass considers precise identification of the wedding garment “both impossible and inappropriate.”³ Second, I want to preach responsibly on this troubling parable, which according to the Revised Common Lectionary is read as a gospel every three years. Third, as an Anglican priest who seeks to be inclusive of all people, I am concerned for the marginalized who already feel excluded from church communities.⁴ My concern for the well-being of the most vulnerable in the church leads me to recognize that appropriate restraint and removal of individuals—those who abuse their power, privilege, and positions of responsibility by harming little ones—is necessary. My thesis, that the expulsion of the individual from the wedding feast may well represent such a scenario, was undoubtedly influenced by hearing reports from the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse while undertaking my research.⁵

The worldview, experiences, and presuppositions of the reader or listener all play a role in what is seen and heard when a parable is read—in the same way that an indigenous tracker, European trekker, photographer, pastoralist, miner, and surveyor all experience the same tract of land in the outback of Australia differently. They see and hear different elements of the landscape and accordingly assess the land as bountiful, barren, or beautiful.

3. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 321.

4. In *What's So Amazing about Grace?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 11, Philip Yancey begins with a prostitute's speaking of church as being the last place she would go for help.

5. Peter McClellan et al., *The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse: Final Report* (Barton, ACT: Commonwealth of Australia, December 2017). Available at <https://tinyurl.com/SBL4829f>.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza identifies four main paradigms of exploring biblical texts.⁶ In the doctrinal-theological paradigm, typical of patristic and medieval exegesis, scholars approach scripture as a rich resource for the revelation of the divine and the development of doctrine.⁷ In the modernist-objectivist paradigm, scholars see themselves as scientists and historians, finding the facts, uncovering the truth, and defining *the* meaning of a text. In the case of parables, this tends to involve deallegorizing them to identify the actual words spoken by the historical Jesus. In the postmodern hermeneutic-cultural paradigm, every interpreter approaches the text from his or her cultural and social location with associated ideological presuppositions, and therefore biblical texts may have many meanings, each with its own contextual integrity.⁸ In the rhetorical-emancipatory paradigm, which includes feminist, liberationist, and postcolonial interpretations, “the scholar communicates with a variegated public and has as her goal personal, social and religious transformation for justice and well-being.”⁹ My underlying agenda of a preferential option for the marginalized and for the vulnerable most closely aligns with the rhetorical-emancipatory paradigm, but engagement with all four paradigms contributes to making meaning of this troubling parable (Matt 22:1–14).

6. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Rhetoric of Inquiry,” in *Rhetorics in the New Millennium: Promise and Fulfilment*, ed. James D. Hester and J. David Hester (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 23–48.

7. Joseph Nalpathilchira stresses the revelatory nature of this parable. See Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready: Come to the Marriage Banquet: The Parable of the Invitation to the Royal Marriage Banquet (Matt 22,1–14) in the Context of Matthew’s Gospel* (Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press, 2012), 31–33, 53–55, 365–70.

8. Examples of this in parable interpretation include Mary Ann Tolbert, *Perspectives on the Parables: Multiple Interpretations* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979), 39–50; John Dominic Crossan, *Cliffs of Fall: Paradox and Polyvalence in the Parables of Jesus* (New York: Seabury, 1980), 1–24; Robert H. Stein, *An Introduction to the Parables of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1981), 67; Ruben Zimmermann, *Puzzling the Parables of Jesus: Methods and Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 7–8.

9. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Democratizing Biblical Studies: Toward an Emancipatory Educational Space* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 91. Examples of this in parable research include William R. Herzog II, *Parables as Subversive Speech: Jesus as Pedagogue of the Oppressed* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994), 3; Luise Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 38–48.

What Is Being Explored? A Parable

The English word *parable* comes from the Greek word *παραβολή*, which literally means something that is cast or placed alongside, that is, a comparison. Ancient Greek rhetoricians used the term to describe short fictions that served to illustrate, prove, or demonstrate a larger argument.¹⁰ In a gospel context, parables draw a comparison between “God’s kingdom, actions or expectations and something in this world, real or imagined.”¹¹ In the Septuagint, *παραβολή* translates the Hebrew word *משל* (*mashal*), which includes a variety of materials, including proverbs, rules, taunts, jests, and riddles.¹² The parables of Jesus fall into two main groups: *similitudes*, which tend to be shorter and more proverbial in nature; and *narrative parables*, short stories,¹³ such as the parable of the royal wedding feast.

In a 1935 lecture, C. H. Dodd defined parable as “a metaphor or simile drawn from nature or common life, arresting the hearer by its vividness or strangeness, and leaving the mind in sufficient doubt about its precise application to tease it into active thought.”¹⁴ Similarly, but more concisely, in John Dominic Crossan’s more recent publication, he defines a parable as a “metaphorical story,” employing mathematical symbols to make his point: “parable = metaphoricity + narrativity.”¹⁵ He contrasts an ordinary narrative, in which an author wants the audience to get *into* the story, with a metaphorical narrative, which points externally to a referent *outside* the story.¹⁶

One of the earliest biblical examples of a parable is the story of a poor man’s lamb told to King David by the prophet Nathan in order to convey to the king the wrong he had done to Uriah (2 Sam 12:1–14).¹⁷ This illus-

10. David Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Rhetoric in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 10; Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 8; David B. Gowler, *What Are They Saying about the Parables?* (New York: Paulist, 2000), 59–61.

11. Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 3.

12. Gowler, *What Are They Saying*, 42–46; Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 20.

13. Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 3.

14. C. H. Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 3rd ed. (London: Nesbit, 1946), 16.

15. John Dominic Crossan, *The Power of Parable: How Fiction by Jesus Became Fiction about Jesus* (London: SPCK, 2012), 8.

16. Crossan, *Power of Parable*, 9.

17. Gowler, *What Are They Saying*, 45; John S. Kloppenborg, *The Tenants in the Vineyard: Ideology, Economics and Agrarian Conflict in Jewish Palestine*, WUNT 195

trates how parables have the potential to function as prophetic speech.¹⁸ Such expanded analogies make comparisons and draw contrasts in order to explain or convince.¹⁹ Rhetorical in nature, parables use indirect communication to engage an audience in a story with its defenses down so as to “deceive the hearer into truth,”²⁰ thereby stimulating appropriate action in response to this experience.

Each gospel narrative incorporates parables in keeping with its distinctive theology. The eschatological focus of Mark’s Gospel contributes to “the polarizing effect of the parables.”²¹ The distinction made between insider understanding and outsider lack of understanding is consistent with the focus in Mark on the messianic secret.²² By contrast, the theological emphasis of Luke’s Gospel is that the good news is for the outsider, and the many parables integrated into Luke’s narrative “reveal the same sensitivity to outsiders and the socially marginalized.”²³ Parables unique to Luke’s Gospel include those concerned with possessions (Luke 12:16–21, 16:19–31) and example stories, such as the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:30–35).²⁴ In Matthew’s Gospel, “parabolic speech is a general way of Jesus’ speaking.” Parables are found throughout this gospel, with clustering in the discursive material, especially Matt 13.²⁵ The Matthean parables invite reflection on both social ethics (e.g., Matt 5–7) and eschatological questions (e.g., Matt 24–25).²⁶ Consideration of parables within the literary and narrative context of the gospel

(Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 1; Stern also includes 2 Sam 14:1–20, 1 Kgs 20:35–43, and Isa 5:1–7 (*Parables in Midrash*, 186); Claus Westermann provides a comprehensive study of “comparisons” (*mashal*-like material) in the Old Testament (*The Parables of Jesus in the Light of the Old Testament*, trans. and ed. Friedemann W. Golka and Alastair H. B. Logan [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1990], 1–151).

18. Westermann, *Parables*, 108; John P. Meier, *Probing the Authenticity of the Parables*, vol. 5 of *A Marginal Jew* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 40–42.

19. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 2–3; Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 22–24; Robert Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and Word of God: The Problem of Language in the New Testament and Contemporary Theology* (New York: Harper, 1966), 153–54.

20. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 2, 8–9.

21. Zimmermann, *Puzzling*, 239.

22. Zimmermann, *Puzzling*, 239.

23. Zimmermann, *Puzzling*, 296.

24. Zimmermann, *Puzzling*, 297.

25. Zimmermann, *Puzzling*, 263.

26. Zimmermann, *Puzzling*, 263.

microtext in which they are located is one of three main approaches to parable interpretation.

Parable Interpretation

There have been several shifts of emphasis in parable interpretation during the last century, which broadly speaking correspond to shifts from the historical in the first part of the twentieth century to the literary in the middle of the century and, more recently, to the recognition of the role of the reading audience in interpretation. In *Puzzling the Parables*, Ruben Zimmermann proposes integrative interpretation by using aspects of all three approaches in turn, namely, sociohistorical, literary, and reader-oriented. He compares this approach to “a mosaic or puzzle, in which many different pieces must be joined together to get a comprehensive picture at the end.”²⁷ Similarly, Vernon Robbins encourages the exploration of various textures of a biblical text, respecting each interpretative approach in its own right to discover the rich tapestry of early Christian discourse.²⁸ Eight distinctive approaches to parable interpretation during the last century can be identified, and these are mapped onto the hermeneutical triangle for parable interpretation used by Zimmerman: (1) form criticism; (2) redaction criticism; (3) narrative criticism; (4) literary and rhetorical analysis; (5) sociohistorical analysis; (6) analysis of parables in their Jewish setting; (7) ideology-identified criticism (liberation, feminist); and (8) history of interpretation (see fig. 1).²⁹

Parables are extensively studied because the evangelists present them as the teachings of Jesus. The historical-critical approach to parable research, which dominated the first two-thirds of the twentieth century, was concerned with identifying what Jesus was most likely to have said.³⁰ In successive editions of the influential *The Parables of Jesus*, Jeremias applied the form-critical principle concerned with identifying the life-setting of the parables in the time of Jesus and the time of the evangelist in order to recover the authentic voice of the historical Jesus from the

27. Zimmermann, *Puzzling*, xii.

28. Vernon K. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts: A Guide to Socio-rhetorical Interpretation* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996); Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society and Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1996).

29. Zimmermann, *Puzzling*, 15, figure 3.

30. Gowler, *What Are They Saying*, 4–16.

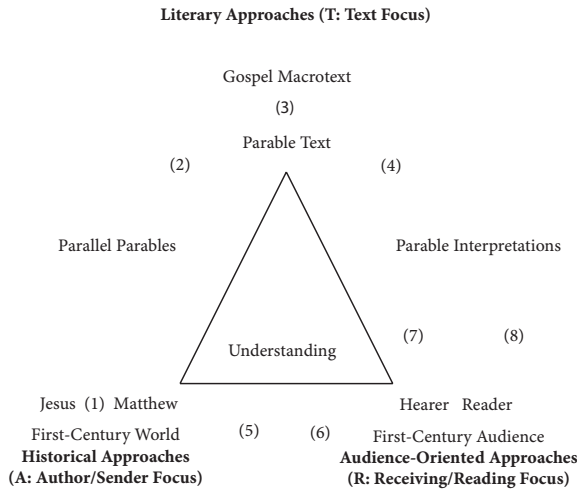


Fig. 1. Hermeneutical Triangle for Parable Interpretation. Adapted from Zimmermann, *Puzzling*, 15, figure 3.

versions of parables found in the gospels.³¹ Concern with identifying the authentic words of Jesus continues in the work of the Jesus Seminar.³² There is also a shift from focusing on the words of Jesus (*ipsissima verba*) to the voice of Jesus in the original structure of the parables (*ipsissima structura*) in the work of Bernard Scott and to the intent of Jesus in the work of Snodgrass.³³ In a recent publication regarding the relationship between the parables and the historical Jesus, John Meier applies the criteria of independent attestation to argue that only four parables may be attributed to the historical Jesus.³⁴ One includes the storyline that the parable of the royal wedding feast (22:1–14) has in common with the parable of the great banquet (Luke 14:15–24). Given that the concluding scene of the expulsion of the wedding guest is only in Matthew (22:11–13),

31. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 11–22 (English editions were published in 1954, 1963, and 1972); Klyne R. Snodgrass, “From Allegorising to Allegorizing: A History of the Interpretation of the Parables of Jesus,” in *The Challenge of Jesus’ Parables*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 8.

32. Robert W. Funk and Roy W. Hoover, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Maxwell Macmillan, 1993).

33. Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1989), 65; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 2–3.

34. Meier, *Probing the Authenticity*, 48–57.

comparative historical approaches that focus on identifying the authentic words of Jesus are not helpful for analyzing this scene. For the last fifty years, the focus of parable study has shifted to exploring the parables in their gospel form and context, rather than attempting to reconstruct the original parables.³⁵

Redaction criticism invites scholars to focus on parables in the context of their macrotext, a particular canonical gospel, considering how and why they may differ from any parallel parables. Jack Kingsbury's study of the parables in Matt 13, published in 1969, was the first redaction-critical approach to parables.³⁶ In the 1980s both John Drury and John Donahue published studies concerned with the gospel setting of each parable.³⁷ Two monographs are dedicated to the trilogy of parables in Matt 21:28–22:14, of which the parable of the royal wedding feast is the third. Wesley Olmstead's was published in 2003 and Rowland Onyenali's in 2013.³⁸

Narrative analysis and redaction criticism focus on parables in their gospel form and context. Olmstead uses both methods in his study of the trilogy of parables in Matt 21–22 and helpfully summarizes the differences between the two approaches.³⁹ Redaction criticism concerns the reworking of possible sources and the historical world of the evangelist, whereas narrative criticism concerns the unity of the final text and the narrative world of the gospel stories. Redaction criticism focuses on the author and the cognitive impact of the parable, whereas narrative criticism focuses on the reader and the affective impact of the parable. The potential limitation of redaction criticism is that it is fragmentary and can lose sight of gospel unity in the exhaustive spadework of detailed source analysis, whereas the potential limitation of narrative criticism is that it is ahistorical and subjective and might ignore the seams in the patchwork nature of the unity. These differences between redaction and narrative criticism are a matter

35. Wesley G. Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy of Parables: The Nation, the Nations and the Reader in Matthew 21:28–22:14*, SNTSMS 127 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 13–14.

36. Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Parables of Matthew 13: A Study in Redaction Criticism* (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1969).

37. John Drury, *The Parables in the Gospels: History and Allegory* (New York: Crossroad, 1985); John Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable: Metaphor, Narrative, and Theology in the Synoptic Gospels* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988).

38. Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy of Parables*, 26; Rowland Onyenali, *The Trilogy of Parables in Mt 21:28–22:14: From a Matthean Perspective* (Frankfurt: Lang, 2013).

39. Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy of Parables*, 3–11.

of emphasis because there is an interrelationship between the historical world of the evangelists and the narrative world of the gospels. Focusing on the narrative dimension of parables themselves was one of the outcomes of the shift in emphasis from historical to literary approaches in the second half of the twentieth century.

In the 1960s, literary analysis of the artistry of parables was undertaken by Geraint V. Jones and Dan Via.⁴⁰ Consideration of the literary genre of narrative parables invited comparisons with the deep structure of folktales and myths, the form of fables, and the model of the *mashal* in rabbinic literature.⁴¹ Eta Linnemann's discussion of parables as language events and Anthony Thiselton's of parables as speech-act events both emphasize the performative potential of parables to call, to promise, to demand, or to give rather than simply to convey teachings.⁴² In Madeleine Boucher's words, parables function by "moving the addressee to decision or action."⁴³ Robert Funk argues that parables are extended metaphors that are irreducible to nonfigurative discursive language and shock the hearer or reader "into decisive action by the juxtaposition of two discrete and often incompatible elements."⁴⁴ Funk and Crossan both use violent language to describe the impact of parables, arguing that they shatter the conventional and mundane world of the hearer, with which a parable narrative begins.⁴⁵ The narrative of a parable plays an important role in leading the audience

40. Geraint V. Jones, *The Art and Truth of Parables* (London: SPCK, 1964); Dan O. Via, *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), vii.

41. John Dominic Crossan, *Finding the First Act: Trove Folktales and Jesus' Treasure Parable* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979); Daniel Patte, ed., *Semiology and Parables: Exploration of the Possibilities Offered by Structuralism for Exegesis* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick, 1976); Mary Ann Beavis, "Parable and Fable," *CBQ* 52 (1990): 473–98; Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 7–24; Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 9–56.

42. Eta Linnemann, *Parables of Jesus: Introduction and Exposition* (London: SPCK, 1966); Anthony C. Thiselton, "The Parables as Language-Event," *SJT* 23 (1970): 437–68.

43. Madeleine Boucher, *The Mysterious Parable: A Literary Study* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America of America, 1977), 14–16.

44. Funk, *Language*, 137–53, 193–98.

45. Funk, *Language*, 194; John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus* (repr., Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1992), 66; Crossan, *Dark Interval: Towards a Theology of Story* (Niles, IL: Argus, 1975), 121–22. Attributing such power to metaphors is questioned by Tolbert (*Perspectives on the Parables*, 42) and Donahue (*Gospel in Parable*, 11).

from the ordinary into a strange world where everything is familiar yet radically different.⁴⁶

Terms used to describe how parables make comparisons between two worlds include *simile*, *metaphor*, *allegory*, and *analogy*.⁴⁷ Adolf Jülicher considered the parables of Jesus extended similes with one point of comparison, whereas he labelled allegories extended metaphors and considered them a post-Jesus development.⁴⁸ Many now consider this an exaggerated distinction creating a false dichotomy.⁴⁹ However, Jülicher's legacy lasted for decades, and allegorical interpretation of parables tends to be viewed with suspicion.⁵⁰ Boucher is credited with arguing that at least some parables are allegories by considering allegory not as a literary form, but as a process in which the meaning of a text is a mystery beyond the literal meaning of the words.⁵¹ Also, distinctions are made between "allegory" (*Allegorie*), the symbolic meaning of a text; "allegorization" (*Allegorizierung*), the process of embellishing elements of what may have been an allegory in simpler form; and "allegorizing" (*Allegorese*), ascribing meanings to a text which the author never intended.⁵² Although allegorizing, especially of every element of a parable, continues to be criticized in current scholarship, it is now accepted that some parables may be considered allegories and allow allegorization. There is precedent for

46. Funk, *Language*, 161. A. M. Hunter makes this point by using a P. G. Wodehouse quote repeatedly. See Hunter, *The Parables: Now and Then* (London: SCM, 1964), 10, 53, 108.

47. John W. Sider, "Proportional Analogy in the Gospel Parables," *NTS* 31 (1985): 18–19; Sider, *Interpreting the Parables: A Hermeneutical Guide to Their Meaning* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995).

48. Adolf Jülicher, *Die Gleichnisreden Jesu*, 2 vols. (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1888–1899).

49. Sider, *Interpreting the Parables*, 20; Craig L. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 42.

50. Charles W. Hedrick, *Many Things in Parables: Jesus and His Modern Critics* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2004), 100; Klyne R. Snodgrass, "From Allegorizing to Allegorizing," in *The Challenge of Jesus' Parables*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 3–29.

51. Boucher, *Mysterious Parable*, 25–26; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 19; Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 42–43.

52. Hans-Josef Klauck, *Allegorie und Allegorese in synoptischen Gleichnistexten* (Münster: Aschendorff, 1978), cited in Charles E. Carlston, "Parable and Allegory Revisited: An Interpretive Review," *CBQ* 43 (1981): 228–42; Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 49.

this in the Synoptic Gospels, which present Jesus providing an allegorical interpretation of the parable of the sower (Mark 4:13–20; Matt 13:18–23; Luke 8:11–15). Snodgrass states, “Jesus does not need to be saved from allegory. Parables are allegorical, some more than others. Parables refer outside themselves, or they ... are not parables.”⁵³

Understanding parables as allegories assumes one-to-one correspondences that need to be decoded, whereas metaphorical and symbolic understandings recognize the role of the reader in making meaning. Paul Ricoeur describes parables as a combination of the narrative form and metaphorical process with more potential for meaning than can be captured in any one interpretation.⁵⁴ Norman Perrin considers the kingdom of God, the referent of many parables, a tensile symbol with a set of meanings not exhausted by any one referent.⁵⁵ Scott describes a parable as employing “a short narrative fiction to reference a symbol” and argues that symbols are not to be domesticated into codes.⁵⁶ Ivor H. Jones discusses the emblematic character of metaphors such as rock and shepherd, which draw a wide range of possible associations into relationship with each other.⁵⁷ Mary Ann Tolbert argues that the involvement of interpreters in making meaning of a parable from their particular context and perspective renders parables inherently polyvalent, with the multiplication of meaning *ad infinitum* limited by the need for interpretations to preserve the integrity of the story as a whole.⁵⁸ Charles Hedrick calls parables “poetic fictions” and considers them “polysemous” because “making meaning is always the responsibility of the reader.”⁵⁹ Crossan discusses the dynamic interaction of the metaphorical, narrative, para-

53. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 16.

54. Paul Ricoeur, “Biblical Hermeneutics,” *Semeia* 4 (1975): 27–148 (30, 75); see also Donahue, *The Gospel in Parable*, 11; Ivor H. Jones, *The Matthean Parables: A Literary and Historical Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 101; Ricoeur, “Biblical Hermeneutics,” 134–35.

55. Norman Perrin, *The Kingdom of God in the Teaching of Jesus* (London: SPCK, 1963), 31, 55–56; Perrin, *Jesus and the Language of the Kingdom: Symbol and Metaphor in New Testament Interpretation*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 99–100, 128–29, 135–36.

56. Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 8, 56–61.

57. Jones, *Matthean Parables*, 65, 117–18, 188 (rock), 255 (shepherd).

58. Tolbert, *Perspectives on the Parables*, 39–50, 71.

59. Charles W. Hedrick, *The Parables as Poetic Fiction: The Creative Voice of Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 79–80; Hendrick, *Many Things in Parables*, 36–44,

doxical, and polyvalent nature of parables in publications that span more than four decades.⁶⁰

The lasting influence of this period of intense literary analysis of the parables of Jesus is to view them as stories, that is, short narrative fictions with a beginning, middle, and end.⁶¹ If parables are realistic fictions,⁶² understanding both what would be mundane and what would be shocking to first-century Jews enhances the impact of the story. Sociohistorical context is important when attempting to consider parables from the perspective of the authorial audience of the gospel in which they appear.⁶³ As Luise Schottroff states, "the relationship between parable narrative and the social world needs to be investigated."⁶⁴

In the 1980s and 1990s, a focus on reading parables in their social setting and cultural context developed. An early example was Kenneth Bailey's literary-cultural approach, which considers parables from the perspective of twentieth-century Middle Eastern peasants.⁶⁵ Scott structured his book according to the social spaces of the ancient world rather than literary form or theological meaning.⁶⁶ Certain aspects of the sociocultural context of the gospels are more relevant to particular parables, such as agricultural practices for the parable of the tenants (Matt 22:33–46), urban social relations for the parable of the great banquet (Luke 14:15–24), and wedding customs for the parable of the ten virgins (Matt 25:1–13).⁶⁷

77–88; Hedrick, *Parabolic Figures or Narrative Fictions? Seminal Essays on the Stories of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), 234–35.

60. Crossan, *In Parables*; Crossan, *Dark Interval*, 47–106; Crossan, *The Power of Parable*.

61. Hedrick, *Many Things in Parables*, 10, 77; Crossan, *Power of Parable*, 8. Story features in the titles of several recent books about parables: Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*; Stephen I. Wright, *Jesus the Storyteller* (London: SPCK, 2014); Amy-Jill Levine, *Short Stories by Jesus: The Enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi* (New York: Harper One, 2014); Ernest van Eck, *Parables of Jesus the Galilean: Stories of a Social Prophet*, Matrix—the Bible in Mediterranean Context 9 (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016).

62. Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 106–48.

63. Warren Carter and John Paul Heil, *Matthew's Parables: Audience-Oriented Perspectives* (Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1998), 42.

64. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 103.

65. Kenneth Bailey, *Poet and Peasant and Through Peasant Eyes: A Literary-Cultural Approach to the Parables in Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983).

66. Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, vii–x. Part 2 is "Family, Village, City and Beyond," part 3 is "Masters and Servants," and part 4 is "Home and Farm."

67. V. George Shillington, ed., *Jesus and His Parables: Interpreting the Parables of Jesus Today* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997); Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 279–349; Richard

Social-scientific studies of parables apply models of the social world of the gospels, such as honor-shame contests, patron-client relationships, kinship patterns, and gender differentiation.⁶⁸ Concurrent to situating parables within social dynamics of the New Testament world, there has also been an increasing emphasis on setting gospel parables in their first-century Jewish context, including the sociolinguistic tradition of the *mashal* in the Hebrew Bible and king-*mashal* in the rabbinic tradition.⁶⁹

Moving into the twenty-first century, there is increased recognition of the role of the interpreter's own social location and ideological perspective. This has led both to the critique of certain ideologies in parables and parable interpretation and also to new insights gained by interpreting parables from particular perspectives, such as liberationist or feminist.⁷⁰ John Kloppenborg begins his thorough exploration of the parable of the tenants by considering the ideology evident in the synoptic versions and various interpretations of this parable.⁷¹ William Herzog argues that the parables of Jesus are a coded social analysis of the exploitation of the poor—earthy

L. Rohrbaugh, "The Pre-industrial City in Luke-Acts: Urban Social Relations," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. Jerome Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 133–46.

68. Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); Eck systematically applies social-scientific models to parables in Luke's Gospel (*Parables of Jesus the Galilean*); Jerome H. Neyrey, *Render to God: New Testament Understandings of the Divine* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 68–78.

69. Brad H. Young, *Jesus and His Jewish Parables: Rediscovering the Roots of Jesus' Teaching* (New York: Paulist, 1989); Young, *The Parables: Jewish Tradition and Christian Interpretation* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1998); Levine, *Short Stories by Jesus*; Stern, *Parables in Midrash*; David Flusser, *Die rabbinischen Gleichnisse und der Gleichniserzähler Jesus* (Bern: Lang, 1981); Harvey K. McArthur and Robert M. Johnston, *They Also Taught in Parables: Rabbinic Parables from the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990); Reuven Kiperwasser, "A Bizarre Invitation to the King's Banquet: The Metamorphosis of a Parable Tradition and the Transformation of an Eschatological Idea," *Proof* 33 (2013): 147–81.

70. For the former, see Tania Oldenhage, *Parables for Our Time: Rereading New Testament Scholarship after the Holocaust* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Sharon H. Ringe, "Solidarity and Contextuality: Readings of Matthew 18:21–35," in *Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*, vol. 1 of *Reading from This Place*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1995), 199–212. For the latter, see Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 1.

71. Kloppenborg, *Tenants*, 7–49.

stories with a heavy meaning more than earthly stories with a heavenly meaning.⁷² Schottroff employs many methods in her liberationist and feminist approach to the parables of Jesus, which leads her to conclude that the king in the parable of the royal wedding feast does not represent God.⁷³ Some studies focus on the history of parables interpretation, observing variations that relate to the ideological and theological focus of the time.⁷⁴

Every reading of a parable is influenced by the reader and what he or she carries in his or her “theological knapsack.”⁷⁵ Besides whatever presuppositions an interpreter brings to a parable, most readers expect that, as sacred text, a parable reveals some aspect of God or the dominion of heaven.⁷⁶ Joseph Nalpathilchira argues that the parable of the royal wedding feast is primarily revelatory in nature, revealing God as both king and father, “the protagonist of salvation and as the eschatological judge.”⁷⁷ In *The Parables after Jesus: Their Imaginative Receptions across Two Millennia*, David Gowler shows how parables have engaged the hearts and fired the imaginations of artists, preachers, poets, and prophets.⁷⁸ They challenge both professors and pew-sitters to evaluate personal priorities and perspectives and to change behavior and attitudes accordingly.

In summary, interpreters approach parables from a variety of perspectives, often employing more than one method to do so.

In *Puzzling the Parables of Jesus*, Zimmermann employs multiple methods in his analysis of parables, grouping them into three phases: first, historical approaches that focus on the origin of the text and the world of the author; second, literary approaches that focus on narrative or other aspects of the text itself; and, third, audience-oriented approaches

72. Herzog, *Parables as Subversive Speech*, 3.

73. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 1–4.

74. Warren S. Kissinger, *The Parables of Jesus: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow, 1979); Stephen L. Wailes, *Medieval Allegories of Jesus' Parables* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987); Richard Lischer, *Reading the Parables*, Interpretation Series (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2014), 151–66.

75. Hedrick uses this phrase in his critique of the religious categories Snodgrass uses to group parables in *Stories with Intent (Parabolic Figures or Narrative Fictions)*, 236.

76. Zimmermann, *Puzzling*, 207.

77. Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready*, 366.

78. David B. Gowler, *The Parables after Jesus: Their Imaginative Receptions across Two Millennia* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017).

that focus on the role of the hearer or reader in interpreting and receiving the text.⁷⁹ This threefold pattern of parable interpretation mirrors developments in modes of biblical interpretation more generally during the twentieth century. Fernando Segovia summarizes these as three paradigms of biblical interpretation: the historical, where the text is a means of conveying the theological message of the author; the literary, where the text is the medium of communication between author and audience; and the cultural and ideological, where the text is both the message and the medium of communication.⁸⁰

Via explored both their literary and existential dimension, Bailey developed a literary-cultural approach, and Jones wrote a literary and historical commentary on the Matthean parables. In the *Feasting on the Gospels* commentary, the theological, pastoral, exegetical, and homiletical perspectives of the parable of the royal wedding feast as understood by four different scholars are presented side by side.⁸¹

History of Interpretation of ἔνδυμα γάμου

The parable of the royal wedding feast has a rich history of interpretation.⁸²

Parris discusses three intertwined foci: polemical-theological interpretation, concerned with whether the king represents God; ethnic-ethical interpretation, concerned with whether the groups in the parable represent different races (Jew or gentile) or the quality of moral behavior; and soteriological interpretation, concerned with the significance of the wedding garment.⁸³ My particular interest is the third focus, the required wedding clothing, due to the dire consequences of not wearing wedding

79. Zimmermann, *Puzzling*, 13–15.

80. Fernando Segovia, “‘And They Began to Speak in Other Tongues’: Contemporary Modes of Discourse in Contemporary Biblical Criticism,” in *Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*, vol. 1 of *Reading from This Place*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 1–34.

81. See “Matt 22:1–14,” in *Feasting on the Gospels: Matthew*, ed. Cynthia A. Jarvis and Elizabeth Johnson, vol. 2, *Feasting on the Word Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2013), 182–87, which includes a “Theological Perspective” (Cynthia A. Jarvis), a “Pastoral Perspective” (David Lewicki), an “Exegetical Perspective” (Cynthia Biggs Kittredge), and a “Homiletical Perspective” (Sally A. Brown).

82. Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready*, 19–78.

83. David Paul Parris, *Reception Theory and Biblical Hermeneutics*, Princeton Theological Monograph Series 107 (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2009), 225.

attire.⁸⁴ The phrase *ἔνδυμα γάμου* (wedding clothing) appears only in the parable of the royal wedding feast (Matt 22:11–12), with no occurrences elsewhere in the New Testament. Despite this rarity, the wedding-clothing imagery has been a source of illustration and reflection by preachers and theologians over the centuries. Interpretations of the wedding clothing in this parable tend to show traces of the theological debates of their times.⁸⁵

Early Church Debate: Does *ἔνδυμα γάμου* Symbolize Baptism?

In the patristic period, the relationship between *ἔνδυμα γάμου* (Matt 22:11–14) and baptism was explored in association with repentance, faith, works of righteousness, love, the Holy Spirit, and Christ.⁸⁶ One of the clearest associations of the wedding clothing with baptism appears in *Homily 8* of those attributed to Clement:

the Father celebrating the marriage of his Son, has ordered us, through the Prophet of the truth, to come into the partings of the ways, that is, to you, and to invest you with the clean wedding-garment, which is baptism, which is for the remission of the sins done by you, and to bring the good to the supper of God by repentance, although at the first they were left out of the banquet. (*The Clementine Homilies* 8.22 [ANF 8:274])

Tertullian expresses concern that “faith even after baptism would be endangered,” and he depicts the loss of previously attained salvation as happening “through soiling the wedding-dress, through failing to provide oil for their torchlets” (*Scorp.* 6 [ANF 1:393]).⁸⁷ In *Concerning Repentance*, Ambrose describes the wedding garment as “the vestment of charity, the veil of grace” in his use of the imagery of the parable of the royal wedding feast to criticize Novatian for placing an unbearably heavy burden on his followers rather than the light yoke of Christ, “polluting them with the stain of a reiterated baptism” (*Paen.* 1.7.30 [NPNF² 10:334]). The *Procat-*

84. Marianne Blickenstaff, *‘While the Bridegroom Is with Them’: Marriage, Family, Gender and Violence in the Gospel of Matthew* (London: T&T Clark, 2005), 70–71.

85. Parris, *Reception Theory*, 216–74.

86. Parris, *Reception Theory*, 237; Davies and Allison list Ps-Clementine, Tertullian, Hilary, and Cyril of Jerusalem as examples of association of the wedding garment with baptism (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:205 n. 97).

87. Cf. Tertullian, *Marc.* 27.2 (ANF 3:563), where the wedding garment refers to “sanctity of the flesh” based on association with the book of Revelation.

echesis to the *Catechetical Lectures* of Cyril of Jerusalem suggests that the man who entered without appropriate wedding clothing should at least have observed the others clad in white and then departed until the right season for him to enter—presumably at baptism (*Procat.* 3 [NPNF² 7:1–2]). Hilary of Poitiers may be referring to the questions asked in the baptismal rite when he states: “The wedding garment represents the glory of the Holy Spirit, the radiance of the heavenly garments worn by those whose confession to the good question is permanently reserved immaculate and whole in the assembly of the kingdom of Heaven.”⁸⁸

Similarly, Irenaeus associates the wedding garment with the Holy Spirit and immortal body; however, his focus is on works of righteousness:

Still further did He also make it manifest, that we ought, after our calling, to be also adorned with works of righteousness, so that the Spirit of God may rest upon us; for this is the wedding garment, of which also the apostle speaks, “Not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up by immortality.” But those who have indeed been called to God’s supper, yet have not received the Holy Spirit, because of their wicked conduct “shall be,” He declares, “cast into outer darkness.” (Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4.36.6 [ANF 1:517])

Several early Christian scholars associate the wedding clothing with good works, although their interpretations are not limited to one possible meaning for the wedding clothing.⁸⁹ Origen’s many meanings of the wedding clothing include “the heart of compassion,” putting on Christ, growth of faith, godliness, mercy, kindness, humility, and gentleness, as well as good works (Origen, *Comm. Matt.* 17).⁹⁰ John Chrysostom describes the garment as “life and practice” (*Hom. Matt.* 69.2).⁹¹ Jerome includes the imagery of being clothed as a new person, which may have allusions to baptism: “The wedding garments are the Lord’s commands and the works that are fulfilled from the Law and the Gospel. They

88. St. Hilary of Poitiers, *Commentary on Matthew*, trans. D. H. Williams, FC (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 233.

89. Luz, *Matthew* 21–28, 58.

90. Discussed in Parris, *Reception Theory*, 237–39; Luz, *Matthew* 21–28, 58; Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 70.

91. *The Homilies of S. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople: On the Gospel of St. Matthew*, trans. Frederick Field and George Provost (London: John Henry Parker, 1853), 932.

become the clothing of the new man ... the garment of the heavenly man from above."⁹²

Augustine associates the lack of a wedding garment with the exposure of "barrenness in all good works" at the final judgment (*Gest. Pelag.* 11 [NPNF1 5:187]). Both he and Gregory the Great consider the wedding garment to be more representative of agape love than baptism, since baptism is needed to gain entry, and the person without wedding clothes has already entered (Augustine, *Serm.* 40.5–6 [NPNF1 6:392–396]; Gregory the Great, *Hom.* 38).⁹³ Augustine details his search of the scriptures for the wedding garment, consulting Pauline epistles to argue that love is what is essential (*Serm.* 45.7 [NPNF1 6:407]). He also alludes to Matt 25 by drawing on the imagery of needing to clothe others in order to be clothed oneself (*Serm.* 45.7 [NPNF1 6:408]). Gregory poses the rhetorical question, "What then must we understand by the wedding garment but love?" (*Hom.* 38.9)⁹⁴

Writing in the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas suggests that although lacking charity itself does not merit punishment, "a person incurs demerit because that person does something that blocks charity, whether by omission or commission" (Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil* 5.8).⁹⁵ In his commentary on Matthew's Gospel, Aquinas answers the question of what the wedding clothing is with a single word: "Christ."⁹⁶ He then draws on Pauline clothing imagery associated with baptism (Rom 13:14, Gal 3:27, and Col 3:15).

In the first centuries of the church, discussions about the meaning of the wedding garment tended to gravitate around the relationship of this clothing to baptism. Even though Augustine and Gregory argue that the wedding clothing represents love (charity), baptism features in their discussions. Centuries later,

92. St. Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew*, trans. Thomas P. Scheck, FC 117 (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 250.

93. Gregory the Great, "Homily 38," in *Forty Gospel Homilies*, trans. David Horst (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian, 1990), 347; see also Parris, *Reception Theory*, 241; Gowler, *Parables after Jesus*, 40–44, 66–70.

94. Manlio Simonetti, ed., *Matthew 14–28*, vol. 1b of *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, ed. Thomas C. Oden (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 146; Parris, *Reception Theory*, 241.

95. Thomas Aquinas, *On Evil*, ed. Brian Davies, trans. Richard Regan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 113.

96. See Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:204 n. 54; Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 58; Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 71.

Aquinas also draws on baptismal imagery for the wedding clothing, although he considers the central importance to be that it represents Christ.

Reformation Debate: ἔνδυμα γάμου, Faith or Works or Both?

During the reformation, Calvin developed the imagery of the wedding clothing representing putting on Christ by describing the ἔνδυμα γάμου as sanctification; that is, the person who is not wearing wedding clothing has professed faith and is therefore justified but has failed to put off his or her old polluted self to put on Christ and thus is not sanctified.⁹⁷

At this time, there was some discussion regarding whether ἔνδυμα γάμου represented faith or good works. Luther considers the wedding garment to be faith: “faith, which puts on the righteousness of Christ, is the true wedding garment. It is active through love, and does the works of love.”⁹⁸ Zwingli also relates the wedding clothing to faith expressed in action, suggesting that the one cast out was not clothed in deeds of faith but wore “only the name of Christ.”⁹⁹ Calvin does not prioritize either faith over works or works over faith: “there is no point in arguing about the wedding garment, whether it is faith or a holy and godly life; for faith cannot be separated from good works and good works proceed only from faith” (Calvin, *Institutes* 2.109).¹⁰⁰ The Catholic exegete John Maldonatus questioned the reformers’ emphasis on salvation by faith, arguing that the ἔνδυμα γάμου represents good works.¹⁰¹

Modern Debate: Is ἔνδυμα γάμου Provided by the Host?

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a number of Protestant commentators made a case for the royal host’s providing the ἔνδυμα γάμου.¹⁰²

97. Parris, *Reception Theory*, 264; Richard T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 313; Jarvis et al., “Matthew 22:1–14,” 184–86.

98. Martin Luther, *The Churchbook: Matthew 13–28*, vol. 2 of *Matthew: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 390, Frederick Dale Bruner provides an English translation of this citation from the collected works of Luther known as *Weimarer Ausgabe* 39.1:265, 5.

99. Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 58.

100. Quoted in Bruner, *Churchbook*, 390.

101. Parris, *Reception Theory*, 267–71.

102. Phillip Doddridge, *The Family Expositor: A Paraphrase and Version of the New Testament with Critical Notes*, vol. 2 (London: J. Waugh, 1745), 337; Richard

Thomas Whittemore writes of the Turkish court of his day, "At the entertainment of the Grand Vizier to Lord Elgin, and his suite, in the palace of the seraglio, pelisses were given to all the guests."¹⁰³ George W. Clark reports that Chardin, who travelled to Persia in the seventeenth century, "mentions a vizier who lost his life for not appearing before his sovereign, a Persian king, in a robe that had been sent to him for the purpose."¹⁰⁴ He describes the royal marriage of the Sultan Mahmoud, who, he reports, had wedding clothing made for every guest, regardless of their social status, and expected it to be worn in his presence.¹⁰⁵ Clark considers that because "eastern manners change so little, it is likely that such customs existed in the days of our Saviour, and long before."¹⁰⁶

Already in the mid-nineteenth century, Heinrich Meyer noted that there was insufficient evidence that the custom of "presenting handsome caftans to those admitted to the presence of royalty" was prevalent in first-century Palestine.¹⁰⁷ He names Michaelis and Olshausen as expositors who were inclined to stress this custom because "such a custom is calculated to make it appear with greater prominence that righteousness is a free gift, and that, consequently, man's sin is much the more heinous."¹⁰⁸ The assumption that the host would provide festive clothes for a special occasion has persisted in some twentieth-century parable interpretation.¹⁰⁹

Hawker, *The Poor Man's Concordance and Dictionary to the Sacred Scriptures, Both the Old and New Testaments* (London: Ebenezer Palmer, 1828), 519; Andrew Cameron, *Family Treasury of Sunday Reading* (London: Thomas Nelson, 1870), 539–40.

103. Thomas Whittemore, *Notes and Illustrations of the Parables of the New Testament: Arranged according to the Time in Which They Were Spoken*, rev. ed. (Boston: Universalist, 1832), 290–91.

104. George W. Clark, *Notes on the Gospel of Matthew; Explanatory and Practical, A Popular Commentary on a Critical Basis, Especially Designed for Pastors and Sunday Schools* (New York: U. D. Ward, Agent, 1870), 302.

105. Clark, *Notes on the Gospel of Matthew*, 302. Similar statements are found in "The Wedding Garment," in *The British Friend: A Monthly Journal Devoted to the Interests of the Society of Friends* 23–24 (1865): 230; William H. Groser, *Biblical Treasury: A Collection of Scripture Illustration and Criticism, for the Use of Sunday School Teachers and Bible Students*, vol. 1–2, New Series (London: Sunday School Union, 1870), 195.

106. Clark, *Notes*, 302.

107. Heinrich August Wilhelm Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Hand-Book to the Gospel of Matthew*, 6th ed., trans. Peter Christie (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1858), 376.

108. Meyer, *Gospel of Matthew*, 376, emphasis original.

109. Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 2nd ed., trans.

Among social-scientific interpreters, Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh state that the royal host would have provided garments for the nonelite coming to his banquet, whereas Jerome Neyrey more tentatively notes that “it appears” that the king supplied wedding garments for the guests (Matt 22:11–12).¹¹⁰

The wedding clothing of Matt 22:11–13 is often associated with clean clothing, especially when similarities with a rabbinic parable (b. Shabb. 153a; Midr. Qoh 9.8) are stressed.¹¹¹ In this parable, guests need to be ready and waiting in clean clothes in order to enter a king’s banquet.¹¹² In this context, Jeremias describes the wedding garment as repentance, fulfilment of the commandments, good works, and the study of torah.¹¹³ Matthew Keener cites Jeremias when he states, “Matthew leaves no doubt as to the interpretation: the wedding garment signifies repentance (3:2; 4:17).”¹¹⁴ Jeremias, however, favors associating *ἐνδυμα γάμου* with Isa 61:10, “God clothes the redeemed with the wedding garment of salvation,”¹¹⁵ because there are several citations from Isa 61 elsewhere in the gospels (Matt 5:3, 11:5; Luke 4:18, 7:22). He notes references to eschatological clothing in apocalyptic literature (1 En. 62.15; Rev 3:4, 5, 18; 19:8) and that the forgiving father provides clothing for his prodigal son (Luke 15:22).¹¹⁶ Jeremias concludes: “God offers you the clean garment of forgiveness and imputed righteousness.”¹¹⁷ He speaks of the “king” providing the clothing in the parable of the royal wedding feast in an allegorical sense, but not in terms of social custom of the time.

John Marsh (Oxford: Blackwell, 1968), 202; W. Selwyn Dawson, “The Gate Crasher,” *ExpTim* 85 (1974): 304–6; Simon Kistemaker, *The Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 101; Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, NAC 22 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 328–29.

110. Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 135; Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 60.

111. William Barclay, *The Parables of Jesus* (repr., Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999), 158–61.

112. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 188.

113. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 188.

114. Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 522.

115. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 188–89.

116. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 188–89.

117. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 189.

Currently, most scholars believe that there is insufficient evidence that first-century hosts provided clothing for their guests at festive occasions and therefore describe the wedding clothing required in the parable of the royal wedding feast as simply clean and neat attire.¹¹⁸ J. Duncan M. Derrett states that the wedding garment "could have meant nothing other than clean, preferably white clothes."¹¹⁹ He and Snodgrass argue the replacement guests in the parable of the royal wedding feast (Matt 22:9–10) would have had time to prepare themselves by dressing in appropriate clothing because they were not compelled to come immediately (cf. Luke 14:15–24).¹²⁰ Jan Lambrecht describes such a lack of preparation for attendance at a royal wedding as "incomprehensible carelessness."¹²¹ The need for appropriate preparation evokes the exhortations to be ready for the return of the Son of Man in the Eschatological Discourse (Matt 24–25) but does not attend to the narrative flow of the parable itself. The king sends out for replacement guests because the meal is ready now (22:8–9), which, like Luke's parable of the great banquet (14:15–24), evokes a sense of urgency.

The argument that the wedding clothing symbolizes appropriate preparation places the onus on the individual to make appropriate preparation before coming into the presence of a ruler (see Gen 41:14), especially the divine king at the moment of eschatological judgment.¹²² This implies taking personal moral responsibility for action and inaction in life, a theme of Matthew's Gospel.¹²³ Luz goes so far as to classify the argument that the host would have provided wedding robes for guests as "exegetically untenable" in a Matthean context.¹²⁴ This assessment has been noted by several scholars.¹²⁵

118. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 187; Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:204; Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 59–60; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 522; Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew*, trans. David E. Green (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1975), 417.

119. John Duncan M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1970), 142; Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 30, 187.

120. Derrett, *Law*, 154; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 341.

121. Jan Lambrecht, *Out of the Treasure: Parables in the Gospel of Matthew* (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 210.

122. Derrett, *Law*, 154; Bruner, *Churchbook*, 391; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 341.

123. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 66; Jones, *Matthean Parables*, 75.

124. Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 58–59.

125. Bruner, *Churchbook*, 391; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 826; Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready*, 152.

Twentieth-Century Debate: Pauline Imagery or Matthean Themes?

Early in the twentieth century, Allen described the wedding garment in relation to several Matthean themes: righteousness (5:20), doing the will of the Father (7:11), moral qualifications (18:3), and confession of Christ before others (10:32).¹²⁶ By the end of the twentieth century, most interpreters were looking for a metaphorical meaning of *ἐνδυμα γάμου* within Matthew's narrative rather than by the association of the verb *ἐνδύω* with being clothed with Christ (Rom 13:14, Gal 3:27), baptism (Gal 3:27–29), or the new self (Col 3:12). For example, Donahue concludes that the wedding garment stands for Christian life, being “properly clothed with the deeds of Christian discipleship,” as evident in Matt 25:31–46.¹²⁷ He arrives at this conclusion by using Pauline clothing imagery, whereas Frederick Bruner argues that “‘a wedding garment’ in the context of Matthew’s Gospel is not passive and imputed (Pauline) righteousness; it is active, moral, Matthean righteousness (5:20),”¹²⁸ which involves doing the will of the Father and engaging in law-abiding discipleship (3:7–10). The wedding garment as a symbol of righteousness is also found in Blaine Charette’s stressing the need for “better righteousness and perfection” and John Nolland’s emphasizing the need for “abundant righteousness” (5:20).¹²⁹

Linking righteousness to the preceding parable, which concerns producing fruit (21:41, 43), the *ἐνδυμα γάμου* is also described as “fruit of righteousness.”¹³⁰ Robert Gundry uses the phrase “evidential works of righteousness.”¹³¹ Scott describes the man without a wedding garment as

126. W. C. Allen describes the wedding garment in relation to Matthean themes, including chapter-verse references: righteousness (5:20), doing the will of God (7:11), moral qualifications (18:3), and confession of Christ before others (10:32). See Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 236.

127. Donahue, *Gospel in Parable*, 95–96.

128. Bruner, *Churchbook*, 390, emphasis original.

129. Blaine Charette, *The Theme of Recompense in Matthew’s Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1992), 149; John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 891.

130. Allan W. Martens, “‘Produce Fruit Worthy of Repentance’: Parables of Judgment against the Jewish Religious Leaders and the Nation,” in *The Challenge of Jesus Parables*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 165.

131. Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 439.

being “without the fruits of the kingdom,” where the need for such fruit is most evident in the judgment scene of Matt 25:31–46.¹³²

An association between the expulsion of the person not wearing an ἔνδυμα γάμου and the final judgment scene (Matt 25:31–46) can be traced back to the homilies of Augustine and Gregory the Great. Augustine recommends clothing the naked, thereby clothing Christ and by doing this receiving the wedding garment from him (*Serm.* 45.7 [NPNF¹ 6:408]). Gregory considers the binding of feet and hands in Matt 22:13 to be eschatological punishment for the feet that never bothered to visit the sick and the hands that gave nothing to the needy.¹³³

In recent scholarship, the wedding clothing tends to be associated with giving to the needy and doing good works. Lambrecht asserts that “the way Christians weave their wedding garment for the messianic banquet” is by reaching out to those in need.¹³⁴ Luz concludes that in the context of Matthew's Gospel, the wedding garment symbolizes good works, as does Brendan Byrne.¹³⁵ Jones considers good works a particularly fitting understanding of the ἔνδυμα γάμου given the Matthean association of king, kingdom, and righteousness.¹³⁶ Anders Runesson describes the wedding clothing as a “metaphor for one's deeds,” which represents the fulfilment of Jewish Law on three levels: external, verbal, and internal.¹³⁷

The ἔνδυμα γάμου as Eschatological Reward for the Righteous

The interpretation of ἔνδυμα γάμου as righteous actions has resonances with Rev 19:8, where the fine linen worn by the bride is the righteous deeds of the saints.¹³⁸ Like Jeremias, Davies and Allison look to apocalyptic literature to “equate the wedding garment with the resurrection body or its garment of glory,” which is often depicted as luminous or angelic (Matt 13:43).¹³⁹ Davies and Allison observe that in apocalyptic literature, not

132. Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 162–63.

133. Wailes, *Medieval Allegories*, 159.

134. Lambrecht, *Out of the Treasure*, 140.

135. Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 59; Brendan Byrne, *Lifting the Burden* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), 181.

136. Jones, *Matthean Parables*, 406.

137. Anders Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew: The Narrative World of the First Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 170–72, 188.

138. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:204

139. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:204.

only was the fallen angel Asael (also known as Azazel) bound hand and foot and thrown into the outer darkness (1 En. 10.4–5; cf. Matt 22:13), but he also forfeited his heavenly raiment, which is then given to Abraham (Apoc. Ab. 13.14).¹⁴⁰ They argue that Matt 22:11–14 counters the complacency and superiority associated with the self-satisfaction of insiders who see themselves as the elect.¹⁴¹ Similarly, Warren Carter suggests this incident leaves “little room for smugness and rejoicing.”¹⁴²

The ἔνδυμα γάμου as Honoring the King, but Is the King God?

Since Irenaeus and Origen argued, against the Valentinians, that the king in the parable of the royal wedding feast represents the God of both the Old and New Testaments,¹⁴³ almost all interpretations of the ἔνδυμα γάμου assume that the king throughout the parable of the royal wedding feast represents God. The lack of wedding clothing is considered an indication of contempt for the king as not wearing clean clothes fails to give him due honor.¹⁴⁴ Carter argues that even though the Gospel of Matthew offers a critique of the Roman Empire, the imperial paradigm “has been internalized, absorbed, and assumed by this gospel’s traditions, communities, and author,”¹⁴⁵ as is evident in both Matthean parables with a βασιλεύς as the main narrative agent (18:23–35, 22:1–14).

Both Schottroff and Marianne Blickenstaff make cases for resistant readings of the parable of the royal wedding feast, considering it a depic-

140. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:206; David C. Sim, “Matthew 22.13a and 1 Enoch 10.4a: A Case of Literary Dependence?,” *JSNT* 47 (1992): 3–19; Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:206. Davies and Allison note that 4QEn Giants 7 i identifies the fallen angel Asael with Azazel of Lev 16, and on page 206 they refer to this fallen angel as Azazel (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:99).

141. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:208.

142. Warren Carter, “Resisting and Imitating the Empire: Imperial Paradigms in Two Matthean Parables,” *Int* 56.3 (2002): 271.

143. Parris, *Reception Theory*, 223–28.

144. Richard Bauckham, “The Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast (Matthew 22:1–14) and the Parable of the Lame Man and the Blind Man (*Apocryphon of Ezekiel*),” *JBL* 115.3 (2006): 485–87; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 522; Carter, “Resisting and Imitating the Empire,” 271.

145. Carter, “Resisting and Imitating the Empire,” 272.

tion of the reality of life under despotic rulers of the time.¹⁴⁶ Schottroff argues that the king in this parable represents such a despotic ruler that the parable ends with an implicit “but God does not act this way.”¹⁴⁷ Blickenstaff notes that in Matthew's Gospel, kings and rulers are associated with tyranny and violence (2:16, 22; 4:8–9; 14:3–11; 20:25; 27:15–29), and therefore the rewards for enduring and remaining faithful to the kingdom of heaven in the face of such oppressive worldly rulers are stressed (5:10–12, 10:39, 11:28–30, 16:24–27, 19:29).¹⁴⁸ In this context, the person without the wedding clothing might be demonstrating allegiance to the kingdom of heaven, in which one is encouraged to give away clothing (5:40), and not to worry about what to wear (6:25) or what to say before the king (10:19).¹⁴⁹ Blickenstaff suggests that the individual without wedding clothing could be fulfilling the role of a true disciple of Jesus by resisting oppressive powers and therefore counted among the few chosen.¹⁵⁰ The Matthean Jesus certainly addresses disciples, whom he warns of oppression in the midst of which they are to remain faithful (e.g., Matt 5:10–12), but his primary audience for the parable of the royal wedding feast is the religious leadership in Jerusalem, whom he portrays as oppressors who inflict heavy burdens on others (Matt 23:4).

Twenty-First-Century Interpretation of ἔνδυμα γάμου

In *Everything Is Ready, Come to the Marriage Banquet: The Parable of the Invitation to the Royal Marriage Banquet (Matt 22,1–14) in the Context of Matthew's Gospel*, Nalpathilchira argues that the wedding clothing represents single-minded preference for the reign of heaven, exemplified by Jesus's life of obedience to the will of the Father.¹⁵¹ He concludes his discussion of the ἔνδυμα γάμου with the following words:

Therefore, we shall say that the wedding garment is a clean garment; symbolically, an embroidered garment made up of a collection of precious jewels, such as conversion, producing fruits, righteousness, doing

146. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 38–48; Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 46–77.

147. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 48.

148. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 52, 48; Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 52, 49.

149. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 50.

150. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 44, 76.

151. Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready*, 234.

the will of the Father, faith, love, etc., the categories dear to the First Evangelist, and everything begins with a single-minded YES to the invitation given by the messengers of God.¹⁵²

This description of the wedding clothing appropriately incorporates several important themes from Matthew's Gospel, but the resultant imagery is dissonant with the Matthean context in at least five ways. First, it implies that the literal meaning of *ἐνδυμα γάμου* is clean clothing by contrasting it with a more detailed symbolic meaning.¹⁵³ Within Matthew's Gospel, however, Jesus does not promote the need for external cleanliness (see 23:25–26). Second, the imagery of embroidered robes evokes the implied criticism Jesus makes between those who wear fine clothes compared to John the Baptist (11:8). Third, the accumulation of “jewels” is discordant with the advice given in the Sermon on the Mount: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal” (6:19 NRSV). In both the first and final discourses of Matthew's Gospel, it is more important to give away clothing than to acquire it (5:40, 25:36). Fourth, Jesus criticizes the scribes and Pharisees who display their righteousness by making their “phylacteries broad and their fringes long” to be seen by others (23:5), so it seems incongruous to develop an image of the wedding garment required in the kingdom of heaven as one displaying publicly the jewels of righteousness and other worthy attributes. Fifth and finally, although I agree that all the “jewels” named by Nalpathilchira are important in Matthew's presentation of what is required in the kingdom of heaven, this list suggests that they are symbols of successful attainment of something like scout badges. If a full complement of jewels is necessary, then this list of requirements is so daunting that it does not encourage people to say “yes” to the invitation to come, which Nalpathilchira considers central to this parable. When jewels feature in the eschatological nuptial imagery of Isa 61:10, they are not markers of success, but symbols of joy associated with God clothing the one rejoicing with salvation and righteousness.

Nalpathilchira's description of *ἐνδυμα γάμου* illustrates three interpretation trends evident in recent scholarship on the parable of the royal wedding feast: first, the understanding of the wedding clothes as clean

152. Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready*, 234.

153. Nalpathilchira refers to literal and figurative meanings (*Everything Is Ready*, 57).

clothes; second, the primacy given to Matthean themes; and third, the recognition of multiple possible meanings of the wedding clothing in Matt 22:11–13. I question the first trend of equating the wedding clothing with clean clothing but laud the other two trends. I believe that any interpretation of Matt 22:1–14, including my own, needs to cohere with major Matthean themes. In the immediate context of the parable of the royal wedding feast within Matthew's Gospel, Jesus places importance on doing the will of the Father (21:31), bearing the good fruit of the kingdom (21:41, 43), and loving God and neighbor wholeheartedly (22:36–40). Therefore, ἔνδυμα γάμου could be understood to symbolize any of these requirements. Righteousness is a major theme of Matthew's Gospel, so ἔνδυμα γάμου could also represent the need for greater righteousness (5:20), acts of righteousness (25:31–46), or the resurrection raiment of the righteous (13:43).¹⁵⁴

If one assumes parables are inherently polysemous,¹⁵⁵ many understandings of ἔνδυμα γάμου—righteousness, good fruit, repentance, love, good works, and obedience to the Father—are welcome at the interpretation table because each is true to the context and approach of the hearer or reader. Only readings with the potential to harm the marginalized and vulnerable would need to be cast out for the healing and well-being of the community. My thesis that the restraint and removal of the individual without wedding clothes in Matt 22:11–13 could be for the protection of vulnerable ones gradually emerged as I explored the various textures of the parable of the royal wedding feast.

“How” This Parable Is Explored: Sociorhetorical Interpretation

My exploration of the parable of the royal wedding feast (Matt 22:1–14) is guided by sociorhetorical interpretation (SRI) as outlined by Vernon Robbins in *Exploring the Textures of Texts*.¹⁵⁶ SRI provides a framework for approaching a parable from different perspectives by employing an

154. Charette, *The Theme of Recompense*, 149; Lambrecht, *Out of the Treasure*, 140; Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:204. Both Hultgren (*Parables of Jesus*, 347–48) and Snodgrass (*Stories with Intent*, 321) include this suggestion on their lists but do not discuss it in any detail.

155. Tolbert, *Perspectives on the Parables*, 39–50; Crossan, *Cliffs of Fall*, 1–24; Stein uses “polysignificant” (*Introduction to the Parables of Jesus*, 67).

156. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*.

appropriate methodology for each approach without subsuming one method into another.¹⁵⁷ To do this, one recognizes a biblical text as thickly textured material, with multiple webs of signification, so that it “looks different according to the different angles from which one approaches it.”¹⁵⁸ Robbins recommends approaching a biblical text from different perspectives to explore the inner texture and intertexture and sociocultural, ideological, and sacred textures of a biblical text.¹⁵⁹

A multimethod process of interpretation is particularly suitable for parables, which scholars approach from a variety of different perspectives, bringing different presuppositions and agendas to the text.

Sociorhetorical Interpretation: Exploring Textures of Texts

The advantages of using SRI are that this interpretative analytic is multidisciplinary and dialogical in nature.¹⁶⁰ SRI is not a method per se; rather, it provides an environment for exploring texts using multiple methods, with each discipline coming to the table of interpretation on an equal footing with the others. Robbins developed his form of sociorhetorical interpretation in response to the diversification of biblical interpretation in the late twentieth century.

157. Vernon K. Robbins, “Social-Scientific Criticism and Literary Studies: Prospects for Co-operation in Biblical Interpretation,” in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context*, ed. Philip F. Esler (London: Routledge, 1995), 274–89.

158. Vernon K. Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher: A Socio-rhetorical Interpretation of Mark* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1992), xxvii.

159. In *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, Robbins includes inner texture (7–39), intertexture (40–70), social and cultural texture (71–94), ideological texture (95–119), and sacred texture (120–31); In *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, Robbins includes inner texture (44–95), intertexture (96–143), social and cultural texture (144–91), and ideological texture (192–236), but not sacred texture.

160. See Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 11–13. This point is made in summary articles: Robbins, “Social-Scientific Criticism,” in *Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Steven L. MacKenzie, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 313; Robbins, “Socio-rhetorical Interpretation,” in *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament*, ed. David E. Aune (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 192–219; David B. Gowler, “Text, Culture, and Ideology in Luke 7:1–10: A Dialogic Reading,” in *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins*, ed. David B. Gowler, L. Gregory Bloomquist, and Duane F. Watson (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003), 89–125.

Gerd Theissen, Ben Witherington, and Keener also use the term *sociorhetorical criticism*, where the prefix *socio-* refers to the application of insights from ancient social history, and *rhetorical* refers to the study of Greco-Roman and Jewish rhetoric in relation to New Testament texts.¹⁶¹ Robbins's sociorhetorical interpretation is a more complex, "full-bodied" analysis, which, like Bakhtin's dialogical approach, recognizes the inescapable involvement of many voices.¹⁶² Robbins recommends approaching the text as "though it were a thickly textured tapestry" containing complex patterns and images that can be viewed from different perspectives, thereby exploring the webs of signification in a text like an anthropologist researches a village and its culture.¹⁶³

In the 1990s, Robbins developed the framework of textures analysis to provide an arena for bringing into conversation representatives of the different developments in New Testament interpretation, including social sciences and postmodern literary theory.¹⁶⁴ In Robbins's words,

161. Gerd Theissen, *Gospel Writing and Church Politics: A Socio-rhetorical Approach*, Chuen King Lecture Series 3 (Hong Kong: Chung Chi College, 2001); Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*; Ben Witherington, *What's in the Word: Rethinking the Socio-rhetorical Character of the New Testament* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 1.

162. David B. Gowler, "The End of the Beginning: The Continuing Maturation of Socio-rhetorical Analysis," in *Sea Voyages and Beyond: Emerging Strategies in Socio-rhetorical Interpretation*, by Vernon K. Robbins (Blandford Forum: Deo Publishing, 2010), 2–3; L. Gregory Bloomquist, "Eyes Wide Open Seeing Nothing: The Challenge of the Gospel of John's Nonvisualizable Texture for Reading Using Visual Texture," in *The Art of Visual Exegesis: Rhetoric, Texts, Images*, ed. Vernon K. Robbins, Walter S. Mellon, and Roy R. Jeal (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 121–67. Differences between Robbins's and Witherington's articulations of sociorhetorical criticism are discussed by David Aune (introduction to *Blackwell Companion to the New Testament*, ed. David E. Aune [Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010], 4); David Gowler, "Socio-rhetorical Interpretation: Textures of a Text and Its Reception," *JSNT* 33.2 (2010): 193; John S. Kloppenborg, "Ideological Texture in the Parable of the Tenants," in *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in Honor of Vernon K. Robbins*, ed. David B. Gowler, L. Gregory Bloomquist, and Duane F. Watson (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 64–88.

163. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 2; Robbins, *Sea Voyages and Beyond: Emerging Strategies in Socio-rhetorical Interpretation*, (Blandford Forum: Deo, 2010), 283.

164. Vernon K. Robbins, "Using Socio-rhetorical Poetics to Develop a Unified Method: The Woman Who Anointed Jesus as a Test Case," *Society of Biblical Literature 1992 Seminar Papers*, SBLSP 31 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1992), 302–19; Robbins, "Socio-rhetorical Criticism: Mary, Elizabeth and the Magnificat as a Test

In a context where historical criticism has been opening its boundaries to social and cultural data, and literary criticism has been opening boundaries to ideology, socio-rhetorical criticism practices interdisciplinary exegesis that reinvents the traditional steps of analysis and redraws the traditional boundaries of interpretation. Socio-rhetorical criticism, then, is an exegetically-oriented approach that gathers current practices of interpretation together in an interdisciplinary paradigm.¹⁶⁵

Robbins presents this interdisciplinary paradigm as a diagram. A simplified version is found in figure 2.¹⁶⁶

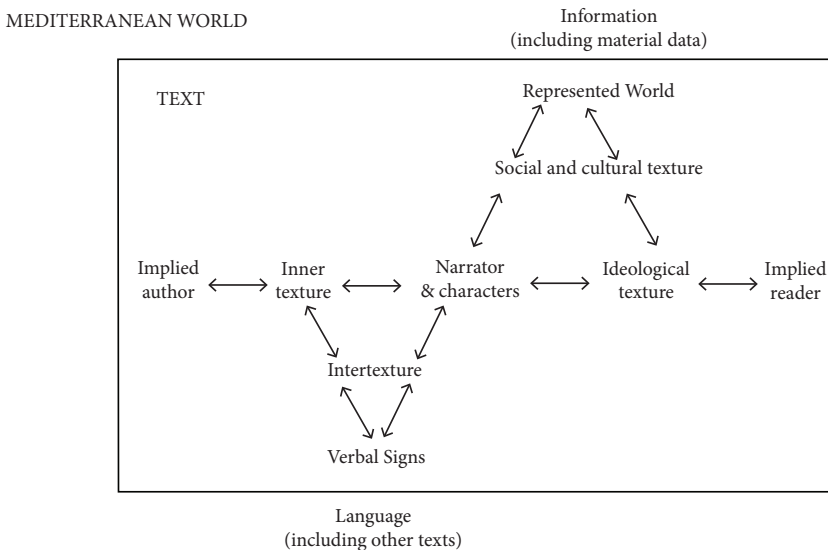


Fig. 2. Sociorhetorical Model of Textual Communication

Robbins argues that Crossan's literary criticism of the good Samaritan parable approaches the text from the bottom of the diagram with language

Case," in *The New Literary Criticism and the New Testament*, ed. Elizabeth Struthers Malbon and Edgar V. McKnight (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994), 164–209; Robbins, *Jesus the Teacher*, xxix.

165. Robbins, *Sea Voyages*, 283.

166. Robbins, "Social-Scientific Criticism and Literary Studies," 279; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 21, figure 2.1. In *Texture*, Robbins emphasizes inner texture elements in figure 2.2 (29), intertexture in figure 2.3 (31), social and cultural texture in figure 2.4 (35), and ideological texture in figure 2.6 (37).

as a game and literature as a system, whereas Rohrbaugh's social-scientific interpretation of Luke's great feast parable starts at the top of the diagram with the social world as a playing field and the urban world of preindustrial antiquity as a system.¹⁶⁷ Robbins argues that in his sociorhetorical model, neither discipline is subservient to the other. He advocates for mutual recognition of the advantages, assumptions, and limitations of each discipline in approaching biblical texts.¹⁶⁸

Robbins first applied a systematic textures analysis to the Magnificat by considering four textures: inner texture (every reading has a subtext), intertexture (every comparison has boundaries), social and cultural texture (every meaning has a context), and ideological texture (every theology has a politics).¹⁶⁹ The same four textures are discussed in his monograph *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse: Rhetoric, Society, and Ideology*. In *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, Robbins adds sacred texture, then, in guidebook style, outlines what is involved in analyzing texts according to each of the five textures. He recognizes good reasons for beginning with any one of the five textures, then advocates deepening analysis by exploring at least two other textures of the text being studied.¹⁷⁰

Each of the five textures described in *Exploring the Textures of Texts* includes several categories. Inner-texture analysis employs literary and narrative criticism to explore what Robbins calls repetitive, progressive, opening-middle-closing, narrational, argumentative, and sensory-aesthetic textures.¹⁷¹ Exploring repetitive and progressive texture patterns involves identifying patterns of repeated and related words. Identifying the opening-middle-closing texture of a text elucidates its literary structure. Analysis of the narrational texture invites consideration of whose voices are heard in the text. The argumentative texture concerns the construction of the rhetoric, that is, by what means the text seeks to persuade the audience. Robbins's sensory-aesthetic texture uses the tripartite body model proposed by Malina.

167. Robbins, "Social-Scientific Criticism and Literary Studies," 281–82.

168. Robbins, "Social-Scientific Criticism and Literary Studies," 285–86.

169. Robbins, "Socio-rhetorical Criticism: Mary"; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*.

170. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 5–6.

171. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 7–39; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 44–95.

Intertexture analysis includes oral-scribal, social, cultural, and historical intertextures.¹⁷² Oral-scribal intertexture concerns the recitation, recontextualization, reconfiguration, narrative amplification, and thematic elaboration of words also found in other texts, such as the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, and inscriptions and Greek, Roman, and Jewish literature, including apocalyptic writings.¹⁷³ Cultural intertexture concerns references to, allusions to, or echoes of cultural knowledge known only to people within a particular culture or through prolonged exposure to that culture.¹⁷⁴ Social intertexture concerns use, reference to, or representation of various forms of social knowledge, such as the social roles, institutions, and codes that every person in a given region would know through their daily interactions.¹⁷⁵ Historical intertexture concerns the description of historical events in a text and how this relates to data and descriptions of the event in other sources.¹⁷⁶

The analysis of social and cultural texture employs three social-scientific models.¹⁷⁷ Specific social topics, also called “social rhetoric,”¹⁷⁸ are based on Bryan Wilson’s typology of religious groups and their responses to the wider world. Common social and cultural topics are those associated with the social world of the first century, such as honor, patronage, kinship,

172. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 40–70; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 96–143; Vernon K. Robbins, “Socio-rhetorical Criticism,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Steven L. Mackenzie, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 312.

173. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 48–52; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 97–108, 121–22.

174. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 59, 60–62; Robbins considers the cultural intertexture of field, seed, growth, and harvest in Mark 4 in terms of Greco-Roman paideia (*Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 113–15).

175. Robbins identifies reference within 1 Cor 9 to six social roles in the Mediterranean world: soldier, vineyard planter, shepherd, plowman, thresher, and temple worker (*Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 127–28). Robbins further considers social institutions, such as the temple and the Roman practice of crucifixion, in Mark 15 (*Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 62–63).

176. Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 118–20, 124–27; Robbins considers the historical intertexture of people, places, institutions, and customs in Mark 15 (*Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 65–68).

177. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 71–94; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 144–91; Robbins, *Sea Voyages*, 145–81.

178. Robbins, *Sea Voyages*, 150–53.

and purity. Final cultural categories, also known as “cultural rhetoric,”¹⁷⁹ represent the extent to which the community represented by a New Testament text adheres to or counters the values of the dominant culture.

Ideological-texture analysis concerns the social location of the interpreter, group dynamics, modes of intellectual discourse, and ideology evident in authoritative traditions of interpretation as well as within the text itself.¹⁸⁰ Sacred-texture analysis considers the divine-human relations according to the following categories: deity, holy persons, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, religious community, and ethics.¹⁸¹ In *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, Robbins considers each of these sacred-texture categories within the six main belief systems (rhetorolects) he proposes as the basis of emergent Christian discourse.¹⁸²

Sociorhetorical Interpretation (SRI) in the Twenty-First Century

Since the publication of both *The Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse* and *Exploring the Textures of Texts* in 1996, further developments in SRI have included an emphasis on topoi; engagement with critical space theory, conceptual metaphor, and cognitive linguistics; and the emergence of rhetoricography, rhetology, and rhetorolect terminology.¹⁸³

Topoi are locations in historical, social, cultural, ideological, aesthetic, and religious networks of meaning, that is, “landmarks in the mental geography of thought.”¹⁸⁴ Each topos has two dimensions: the topographical, descriptive, pictorial, narrative-building dimension; and the topological,

179. Robbins, *Sea Voyages*, 153–57.

180. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 96–115; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 193–220.

181. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 120.

182. Vernon K. Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, vol. 1 (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo 2009), 495–517.

183. Vernon K. Robbins, Robert H. von Thaden Jr., and Bart B. Bruehler, eds., *Foundations for Sociorhetorical Exploration: A Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Reader*, RRA 4 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016).

184. L. Gregory Bloomquist, “Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology: Socio-rhetorical Analysis in the Reading of New Testament Texts,” in *Rhetorics in the New Millennium: Promise and Fulfilment*, ed. James D. Hester and J. David Hester (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 23–48; Robbins, *Invention*, 81–85; L. Gregory Bloomquist, “Paul’s Inclusive Language: The Ideological Texture of Romans 1,” in *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in*

enthymematic, argumentative, reasoned, syllogistic dimension.¹⁸⁵ Using visual imagery to persuade is rhetography, which is at least as important a feature of rhetoric as rhetology, reasoned argument.¹⁸⁶ Rhetography draws on a reservoir of both personal experience and past cultural experience encoded in texts, rituals, and traditions.¹⁸⁷ For example, in Luke 11:5–13, the topos of giving, which includes asking, friendship, hospitality, and receiving, is expressed using the rhetography of asking a neighbor for bread in the night along with “syllogistic rhetology based on friendship, hospitality, and exceptionally generous patronage to explain the nature of petition and God’s graciousness in the Lord’s Prayer.”¹⁸⁸ L. Gregory Bloomquist emphasizes the importance of topoi in moving the audience to a new position.¹⁸⁹

Robbins proposes that each form of early Christian discourse evokes particular rhetography; for example, apocalyptic discourse draws on imagery of the imperial divine courtroom, wisdom discourse on the family household, and priestly discourse on the temple.¹⁹⁰ In 1996 Robbins first coined the term *rhetorlect*, a contraction of rhetoric and dialect,

Honor of Vernon K. Robbins, ed. David B. Gowler, L. Gregory Bloomquist, and Duane F. Watson (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 174.

185. Robbins, *Invention*, 5–88; Bloomquist, “Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology,” 138.

186. Robbins, “Sensory-Aesthetic Texture of the Compassionate Samaritan Parable in Luke 10,” in *Literary Encounters with the Reign of God*, ed. Sharon H. Ringe and H. C. Paul Kim (New York: T&T Clark International, 2004), 252–53; Robbins, “Rhetography: A New Way of Seeing the Familiar Text,” in *Words Well Spoken: George Kennedy’s Rhetoric of the New Testament*, ed. C. Clifton Black and Duane F. Watson (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2008), 81–106.

187. David A. deSilva, “Seeing Things John’s Way: Rhetography and Conceptual Blending in Revelation 14:6–13,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 18.2 (2008): 271–98, drawing on Todd V. Oakley, “The Human Rhetorical Potential,” *Written Communication* 16 (1999): 93–128.

188. Robbins, “Socio-rhetorical Criticism,” 313; Robbins, “From Enthymeme to Theology in Luke 11:1–13,” in *Literary Studies in Luke-Acts: A Collection of Essays in Honor of Joseph B. Tyson*, ed. Richard P. Thompson and Thomas E. Phillips (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1998), 191–214.

189. Bloomquist, “Paul’s Inclusive Language,” 165–93; Bloomquist, “Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology,” 138–46. Vernon K. Robbins, Robert H. von Thaden Jr., and Bart B. Bruehler, introduction to *Foundations for Sociorhetorical Exploration: A Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Reader*, ed. Vernon K. Robbins, Robert H. von Thaden Jr., and Bart B. Bruehler (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 14.

190. Robbins, “Rhetography.”

to distinguish between six different forms of early Christian discourse.¹⁹¹ In *Invention of Christian Discourse*, Robbins elaborates on these six rhetorolects: wisdom, miracle, apocalyptic, prophetic (formerly oppositional), priestly (formerly death-resurrection), and precreation (formerly cosmic).¹⁹² He blends cognitive metaphor theory and critical space theory to consider them as idealized cognitive models that provide paradigms for belief systems.¹⁹³ Von Thaden describes this cognitive turn in sociorhetorical interpretation as complementary to the textures approach.¹⁹⁴

Sociorhetorical Interpretation in Practice

Since the publication of *Exploring the Textures of Texts* two decades ago, there have been several developments in sociorhetorical interpretation; nevertheless, the five-textures approach still provides a helpful and holistic framework for exploring biblical texts.¹⁹⁵ For example, Rosemary Canavan employs all five textures in her study *Clothing the Body of Christ at Colossae*, which begins with the topos of clothing in Col 3:1–17. She constructs the identity of the members of the body of Christ informed by visual exegesis of the idealized representation of clothing of the emperor on statues, monuments, stelae, and coins of the Lycus Valley.¹⁹⁶

Both Bloomquist and Elaine M. Wainwright collapse five textures into three. Bloomquist considers both sacred texture and social and cultural texture with intertexture, resulting in a three-part framework of inner texture, intertexture, and ideological textures.¹⁹⁷ Alexandra Gruca-Macaulay employs this tri-texture framework in *Lydia as a Rhetorical Construct in Acts*.¹⁹⁸

191. Robbins, "Dialectical Nature," 353–62.

192. Robbins, *Invention*, 113–14.

193. Robbins, *Invention*, 88–89, 104–20.

194. Robert H. von Thaden Jr., *Sex, Christ, and Embodied Cognition: Paul's Wisdom for Corinth* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 37–68.

195. Riku P. Tuppurainen, "The Contribution of Socio-rhetorical Criticism to Spirit-Sensitive Hermeneutics: A Contextual Example—Luke 11:13," *Journal of Biblical and Pneumatological Research* 4 (2012): 40–51.

196. Rosemary Canavan, *Clothing the Body of Christ at Colossae* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).

197. Bloomquist, "Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology," 138–46; Bloomquist, "Eyes Wide Open," 121–67.

198. Alexandra Gruca-Macaulay, *Lydia as Rhetorical Construct in Acts*, ESEC 18 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016).

Wainwright adapts Robbins's five textures to develop an ecorhetorical approach to Matthew's Gospel. She begins her ecological reading with the ideological presupposition that every element of the universe has intrinsic worth, interconnectedness, voice, purpose, and mutual custodianship.¹⁹⁹ She argues that biblical texts need to be read with suspicion regarding the anthropological bias, with empathy for earth, and with a readiness to retrieve the voice of the nonhuman elements of the ecosystem. To achieve this, Wainwright broadens the social and cultural texture of SRI to include material elements, renaming it "ecological texture."²⁰⁰ She considers the analysis of ideological and sacred textures as integral to her consideration of three main textures: inner texture, intertexture, and ecological texture.²⁰¹ Wainwright appreciates the multidisciplinary dynamic of SRI, which allows interpreters to "weave together aspects of reading which biblical studies has traditionally separated such as hermeneutic and methodology, diachronic and synchronic, text and context."²⁰²

My Map for Exploring the Textures of Matthew 22:1–14

To explore the parable of the royal wedding feast, I approach the parable from a series of different positions to examine its inner texture and intertexture and its ideological, social and cultural, and sacred textures. Even though my interest concerns the final scene of the parable of the royal wedding feast, I consider the parable in its entirety as the basic literary unit for exploration.

199. Elaine M. Wainwright, *Habitat, Human, and Holy: An Eco-rhetorical Reading of the Gospel of Matthew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2014), 2.

200. Elaine M. Wainwright, "Images, Words and Stories: Exploring Their Transformative Power in Reading Biblical Texts Ecologically," *BibInt* 20 (2012): 280–304.

201. Wainwright, *Habitat, Human, and Holy*, 22–25; Elaine M. Wainwright, "'Save Us! We are Perishing!' Reading Matthew 8:23–27 in the Face of Devastating Floods," in *Bible, Borders, Belonging(s): Engaging Readings from Oceania*, ed. Jione Havea, David J. Neville, and Elaine M. Wainwright (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014), 21–37; Elaine M. Wainwright, "Of Borders, Bread, Dogs and Demons: Reading Matthew 15:21–28 Ecologically," in *Where the Wild Ox Roams: Biblical Essays in Honor of Norman*, ed. C. Habel, Alan H. Cadwallader, and Peter L. Trudinger (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2013), 114–26.

202. Wainwright, "Images, Words and Stories," 287.

In the first chapter, I take a close look at the inner texture of Matt 22:1–14, applying literary criticism and narrative analysis as recommended by Robbins. This involves exploring five textures: repetitive-progressive, opening-middle-closing, narrational, argumentative, and sensory-aesthetic. The first two textures require little further explanation. There have been so many developments in narrative analysis of New Testament texts since the publication of Robbins's guidebook that a narrative-critical reading of the parable could be an exploration in its own right.²⁰³ I have chosen to frame my exploration of the narrative of this parable by systematic consideration of the spatial-temporal, psychological, phraseological, and ideological planes (or perspectives) of a narrative because these feature in studies of Matthew's narrative by Janice Capel Anderson, David B. Howell, and Dorothy Jean Weaver.²⁰⁴ Exploring the argumentative texture allows for investigation of the rhetorical function of this parable, including allegorical readings. Sensory-aesthetic-texture analysis involves first noting all the references to nouns and verbs associated with body parts and then categorizing them according to the three-body-zone model Malina considers representative of biblical anthropology.²⁰⁵

For the second chapter, I step back to increase the breadth of view to consider the parable of the royal wedding feast in its literary and narrative setting within the Gospel of Matthew. This is a shift of focus from the story told by Jesus to Matthew's story of Jesus and the dialogical relation-

203. James L. Resseguie summarizes the advantages of narrative criticism as (1) viewing the text as a whole rather than as fragmented, (2) being concerned with complexities and nuances of the text as literature, and (3) emphasizing the effect of a narrative on the reader. See James L. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism of the New Testament: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 38–40.

204. Boris A. Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form*, trans. Valentina Savarin and Susan Wittig (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973); Gary Yamasaki, *Perspective Criticism: Point of View and Evaluative Guidance in Biblical Narrative* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012); Yamasaki, *Watching a Biblical Narrative: Point of View in Biblical Exegesis* (New York: T&T Clark, 2007); Janice Capel Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web: Over, and Over, and Over Again*, JSNTSup 91 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1994); David B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990); Dorothy Jean Weaver, *Matthew's Missionary Discourse: A Literary-Critical Analysis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990).

205. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 29–36; Bruce J. Malina, *The New Testament World: Insights from Cultural Anthropology*, 3rd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 68–78.

ship between these two interrelated narratives. I explore what could be called “intratexture” using four inner texture categories. First, I situate the parable within the opening-middle-closing of the narrative of Matthew’s Gospel as a whole and then within increasingly smaller frames within the gospel. Second, I explore its narrative texture and highlight similarities between the dominance of the voice of Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel and the voice of the king in this parable. Third, I identify key topoi within the parable, such as “weeping and gnashing of teeth,” and how and where such topoi are repeated within Matthew’s Gospel. Fourth, by focusing on words concerned with body parts and their functions, I explore the sensory-aesthetic texture of the gospel. Both the repetitive-progressive and sensory-aesthetic textures show verbal and thematic connections between the parable of the royal wedding feast and Matt 18.

In chapters 3 and 4, I explore the verbal and thematic connections between the parable of the royal wedding feast and other ancient Jewish and Christian texts woven from the same or similar topoi. Such intertextual exploration involves placing such texts alongside this parable. There are many ways to explore intertexture, which can be defined as “the study of how a given text is connected with other texts (broadly understood) outside itself and how those texts affect the interpretation of the given text.”²⁰⁶ I structure my exploration of the intertexture of this parable topoi by topoi. In chapter 3, I begin intertextual analysis with gospel and rabbinic parables about kings giving feasts, feasts with replacement guests, and weddings. Then I explore the topoi of wedding and calls to come in the Old Testament. I conclude chapter 3 with a focus on King Hezekiah’s Passover feast as described by both the Chronicler and Josephus, as this has several topoi in common with the parable of the royal wedding feast. In chapter 4, the focus of intertextual exploration is on the topoi introduced in the latter part of the parable: clothing, binding feet and hands, casting out, outer darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth, and few chosen (22:11–14). Attention is given to intertextual relationship with the book of Esther, 1 En. 10, and Tob 8, all of which have several topoi in common with the parable of the royal wedding feast.

In chapters 5 and 6, I look *through* the parable of the royal wedding feast to explore the sociocultural world that lies *behind* Matthew’s

206. B. J. Oropeza and Steve Moyise, introduction to *Exploring Intertextuality: Diverse Strategies for New Testament Interpretation of Texts* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), xiii–xx.

Gospel, and *at* the text to observe how this world is both reflected and critiqued within this gospel. In chapter 5, I explore what Robbins calls the social rhetoric, that is, the stance towards the wider world advocated in the Gospel of Matthew according to Bryan Wilson's typology of sectarian responses to the world.²⁰⁷ This chapter shows how sectarian *topoi*,²⁰⁸ such as the expulsion of unworthy members, are employed in Matthew's Gospel without advocating an isolationist stance in relation to the wider world. In chapter 6, I explore three aspects of the social world of Matthew: the first-century Jewish worldview; the social structures in the time of the Roman Empire, including the role of women; and honor-shame culture. I identify the cultural rhetoric, that is, the extent to which the text conforms to or criticizes the attitudes and values of the dominant culture in relation to these three aspects.²⁰⁹ From this analysis, I argue that the removal and restraint of the individual from the wedding feast concerns more than ethnicity, social status, or honor.

In chapter 7, the focus shifts from the social and cultural location and ideological worldview of the author of Matthew to my own social and cultural location and how this influences my reading of the parable of the royal wedding feast.²¹⁰ I recognize that approaching the text from my social location, that of a twenty-first-century Christian woman, plays a significant role in how I read a gospel written by a first-century Jewish man. Ideological-texture analysis includes consideration of the ideology of power and rationalization of power relations evident in a text and its interpretation.²¹¹ This is important for any biblical text, but it is particularly pertinent for a parable with a βασιλεύς (22:2), a king or emperor, as the dominant narrative agent usually considered to represent God. Interpretations that assume that the silence of the individual before the king indicates guilt are of concern because in my context those silenced by ecclesiastical authority include little ones who have suffered child sexual

207. Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 147–59; Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 72–75.

208. Bryan Wilson, "An Analysis of Sect Development," *American Sociological Review* 24 (1959): 3–15; Wilson, *Religious Sects: A Sociological Study* (London: World University Library, 1970), 28–35; Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 91–93.

209. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 56–59.

210. Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 24–27; Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 96–99.

211. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 110–15.

abuse within the Anglican Church of Australia. I critique the imperial ideology of the parable of the royal wedding feast and its interpretations by applying a preferential option for such marginalized little ones.

In chapter 8, I explore the sacred texture of the parable of the royal wedding feast in four phases. First, I discuss the metaphor “God is king” and how God is both like and unlike the king in the parable of the royal wedding feast. Second, I explore the relationship between the king in the parable of the royal wedding feast, the Roman emperor, the “father of the fatherland,” and the “Father in heaven” within Matthew’s Gospel. Third, I argue that this parable employs prophetic rhetoric addressed to those with religious authority and political power. Fourth, I consider the implications of such prophetic rhetoric for all the sacred texture categories: deity, holy persons, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, religious community, and ethics.²¹²

In the conclusion, I weave the findings of exploring the inner texture and intertexture and the social and cultural, ideological, and sacred textures into what I consider to be the rhetorical force of the parable of the royal wedding feast, particularly the troubling expulsion of the individual not wearing wedding clothing. Concluding with articulation of rhetorical force follows the three-phase pattern that has developed in sociorhetorical interpretation, that is, beginning with a discussion of rhetography, moving through textural analysis, and concluding with a presentation of the rhetorical force of the text.²¹³

Rhetography is “the graphic picturing in rhetorical description” and is like *ekphrasis* in ancient Greek rhetoric, which brings what is illustrated in the text clearly before the eyes.²¹⁴ Snodgrass begins his analysis of the parable of the royal wedding feast with this assessment: “Matthew’s version is enough to make any interpreter go weak in the knees; I consider it among the most difficult parables of all.”²¹⁵ Presumably, this response is not only due to the rhetography of this story, as troublesome as this is, but also because it is part of the Gospel of Matthew, where this parable comes from the mouth of Jesus and is thus authoritative for Christians. This sacred dimension of the text is why I bring my concerns as a person, a preacher, and a priest to my exploration of this parable.

212. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 120.

213. Robbins, Thaden, and Bruehler, introduction, 6.

214. Robbins, *Invention*, 16; Robbins, “Rhetography,” 89.

215. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 299.

Inner Texture of Matthew 22:1–14

My exploration of the parable of the royal wedding feast begins with an examination of the inner texture of this parable. Inner texture is the careful consideration of “the wording, phrasing, imagery, aesthetics, and argumentative quality of the text.”¹ To use the analogy of tapestry, it is about noticing the weave of the fabric in order to “gain an intimate knowledge of words, word patterns, voices, structures, devices and modes in the text.”² Robbins identifies five main categories of inner texture: (1) repetitive-progressive, (2) opening-middle-closing, (3) narrative, (4) argumentative, and (5) sensory-aesthetic.³ In this chapter, I explore the inner texture of Matt 22:1–14 according to these five categories. In the next chapter, I focus on how the parable of the royal wedding feast functions within the opening-middle-closing, repetitive-progressive, and narrative textures of the Gospel of Matthew as a whole.

1.1. Repetitive-Progressive Texture

In sociorhetorical interpretation, exploration of the inner texture of a New Testament text usually begins with analysis of the repetitive and progressive texture of the text.⁴ Repetitive texture “resides in the occurrence of

1. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 5; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 46.

2. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 7.

3. Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 46; cf. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 7, in which repetitive and progressive textures are considered consecutively rather than together.

4. Examples include Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 8–9; H. J. Bernard Combrink, “Shame on the Hypocritical Leaders in the Church: A Socio-rhetorical Interpretation of the Reproaches in Matthew 23,” in *Fabrics of Discourse: Essays in*

words and phrases more than once in a unit.”⁵ Multiple occurrences of grammatical, syntactical, or topical phenomena also have the potential to produce repetitive texture. Progressive texture patterns are based on words and phrases that are related in some way, such as the alternation of pronouns (e.g., *I, you*), temporal markers (e.g., *now, then*), conjunctions related to causation (e.g., *because, therefore*), and sequences.⁶ In addition to progressive patterns (what follows what), word-pattern categories include cluster (what goes with what), agon (what is opposite to what), and transformative (how particular words, phrases, characters, and events change in the course of the text).⁷

To see patterns of repeated and related words with the greatest clarity, Robbins recommends physically highlighting the repeated or related words on a full copy of the text and then displaying the results diagrammatically.⁸ In Burkean literary analysis, which informs Robbins's repetitive-progressive texture, this process is known as “indexing.”⁹ Snyder uses this in conjunction with Burke's “pentad” of dramatistic analysis of any form of human communication, including narrative, debate, speech, or letter.¹⁰ The five elements of Burke's pentad are as follows: act (what happens), scene (where the action is happening), agent (who is involved in the action), agency (how the agents act), and purpose (why the agents act as they do).¹¹ Repetitive-progressive-texture analysis may draw attention to pentad ele-

Honor of Vernon K. Robbins, ed. David B. Gowler, L. Gregory Bloomquist, and Duane F. Watson (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 1–35; Bloomquist, “Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology,” 115–46; Lincoln E. Galloway, “Consider the Lilies of the Field ...: A Sociohistorical Analysis of Matthew 6:25–34,” in *The Multivalence of Biblical Texts and Theological Meanings*, ed. Christine Helmer and Charlene T. Higbe (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 67–82.

5. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 8.

6. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 10.

7. Lewis Leroy (Lee) Snyder, “The Ironic Drama of Matthew 22:15–46,” in *Rhetorics in the New Millennium Promise and Fulfillment*, ed. James D. Hester and J. David Hester (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 147–67.

8. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 8; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 49.

9. Lewis Leroy (Lee) Snyder, “Appendix E: An Overview of the Burkean Critical Method,” in *Rhetorics in the New Millennium Promise and Fulfillment*, ed. James D. Hester and J. David Hester (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 274–78.

10. Snyder, “Ironic Drama of Matthew,” 147, 165.

11. Kenneth Burke, *A Grammar of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California, 1969), 127–322.

ments by highlighting actions such as seeing, dividing a narrative into scenes, identifying the relative significance of narrative agents, exploring themes, and dissecting the rhetorical structure of an argument.¹²

My exploration of the repetitive-progressive texture of the parable of the royal wedding feast highlights *who* is in the story (narrative agents), *where* the action happens (scene), *what* happens in relation to the verb *to come*, and *how* conjunctions knit the story together. Emergent patterns demonstrate the dominance of the king, highlight the wedding setting, and reinforce the importance of invitation and appropriate response in this parable. Repetitions of βασιλεύς, γάμος, καλέω, and progressive texture, based on syntactical and verbal patterns, give this parable a structural unity.¹³

1.1.1. Narrative Agents

The results of the repetitive-progressive-texture analysis of narrative agents in the parable of the royal wedding feast are displayed in table 1.1. This shows the βασιλεύς (king) to be the dominant individual and that δοῦλοι (slaves) are the most frequently mentioned group.

Table 1.1. Narrative Agents in Matthew 22:2–14

	king	other individuals	king's agents: slaves, troops, and servants	those invited/ those dining	other groups of people
2	ἄνθρωπῳ βασιλεῖ	τῷ υἱῷ αὐτοῦ			
3			τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ	κεκλημένους	
4			δούλους	κεκλημένους	

12. For seeing, see Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 12–14, in which he explores the repetitive-progressive texture of “seeing” in Mark 15:1–16:8; for dividing a narrative into scenes, see Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 12–14, in which he identifies seven scenes in Mark 15:1–16:8 based on repetitive-progressive texture; for identifying agents, see Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 8–9, in which he uses repetitive-texture analysis to identify Jesus as being the person of central importance in Mark 15:1–16:8; for identifying themes, see Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 10–12, in which he explores king and kingdom in Mark’s Gospel using progressive texture; for dissecting rhetorical structure, see Combrink, “Shame on the Hypocritical Leaders,” 1–35.

13. Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 46.

5	ὃς μὲν, ὃς δέ	ἀμελήσαντες
6	δούλους	λοιποί
7	βασιλεύς	στρατεύματα φονεῖς
8	δούλοις	κεκλημένοι
9		
10	δοῦλοι	ἀνακειμένων πονηροὺς ἀγαθοὺς
11	βασιλεύς	ἄνθρωπον ἀνακειμένους
12		
13	βασιλεύς	διακόνοις
14		κλητοὶ ἐκλεκτοί

The βασιλεύς (king) is the dominant individual of the parable. The noun occurs four times (22:2, 7, 11, 13) and the king is the agent of action a further five times (22:3, 4, 7, 8, 12). Despite the importance of using inclusive language, I use the traditional translation of βασιλεύς as “king” (as well as “ruler”) and βασιλεία as “kingdom” (as well as “dominion”) both to highlight the linguistic relationship between the two terms and for ease of engagement with existing discussion concerning this parable.¹⁴

The king dominates the action in this parable by being the subject of many of the verbs involved. The king orders a feast for his son’s wedding (22:2) and ensures it is ready (22:4). He sends out his slaves (22:3, 4, 9) and his troops to kill and burn at this command (22:7). The king calls (22:4, 9), sees (22:11), and, unlike any of the other characters, speaks (22:4, 8–9, 12, 13). Other individuals make only a brief appearance. Even the king’s son, whose wedding it is, is only mentioned once (22:2).

The king has a dominant role with respect to other people in the parable. He commands his slaves, δοῦλοι (22:3, 4, 6, 8, 10); attendants, διάκονος (22:13); and troops, στρατεύμα (22:7). Those who choose not to come are

14. Christie Cozad Neugar, “Image and Imagination: Why Inclusive Language Matters,” in *Engaging the Bible in a Gendered World: An Introduction to Feminist Biblical Interpretation in Honor of Katharine Doob Sakenfeld*, ed. Linda Day and Carolyn Pressler (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 153–65; Elaine M. Wainwright, Robert J. Myles, and Carlos Olivares refrain from using *kingdom*, *reign*, or *dominion* by transliterating rather than translating βασιλεία in the title of their study guide to Matthew’s Gospel. See Wainwright, Myles, and Olivares, *Matthew: An Introduction and Study Guide: The Basileia of the Heavens Is Near at Hand* (repr., London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

reacting to his invitation (22:5–6). The king invites the invitees, *κεκλημένοι* (22:3, 4, 8); prepares the food for those dining, *ἀνακείμενοι* (22:10, 11); and instructs his slaves to bring in the bad and the good, *πονηρούς καὶ ἀγαθούς* (22:10). This last phrase combines terms that are usually in opposition (agon) to one other. By contrast, in the concluding statement (22:14), words with similar meanings, *κλητοί* (called) and *ἐκλεκτοί* (chosen) (22:14), are placed as contrasting terms.¹⁵

The king features in every scene of the parable, unlike any other individual or group. Those who were invited, *κεκλημένοι* (22:3, 4, 8), do not come to the wedding feast and therefore do not feature in the final scene, unlike those who do come to dine, the *ἀνακείμενοι* (22:10, 11). The slaves, *δοῦλοι* (22:3, 4, 6, 8, 10), who were the king's messengers and brought people to the wedding feast, do not feature in the final scene, whereas the king's attendants, *διακόνους* (22:13), do.¹⁶ Both these changes of terms reflect the change of scene from outside to inside the wedding.

1.1.2. The Wedding Setting

The word for wedding, *γάμος*, occurs eight times in the parable of the royal wedding feast (22:2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). The early or noontime meal, *ἄριστον*, occurs only once (22:4), and the main meal usually served in the late afternoon, *δεῖπνον*, not at all (cf. Luke 14:17, 24).¹⁷

Table 1.2. Repetitive Texture of *Wedding* in Matthew 22:2–13

Verse	Wedding	Meal	Other locations
2	γάμους		ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν
3	εἰς τοὺς γάμους		
4	εἰς τοὺς γάμους	ἄριστον	
5			ἄγρόν, ἐμπορίαν
7			πόλιν αὐτῶν
8	γάμος		

15. Donald Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, WBC 33b (Dallas: Word, 1995), 628.

16. Ivor H. Jones, *The Matthean Parables: A Literary and Historical Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1995), 409.

17. Johannes Behm, “δεῖπνον,” *TDNT* 2:34–35; K. Niederwimmer, *γάμος*, *EDNT* 1:236–38; “ἄριστον,” *EDNT* 1:52; J. Wanke, “δεῖπνον,” *EDNT* 1:281–82.

9	εἰς τοὺς γάμους	τὰς διεξόδους τῶν ὁδῶν
10	ἐπλήσθη ὁ γάμος ἀνακειμένων	τὰς ὁδοῦς
11	ἔνδυμα γάμου	
12	ἔνδυμα γάμου	
13		τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον

As shown in table 1.2, *γάμος* occurs four times as a plural (22:2, 3, 4, 9), twice in the singular (22:8, 10), and twice as the adjective in *wedding clothing* (22:11, 12). Elsewhere in the New Testament, *wedding* also occurs in both the singular form (John 2:1, 2; Heb 13:4; Rev 19:7, 9) and the plural form (Matt 25:10; Luke 12:26, 14:8). Similarly, the Septuagint includes both the singular (Gen 29:22, Tob 6:12) and the plural forms of *γάμος* (Wis 14:24, 26; 13:17; 1 Macc 9:37, 41). The use of the plural might be a development of late wisdom literature.¹⁸ Josephus distinguishes between singular *γάμος* as the wedding and plural *γάμοι* as the wedding celebrations (A.J. 14.467).¹⁹ Some consider the plural of wedding as synonymous with any feast in Koine Greek.²⁰ One way of keeping the sense of the plural in English translations of this parable is by the use of *wedding festivities* or *wedding celebrations* in verses 2, 3, 4, and 9. Such translations are consistent with the suggestion that *ἄριστόν* (22:4) implies an early meal in a series of meals associated with wedding feasts.²¹ Most modern English translations qualify *wedding* in Matt 22:2 by adding *banquet* (NRSV, NIV, CEV) or *feast* (ESV), whereas older translations tend not to; for example, the King James Version uses *marriage*.

Metonymically, *γάμος* can refer to the place where a marriage occurs.²² On three occasions, *γάμος* is a location into which people are to enter (22:3, 4, 9), and once it is a space that is filled (22:10). Translations of the singular form of *γάμος* (22:10) are usually modified with the addition of

18. Jones, *Matthean Parables*, 401.

19. BDAG, s.v. “γάμος.”

20. H. K. Moulton suggests the semantic range includes “any feast or banquet,” citing Luke 12:36 and 14:8 as examples. See *The Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 75.

21. Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew*, trans. David E. Green (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1975), 420.

22. Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), 96; BDAG, s.v. “γάμος.”

another noun, resulting in *wedding hall* (NRSV, NIV, ESV), *Hochzeitssaal* (German), and *la salle des noces* (French). This serves to focus the interpretation of γάμος (wedding) as a location even though the translation would be intelligible without the inclusion of the word *hall*.²³ In Matt 22:10, γάμος has the textual variant νυμφών (bridal chamber).²⁴ In current scholarship this variant is considered to be a later Alexandrian correction,²⁵ probably changed to resonate with Matt 9:15, with references to υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος (sons of the bridal chamber) and νυμφίος (bridegroom).

The preposition εἰς features in the repeated invitations to come into the wedding, εἰς τοὺς γάμους (22:3, 4, 9); when the king comes in, εἰσελθὼν (22:11); and when he questions how the one without wedding clothing came in, εἰσῆλθες (22:12). It is unfavorable to enter other locations, whether willingly, such as the invitee who goes into his own field, εἰς τὸν ἴδιον ἀγρὸν (22:5), or unwillingly, such as the one who is cast out of the wedding and *into* the outer darkness, εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἑξώτερον (22:13).

The importance of ἔνδυμα γάμου is stressed by repetition (22:11, 12), alliteration, and the dire consequences of not wearing wedding clothing. First, the narrator recounts that the king sees that one of those present is not wearing wedding clothing, ἔνδυμα γάμου (22:11), then the same term is repeated in direct speech in the king's question (22:12). The first mention immediately follows the perfect passive participle (ἐνδεδυμένον) for the verb for putting on clothes (ἐνδύω), thereby creating an alliteration: οὐκ ἐνδεδυμένον ἔνδυμα γάμου (22:11). This word play translates as “not clothed with wedding clothes,”²⁶ “not attired in wedding attire,” “not wearing wedding wear,” or “not dressed in wedding dress.” The importance of wearing ἔνδυμα γάμου to avoid negative consequences (22:13) is foreshadowed by the use of two different forms of negation: the unusual use of οὐ to negate a participle (22:11) followed by use of the more common word for negation, μὴ, in the next verse (22:12).²⁷

23. The KJV does this with “the wedding was furnished with guests”.

24. Arland J. Hultgren, *The Parables of Jesus: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 342.

25. Bruce M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: UBS, 1994), 58.

26. Ralph Earle lists several permutations using “clothes.” See Earle, *Word Meanings in the New Testament* (repr., Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1994), 20.

27. C. F. D. Moule notes only about twenty occurrences of οὐ negating a participle in the New Testament and describes the use in Matt 22:11 as striking. See Moule,

1.1.3. Repetitions Associated with καλέω

Words derived from the verb καλέω (I call) form a connecting thread throughout the parable of the royal wedding feast. They provide a verbal link with the concluding logion (22:14), which does not quite fit with what precedes it.²⁸ These καλέω-related words are set out in table 1.3.

Table 1.3. Words derived from the verb καλέω

Verse	Word	
3	καλέσαι	verb, aorist infinitive active
3	κεκλημένους	participle, perfect passive accusative masculine plural
4	κεκλημένοις	participle, perfect passive dative masculine plural
8	κεκλημένοι	participle, perfect passive nominative masculine plural
9	καλέσατε	verb, aorist imperative active second-person plural
14	κλητοί	adjective nominative masculine plural

The king sends out slaves to call (καλέσαι) those initially invited (22:3) and to call in (καλέσατε) those at the crossroads (22:9). The word used to denote those initially invited by the king is κεκλημένοι, the perfect passive participle of the verb καλέω, providing a play on words in the Greek, “the called ones,”²⁹ which I try to retain by using *invitees*. The perfect tense stresses that although the action of invitation is completed, the results of inviting continue. The threefold repetition of κεκλημένοι serves to stress the calling action of the king, especially being the only occurrences of κεκλημένοι in Matthew's Gospel (cf. Luke 14:7, 8, 17, 24; Heb 9:15; Rev 19:9).³⁰

An Idiom Book of New Testament Greek, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1959), 105.

28. W. C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew*, 3rd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1912), 236; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 891; Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 348.

29. Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 886.

30. Jones, *Matthean Parables*, 400.

The repetition of words derived from *καλέω* result in “calling” being the distinctive and insistent action undertaken by the king. Three times the king sends out slaves to call people to come to the wedding feast he has prepared (22:3, 4, 8–9). Repetitions connect the first and second call, and then the second and third call. The second sending out of slaves (22:4) is so like the first (22:3), it is only differentiated by the addition of the word *πάλιν* (again) and the replacement of *αὐτοῦ* with *ἄλλους* (other),³¹ as is evident in the first row of table 1.4.

Table 1.4. Repetitive-Progressive Texture of Matthew 22:3, 4–6

Matthew 22:3	Matthew 22:4–6
³ καὶ ἀπέστειλεν τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ	⁴ πάλιν ἀπέστειλεν ἄλλους δούλους λέγων·
καλέσαι τοὺς κεκλημένους	Εἶπατε τοῖς κεκλημένοις
	Ἴδου τὸ ἄριστόν μου ἡτοίμακα, οἱ ταῦροί μου καὶ τὰ σιτιστὰ τεθυμένα, καὶ πάντα ἔτοιμα·
εἰς τοὺς γάμους,	δεῦτε εἰς τοὺς γάμους.
καὶ οὐκ ᾔθελον ἐλθεῖν.	⁵ οἱ δὲ ἀμελήσαντες ἀπῆλθον,
	ὃς μὲν εἰς τὸν ἴδιον ἀγρόν,
	ὃς δὲ ἐπὶ τὴν ἐμπορίαν αὐτοῦ·
	⁶ οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ κρατήσαντες τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ ὕβρισαν καὶ ἀπέκτειναν.

The first and second call-and-response sequences (22:3, 4–6) have several words in common, *κεκλημένους/κεκλημένοις*, *ἀπέστειλεν*, *δούλους*, and *εἰς τοὺς γάμους*. The reports of nonattendance follow a pattern of negation, a verb related to making a choice, and then variations on the verb *to come* as found in *καὶ οὐκ ᾔθελον ἐλθεῖν* (22:3) and *οἱ δὲ ἀμελήσαντες ἀπῆλθον* (22:5). The second call-and-response sequence includes additional material, with both a more elaborate and extended invitation (22:4) and the inclusion of three variations of not coming (22:5–6).

There are also parallels in the second (22:4) and third calls (22:8–9). Both involve the king sending out his slaves to invite people *εἰς τοὺς γάμους* (22:4, 9) by addressing them with direct speech in which the king describes the meal as ready, *ἔτοιμα* (22:4) and *ἔτοιμός* (22:8). The *μὲν* ...

31. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 628.

δέ construction, which refers to those who choose to busy themselves with other affairs rather than come to the feast (22:5),³² also features in the king's declaration that the initially invited guests are unworthy (22:8). What happens in between the second and third call (22:6–7) also exhibits distinctive word patterns.

1.1.4. Progressive Texture in Matthew 22:6–7

The dramatic events of Matt 22:6–7 include an internal structural parallelism. The pattern of verse 6 is repeated in a more expanded form in verse 7. Both verses 6 and 7 begin with the subject and conjunction δέ and include three verbs in the active voice and aorist tense, with the first in the form of a participle connecting the action of the subject to the grammatical object:³³

v. 6: οἱ δὲ λοιποὶ κρατήσαντες τοὺς δούλους αὐτοῦ ὕβρισαν καὶ ἀπέκτειναν.

v. 7: ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς ... πέμψας τὰ στρατεύματα αὐτοῦ ἀπώλεσεν ... καὶ ... ἐνέπρησεν.

The pattern of the king's reaction parallels the pattern of the actions of "the rest" but on an amplified scale. It is recounted in more detail, and the king's reaction is of greater magnitude than that of those who seize, torture, and kill his servants. The king does not simply send his troops; he does this because he is enraged. In verse 6, the rest abuse and kill the king's slaves in the course of three words, whereas in verse 7 what the king's troops do in response includes significantly more detail.

The pattern of δέ-subject-participle-object-verbs is unique to verses 6 and 7, but there are elements of this pattern elsewhere within the parable, creating grammatical and aural resonances between verses 6 and 7 and other verses in the parable. Matthew 22:5 begins with the first δέ in the parable, followed by the participle-verb construction οἱ δὲ ἀμελήσαντες ἀπῆλθον, although it lacks the subject and object components of the pattern, and only one verb follows the participle. Matthew 22:10 includes subject and object, and two verbs follow the participle, but the subject follows the participle and the clause is introduced by καὶ rather than δέ. The resultant pattern is καί-

32. Hagner, *Matthew* 14–28, 628.

33. Hagner, *Matthew* 14–28, 628.

participle-subject-object-verbs: καὶ ἐξεληθόντες οἱ δοῦλοι ἐκεῖνοι εἰς τὰς ὁδοὺς συνήγαγον πάντας οὓς εὔρον. Matthew 22:11 begins with a participle and δέ, followed by the subject: εἰσελθὼν δὲ ὁ βασιλεὺς. The king's command to bind and cast out the one not wearing wedding clothing begins with a participle, Δῆσαντες, followed by the main verb, ἐκβάλετε (22:13).

In sentences where the first verb is in the form of an aorist participle, it is ingressive, introducing a new action or story element, with the word order reflecting the temporal order of closely related events.³⁴ Translating the aorist participles as participles renders grammatical parallels between verses 6 and 7 with other verses in the parable more obvious:

- v. 5: But *having disregarded* the invitation, the invitees *turn away*.
- v. 6: But the rest, *having seized* the slaves, *maltreated* and *killed* them.
- v. 7: But the king, *having sent* his troops, *destroyed* those murderers and *burnt* their city.
- v. 10: And *having gone out* the slaves *brought in together* all whom they *found*.
- v. 13: *Having bound* him hand and foot, *cast* him out into the outer darkness.

Despite the jarring nature of their content in the flow of the parable, verses 6 and 7 have language patterns consistent with the rest of the parable, including use of the conjunction δέ.

1.1.5. Repetitive-Progressive Texture of Conjunctions

Applying Stephanie Black's extensive study of conjunctions in Matthew's narrative to Matt 22:1–14 shows how clauses are stitched together to form the fabric of the parable of the royal wedding feast.³⁵ Black argues that in Matthew's Gospel, conjunctions function as follows: καί is a signal of continuity that tends to be used to link monolectic verbs with a previously introduced narrative agent; δέ is a signal of low- to mid-level discontinuity, associated with a change of subject from one sentence to the next; and

34. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 555–58, 642.

35. Stephanie L. Black, *Sentence Conjunctions in the Gospel of Matthew: καί, δέ, τότε, γάρ, οὖν and Asyndeton in Narrative Discourse*, JSNTSup 216 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002).

τότε is a signal of marked continuity.³⁶ She also describes both γάρ and οὖν as markers of “off-line inference,” with γάρ introducing an inference or additional explanatory material and οὖν usually following the off-line material and a return to the narrative line.³⁷ The location of various conjunctions in the text of the parable of the royal wedding feast is shown in table 1.5.

The use of either καί or asyndeton until verse 5 contributes to the continuous flow of the first part of the parable. Later, καί contributes to a continuous flow of narrative as the troops (22:7) and the slaves (22:10) do as instructed by the king. It also connects the king first observing and then questioning the one without wedding clothing (22:11–12).

Table 1.5. Conjunctions and Asyndeton in Matthew 22:1–14

Verse	Related expressions	
1	καί	
2	–, ὅστις	
3	καί, καί	
4	–, καί	
5	δέ	μέν ... δέ
6	δέ	
7	δέ, καί, καί	
8	τότε	μέν ... δέ
9	οὖν	
10	καί, καί	
11	δέ,	
12	καί, δέ	
13	τότε	
14	γάρ	

The use of δέ at the beginning of three consecutive verses (22:5, 6, 7) emphasizes both a change of subject and that the action is unexpected in an adversarial way.³⁸ The next δέ marks the king’s arrival in the area

36. Black, *Sentence Conjunctions*, 124, 153, 246.
37. Black, *Sentence Conjunctions*, 260–63.
38. As noted in section 1.1.4.

where people are eating, both signaling a return to the king as the subject and suggesting that something unexpected is about to happen (22:11). The final δέ introduces the narrator's report that the individual without wedding clothing remains silent in response to the king's question, signifying either the change of subject or surprise or both (22:12).

In Matthew's Gospel, τότε is often translated as "then," indicating narrative development, either temporal and consequential (e.g., 12:44, 45); marking a natural transition point, such as immediately before or just after a speech (e.g., 15:28, 16:24); and serving to conclude a sequence (e.g., 4:10, 11) or connecting back to a storyline from earlier in the narrative (e.g., 13:43).³⁹ Τότε occurs twice in the parable of the royal wedding feast (22:8, 13). Both occurrences recount the king's response to what immediately precedes them, introduce direct speech, and conclude a sequence within the parable (22:2–8, 9–13).

Both οὖν and γάρ occur only once in the parable of the royal wedding feast and both indicate off-line inference. The use of οὖν reconnects with the main storyline (22:9) after the king makes an evaluation of the previous action by pronouncing the invited ones as unworthy (22:8). In the conclusion (22:14), the use of γάρ introduces the final statement as an inference or comment on the parable proper. The link between the concluding comment to what precedes it is enhanced using alliteration: κλαυθμός (22:13), κλητοί, and ἐκλεκτοί (22:14). The single uses of οὖν and γάρ respectively (22:9, 14) attach comment on the action to the action itself in the parable of the royal wedding feast.

1.1.6. Summary of the Repetitive-Progressive Texture of the Parable

In the parable of the royal wedding feast (22:1–14), *wedding* is repeated eight times (22:2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). *King* is repeated four times (22:2, 7, 11, 13), and in addition, the king is the implied subject in several verbs. He prepares the food (22:2, 4), invites to the feast (22:3, 4, 9), and determines who may participate (22:11–13). In almost every way, it is the king's feast, even though his son is the bridegroom (22:2). The verb καλέω threads through the whole parable and links the concluding logion with the parable proper (22:3, 4, 8, 9, 14).

39. Steven E. Runge, *Discourse Grammar of the Greek New Testament: A Practical Introduction for Teaching and Exegesis* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2010), 37–42.

As Luz observes, repeated words within Matt 22:1–14 provide unifying features that obscure the disjointed nature of the action.⁴⁰ Twice in this parable, violence intrudes into the flow of the narrative (22:6–7, 13). The king is the named narrative agent in both these sections (22:7, 13), as well as in the scene openings (22:2, 11). Attention centers on the king from the beginning, and the parable proper closes with his having the last word.

1.2. Opening-Middle-Closing Texture of Matthew 22:1–14

My analysis of the opening-middle-closing texture of the parable of the royal wedding feast is of the version found in the Gospel of Matthew (22:1–14). Even though parallels with Luke 14:15–24 and Gos. Thom. 64 end with Matt 22:10, this is not considered the closing texture.⁴¹ The king is the dominant narrative agent throughout Matt 22:2–13, thereby incorporating the final scene (22:11–13) into the parable, regardless of whether this scene is a Matthean composition or a separate parable now annexed to 22:1–10, possibly already in a pre-Matthean tradition.⁴²

1.2.1. Framing of the Parable Proper: *Mashal* and *Nimshal*

In Matthew's Gospel, the parable proper is framed by setting this story as one of several parables told by Jesus (22:1). This gives this fictional story a certain authority, further emphasized with the closing aphorism, "many

40. Luz, *Matthew* 21–28, 46.

41. An example of considering the basic literary unit Matt 22:1–10 rather than Matt 22:1–14 is in Elaine Wainwright, "God Wills to Invite All to the Banquet: Matthew 22:1–10," *International Review of Mission* 77 (1988): 185–93.

42. Davies and Allison "strongly suspect Matthean composition" (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:194); Luz considers Matt 22:11–13 most likely to be a Matthean addition given the number of characteristically Matthean terms included (*Matthew* 21–28, 48); W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann state that "verse 11 obviously begins another parable" (*Matthew: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, AB 26 [Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971], 269); Madeleine L. Boucher suggests verses 11–13 are probably another parable conflated with verses 2–10 (*The Parables*, rev. ed., NTM 7 [Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1983], 104); Hagner considers verses 11–14 another parable from Matthew's special source (*Matthew* 14–28, 627–28); Jones argues that there is no stylistic break at 22:10 because verses 11–12 contain signs of pre-Matthean material with only weak evidence for Matthean authorship, as is true of Matt 22:2–12 as a whole (*Matthean Parables*, 406–8).

are called, but few are chosen” (22:14 ESV). Robbins identifies what he calls the parable of the compassionate Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37) as being framed by an opening scene (10:25–27) and closing scene (10:36–37), with the middle as a story with its own opening-middle-texture (10:30, 31–34, 35).⁴³ Similarly, the story told in Matt 22:2–13 has its own opening-middle-closing texture. The first words spoken by Jesus introduce this story as one concerned with the kingdom of heaven (Matt 22:2). The closing texture of the story is the reference to the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (22:13). The story is then followed by an evaluative statement (22:14), like a rabbinic parable.⁴⁴

In Hebrew, the word for parable is *mashal* (משל), which means “likeness” or “similarity.” In the Hebrew Bible, *mashal* refers to a variety of figures of speech, including similes, metaphors, proverbs, and allegories, and in rabbinic literature *mashal* became a title for parables and fables.⁴⁵ The *mashal* is considered so important in rabbinic exegesis that it is said, “Until Solomon invented the משל, no one could understand Torah at all” (Song of Songs Rabbah).⁴⁶ The literary form of the rabbinic *mashal* includes identifiable elements.⁴⁷ The formula *mashal le*, translated as “similarly” or “it is like,” is the marker of comparison, which introduces the story used to reflect on a verse of scripture and any question or concern that this text raises. The conjunction *kakh*, “similarly” or “therefore,” is the marker of applicability, which introduces the *nimshal*, the associated explanation or interpretation. This may include one or more prooftexts, which either reiterate or supply additional scriptural references, giving rise to the midrash.⁴⁸

Matthew 22:1–14 complies with this template of a *mashal* in several ways,⁴⁹ although a rabbinic *mashal* illustrates the teaching of a rabbi regarding a verse of scripture, whereas this parable illustrates the teaching of Jesus regarding the dominion of heaven (22:1–2). The use of the

43. Robbins, “Sensory-Aesthetic Texture,” 252.

44. Daniel C. Olson, “Matthew 22:1–14 as Midrash,” *CBQ* 67 (2005): 435–53.

45. David Stern, *Parables in Midrash: Narrative and Rhetoric in Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 9–10.

46. Daniel Boyarin, *Sparks of the Logos: Essays in Rabbinic Hermeneutics* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 93.

47. Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 24; Alan Appelbaum, *The Rabbis’ King-Parables: Midrash from the Third Century Roman Empire* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2010), 281.

48. David Stern, “Rhetoric and Midrash: The Case of the *Mashal*,” *Proof* 1.3 (1981): 266.

49. Olson, “Matthew 22:1–14 as Midrash,” 435–53.

passive of the verb ὁμοιῶ to introduce the parable of the royal wedding feast (22:2) corresponds to “similarly,” *mashal le*. The *mashal* proper follows with a king as the main narrative agent (22:2–13). The saying usually translated as “for many are called, but few are chosen” (22:14 NRSV) is introduced by γάρ; although this is a weak marker of applicability, it corresponds with *kakh*, “therefore,” which introduces the *nimshal* of a rabbinic *mashal*.⁵⁰

Daniel Olson proposes that Matt 22:14 functions as a combined *nimshal* and proof-text, unlike the parable which precedes it. The parable of the tenants (21:33–44) concludes with both a citation of scripture as a proof-text (21:42) as well as a *nimshal* (21:43–44).⁵¹ Olson argues that “for many are invited” is an allusion to Zeph 1 and “few are chosen” to the Book of Watchers (1 En. 1–36). He notes that the midrashic combination of these two texts is also evident in the Similitudes of Enoch (1 En. 37–71).⁵²

In summary, the opening, middle, and closing textures of the parable of the royal wedding feast correspond to the *mashal-nimshal* pattern of rabbinic parables, with a setting (22:1) and a comparative story (22:2–13) followed by a *nimshal*-like concluding statement (22:14).

1.2.2. Double Sequence of Invitation and Response

The *mashal* proper of the parable of the royal wedding feast (Matt 22:2–13) has a double sequence of invitation and response, as presented in table 1.6.⁵³

50. Appelbaum, *Rabbis' King-Parables*, 283.

51. Olson, “Matthew 22:1–14 as Midrash,” 437.

52. Olson, “Matthew 22:1–14 as Midrash,” 437.

53. Andries van Aarde makes the case for this double sequence of events. See Aarde, “Plot as Mediated through Point of View: Mt: 22:1–14—A Case Study,” in *A South African Perspective on the New Testament: Essays by South African New Testament Scholars Presented to Bruce Manning Metzger during His Visit to South Africa in 1985*, ed. Jacobus H. Petzer and Patrick J. Hartin (Leiden: Brill, 1986), 67; see also Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:193; Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 46; Andries van Aarde, *God-with-Us: The Dominant Perspective in Matthew's Story and Other Essays*, HvTStSup 5 (Pretoria: HTS, 1994), 240–47.

Table 1.6. Double Opening-Middle-Closing Textures in Matthew 22:2–14

	Rejection of Invitation	Acceptance of Invitation
King invites, because ...	vv. 2–3a	v. 8–9
Response to invitation	v. 3b rejection	v. 10 acceptance
King's reaction to response	v. 4 more invitation	v. 11–12b enters feast and asks question
Response to king	v. 5 rejection v. 6 violence	v. 12c silence
King's punishment	v. 7 death and destruction	v. 13 binding and casting out.
Evaluative Statement	v. 8 not worthy	v. 14 many called, few chosen.

Each sequence opens with an invitation from the king, has a middle in which the invitation is rejected (first sequence) or accepted (second sequence), and ends with punishment administered by royal decree. Overall, the king invites people to his son's wedding feast three times (22:3, 4, 8–9), but the first two are considered together as part of the first sequence because, in response to both these invitations, those invited do not come (22: 2–8).

The reason for the first sequence of invitation and response is the wedding of the king's son (22:2), and the reason for the second is that the feast is ready, requiring guests to eat it (8–9). The king's speech in verses 8 and 9 is at the center of the parable. It both completes the first sequence with the declaration of unworthiness (22:8) and begins the second sequence (22:9). Nolland suggests that the extravagant generosity of extending the feast beyond those first invited is at the heart of this parable (22:9).⁵⁴ It is indeed at the literary center of the parable, but this message is overshadowed by what precedes and what follows.

At the end of each sequence, there is an evaluative comment with some ambiguity regarding to whom it refers. First, the king states that the invitees are unworthy of the feast he has ready (22:8). The *τότε* implies that this statement refers specifically to those who killed the slaves (22:6) although the *κεκλημένοι* invites association with all the invitees who refuse to come (22:3, 4, 8). At the end of the second sequence, the storyteller observes,

54. Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 888.

“many are called, but few are chosen” (22:14 NRSV). The “many” probably refers to both the initial invitees and all the bad and good gathered into the wedding feast, but the “few” is more ambiguous. Once one person is removed, the remainder of those who fill the wedding hall is more than a few. Ben Meyer helpfully suggests that, based on Semitic idiom in Greek translation, πολλοί (many) may be better translated as “all,” and ὀλίγοι (few) as “not all.”⁵⁵ Matthew 22:14 could then be understood as “more numerous those called, less numerous are those chosen.”⁵⁶ With this translation, the expulsion of one person (22:13) leaves a remainder of “not all,” which makes more narrative sense than “few.”⁵⁷

1.2.3. Summary of Opening-Middle-Closing Texture

In summary, Matt 22:1–14 is framed by the parable proper being introduced as one of several told by Jesus in Matt 22:1 and the concluding statement in Matt 22:14. The middle has a double sequence of minor opening-middle-closing textures, with openings characterized by the king sending out slaves to convey invitations to come to the wedding feast (22:2, 9) and closings characterized by punishment (22:7, 13) followed by a statement regarding inclusion and exclusion (22:8, 14). The first sequence (22:2–8) concerns rejection of the invitation, and the second sequence (22:9–13), acceptance of the invitation. At the center of the parable, as part of the same speech event (22:8–9), the two sequences are held together by the king's assessment of the first invited (22:8) and his consequent instruction to his slaves to bring in people from the thoroughfares (22:9).

55. Ben F. Meyer, “Many (= All) Are Called, but Few (= Not All) Are Chosen,” *NTS* 36 (1990): 89–97, cited in Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3: 207; Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 625; Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 350; Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 45; Nolland, *Matthew*, 891; Wesley G. Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy of Parables: The Nation, the Nations and the Reader in Matthew 21:28–22:14*, SNTSMS 127 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 127; David L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 524; Grant R. Osborne, *Matthew: Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 803.

56. Meyer, “Many (=All),” 89–97.

57. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:207; Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 625; Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 350; Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 45, 5; Olmstead, *Matthew's Trilogy of Parables*, 127; Turner, *Matthew*, 524; Osborne, *Matthew*, 803.

1.3. The Narratological Texture: Point of View Analysis

My exploration of the narrative of the parable of the royal wedding feast employs perspective (point of view) criticism, which New Testament critics have developed from Boris Uspensky's narrative planes.⁵⁸ He identifies and elaborates on four narrative planes: spatial-temporal, phraseological, psychological, and ideological.⁵⁹ Matthew's Gospel has been studied utilizing these narrative planes, with one of the earliest studies centered on this parable.⁶⁰ Andries van Aarde's study of Matt 22:1–14 focused on the ideological point of view, particularly in terms of allegorical reading. I outline all the narrative planes of the story told by Jesus (22:2–13), deferring consideration of allegorical meanings to the argumentative-texture analysis.

1.3.1. Spatial Perspective

The spatial narrative plane concerns the narrator's vantage point, whether it is fixed or roving or whether it is centered on or from one or more people in the narrative space.⁶¹ The parable of the royal wedding feast opens with the king at the center of the story. The spotlight, so to speak, is on the king and his call to come to his son's wedding feast (22:3, 4, 9). The king acts centrifugally by sending out his slaves (22:3, 4, 9) and troops (22:7) and exerts centripetal force as the slaves bring in those they find (22:10). They are to seek out people from τὰς διεξόδους τῶν ὁδῶν (22:9), literally "the crossroads of the roads," where a thoroughfare cuts through the city

58. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 167–196; Yamasaki, *Perspective Criticism*; Norman Peterson, "'Point of View' in Mark's Narrative," *Semeia* 12 (1978), 102–7.

59. Uspensky, *Poetics of Composition*.

60. Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 53–77; David B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990), 161–203; Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1988), 31–37; Mark Allan Powell, "Direct and Indirect Phraseology in the Gospel of Matthew," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1991 Seminar Papers*, SBLSP 30 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1991), 405–17; Dorothy Jean Weaver, *Matthew's Missionary Discourse: A Literary-Critical Analysis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990), 31–70; Warren Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), especially chapters 8 and 9; Aarde, "Plot as Mediated," 62–75.

61. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 171.

boundary and runs out into the open country.⁶² In ancient cities, the ruler and his retainers were most likely to live in the center of the city, and the most marginalized (and therefore least likely to receive an invitation to a royal feast) would live furthest from the center and closest to the edge of the city.⁶³ The slaves who go out from the king to find people go towards the outskirts of the city and perhaps beyond to bring people into the wedding feast. Some focus on the urgency of the meal being read. They suggest that the slaves gather in the replacement guests from the crossroads at the edge of the city.⁶⁴ Others focus on the expansiveness of the invitation and describe the slaves going out to the country roads, perhaps even as far as the borders of the kingdom.⁶⁵

Once the wedding hall is full of dinner guests, the king comes in to see them (22:10–11), the one scene in which the king makes an entrance in this parable. When the king sees an individual without wedding clothes, he has this person cast out of the wedding feast into the darkness beyond the festivities, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (22:13). Spatially, this is outside the wedding feast and at a distance from the king, around whom the spatial plane centers. Often the translation of εἰς τὸ σκότος τὸ ἑξώτερον is “into the outer darkness” (e.g., NRSV, ESV), but Kim Papaioannou argues that in this phrase, ἑξώτερος is not a superlative and that “darkness outside” makes a better translation.⁶⁶ He observes that the need for lamps in the parable of the ten virgins (25:1–10) suggests that wedding festivities take place at night, when it is dark outside.⁶⁷ Narratively, the outer darkness could simply be the darkness of being outside the circle of light; however, “weep-

62. BDAG, s.v. “Διέξοδος”; Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:203; Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, SP 1 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1991), 306; Alexander Balmain Bruce, *The Synoptic Gospels*, ed. W. Robertson Nicoll, *The Expositor's Greek Testament* 1 (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 271.

63. Richard L. Rohrbaugh, “The Pre-industrial City in Luke-Acts: Urban Social Relations,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts*, ed. Jerome Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1990), 133–46.

64. Bruce, *Synoptic Gospels*, 271.

65. Harrington, *Matthew*, 306; Luz, *Matthew* 21–28, 55.

66. Kim Papaioannou, *The Geography of Hell in the Teaching of Jesus: Gehenna, Hades, The Abyss, The Outer Darkness Where There is Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2013), 240.

67. Papaioannou, *Geography of Hell*, 198.

ing and gnashing of teeth” does suggest something more sinister. This phrase is in the future tense, which raises the question of the temporal plane of this parable.

1.3.2. Temporal Perspective

Analysis of the temporal plane of a narrative identifies the position of the audience on the timeline of the story being told.⁶⁸ The parable of the royal wedding feast is mainly recounted in the past tense; however, the use of the historic present and direct speech brings the audience into the story to hear the king in real time.

In Koine Greek narrative, the skeletal structure is often in the aorist indicative, providing a bird’s eye view of the action.⁶⁹ In Matt 22:1–14, thirty-three of the fifty-five verbs are in the aorist. The aorist signals a past action undefined in terms of duration or state of completion,⁷⁰ whereas the perfect indicates a completed past action, and the imperfect a continuous or repeated action. In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the perfect tense indicates completed past actions: those called had already been invited (22:3, 4, 8); the preparations for the feast, ἡτοιμάξα and τεθυμένα, were complete (22:4); and the act of being dressed was complete, ἐνδεδυμένον (22:11). The imperfect features twice in the parable. It describes the choice not to come (22:3) and the continuing unworthiness of those decreed so by the king as ongoing (22:8). The parable includes only one verb in the future tense: ἔσται, used with reference to the place where there *will be* weeping and gnashing of teeth (22:13). There are several present tense verbs throughout the parable (22:1, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14).

Biblical narrative usually describes past events, to which readers can be “transported to a position right on the timeline itself” by the use of the historic present.⁷¹ This tense has the potential to synchronize, albeit briefly, “the temporal positions of the narrator, characters, and implied reader.”⁷² By means of the present tense participle λέγων (saying), Jesus

68. Yamasaki, *Perspective Criticism*, 69.

69. Constantine R. Campbell, *The Basics of Verbal Aspect in Biblical Greek* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 38.

70. Frank Stagg, “The Abused Aorist,” *JBL* 91.2 (1972): 222–31.

71. Yamasaki, *Perspective Criticism*, 69.

72. Anderson cites Matt 22:41–46 as an example (*Matthew’s Narrative Web*, 64).

addresses the reader as well as the parable audience through this narrative (22:1).⁷³ Most of the words spoken by the king are introduced using the historic present: “saying,” λέγων (22:4), or “he says,” λέγει (22:8, 12; cf. 22:13). The king speaks in the present tense in the following instances: in the imperative to come to the wedding feast (22:4), in the statement that this feast is (ἐστίν) ready (22:8), in the instruction to go out (πορεύεσθε) and gather people (22:9), and in the question about not having (ἔχων) wedding clothing (22:12). The present participle of ἀνάκειμαι, literally “to recline,” the Greco-Roman position in which to dine, describes the dinner guests (22:10, 11). The concluding statement is also in the present tense (22:14). The use of the present tense in this parable creates an immediacy with the audience, drawing them into the temporal plane of the narrative.⁷⁴

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, only the king speaks, and his voice occupies a significant proportion of the time it takes to recount this story (22:4, 8–9, 12a, 13). The parable varies in pace, slowing to speech pace when there is direct discourse (22:4, 8–9) and hastening when the time taken to narrate the event is less than the length of time needed for the event to occur (22:3, 6–7).⁷⁵

There are two moments in the parable of the royal wedding feast when the temporal flow of the narrative is so disrupted that the verisimilitude of this parable's being a realistic fiction is so stretched that there is a tendency for the focus to be on allegorical interpretation.⁷⁶ The first concerns the readiness of the feast both before and after the events of verses 6 and 7 (22:4, 8). The second is that a guest needs to be wearing wedding clothing when gathered in from the thoroughfares at short notice (22:9–13). It would undoubtedly take some time for the king to mobilize troops to kill the slave slayers and burn their city (22:7), and therefore many ask how the food is ready both before and after (22:4, 8) and does not cool or spoil while this battle is fought.⁷⁷ This continuity issue stretches the realism of this parable,⁷⁸ but it does not necessarily destroy it. In Matt 22:4, the king

73. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 36; Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 173.

74. Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 888.

75. Yamasaki, *Perspective Criticism*, 77, 84.

76. Kloppenborg discusses the description of parables as realistic fiction (*Tenants*, 106–44).

77. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 29–30.

78. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 300; Douglas R. A. Hare, *Matthew*, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching (Louisville: Westminster John

describes the readiness of ἄριστον, a relatively rare New Testament word (Matt 22:4; Luke 11:48; 14:12) meaning the early meal of the day.⁷⁹ Festivities set to begin at lunchtime could be delayed until later that day or even until another day given that biblical wedding festivities seem to extend over a week (Gen 29:28, Judg 14:12) or two (Tob 10:7). Also, the king need not wait for his troops to return before sending his slaves out to gather replacement guests.⁸⁰

To address the concern about people brought in at short notice having time to change into clothing suitable for a wedding,⁸¹ Derrett and Snodgrass emphasize that, unlike Luke's similar parable (14:15–24), the replacement guests in Matthew (22:9–10) are not compelled to come and are not necessarily poor. Therefore, they argue, these replacement guests would have had the time and the resources to make suitable preparation for attendance at a royal wedding feast.⁸²

The king's question about wearing wedding clothing is so confronting (22:12) because it addresses "us" directly in the present tense with a challenge once "we" have identified with the replacement guests.

1.3.3. Psychological and Phraseological Perspectives

The phraseological narrative plane includes what characters say (what comes out of a character), whereas the psychological narrative plane is what characters think and feel (what is inside a character).⁸³ The psychological perspective is composed of what the narrator chooses to share about a character's thoughts, feelings, intentions, attitude, or experience.⁸⁴ The parable of the royal wedding feast is recounted in the third person, revealing little of the interiority of any of the narrative agents apart from the king's being enraged (ὠργισθῇ) by the killing of his slaves (22:6–7). The narrator provides no rationale for the invitees killing the king's slaves

Knox, 2009), 252; Thomas G. Long, *Matthew*, Westminster Bible Companion Series (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 247.

79. Schweizer, *Good News*, 420.

80. Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 887.

81. Long, *Matthew*, 247; Schweizer, *Good News*, 416; Hare, *Matthew*, 252.

82. John Duncan M. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament* (repr., Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005), 154; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 341.

83. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 190.

84. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 36; Weaver provides a more complex description of psychological point of view (*Matthew's Missionary Discourse*, 49–50).

(22:6), unlike the parable of the tenants, where the tenants express their reasons for killing the heir by speaking among themselves (21:38).

The phraseological plane focuses on the voices through whom the story is told. This includes both diegetic discourse in the narrator's own voice and mimetic discourse in the form of direct speech, letters, or journals in the voice of various characters.⁸⁵ In the parable of the royal wedding feast, there are only two voices, the narrator and the king, thereby underlining the authority of the king.⁸⁶ The king speaks mainly to give instruction (22:4, 9, 13) but also to evaluate (22:8) and to question (22:12). When the king gives instructions to his slaves (22:4, 9) or to his attendants (22:13), more than twenty words are spoken. The king communicates more than a third of the words of the narrative of the parable within four utterances (22:4, 8–9, 12, 13).⁸⁷

1.3.4. Ideological Perspective

“The ideological point of view refers to the norms, values, beliefs, and general worldview of the narrator.”⁸⁸ In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the same ideological perspective is conveyed through the words of the narrator and of the king. The narrator makes no negative comments about the king, his actions, or his words. The narrator provides some explanation for the king's acting as he does (22:7), but little or none for why others act as they do. The narrator gives no indication of why the majority of the invitees kill the message-bearing slaves (22:5), calling them murderers (φονεῖς) in ideological alignment with the enraged king who commands his troops to destroy them.⁸⁹ The narrator stresses the need for wedding clothing (22:11–12), apparently considering the lack thereof sufficient reason for the king to interrogate and expel the person without wedding clothing. The narrator's comment that only few are chosen (22:14) echoes the evaluation of the king that many are unworthy (22:8). The unworthy guests of the first

85. Weaver, *Matthew's Missionary Discourse*, 43.

86. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:194.

87. Davies and Allison describe the parable as dominated by direct speech (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:194). In the Greek text of Matt 22:2–13, 85 of a total of 218 words are spoken by the king.

88. Resseguie, *Narrative Criticism*, 172.

89. Aarde, *God-with-Us*, 42.

sequence and the cast-out guest in the second are both distant from the king ideologically and thereby aligned with each other in this regard.⁹⁰

Resistant readings of the parable of the royal wedding feast side with the expelled guest and align themselves against the king, arguing that such a tyrant could not represent God.⁹¹ However, Jesus is the narrator of this parable, and the narrator is in ideological alignment with the king, which presents a serious obstacle to such an interpretative line.

1.3.5. Point of View in the Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast

In addition to the consideration of narrative planes, point of view analysis also includes consideration of first- or third-person narration and the degree of narrator omniscience and intrusiveness.⁹² The parable of the royal wedding feast is predominantly third-person narrative; however, with a third of the words of this parable being spoken by the king, some of the storyline is in the second person.

The narrator is spatially-temporally omniscient, referring to what happens when the king sends out his slaves to convey his invitation (22:3b, 5, 6, 10) and when he sends out his troops (22:7), as well as recounting what happens in closer proximity to the king (22:2, 3a, 4, 8–9, 11–13). The narrator is not omniscient or intrusive in the psychological plane, revealing little interiority of any of the narrative agents. The only emotion recorded by the narrator is the king's anger (22:7).

The phraseological plane and the ideological plane of this parable closely align,⁹³ stressing the desirability of responding appropriately to the king's generous hospitality. The use of the historic present enhances the rhetorical force of the parable by bringing the story, particularly the king's words, into the time of the audience. Given issues of continuity in the temporal plane, some question the verisimilitude of this parable, arguing that only allegorical interpretation of this parable is possible.⁹⁴

90. Aarde, "Point of View," 67–68.

91. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 1–2, 38–48; Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 46–77.

92. Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 53–54.

93. Anderson considers the ideological and phraseological planes of Matthew's Gospel so aligned that she considers them together (*Matthew's Narrative Web*, 56–62).

94. Hare gives allegory as an explanation three times in almost as many sentences (*Matthew*, 252).

1.4. Argumentative Texture: Rhetoric, Parable, and Allegory

Parables are rhetorical in nature: their purpose is to persuade their audience to a particular way of seeing the world and to live in it accordingly.⁹⁵ In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the use of vivid imagery contributes both to making judgments about the past and to changing behavior in the future. Graphic descriptions are both conciliatory (22:4, 9) and threatening (22:7, 13), with additional force in allegorical readings where the king represents God.

Parable narratives are more than illustrative of an idea. By painting a picture and engaging the audience emotionally, parables persuade each hearer to make a judgment and act in a certain way.⁹⁶ Robbins has coined the term *rhetography* for the descriptive, picturing, narrative-building dimension of topoi and coined the term *rhetology* for the enthymematic, argumentative, syllogistic dimension.⁹⁷ Parables are predominantly, but not exclusively, rhetography.⁹⁸ The parable of the royal wedding feast makes powerful use of rhetography, especially in the final scene (22:13).

In longer parables, narrative plays an important role in leading the audience from what seems to be an ordinary, everyday situation to revealing this as a strange world where things are radically different.⁹⁹ Some argue that the royal-wedding setting of this parable lacks this necessary verisimilitude because the story does not represent the everyday world of the first audience of the gospels.¹⁰⁰ However, the arbitrary exercise of royal power and rough treatment of slaves in this parable is consistent with its first-century social setting,¹⁰¹ even if the first hearers were not familiar with the inside of a palace themselves.

The parable of the royal wedding feast compares the dominion of heaven to a human king inviting people to his son's wedding. I consider this narrative (Matt 22:1–14) an organic whole in which each part functions in

95. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 3; Dodd, *Parables of the Kingdom*, 22–24; Funk, *Language*, 153–54.

96. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 29; Funk, *Language*, 144; A. T. Cadoux, *The Parables: Their Art and Use* (New York: Macmillan, 1931), 97.

97. Robbins, "Social-rhetorical Criticism," 313.

98. Robbins, "Sensory-Aesthetic Texture," 253.

99. Funk, *Language*, 161.

100. Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 162–63.

101. See Jennifer Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (repr., Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006), 112–18.

relation to the other parts in the development of the analogy, but without one-to-one correspondences for every element of the parable.¹⁰² Snodgrass argues that parables depict actual realities partially, using hyperbole to make people think, question, and see things differently.¹⁰³ “They are mirrors of reality—angled at different degrees to shock and arrest and move people to response.”¹⁰⁴

There is little doubt that the parable of the royal wedding feast evokes a response from its audience. However, there is debate about whether this is to cast judgment on the past, like the forensic rhetoric of the courtroom or to change behavior in the future, like the deliberative rhetoric of the public forum.¹⁰⁵ The parable is often described as forensic rhetoric inviting the audience to join in passing judgment on Israel.¹⁰⁶ Eduard Schweizer considers there to be a shift from forensic rhetoric in Matt 22:2–10 to deliberative rhetoric in Matt 22:11–13, warning the church with the example of Israel.¹⁰⁷ Similarly, Olmstead describes verse 10 as marking a transition from polemic to paraenesis.¹⁰⁸ There is, however, no stated change of audience during the course of this parable. Furthermore, the use of the historic present and direct address of the king lace this parable with deliberative rhetoric throughout, encouraging the audience to choose to come to the feast (22:4), to seek out those on the streets to bring into the feast (22:9), and to wear the required wedding clothing (22:12).

Schottroff describes the parable of the royal wedding feast as politics with a carrot and a stick, using evocative imagery for what Craig Evans calls the conciliatory or threatening rhetoric of parables.¹⁰⁹ Conciliatory

102. Funk, *Language*, 147; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 26, 27, 29; Tolbert, *Perspectives on the Parables*, 71.

103. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 27.

104. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 29.

105. Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready*, 35, 365.

106. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 27; Allan W. Martens, “‘Produce Fruit Worthy of Repentance’: Parables of Judgment against Jewish Religious Leaders and the Nation (Matt 21:28–22:14, par. Luke 13:6–9),” in *The Challenge of Jesus’ Parables*, ed. Richard N. Longnecker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 151–76.

107. Schweizer, *Good News*, 400–403.

108. Olmstead, *Matthew’s Trilogy of Parables*, 125–29.

109. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 38, 283; Craig Evans, “Jesus’ Rhetoric of Criticism: The Parables against His Friends and Critics,” in *Rhetorical Criticism and the Bible: Essays from the 1998 Florence Conference*, ed. Stanley E. Porter and Dennis L. Stamps (London: Sheffield Academic, 2002), 256–79.

rhetoric invites people to rethink their position and consider siding with Jesus, whereas threatening rhetoric portrays dire consequences for those who do not hear the word of God.¹¹⁰ The parable of the royal wedding feast includes both. Conciliatory rhetoric is found in the invitation of the king to come to the feast, which has a pleasing repetition of sounds in ἡτοιμάμακα, τεθυμένα, and ἔτοιμα (22:4).¹¹¹ Threatening rhetoric occurs in the references to the burning city (22:7) and to expulsion to the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (22:13).¹¹² The imagery of the threatening rhetoric is so vivid that the conciliatory rhetoric of the parable tends to be overshadowed.

Snodgrass suggests that the more prophetic a parable, the more obvious references external to the parable itself are. He singles out the parable of the royal wedding feast as an example of a diaphanous parable.¹¹³ “Unlike Luke’s account, Matthew’s story does not remain on the narrative level.... It is almost diaphanous in that one sees through to the reality almost from the first. In fact, one sees more of the reality than the parable.”¹¹⁴ This reality alludes to the allegorical interpretation of this parable.

There is almost universal agreement that the parable of the royal wedding feast is allegorical.¹¹⁵ The king is considered to represent God; the son, Jesus; and the marriage feast, the eschatological banquet (Isa 25:6–8) or the great marriage feast of the Lamb (Rev 19:9).¹¹⁶ The two sets of slaves sent out by the king (22:3a, 4) are understood as, first, the former and latter

110. Evans, “Jesus’ Rhetoric of Criticism,” 270–71, 275.

111. Hagner describes this threefold repetition of sounds as “euphonic if not syntactic parallelism” (*Matthew 14–28*, 628).

112. Evans, “Jesus’ Rhetoric of Criticism,” 267–68.

113. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 21–22, 318; Nalpathilchira employs this imagery in a subheading: “A Diaphanous Parable with Explication of its Referents” (*Everything Is Ready*, 73–74).

114. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 300.

115. Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 52; Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:196–97; Snodgrass asserts that scholars agree that Matt 22:1–14 is an allegory (*Stories with Intent*, 300). Michael D. Goulder rates Matt 22:1–14 as 95 percent allegory, whereas Luke 14:15–24 only scores as 64 percent allegory (*Midrash and Lecture in Matthew* [London: SPCK, 1974], 57–59). By contrast, Suk Kwan Wong develops a different measure of allegory and assesses Matt 22:1–14 as 50 percent and Luke 14:15–24 as 100 percent on her allegorical spectrum. See Wong, *Allegorical Spectrum of the Parables of Jesus* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2017), 52–54.

116. Long, *Matthew*, 246.

prophets and, second, the first prophets of Israel, then John the Baptist, Jesus and his disciples.¹¹⁷ Alternatively, they are understood as the first prophets then the apostles and missionaries of the early church.¹¹⁸ Most consider those first invited to refer to Israel and hence view the first slaves as the prophets of the Hebrew Bible (22:3) and the second group as the prophets and missionaries associated with Jesus (22:4), including John the Baptist among those prophet-slaves killed by “the rest” (22:6).¹¹⁹ The slaves sent out to gather people from the streets as replacement guests are often associated with the disciples commissioned by Jesus to go out to all nations at the conclusion of the Gospel of Matthew (28:16–20).¹²⁰

The parable of the royal wedding feast is often described as a summary, a “sweeping overview,” of salvation history, marking the shift from the pre-Easter mission to Israel (22:2–8) to a more universal post-Easter mission focused on gentiles (22:9–10).¹²¹ The king’s army and destruction of “their city” (22:7) are generally assumed to allude to the destruction of Jerusalem by Roman imperial forces in 70 CE.¹²² In such a schema, the first part of the parable (22:1–10) refers to the pre-Easter mission to the “Jewish nation” (10:5–42), and the latter part (22:11–13) to “the Christian society waiting for the coming kingdom.” Consequently, the wedding garment refers to ways in which Christians

117. Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 437; Hagner, *Matthew* 14–28, 630.

118. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 822.

119. Boucher, *Parables*, 109; Hultgren, *Parables*, 344.

120. See, for example, Graham Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 153, “finally the Gentiles are summoned to the Marriage Feast.”

121. Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 343–49; Long, *Matthew*, 246; Aarde, “Point of View,” 62–75.

122. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:131; David Sim, “The Social and Religious Milieu of Matthew,” in *Matthew, James and the Didache: Three Related Documents in Their Jewish and Christian Setting*, ed. Huub van de Sandt and Jürgen K. Zangerberg, SymS 45 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 16–19; even Nolland reflects on the use of the fall of Jerusalem as a “Watershed for Dating” in some detail (*Gospel of Matthew*, 14–16). Margaret Davies suggests possible association with the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians in the sixth century BCE. See Margaret Davies, *Matthew*, Readings: A New Biblical Commentary Series (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 151.

are to be in a state of readiness, as in the parable of the ten virgins (Matt 25:1–13).¹²³

These allegorical readings of the parable approach it from the temporal perspective that considers when Matthew's Gospel was written: the late first century. Within the narrative of Matt 21–23, Jesus tells the parable of the royal wedding feast to an audience composed of Jewish religious leaders prior to the fall of Jerusalem. It is plausible that these Jewish leaders would have also heard this parable as an allegory with the king representing God. For them, the slaves might represent prophets, and the good and bad who are brought into the wedding feast (22:10) might represent "tax collectors and prostitutes" (21:31 NRSV).¹²⁴ The audience of Jewish religious leaders could have assumed that Jesus was alluding to himself as the king's son because earlier in the gospel he alludes to himself as a bridegroom (9:15). Tax collectors are a catchphrase to facilitate such a connection because Jesus uses the bridegroom imagery when he responds to criticism for eating with tax collectors and sinners (9:10–11), and the leaders have just been told tax collectors will enter the kingdom of God ahead of "you" (21:31).¹²⁵ The leaders seem to recognize a negative portrayal of themselves in the parable because they respond by plotting against Jesus (22:15).¹²⁶

Snodgrass states of the parable of the royal wedding feast that "one knows quickly that this cannot be a story of an actual wedding; rather it depicts the failure of Israel. To treat it as a realistic picture is a huge distortion."¹²⁷ Therefore, he argues, no explanation is needed, unlike those

123. Allen, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 236; Derrett, *Law*, 142–54; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 27, 341.

124. Amy-Jill Levine, *Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Salvation History* (Lewiston, NY: Mellen, 1988), 212–13; Dennis C. Duling acknowledges Levine's role in changing the understanding of the final gathering as the mission to the gentiles (*A Marginal Scribe: Studies of Matthew in a Social-Science Perspective* [Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2012], 40–41). This is evident in recent commentaries: both France (*Gospel of Matthew*, 822) and Turner (*Matthew*, 208) consider it doubtful that the parable of the royal wedding feast portrays a redemptive-historical transition from Jews to gentiles.

125. Phillip Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom: The Origin of the Eschatological Feast as a Wedding Banquet in the Synoptic Gospels* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2013).

126. Sim, "The Man Without the Wedding Garment (Matthew 22:11–13)," *Heythorp Journal* 31 (1990): 165–78.

127. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 27.

supplied for the parables of the sower (Matt 13:1–9, 18–23), the wheat and the weeds (13:24–30, 36–43), and the dragnet (13:47–50).¹²⁸ Snodgrass argues that the allegory is so obvious, the “surface narrative is close to not being there at all.”¹²⁹ I am not as convinced that the “surface narrative” is almost completely absent. The narrative involves at least two hundred words, with no explicit connections made between the story elements and their allegorical referents. This statement also seems at variance with one of his recommendations for parable interpretation, namely, “interpret what is given, not what is omitted.”¹³⁰ The problem with this parable is not the thinness of the narrative, but the thickness of the violence when assuming the king represents God. Snodgrass tends to protect God from accusations of violence, stating that God does not employ torturers (Matt 18:34), dichotomize people (24:51), or reap where he does not sow (25:24); rather, he argues, such statements are hyperbolic warnings typical of parabolic rhetoric.¹³¹ Given this concern for distancing God from parabolic violence, it is perhaps no surprise that Snodgrass describes the parable of the royal wedding feast as among the most difficult of parables, “enough to make any interpreter go weak in the knees.”¹³²

1.5. Sensory-Aesthetic Texture

Effective rhetoric engages the senses and emotions as well as the mind and thinking. Analysis of sensory-aesthetic texture explores how a text embodies and evokes thoughts, emotions, sight, sound, touch, taste, and smell by use of reason, intuition, imagination, and humor.¹³³ In the last decade, there have been a number of publications regarding the senses in studies of the ancient world, the Hebrew Bible, rabbinic literature, and early Christianity.¹³⁴ These will no doubt inform future explorations of the

128. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 34.

129. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 300.

130. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 29.

131. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 27, 29.

132. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 299.

133. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 29–30; Roy R. Jeal, *Exploring Philemon: Freedom, Brotherhood, and Partnership in the New Society*, RRA 2 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 13.

134. Robert Jütte, *A History of the Senses: From Antiquity to Cyberspace*, trans. James Lynn (Cambridge: Polity, 2005); Shane Butler and Alex Purves, ed., *Synaesthesia and the Ancient Senses* (London: Routledge, 2014); Mark Bradley, ed., *Smell and the*

sensory-aesthetic texture of texts, but here I limit my sensory-aesthetic exploration of the parable of the royal wedding feast to the process developed and employed by Robbins.¹³⁵

Robbins recommends identifying references to senses and their related body parts then grouping them according to Malina’s model of biblical anthropology: emotion-infused thought (eyes-heart), self-expressive speech (mouth-ears), and purposeful action (hands-feet).¹³⁶ This is a development of Bernard de Gérardon’s tripartite description of the human body in the Hebrew Bible: the will (eyes-heart), the expression of the will (ears-mouth), and the action of the will (hands-feet).¹³⁷ The words associated with these three body zones are recorded in table 1.7.

Table 1.7: Three Body Zones¹³⁸

Emotion-Infused Thought	Self-Expressive Speech	Purposeful Action
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Ancient Senses (London: Routledge, 2015); Michael Squire, ed., *Sight and the Ancient Senses* (London: Routledge, 2015); Kelli C. Rudolph, ed., *Taste and the Ancient Senses* (London: Routledge, 2017); Alex Purves, ed., *Touch and the Ancient Senses* (London: Routledge, 2017); Eleanor Betts, ed., *Senses of the Empire: Multisensory Approaches to Roman Culture* (London: Routledge, 2017); Yael Avrahami, *The Senses of Scripture: Sensory Perception in the Hebrew Bible* (London: T&T Clark, 2012); Deborah A. Green, *The Aroma of Righteousness: Scent and Seduction in Rabbinic Life and Literature* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2011); Louise Lawrence, “Exploring the Sense-Scape of the Gospel of Mark,” *JSNT* 33.4 (2011): 387–97; Jennifer A. Glancy, *Corporal Knowledge: Early Christian Bodies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Anne Elvey, *The Matter of the Text: Material Engagements between Luke and the Five Senses*, *The Bible in the Modern World* 37 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2011).

135. Robbins explores Mark 15–16 (*Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 32–36); Robbins explores 1 Cor 9 (*Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 89–91); Vernon K. Robbins, “Rhetorical Ritual: Apocalyptic Discourse in Mark 13,” in *Vision and Persuasion: Rhetorical Dimensions of Apocalyptic Discourse*, ed. Gregory Carey and L. Gregory Bloomquist (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1999), 95–121; Robbins, “Sensory-Aesthetic Texture,” 248–61.

136. Malina, *New Testament World*, 68–69.

137. T. Raymond Hobbs and P. Kenneth Jackson, “The Enemy in the Psalms,” *BTB* 21.1 (1991): 26; Malina, *New Testament World*, 69.

138. Malina lists the words that are included in this table (*New Testament World*, 69).

Organs	eyes, heart	head, mouth, ears, tongue, and teeth	hands, feet, fingers, arms, legs
Verbs	see, know, feel, think, understand, choose, remember	speak, hear, call, cry, question, sing, instruct, praise, blame, disobey	come, go, walk, stand, sit, act, accomplish, touch, steal, build
Nouns and Adjectives	thought, mind, will, intention, plan, love, hate, sadness, joy, wise, foolish, sight, blindness	speech, voice, call, silent, attentive	action, work, behavior, gesture, quick, slow
Our Culture	intellect, will, personality, affection	communication, dialogue	outward human behavior

Exploring the sensory-aesthetic texture of the parable of the royal wedding feast by these categories leads to two main findings. First, the king dominates the sensory-aesthetic texture of this parable, a dominance already observed in the exploration of the repetitive and narrative texture. Second, by binding the hands and feet of the one who is cast out, the potential to undertake purposeful action is curtailed.

The dominance of the king is evident in all three body zones. In the zone of self-expressive speech, the king is the only one to speak (22:4, 8–9, 12, 13). The use of the passive ἐφιμώθη to describe the silence with which the king's question is met implies being silenced or “muzzled” (22:12).¹³⁹ In the zone of emotion-infused thought, the king calls those invited to come and see (ἰδοὺ) that all is ready for the feast (22:4), and he is capable of two kinds of “seeing” when he comes into the feast (22:11–12): θεάσασθαι, from θεάομαι, and εἶδεν, from the more common ὁράω.¹⁴⁰ The king dominates the purposeful action in this parable by direct action (22:2–4, 11) or through his slaves (22:3, 4, 9–10), troops (22:7), and attendants (22:13), whereas others react to his actions (22:3b, 5–6).

When the king commands his attendants to cast out the inappropriately dressed individual, he is to be bound by the feet and hands (22:13), a detail superfluous to making sense of the narrative.¹⁴¹ Reference to these

139. Moulton, *Analytical Greek Lexicon Revised*, 427.

140. Further implications of the rhetoric of “seeing” will be discussed in chapter 2.

141. To use the language of literary critics, it could be called “redundant” as explained by Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 43–45.

body parts serves to stress that the potential of this person to do purposeful action of any kind is restricted. This raises the question of why the king orders this person to be so restrained. Perhaps this individual would otherwise act in a harmful way towards the other wedding guests. His removal might be perceived to benefit those dining at the royal wedding feast.

Malina argues that when a biblical text mentions all three body zones, it alludes to the whole of life. For example, Elisha brings a dead child alive by "putting his mouth upon his mouth, his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands" (2 Kgs 4:34 NRSV).¹⁴² To apply this to the expelled individual in Matt 22:13, the whole of this person's life is restricted: by darkness in the zone of emotion-infused thought, by unproductive dental activity in the zone of self-expressive speech, and by binding feet and hands in the zone of purposeful action.

In chapter 2, I will explore the sensory-aesthetic texture of the parable of the royal wedding feast further by considering rhetoric associated with seeing and blindness and with hands and feet in the wider context of Matthew's Gospel.

1.6. Conclusion

To summarize this exploration of the inner texture of the parable of the royal wedding feast, I report the following findings and the future directions of exploration they invite: analysis of the repetitive-progressive texture of this parable shows that the repetition of words for wedding, king, and calling, together with the use of various conjunctions, weave the disparate parts of this parable into a cohesive literary unit. In chapter 2, the repetitive-progressive threads that stitch this parable into the beginning-middle-closing textures of the Gospel of Matthew are traced. The beginning-middle-closing texture of the parable of the royal wedding feast follows a pattern like that of a rabbinic *mashal*, with "for many are called, few chosen" (22:14) acting similarly to a *nimshal*. In chapters 3 and 4, the parallels between this parable and rabbinic king parables are considered in more depth as part of the intertexture analysis. The king dominates the narrative planes of Matt 22:1–14. The only voices heard are his and that of the narrator, with whom the king is ideologically aligned. The narrator of this parable is Jesus. In chapter 2, parallels are drawn between

142. Malina, *New Testament World*, 70.

the narrative dominance of the king in the parable story told by Jesus and the narrative dominance of Jesus in the gospel story of Jesus told by Matthew. In the parable, the present-tense, second-person address calls, commissions, and confronts the audience in real time (22:4, 9, 12). When the parable is read allegorically, the king is cast as God, which makes the rhetography—argument by narrative-pictorial means—particularly challenging. The metaphor of God as king is discussed in detail in chapter 8, when sacred texture is explored. Exploring the sensory-aesthetic texture of this parable focuses attention on the explicit references to feet and hands in the royal command to restrain and remove the individual not wearing wedding clothing (22:13). In chapters 3 and 4, the intertexture of binding by the hands and feet in 1 En. 10 is explored. This follows chapter 2, where the imagery of excising hands and feet is identified in Matt 18. In the next chapter, exploration of inner texture moves back from a close reading of Matt 22:1–14, as undertaken in this first chapter, to look at the wider framing of the parable within the Gospel of Matthew as a whole.

The Parable in the Gospel of Matthew

In this chapter, my exploration of the fabric of the parable of the royal wedding feast extends from a narrow focus on the parable itself (as in chapter 1) to the broader scope of the parable within the inner textures of the Gospel of Matthew. First, I locate the parable of the royal wedding feast within the opening-middle-closing textures of the Gospel of Matthew then within increasingly smaller sections of the gospel framed by repetition. Second, I explore key words and phrases of the parable by tracing the threads of their repetitive-progressive texture through the weave of Matthew's Gospel. Third, I discuss how the narrative planes of the parable (story told by Jesus) align with the narrative planes of the gospel (story about Jesus). Fourth, in an analysis of sensory-aesthetic texture, I explore Matthean rhetoric of seeing and the topos of excision of body parts that cause stumbling and sin. All four of these inner-textural studies illuminate how the parable of the royal wedding feast is woven into the fabric of the Gospel of Matthew.

2.1. The Opening-Middle-Closing Textures

There are several proposals for how best to describe the opening-middle-closing texture of the Gospel of Matthew.¹ There is agreement that repetitions of key phrases are of structural significance despite a lack of consensus as to which are most significant in determining the literary structure.² Here, I discuss the place of the parable of the royal wedding

1. David Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew's Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, BLS 15 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1988), 11.

2. Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, rev. ed., trans. James E. Crouch, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 6; Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:88-95.

feast within two possible opening-middle-closing structures for the Gospel of Matthew. I also explore the location of the parable of the royal wedding feast within increasingly smaller sections of the gospel, each framed by *inclusio* repetitions.

2.1.1. The Parable as Part of the Narrative between Discourses

The Gospel of Matthew has a pattern of alternating narrative and discourse material. The repeated words *καὶ ἐγένετο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς* mark the end of the five major discourses (7:28, 11:1, 13:53, 19:1, and 26:1): the Sermon on the Mount (5:1–7:27), the Mission Discourse (9:36–10:42), the Parables Discourse (13:1–52), the Community Discourse (17:22–18:35), and the Eschatological Discourse (24–25). Benjamin Bacon proposed that therefore the Gospel of Matthew, like the Torah, consists of five books, each with a narrative-discourse pattern, preceded by a prologue (Matt 1–2), and concluded by an epilogue (26:3–28:20).³

The collection of teachings into discourses in the Gospel of Matthew is somewhat similar in format to that of ancient biography.⁴ Encomiastic writing, as described by Quintilian (*Inst.* 3.7.15), begins with origins, possibly including oracles and omens, and then recounts the virtues, deeds, speeches, and noble death of the subject.⁵ The contents of these may be grouped with greater concern for thematic development than chronological accuracy, as in the *Life of Moses* by Philo, *Apollonios of Tyana* by Philostratus, and the biographies by Plutarch (*Alex.* 37:4, 56:1) and Suetonius (*Aug.* 9, *Cal.* 22:1, *Nero* 19:3).⁶ There is discussion regarding the extent to which gospels conform to the pattern of Greco-Roman *βίοι*.

3. Benjamin W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (New York: Henry Holt, 1930), 80–90. See also Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 134–35.

4. Philip L. Schuler proposes that the gospel belongs to a category he describes as “encomiastic biography.” See Schuler, *A Genre for the Gospels: The Biographical Character of Matthew* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 75; cf. Graham Stanton, *Studies in Matthew and Early Christianity*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and David Lincicum, WUNT 309 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 100, in which the author questions whether the Gospel of Matthew can be linked with a particular strand of ancient biography.

5. Jerome Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 2–5, 90–162; Ulrich Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, trans. Rosemary Selle (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 74.

6. Craig S. Keener, “Suggestions for Future Study of Rhetoric and Matthew's Gospel,” *HvTSt* 66.1 (2010): art #812; Ulrich Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 73–76; Richard

Richard Burridge argues that there is enough variation between works classified as βίοι for the New Testament gospels to be considered as sharing a family resemblance to them.⁷ The βίοι all concentrate on the life of one person, either as history or encomium. They vary in the degree to which they focus on and combine four elements: moral philosophy, with an emphasis on ethics and imitation; religious or philosophical teaching; political belief and polemic; and narrative and rhetorical features to enhance interest and entertainment.⁸ All these four elements of βίοι are identifiable in Matthew's Gospel: moral philosophy in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7), religious teaching in the Parables Discourse (Matt 13), and polemic in Matt 23, and the gospel is a carefully constructed narrative with a beginning, middle, and end.

Allison convincingly argues that the purpose of Matthew's narrative-discourse-patterned biography is "mimetic following of Jesus, who is virtue embodied."⁹ By recording what Jesus did as well as what he said, and displaying congruence between the two, the author of Matthew's Gospel presents Jesus as the Messiah, "Torah incarnate, animate law."¹⁰ The narrative context for the sayings of Jesus distinguishes the Gospel of Matthew from collections of the sayings of the rabbis or the sayings of Jesus, such as Q and the Gospel of Thomas. In the New Testament gospels, as in the prophetic literature, especially the book of Jeremiah, speech content is embedded in narrative.¹¹

The parable of the royal wedding feast is part of the narrative between two discourses: the Community Discourse (Matt 18) and the Eschatological Discourse (Matt 24–25). The Matthean Jesus tells this parable, not as discursive teaching for his disciples, but as part of an ongoing confrontation with religious leaders in the Jerusalem temple (Matt 21–23). It is the third of three parables told in this context, and the three questions asked of Jesus following his telling of this parable are ploys to ensnare him

Burridge, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Greco-Roman Biography*, 2nd ed. (repr., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 247–51.

7. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, 184; Keener, "Suggestions for Future Study," 1–6.

8. Burridge, *What Are the Gospels?*, 64.

9. Dale C. Allison, *Studies in Matthew: Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 153.

10. Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 145.

11. Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 146.

(22:15–40). By contrast, the questions asked of Jesus in the discourses are genuine enquiries by the disciples (13:10, 36; 18:21).¹²

Two threads link the parable of the royal wedding feast with parables in both the preceding and following discourses. References to *king* are found in the parable of the two debtors, in the fourth discourse (18:23), and in the depiction of final judgment in the fifth discourse (25:34, 40). Description of individuals punished by their superior, such as in this parable (22:13), also concludes parables in both the Community Discourse (18:35) and in the Eschatological Discourse (24:51; 25:30).

Attempts have been made to develop the alternation of narrative and discourse into a chiasmic structure for the whole of the Gospel of Matthew.¹³ These place the Parables Discourse at the center of the chiasm, thereby inappropriately relativizing the importance of the whole of the trial, suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus.¹⁴ Narrative-based structures of Matthew's Gospel seek to address such imbalances of emphasis, and I consider them alongside the alternating discourse-narrative pattern.

2.1.2. The Parable within Matthew's Narrative

Jack Dean Kingsbury draws on the work of N. B. Stonehouse to recommend using the phrase ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς, "from then Jesus began" (4:17; 16:21), as the basis for structural division of Matthew's Gospel as narrative.¹⁵ The resultant three sections are: (1) "The Person of Jesus Mes-

12. Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 135.

13. C. H. Lohr, "Oral Techniques in the Gospel of Matthew," *CBQ* 23 (1961): 424–34; Peter F. Ellis, *Matthew: His Mind and His Message* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1974); H. J. Bernard Combrink, "The Structure of the Gospel of Matthew as Narrative," *TynBul* 34 (1983): 61–90; Gary W. Derickson, "Matthew's Chiastic Structure and Its Dispensational Implications," *BSac* 163 (2006): 423–37; Tyler J. VanderWeele, "Some Observations Concerning the Chiastic Structure of the Gospel of Matthew," *JTS* 59.2 (2008): 669–73.

14. Bauer, *Structure of Matthews Gospel*, 11; Luz notes chiastic configurations in sections of the gospel, but does not consider chiasm a structural feature of the composition of the whole gospel (*Matthew 1–7*, 3–7); Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:60.

15. Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 7–25; Kingsbury, "The Structure of Matthew and His Salvation-History," *CBQ* 35.4 (1973): 453, citing N. B. Stonehouse, *The Witness of Matthew and Mark to Christ* (London: Tyndale, 1944), 129–31.

siah” (1:1–4:16); (2) “The Proclamation of Jesus Messiah” (4:17–16:20); and (3) “The Suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Messiah” (16:21–28:20). The parable of the royal wedding feast is in the lengthy last section. Both Luz and Allison question whether this phrase bears the weight of such a tripartite structure.¹⁶

Many further subdivide Matthew’s narrative according to additional chronological, geographical, and narrative features. H. J. Combrink also suggests a three-part narrative structure: (1) setting, 1:1–4:17; (2) complication, 4:18–25:46; and (3) resolution, 26:1–28:20. He divides “the complication” into three further more manageable sections: 4:18–11:1, 11:2–16:20, and 16:21–25:46.¹⁷ This proposal maintains Matt 16:21 as a structural divider, as do the six narrative-block structures of Carter (1:1–4:16, 4:17–11:1, 11:2–16:20, 16:21–20:34, 21:1–27:66, 28:1–20) and Richard France (1:1–4:11; 4:12–16:20; 16:21–20:34; 21:1–25:46; 26:1–28:15; 28:16–20).¹⁸ Wim Weren proposes a structure for Matthew’s Gospel based on “hinge texts” that mark turning points in the narrative, both summarizing what has been and introducing what is to come.¹⁹ In his proposal (see table 2.1 below), the second ἀπὸ τότε statement (16:21) is part of the hinge text, Matt 16:13–28, which marks a shift from the focus on Galilee towards Jerusalem. Matthew 21:1–17 marks the arrival of Jesus in Jerusalem following his journey there (17:1–20:34) and sets the scene for what happens next in Jerusalem (21:18–25:46). This includes Jesus telling the parable of the royal wedding feast.

16. Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 4; Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 137.

17. Combrink, “Structure of the Gospel of Matthew,” 75.

18. Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller*; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 4.

19. Wim J. C. Weren, “The Macrostructure of Matthew’s Gospel: A New Proposal,” *Bib* 87 (2006): 171–200; Weren, *Studies in Matthew’s Gospel: Literary Design, Intertextuality, and Social Setting* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 13–41. Weren’s macrostructure is cited in Charles H. Talbert, *Matthew*, Paideia Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 6; David L. Turner, *Matthew*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014), 8.

Table 2.1. Weren’s Macrostructure of the Gospel of Matthew²⁰

1:1–4:11 overture	4:12–17 hinge	4:18–25:48 corpus						26:1–16 hinge	26:17–28:20 finale
		4:18–16:12 Galilee focus			16:13–28	17:1–25:46 Jerusalem focus			
		4:18–11:1	11:2–30	12:1–16:12		17:1–20:34 toward	21:1–17 entry	21:18–25:46 in	

The parable of the royal wedding feast occurs within the narrative between the Community Discourse (Matt 18) and Eschatological Discourse (Matt 24–25) and in the third part of the three-part narrative of Matthew’s Gospel promoted by Kingsbury (Matt 16:21–28:20). Within this large narrative block, the parable is found within what Weren describes as “Jerusalem focus” text (Matt 17:1–25:46) and more specifically after Jesus arrives in Jerusalem and engages in prophetic action and teaching (Matt 21–25).

2.1.3. King *Inclusio* Framing Jesus in Jerusalem (Matt 21–25)

Matthew 21–25 opens with Jesus riding into Jerusalem on a donkey as the prophesied king (21:1–11) and closes with the Son of Man coming in glory to judge the nations, when as king he will welcome “the sheep” into the kingdom (25:31–46).²¹ Within this king *inclusio* (21:5; 25:34, 40), Jesus tells a story about a king (22:1–14).

In Matt 21–25, Jesus is portrayed as pronouncing judgment.²² Schweizer describes Matt 21:23–25:46 as a double sequence of Jesus putting Israel on trial and then warning the church.²³ This pattern is shown in table 2.2.

20. Weren, “Macrostructure,” 200; Dorothy Jean Weaver also considers 9:35 as a hinge verse in 4:23–11:1 (*Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 73).

21. Jacob J. Scholtz, “Behold the Glory of the King: Chiastic Structures in Matthew 21–25,” *IDS* 49.1 (2015): art # 1856.

22. Alistair I. Wilson, *When Will These Things Happen? A Study of Jesus as Judge in Matthew 21–25* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2004).

23. Schweizer, *Good News*, 26.

Table 2.2. Structure of Matthew 21–25 (Schweizer)

	Matthew 21:23–22:14	Matthew 22:15–26:1
Israel put on trial	21:23–27	22:15–46
Verdict issued	21:28–32 (21:31)	23:1–32
Sentence declared	21:33–46 (21:41, 43)	23:33–36
Sentence executed	22:1–10 (22:7)	23:37–24:2
Church warned	22:11–14	24:3–25:46

There are several problems with this structure. First, the whole of Israel is considered as on trial rather than only the religious leaders who debate Jesus in this part of Matthew's narrative. Second, this section opens with the authority of Jesus being questioned rather than Israel being put on trial. Third, the execution of the sentence with respect to Jerusalem (22:7, 23:37–38) lies in the future for the audience of religious leaders within the narrative. My fourth concern is that the parables are treated in a reductionist way to cohere with the courtroom analogy, thereby overemphasizing discontinuity between Matt 22:1–10 and 22:11–14, where there is no obvious change of audience or location.

In contrast to Schweizer, Charles Talbert does not dissect the parable of the royal wedding feast. In Talbert's more natural outline of judgment in Matt 21–25, Jesus pronounces judgment in the present (21:1–24:1) and then warns of judgment in the future (24:2–26:1).²⁴ A change of both location and audience (24:1–3) marks the division between these two sections. Before this change, Jesus pronounces judgment on the Jewish religious leaders in the temple (21:1–24:1), and afterward Jesus teaches his disciples in view of the temple, warning of future judgment in what is known as the Eschatological Discourse (24:2–26:1).²⁵ Jesus tells the parable of the royal wedding feast in the first half of this section, which is focused on Jesus in Jerusalem in the temple among the religious leaders, which has its own opening-middle-closing texture.

24. Talbert, *Matthew*, 264.

25. Talbert, *Matthew*, 264.

2.1.4 Messianic Proclamation Framing Jesus in the Temple (Matt 21–23)

The confrontations the Matthean Jesus has with the religious leaders in the Jerusalem temple (21:1–24:1) are framed by a threefold *inclusio* in the opening and closing textures. The messianic proclamation, “Blessed is the One who comes in the name of the Lord,” frames this section (21:9 NRSV; 23:39). Jesus enters and laments for Jerusalem (21:10, 23:37). Jesus enters and leaves the temple (21:12, 24:1).

Jacob Scholtz identifies the opening (21:1–17) and closing (23:37–39) of this section as the outside correspondences of a chiasm, with the discussion about the Messiah and Son of David (22:41–46) at the center.²⁶ Prior to this central discussion, Jesus and the religious leaders engage in confrontation (Matt 21–22). Then after Jesus effectively silences his opponents, he delivers a polemic attacking the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 23).

Like the polemic of Matt 23, Jesus tells the parable of the royal wedding feast in the context of confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders. Unlike the Eschatological Discourse that follows (24:3–26:1), neither the majority of Matt 23 nor the parable is addressed to the disciples. Pharisees are in the audience when Jesus tells this parable (21:45)—they consider the parable an attack on themselves and respond accordingly (22:15).²⁷ In Matt 23, Jesus brings multiple accusations against the scribes and Pharisees for their failures as religious leaders: burdening others (23:4), keeping others out of the dominion of heaven (23:13), being blind guides (23:16, 24), and neglecting the weightier matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faith (23:23). Perhaps such failings are to be associated with being unworthy of the royal wedding feast.

In Matthew's narrative, first-century Jewish religious leaders are the primary audience of the parable of the royal wedding feast. I suggest that religious leaders of the new people (21:43) need to hear this parable as more than a warning that each individual needs to take personal responsibility for meeting the dress requirements for the dominion of heaven.²⁸ This parable is addressed to religious leaders and not ordinary Jews. I consider the lack of wedding clothes to suggest a lack of appropriate responsibility for others rather than taking inadequate responsibility for being righteous

26. Jacob J. Scholtz, “Blessed Is He Who Comes in the Name of the LORD: A Chiastic Structure for Matthew 21:1–23:39,” *IDS* 49.1 (2014): art #1802.

27. Sim, “Man Without the Wedding Garment,” 165–78.

28. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 75.

oneself. Burdening others (23:3–4) seems a more likely cause for restraint and removal (22:13) than personal inadequacy. A lack of suitable preparation prevents entry into the wedding feast in the parable of the ten virgins (25:1–13), but this parable is addressed to disciples, not the Jewish religious leaders. The Jewish leaders are silenced by the commandment to love God and others (22:37–40) and the questions Jesus asks about the Son of David (22:41–46). This closes the confrontation proper between Jesus and the religious leaders (21:23–22:46) because after this they do not try to answer the criticism Jesus levels at them.

2.1.5. Jesus Establishes His Authority in the Temple (Matt 21:23–22:46)

The focus of Matt 21:23–22:46 is Jesus establishing his authority among the religious leaders in the temple. An outline of this confrontation is provided in table 2.3. In the opening texture, Jesus is asked questions (21:23–27), and in the closing texture no one dares to ask Jesus any more questions (22:41–46).²⁹ The middle texture includes Jesus telling three parables and then responding to three controversial questions. The parable of the royal wedding feast (22:1–14) is the third of three parables in the middle texture of this larger section. The main narrative agent increases in authority from a man with two sons to work his fields (21:28–32) to a landowner with tenants (21:33–46) and then to a king (22:1–14).³⁰ The vineyard setting links the first two, and the repeated sending out of slaves links the second two. Olmstead observes features common to the three parables: (1) an authority figure makes a request, (2) the request is repeated, (3) the authority figure is spurned (repeatedly), (4) some accept his authority, (5) the unfaithful are punished, and (6) replacements are found.³¹

29. Talbert, *Matthew*, 250.

30. Olmstead, *Trilogy of Parables*, 26; Rowland Onyenali, *The Trilogy of Parables in Mt 21:28–22:14: From a Matthean Perspective* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2013); Long, *Matthew*, 241 (see especially “Three Parables about Disobedience”).

31. Olmstead, *Trilogy of Parables*, 172–73.

Table 2.3. Opening-Middle-Closing Texture of Matthew 21:23–22:46³²

*Opening Texture*A Jesus is questioned about his authority (21:23–27)

Middle Texture

B Three parables of judgment (21:28–22:14)

* Two sons (21:28–30) and discussion (21:31–32)

* Tenants (21:33–39) and discussion (21:40–46)

* Royal Wedding Feast (22:1–14)

B' Three controversies (22:15–22:40)

* Taxes—response to a question from Pharisees and Herodians (22:15–22)

* Resurrection—response to a question from the Sadducees (22:23–33)

* Great Commandment—response to a question from a lawyer (22:34–40)

*Closing Texture*A' Jesus asks no more questions, opponents silenced (22:41–46)

There are groups of three elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel, including parable triads (13:24–33, 13:44–47, 24:37–51, 25:1–46),³³ and the three controversies based on hostile questions (22:15–22:40) that follow this triad of parables. In both Mark's and Luke's Gospels, in the position parallel to Matthew's three parables (Matt 21:28–22:14), there is only one parable, the parable of the tenants (Mark 12:1–12; Luke 20:9–19). In all three gospels, this is preceded by Jesus's entry into Jerusalem and followed by the three controversies, discussion about the Son of David, and the beginning of his polemic denouncing scribes and Pharisees (Matt 22:15–23:3, Mark 12:13–40, Luke 20:20–47).³⁴

The triad of parables in Matt 21:28–22:14 form a literary unit. Schweizer and Olmstead describe Matt 22:11–14 as the conclusion and

32. Talbert, *Matthew*, 250, adapted.

33. Olmstead, *Trilogy of Parables*, 33–39; Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:61–72, 1:86–87; Dale C. Allison, "The Structure of the Sermon on the Mount," *JBL* 106 (1987): 425–45; Luz, *Matthew* 1–7, 5–6; Olmstead argues for Matthean composition (*Trilogy of Parables*, 36–37), whereas Jones favors pre-Matthean combination (*Matthean Parables*, 400–409). Onyenali provides a relatively recent review of redaction-critical studies of this parable trilogy (*Trilogy of Parables*).

34. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 799–800.

climax of this literary unit, which occurs by shifting from polemic (judgment on Israel) to paraenesis (warning of judgment in the church).³⁵ In the narrative of Matthew's Gospel, however, Jesus's confrontation with the religious leaders continues. Immediately after Jesus concludes this parable, the Pharisees plan to ensnare Jesus. The use of *τότε* suggests that this plotting is a consequence of hearing these parables (22:15). The three parables are part of a confrontation with the religious leaders in Jerusalem, which continues with Jesus being asked tricky questions until all his opponents are silenced by his responses (22:15–46).

2.1.6. The Parable in the Opening-Middle-Closing Textures of Matthew

In summary, the parable of the royal wedding feast is the third of a series of three parables Jesus tells in the Jerusalem temple (21:28–22:14). These three parables are followed by Jesus being asked three challenging questions by various Jewish religious leaders. Both groups of three are in a section that opens with religious leaders questioning the authority of Jesus and closes with Jesus silencing them with his authority (21:23–22:46). After this, Jesus denounces the scribes and Pharisees (23:1–39). The confrontation and denunciation together form the middle of a larger section that opens with Jesus being welcomed into Jerusalem with “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” and closes with Jesus speaking the same phrase (21:9; 23:39 NRSV). This is followed by Jesus leaving the temple and moving across to the Mount of Olives, where he delivers the Eschatological Discourse to his disciples (24:3–26:1). Matthew 21–25 begins with Jesus riding into Jerusalem as the prophesized king and concludes with Jesus's description of the Son of Man coming in glory to judge the nations and welcome, as their king, those who care for the least (21:1–25:46).

Matthew's Gospel has a pattern of alternating discourse and narrative material. The parable of the royal wedding feast is not part of one of the great five discourses Jesus tells in this gospel but rather is part of the narrative development between the Community Discourse and the Eschatological Discourse. This parable is not part of the teaching Jesus provides for his disciples; rather, it is part of the confrontation he has with religious leaders. This rhetorical and narrative context needs to be considered when

35. Olmstead, *Trilogy of Parables*, 128–30; Schweizer, *Good News*, 400–403.

reading the parable of the royal wedding feast, a microtext within the macrotext of Matthew's Gospel.³⁶

2.2. The Parable within the Narrative of Matthew's Gospel

Aarde describes the parable of the royal wedding feast as "fully part of the selected, arranged and integrated story-stuff" of Matthew's Gospel, written "for a particular purpose and from a particular narrative point of view."³⁷ The gospel is all about Jesus, presenting him as a fulfillment of prophecy, as God-with-us (1:23, 18:20, 28:20), the exemplar and embodiment of obedience to divine will.³⁸ The narrator of Matthew's Gospel aligns ideologically with Jesus, through the spatial, temporal, psychological, and phraseological planes of the narrative.

When Jesus is in the temple precinct (Matt 21–23), the narrator encourages the audience to align with Jesus against the religious leaders. During the telling of the parable of the royal wedding feast, the narrator encourages the audience to align with the king and the replacement guests against the unworthy invitees who did not come.³⁹ The king's expulsion of one of the replacement guests for not wearing wedding clothing comes as a shock because of the ideological alignment of the king with the narrator of the parable—and the narrator is Jesus! To explore this dynamic further, I consider the parable from various narrative perspectives of Matthew's Gospel.

2.2.1. Spatial Perspective

The spatial-temporal plane of the plotted story in the Gospel of Matthew mainly parallels that of the Gospel of Mark.⁴⁰ The Galilee ministry (4:12–11:1) is followed by the journey south (11:2–20:34) to Jerusalem (21:1–28:20).⁴¹ The narrator of Matthew's Gospel is with Jesus from his first adult appearance until his death (3:13–27:56), observing Jesus's

36. Aarde, *God-with-Us*, 239.

37. Aarde, *God-with-Us*, 34, 71.

38. Aarde, *God-with-Us*, 53.

39. Aarde, *God-with-Us*, 247.

40. Bauer, *Structure of Matthews Gospel*, 11.

41. Craig Evans, *Matthew*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 9.

encounters with others from a close but suprapersonal stance.⁴² The use of particular verbs place Jesus at the center of the narrative: *προσέρχομαι*, various people come “towards” Jesus (5:1; 8:2, 5, 19, 25; 9:14, 20, 28; 13:10, 36; 14:12, 15; 15:1, 12, 23, 30; 16:1; 17:14, 19; 18:1, 19:3, 16; 20:20; 21:14, 23; 22:23; 24:1, 3; 26:17, 49); *προσφέρω*, some “bring” sick or possessed people to him for healing and exorcism (4:24; 8:16; 9:2, 32; 12:22; 14:35); and *ἀκολουθέω*, people “follow” him (4:20, 22, 25; 8:1, 10, 23; 9:9, 27; 12:15; 14:13; 19:2; 20:29, 34; 21:9; 27:55).⁴³ Weaver helpfully depicts the spatial perspective of this centripetal flow of movement towards Jesus, who is himself moving, as

a moving spotlight which follows a single character across the stage. The light itself remains focused on Jesus as he moves from place to place. But it also illumines, one by one or in groups, the other characters as they enter the spotlight briefly and then disappear from sight or follow along the edge of the glow.⁴⁴

In Matt 21–23, Jesus is in the spotlight and the stage is the temple, the center of Jewish religious authority. Various groups of religious leaders come forward to present a challenge to Jesus, which he successfully counters to establish his authority. Then those adversaries blend back into the background audience as the next confrontation begins. Initially, Jesus is challenged by the chief priests and the elders (21:23), who are the “they” of his audience until the end of the parable of the tenants (21:45), when it emerges that the Pharisees have been listening to Jesus’s parables as well (21:45). The Pharisees become the main opponents (22:15, 41), with only one challenge from Herodians (22:16) and then Sadducees (22:23, 34). In the temple the spotlight is on Jesus as he counters his opponents and establishes his authority.

2.2.2. Temporal Perspective

Jesus occupies much of the temporal as well as spatial perspective of Matthew’s Gospel. The Gospel of Matthew presents a condensed history

42. Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 35; Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 45.

43. Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 45–46.

44. Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 46.

spanning many generations (1:1–17) then slows down to zoom in on Jesus and his public life.⁴⁵ This gospel envisages three epochs of salvation history: the time of prophecy (1:1–4:11), the messianic ministry of Jesus (4:12–28:15), and the mission of the disciples (28:16–20), which extends beyond the narrative of the gospel into the ministry of the church.⁴⁶ The temporal perspective of the narrator is in this third epoch, which is made evident by the phrases “until now,” *ἕως ἄρτι* (11:2) and *ἕως τοῦ νῦν* (24:21); “to this (day),” *ἕως τῆς σήμερον* (27:8); and “until this day,” *μέχρι τῆς σήμερον ἡμέρας* (28:15).⁴⁷ It is only at this last temporal marker (28:15) that the narrator, Jesus, the disciples, and the implied reader are in the same generalized temporal position, “the mission period between the resurrection and the Parousia.”⁴⁸

From the temporal perspective of the narrator of Matthew's Gospel, salvation history can be summarized as two epochs: first, the time of preparation, prophecy, and promise prior to the time of Jesus and, second, the time of fulfillment in Jesus and the post-Easter life of the church.⁴⁹ Jesus is presented as Emmanuel, God-with-us, the fulfillment of prophecy (1:23) who is a continuing presence with his disciples (28:20) and whenever two or three gather in his name in the life of the church (18:20). The use of the historic present synchronizes the time of the narrator and that of the audience.⁵⁰ There are eighty examples of the historic present in Matthew's Gospel, forty-three of which introduce Jesus “saying” (e.g., 22:1).⁵¹ Three of the four times the king speaks within the parable of the royal wedding feast, he does so in the present tense: *λέγων* (22:4) and *λέγει* (22:8, 12). The use of direct speech brings the words of the king to the audience from the mouth of the narrator, who is Jesus. In the plotted time of the gospel, this parable is enough to aggravate the Pharisees, who with the chief priests already want to arrest him (21:45–46, 22:15).

45. Weaver, *Missionary Discourse*, 47.

46. F. J. Matera, “The Plot of Matthew's Gospel,” *CBQ* 49.2 (1987): 233–53; Brendan Byrne, *Lifting the Burden* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2004), x.

47. Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 63.

48. Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 63.

49. Bauer, *Structure of Matthews Gospel*, 143–48.

50. Anderson cites Matt 22:41–46 as an example (*Matthew's Narrative Web*, 64).

51. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 36; Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 61; David B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 173.

2.2.3. Psychological Perspective

On the psychological plane, the narrator of Matthew's Gospel has access to dreams, feelings, thoughts, and private conversations of various characters.⁵² So does Jesus. He is aware that the disciples have little faith and challenges this on several occasions (8:26, 14:31, 16:8). The Matthean Jesus does not need to ask questions to find out information as much as the Marcan Jesus does (Mark 5:30; cf. Matt 9:21–22; Mark 9:16; cf. Matt 17:14; Mark 9:21; cf. Matt 17:17–18).⁵³ Neither does the narrator of Matthew's Gospel describe Jesus as being angry, *ὀργή* (cf. Mark 3:5),⁵⁴ or indignant, *ἀγανακτέω* (cf. Mark 10:14), whereas both the disciples (20:24, 26:8) and chief priests and scribes (21:15) express indignation. Both the narrator (12:14, 19:3) and Jesus (12:25, 22:18) know the underlying intentions of the Pharisees, and even Pilate recognizes that the religious leaders have brought Jesus before him for dubious reasons (27:17–18).⁵⁵ The glimpses into the thoughts of various characters guide the audience to approve of Jesus and disapprove of the religious leaders,⁵⁶ especially when the Pharisees plot to entrap (*παγιδεύω*) Jesus after hearing the parable of the royal wedding feast (22:15).

2.2.4. Phraseological Perspective

The voice of the king dominates the phraseological plane of the parable and the voice of Jesus dominates the phraseological plane of Matthew's Gospel. More than half the words of Matthew's Gospel are voiced by Jesus, proportionally more than in any other gospel, as shown in table 2.4.⁵⁷

52. Weaver cites Matt 1:20, 25; 2:12, 13, 19, 22; 4:1–11 and extrapolates from verbalization in Matt 8:27; 9:8, 33 (*Matthew's Missionary Discourse*, 34).

53. Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller*, 50.

54. Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller*, 49.

55. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 36; Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 69–72.

56. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 177.

57. Lars Kiesel, *The Jews and the World in the Fourth Gospel* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 133–34.

Table 2.4. Analysis of Direct Speech and Narration in the Gospels

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Direct Speech—Jesus	56%	35%	47%	42%
Direct Speech—Others	10%	11%	13%	16%
Direct Speech—Total	66%	46%	60%	58%
Narrator	34%	54%	40%	42%

The voice of Jesus is heard more than the voice of the narrator in Matthew’s Gospel. Characters rarely respond at any length to the direct speech of Jesus, and if they initiate encounters with Jesus, he tends to have the last word.⁵⁸ Phrases common to both Jesus and the narrator of the gospel show their ideological alignment. For example, the narrator reports the first passion prediction of Jesus (16:21), which Jesus subsequently voices himself (17:22, 20:18).⁵⁹ In the discussion concerning “their city” in Matt 22:7, it is noted that the narrator of Matthew’s Gospel refers to “their synagogue” (12:9, 13:54) and “their synagogues” (4:23, 9:35); similarly, Jesus refers to “their synagogues” when speaking to the disciples (10:17) but “your synagogues” when addressing scribes and Pharisees (23:34).⁶⁰ The phraseological plane shows ideological alignment between the narrator of the gospel and Jesus as it does between the narrator of the parable and the king.

2.2.5. Ideological Perspective

In Matthew’s Gospel, the narrator and Jesus so align ideologically that all the perspectives evident in the gospel may be grouped into two categories: accepting or rejecting Jesus—the one who reveals God’s will.⁶¹ Borrowing a phrase from Matt 16:23, Kingsbury describes those who accept Jesus “as thinking the things of God,” which the disciples mostly do, crowds sometimes do, and the Jewish leaders never seem to do.⁶² Weaver helpfully

58. Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse*, 44.
59. Howell, *Matthew’s Inclusive Story*, 169.
60. Anderson, *Matthew’s Narrative Web*, 57.
61. Howell, *Matthew’s Inclusive Story*, 182.
62. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 34–35.

summarizes the dichotomy of being either for or against the Matthean Jesus as follows:

Characters either worship Jesus (2:2, 11) or plot to kill him (2:7–8, 13); they either submit to Jesus (3:15; 4:20, 22; 9:9) or try to seduce him (4:1, 3, 5–6, 8–9); they either cry out for Jesus to save them (8:25) or implore him to leave their region (8:34); they either respond to Jesus in faith (8:10, 9:2, 22, 29) or in disbelief and scorn (9:23–24).⁶³

The degree of ideological alignment of the narrator with various characters is evident in how congruent the psychological (feeling), phraseological (speech), and spatial-temporal (action) planes are in respect to such characters.⁶⁴ Therefore, ideological alignment with Jesus is strong. For example, Jesus feels compassion on the psychological plane (9:36, 14:14, 20:34);⁶⁵ he speaks of having compassion for the crowds on the phraseological plane (15:32); and he acts compassionately by feeding the crowds on the spatial-temporal plane (15:35–38). Similarly, Jesus both claims to have authority (9:6) and acts authoritatively (9:5–8).⁶⁶ By contrast, there is incongruence in the portrayal of Herod, who says he wants to worship Jesus on the phraseological plane (2:8) but is frightened by the news of Jesus's birth on the psychological plane (2:3) and attempts to kill Jesus on the spatial-temporal plane (2:12–16).⁶⁷ Herod is presented as an unreliable character aligned against Jesus.

In Matthew's Gospel, the genealogy, angelic appearances, prophetic-fulfillment quotations, and endorsement by the Father at his baptism all present Jesus as a reliable character.⁶⁸ When Jesus speaks, he often quotes the Hebrew Scriptures, thus speaking the word of God and being an exponent of God's point of view.⁶⁹ Jesus recognizes the scribes and Pharisees as authorities but not practitioners of the Mosaic law (23:2–3). The incongruence between what they say to Jesus and their motivations for speaking to him is a recurring theme (12:10; 19:3; 22:16–17, 24–28, 36), portraying

63. Weaver, *Matthew's Missionary Discourse*, 52–53.

64. Weaver, *Matthew's Missionary Discourse*, 43.

65. Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 69–72.

66. Powell, "Direct and Indirect Phraseology," 409.

67. Powell, "Direct and Indirect Phraseology," 407.

68. Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 57.

69. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 35.

them as duplicitous hypocrites (15:7; 22:18; 23:13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29).⁷⁰ The fate of hypocrites involves weeping and gnashing of teeth (24:51), like that of the person not wearing wedding clothing in the parable of the royal wedding feast.

In Aarde's study of ideological point of view in Matt 22:1–14, he argues that the plot of Matthew's Gospel involves two related narrative lines: the pre-Easter commission of Jesus and the post-Easter commission of the disciples, which is sometimes embedded in the first rather than following in chronological order.⁷¹ He considers the parable of the royal wedding feast to be an illustration of this double plot line in a nutshell,⁷² with a carefully crafted parallel between the particularistic mission, which ends with the king punishing those not worthy (22:7–8), and the universalistic mission, which ends with the casting out of the inappropriately dressed guest (22:13). Aarde describes the degree of equivalence between the particularistic and universalistic narrative lines as "remarkable."⁷³ Thus he associates the improperly attired guest (22:13) with the antagonists of the first narrative line who are declared unworthy (22:8). Given that some of those declared unworthy killed the king's slaves (22:6), perhaps one may infer that the person without wedding clothes was guilty of more than not being completely aligned with the king on the ideological plane.

The disciples are not always completely aligned with Jesus. On the psychological and phraseological planes, they have little faith (8:26, 14:31, 16:8, 17:20) and need further explanations (16:5–16) and reassurances (19:27). On the spatial-temporal plane, the disciples do not accompany Jesus after his arrest, and although Peter does, albeit at a distance, he disowns Jesus on the phraseological plane (26:69–75). After the resurrection of Jesus, some of the disciples still doubt, but the lack of complete ideological alignment does not prevent him from commissioning them along with those who worship him (28:16–20). Lacking complete ideological alignment with Jesus does not entail exclusion from the post-Easter community, nor is it a cause for violent consequences. For example, the rich young man who obeys all the commandments but cannot bring himself to sell all he owns and abandon his family walks away grieving without any suggestion that he experiences any further punishment or violence beyond

70. Powell, "Direct and Indirect Phraseology," 413–16.

71. Aarde, "Plot as Mediated," 64.

72. Aarde, "Plot as Mediated," 61.

73. Aarde, "Plot as Mediated," 67–68.

his own distress (19:16–22). In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the lack of wedding clothing also represents more than a lack of ideological alignment to warrant the punishment the king commands (22:13).

2.2.6. The Parable Parallels the Point of View of Matthew's Gospel

The role of the king in the narrative planes of the parable of the royal wedding feast parallels that of Jesus in the narrative planes of Matthew's Gospel. The king dominates the spatial, temporal, phraseological, and ideological planes of the parable in ideological alignment with the narrator. The narrator of this parable is Jesus, who dominates the spatial, temporal, phraseological, and ideological planes of Matthew's Gospel in ideological alignment with the narrator of the gospel.

On the spatial-temporal plane of the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus tells the parable of the royal wedding feast in the Jerusalem temple when he asserts his authority with respect to the religious leaders. On the psychological and phraseological planes, the narrator reveals the intention of the religious leaders to entrap and arrest Jesus. Even, or rather especially, in Jerusalem, the audience is to recognize that the authority of Jesus exceeds that of the religious leaders, whom he silences in debate. Ideologically, the narrator aligns with Jesus as the Son of the Father and through the gospel narrative argues for the audience to see this and respond appropriately. In the parable the human king calls for those invited to come and see the wedding feast he has prepared.

2.3. Repetitive-Progressive Threads in Matthew's Gospel

“King” and “wedding” are among the repeated words earlier identified in the exploration of the repetitive-progressive texture of the parable of the royal wedding feast. Some of the expressions that appear only once in this parable are characteristic of Matthew's Gospel, especially the opening and closing phrases “kingdom of heaven” (22:2) and “where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (22:13). Repetition of such phrases enhances the predictability and thus the “readability of a text.”⁷⁴ Repetition also aids listening—and the Gospel of Matthew was probably written

74. Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 36–38.

to be read aloud.⁷⁵ These distinctive opening and closing phrases frame the consideration of words from within the parable of the royal wedding feast that are repeated elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel.

2.3.1. Parables of the Kingdom of Heaven

The parable of the royal wedding feast is introduced by the use of two phrases found elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel: ἐν παραβολαῖς αὐτοῖς λέγων, "speaking to them in parables" (13:3, 13; 22:1); and ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, "the kingdom of the heavens" (13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47; 18:23; 20:1; 22:1; 25:1).⁷⁶ The Matthean Jesus favors this expression over ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ, "the kingdom of God," when introducing parables (2:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43).

The first word of the parable of the royal wedding feast spoken by Jesus is ὁμοιωθή, the third-person aorist passive of ὁμοιόω, usually translated as "may be compared" (22:2). The parables of the wheat and the weeds (13:24) and the two debtors (18:23) also open with ὁμοιωθή. The parable of the ten virgins opens with this verb in the future tense, ὁμοιωθήσεται (25:1). The use of the passive in these four parables differentiates these longer narrative parables from the shorter simile-like parables that begin with ὁμοία, for example, the kingdom of heaven is *like* a mustard seed (13:31), leaven (13:33), a treasure in a field (13:44), a dragnet (13:47), and a householder, οἰκοδεσπότης (13:52, 20:1).

The phrase ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, literally translated as "the kingdom of the heavens," is characteristic of Matthew's Gospel.⁷⁷ Jonathan Pennington argues that Matthew's preference for "kingdom of heaven" over "kingdom of God" is more than the Jewish reverential avoidance of the word for God.⁷⁸ The use of the plural "heavens" both distinguishes the divine invisible realm from the created "heaven and earth,"⁷⁹ and parallels another characteristic Matthean phrase, πᾶτερ ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς (Father in the heavens), which also uses the plural form of heaven.⁸⁰ Therefore, "kingdom of heaven" evokes not

75. Stanton, *Gospel for a New People*, 54–84.

76. Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 237.

77. Jonathan T. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew*, SNT 126 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 85–86.

78. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth*, 84, 339.

79. Pennington notes similar use in Wisdom literature and the Testament of Abraham (*Heaven and Earth*, 340).

80. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth*, 341.

only the repetitions of this phrase in Matthew's Gospel but also suggests that the "Father in heaven" is the monarch of this kingdom.

2.3.2. Kings and Son in the Gospel of Matthew

In Matthew's Gospel the portrayal of earthly monarchs is not a positive one.⁸¹ The kings named in the narrative kill infants (2:16, 22) and John the Baptist (14:3–11). Although Jesus is associated with "Son of David" kingship when he enters Jerusalem (21:25), the city of the great king (5:35), later he is mocked as the "king of the Jews" (27:11, 29, 37) and "king of Israel" (27:42).

Only two parables in Matthew's Gospel have a king as the main narrative agent (18:23; 22:2, 7, 11, 13). In both, the king exercises judgment in a way that involves violence (18:34; 22:7, 13). Both parables also conclude with words that seem to justify violence (18:35; 22:14). The parable of the royal wedding feast specifies that these actions are of a *human* king (22:2), *ἄνθρωπος βασιλεῖ*, perhaps to distance the actions of this king from Jesus.

When the Matthean Jesus speaks of kings and rulers he associates them with wolves (10:16–18), describes them as wearers of soft clothing (11:7–9), and accuses them of collecting taxes (17:25). Jesus contrasts ideal discipleship with rulers of the nations who "lord it over" others (20:25).⁸² When the Son of Man will come in glory to judge the nations, he is named as king only when he welcomes those on his right into the kingdom prepared for them because they have served the least of his brothers and sisters (25:34, 40).

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the king prepares the wedding celebrations for his son (22:2). In Matthew's Gospel, *son* in the singular almost invariably refers to Jesus with the only exceptions being Matt 7:9; 10:37; 17:15; 23:15, 35. The "Son of David" title introduces this gospel and it appears sporadically until the temple scene (1:1, 20; 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; 21:9, 15; 22:42). The "Son of God" references start later but then continue to the crucifixion (4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 16:16; 26:63; 27:40, 43, 54). The "Son of Man" references (8:20; 9:6; 10:23; 1:19; 12:8, 32, 40; 13:37, 41; 16:13, 27, 28; 17:9, 12, 22; 19:28; 20:18, 28; 24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44; 25:31; 26:2, 24, 45; 26:64) begin after the first discourse then continue beyond the final discourse. Moreover, Jesus is addressed as "my beloved

81. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 48.

82. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 48.

Son” by the heavenly voice (3:17, 17:5), and Jesus himself emphasizes intimate knowledge between the Father and Son (11:27). These christological titles enhance the likelihood of reading “the son” in both the parables of the tenants (21:37, 38) and the royal wedding feast (22:2) as Jesus, the Son of the Father in heaven.

2.3.3. Weddings, Worthiness, and Dining in Matthew's Gospel

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the human king prepares a feast to celebrate the wedding of his son (22:2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12). The only other occurrence of *wedding* in Matthew's Gospel is in the parable of the ten virgins, when the bridegroom welcomes those with lamps lit into the wedding celebrations, εἰς τοὺς γάμους (25:10; cf. 22:3, 4, 9). The bridegroom in the parable of the ten virgins (25:1, 5, 6, 10) features as a central narrative agent and decides who may or may not enter the wedding festivities. In contrast, the son in the parable of royal wedding feast is not even named as a bridegroom and does not arbitrate on who may participate in the wedding festivities—the king does.

The king declares those first invited as not “worthy,” ἄξιος (22:8). Apart from this and John the Baptist's warning to bear fruit worthy of repentance (3:8), the other references to worthiness are in the Mission Discourse. The worker is *worthy* of support (10:10); disciples are to stay with whoever is *worthy* (10:11); peace is to rest on the house that is *worthy* and be received back if it is not (10:13). A threefold repetition of ἐμὲ οὐκ ἔστιν μου ἄξιος, “is not worthy of me,” features in the challenging words of Matt 10:37–38: “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me” (NRSV). The consideration of worthiness in the Mission Discourse begins with assessing the worthiness of others (10:11–13) and concludes with these challenging words for would-be disciples to assess their own level of worthiness and commitment to following Jesus (10:37–38). There is a similar shift in the parable of the royal wedding feast from assessing the worthiness of *them*, conveyed in the third person (22:8), to being asked in the present tense and second person why *you* are not wearing wedding clothes (22:12), generating self-reflection regarding worthiness.

Both bad and good, πονηροὺς τε καὶ ἀγαθοὺς, are gathered into the wedding feast (22:10). Earlier Jesus speaks of how the Father in heaven shines

the sun on both the bad and the good, *πονηροὺς καὶ ἀγαθοὺς*, the same phrase in the same tense and word order (5:45). Then Jesus exhorts his audience to love as indiscriminately as the Father does (5:48). By gathering the bad and good together, the slaves have been suitably indiscriminate in bringing into the wedding all whom they find (22:10). References to good and bad fruit (7:16–20) and good and bad fish (13:47–50) are not as close a parallel as Matt 5:45 verbally and thematically. Verbally, the words *good* and *bad* are not in close proximity, and thematically they focus on the future separation into two groups and the fiery fate of the “bad.” By contrast, “the bad and the good” in both the Sermon on the Mount (5:45) and the parable of the royal wedding feast (22:10) indicate the impartiality of God’s care and concern for all people.

The bad and good dine together at the wedding feast, with a participle from the verb *ἀνάκειμαι*, “to recline to dine,” describing those in the full house (22:10) and those whom the king comes in to see dining (22:11). Narratively, the imagery associated with this word resonates both backwards and forwards, depicting Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners in the past (9:9–13) and at his last meal with the twelve in the future of the narrative (26:20).⁸³

2.3.4. Call, Come, Prepare, and Send in Matthew’s Gospel

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the invitation to come to the feast is emphasized as *a call* to come featuring the verb *καλέω* in various forms (22:3, 4, 8, 9, 14). The verb *καλέω* is a call to make a decision when Jesus calls the disciples James and John (4:21) and also sinners rather than the righteous (9:13).⁸⁴ In Matthew’s Gospel, the term used to describe the gathered community, *ἐκκλησία*, comes from *καλέω* and literally means “those who are called out” (16:18, 18:17).⁸⁵ To come in response to a call is to accept the authority of the one who calls, as parabolic slaves do of their master (20:8; 25:14) but the magi do not do of Herod (2:7, 12).

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the king calls the invitees to come, *Δεῦτε* (22:4). Jesus uses the same imperative, *Δεῦτε*, to call the first disciples to “come” (4:19) and to invite those who are weary to come

83. John Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 889.

84. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 56.

85. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 56.

to him (11:28). When the Son of Man comes in glory, this king invites the blessed to come into the kingdom (25:34). After the resurrection the angel of the Lord invites the two Marys to come and see that the tomb is empty (28:6).

The call to come to the king's wedding feast stresses that the food is ready (22:4). The verb *ἐτοιμάζω*, "to make ready or prepare," occurs also in the call of John the Baptist to prepare the way (3:3), in eschatological warnings to be ready (20:23; 25:34, 41), and in preparing for the Passover meal that becomes the Last Supper (26:17, 19). The adjective *ἔτοιμος*, "ready," which features in both verses 4 and 8, occurs also in the Eschatological Discourse, regarding readiness for the arrival of the Son of Man (24:44) and the bridegroom (25:10).

In the parable the king sends out, *ἀποστέλλω*, slaves (22:3, 4). Other authority figures in the parables also send out agents: the angels of the Son of Man are sent out (13:41, 24:31); the generous employer sends workers into his vineyard (20:2); and the vineyard owner sends out his slaves twice and then his son (21:34, 36, 37). The latter parable immediately precedes the parable of the royal wedding feast, and the Pharisees respond to the parable of the tenants by sending their disciples to entrap him (22:16).

Jesus both considers himself sent out (10:40, 11:10, 15:24) and sends out the twelve disciples as sheep into the midst of wolves (10:16). Later, when speaking to the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus speaks of sending out prophets, sages, and scribes, some of whom will be killed (23:34).

2.3.5. Slaves, *δοῦλοι*, and Servants, *διάκονοι*, in Matthew's Gospel

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the king's slaves, *δοῦλοι*, call the invitees to come to the feast the king has prepared (22:3, 4, 8, 10), and some are abused and killed as a result (22:6). At the wedding feast, the king commands his servants, *διάκονοι*, to bind and cast out an inappropriately dressed individual (22:13). In the parable of the wheat and the weeds (13:24–30), there is also a change of designation of the slaves, *δοῦλοι* (13:27), into a group with a particular task, that of reapers or harvest workers, *θερισταις* (13:30).⁸⁶ The particular task associated with *διάκονοι* is to wait at tables,⁸⁷ and therefore it makes narrative sense for *διάκονοι*

86. Jones, *Matthean Parables*, 409.

87. Hermann W. Beyer, "διάκονος," *TDNT* 2:88.

to replace δοῦλοι as the action shifts from outside to inside the feast. The only other occurrences of the noun δῖακονος are in the phrase “the greatest among you shall be your servant” (20:26; 23:11 ESV).

Slaves are very present in Matthew’s Gospel: they appear in the narrative of the gospel (e.g., 8:9, 26:51) and in dominical sayings (e.g., 10:24, 25; 20:26, 27). Slaves feature in the parables of the wheat and the weeds (13:27, 28), the two debtors (18:23, 26, 27, 28, 32), the tenants (21:34, 35, 36), the faithful and unfaithful slave (24:45, 46, 48, 50), and the talents (25:14, 19, 21, 23, 26, 30). In both the parables of the tenants and of the royal wedding feast, slaves are sent out (21:34, 22:3), sent out again (21:36, 22:4), and killed (21:35, 22:6). In the parable of the tenants, the vineyard owner then sends his son and heir, who is killed (21:37–38), whereas the king sends his troops to destroy the killers, and only then sends out more messengers—slaves rather than his son (22:6–9).

2.3.6. To Seize and to Kill; to Become Angry and to Destroy

In the parable of the royal wedding feast (22:6), slaves are seized (κρατέω), abused (ὕβριζω), and killed (ἀποκτείνω). There are two other scenes in Matthew’s Gospel, which use the verbs κρατέω and ἀποκτείνω. The first is in the narrative about King Herod’s arrest of John the Baptist and his plan to put him to death (14:3, 5). The second is when the chief priests and elders plot to have Jesus arrested and put to death (26:4). The verb for seize, κρατέω, “to take hold with some force,” occurs elsewhere in Matthew’s Gospel (9:15, 12:11, 28:9) but mainly with respect to the arrest of Jesus (21:46; 26:4, 48, 50, 55, 57). The only other parable in which κρατέω occurs is the parable of the two debtors, when the larger debtor grabs the smaller debtor by the throat (18:28). In the parable of the tenants, a different verb, λαμβάνω, describes the tenants seizing the slaves (21:35). This parable has three rounds of killing (ἀποκτείνω), two of slaves and then the son and heir (21:35, 38, 39). Jesus warns that he will be killed (16:21, 17:23), as will the prophets, sages, and scribes he sends (23:34) and as will happen in the time of tribulation (24:9). He also, however, speaks of those who can kill the body but not the soul (10:28).

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the king is angered by killing (22:7), one of only three occurrences of ὀργίζω in Matthew (5:22, 18:34, 22:7). In the parable of the two debtors, the king is angered by violence inflicted on a slave and then punishes the perpetrator (18:34). In the

parable of the royal wedding feast, the king sends his troops to destroy those murderers, ἀπώλεσεν τοὺς φονεῖς ἐκείνους (22:7). *Murderer*, φονεύς, occurs only once in Matthew's Gospel; however, the Matthean Jesus uses the related verb φονεύς to accuse the scribes and Pharisees of murdering prophets (23:31–35), as does Stephen to make a similar accusation in Acts 7:52.⁸⁸ Similarly, the Matthean Jesus uses the related verb φονεύω to accuse the scribes and Pharisees of murdering prophets (23:31–35).⁸⁹

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the murderers are destroyed, ἀπόλλυμι (22:7), rather than killed, ἀποκτείνω (cf. 22:6), which seems to suggest greater finality (10:29). In Matthew's Gospel, ἀποκτείνω seems to be reserved for John the Baptist, Jesus, and his associates, whereas the verb ἀπόλλυμι has a more general application and wider semantic range. In Matthew's narrative an early occurrence describes King Herod's plans to destroy the infant Jesus (2:13), and the last appears in the passion narrative when the crowd is encouraged to ask for the destruction of Jesus rather than Barabbas (27:20). Jesus warns, "All who take the sword will perish by the sword" (26:52 NRSV), and in this parable we see this dynamic played out as those who killed the slaves are destroyed (22:7).

2.3.7. Clothing in Matthew's Gospel

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the king sees and questions the individual who is not wearing ἔνδυμα γάμου (22:11, 12). Seven of the eight occurrences of ἔνδυμα in the New Testament are in Matthew's Gospel. In all occurrences, other than the two in this parable, ἔνδυμα refers to clothing in general rather than a specific garment. It describes John the Baptist wearing clothing of camel's hair (3:4) and the angel of the resurrection in clothing as white as snow (28:3). In the Sermon on the Mount, ἐνδύματος is repeated in the exhortation not to worry because "life is more than food, body more than clothing" (6:25, 28; cf. Luke 12:23), and ἐνδύμασι is used to warn against false prophets, depicted as wolves clothed as sheep (7:15). This last suggests the use of disguise, which might be implied in the king's question (Matt 22:12).

There are words that refer to specific items of clothing in the New Testament: ἱμάτιον, χιτῶν, and στολή; the first two occur in Matthew's Gospel,

88. Horst Balz, "φονεύς," *EDNT* 3:435.

89. Balz, "φονεύω," *EDNT* 3:436.

and the third does not. Both the narrator and Jesus refer to ἱμάτιον, an outer garment translated as “cloak” or “robe.”⁹⁰ People provide them for Jesus to ride on as he enters Jerusalem (21:7, 8). Touching the ἱμάτιον of Jesus is a means by which people are healed (9:20, 21; 14:36); it turns white at the transfiguration (17:2) and is divided at the crucifixion (27:31, 35). Within his teaching, Jesus says to give your ἱμάτιον to one who takes your shirt (5:40); he advises not to sew new cloth onto an old cloak (9:16); he references the soft robes of those who live in royal residences (11:8); and he warns that someone in the field will not have time to turn back to get a coat (24:18). The ἱμάτιον is an outer garment, whereas the χιτῶν is worn next to the skin and is translated as “tunic” or “shirt.”⁹¹ This word only occurs twice in Matthew’s Gospel: in the exhortations to give your cloak to the one who takes your shirt (5:40; cf. Luke 6:29) and not to take or wear a second shirt when sent out by Jesus (10:10; cf. Mark 6:9, Luke 9:3). The author of Matthew’s Gospel does not refer to στολή, a “long, flowing robe.”⁹² Elsewhere in the New Testament, the prodigal son is clad in the best στολή (Luke 15:22), and they are the long robes worn by Pharisees (Mark 12:38; Luke 20:46) and are associated with being white (Mark 16:5; Rev 6:11; 7:9, 13) and washed (Rev 7:14, 22:14).

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, attendance at the wedding feast requires wedding clothing (ἔνδυμα γάμου) in a general sense, not a long robe (στολήν), as is associated with good standing and eschatological redemption; nor a garment (ἱμάτιον), which has christological associations; nor a tunic (χιτῶν). Matthew uses ἔνδυμα both literally to refer to clothing (3:4) and metaphorically to refer to false prophets in sheep’s clothing (7:15).⁹³ This opens the use in Matt 22:11, 12 to both possibilities.

2.3.8. Friend and Silence in Matthew’s Gospel

The king addresses the person not wearing wedding clothes as ἑταῖρε (friend), which Luz describes as condescending, and Davies and Allison as ironic.⁹⁴ There are only three occurrences of ἑταῖρε in the New Testa-

90. BDAG, s.v. “ἱμάτιον.”

91. BDAG, s.v. “χιτῶν.”

92. BDAG, s.v. “στολή.”

93. Friberg, Friberg, and Miller, *Analytical Lexicon*, 149.

94. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:205; Luz, *Matthew* 21–28, 56.

ment, all in Matthew's Gospel. The householder calls one of the grumbling workers in the parable of the generous householder "friend" (20:13), and Jesus calls Judas *ἑταῖρε* at the Last Supper (26:50).⁹⁵

The one called "friend" in the parable of the royal wedding feast remains silent (*ἐφίμωθη*) in response to the king. The verb *φίμω* is related to *φίμω*, which means "muzzle"; here it occurs in the passive voice, that is, "he was silenced or muzzled."⁹⁶ The same verb is used to describe Jesus as having silenced, *ἐφίμωσεν*, the Sadducees (22:34), whereas when Jesus remains silent before the High Priest, this is conveyed using a different verb, *σιωπάω* (26:63). Both the king's question in the parable (22:11–13) and Jesus's question to the Pharisees (22:43–46) conclude any further discussion. In the parable the individual is then cast into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

2.3.9. Casting out, Weeping, and Gnashing of Teeth

In Matthew's Gospel the verb *ἐκβάλλω* describes Jesus's casting out demons (8:16, 31; 9:33, 34; 10:1, 8; 12:24, 28; 17:19). In a more neutral context, this verb is used in illustrations that involve taking matter out from the eyes (7:4, 5), a storehouse (13:52), the heart (12:35), and the bowels (15:17). Apart from the act of going out into the harvest (9:38), when humans are the object of *ἐκβάλλω*, it is forceful (8:12, 21:39, 22:13, 25:30). When Jesus throws out people, his next action is to restore life (9:35) or heal (21:12). The pattern of first casting out and then healing is found in a summary of Jesus's ministry (8:16), the authority he gives his disciples (10:1), and in what happens when Jesus first enters the temple (21:12–17).

The phrase *ἐκεῖ ἔσται ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων* (where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth) is repeated six times in Matthew's Gospel (8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:50), with only one other New Testament occurrence (Luke 13:28). It is always voiced by Jesus (8:12; 13:42, 50; 24:51), albeit twice through a character in a parable (22:13, 25:30).⁹⁷ "Gnashing of teeth," *ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων*, only occurs in combination with weeping, and *ὁ κλαυθμὸς* occurs only once without "gnashing of teeth"

95. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 69–70.

96. Harold K. Moulton, *The Analytical Greek Lexicon*, rev. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 427.

97. Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 153.

(2:18).⁹⁸ Weeping and gnashing of teeth are situated in the outer darkness, τὸ σκοτός τὸ ἐξώτερον, three times (8:12, 22:13, 25:30) and twice in a fiery furnace, τὴν κάμινον τοῦ πυρός (13:42, 50), and they are associated with the fate of hypocrites once (24:51).

“Weeping and gnashing of teeth” tends to be assimilated to Gehenna or hell,⁹⁹ but only twice is it associated with fiery fates in Matthew’s Gospel (13:42, 50). *Gehenna*, the Greek word often translated as “hell,” symbolically refers to eternal fire and literally to a valley southwest of Jerusalem where rubbish was burned.¹⁰⁰ The furnace of fire, κάμινον τοῦ πυρός in the parables of the wheat and the weeds and of the dragnet (13:42, 50), thematically links with John the Baptist’s warning that trees that are not producing good fruit are cut down and thrown into the fire (3:10) and burned with unquenchable fire (3:12). Jesus uses agricultural allusions for fiery judgment (7:19; 13:40, 42, 50). He refers to eternal fire, πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον (18:8, 25:41), Gehenna of fire, γέενναν τοῦ πυρός (5:22, 18:19), and Gehenna per se (5:29, 30; 10:28; 23:15).

There are significant differences between the twin parables of the wheat and the weeds and of the dragnet in Matt 13 and the parable of the royal wedding feast. The first two concern eschatological separation into two groups, whereas Matt 22:11–13 concerns the expulsion of an individual. This person is only cast out after the bad and good have already entered the wedding feast (22:9–13), whereas only the wheat is gathered into the barn (13:30), only the good fish are placed in baskets (13:48), and only the “sheep” welcomed into the kingdom (25:34). The parable of the royal wedding feast does not use agricultural allusions to fiery judgment; rather, in this parable “weeping and gnashing of teeth” will occur in the “outer darkness.” Those whose fate involves “weeping and gnashing of teeth” are thrown (βάλεω) there, and when the location is the “outer darkness,” this is intensified with the prefix ἐκ, thus indicating being cast out or thrown out with some force (8:12, 22:13, 25:30). This fate also awaits heirs of the kingdom, while the many who come from the east and west feast with the patriarchs (8:12).

The two occurrences of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” in the Eschatological Discourse, as in the parable of the royal wedding feast, have

98. Charette, *Theme of Recompense*, 140–41.

99. For example, Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 56; Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 105.

100. Papaioannou argues that the rubbish dump imagery for eschatological punishment is a later development (*Geography of Hell*, 80–82).

individuals cast there by the “master” (22:13, 24:51, 25:30). The slave who buries his talent in the ground is also cast into the outer darkness (25:30), and the unfaithful slave is thrown in with the hypocrites (24:51). The slave cast there is first cut into pieces, literally “cut into two,” διχοτομέω (Matt 24:51, Luke 12:46). However, as the person continues to be able to experience bodily distress, it is sometimes considered as referring to severe cutting caused by being whipped (cf. Luke 12:47) or, even more metaphorically, to being cut off from the community.¹⁰¹ The punishment for failing to feed fellow slaves their portion is certainly severe and, if read literally, irreversible.¹⁰² Being cast into the “outer darkness,” unlike being cast into a furnace or chopped into pieces, is potentially reversible.

2.3.10. Summary of Repetitive-Progressive Threads in Matthew

The parable of the royal wedding feast includes words and phrases that occur elsewhere in the Gospel of Matthew, and this repetitive-progressive texture shows the parable to be of a piece with the remainder of the gospel. “Kingdom of heaven” in the opening texture and “weeping and gnashing of teeth” in the closing texture frame this parable in Matthean language. Some other parables in Matthew’s Gospel have several of the words and phrases also found in the parable of the royal wedding feast.

The parable of the tenants, which immediately precedes the parable of the royal wedding feast, also includes ἀνθρώπων (21:33), δοῦλοι (21:34–36), ἀποκτείνω (21:35, 38, 39), ἐκβάλλω (21:39), and ἀπόλλυμι (21:41). The parable of the wheat and the weeds and its interpretation includes ὡμοιωθή (13:24), ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (13:24), ἀνθρώπων (13:24, 31), δοῦλοι (13:27, 28), συνάγω (13:30), and, of specific interest, ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων (13:42). This phrase also concludes the parable of the talents (25:30). The parable of the two debtors

101. Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 161; Otto Betz, “The Dichotomized Servant and the End of Judas Iscariot,” *RevQ5* (1964): 43–58; Schweizer, *Good News*, 463; John R. Donahue, *Gospel in Parable*, 100. This alternative reading is noted in the NRSV for both Matt 24:51 and Luke 12:46. Kathleen Weber argues that it is not appropriate to make this assumption based on 1QS II, 16. See Weber, “Is There a Qumran Parallel to Matthew 24:51–Luke 12:46?,” *RevQ* 16.4 (1995): 657–63.

102. Llewellyn Howes stresses the importance of feeding other slaves in the duties of the slave in the absence of the master. See Howes, “Food for Thought: Interpreting the Parable of the Loyal and Wise Slave in Q12:42–44,” *AcT Supplement* 23 (2016): 110–30.

lacks this distinctive phrase but like the parable of the wheat and the weeds includes *ὡμοιωθή* and *ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν* in its introduction (18:23). More importantly, this parable concerns a human king (*ἀνθρώπων βασιλεῖ* in 18:23), who is angered (*ὀργίζω* is used in 18:34) by the report of a slave being seized (*κρατέω* is used as a participle in 18:28) and subjected to violence (*πνίγω* in 18:28; cf. *ὑβρισαν καὶ ἀπέκτειναν* in 22:6). In this parable, the perpetrator and victim are fellow slaves, *σύνδουλοι*, and their peers report this behavior to the king (18:28, 29, 31), who acts on their report by punishing the one who does violence to the other. The violence is both verbal and physical, involving both the body zones of self-expressive speech and purposeful action according to the terminology of sensory-aesthetic texture.

2.4 Sensory-Aesthetic Texture of Matthew's Gospel

Exploring sensory-aesthetic texture involves identifying nouns and verbs associated with body parts and then grouping these into three body zones: emotion-infused thought (eyes-heart), self-expressive speech (mouth-ears), and purposeful action (hands-feet).¹⁰³ My exploration of sensory-aesthetic textures focusses on two aspects of the parable of the royal wedding in the Matthean context: the rhetoric of seeing in the zone of emotion-infused thought and the binding of feet and hands in the zone of purposeful action.

2.4.1. The Rhetoric of Seeing in Matthew's Gospel

Seeing is significant in the parable of the royal wedding feast. The king invites guests to “see” that all is ready (22:4), then two different verbs are employed to describe the king “seeing” his guests at the wedding feast (22:11–12).

The king asks the invited ones to come and see—*Ἴδου*, the imperative form of *ὁράω*—that the feast is ready without any reference to tasting (cf. Ps 34:8, Luke 14:24). There are more than fifty occurrences of *ἵδου* in Matthew's Gospel. This imperative occurs in the teaching of Jesus (6:26, 11:8) and in warnings about false Messiahs (24:23, 26) and is used to preface questions of Jesus (12:2, 12:47, 19:27), to announce the bridegroom

103. Malina, *New Testament World*, 68–69; Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 29–31.

(25:6), and twice to make prophetic statements about Jesus, announcing his birth and entry into Jerusalem, both very significant points in the gospel (1:23, 21:5). Later, the same verb appears in the statement that the king noticed (εἶδεν) an individual without wedding clothing when he came in to see (θεάσασθαι) those dining (22:11). Elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel, this verb for seeing, θεάομαι, implies some intentionality (11:7), especially in order to be seen by others (6:1, 23:5). Some argue that the king's arrival and observation of his guests is akin to an inspection,¹⁰⁴ especially as the king questions the one person he sees (εἶδεν from ὁράω) not wearing wedding clothing.

The Parables Discourse in Matthew's Gospel includes wordplay about seeing and not seeing using both ὁράω and βλέπω, another verb for seeing or looking. This wordplay is displayed in table 2.5.

Table 2.5. Seeing and Not Seeing in the Parables Discourse (Matt 13:13–17)

13:13	βλέποντες οὐ βλέπουσιν	seeing they do not see
13:14	βλέποντες βλέψετε καὶ οὐ μὴ ἴδητε	seeing you will see but not perceive
13:15	τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς αὐτῶν ἐκάμυσαν	they have closed their eyes
	μήποτε ἴδωσιν τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς	they might not look with their eyes
13:16	ὕμῶν δὲ μακάριοι οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ὅτι βλέπουσιν	but blessed are your eyes, for they see
13:17	πολλοὶ προφῆται καὶ δίκαιοι ἐπεθύμησαν ἰδεῖν ἃ βλέπετε καὶ οὐκ εἶδαν	many prophets and righteous people longed to see what you see, but did not see

In Matthew's Gospel, βλέπω also describes the Father *seeing* what happens in secret (6:4, 6, 18), those who *see* after Jesus heals them from blindness (12:22; 15:31), and the angels of the little ones who *see* the face of the Father (18:10).

The word for blind, τυφλός, has a literal and metaphorical meaning. It refers both to blind people who are healed by Jesus (9:27–28, 11:15, 12:22, 15:30–31, 20:30, 21:14) and to the Pharisees, whom Jesus accuses of being “blind” and of being “blind guides” (15:14; 23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26). Jesus tells the parable of the royal wedding feast in the presence of the Phari-

104. Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 347; John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church, and Morality in the First Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 153; Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready*, 150.

sees. Through the voice of the king, he encourages them to come and see that all is in readiness for the feast (22:4). They see enough to acknowledge that Jesus does not see anyone as greater than another (20:16) but use this to entrap him rather than recognize him as the Son. Soon after this exchange, Jesus accuses them of being blind (23:17, 19, 26) and, even worse, of being blind guides (23:16, 24). They do not recognize Jesus as the Messianic Son of David even though two pairs of blind men do (9:27, 20:30).¹⁰⁵

The use of direct speech in the parable of the royal wedding feast invites not only the religious leaders in Jerusalem to come and see (and understand) the feast prepared by the king (22:4) but also invites successive audiences of Matthew's Gospel to do so.

2.4.2. Binding and Excising Hands and Feet in Matthew's Gospel

During the feast, the king commands that the one without wedding clothing is to be bound by the feet and hands before being cast out into the outer darkness (22:13). This specific reference to feet and hands invites further exploration of when hands and feet (the zone of purposeful action) occur together in Matthew's Gospel.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus reiterates part of the law of limited retribution related to eyes and teeth (Matt 5:38): "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot" (Exod 21:23–24; Deut 19:21 NRSV).¹⁰⁶ Twice in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus recommends excising such body parts for the good of the whole body: first, the right eye and right hand in the context of teaching about lust (5:29–30); and then in the Community Discourse: "If your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to enter life maimed or lame than to have two hands or two feet and to be thrown into the eternal fire" (Matt 18:8–9 NRSV).

The advice to sever the hand or foot that causes stumbling is preceded by the admonition not to be a stumbling-block to the little ones (18:6–7) and followed by the exhortation not to "despise one of these little ones" (18:10 NRSV). This is in a context where the Father's concern for little ones punctuates the pericope (18:6, 10, 14). Both excising and binding

105. Lawrence, "Exploring the Sense-Scape," 391.

106. Malina, *New Testament World*, 70.

hands and feet removes the potential to do any purposeful action, including that of harming little ones.

In Matt 18, the protocols for expelling a member of the community who has sinned (18:15–17) follow the exhortation to remove a hand, foot, or eye that has caused sin (18:6–7). This suggests that excising a body member may correspond to expelling a community member as well as an exercise in self-control.¹⁰⁷ Such an association is evident in the writings of Quintilian: “As physicians amputate mortified limbs, so must we lop away foul and dangerous criminals, even though they be bound to us by ties of blood” (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.3.75).¹⁰⁸

The reference to hands and feet in the king's command to bind and cast out the one without wedding clothing (22:13) might evoke both the imagery of excising a body member (hand, foot, or eye) to remove the potential for sin (18:6–9) and that of removing a sinner from membership of the body of the church community (18:15–17). In first-century society, the emphasis was not on the individual, but rather on an individual in community, a collectivistic “dyadic” personality.¹⁰⁹ Therefore, an individual was considered expendable (John 11:50) and could be excluded for the good of the group (1 Cor 5:5, 13; Rom 16:17).¹¹⁰ In Matt 18, the advice to cut off one's hand or foot or to pluck out one's eye if it causes one to stumble (18:8–9) is framed by Jesus's concern for little ones (18:6–7, 10). The focus is not on individual stumbling and sin, but when others, such as little ones, stumble, “woe to the one by whom the stumbling block comes” (18:7 NRSV).

Reading Matt 22:11–13 in light of the Community Discourse in Matt 18, I suggest that the bound and expelled individual may be understood as being cast out of the royal wedding feast because he or she harms the little ones in the community, either by being a stumbling block causing them to sin (18:7) or by failing to seek them out when they were lost (18:10). In the parable of the two debtors (18:23–35), the king commands that the person with an enormous debt be punished not because of the debt, but because

107. Göran Forkman, *The Limits of Religious Community: Expulsion from the Religious Community within the Qumran Sect, within Rabbinic Judaism, and within Primitive Christianity* (Lund: Gleerup, 1972), 123.

108. Cited by Myrick C. Shinall, “Dismemberment, Dualism and the Theology of the Body in the Gospel of Matthew,” *BTB* 44.4 (2014): 189.

109. Malina, *New Testament World*, 58–66.

110. Malina, *New Testament World*, 66.

this person threatens a fellow slave, grabbing him by the throat (a harmful purposeful action) and demanding debt repayment. Perhaps a similar rationale is operative in the parable of the royal wedding feast.

2.5. Conclusion

The parable of the royal wedding feast is part of the fabric of the Gospel of Matthew. The middle of the opening-middle-closing texture of the Gospel of Matthew involves alternation between narrative and discourse. This parable, unlike many Matthean parables, is not part of one of five teaching blocks of the gospel; instead, it contributes to the narrative development (Matt 19–23) between the Community Discourse and Eschatological Discourse. It is the third of three parables in the confrontation Jesus has with various religious leaders in the Jerusalem temple to establish his authority as the messianic Son of David (Matt 21–23). The religious leaders constitute the primary audience for the whole of the telling of parable of the royal wedding feast. The final scene (22:11–13) is not an aside addressed to the disciples only.

Analysis of the narrative point of view shows that the king and the narrator of the parable align on the phraseological and ideological planes, as does the narrator of the parable, Jesus, with the narrator of Matthew's Gospel. The voice of the king and the voice of Jesus dominate the parable and gospel, respectively. Jesus, as narrator, addresses the audience directly by speaking in the second person and in present tense, thereby calling listeners and readers to align ideologically with Jesus as the Son of the heavenly Father.

Exploring the repetitive-progressive texture of significant words and phrases in the parable as they thread through the Gospel of Matthew draws attention to where they cluster together. For example, in the only other parable with a human king as the dominant narrative agent, the parable of the two debtors (18:23–35), the king also expels an individual from the community, albeit by casting him into prison (18:34–35) rather than outer darkness (22:13). Nevertheless, I consider such *expulsion* of an individual a closer parallel with Matt 22:11–13 than those parables in which eschatological judgment involves *separation* into two groups (Matt 13:24–30, 47–50; 25:31–46). In the explanation of the parable of the wheat and the weeds, however, it is noteworthy that it is not simply the bad or wicked who will be thrown “into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth,” but the more specifically desig-

nated group of “all causes of sin and all evildoers” (13:41–42 NRSV). It is only with the removal of these evildoers that the righteous may shine like the sun (13:43). An example of what constitutes the kind of evildoing that results in weeping and gnashing of teeth is found in the story of the slave who does not exercise good care of the slaves entrusted to his responsibility (24:48–51). By being dichotomized (24:51), as with having feet and hands bound, this individual can no longer beat other slaves in the household (24:49). By association, I suggest that only after the removal of an individual with the power to harm others may those gathered at the king's feast eat in peace.

Consideration of the sensory-aesthetic texture of Matthew's Gospel highlights thematic connections in the zone of purposeful action between the parable of the royal wedding feast and the Community Discourse (Matt 18), where the removal of body parts that cause sin, stumbling, and harm to little ones in the community is discussed. This includes advice to excise an offending hand or foot (18:6–9) and guidelines for the expulsion of a member of the community who sins against another (18:15–17). The Community Discourse is addressed to would-be leaders of the ecclesia, and Matt 21–23 is addressed to the religious leaders in the temple. Jesus accuses the scribes and Pharisees of blindness no less than five times (23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26), and in the parable of the royal wedding feast, the initially invited refuse to “come and see” the feast the king has prepared. This suggests that not only are the religious leaders blind to the parabolic king's invitation, but they are willfully so because in the three-body zone system of sensory-aesthetic texture, the eyes and heart are connected.¹¹¹ There are also resonances between the killing of the king's slaves in the parable (22:6) and the prophets, sages, and teachers Jesus speaks of sending, who are killed, flogged, and pursued (23:34).

In this chapter, verbal and thematic connections have been identified between the parable of the royal wedding feast and other parts of Matthew's Gospel, particularly parables with similar inner texture. In the next two chapters the focus is on intertexture, the verbal and thematic connections of this parable with other early Christian and Jewish texts. In chapter 3, intertexture analysis begins with rabbinic and gospel parables that have topoi in common with Matt 22:1–14.

111. Malina, *New Testament World*, 68–69.

Intertexture of Matthew 22:1–10

The focus of this chapter and chapter 4 is intertexture, that is, “the study of how a given text is connected with other texts (broadly understood) outside itself and how those texts affect the interpretation of the given text.”¹ To do this, my exploration of the textures of the parable of the royal wedding feast shifts from the macrotext of Matthew’s Gospel, the focus of chapter 2, to other texts, particularly parables, woven with some of the same threads as this parable. These threads, that is, the significant words, phrases, and themes of the parable identified in the inner-texture analysis of chapters 1 and 2, are considered *topoi*. In sociorhetorical interpretation, a *topos* is defined as a location of thought in historical, social, cultural, ideological, aesthetic, and religious networks of meaning and signification.² Robbins proposes that a *topos* is not simply a word, idea, or theme with specific contents *in* which to search, but rather a semantic common space *from* which to search.³ In this chapter, I explore the networks of meaning associated with the “wedding” component of *ἐνδυμα γάμου*, that is, the intertexts related to the event from which the individual was cast out, focusing on Matt 22:1–10. In chapter 4, I explore the intertextures of the “clothing” component of *ἐνδυμα γάμου* and the consequences of not wearing such clothing in this parable, that is, the

1. B. J. Oropeza and Steve Moyise, *Exploring Intertextuality: Diverse Strategies for New Testament Interpretation of Texts* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), xiii.

2. Robbins, “Socio-rhetorical Criticism,” 312; Robbins, *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, RRA 1 (Blandford Forum, UK: Deo, 2009), 81–85; Bloomquist, “Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology,” 134–35.

3. Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 83. See also Carolyn R. Miller, “The Aristotelian Topos: Hunting for Novelty,” in *Foundations for Sociorhetorical Exploration: A Rhetoric of Religious Antiquity Reader*, ed. Vernon K. Robbins, Robert H. von Thaden Jr., and Bart B. Bruehler, RRA 4 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 95–117.

topoi of binding, darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth, focusing on Matt 22:11–14.

In intertextual analysis within sociorhetorical interpretation, the topoi identified as significant to a New Testament text are not only traced to where they may feature in the Old Testament; how they are configured elsewhere within the New Testament, in extrabiblical writings, and in Greco-Roman literature more generally is also examined. For example, Mark 4 contains images of fields, sowing seeds, and harvest characteristic of Jewish apocalyptic, wisdom, and prophetic literatures; however, similar imagery associated with growing seeds is also found in Greco-Roman discourse (Hippocrates, *Law* 3; Seneca, *Ep.* 38.2; Quintilian, *Inst.* 5.11.24). Robbins considers both this Greco-Roman cultural intertexture as well as Jewish cultural intertexture important for interpreting the parables of Mark 4.⁴

Robbins describes exploring intertexture as entering the interactive world of the text by identifying the oral-scribal, cultural, social, and historical intertexture of the text.⁵ Oral-scribal intertexture is the analysis of how a text recites, recontextualizes, reconfigures, amplifies, or elaborates on a text external to it.⁶ Cultural intertexture refers to the reference, allusion, or echo of insider cultural knowledge known only by people within or familiar enough with a particular culture to understand the values, scripts, codes, and systems of that culture.⁷ For references and allusions to phenomena understood by people of different cultures, Robbins uses the category of social intertexture. Social intertexture refers to the use, reference, or representation of various forms of social knowledge, that is, information about social roles, institutions, and codes understood by everyone in a given region through their day-to-day interactions.⁸ Historical intertexture concerns how a historical event is portrayed or alluded

4. Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 113–15; Burton L. Mack and Vernon K. Robbins, *Patterns of Persuasion in the Gospels* (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1989), 145–60.

5. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 40–70; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 96–143.

6. Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 97–108; Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 40–58.

7. Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 108–15; Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 58–62.

8. Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 115–18; Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 62–63.

to in the focus text by comparison with references to the same historical event in other texts.⁹ Cultural, social, and historical intertexture help to identify the social location of the author of the text, which is the focus of chapter 6. The intertexture analysis in this chapter and in chapter 4 makes use primarily of the oral-scribal intertexture category. This process begins with actual words in the text, seeks the same expression in other texts, and then considers how the configuration of this topos in an intertext may inform interpretation of the focus text. However, not all topoi are encapsulated in a word or phrase, so alternative forms of intertextual analysis are needed to explore the networks of such thematic associations.

The analysis of intertexture is a growing field in New Testament scholarship.¹⁰ Steve Moyise helpfully identifies five types of intertextual analysis employed in New Testament studies: echo, narrative, exegetical, dialogical, and postmodern.¹¹ In what follows, I outline these intertexture types and how each relates to my exploration of the intertextures of the parable of the royal wedding feast.

Echo intertexture invites transfer of significations from one text to another even though it is not introduced with a citation formula and is less obvious than an allusion.¹² For example, in *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, Richard B. Hays observes that Phil 1:19 includes the same words as found in Job 13:16 LXX, τοῦτό μοι ἀποβήσεται εἰς σωτηρίαν, to describe an assurance of deliverance from suffering.¹³ Having identified what Robbins might call oral-scribal intertexture, Hays then considers the literary context of the phrase in Job as well as in Philippians.¹⁴ He suggests that for those familiar with the book of Job, hearing these same words in Philippians invites association of Paul's suffering with that of Job and of the false preachers in Phil 1:15–17 with the false comforters in the book

9. Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 118–20; Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 63–68.

10. Oropeza and Moyise provide a summary (*Exploring Intertextuality*, xiii–xx).

11. Steve Moyise, “Intertextuality and Biblical Studies,” *Verbum et Ecclesia* 23.2 (2002): 418–31.

12. Moyise, “Intertextuality and Biblical Studies,” 419–20.

13. Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 23; Moyise, “Intertextuality and Biblical Studies,” 419–21.

14. Richard B. Hays refers to this process of exploring the literary context of the echoed text as *metalepsis*. See Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2016), 127–29.

of Job.¹⁵ I also look to the wider literary context beyond the Septuagint or Hebrew Bible when I explore the same phrasing in Matt 22:13 and 1 En. 10.4 to see what associations may be made between the two texts.

Narrative intertexture “emphasizes both the continuing role of a significant story, while also acknowledging that each new retelling is a reshaping of that story.”¹⁶ For example, the Exodus tradition was already retold in both the prophetic (Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah) and later wisdom and apocalyptic traditions (Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, Enoch) before Paul drew on this meta-narrative in Galatians and Rom 8.¹⁷ Similarly, there is narrative intertextuality between the parable of the royal wedding feast and the eschatological banquet meta-narrative first described in Isa 25:6–8 and then reworked in later prophetic, Second Temple apocalyptic, and then Christian and rabbinic literature.¹⁸

Exegetical intertexture is where the focus text is an exegesis of preexisting scripture.¹⁹ For example, Timothy Berkley considers Rom 2:17–29 an exegesis of Gen 17, Deut 28–30, Jer 7–9, and Ezek 36.²⁰ Rabbinic parables, including a partial parallel to the parable of the royal wedding feast, are found in the midrashic exegesis of Scripture.²¹ Olson considers Matt 22:1–14 a midrash on Zeph 1 and 1 En. 10.²² Goulder proposes that Matthew's Gospel as a whole is a midrashic expansion of Mark's Gospel, much like the books of Chronicles are a reworking of the books of Samuel and Kings.²³ He argues that the parable of the seed growing secretly (Mark 4:26–29) becomes the parable of the wheat and the weeds (Matt 13:24–30,

15. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 23; Moyise, “Intertextuality and Biblical Studies,” 419–21.

16. Moyise, “Intertextuality and Biblical Studies,” 422.

17. Sylvia C. Keesmaat, “Exodus and the Intertextual Transformation of Tradition in Romans 8.14–30,” *JSNT* 54 (1994): 29–56; Moyise, “Intertextuality and Biblical Studies,” 422.

18. Reuven Kiperwasser, “A Bizarre Invitation to the King's Banquet: The Metamorphosis of a Parable Tradition and the Transformation of an Eschatological Idea,” *Proof* 33.2 (2014): 166–70.

19. Moyise, “Intertextuality and Biblical Studies,” 422–24.

20. Timothy W. Berkley, *From a Broken Covenant to Circumcision of the Heart: Pauline Intertextual Exegesis in Romans 2:17–29*, SBLDS 175 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), 67–107.

21. Kiperwasser, “Bizarre Invitation,” 147–81.

22. Olson, “Matthew 22:1–14 as Midrash,” 435–53.

23. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew*, 4.

36–43), the doorkeeper parable (Mark 13:34–35) expands to a group of parables on the theme of watching and readiness in Matt 24–25, and the parable of the royal wedding feast is a reworking of the parable of the tenants from Mark 12:1–12 with the story of Esther.²⁴

With dialogical intertexture, the newer text informs readings of the source text as well as the source text bringing a network of associations to the newer text.²⁵ Moyise argues that there is such a dialogical relationship between the military Lion of Judah in the Hebrew Scriptures and the sacrificial Lamb of God in the book of Revelation.²⁶ Hays, who considers the Hebrew Scriptures as the manger or cradle from which the Synoptic Gospels emerge, argues that not only does the Old Testament teach us how to read the gospels, but that the gospels also influence how we read the Old Testament.²⁷ In *The Intertextual Jesus* Allison also makes a point about the bidirectional relationship between texts, arguing that any possible “allusions should be investigated from both ends.”²⁸ He notes that as the New Testament writings became canonical, more and more intertextual associations were made between New Testament texts.²⁹ Audiences of the parable of the royal wedding feast may imagine the replacement guests as poor and disabled by bringing elements from the parable of the great banquet (Luke 14:15–24) into their picturing of Matt 22:1–14.

Postmodern intertexture recognizes that there is always more than one way of reading a text because the complex interactions with a web of associated texts make determining a single meaning impossible.³⁰ Choices about which texts to consider intertexts are influenced by the vested interests and ideology of the reader.³¹ Hays provides helpful criteria for identifying and assessing the relevance of particular intertexts to the

24. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew*, 4, 415–18; Blickenstaff also suggests intertexture with the fate of Haman in the book of Esther (*Bridegroom*, 74).

25. Moyise, “Intertextuality and Biblical Studies,” 424–25.

26. Moyise, “Intertextuality and Biblical Studies,” 424–25.

27. Richard B. Hays, *Reading Backwards: Figural Christology and the Fourfold Gospel Witness* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014), 1–5.

28. Dale C. Allison, *The Intertextual Jesus: Scripture in Q* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 10–11.

29. Allison, *Intertextual Jesus*, 10.

30. Moyise, “Intertextuality and Biblical Studies,” 428.

31. Moyise, “Intertextuality and Biblical Studies,” 425.

interpretation of a particular passage.³² My assessment of the relevance of potential intertexts for understanding the parable of the royal wedding feast is guided by two of his criteria: thematic coherence (whether the themes of the intertext are consistent with the themes of the focus text) and historical plausibility (whether the association is plausible for what may be known of both author and authorial audience).

This chapter explores intertexts related to the royal wedding setting of the parable of the royal wedding feast. Texts considered include rabbinic parables about a human king holding a banquet (e.g., b. Shabb. 153b), parables with the plot line of a feast needing replacement guests (Luke 14:15–24; Gos. Thom. 64), the Wedding Supper of the Lamb (Rev 21), calls to come (Prov 9, Isa 55), and King Hezekiah's Passover feast as described by both the Chronicler and Josephus.

3.1. Human King (ἄνθρωπος βασιλεῖ) Parables

The parable of the royal wedding feast is one of the few parables in the canonical gospels that concern a king (Matt 18:23, 22:2; Luke 14:31), whereas many rabbinic parables do.³³ As the *mashal* became a popular device in midrashic exegesis, it developed into the literary form of a king *mashal* with conventions regarding language, diction, and theme.³⁴ The majority of rabbinic parables are part of midrashim, which document the teachings of the sages and rabbis of the Talmudic era, the first five centuries of the Common Era.³⁵

In the course of the Second Temple period, the motif of the eschatological banquet first presented in Isa 25:6–9 proliferated, accruing additional motifs, such as “the invitation to the banquet, the dismissal from the banquet, the refusal to participate, and the entry in inappropriate dress.”³⁶ Reuven Kiperwasser concludes, therefore, that the “historical

32. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 29–31, cited in Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 17; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 101.

33. Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 35–36; Appelbaum, *Rabbis' King-Parables*.

34. David Stern and Mark Jay Mirsky, *Rabbinic Fantasies: Imaginative Narratives from Classical Hebrew Literature* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 35–36; Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 19–21.

35. Daniel Boyarin, “New Wine in Old Bottles: Intertextuality and Midrash,” *Poetics Today* 8.3 (1987): 539.

36. Kiperwasser, “Bizarre Invitation,” 166.

Jesus and the authors of the synoptic gospels did not create the royal banquet parable, but made use of a common form at their disposal from the collection of contemporary rhetorical tools.”³⁷

Much rabbinic literature postdates the New Testament, but the rabbis took great care to preserve oral traditions and were meticulous in attributing sayings and stories to the rabbis who used them in their teaching, which assists in the process of dating rabbinic parables and motifs.³⁸ However, my exploration of the relationship between Matt 22:1–14 and rabbinic king parables is not source critical. It does not attempt to resolve “whether the rabbis plagiarized the Gospels or Jesus robbed from the rabbis”;³⁹ rather, the focus is on themes, teachings, and images that had currency in both the rabbinic and gospel story-telling worlds.

In rabbinic literature, the same or similar parable may illustrate different scriptural texts, creating a wide web of associations.⁴⁰ By being part of midrash, the exegesis of biblical texts, the rabbinic *mashal-nimshal* form incorporates additional verses of Scripture, creating a highly intertextual mosaic of texts.⁴¹ This pattern is evident at the conclusion of the parable of the tenants (Matt 21:33–46, Mark 12:1–12, Luke 20:9–19).⁴² This pattern is also found in Qoh. Zut. 9.8, where the rabbinic exegesis includes citations from Isa 65:13 and Mal 3:18 following a king parable with some parallels with the parable of the royal wedding feast.⁴³

3.1.1. The Parable of the King’s Banquet without a Set Time

Discussion of the parallels between the parable of a king’s banquet without a set time (b. Shabb. 153a) and the parable of the royal wedding feast (Matt

37. Kiperwasser, “Bizarre Invitation,” 170.

38. Brad H. Young, *Meet the Rabbis: Rabbinic Thought and the Teachings of Jesus* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 108–9.

39. Young, *Meet the Rabbis*, 63.

40. Stern provides examples of how variations on a *mashal* beginning with “a king made a bridal chamber for his son” illustrate different scriptural texts (*Parables in Midrash*, 24–42).

41. Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 1–2; Oropeza and Moyise, *Exploring Intertextuality*, xv; Daniel Boyarin, *Intertextuality and the Reading of Midrash* (repr., Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 22–38.

42. Stern, *Parables as Midrash*, 197.

43. Kiperwasser includes an English translation of this midrash (“Bizarre Invitation,” 149–51).

22:1–14) dates back at least a century.⁴⁴ Of the many rabbinic parables that begin with a king giving a banquet, this one is most influential in the interpretation of Matt 22:1–14, with a number of commentators inferring that wedding clothing means clean clothing.⁴⁵ The rabbinic parable (*mashal*) is part of the exegesis of Eccl 9:8, “Let your garments always be white; do not let oil be lacking on your head” (NRSV), found in Qoh. Rab. 9:8, Qoh. Zut. 9:8, and b. Shabb. 153a.⁴⁶ It is only in this later Babylonian Talmud tractate that the parable is attributed to Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai,⁴⁷ the influential first-century Jewish leader who may have been a contemporary of the author of the Gospel of Matthew.⁴⁸

In this *mashal* a king advises that he will give a feast at some unspecified time. Karin Zetterholm suggests that invitations to dinner usually imply a set time, for in rabbinic Hebrew, the verb to invite, לְהִזְמִין, contains the word for time, זֶמֶן.⁴⁹ Furthermore, a king would not usually invite servants; therefore, the behavior of the servants who continue doing their usual work is quite understandable, and those who get dressed up and rush to the palace ready would seem to be the foolish ones.⁵⁰ When the feast is ready, it turns out that the reverse is true. The wise ones are those who prepared by wearing the clean clothing needed to enter the king's feast, but the foolish continued working at their trades, “the plasterer went to his plaster, the potter to his clay, the washer to his laundry,” so when the feast is ready they are turned away because they are not wearing clean clothes.⁵¹

44. Allen, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 235, citing August Wünsche, *Neue Beiträge zur Erläuterung der Evangelien aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1878), 22.

45. Bauckham, “Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast,” 481; Derrett, *Law*, 154; Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 187; Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, 269; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 890; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 826; Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready*, 234.

46. Kiperwasser, “Bizarre Invitation,” 151–52, 172–73.

47. Kiperwasser proposes that this is due to a transmission error, as both R. Yohanan's words preceding the parable in Qoh. Zut. and other sage attributions were not included in the later versions (“Bizarre Invitation,” 151, 173).

48. Jacob Neusner, *A Life of Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai, ca. 1–80 CE* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975).

49. Karin Hedner Zetterholm, *Jewish Interpretation of the Bible: Ancient and Contemporary* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 116.

50. Zetterholm, *Jewish Interpretation*, 115–21.

51. Kiperwasser, “Bizarre Invitation,” 150.

Despite the topoi of king and clothing, the structure and plot of the main part of this rabbinic *mashal* have greater parallels with Matt 25:1–13, the parable of the ten virgins, than with the parable of the royal wedding feast. In both the parable of the banquet with no set time and Matt 25:1–13, there is a division between two groups: the wise and the foolish. The wise are ready and waiting—with clean clothes in one case and a supply of oil for lamps in the other. At the end of both these parables, the foolish do not gain entry, unlike the one without wedding clothes in the parable of the royal wedding feast, who is cast out once already inside (Matt 22:13). In the rabbinic parable, the wise prove to be the ones waiting around in clean clothes rather than working and getting dirty because, in its Talmud setting, this story illustrates the need to keep the Sabbath strictly. By contrast, in Matthew's Gospel, actively *doing* the will of the Father, even on the Sabbath, is crucial (7:21–27; 12:1–12, 50).

In both Qoh. Zut. 9:8 and b. Shabb. 153a, sages elaborate on the basic *mashal* of a King's Banquet with No Set Time by referring to Isa 65:13, "My servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry" (NRSV).⁵² Isaiah 65:12–14, the immediate context of Isa 65:13, parallels imagery in the parable of the royal wedding feast. Those who are not servants do not answer the Lord's call (Isa 65:12; cf. Matt 22:3–5), which is why they go hungry (Isa 65:13; cf. Matt 22:8, Luke 14:24) and "shall cry out for pain of heart, and shall wail for anguish of spirit" (Isa 65:14 NRSV). This evokes the weeping and gnashing of teeth in Matt 22:13, but it is not part of the king parable proper.

3.1.2. Rabbinic King Parables about the World-to-Come

In addition to the parable of a king's feast with no set time (b. Shabb. 153a), several other rabbinic king parables center on a banquet and concern the world to come. Herbert Bassler and Marsha Cohen draw attention to two rabbinic parables found in Midrash Psalms. In one, Rabbi Yosi bar Hanina relates a *mashal* about a king whose invited guests were quite late to the banquet. Rather than criticizing them, the king is grateful that the food is not wasted, and the *nimshal* even describes these tardy guests as the righteous, for whom God has prepared the world to come.⁵³ In another parable in Midrash Psalms, the circle of those invited extends beyond the

52. Kiperwasser, "Bizarre Invitation," 152–53.

53. Herbert W. Bassler and Marsha B. Cohen, *The Gospel of Matthew and Judaic Traditions: A Relevance-Based Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 563.

initially invited. Rabbi Eleazar relates a *mashal* about a king who initially limited feast invitations to merchants but is advised to invite craftsmen as well because the feast was too much for the merchants to consume without additional guests.⁵⁴ The *nimshal* of this parable is that ordinary Jews as well as the elite gain eternal life.⁵⁵ In Gen. Rab. 9.10, the angel of life is with those who eat the good things laid out at the king's banquet and bless the king, whereas those who eat without blessing the king are decapitated by the sword. The *nimshal* stresses the importance of blessing God by laying up precepts and good deeds.⁵⁶

3.1.3. The Parable of the Blind Man and the Lame Man

The parable of the blind man and the lame man, one of the oldest examples of a king *mashal*, dates to the late first century CE.⁵⁷ It has the *nimshal* that the body and soul are linked and cannot be judged separately. This is conveyed in the parable proper, in which a blind man and a lame man work together to steal figs from the king's orchard. Versions of this parable of the blind man and the lame man are found in Epiphanius (*Pan.* 64:70) and in four rabbinic texts.⁵⁸ The version in Epiphanius has several topoi in common with the parable of the royal wedding feast: the setting is that of the wedding of the king's son, the guests are called to the wedding, and interlopers are identified by what they are not wearing—military footwear in Epiphanius and wedding clothing in Matthew. Troops also feature in both parables, but in the parable of the blind man and the lame man, those invited are troops, whereas in the parable of the royal wedding feast the king sends out troops to destroy the murderers and burn their city. In Epiphanius's version of the parable of the blind man and the lame man, when the king asks questions to find out how civilian footprints came to

54. Basser and Cohen, *Gospel of Matthew*, 362.

55. Basser and Cohen, *Gospel of Matthew*, 362.

56. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 304.

57. Bauckham, "Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast," 471–88; Luitpold Wallach, "The Parable of the Blind and the Lame," *JBL* 6 (1943), 333–39; Marc Bregman, "The Parable of the Lame and the Blind: Epiphanius' Quotation from an Apocryphon of Ezekiel," *JTS* 48 (1991): 125–38; James R. Mueller, *The Five Fragments of the Apocryphon of Ezekiel: A Critical Study* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1994).

58. Bauckham, "Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast," 473.

be in his garden, the narrator reminds the reader that the king must be “a man, for God is ignorant of nothing” (*Pan.* 64.70).⁵⁹

3.1.4. Flesh-and-Blood King Parables

Rabbinic king parables often have as the main narrative agent “a leader or head of a Roman province, or even the emperor himself, who functions as the parable’s signifier for the God of Israel.”⁶⁰ Stern wryly and rightly observes that the rabbis’ choice of the emperor as a symbol of God is a paradoxical one.⁶¹ Alan Appelbaum argues that in some rabbinic king parables, the king in the parable does not signify God because these parables are a form of resistance literature.⁶² The antithetical nature of these parables is evident in the *nimshal*’s being introduced with the conjunction *but*, like δὲ used to distinguish the behavior of disciples from secular rulers in the Synoptic Gospels (Matt 20:24–28, Mark 10:42, Luke 22:24–26).⁶³ There is, however, no such *but* in the parable of the royal wedding feast—the *nimshal* is introduced with γάρ (for).

Some rabbinic parables introduce the king as מלך בשר ודם, “a king of flesh and blood,” to draw a distinction between God and human kings, especially those in the imperial cult with pretensions of divinity.⁶⁴ Similar to this “flesh-and-blood king” formula, ἀνθρώπων βασιλεῖ (human king) is used in both king parables in the Gospel of Matthew (18:23, 22:2).⁶⁵ The inclusion of ἄνθρωπος might also provide a clue to transmission history. David Stern notes that, when the same *mashal* is found in different versions, if the protagonist is an ordinary person, *adam*, in an earlier source, he is invariably changed into a king, *melekh*, in a later one.⁶⁶ By analogy with this development pattern of the rabbinic king-*mashal* form, Matt

59. Bauckham, “Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast,” 474.

60. Kiperwasser, “Bizarre Invitation,” 148; Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 16–19.

61. Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 94.

62. Appelbaum, “Hidden Transcript,” 287–301; Appelbaum, *Rabbis’ King-Parables*, 283.

63. Appelbaum, *Rabbis’ King-Parables*, 283–84.

64. Stern, “Rhetoric and Midrash,” 267–68.

65. Basser and Cohen, *Gospel of Matthew*, 367; Schalom Ben-Chorin, *Brother Jesus: The Nazarene through Jewish Eyes*, trans. Jared S. Klein and Max Reinhart (repr., Athens: University of Georgia, 2012), 76.

66. Stern, “Rhetoric and Midrash,” 267.

22:1–14 could be a later version of the parable found in Luke 14:15–24 and in Gos. Thom. 64.

3.2. Feasts with Replacement Guests from the Streets

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, those initially invited do not attend and replacement guests are found to consume the feast. A similar storyline is also found in Luke 14:15–24, Gos. Thom. 64, and the story of bar Ma’yan in rabbinic literature.

3.2.1. Luke 14:15–24

Matthew’s parable of the royal wedding feast (Matt 22:1–14) and Luke’s parable of the great banquet (14:15–24) have a similar basic storyline with significant plot variations and little vocabulary in common.⁶⁷ Some parable commentaries emphasize the similarities between the two parables; others, their differences.⁶⁸ In both stories, the host sends out invitations to come to a festive meal, but all those invited refuse to come, so the host responds by sending out slaves to bring in replacement guests from the streets. The similarities and differences between the storylines of these two parables are summarized in table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Comparison of Matthew 22:1–14 and Luke 14:15–24⁶⁹

	Matthew 22	Luke 14
Explication: A man organizes a festive meal	v. 2: A (man) king organizes a wedding feast for his son	v. 16: A man organizes a dinner for many
Rising Action: The host sends out his slave(s) to summon those invited	Twice v. 3a: his slaves v. 4: other slaves	Once v. 17: his slave

67. Meier, *Probing the Authenticity*, 258; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 305.
68. For similarities, see for example Blomberg, who considers them together in a section titled “Great Supper” (*Interpreting the Parables*, 233–240); for differences, see for example Hultgren, who first considers Luke 14:16–34 and Gos. Thom. 64 under the heading “The Great Banquet” and then follows this with consideration of Matt 22:1–14 under the heading of “The Wedding Feast” (*Parables of Jesus*, 331–57).
69. Meier, *Probing the Authenticity*, 254; Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 334.

Complication: All those invited refuses to come	v. 5: Summary statement, two exits	vv. 18–20: Summary statement, three excuses
Escalation:	v. 6: The rest kill the slaves; v. 7: Troops sent to destroy murderers of the slaves and burn their city	
Rising Action: The host is angry	v. 7	v. 19
Resolution: Slave(s) sent out to gather replacement guests until feast is full	Once vv. 9–10	Twice vv. 21–23
Epilogue	vv. 11–13	

Matthew's story has two plot elements that are not in Luke's story: the king's slaves are killed, to which the king responds by sending troops to destroy those who did this and to burn their city (22:6–7); and an individual without wedding clothing is thrown out of the feast (22:11–13).⁷⁰ Matthew's parable has two sets of slaves sent out for the initial inviting (22:3–4), whereas Luke's parable has two in-gatherings of replacement guests (14:21–23).

There are surprisingly few words common to both parables.⁷¹ This is at least partly because the two parables differ even when the storylines are in parallel. Both parables name the host of the feast as a man, *ἄνθρωπος* (Matt 22:2, Luke 14:16); however, in Matthew this man is a king, *ἀνθρώπῳ βασιλεῖ* (22:2). Henceforth in Matthew's parable the host is identified as king (22:2, 7, 11, 13), whereas in Luke's parable the host is later identified as the head of the household, *οἰκοδεσπότης* (14:21), and lord, *κύριος*, of the slave (14:21, 22, 23). In Luke's parable there is only one slave (14:17, 21, 22), whereas Matthew's king sends out multiple slaves (22:3, 4, 8). The event to which people are invited differs. In Matthew's parable, it is a wedding (*γάμος*) for the king's son, for which an early meal (*ἄριστον*) is prepared (22:4), whereas in Luke's parable it is a dinner (*δεῖπνον*) to which many are invited (14:17). In Luke's parable, voice is given to those who give excuses for not coming, whereas in Matthew's, only the king speaks

70. Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 334.

71. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:194 n. 4.

and no reasons for not coming are provided. In both parables, the venue is eventually filled: πλήθω fills, as in completes, the wedding (Matt 22:10); and γεμίζω fills, as in loads, the house (Luke 14:23). In Matthew's story the wedding is filled with *all* those found by slaves on the roads, both the bad and the good (22:9–10), whereas in Luke's story the slave is *first* to bring in the poor, the crippled, the blind and the lame, τοὺς πτωχοὺς καὶ ἀναπίρους καὶ τυφλοὺς καὶ χωλοὺς (14:21).

In Koine Greek, Matt 22:1–14 consists of 223 words, only 23 of which correspond with those in Luke 14:15–24.⁷² The longest phrase in common is only three words long, εἰς τὰς ὁδοὺς (Matt 22:10, Luke 14:23).⁷³ Both parables include the term κεκλημένος more than once (Matt 22:3, 4, 8; Luke 14:17, 24). Both hosts call (καλέσαι in Matt 22:3; ἐκάλεσεν in Luke 14:16) the guests with an imperative to come (δεῦτε in Matt 22:4; Ἔρχεσθε in Luke 14:17) because the feast is ready, ἔτοιμος (Matt 22:4, Luke 14:17). Although there is little in common in the description of the refusals to come, ἀγρός (field) appears in both Matt (22:5) and Luke (14:18). Both hosts become angry (ὠργίσθη in Matt 22:7; ὀργισθεῖς in Luke 14:21) after the invited ones do not come and consequently send slaves out onto roads, εἰς τὰς ὁδοὺς (Matt 22:10, Luke 14:23), to find replacements. Different compound verbs based on “to lead,” ἄγω, describe bringing in replacement guests. In Matt 22:10 the slaves bring them together (συνήγαγον), whereas in Luke 14:21 the slave is first instructed to bring them in (εἰσάγαγε), and then this intensifies by the use of a different verb (ἀνάγκασον), “to compel” even more to come in (14:23).

Some of the words in common are not located in the same part of the parable. The introduction to Luke's parable opens with reference to those with whom Jesus is dining, συνανακείμενος (14:15), whereas in Matthew's parable the reference to those dining, ἀνακείμενος, is toward the end of the parable (22:10, 11). The introduction to Luke's parable states that the host invited many, ἐκάλεσεν πολλοὺς (14:16), whereas “many” only appears at the end of Matthew's parable (22:14). Both parables refer to a city, but in Luke it is that of the householder (14:21), whereas for Matthew it is the city of the murderers (22:7). In Matthew's parable, guests are called to come

72. Wim J. C. Weren, “From Q to Matthew 22:1–14: New Light on the Transmission and Meaning of the Parable of the Guests,” in *Studies in Matthew's Gospel: Literary Design, Intertextuality, and Social Setting* (Leiden: Brill, 2014), 280.

73. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:194; Allison, *Intertextual Jesus: Scripture*, 232.

into the wedding (22:3, 4, 9), whereas in Luke's parable a wedding provides the third excuse of nonattendance, "I have married a wife" (14:20 ESV).

The significantly different vocabulary in Matt 22:1–14 and Luke 14:15–24 has led to discussion about whether these two parables are variants of the same parable told by Jesus. The percentage of words common to Matt 22:1–14 and Luke 14:15–24 is significantly less than what is typical of passages readily attributed to Q, the hypothetical sayings source in the two-source hypothesis for the Synoptic Gospels.⁷⁴ Therefore, many consider these parables as drawn from special traditions and not based on the same original parable.⁷⁵ By contrast, Meier uses the evidence for independent traditions to argue that the criterion of multiple attestation is met by this parable, and so it is "more likely than not that the parable of the Great Banquet comes from the historical Jesus."⁷⁶ Others consider Matt 22:1–14 and Luke 14:15–24 to derive from the common Q source, albeit in a heavily adapted form.⁷⁷ John Kloppenborg even prepares a possible reconstruction of such a Q parable.⁷⁸ Weren proposes that Matthew's parable of the royal wedding feast is composed of two Q parables, a combination of the parable of the guests (Luke 14:15–24), and the parable of the king-aspirant with rebellious subjects (Luke 19:11–27).⁷⁹ The limited number of oral-scribal correspondences between the parable of the royal wedding feast and either of these two Lukan parables makes it difficult to conclude that it is composed of elements from either one or two Q parables.

The parables of the royal wedding feast (Matt 22:1–14) and the great banquet (Luke 14:15–24) are told in quite different narrative contexts. Matthew's parable is part of a longer interaction between Jesus and the religious authorities in Jerusalem. Luke's parable of the great banquet (14:15–24) is part of Jesus's teaching as he shares in a Sabbath meal at the house of a Pharisee (14:1–3) well before he arrives in Jerusalem. Jesus uses

74. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:194; Allison, *Intertextual Jesus*, 232.

75. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 299; Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 335; Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 63; Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:194; Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 47.

76. Meier, *Probing the Authenticity*, 278.

77. Donahue, *Gospel in Parable*, 93, 141; Jones, *Matthean Parables*, 401; Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 627.

78. John S. Kloppenborg, *Q, the Earliest Gospel: An Introduction to the Original Stories and Sayings of Jesus* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 50, 140.

79. Weren, "From Q to Matthew 22:1–14," 280–93.

deliberative rhetoric to encourage his listeners to be humble and to extend hospitality, using anecdote and humor to make his point in much the way an after-dinner speaker might in a Greco-Roman symposium.⁸⁰ The first two excuses given in Luke 14:15–24 develop a threefold pattern: (1) acquisition, (2) the need to try out the purchase, and (3) “I cannot come.” The third excuse, “I have married a wife,” omits the second step but may imply a sexual innuendo expressed with a wry smile, pause, or wink.⁸¹ In the symposium setting, humor could be at the expense of the entertainers and any disability they might have. Thus, inviting “the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind” (Luke 14:13, 21) might imply inviting the after-dinner entertainers to be seated as guests at the dinner.⁸²

The Lukan Jesus tells the parable of the great banquet (14:15–24) immediately following encouragement to include those usually excluded from a banquet, with promises of blessing for those who invite those who cannot reciprocate (14:12–14). He calls the audience to be generous hosts and invite the marginalized to the table, to use Ernest van Eck's words, being “real patrons” like the host, unconcerned about honor rating and balanced reciprocity, thereby transcending both the physical walls of the city and purity boundaries to make the reign of God visible.⁸³ In many

80. Terri Bednarz, “Symposiac Humor in Luke 14:1–24,” in *Finding a Women's Place: Essays in Honor of Carolyn Osiek*, ed. David L. Balch and Jason T. Lamoreaux (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 151–70; cf. Willi Braun, who questions the symposium hypothesis. See Braun, *Feasting and Social Rhetoric in Luke 14*, SNTSMS 85 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 138–44.

81. Bruce W. Longenecker, “A Humorous Jesus: Orality, Structure and Characterisation in Luke 14:15–24 and Beyond,” *BibInt* 16 (2008): 179–204, esp. 189; Karl Hand begins with “Jesus knew how to think crudely, how to make the kind of jokes that peasants make, and how to use those jokes subversively to raise social awareness” (“A Wicked Sense of Humor,” *ThTo* 70.2 [2013]: 119–127); Don Waisanen, “A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Decorum: Quintilian's Reflections on Rhetorical Humor,” *Advances in the History of Rhetoric* 18.1 (2015): 29–52.

82. Louise Gosbell, “Banqueting and Disability in the Ancient World: Reconsidering the Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15–24),” in *Theology and the Experience of Disability: Interdisciplinary Perspectives from Voices Downunder*, ed. Andrew Picard and Myk Habets (London: Routledge Ashgate, 2016), 129–44; Gosbell, “The Parable of the Great Banquet (Luke 14:15–24), CBM and the Church: Churches as Places of Welcome and Belonging for People with Disability,” *St Mark's Review* 232 (2015): 109–22.

83. Ernest van Eck, “When Patrons Are Patrons: A Social-Scientific and Realistic Reading of the Parable of the Feast (Luke 14:16b–23),” *HvTSt* 69.1 (2013): 12; Eck, *The*

ways, Luke's feast parable (14:15–24) serves as an "example story"—much like four other Lukan parables often considered example stories: the good Samaritan (10:29–37), the rich fool (12:16–20), the rich man and Lazarus (16:19–31), and the Pharisee and the toll collector (18:9–14).⁸⁴ By contrast, the rhetorical force of the Matthean parable (22:1–14) is not to encourage the audience to do likewise by being generous hosts. Rather, the audience is encouraged to accept the hospitality of the generous royal host—appropriately clothed and presumably alongside the tax collectors and prostitutes (21:31) but not the traders and buyers who do not come to the dinner at the center of the similar parable in Gos. Thom. 64.

3.2.2. The Gospel of Thomas Logion 64

Gospel of Thomas 64 has features in common with both Matt 22:1–14 and Luke 14:15–24, with the greatest similarity being to the Lukan parable.⁸⁵ There is debate about whether the Coptic Gospel of Thomas (found in Codex II of the Nag Hammadi library unearthed in 1945) is an independent witness to early Christianity or dependent on the canonical gospels.⁸⁶ Given the gnostic nature of a number of texts co-located with the Gospel of Thomas, many, including Simon Gathercole, Mark Goodacre, Nicholas Perrin, and John Meier, consider the Gospel of Thomas to date from the second century and to be dependent on the synoptic gospels.⁸⁷ They

Parables of Jesus the Galilean: Stories of a Social Prophet (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), 84–116.

84. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 350; Jeffrey Tucker, *Example Stories: Perspectives on Four Parables in the Gospel of Luke* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 14;.

85. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 63–67; Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 233–40; Hultgren emphasizes the Matthean differences (*Parables of Jesus*, 334, table 3).

86. Christopher Skinner, *What Are They Saying about the Gospel of Thomas?* (New York: Paulist, 2012), 1–4.

87. Skinner, *What Are They Saying?*, 9–10, 30–34; Simon Gathercole, *The Composition of the Gospel of Thomas: Original Languages and Influences* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Mark Goodacre, *Thomas and the Gospels: The Case for Thomas' Familiarity with the Synoptics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012); Nicola Denzey Lewis, "A New Gnosticism: Why Simon Gathercole and Mark Goodacre on the Gospel of Thomas Change the Field," *JSNT* 35.3 (2014): 242; Nicholas Perrin, *Thomas and Tatian: The Relationship between the Gospel of Thomas and the Diatessaron* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003); Perrin, *Thomas: The Other Gospel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2007), 77–99; Meier, *Probing the Authenticity*, 145–48.

consider the excuses for not coming to the dinner in Gos. Thom. 64 to represent an urbanized setting suggestive of a later development.⁸⁸ Others, including Helmut Koester, James Robinson, Stephen Patterson, April DeConick, Kloppenborg, and the Jesus Seminar, consider the Gospel of Thomas to represent a particular trajectory in early Christianity parallel to the Synoptic Gospels and not dependent on them.⁸⁹ The Gospel of Thomas might represent both early material and that of later redaction.⁹⁰ It is difficult to make verbal comparisons between the canonical gospels and the Gospel of Thomas because the earliest complete version of Thomas is in Coptic. Although some fragments of Greek text found at Oxyrhynchus early in the twentieth century have been identified as being from Thomas, none of these Greek texts include logion 64.⁹¹

The Gospel of Thomas 64 has unique features as well as elements in common with Luke 14:15–24 and Matt 22:1–14. All three parables concern a festive meal and a host who sends one or more slaves to announce to the invited guests that the food is ready, and all those invited choose not to come, to which the host responds by instructing that replacement guests be gathered from the streets.⁹² Unlike Matthew (22:1–2), neither Gos. Thom. 64 nor Luke 14:15 introduces these stories as comparisons of the dominion of heaven. In both Luke 14:15–24 and Gos. Thom. 64, the host of the dinner is not a king, he has only one slave, and those who

88. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:196; Luz, *Matthew* 21–28, 49; Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 63–64.

89. Skinner, *What Are They Saying?*, 24; James M. Robinson and Helmut Koester, *Trajectories through Early Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971); April D. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas in Translation* (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 7–8; Stephen Patterson, “Twice More: A Response to Simon Gathercole,” *The Composition of the Gospel of Thomas*; Mark Goodacre, *Thomas and the Gospels*, *JSNT* 35.3 (2014): 259; John S. Kloppenborg, “A New Synoptic Problem: Mark Goodacre and Simon Gathercole on *Thomas*,” *JSNT* 36.3 (2016): 199–239; Robert W. Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar, *The Five Gospels: What Did Jesus Really Say? The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus* (New York: Harper Collins, 1996).

90. Uwe-Karsten Plisch, *The Gospel of Thomas: Original Text with Commentary*, trans. Gesine Schenke Robinson (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2008); Patterson, “Twice More,” 259.

91. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, “The Oxyrhynchus Logoi of Jesus and the Coptic Gospel According to Thomas,” in *Essays on the Semitic Background of the New Testament* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1971), 355–433.

92. Hultgren, *Parables*, 333; Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:195; Luz, *Matthew* 21–28, 49.

excuse themselves from the dinner do so using direct speech. Logion 64 uses the same word for dinner as Luke 14:15–24, *δεῖπνον*, one of the Greek loanwords found in the Coptic text of the Gospel of Thomas.⁹³

Gospel of Thomas 64 differs from Luke 14:15–24 as well as from Matt 22:1–14 in terms of what occasions the dinner, the number of excuses, and the concluding statement. In Matthew, the occasion is the wedding of the king's son; in Luke, it is a dinner for many; in Thomas, the man was receiving visitors.⁹⁴ When the slave is sent out to invite the guests, he begins the first, third, and fourth personal invitation with “My master invites you” (64.2, 6, 8; cf. 64.4), which suggests that this may not be a summons to those already invited, *κεκλημένοι*. All four excuses in the Gospel of Thomas (64.3, 5, 7, 9) and two of the three in Luke (14:18, 19; cf. 20) follow a threefold pattern of explanation, elaboration, and excuse. Both parables reference marriage in the third excuse: in Gos. Thom. 64.7, the invitee is organizing the wedding dinner for a friend who is getting married, whereas in Luke 14:20 it is the invitee himself who has married recently.⁹⁵ The hosts in the Matthean and Lukan parables are both angered by the responses to their invitations, whereas in Thomas the host simply sends his slave to “go outside onto the roads. Bring those whom you find, so that they may eat” (64.11). This instruction does not identify those so located in any way: neither as both the bad and the good (see Matt 22:10) nor the poor, the crippled, the blind, and the lame (see Luke 14:21). In Gos. Thom. 64 there is no going out a second time (cf. Luke 14:23) and no focus on filling the feast with guests (cf. Matt 22:10, Luke 14:21–23).

Gospel of Thomas 64 concludes with the host making an evaluative statement, “buyers and traders will not enter the places of my Father” (64.12; cf. Matt 22:8, Luke 14:24). This reflects the financial focus of the excuses: the invitees are too busy to come to dinner due to presenting invoices to merchants (64.3), checking on recently purchased real estate (64.5), and collecting rent from a “farm,” “country villa,” or “village” (64.9;

93. Gathercole notes that the Coptic Gospel of Thomas has 372 loanwords from Greek (*Composition*, 108).

94. Bentley Layton, ed., *Gospel according to Thomas, Gospel according to Philip, Hypostasis of the Archons, and Indexes*, vol. 1 of *Nag Hammadi Codex II*, 2–7 (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 77.

95. Michael W. Grondin, *Coptic Gospel of Thomas*, Saying 64 in three translations, tinyurl.com/SBL4829c.

cf. ἀγρός in Matt 22:4, Luke 14:8).⁹⁶ Petr Pokorný suggests that even organizing a dinner for a friend getting married (64.6–7) can be considered a business relationship, thereby identifying business affairs as the common element in all four excuses as well as in the concluding statement (64.12).⁹⁷

An anti-wealth ideology is identified in the Gospel of Thomas. Pokorný argues that business was suspect because possessions created “an obstacle on the way toward conversion, spiritual renewal and reaching the kingdom of the heavenly *Father*.”⁹⁸ DeConick considers the concluding statement (Gos. Thom. 64.12) to reflect the early Christian ideal of poverty, also evident in Sirach (26:29–27:2), Acts (4:32–5:11), James (4:13–17) and Pseudo-Clementine Homilies (15.3).⁹⁹

Gospel of Thomas 64 is preceded by the parable of the rich fool (63; cf. Luke 12:16–21) and followed by the parable of the tenants (65; cf. Matt 21:33–44, Mark 12:1–12, Luke 20:9–19). Patterson argues that these three parables are grouped together “to decry the foolish pursuit of worldly gain and warn against the ruin that is sure to follow.”¹⁰⁰ He identifies sayings that demonstrate the countercultural attitude to wealth in early Christianity in both the Gospel of Thomas and Q.¹⁰¹ These are summarized in table 3.2.

Table 3.2. Socially Radical Christianity in the Gospel of Thomas and Q¹⁰²

	Gospel of Thomas	Q/Luke
itinerant lifestyle	86	9:58
renounced family life	55	14:26
embraced poverty	54	6:20b

96. DeConick argues that the Greek ἀγρός has a similar range of meaning (*Original Gospel of Thomas*, 210).

97. Petr Pokorný, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Thomas: From Interpretations to the Interpreted*, Jewish and Christian Texts in Contexts and Related Studies 5 (London: T&T Clark International, 2009), 110.

98. Pokorný, *Commentary on Thomas*, 110, emphasis original.

99. DeConick, *Original Gospel of Thomas*, 209–13.

100. Stephen Patterson, *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Origins: Essays on the Fifth Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 113.

101. Patterson, *Gospel of Thomas*, 107–8.

102. Patterson, *Gospel of Thomas*, 107–8; Stephen J. Patterson and James M. Robinson, *The Fifth Gospel: The Gospel of Thomas Comes of Age* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1998), 38.

wealth a liability	95.1–2	6:34–35a
wealth a fleeting illusion	76.3	12:33
food and clothing inessential	69.2 36	6:21a 6:39
challenged the cleanliness rules	14.4 89	10:8–9 11:39–40
criticized the elite	39.1–2 78.1–3	11:52 7:24–26

The authors of the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and Thomas differ in how they configure the story of the host who responds to rejected feast invitations by finding replacement guests. Matthew uses it to confront the religious leaders of his day; Luke, to encourage the audience to invite the poor to dinners; and Thomas, to teach about the dangers of pursuing business interests and the accumulation of wealth. Much the same story, found in the Jerusalem Talmud, has a different rhetorical purpose.

3.2.3. The Bar Ma'yan Story in the Jerusalem Talmud

There is a rabbinic story recorded in the Jerusalem Talmud about a host who brings in replacement guests after those invited refuse to come (y. Sanh. 6.6, y. Hag. 2.2).¹⁰³ A corrupt tax collector called bar Ma'yan invites the town councilors to his banquet, but when they choose not to attend, he issues orders for the poor to come and eat the food to avoid waste.¹⁰⁴

The rhetorical goal of the bar Ma'yan story is quite different from the gospel parables it is purported to parallel.¹⁰⁵ Both the Matthean and Lukan parables focus on generous hospitality, the offering of it in Luke 14:15–24 and the accepting of it in Matt 22:1–14, whereas bar Ma'yan's one good deed provides no guarantees in the afterlife. In the continuation of the story, bar Ma'yan finds himself near but unable to reach and cross a stream of water, whereas a poor Torah scholar who only made one error in life and whose funeral was poorly attended enjoys

103. Jacob Neusner, *Hagigah and Moed Qatan*, vol. 20 of *The Talmud of the Land of Israel* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 57; Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 176–80; Bauckham, “Rich Man and Lazarus,” 225–46; Bassler and Cohen, *Gospel of Matthew*, 365.

104. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 178–79; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 303.

105. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 303.

being among the fountains in the garden of paradise.¹⁰⁶ This story serves both to encourage the righteous and to warn the unrighteous by showing that rewards on earth, such as good attendance at one's funeral, do not foreshadow what happens in the afterlife. Similarly, in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus warns that public displays of piety and almsgiving may be rewarded in the here and now but not necessarily in the hereafter (6:1–18). Unlike the bar Ma'yan story, however, in Matthew's Gospel one good deed, that of providing a cup of water, is enough not to lose the reward (10:42).

The bar Ma'yan story, Luke 14:15–24, and Gos. Thom. 64 share the same basic plot line as Matt 22:1–14, but each has a different rhetorical force. The bar Ma'yan story encourages the righteous with promises of reward in the afterlife. Luke 14 promotes following the example of the generous householder and including the poor and disabled at the dinner table. Gospel of Thomas 64 warns about the encumbrances of wealth in hearing and responding to the call to follow Jesus.

3.3. Wedding (γάμος) Intertexture

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the call is to come to a wedding, γάμος (Matt 22:2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12), unlike Luke 14:15–24 and Gos. Thom. 64. The few other Synoptic Gospel occurrences of *wedding* are all in parables (Matt 25:10; Luke 12:36, 14:8). Wedding settings in the gospels provide indications of the social codes regarding weddings with respect to seating positions (Luke 14:8), lamps (Matt 25:10), and the provision of sufficient wine (John 2:1–11). In the Hebrew Bible, weddings are associated with joy and contrasted with mourning and fasting. Nuptial imagery often celebrates the restoration of the relationship between God and an adulterous people. On the few occasions when the Hebrew Scriptures include references to wedding feasts, there tends to be a problem for the bridegroom: Jacob marries the wrong sister, and Samson sets a wager with disastrous consequences. The death or near death of the bridegroom becomes a topos in Jewish apocalyptic and rabbinic literature, often related to the fate of Zion.

106. Bauckham, "Rich Man and Lazarus," 227–28.

3.3.1. Luke 14:7–11

Luke's parable of the wedding feast (Luke 14:7–11), which immediately precedes his parable of the great banquet, has at least five oral-scribal intertextures with Matt 22:1–14. Both introductions mention παραβολή (Matt 22:1, Luke 14:7) and signal that the parable concerns a wedding (Matt 22:2, Luke 14:8). The word used to describe the meal in Matt 22:4, ἄριστον, also appears in Luke 14:12 but not in Luke's parable of the great banquet, where the meal is a δεῖπνον (Luke 14:16, 17, 24). The only New Testament occurrences of the word used to describe those invited to the wedding, κεκλημένους, are in the two parables in Luke 14 and in the parable of the royal wedding feast (Matt 22:3, 4, 8; Luke 14:7; 14:17, 24). The dinner guests are identified with the participle of the verb ἀνάκειμαι in Matt 22:10, 11 and with the augmented form συνανάκειμαι in Luke 14:10, 15.

Luke's parable of the wedding feast elaborates on the criticism of those who take places of honor or head table seats, πρωτοκλισία (14:7, 8), and at banquets found in the triple tradition (Matt 23:6, Mark 12:39, Luke 20:46). The Lukan story about appropriate behavior at a wedding, like the scene in Matt 22:11–13, is set inside the wedding hall once the feast has begun. In both stories, only the host speaks, and in both Luke 14:7–11 and Matt 22:11–13, he does so twice. Both hosts challenge an individual wedding attendee regarding a position of honor in the seating arrangements (Luke 14:9) and how the guest came to be at the wedding feast without wearing appropriate clothing (Matt 22:12). Consequently, shameful relocation is required: in Luke 14:9 the guest needs to move down to the lowest place; and in Matt 22:13, the host commands that the wrongly dressed guest be bound hand and foot and cast into the outer darkness.

In both Luke 14:7–11 and Matt 22:11–13, the host addresses a guest as “friend,” but both the words and tone are different. The king calling someone Ἐταῖρε is not a good thing. It is followed by the command for that person to be cast out (Matt 22:12, 13). When the Lukan host uses Φίλε, it is to invite someone to move up to a position of higher status (14:10), but not to instruct someone to move down for someone of higher status (14:9). The only occurrence of φίλος in Matthew's Gospel is in the description of Jesus as a friend of tax collectors and sinners (11:19).

In general terms, both Matt 22:11–13 and Luke 14:7–11 concern appropriate behavior at a wedding feast with unpleasant consequences for being in the wrong clothes or at the wrong place setting at the table.

3.3.2. Weddings: A Time of Rejoicing with the Bridegroom

In the Hebrew Bible, wedding feasts (משתה) last for seven days (Gen 29:17, Judg 14:17, Tob 11:18) and often involve a plot complication. Laban tricks Jacob into marrying Leah rather than Rachel (Gen 29). Samson tells a riddle to his wedding guests that leads to violence when his bride Delilah supplies them with the answer (Judg 14). The book of Esther starts when Vashti refuses to join her drunk husband and his male associates on the seventh night of feasting, which the Septuagint describes as a marriage (Esth 1:5).¹⁰⁷ In the book of Tobit, the multiple weeks of wedding festivities (Tob 8:19–20, 11:7, 11:18) celebrate the survival of this bridegroom, Tobias, given that Sarah's first seven husbands did not emerge from the bridal chamber alive (Tob 6:14, 7:11). In the Sinaiticus version of Tobit, the description of the feast to celebrate the wedding and survival of Tobias, like the wedding feast in the parable of the royal wedding feast, includes the slaughter of animals (Matt 22:4), namely, “two steers and four rams” (Tob 8:19 NRSV).¹⁰⁸

In rabbinic literature, special provision is made for wedding parties during the seven days of a wedding to enable them to rejoice more fully (b. Sukkah 25b; t. Ber. 2.9).¹⁰⁹ There is only one explicit reference to a wedding (חתונה) in the Hebrew Bible, and it is associated with the gladness of heart (Song 3:11). The joy and happiness of a bride and bridegroom are conveyed in various ways: being in the bridal chamber or under the bridal canopy (Ps 19:5), lifting their voices in song (Jer 33:11), smelling of perfume (3 Macc 4:6), and wearing ornamentation, jewels for the bride, and a garland for the groom (Isa 61:10, 3 Macc 4:8).

In Matt 22:1–14, the king prepares a wedding feast to celebrate the marriage of his son, who is therefore the bridegroom, νυμφίος, even if not referred to as such in this parable (cf. Matt 25:1, 5, 6, 10). In all three Synoptic Gospels, Jesus refers to himself as the bridegroom (Matt 9:15, Mark 2:19, Luke 5:34) and the disciples as οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ νυμφῶνος, literally “sons of the bridal chamber.”¹¹⁰ This phrase is considered a Semitism for “attendants of

107. Carey A. Moore suggests that τοῦ γάμου (of the marriage) might be a corruption of τοῦ πότου (of the drinking). See Moore, *Esther: Introduction, Translation and Notes*, AB 7b (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1971), 6–7.

108. Stuart Weeks, “Restoring the Greek Tobit,” *JSJ* 44 (2013): 9.

109. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:109.

110. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:198; Luz, *Matthew* 21–28, 52; Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 3; Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 4.

the groom” and thus by extension to refer to “wedding guests.”¹¹¹ In John’s Gospel, John the Baptist describes himself as rejoicing as the friend of the bridegroom (John 3:29). The focus of the synoptic bridegroom logion is also on rejoicing: “The wedding guests cannot mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them, can they? The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast” (Matt 9:15 NRSV).

In Maccabean literature, wedding celebrations turn into mourning with the death of a bridegroom (1 Macc 9:37–41) and when disaster strikes Jerusalem (1 Macc 1:27, 3 Macc 1:19). When King Ptolemy Philopator demands the deportation of the Jews, bridal attire is contrasted with that of mourning: the myrrh-perfumed hair of brides is sprinkled with ashes, and the heads of bridegrooms are encircled with ropes instead of garlands (3 Macc 4:6–8).

Divine punishment is associated with the silencing of the sounds of mirth, joy and gladness, epitomized by voices of the bridegroom and bride (Jer 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; Bar 2:23; Rev 18:23).¹¹² Corporate fasting to indicate repentance requires even the bride and groom to leave their bridal chamber (Joel 2:16). When fortunes are restored, following a time of desolation and lamentation, the voices of the bride and bridegroom are raised in a song of praise (Jer 33:11).¹¹³ Furthermore, there is the promise that as a groom delights in his bride, God will rejoice over Zion (Isa 62:4–5).¹¹⁴ Wedding imagery conveys the joy of a future restoration of the damaged relationship between God and his people.¹¹⁵

3.3.3. Jerusalem the Bridal Chamber

The Matthean Jesus tells the parable of the royal wedding feast in Jerusalem. This city is described as a bride in prophetic and some apocalyptic writings (Isa 54:5–13, Rev 19–21, Pss. Sol. 11, Bar 5:1–9), but it is also associated with the death or near death of the bridegroom in the bridal-chamber motif of post-biblical Jewish writings.¹¹⁶

111. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:109.

112. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 176.

113. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 176–77.

114. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:199, 2:111.

115. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 103.

116. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 133–38, 170; Metzger notes that Matt 22:10 has a textual variant with νυμφῶν, “bridal chamber,” rather than γάμος, “wedding” (*Textual Commentary*, 58).

In 4 Ezra 9:26–10:59, the woman who personifies Jerusalem (Zion) makes a marriage feast for her only long-awaited son, who dies when he enters the bridal chamber (10:1).¹¹⁷ The angel Uriel explains the allegory (10:28–59): barrenness represents the time prior to the building of Solomon's temple; the life of the son represents the years of Jerusalem's habitation; and the death of the son represents the fall of Jerusalem. Fourth Ezra was written in the late first century to make some meaning of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple in 70 CE.¹¹⁸

In rabbinic literature, there are several parables that begin, "there was a king who made a bridal chamber for his son," and one of these concerns the destruction of Jerusalem.¹¹⁹ In Midr. Rab. 4.14, a king makes a bridal chamber for his son, and when the son angers him, the king destroys the bridal chamber. The *nimshal* of this parable explains that Lam 4:11 is a song of Asaph rather than a dirge or lament because when Zion burned, only the buildings (the bridal chamber) were destroyed by the king's anger and not Israel (the son).¹²⁰ The book of Lamentations reflects on the destruction of the first temple, but the *midrashic* reflection on this scripture postdates the destruction of the second temple, thereby associating the destruction of the temple in 70 CE with divine anger (cf. Matt 22:7). These rabbinic parables do not portray Jerusalem as a woman, unlike 4 Ezra and the book of Revelation, both of which develop the prophetic tradition of depicting Jerusalem (or Zion) as a woman.

3.3.4. The Wedding Feast of the Lamb: Revelation 19

In the book of Revelation, two women, Babylon the Harlot and Jerusalem the Bride, are sharply contrasted.¹²¹ In Babylon, "the voice of bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more" (Rev 18:23 NRSV; cf. Jer 7:34, 16:9, 25:10, 33:11), whereas the New Jerusalem will be the bride for the victorious Lamb bridegroom (Rev 19–22), drawing on bridal imagery

117. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 174; Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:109–11.

118. Daniel Harrington dates 4 Ezra to the late first century. See Harrington, *Invitation to the Apocrypha* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 185.

119. Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 24–35.

120. Stern, "Rhetoric and Midrash," 278; Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 25.

121. Jan Fekkes III, "'His Bride Has Prepared Herself': Revelation 19–21 and Isaian Nuptial Imagery," *JBL* 109 (1990): 269–87.

from Isaiah (54:11–12, 61:10).¹²² Here the nascent Christian community rather than Israel or Judah is the νύμφη, “bride.” The marriage metaphor is applied to Christ and the church elsewhere in the New Testament (2 Cor 11:2, Eph 5:22–33) but without mention of *wedding*.¹²³

The Wedding Feast scene in Rev 19–21 has several topoi in common with Matt 22:1–14.¹²⁴ These include three oral-scribal intertextures: wedding, γάμος (Matt 22:2; Rev 19:7, 9); invited ones, κεκλημένοι (Matt 22:3, 4, 8; Rev 19:9); and “Come!” Δεῦτε (Matt 22:4, Rev 19:9). There are also two thematic but nonverbal intertextures: meals, ἄριστον (Matt 22:4) and δεῖπνον (Rev 19:9); and verbs for wearing, ἐνδύω (Matt 22:11, 12) and περιβάλλω (Rev 19:8). Earlier in the book of Revelation, there is discussion regarding being worthy (3:4; 4:11; 5:2, 4, 9, 12; cf. Matt 22:8). Immediately after the depiction of the Wedding Supper of the Lamb, armies (στρατεύματα; cf. Matt 22:7) feature, both victorious heavenly armies (19:14) and the defeated armies of the beast and earthly kings (19:19). One difference between the two wedding feasts is that Matt 22:1–14 makes no mention of a bride, whereas in Revelation the New Jerusalem is described as “a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev 21:2 NRSV). An angel issues the invitation to “come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb” (21:9 NRSV).

3.4. “Come!” (Δεῦτε) Intertexture

Exhortations to “come” and feast are found in Luke 14:17, Prov 9:1–6, Isa 55, 2 Chr 30, and Rev 19 as well as in the parable of the royal wedding feast. In Matt 22:4, the king’s invitation concludes with καὶ πάντα ἔτοιμα δεῦτε εἰς τοὺς γάμους (Everything is ready, come to the wedding feast). There is also an exhortation to come because the food is ready in Luke 14:17: “Ἐρχεσθε, ὅτι ἤδη ἔτοιμά ἐστιν (Come, everything is now ready).

In Prov 9:1–6, Lady Wisdom sends out her servants to invite people to “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed” (9:5 NRSV). Like the king in the parable of the royal wedding feast, she sends out her

122. Fekkes, “His Bride Has Prepared Herself,” 269.

123. Fekkes, “His Bride Has Prepared Herself,” 272.

124. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:199; Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 52; David A. deSilva suggests that the wedding-feast imagery in Revelation developed from Jesus traditions such as those found in Matt 22:1–14. See deSilva, *Seeing Things John’s Way: The Rhetoric of the Book of Revelation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2009), 170.

slaves to convey the invitation (Prov 9:3, Matt 22:3, 4) and has slaughtered her animals in preparation (Prov 9:2, Matt 2:4).¹²⁵ By contrast, Lady Folly seems to have made no preparations. She seeks to entice passersby with stolen water and eating bread in secret, which unbeknownst to them is really among the dead in Sheol (Prov 9:13–18). Lady Folly invites people to *turn aside*, סור in Hebrew and ἐκκλινάτω in Greek (9:16), whereas, like the king in Matt 22:4 and host in Luke 14:17, Lady Wisdom invites people to *come*, הלך in Hebrew and ἔλθατε in Greek (9:5).

In Isa 55:1–2, there are three calls to come to “eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food” (NRSV). This reference to eating rich satisfying food evokes the eschatological banquet of Isa 25:6: “On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of rich food, a feast of well-matured wines, of rich food filled with marrow, of well-matured wines strained clear” (NRSV).

In Isa 55, the call to come and eat good things (55:1–2) is associated with the renewal of the Davidic covenant (55:3). The initial making of this covenant involved the sacrifice of ox and fatling, שׁוֹר וּמְרִיא (2 Sam 6:13). Jesus is greeted as “Son of David” as he enters Jerusalem (21:9, 15), shortly before he tells the parable of the royal wedding feast, in which the king’s invitation refers to the sacrificing of the same animals used in the making of the Davidic covenant, οἱ ταῦροί μου καὶ τὰ σιτιστὰ, “oxen and fatlings” (Matt 22:4). This may well be more than a coincidence.

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the king’s call to come to the wedding feast (Matt 22:4) evokes Lady Wisdom’s invitation to come to the feast she has prepared (Prov 9:1–6) and Isaiah’s call to come and eat of the food that satisfies (Isa 55:1–3), drawing on eschatological-banquet (Isa 25:6–8) and Davidic-covenant imagery (2 Sam 6:13). There are also intertextual resonances between the parable of the royal wedding feast and Hezekiah’s Passover feast (2 Chr 30; Josephus, *A.J.* 9.2) regarding the importance of responding to the king’s call to come.¹²⁶

3.5. King Hezekiah’s Passover Feast

Brant Pitre convincingly argues that King Hezekiah’s invitation for all the tribes of Israel to come to celebrate Passover together in Jerusalem

125. Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 307.

126. Brant Pitre, “Jesus, the Messianic Wedding Banquet and the Restoration of Israel,” *Letter and Spirit* 8 (2013): 35–54.

(2 Chr 30) is a “remarkably similar story” to the parable of the royal wedding feast.¹²⁷ Hezekiah’s feast lasts for seven days, which seems to be the customary length of wedding festivities (Gen 29:22–27, Judg 14:12, Jos. Asen. 21.8, b. Ketub. 4b).¹²⁸ In both stories, a king sends out the invitations conveyed by messengers who speak the actual words of the king (2 Chr 30:6–9, Matt 22:4), those invited scorn the king’s messengers (2 Chr 30:11; cf. Matt 22:6), and there is reference to divine anger (2 Chr 30:8; cf. Matt 22:8).¹²⁹ In both stories, despite refusals to come in response to the king’s invitation, there is an abundance of guests, including those who were not invited earlier, such as the resident aliens of Judah and Israel who attend King Hezekiah’s Passover feast in Jerusalem (2 Chr 30:25–26; cf. Matt 22:10).¹³⁰

As fictional stories, parables do not purport to be reports of historical events,¹³¹ but they may nevertheless bring specific events to mind. In the temporal plane of Jesus’s audience of religious leaders in the temple (Matt 21–23), the first-century fall of Jerusalem is not yet a past event, whereas King Hezekiah’s Passover feast certainly was. Moreover, this story seems to have been in circulation during the first century because Josephus reflects on it.¹³²

In Josephus’s account of Hezekiah’s Passover feast, the king’s couriers are prophets killed by the northern tribes who reject the invitation (A.J. 9.2.263–267). Such behavior only ceases when God punishes them with the downfall of the northern kingdom (A.J. 9.2.267–291).¹³³ By association, the destruction of the city in Matt 22:7 might well allude to the fall of the cities of Samaria to the king of Assyria (2 Kgs 17:24),¹³⁴ with the parable serving as a prophetic warning that those in Jerusalem will see their city destroyed if they continue to kill the prophets (cf. Matt 23:29–38).

127. Pitre, “Jesus, the Messianic Wedding Banquet,” 43.

128. Pitre, “Jesus, the Messianic Wedding Banquet,” 44.

129. Pitre, “Jesus, the Messianic Wedding Banquet,” 44.

130. Pitre, “Jesus, the Messianic Wedding Banquet,” 45.

131. Stern distinguishes between the *mashal* as a work of fiction and *ma’aseh*, a story about an event (*Parables in Midrash*, 13).

132. Pitre, “Jesus, the Messianic Wedding Banquet,” 45–47; Schweizer, *Good News*, 418.

133. Pitre, “Jesus, the Messianic Wedding Banquet,” 45–47; Schweizer, *Good News*, 418.

134. Pitre, “Jesus, the Messianic Wedding Banquet,” 47; Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 318.

3.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored intertexts of the parable of the royal wedding feast associated with the *topoi* of king, guests from the streets, wedding, and calls to come. Several rabbinic parables about the world to come begin with a flesh-and-blood king giving a banquet, with the parable of the banquet with no set time attributed to Yohanan ben Zakkai (b. Shabb. 153a) considered a close parallel to Matt 22:1–14. However, the separation into two groups at the point of entry into the feast in this rabbinic parable has closer parallels with the parable of the ten virgins (Matt 25:1–13) than the parable of the royal wedding feast (22:1–14) despite the royal host and need for clean clothes. Furthermore, the need to be ready and waiting in clean clothes is consistent with the setting of this rabbinic parable in a tractate on Sabbath observance. Moreover, to encourage people to keep clothes clean and not to go about their daily work does not resonate with the concern for *doing* the will of the Father in Matthew's Gospel.

The parable storyline of a host bringing in replacement guests because those invited refuse to come features in Luke 14:15–24, Gos. Thom. 64, and the rabbinic story of bar Ma'yan, as well as Matt 22:1–14. Each of these stories differs according to the rhetorical purpose associated with its literary context. Luke's version encourages those listening (at the home of a Pharisee) to emulate the host in the parable by inviting the poor and disabled to dinner. Logion 64 in the Gospel of Thomas warns that those who value wealth, such as traders and buyers, find it difficult to respond to the call to follow Jesus. The story of bar Ma'yan encourages the righteous by illustrating that one good deed, no matter how appreciated by the poor of the city, does not suffice to enter paradise. Even though no one is cast out of a feast in these parables, the respective implied dress codes for heaven could be perceived as extending hospitality, eschewing wealth, and being faithful in righteousness.

The wedding setting suggests a plot complication (Gen 29, Judg 14, John 2), stresses the importance of not vying for places of honor (Luke 14:7–11), and symbolizes joy (Song 3:11, Ps 19:5, Jer 33:11, 3 Macc 4:6–8). It also evokes the prophetic tradition of depicting the restoration of the divine-human relationship with bridal imagery. This finds expression in the book of Revelation with the vision of the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev 19) and Jerusalem as the new bride (Rev 21). An angel extends the invitation, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb" (Rev 21:9 NRSV). The invitation "to come" resonates with the king's invita-

tion to come and see that all is prepared for the wedding feast in Matt 22:4. Calls to come are also found in the invitation to partake of food that satisfies in Isa 55:1–2 and Lady Wisdom's invitation to the feast she has prepared (Prov 9:1–5). Intertextual echoes of these invitations suggest that to respond to the king's call to come, see, and partake of his feast is a good and wise thing to do. The story of King Hezekiah's Passover Feast as told by the Chronicler (2 Chr 30) and recounted by Josephus (*A.J.* 9.2) not only emphasizes the importance of coming to the feast, but also the negative consequences of killing the messenger-prophets who convey the invitation.

In the next chapter, consideration of the intertexture of the parable of the royal wedding feast continues by focusing on the *topoi* found in Matt 22:11–14.

Intertexture of Matthew 22:11–14

The intertextual exploration of the parable of the royal wedding feast begun in the previous chapter continues in this one. Chapter 3 discussed the oral-scribal and narrative intertextures of king, feasts with replacement guests, weddings, and calls to call, particularly in parables and Old Testament passages considered parallel to Matt 22:1–10. This chapter focuses on intertexture related to Matt 22:11–14: clothing; binding feet and hands, darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth; the expulsions of individuals in Esther, Tobit, and 1 Enoch; and the many called and few chosen in Matt 22:14.

4.1. Clothing (ἔνδυμα)

The rhetoric of clothing is important in both biblical literature and human society more generally, as Roy Jeal puts it:

The ways in which bodies are clothed have far-reaching and sometimes dramatic implications for identity, for movement, for relationships with others, for behaviour, for economic, social and spiritual status, for sexual roles, and for religious, ideological and political discourse.... Dressing, undressing and redressing have literal, symbolic and rhetorical connotations that define people and social realities.¹

Identifying ἔνδυμα γάμου based on literary context is difficult because this word combination does not occur in the New Testament other than in the parable of the royal wedding feast (Matt 22:11, 12) and is not found in the Septuagint. The only reference to wedding clothing in extrabiblical material is found in the novella Joseph and Aseneth, which expands on

1. Roy R Jeal, “Clothes Make the (Wo)man,” *Scriptura* 90 (2005): 685–86.

the marriage of the patriarch Joseph and his Egyptian wife, Aseneth (Gen 41:45). Here the bride wears a γάμου στολήν as wedding arrangements are made (Jos. Asen. 20.6).² The focus of this romance is on the conversion of Aseneth, represented by changes of clothing from the idolatrous apparel to a black tunic symbolizing the burial of her pagan identity, then to a new linen robe representing her life-giving conversion to Judaism, and finally to a wedding garment.³ This symbolizes her new identity with God through marriage to Joseph, and she is so full of glory, her face, like Joseph's, shines like the sun.⁴ Despite this emphasis on clothing, the story of Joseph and Aseneth lacks any description of what guests to a wedding feast might be expected to wear.

With little written evidence of what first-century people wore to weddings, there is some debate about whether the host would have provided clothing or whether it simply needed to be clean clothing. Furthermore, ἔνδυμα γάμου may be understood allegorically because the verb for putting on clothing, ἐνδύω, is employed metaphorically as well as literally in both the Septuagint and New Testament.⁵ In the Old Testament, clothing imagery includes skin (e.g., Gen 3:21); symbolizes the wearer's social status, such as royal (e.g. Gen 41:42), widowed (e.g., Gen 38:9), or of the priestly class (e.g., Exod 29:4–9); demonstrates allegiance (e.g., Deut 22:11); and represents the wearer's inner or outer characteristics.⁶ The Septuagint refers to being clothed in shame (Job 8:22, Ps 35:26), dishonor (Pss 35:26, 109:29), disgrace (Ps 132:18), despair (Ezek 7:27). On a more positive note, one may be clothed in righteousness (Job 29:14, Ps 132:9, Isa 59:17), salvation (Ps 132:16), strength (Isa 51:9, 52:1, Prov 31:25) and dignity (Prov 31:25). These clothing images provide "a broad palette of

2. C. Burchard, "Joseph and Aseneth (First Century BC–Second Century AD)," *OTP* 2:234; D. Cook, "Joseph and Aseneth," in *The Apocryphal Old Testament*, ed. H. F. D. Sparks (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 473–503.

3. Jung Hoon Kim, *The Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline Corpus* (London: T&T Clark International, 2004), 58–69.

4. Kim, *Significance of Clothing Imagery*, 68–69.

5. In the LXX, literal examples include the requirements regarding priestly garments (Exod 28:41; 29:5; 40:13; 40:14; Lev 6:10, 11; 8:7; 8:13; 16:4, 23; Num 20:26, 27; Ezek 42:14; 44:19), putting on armor (1 Sam 17:38, Jer 46:4), and the clothing of naked captives (2 Chron 28:15). In the wisdom literature, ἐνδύω is used in the warning that the result of drunkenness is to be clothed in rags (Prov 23:21) and to put on sackcloth (Esth 4:1, Jonah 3:5).

6. Kim, *Significance of Clothing Imagery*, 8–12.

metaphorical possibilities” for ἔνδυμα γάμου.⁷ Consideration will be given to intertextual possibilities for ἔνδυμα γάμου from prophetic writings, New Testament parables and letters, apocalyptic literature, rabbinic literature, and Qumran documents—recognizing that this parable concerns no ordinary wedding feast, but one hosted by a king.

To come into the presence of a ruler requires appropriate preparation, such as washing and changing into clean clothes (Gen 41:14, 2 Kgs 25:29). The lack of wedding clothing in the parable of the royal wedding feast seems to indicate a lack of appropriate respect for the position and power of a king.⁸ Most agree that, according to this parable’s storyline, the person not wearing wedding clothes deserves the fate commanded by the king (22:13) either because he declines to wear the festive garments provided or because he does not have the decency to ensure that his clothing is at least clean and tidy.⁹ Luz has ruled the provision of clothing interpretation as “exegetically untenable,” which has been repeated in several commentaries.¹⁰

4.1.1. Festal Clothing

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, those gathered into the wedding feast come in from the crossroads (Matt 22:9–10). They are people on the move, and provision of clothing may be an extension of hospitality to itinerant people. When the Matthean Jesus sends his disciples out on mission they are to travel light, without a second χιτῶν, translated “shirt” or “tunic” (10:9–13). In each village or town, they are to stay at the home of a worthy person for the duration of their visit (10:11), and perhaps accepting such hospitality includes receiving a clean tunic. In 2 Kgs 5:22, part of the hospitality extended to visiting prophets is provision of clothing.

7. Luz, *Matthew* 21–28, 56 n.73.

8. Warren Carter, *Matthew and the Margins: A Socio-political and Religious Reading* (London: T&T Clark, 2000), 437; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 522; Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels*, 2nd ed. (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 111; Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready*, 234.

9. Exceptions include Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 77; and Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 48; see Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 111; Blomberg, *Matthew*, 328–29; Nalpathichra, *Everything Is Ready*, 234; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 522; Hare, *Matthew*, 252; Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 306; Gundry, *Matthew*, 439.

10. Luz, *Matthew* 21–28, 58–59, cited in Bruner, *Churchbook*, 391; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 826; Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready*, 152.

In the Jerusalem Talmud, if an itinerant poor person stayed over the Sabbath, the host was obligated to provide appropriate clothing to participate in the Sabbath celebrations.¹¹ This demonstrates expectations of hospitality, even though, unlike the parable, it concerns Sabbath dress for one person rather than wedding clothing for large numbers. In Matt 22:1–14, however, the host is a king, and at the time of the Roman Empire, the rich and powerful could accumulate festive clothing and then demonstrate their magnanimous patronage by bestowing these outfits. For example, Horace describes a Roman general named Lucillus offering to provide a hundred outfits needed for a theater from five thousand he owned.¹²

In 2 Kgs 10:22, clothing is provided for a multitude of people within a passage considered possible intertexture for Matt 22:1–14.¹³ The wardrobe keeper provides Israelites who are prepared to offer a sacrifice to Baal with appropriate garments for worship, which suggests a practice of storing clothing to provide appropriate apparel for those coming to worship. Unlike the parable of the royal wedding feast, this clothing is for worship and not for a wedding; however, like Matt 22:1–14, this occasion also involves mass slaughter and destruction of the place in which people are congregated—seemingly on divine mandate (2 Kgs 10:18–30; cf. Matt 22:7). Clothing also features in another biblical description of divine punishment: Zeph 1.

4.1.2. Clothing in Prophetic Literature

Correspondences between the parable of the royal wedding feast (Matt 22:1–14) and Zeph 1:7–10 have been noted, with Daniel Olson focusing on the Greek text of Zephaniah.¹⁴ The words in common are presented in italics in this English translation of the latter:

11. Wayne Allen, *Further Perspectives on Jewish Law and Contemporary Issues* (Bloomington, IN: Trafford, 2011), 91.

12. Thomas Whittemore, *Notes and Illustrations of the Parables of the New Testament: Arranged according to the Time in Which They Were Spoken*, rev. ed. (Boston: Universalist, 1832), 291.

13. John Jason Owen, *A Commentary, Critical, Expository and Practical, on the Gospels of Matthew and Mark* (New York: Leavitt & Allen, 1857), 279; Frank Stern, *A Rabbi Looks at Jesus's Parables* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 162; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 522; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 826.

14. Olson, "Matthew 22:1–14 as Midrash," 435–53; Derrett, *Law*, 126–55.

Be *silent* before the Lord GOD! For the day of the LORD is at hand;
 the LORD has prepared a *sacrifice*, he has consecrated his *guests*.
 And on the day of the LORD's *sacrifice*
 I will punish the officials and the *king's sons*
 and all who *dress* themselves in foreign *attire*.
 On that day I will punish all who leap over the threshold,
 who fill their master's house with violence and fraud. (Zeph 1:7–9 NRSV)

Oral-scribal correspondences include *κλητοί* (*guest* in Zeph 1:7; *chosen* in Matt 22:14), *ἐτοιμάζω* (preparation), and *θύω* (*sacrifice* in Zeph 1:7; *slaughter* in Matt 22:4). In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the animals are slaughtered for a wedding feast rather than for a sacrifice; however, this difference may not be as significant as it first looks. In Koine Greek, feasts are associated with weddings, and in the Hebrew Bible sacrifices are often followed by feasts (e.g., Lev 7:11–38, 1 Sam 9:13).¹⁵ There are also words common to both Matt 22:1–14 and Zeph 1 that function differently within the two texts: *king* (Zeph 1:5, 8; Matt 22:2, 7, 11, 13), *military* (Zeph 1:5, Matt 22:7), *heaven* (Zeph 1:5, Matt 22:2), *darkness* (Zeph 1:15, Matt 22:13), and *city* (Zeph 1:16, Matt 22:7). Silence features in both texts, but a different word is used (Zeph 1:7, Matt 22:12).

The most noteworthy correspondence is that both texts refer to punishment for those wearing the wrong clothes. In Zeph 1:8, this is for wearing foreign clothing, τοὺς ἐνδεδυμένους ἐνδύματα ἀλλότρια. Among the main themes of Zeph 1 are condemnation of the rich and powerful, syncretic practices and apostasy, and defiling the temple.¹⁶ These three themes are evident in the literary context of Matt 21–23. Jesus tells this parable to the religious leaders, who are powerful and possibly wealthy, after he accuses them of not listening to John, who came in the way of righteousness (21:32), and of defiling the temple (21:12–16).

By contrast, in Zech 3:1–5 the high priest Joshua stands accused before Satan rather than before Jesus (Matt 21–23) or the Lord (Zeph 1). The angel of the Lord provides the festive apparel to the high priest Joshua, who has been “plucked from the fire” and stands accused before Satan. The angel commands that Joshua’s filthy clothes be removed. This has more than a literal meaning because it is accompanied with the words “See, I have taken your guilt away from you, and I will clothe you with festal

15. Olson, “Matthew 22:1–14 as Midrash,” 443.

16. Olson, “Matthew 22:1–14 as Midrash,” 445–46.

apparel" (Zech 3:4 NRSV; cf. Exod 29:5, Lev 16:4, Ezek 44:17).¹⁷ Then the angel of the Lord commands, "Let them put a clean turban on his head" (Zech 3:5 NRSV; cf. Exod 29:5, Lev 8:9), which evokes both the ordination of a priest (Exod 29, Lev 8) and preparations for the Day of Atonement (Lev 16).¹⁸ Clean clothes are also worn as part of ritual sacrifice (Num 19:7–10) and when Moses consecrates the people (Exod 19:10, 14) and the Levites (Num 8:7–21). In Zech 3 a renewed divine-human relationship is portrayed by the provision of clean attire to the high priest representing the whole of Israel,¹⁹ whereas in Isa 61 it is portrayed by the provision of wedding attire.

In Isa 61:1–11, a text with intertextual links elsewhere in the gospels (Matt 11:4–5, Luke 4:18–19),²⁰ the provision of wedding apparel symbolizes rejoicing when the divine-human relationship is restored.

ἐνέδυσεν γάρ με ἱμάτιον σωτηρίου καὶ χιτῶνα εὐφροσύνης
ὡς νυμφίῳ περιέθηκεν μοι μίτραν
καὶ ὡς νύμφην κατεκόσμησέν με κόσμῳ. (Isa 61:10 LXX)

for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation,
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. (Isa 61:10 NRSV)

In the Septuagint the nouns for clothing are *garment* (ἱμάτιον) and *tunic or shirt* (χιτῶν) rather than *clothing* (ἔνδυμα); however, the related verb ἐνδύω describes the act of clothing. Similarly, the verb ἐνδύω, but not the noun ἔνδυμα, features in Luke's parable of the two sons (15:11–32).

4.1.3. Clothing in the New Testament

In Luke's parable of the two sons (Luke 15:11–32), clothing is also provided to celebrate a restored relationship, here between father and son. This is the only parable in the canonical gospels other than the parable of the royal wedding feast (Matt 22:1–14) that mentions clothing in the

17. Michael R. Stead, *Intertextuality of Zechariah 1–8* (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 158–60; Kim, *Significance of Clothing Imagery*, 21–24.

18. Stead, *Intertextuality*, 160.

19. Kim, *Significance of Clothing Imagery*, 24.

20. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 189.

context of a feast. The father calls for the best *στολή* (robe) to be given to his newly returned younger son (15:22). This is not *ἐνδύμα* (cf. Matt 22:11, 12); however, the verb, *ἐνδύω*, appears in the instruction to clothe the prodigal son in a fine robe (Luke 15:23; cf. Matt 22:11). There are three instances of words common to both parables. First, a father makes a feast for his *son*, albeit for different occasions, a homecoming in Luke (15:22–24) and a wedding in Matthew (22:2). Second, the same verb, *θύω*, is used to describe the killing of the fatted calf, *τὸν σιτευτὸν θύσατε* (Luke 15:23), and the fatlings, *τὰ σιτιστὰ τεθυμένα* (Matt 22:4). Third, the older brother chooses not to come, *οὐκ ἤθελεν εἰσελθεῖν* (Luke 15:28), and the wedding invitees make the same choice, *οὐκ ἤθελον ἐλθεῖν* (Matt 22:3). Some of the symbolic meanings suggested for the wedding garment (Matt 22:11–13) correspond to those suggested for the robe provided by the father (Luke 15:22–23), such as baptism, wisdom, love, immortality, Holy Spirit, imputed righteousness, and sanctification.²¹

In New Testament epistles, the verb *ἐνδύω* describes putting on Christ in association with baptism (Gal 3:27, Rom 13:14), the new self (Col 3:10, Eph 4:24), godly virtues (Col 3:12), the resurrection body (1 Cor 15:53–54), and spiritual armor (Thess 5:8, Rom 13:12, Eph 6:11).²² Drawing on the connection between clothing and baptism (Gal 3:27),²³ some early church writings, including those of Pseudo-Clementine, Tertullian, Hilary, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Origen, associate the wedding clothing of Matt 22:11–13 with baptismal robes.²⁴ Baptism references frame the ministry of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel (3:1–16, 28:19); however, in Matthew's Gospel, baptism is not associated with a change of clothing.

Paul connects baptism with being clothed with Christ (Gal 3:27), and his letter to the Romans provides further instruction on the behavioral implications of being clothed with Christ (Rom 13:12b–14a). Military imagery, such as putting on the armor of light, is used to depict the change of loyalties and associated behavior that conversion to Christ entails (Rom 13:12, 1 Thess 5:8, Eph 6:11, 14–17).²⁵ It has been noted that the excuses

21. Blomberg, *Interpreting the Parables*, 20.

22. Barbara E. Reid, *Parables for Preachers: Year A* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2001), 184; Kim, *Significance of Clothing Imagery*, 106–51.

23. Jeal, "Clothes Make the (Wo)man," 689–92.

24. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:205 n.97; Parris, *Reception Theory*, 237–39.

25. Jeal, "Clothes Make the (Wo)man," 693.

stated for not coming to the dinner in Luke 14:15–24 bear some relation to the formal exemptions from going to war listed in Deut 20:5–7 and 24:5.²⁶ Matthew 22:1–14 does not have these excuses, and hence the war exemption intertexture is so muted that it is questionable whether it is there at all.

In Col 3, the characteristics associated with being clothed in Christ are countercultural to the values of the Roman military elite displayed on monuments and coins of Colossae.²⁷ The exhortation to clothe oneself with the new self (Col 3:10, Eph 4:24) specifies putting on “heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience” (Col 3:12 NAB), and above all to clothe oneself with love, ἀγάπη (Col 3:14). As Jeal argues, “what is important is what the clothing *does*, what it brings about and how it brings about ideas and action”—with significant persuasive and political implications.²⁸

Augustine draws on 1 Cor 13 to associate the wedding clothing of Matt 22:11–12 with ἀγάπη, love (*Serm.* 40.5–6 [NPNF¹ 6:392–96]). He describes the wedding garment as faith with love—love of Christ, love of another, love of friends, and love of enemies—specifying that to pray that one’s enemy die is definitely not wearing the wedding garment (*Serm.* 40.9 [NPNF¹ 6:395]). The themes of loving enemies (5:44) and loving neighbors as oneself (22:34–40) are found in the Gospel of Matthew. Augustine alludes to Matt 25:31–46 to argue that through tangible expressions of love Christ provides the required wedding clothing:

See the wedding garment; put it on, you guests: that you may sit down securely.

Do not say, we are too poor to have that garment.

Clothe others, and you are clothed yourselves.

It is winter, clothe the naked. Christ is naked;

and He will give you that wedding garment whosoever have it not.

(Augustine, *Serm.* 45.7 [NPNF¹ 6:408])

This is a thematic rather than verbal link, as the verb for clothing the naked in Matt 25:36, 38, 43 is περιβάλλω rather than ἐνδύω as in Matt 22:11–13.

Through the centuries a number of interpreters have understood the wedding clothing to represent love in action: faith in more than name

26. Derrett, *Law*, 130–38.

27. Canavan, *Clothing the Body of Christ*, 168.

28. Jeal, “Clothes Make the (Wo)man,” 695–96.

(Zwingli), “deeds of Christian discipleship,” “evidential works of righteousness,” or simply good works.²⁹ Luz argues that in the context of Jesus debating religious leaders in the Jerusalem temple, *ἐνδύμα γάμου* corresponds to obedience to the will of the Father (21:31) and to producing good fruit, *καρπός* (21:19, 34, 41, 43),³⁰ a theme developed earlier in Matthew’s Gospel (3:8–10, 7:16–20, 12:33, 13:8).

4.1.4. Clothing in Apocalyptic Literature

Davies and Allison suggest that equating the *ἐνδύμα γάμου* with the fruit or works of righteousness corresponds to Rev 19:7–8, where the bride of the Lamb is clothed in “fine linen, bright and pure” and “the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints” (NRSV).³¹ They, however, focus on the bright and luminous appearance of the righteous, who “will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” at the *eschaton* (Matt 13:43 NRSV) and equate the wedding garment with the resurrection body.³²

Paul uses the language of clothing to describe the transformation that will happen when the resurrection of the dead takes place.³³ The aorist middle infinitive of *ἐνδύω* is used in a phrase with repetitive-progressive texture (1 Cor 15:53):

δεῖ γὰρ τὸ φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀφθαρσίαν
καὶ τὸ θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀθανασίαν.

For this perishable body must put on imperishability,
and this mortal body must put on immortality. (NRSV)

This verse is followed by “death has been swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor 15:54 NRSV; cf. 2 Cor 5:4)—imagery that evokes the eschatological feast of Isaiah, where the Lord of hosts will “swallow up death forever” (Isa 25:8 NRSV).

In 1 En. 62.15–16, the chosen righteous rise from the earth and are given the garments of life that do not age.³⁴ This passage parallels Isa 52:1–2, and

29. Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 58; Donahue, *Gospel in Parable*, 96; Gundry, *Matthew*, 439; Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 58.

30. Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 56.

31. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:204.

32. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:204.

33. Kim, *Significance of Clothing Imagery*, 193–223.

34. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:204; George W. E.

“garments of glory” resonate with both the restoration of Jerusalem (Bar 5:1–2, Pss. Sol. 11.7) and the resurrection of the righteous dead symbolized by new clothing (1 Cor 15:53–54, 2 Cor 5:1–4, Ascen. Isa. 4.16–17).³⁵ When Enoch comes to stand before the Lord in 2 En. 22.8–10, the Lord commands the angel Michael to change Enoch's earthly garments for glorious garments, and he becomes indistinguishable from the angels.³⁶ Further references to the righteous being stripped of their mortal bodies and receiving glorious garments are found in the Ascension of Isaiah (9.9), Apocalypse of Peter (7), Odes of Solomon (21.2–3; 25.8), and 4 Ezra (2:39, 45).³⁷ This apocalyptic imagery of luminous and angel-like garments of glory is also found in the interpretation of the parable of the wheat and the weeds when “the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt 13:43 NRSV).³⁸ In a further intertextual correspondence, this follows the evildoers being thrown into the fire where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (13:42; cf. 22:13).

Once in the heavenly realm, there are no assurances of retaining heavenly garments. In the Apoc. Ab. 13.14, Azazel the fallen angel forfeits his heavenly garment to Abraham.³⁹ “For behold, the garment, which in heaven was formally yours has been set aside for him, and the corruption which was on him has gone over to you.”⁴⁰

Heavenly raiment is often depicted as white, which resonates with white clothing symbolizing the washing away of sin (Ps 51:7, Isa 1:18), the appearance of heavenly beings (Dan 7:9, Matt 28:3, John 20:12, Acts 1:10), and the transfiguration of Jesus (Matt 17:2, Mark 9:3, Luke 9:29). In the book of Revelation, white is worn by the twenty-four elders seated

Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of Enoch Chapters 37–82* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2012), 255; Kim, *Significance of Clothing Imagery*, 34.

35. Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 267–68.

36. James Buchanan Wallace, *Snatched into Paradise (2 Cor 12:1–10): Paul's Heavenly Journey in the Context of Early Christian Experience* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2011), 124; Kim, *Significance of Clothing Imagery*, 35.

37. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:204; Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 189.

38. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:204 n.55.

39. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:206; David C. Sim, “Matthew 22.13a and 1 Enoch 10.4a: A Case of Literary Dependence?” *JSNT* 47 (1992): 14–15.

40. Alexander Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha: Toward the Original of the Apocalypse of Abraham* (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 20, 57.

on twenty-four thrones (Rev 4:4) and by the “great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb” (Rev 7:9 NRSV). Their robes have been washed white in the blood of the Lamb (Rev 7:14), who by his sacrifice has made them *worthy* (Rev 5:1–10). Earlier in the book of Revelation, the people of Sardis are told, “you have still a few persons in Sardis who have not soiled their clothes; they will walk with me, dressed in white, for they are worthy” (Rev 3:4 NRSV). This has two oral-scribal links with Matt 22:1–14: *few*, ὀλίγος (Rev 3:4; cf. Matt 22:14), and *worthy*, ἄξιος (Rev 3:4; cf. Matt 22:8).

White clothing is associated with eschatological feasting in apocalyptic literature (Rev 3:4, 5, 18; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9–14; 2 Esd 2:40; 1 En. 90.31).⁴¹ For example, the people of Laodicea are to repent and acquire white clothes to be ready to eat with the One who will come and knock on their door; otherwise, they do not gain entry to the eschatological feast (Rev 3:15–20).

4.1.5. White Clothing

Wearing white outfits for special occasions, such as at sacrifices, festivals, and processions, was the practice in several ancient cultures.⁴² In Roman culture a white toga was worn to weddings and a dark one to funerals (Sidonius, *Ep.* 5.7).⁴³ A dark *toga pulla* would be worn to the burial ceremony. Based on Cicero’s criticism of P. Vatinius for arriving at the feast after a funeral still in black clothing, it seems that in Rome the host and guests were expected to come freshly washed and wearing a white toga for the feast following a funeral.⁴⁴ In rabbinic tradition, men did not wear white when mourning (Sifre Deut. 115b).⁴⁵ Josephus

41. OTP 1:750, 771.

42. Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, “The White Dress of the Essenes and Pythagoreans,” in *Jerusalem, Alexandria and Rome: Studies in Ancient Cultural Interaction in Honor of A. Hilhorst*, ed. Florentino Garcia Martinez and Gerard P. Luttikhuis (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 301.

43. Shelley Stone, “The Toga: From National to Ceremonial Dress,” in *The World of Roman Costume*, ed. Judith Lynn Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 2001), 40.

44. Julia Heskel, “Cicero as Evidence for Attitudes to Dress in the Late Republic,” in Sebesta and Bonfante, *The World of Roman Costume*, 141.

45. Lucille A. Roussin, “Archaeological Remains and the Evidence from the Mishnah,” in Sebesta and Bonfante, *The World of Roman Costume*, 186.

notes that white was worn by Solomon to go to the temple (*A.J.* 8.146), by Archelaus after he mourned his father Herod (*B.J.* 2.1), and by David to end a time of mourning (*B.J.* 7.156).⁴⁶

In Greek sources from the first centuries of the Common Era, clean white clothing symbolizes purity.⁴⁷ Wearing simple white, clean, linen clothing suggests asceticism, religious purity, and sometimes veganism.⁴⁸ In third-century accounts of Pythagoras, he is portrayed as being in a continuous state of purity by always wearing white (Diodorus Siculus, *Bib hist.* 10.9.6; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives* 8.33; Iamblichus, *Life* 153).⁴⁹ Philo considered the two main layers of priestly clothing to represent two aspects of the soul, with the outer colorful attire representing the cosmos, whereas the white linen garment demonstrated purity in regard to inward things (*Mos.* 1.131; *Somn.* 1.214, 215, 218).⁵⁰

Josephus noted that the Essenes wore white clothes (*B.J.* 2.123, 2.137), probably made out of undyed linen, to avoid the impurity of dye, to identify contaminating oil stains, or to eschew extravagance.⁵¹ Essenes kept their resources in common (*B.J.* 2.122), and if anyone achieved some authority, they were not to wear distinguishing clothing or ornamentation (*B.J.* 2.140).⁵² They wore their clothes and footwear until it fell apart (*B.J.* 2.126). At Qumran, clothing became so tattered that the accidental exposure of genitals was a sufficiently common occurrence for regulations to be developed to punish this with thirty-day penance (1QS VII, 14).⁵³ To participate in the communal meal, members of the Qumran

46. Joan E. Taylor, *The Essenes, the Scrolls and the Dead Sea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 84.

47. Tigchelaar, "White Dress," 310.

48. Tigchelaar, "White Dress," 305.

49. Tigchelaar, "White Dress," 303–5; Keener cites the first of these sayings (*Gospel of Matthew*, 522).

50. Kim, *Significance of Clothing Imagery*, 44–51.

51. Tigchelaar, "White Dress," 301, 308–11; Orit Shamir and Naama Sukenik, "Qumran Textiles and the Garments of Qumran's Inhabitants," *DSD* 18.2 (2011): 222–24; Jodi Magness, *The Archaeology of Qumran and the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 200–202; Magness, *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Times of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 111.

52. Tigchelaar, "White Dress," 307–11.

53. Magness, *Archaeology of Qumran*, 194; Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, eds., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 1:87.

community needed to have bathed and be wearing clean white clothing that covered their nakedness, which included tying a loincloth around the waist to cover a tear in a worn, but otherwise clean, tunic.⁵⁴ A focus in some of the Dead Sea Scrolls on being like the angels might explain why Essenes wore white all the time.⁵⁵ In later rabbinic texts, wearing shining white clothing came to be associated with nobility and not needing to get dirty by doing manual labor, quite different from the rag-wearing community at Qumran.⁵⁶ Clean clothes were needed to enter a house of worship (CD XI, 22) and for the Sabbath (CD XI, 3–4).⁵⁷

Nolland draws on rabbinic rulings about Sabbath dress in his commentary on Matt 22:11–13: “At whatever level was within their reach people dressed up for special occasions. Freshly washed garments and lower hemlines provided a minimal differentiation.”⁵⁸ Most halakhic authorities agree that fine clothes are required on the Sabbath (b. Shabb. 25b, 113b; y. Pe’ah 21b; Ruth Rab. 3.3; Pesah. Rab. 33)—unless beyond someone’s financial means.⁵⁹ In the Babylonian Talmud, Rabbi Huna recommends that if people are too poor to have a second set of clothes specifically kept clean and neat for the Sabbath, they should wear their clothes “Sabbath length.” This means to keep the outer garment long and not tucked up, as it would be for manual work (b. Shabb. 113).⁶⁰ The need to refrain from working to keep clothes clean in readiness for the king’s feast is central to the parable the banquet with no set time (b. Shabb. 153a). Immediately preceding this parable, there is another concerning clean clothes. In this story, the king provides his servants with apparel, which the wise fold away, thereby returning the clothing in immaculate

54. Magness, *Archaeology of Qumran*, 196.

55. Tigchelaar, “White Dress,” 312.

56. Tigchelaar, “White Dress,” 312.

57. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 522.

58. Nolland cites b. Shabb. 113a, 153a (*Gospel of Matthew*, 890).

59. Allen, *Further Perspectives*, 94.

60. James S. Jeffers, *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 43–44; Samuel. A. Berman, *Midrash Tanhuma–Yelammedenu: An English Translation of Genesis and Exodus from the Printed Version of Tanhuma–Yelammedenu with an Introduction, Notes, and Indexes* (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1996); Emil G. Hirsch, Joseph Jacobs, Executive Committee of the Editorial Board, Julius H. Greenstone, “Sabbath,” *JewishEncyclopedia.com*, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL4829d>; http://www.come-and-hear.com/shabbath/shabbath_113.html.

condition when required to do so, whereas the fools sully them by working in them (b. Shabb. 152b). These two parables are found in a tractate on keeping Sabbath observance, which includes a portrayal of changing into Sabbath clothes in terms of marriage imagery (b. Shabb. 119a): “R. Hanina robed himself and stood at sunset of Sabbath eve [and] exclaimed, ‘Come and let us go forth to welcome the queen Sabbath.’ R. Jannai donned his robes, on Sabbath eve and exclaimed, “Come, O bride, Come, O bride!”⁶¹ Despite this nuptial imagery, this text concerns observance of the Sabbath rather than wedding customs.

Evidence for the need to wear clean white clothes to weddings in the social world of the gospels is thin. It may have been Roman practice to wear clean white togas to weddings and other feasts, but this did not apply to ordinary people ineligible to wear the toga. In Jewish sources the expectation regarding clean white clothing is related either to rabbinic requirements for Sabbath observance or to sectarian practices of the Essenes. These parallels are of limited value because in Matthew's Gospel, appropriate Sabbath observance does not take precedence over mercy (Matt 15:1–14). Moreover, as I will argue in chapter 5, in contrast to the Qumran community, the social rhetoric of Matthew's Gospel is not isolationist but rather reaches out to those on the margins of society.

4.1.6. ἔνδυμα γάμου

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, when the king comes amongst the wedding guests, something distinguishes those who are wearing ἔνδυμα γάμου from the one who is not (Matt 22:11–12). Most suggested intertexts for this wedding clothing raise further questions concerning why a lack of such clothing would lead to expulsion. If the wedding clothing symbolizes divine initiative in restoring the divine-human relationship (Zech 3, Isa 61, Luke 15), why is this individual not given a mantle of forgiveness on arrival at the feast? If the wedding clothes symbolize being clothed with Christ, faith, love, or doing the will of the Father by means of good works (Gal 3:27, Rom 13:12–13, Col 3:10–14, Matt 21–23, 25:31–46), then surely more than one person would be an interloper who failed to make the entrance grade? If the wedding clothes

61. http://www.come-and-hear.com/shabbath/shabbath_119.html; Allen, *Further Perspectives*, 91–92.

symbolize the resurrection raiment of the righteous (1 Cor 15; 1 En. 62; 2 En. 22; 4 Ezra 2.39, 45), what would lead to the forfeit of this heavenly dress? To address these questions, the next phase of intertextual exploration concerns the consequences of wearing the wrong clothes described in Matt 22:13.

4.2. Oral-Scribal Intertexture of Matthew 22:13

In Matt 22:13, the king commands his attendants first to bind the feet and hands of the person without wedding clothing and then to cast him out into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth. The intertexture of each of these topoi, binding feet and hands, casting out, outer darkness, weeping, and gnashing of teeth, will be explored to address the question of why an individual may have needed to be expelled from the parabolic royal wedding feast.

4.2.1. Binding Feet and Hands (δῆσαντες αὐτοῦ πόδας καὶ χεῖρας)

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the king commands that the individual cast out of the wedding feast first be bound—specifically by feet and hands (Matt 22:13; cf. 13:41).⁶² The binding of both feet and hands followed by casting into a pit or dark prison is consistent with the arrest and fettering of a criminal when detained prior to trial (Acts 12:7, 16:24–27, 21:11; Josephus, *A.J.* 19.6.295).⁶³ It also has other overtones.

Nickelsburg considers “binding” a quasi-technical term for neutralizing a demon and thus healing a person.⁶⁴ Forms of the Aramaic verb *to bind* are found on curse tablets, magic bowls, and papyri that have incantations against demons.⁶⁵ In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus uses the imagery of binding the strong man to explain how he is able to cast out demons (Mark 3:22–27, Matt 12:29, Luke 11:20–22).⁶⁶ In apocalyptic literature, evil beings are

62. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:206.

63. George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 221.

64. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 221.

65. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 221; Graham H. Twelftree, “Exorcism and the Defeat of Beliar in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” *VC* 65 (2011): 182–83.

66. Ched Myers was so taken by this imagery he used it to title his commentary on Mark’s Gospel. See Myers, *Binding the Strong Man* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1988).

bound. An angel binds “the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan” in the book of Revelation (20:2 NRSV).⁶⁷ In T. Levi 18.11, from the second century, a new priest binds Beliar (Belial), a synonym for Satan, the archenemy of God and his people, who leads people astray, causes inner turmoil, and incites lust, anger, and hatred.⁶⁸

The angel Raphael is commanded to bind the fallen angel Asael (1 En. 10) and the demon Asmodeus (Tob 8:3).⁶⁹ The similarity between the commands to bind the feet and hands of Asael in 1 En. 10.4 and those of the inappropriately dressed guest in Matt 22:13 have been noted for more than a century.⁷⁰ The earliest description of the binding of Asael is found in the Book of Watchers (1 En. 1–36).⁷¹ There are two variant extant Greek recensions of this Enochian text. In Codex Panopolitanus, feet are mentioned first in 1 En. 10.4, as in Matt 22.13. The fragment of 1 Enoch preserved in the ninth-century Chronography of Syncellus names hands before feet with the added detail of the feet being bound together.⁷² Similarly, in the Sinaiticus version of Tob 8:3, the angel Raphael binds the demon Asmodeus with the feet together as well as by the hands,⁷³ translated as “bound him there hand and foot” in the NRSV. These four texts are set out below for ease of comparison.

67. Adela Yarbro Collins, *The Combat Myth in the Book of Revelation* (Missoula, MT: Scholars, 1975), 81–83; Nickelsburg considers the imagery in the book of Revelation to be dependent on 1 En. 10 (1 *Enoch* 1, 222–23).

68. Twelftree, “Exorcism,” 175–76, 181.

69. Robert. H. Charles translates 1 En. 10.4 with *Azâzêl*, whereas Nickelsburg has *Asael* for 1 En. 10.4 (1 *Enoch* 1, 215). See Charles, *The Book of Enoch*, Translations of Early Documents Series 1: Palestinian Jewish Texts (London: SPCK, 1917).

70. A. H. McNeile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London: Macmillan, 1915), 317; Gundry, *Matthew*, 440; Sim, “Matthew 22.13a,” 3–19; Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3: 206; Olson, “Matthew 22:1–14 as Midrash,” 448–49.

71. Nickelsburg, 1 *Enoch* 1, 215; Andrei A. Orlov, “The Pteromorphic Angelology of the Apocalypse of Abraham,” *CBQ* 71 (2009): 838; Sim, “Matthew 22.13a,” 14.

72. Nickelsburg, 1 *Enoch* 1, 216–17; Sim, “Matthew 22.13a,” 4–5.

73. These texts can be accessed online at <http://en.katabiblon.com/> and <http://www.codex-sinaiticus.net/>.

Matt 22:13	δήσαντες αὐτοῦ πόδας καὶ χεῖρας
1 En. 10.4 Codex Panopolitanus	δήσον τον Ἀζαήλ ποσίν και χερσίν
1 En. 10.4 Chrono-graphy of Syncellus	δήσον τον Ἀζαήλ χερσι και ποσι συμπόδισον αὐτόν
Tob 8:3 Sinaiticus	συνεπόδισεν αὐτόν ἐκεῖ καὶ ἐπέδησεν παραχρήμα

The Greek recensions of 1 En. 10.4 and Matt 22:13 do not have word-for-word correspondence; nevertheless, there are several similarities. In Matt 22:13, the parabolic king (22:11) probably represents God, and in 1 En. 10, the one who commands is earlier described as a king (9.4).⁷⁴ Both the gospel and Enochian recensions employ δέω, specify that the feet and hands are to be bound, and use a form of the verb βάλλω: βάλλω in Codex Panopolitanus, ἐμβάλλω in Chronography of Syncellus, and ἐκβάλλω in Matthew. All three texts agree that the expelled being is to be cast into the darkness, εἰς τὸ σκότος.⁷⁵ Progressive parallelism in 1 En. 10.4–5 serves to stress *casting out* into *darkness*.⁷⁶

v. 4b	bind	cast			into darkness
vv. 4c–5c	open	cast	lay	cover him	with darkness
				cover face	
				let him not	see the light.

4.2.2. Outer Darkness (τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον)

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the inappropriately dressed guest is cast into τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον (22:13), usually translated as “the outer darkness” (e.g., NRSV, ESV) and understood to represent hell, “the darkness of the damned.”⁷⁷ The phrase itself could also be translated as “the darkness outside” and could be referring simply to the literal darkness beyond the well-lit festivities.⁷⁸ From the same era as Matthew’s Gospel, the topos of darkness as a place of punishment features in apocalyp-

74. Sim, “Matthew 22.13a,” 5.

75. Sim, “Matthew 22.13a,” 6.

76. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 221.

77. Luz, *Matthew* 21–28, 56; Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew: Catholic Commentary on Sacred Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 282–83.

78. Papaioannou, *Geography of Hell*, 198.

tic literature—Jewish (1 En. 103.7, 108.14–15; Pss. Sol. 14.9, 15:10) and Christian (2 Pet 2:4, 17; Jude 6, 13; Rev 16:10).⁷⁹

All three occurrences of ἐξώτερος in the New Testament qualify darkness, τὸ σκότος τὸ ἐξώτερον (Matt 8:12, 22:13, 25:30). In the Septuagint, however, none of the twenty-three occurrences of ἐξώτερος relates to darkness. The fifteen occurrences of ἐξώτερος in Ezekiel describe the outer court of the temple (10:5; 40:19, 20; 41:15, 17; 42:1, 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 14; 44:19; 46:20, 21), with a change of clothes needed to move between the inside holy place and the outer court (Ezek 42:14, 44:19). Based on the usage of ἐξώτερος in the Septuagint, Gregory Sapaugh proposes that the inappropriately dressed guest of Matt 22:11–13 is simply cast out to the outer court of the king's palace.⁸⁰ Arriving at the same conclusion from a different direction, Papaioannou argues that ἐξώτερος is not a superlative in Matt 22:13 and that therefore “darkness outside” would make a better translation.⁸¹ He argues that this phrase need not have an apocalyptic connotation, and the darkness outside might simply denote a location beyond the lamp light associated with wedding feasts (Matt 25:1–13, 4 Ezra 10.2).⁸² It is difficult, however to divorce “darkness outside” from apocalyptic allusion because in all three occurrences within the New Testament there is also “weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

In the Hebrew Bible, there is a wide semantic range for darkness (דָּחַךְ): it is contrasted with light (Gen 1:2, 4, 5, 18; Amos 5:18, 20), describes night (Gen 15:22; Josh 2:5; Job 5:14; 26:10; Ps 104:20), refers to blindness (Job 12:25), and is associated with death (Job 3:5; 10:21, 12:22; Pss 107:10, 14; 143:2) and Sheol, the place of the dead (Job 17:12, 13). Being “in darkness” implies ignorance (Ps 82:5, Eccl 2:13–14), ill-fortune (Eccl 5:17), unrighteousness (Prov 2:13), and needing light (Isa 9:2, Mic 7:8). Darkness is not necessarily a god-forsaken place: God illuminates the darkness (2 Sam 22:29; Pss 18:28, 139:11–12; Mic 7:8), speaks out of darkness (Deut 4:11, 5:23), dwells in a dark cloud (Exod 20:21; 1 Kgs 8:12; Pss 18:11, 97:2), and uses darkness to hide (2 Sam 22:10, 12) and to protect (Exod 14:20).

79. David C. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology in the Gospel of Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 34; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 319.

80. Gregory P. Sapaugh, “A Call to the Wedding Celebration: An Exposition of Matthew 22:1–14,” *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* 5.1 (1992): 11–34.

81. Papaioannou, *Geography of Hell*, 240.

82. Papaioannou, *Geography of Hell*, 198; Luz, *Matthew* 8–20, 15.

The topos of darkness as a form of divine punishment seems to develop from darkness being one of the ten plagues visited on Egypt (Exod 10:21–22; Ezek 32:7–8; Wis 17; Exod. Rab. 14:2).⁸³ In the Hebrew Bible, darkness comes to be associated with prison (Isa 42:7, 49:9) and divine punishment (Isa 22:8; 47:5; Ps 35:6; Jer 13:16; Lam 3:2, 25), including prophetic warnings about final judgment on the day of the lord (Joel 2:2, 31; Zeph 1:15; Amos 5:20; 8:9; Isa 13:10; Jer 4:28). The association of darkness with eschatological punishment develops further in the Second Temple period. In 1 En. 103.5–8, the judgment of darkness and chains is post death and shall be for all the generations of the world. In the Wisdom of Solomon, the wicked are received by darkness (17:21) and held captive by being chained with darkness (17:16–17).

In the New Testament, both 2 Peter and Jude warn that even sinful angels are chained in deepest darkness until judgment day (2 Pet 2:4, Jude 6). *Deepest* implies spatial separation on the vertical plane as *outer* does on the horizontal plane. The deepest darkness (ὁ ἔσφορος τοῦ σκοτίους) is reserved for those who sin and stray (2 Pet 2:17, Jude 13).⁸⁴ Both 2 Peter and Jude elaborate on what constitutes such sin. In 2 Peter, those who “have eyes full of adultery, insatiable for sin,” who “entice unsteady souls” and “have hearts trained in greed” (2:14 ESV) are “blots and blemishes,” σπίλοι καὶ μῶμοι (2:13 NRSV). In Jude 12, slanderers associated with Cain, Balaam, and Korah are described as σπιλάδες, which means either “blemishes” or “reefs.” *Blemishes* implies a moral stain, whereas *reefs* might hint at hidden rocks that could cause community members to stumble, which would resonate with Matt 18:6–7.⁸⁵ The first of the six accusations in Jude 12–13 is that such people feast without fear, feeding only themselves.⁸⁶ The verb for feeding is ποιμαίνω, which literally means “shepherding,” oral-scribal intertexture for the criticism of the shepherds of Israel for feeding themselves rather than their “sheep” in Ezek 34:1–10 LXX.⁸⁷ The only occurrence of this verb in Matthew’s Gospel is found in the prophecy that

83. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 319.

84. Turner, *Matthew*, 524.

85. Gene Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 94; Richard Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, WBC 50 (Waco, TX: Word, 1983), 85–86.

86. Alexandra Robinson, *Jude on the Attack: A Comparative Analysis of the Epistle of Jude, Jewish Judgement Oracles, and Greco-Roman Invective* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2018), 192.

87. Green, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 95; Robinson, *Jude on the Attack*, 43.

the one who will shepherd Israel will come from Bethlehem (Matt 2:8). To summarize, the deepest darkness is reserved for those who entice unsteady souls into sin (2 Pet 2:14) and leaders who feed only themselves (Jude 12) even though they may presently participate in love feasts. There are potential parallels between such people who creep in stealthily (*παρεισδύω*) to feast alongside others (Jude 4) but who will experience deepest darkness (Jude 6) and the one cast out from the king's wedding feast into the outer darkness (Matt 22:13).

Revelation 16:10–11 associates darkness with teeth-related punishment for the ungodly: “The fifth angel poured his bowl on the throne of the beast, and its kingdom was plunged into darkness; people gnawed their tongues in agony, and cursed the God of heaven because of their pains and sores, and they did not repent of their deeds” (NRSV). The image of gnawing, *μασάομαι*, like the gnashing of teeth in Matt 22:13, expresses strong emotion, especially together with *ἐκ τοῦ πόνου*, translated as in “agony, pain, or distress” (Rev 16:10, 11; 21:4; cf. Col 4:13).

4.2.3. Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth

The phrase *ὁ κλαυθμὸς καὶ ὁ βρυγμὸς τῶν ὀδόντων* (weeping and gnashing of teeth) is characteristic of Matthew's Gospel (8:12; 13:42, 50; 22:13; 24:51; 25:30).⁸⁸ This phrase may have its origins in Q.⁸⁹ It is not found elsewhere in Scripture apart from Luke 13:28, where this saying is surrounded by material common only to the Gospels of Matthew and Luke. It is preceded by teaching about the narrow door (Luke 13:21–27; cf. Matt 7:13–14), which resonates with the topos of “few chosen” in Matt 22:14. It is followed by a saying about the last being first and the first last (Luke 13:30; cf. Matt 19:30, 20:16). This theme of reversal of fortunes is intensified by the intertexture of “weeping” and “gnashing of teeth.”

Seven of the nine occurrences of *κλαυθμὸς* (weeping or wailing) in the New Testament are in association with gnashing of teeth (cf. Matt 2:18, Acts 20:37). The associated verb *κλαίω* occurs forty times in the New

88. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:31; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 319, “a favorite Matthean phrase.”

89. John S. Kloppenborg, *Q Parallels: Synopsis, Critical Notes and Concordance* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge, 1988), 136; Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*, 140; Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:31; Boring, “Gospel of Matthew,” 311, 418; Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 344.

Testament,⁹⁰ but only twice in the Gospel of Matthew (2:18, 26:75). It is as if, apart from Rachel mourning her children in Ramah (2:18), the author of Matthew's Gospel reserves *κλαυθμός* and *κλαίω* for “weeping and gnashing of teeth.” The Matthean versions of synoptic parallels that include *κλαίω* either omit this verb, as in the raising of the synagogue leader's daughter (Mark 5:39, Luke 8:52; cf. Matt 9:23), or replace it with mourning, *πενθέω*, as in the Beatitudes (Luke 6:21; cf. Matt 9:15). There is significantly more weeping in both the Gospel of Luke (7:13, 32, 38; 19:41; 23:28) and the Gospel of John (11:31, 33; 20:11, 13, 15). The verb *κλαίω* describes the audible manifestation of deep grief.⁹¹ It intensifies the words with which it is paired: *ἀλαλάζω*, “to wail or cry out” (Mark 5:38); *ὀλολύζω*, “to howl” (Jas 5:1); *θρηγνέω*, “to wail or lament” (John 16:20); *κόπτω*, “to cut” as in “to lament” (Rev 18:9); and *πενθέω*, “to mourn” (Luke 6:25; Jas 4:9; Rev 18:11, 15, 19).

In the Letter of James, *κλαίω* is associated with the warning of eschatological reversal directed towards the rich, who get fat living in luxury while not paying their laborers: “Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you. Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire” (Jas 5:1–3 NRSV). These rich people are told, “You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who does not resist you” (Jas 5:6 NRSV). Similarly, the temple audience of the parable of the royal wedding feast are told they will kill, flog, and pursue prophets, sages, and scribes (Matt 23:34).

In apocalyptic literature, weeping (*κλαυθμός*) is associated with the physical pain of eternal isolation and punishment: “they will cry and lament in a void, empty place, and burn in a fire where there is no end” (1 En. 108.3).⁹² Furthermore, the punishment of the wicked is increased by being able to see the bliss of the righteous (1 En. 108.3,

90. Zoltan L. Erdely and Kevin G. Smith, “Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth: The Nature of the Suffering of the Wicked in Matthew,” *Conspectus* 15 (2013): 148.

91. Rengstorf, “*κλαίω*, *κλαυθμός*,” *TDNT* 3:722–74.

92. Meghan Henning, *Educating Christians through the Rhetoric of Hell: “Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth” in the Paideia of Matthew and the Early Church* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014), 162; Nickelsburg notes connections between Matt 22:13 and 1 En. 108.4–6 as well as 10.4 (1 *Enoch* 1, 556).

5; 2 En. 40.12).⁹³ This element also emerges in the “gnashing of teeth” topos within the Septuagint.

Gnashing, βρρυγμός, is derived from βρύκω, which, like βρύχω, means “to bite noisily,” “chew audibly,” “gobble greedily,” “devour,” or “consume.” Hippocrates uses the expression βρύχει τοὺς ὀδόντας to describe the chattering of teeth when suffering from a fever.⁹⁴ In one of only two New Testament references to dental activity other than in association with κλαυθμός, a boy possessed by an evil spirit grinds his teeth, τρίζει τοὺς ὀδόντας (Mark 9:18).⁹⁵ In the other, prior to the stoning of Stephen, those who hear his speech become enraged and gnash their teeth at him, ἔβρυχον τοὺς ὀδόντας (Acts 7:54), which has parallels with “gnashing of teeth” in the Septuagint.

Seven of the eight occurrences of the substantive βρρυγμός and the associated verb βρύχω in the Septuagint are associated with teeth.⁹⁶ Zoltan Erdey and Kevin Smith consider these expressions of anger (Ps 35:16), hatred, bitterness, a desire to destroy (Job 16:9), envy and jealousy (Pss 37:12, 112:9), a malevolent joy at the hardship of others (Lam 2:16), wrath (Prov 19:12), and imminent death (Sir 51:3).⁹⁷

Biblical references to the gnashing of teeth are often associated with wrath or derision directed by the wicked adversary towards the vulnerable righteous (Job 16:9; Pss 35:16, 37:12; Lam 2:16; Sir 51:3; Acts 7:54; cf. Sir 30:10). Ben Sirach gives thanks to “O Lord and King” for delivering him “from grinding teeth about to devour me” (Sir 51:1, 3 NRSV). In the four gospels, the scribes (and Pharisees in Matthew’s case) are accused of devouring widow’s houses (Matt 23:14, Mark 12:40, Luke 20:47), suggesting predatory and unjust behavior towards the vulnerable. In the early second century, Ignatius of Antioch compared his coming martyrdom in Rome to being ground into fine flour by lion’s teeth.⁹⁸

93. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 319.

94. K. H. Rengstorf, “βρύχω, βρρυγμός,” *TDNT*, 1:641; BDAG, s.v. “βρύχω”; McComiskey, “βρύχω,” *NIDNTT*, 1:420; Erdey and Smith, “Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth,” 151–52.

95. The only use of τρίζω in the New Testament. See Richard E. Whitaker and John R. Kohlenberger III, *The Analytical Concordance to the New Revised Standard Version of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 5622.

96. Papaioannou, *Geography of Hell*, 179.

97. Erdey and Smith, “Weeping and Gnashing of Teeth,” 154–55.

98. Owen F. Cummings, *Eucharistic Doctors: A Theological History* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2005), 11.

The enemies who grind or gnash their teeth do not always prevail. In Ps 112:10, the wicked gnash their teeth in frustration when they see that the righteous endure despite their evil intentions to torment them.⁹⁹ Robert Gundry considers such grinding of teeth more descriptive of grief than anger, whereas John Nolland argues it is an aggressive expression of hostility and anger.¹⁰⁰ Karl. H. Rengstorf describes βρυγμός as such strong hatred that it includes a desire to destroy, but he believes that when the word is combined with *weeping*, the resultant phrase refers to the remorse of those outside the kingdom rather than rage.¹⁰¹ Variations on “gnashing of teeth” being an inward-focused emotion include *self-reproach* (Schwank and Hagner), *self-hate* (Bruner), and *anxiety* (Keener).¹⁰² Sometimes this phrase is associated with how others will view them, for example, *disgrace*, as suggested by Donald Senior.¹⁰³ I favor the understanding that gnashing of teeth is an outward-focused manifestation of anger, as suggested by Davies and Allison,¹⁰⁴ or frustration, as suggested by Harrington.¹⁰⁵ Intertextually, gnashing of teeth is an activity usually directed at one or more victims, symbolizing either present menace or future frustration.

The first mention of weeping and gnashing of teeth in Matthew (8:11–12; cf. Luke 13:28) warns of the eschatological reversal of fortunes.¹⁰⁶ Eschatological vindication, with rewards for the righteous and punishment for the wicked, is foundational to apocalyptic literature and features

99. Gundry suggests a specific allusion to Ps 112:10 (*Matthew*, 146); cf. France, who notes “the phrase is conventional, and the contents not similar” (*Gospel of Matthew*, 319):

100. Robert H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel: With Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 77; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 357–58.

101. Rengstorf, “βρύχω, βρυγμός,” *TDNT* 1:641–42; Rengstorf, “βρύχω,” *TDNT* 1:642.

102. Benedikt Schwank, “Dort wird Heulen und Zähneknirschen sein,” *BZ* 16 (1972): 121–22; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, WBC 33a (Dallas: Word Books, 1993), 206; Frederick Dale Bruner, *The Christbook, Matthew 1–12*, vol. 1 of *Matthew: A Commentary*, rev. and enl. ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 383–84; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 268.

103. Donald Senior, *Matthew* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 274.

104. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:31.

105. Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 353.

106. Henning, *Educating Christians*, 169.

in Matthew's Gospel.¹⁰⁷ Pedagogical warning about the eschatological reversal of fates is a theme found in Plato's *Phaedo* and Lucian's *Menippus*.¹⁰⁸ Lucian describes a future when kings will be abused like slaves (*Menippus* 17), and the poor will torment the rich, using them as donkeys to carry their burdens (*Menippus* 20).¹⁰⁹ By contrast, in Matthew's Gospel, weeping and gnashing of teeth is not a punishment meted out by vindicated righteous ones but by the angels of the harvest (13:42, 50), the king (22:13), the master (24:51), and the Son of Man (25:30). More than warning the wicked, it assures the righteous of future vindication.

"Weeping and gnashing of teeth" is such evocative language that it may be considered an example of the ancient rhetorical technique of ekphrasis, bringing "before the eyes."¹¹⁰ Furthermore, doing so in such vivid detail that "emotions will ensue" as if present at the event is characteristic of a rhetorical device known as *enargeia* (Quintilian, *Inst.* 8.3.67–9).¹¹¹ Matthew's *enargeia* of hell is limited to a few lines, unlike the "tours of hell" in later Christian literature, which draw on both Jewish apocalyptic literature and the Greek and Latin "Tours of Hades."¹¹² For example, the description of hell in Apocalypse of Peter, includes the depiction of men and women gnawing on their own lips and tongues (27–28).¹¹³

Matthew's use of apocalyptic topoi is relatively restrained despite being more pronounced than that of his fellow evangelists.¹¹⁴ In Matthew's Gospel, "weeping and gnashing of teeth" does not invite the righteous to delight in the discomfort of those sent out into the torment of hell.¹¹⁵ Weeping, as for those who "cry out for pain of heart, and

107. Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*, 42–52; Henning, *Educating Christians*, 169; Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 206.

108. Henning, *Educating Christians*, 168.

109. Henning, *Educating Christians*, 169.

110. Canavan, *Clothing the Body of Christ*, 145.

111. Henning, *Educating Christians*, 59, 67–75; Ruth Webb argues *ekphrasis* is a technique rather than a genre limited to descriptions of art works and architecture. See Webb, *Ekphrasis, Imagination and Persuasion in Ancient Rhetorical Theory and Practice* (Faunham: Ashgate, 2013), 193.

112. Henning describes these tours of hell as using the rhetorical technique of *periegesis*, which means "to show around" (*Educating Christians*, 174).

113. Henning, *Educating Christians*, 183–89.

114. Henning, *Educating Christians*, 174; Sim, *Apocalyptic Eschatology*, 128, 179.

115. Papaioannou, *Geography of Hell*, 232.

shall wail for anguish of spirit” in Isa 65:13 (NRSV), represents the deep sorrow and frustration of being excluded from the feast (Matt 8:11–12, 22:13). The reason for being excluded is suggested by the intertexture of gnashing of teeth, which associates those who are excluded with the wicked who mock (Ps 35:16) and plot (Ps 37:2) against the righteous. Those who are gathered in from the streets to participate in the feast may represent those whom the Lord protects from the teeth of their enemies (Ps 124:6) and whom the Lord and King delivers from being devoured (Sir 51:3). For this protection to be effective, anyone who would harm them needs to be held at bay. Such a one may cry out in frustration not only at missing out on the feast but also because of an inability to prevail against or devour the righteous ones. Even in the idyllic Ps 23, feasting occurs in the presence of enemies from whom they are protected by the good shepherd (23:5).¹¹⁶ The need to render enemies impotent in order to feast is also observed in the eschatological feast for all peoples in Isa 25:6–8 as it follows the destruction of enemy strongholds (Isa 25:2–3).¹¹⁷

4.3. Intertexture of Expulsion and Reversal of Fortunes

The reversal of fortunes is a common theme in the Hebrew Bible. It features in the stories of Exodus, Joseph (Gen 37–50), Ruth, Hannah (1 Sam 2), David (1 Sam 16, 2 Sam 1), and Daniel (2, 4–5).¹¹⁸ Brenner argues that in the book of Esther in particular, symmetries and repetitions work together to emphasize the underlying theme of “an inversion of fate” or “overturning of destinies.”¹¹⁹ In Esther, Tobit, and 1 Enoch the removal of a being is instrumental in reversing the fortunes of a people so that “a victimizer becomes a victim, whereas the victim flourishes.”¹²⁰ In Esther, Tobit, and 1 Enoch, the “victimizees” are Haman the royal adviser, Asmodeus the demon, and Asael the fallen angel, respectively. Those who flourish as a result are the Jewish minority in the book of Esther, the righ-

116. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 44.

117. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 56.

118. Athalya Brenner, “Looking at Esther through the Looking Glass,” in *A Feminist Companion to Esther, Judith and Susanna*, ed. Athalya Brenner (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1995), 71–80.

119. Brenner, “Looking at Esther,” 71.

120. Brenner, “Looking at Esther,” 74.

teous extended family of Tobit living in the diaspora, and the whole earth in 1 En. 10. These three texts merit closer attention as intertexture for Matt 22:1–14.

4.3.1. Esther

The book of Esther contains several topoi in common with the parable of the royal wedding feast, including feasting, messengers, killing, royal anger, clothes, and the drastic removal of an individual. Nearly half of the references to feasting in the Hebrew Bible occur in Esther.¹²¹ Michael Goulder suggests that the parable of the royal wedding feast is a reworking of the parable of the tenants (Mark 12:1–12, Matt 21:33–44) meshed with the story of Esther.¹²² Blickenstaff identifies parallels between the inappropriately dressed guest at the royal wedding feast (Matt 22:1–14) and Haman in the book of Esther.¹²³

Feasting is significant in the book of Esther, with twenty of the Hebrew Bible occurrences of the word for feast or banquet, *משתה* (*mishteh*), which is derived from the verb *to drink*.¹²⁴ The *mishteh* is the extravagant setting in which Persian rulers make decisions that lead to the suffering of the Jewish people in exile (Esther 1:3, 5, 9, 2:18; Dan 1:5, 8, 10).¹²⁵ Feasting, gladness, gift exchange, and almsgiving also inaugurate the feast of Purim (9:20–23).¹²⁶ This feasting, as in the wedding feast within Matthew's parable, follows the wholesale slaughter and destruction of enemies (Esth 9:5, 16; Matt 22:7).

In both the book of Esther and the parable of the royal wedding feast, those who have already been invited are called to come to dinner by either eunuchs or slaves (Esth 5:8, 6:14; Matt 22:3–4). While feasting with the king, Haman is revealed as plotting the massacre of the Jews, which angers the king. As a result, Haman is taken outside and hanged (7:1–10)—on

121. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 45–46.

122. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew*, 415–18.

123. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 74.

124. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 45; Michael V. Fox, *Character and Ideology in the Book of Esther*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 156.

125. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 46; Nathan MacDonald, *Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 203, 209.

126. Goulder argues that in his proposed lectionary reading of Matthew's Gospel, lection 51 (Matt 22:1–14) would be read at Purim (*Midrash and Lection in Matthew*, 190–98).

the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. This complete reversal of fortunes is foreshadowed by Haman being put in the position of providing Mordecai with the royal robes he had expected to wear himself (6:7–11).¹²⁷

Mordecai and Haman are one of several pairings of characters in the book of Esther, alongside Esther and Vashti and the counsel Mordecai gives his adopted daughter Esther and that given by Zareh to her husband, Haman (5:14, 6:13). Brenner notes, however, that the king Ahaseurus has no obvious parallel; no one mirrors him or is cast as his shadow.¹²⁸ He sits above the other characters, acting as an arbitrator when angered, bringing justice to an unjustly treated people. In my view, this resonates with the role of the king in the parable of the royal wedding feast.

Matthew's parable is told to religious and political leaders who, like Haman, are individuals with the capacity to influence the fortunes of others. Like Haman, they probably see themselves as insiders and expect to wear the robes of those whom the king honors. The parable warns such an audience that any individual who seeks to use a position of power to harm others will, like the individual without wedding clothes, be cast out of the king's presence and suffer fearful consequences.¹²⁹ In the book of Esther, a human individual, Haman, needs to be removed for the Jewish people to flourish, whereas in the book of Tobit, a demon needs to be expelled for the family of Tobit to flourish.

4.3.2. Tobit

The intertexture of binding by both hands and feet in Matt 22:13 with Tob 8:3 as well as 1 En. 10.4 has been overlooked in the past. One reason is that for many centuries there was no Semitic text of the book of Tobit available, and the assumption was made that this text would not have been accessed by Jews in the Second Temple period (see Origen's *Letter to Africanus*, dating from 240 CE).¹³⁰ Twentieth-century archaeological discoveries have changed this. Among the discoveries of Tobit texts in Cave 4 at Qumran are four partial Aramaic texts (4QTob^{a,b,c,d}, numbered 4Q196–4Q199) and one fragmentary Hebrew text (4QTob^e, 4Q200), writ-

127. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 74.

128. Brenner, "Looking at Esther," 75–76.

129. Goulder, *Midrash and Lection in Matthew*, 417; Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 74.

130. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Dead Sea Scrolls and Christian Origins* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 136–37.

ten in Hasmonean and Herodian scripts that date these copies to between 100 BCE and 50 CE.¹³¹

Without a complete Semitic text, translations of the book of Tobit have relied on three Greek recensions: GI, based on Codices Vaticanus (B), Alexandrinus (A), and Venetus (V); GII, mainly based on Codex Sinaiticus (S), La, MS 313 (3:6–6:16), and p¹⁰⁷⁶⁼⁹¹⁰; and GIII, an intermediate or mixed version.¹³² Until recently, the most widely available English translations of the Septuagint favored the Greek recension GI over the longer reading of the book of Tobit in GII,¹³³ which provides another reason why the intertexture of Matt 22:13 with Tob 8:3 has been overlooked. In GI, the angel Raphael simply binds the demon Asmodeus, ἔδησεν αὐτὸ ὁ ἄγγελος, whereas in the NRSV translation of Tobit, based on GII, Raphael binds Asmodeus “hand and foot” (8.3). The Sinaiticus text of this portion of Tob 8:3 is συνεπόδισεν αὐτὸν ἐκεῖ καὶ ἐπέδησεν παραχρῆμα.

Not only is the demon bound by the hands and feet, but this being is also expelled from a wedding chamber, another intertextual association with the parable of the royal wedding feast. In Tob 8:3, the angel Raphael binds the demon Asmodeus, who caused Sarah's first seven bridegrooms to die on their wedding night (3:17).¹³⁴ Asmodeus is expelled by the smell of fish rather than by the angel Raphael directly: in Vaticanus (GI) the verb is *fled*, ἔφυγεν from φευγω; whereas in Sinaiticus (GII), the demon is “repelled,” ἐκώλυσεν from κωλυω, and then flees away. Raphael has a role in this expulsion as well as eventually binding the demon because the fish innards are prepared by Tobias at Raphael's suggestion. This smell expels the demon not to the darkness (cf. 1 En. 10.5, Matt 22:13) but nevertheless to a faraway place, that is, the farthest reaches of Egypt, a land known

131. Fitzmyer, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 131–42; Fitzmyer, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 133.

132. Geoffrey David Miller notes that the Semitic original of the book of Tobit is lost and translations rely on these three Greek recensions. See Miller, *Marriage in the Book of Tobit* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 6–7.

133. Richard Bauckham notes that the NRSV translates GII. GI is the basis of Tobit in the Vulgate, KJV, and the Brenton translation of the Septuagint used in many online versions. See Bauckham, *The Jewish World around the New Testament: Collected Essays 1*, WUNT 233 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 435.

134. Joseph A. Fitzmyer notes that the literal translation of the GII recension of Tob 3:17 is “loosing,” often rendered “freeing,” and the GI recension has “binding” which foreshadows 8:3. See Fitzmyer, *Tobit: Commentaries on Early Jewish Literature* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2003), 161.

for magic and witchcraft (Exod 7:11, 1QapGen XX, 20).¹³⁵ Demons are known to reside in waterless wilderness areas (cf. Matt 12:43, Luke 11:24), most notably the wilderness of Azazel in Lev 16:7–10.¹³⁶ In the Babylonian Talmud, Asmodeus is the king of demons (b. Git. 68; b. Pesah. 110a, 122b).¹³⁷ In the Testament of Solomon (5.7–8), “renowned Asmodeus” is an offspring of the fallen angels who works evil by plotting against newlyweds, marring the beauty of maidens, estranging their hearts, and spreading madness among women.¹³⁸

In Tob 8 the wedding feast can only really begin once Raguel has established that Tobias has survived his wedding night. This is the only wedding feast in the Septuagint that, like Matt 22:4, includes mention of the animals slaughtered for the feast, in this case two oxen and four rams (Tob 8:19). This feast is only possible because the demon that plagued Sarah by killing her first seven bridegrooms is expelled and bound. This enables the endogamous marriage, which unites two families living righteous lives in the diaspora, to begin and have the potential to bear fruit. Given that Tobias and Sarah are related and each the only child of their respective parents, the situation is similar to that of the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah in Gen 24;¹³⁹ the succession of this Jewish family is endangered by this demon. By binding Asmodeus, Raphael frees Sarah from the shame of being spouseless and childless (Tob 3:11–15), protects Tobias from death in the bridal chamber, and provides the opportunity for this family to have a future. In Tobit, Raphael binds Asmodeus in Egypt when the demon is expelled from the domestic scene of a bridal chamber, whereas in 1 Enoch he is ordered to bind Asael in a heavenly court, and this watcher’s expulsion leads to the healing of the whole earth.

4.3.3. 1 Enoch

The oral-scribal intertexture between 1 En. 10.4 and Matt 22:13, including both binding of feet and hands and casting out into darkness,¹⁴⁰ is so striking that it merits exploring the wider literary context of 1 En. 10.4.

135. Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 243.

136. Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 243.

137. Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 151.

138. Fitzmyer, *Tobit*, 151.

139. Miller, *Marriage*, 209.

140. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 556; Sim, “Matthew 22.13a,” 3–19; Davies and Alli-

In 1 En. 10, four archangels, Sariel, Raphael, Gabriel, and Michael, are commissioned to deal with the rebellion of fallen angels known as watchers.¹⁴¹ Raphael is assigned Asael (10:4–6):¹⁴²

Go, Raphael, and bind Asael hand and foot,
and cast him into the darkness;
and make an opening in the desert that is in Doudael.
There cast him,
and lay beneath him sharp stones and jagged rocks.
And cover him with darkness and let him dwell there forever. Cover up
his face and let him not see the light.
And on the day of the great judgment
he will be led away to the burning conflagration.
And heal the earth, which the watchers have desolated, and announce
the healing of the earth, that the plague may be healed, and all the sons of
men may not perish because of the mystery that the watchers have told
and taught their sons.

Earlier, in 1 En. 8.1, it is recounted that the mysteries that the watcher Asael revealed to humankind, which both endanger humankind and render the earth in need of healing, are metallurgy and chemistry. Learning these mysteries led the holy ones astray by enabling them to make instruments of war out of iron; to fashion gold, silver, and precious stones into ornaments; and to develop cosmetics and dyes, thereby providing both means and motivation for human conflict.¹⁴³ By binding Asael, Raphael engages in healing activity (1 En. 10.7) as he does elsewhere (1 En. 40.9; Tob 3:17, 12:14), thereby being true to his name, which means “God has healed.”¹⁴⁴ In 1 En. 10.7 this healing extends to the whole earth.

The restraining of Asael in the Book of Watchers (1 En. 1–36) is repeated in the Parables of Enoch (1 En. 37–71), where he is chained rather than bound (10.4, 54.3–4) but nevertheless also cast out onto jagged rocks and covered with darkness (10.5, 54.5). In both passages, he is accused of leading others astray (10.8; cf. 8.1–2, 54.6; cf. 69.6–12) and therefore will

son, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:206; Olson, “Matthew 22:1–14 as Midrash,” 448–49.

141. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 215.

142. Translation from Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 215.

143. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 188, 220–21.

144. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 220–21.

be incinerated by flame on the final day of judgment (10.6, 54.6).¹⁴⁵ In the Parables of Enoch, shackles are also prepared for humans who have preyed on humanity, “the kings and the mighty,” as well as “Azazel and his host” (1 En. 53.1–7, 54.5).¹⁴⁶ This eschatological punishment is not for the wicked in general but specifically for “the kings and the mighty,” that is, those who have the greatest potential to do evil by oppressing and harming those dependent on their mercy.

In Isa 24:19–22, when the earth is destroyed, “the LORD will punish the host of heaven in heaven, and on earth the kings of the earth” (NRSV) by placing them in a pit.¹⁴⁷ The ability for all peoples to come to the holy mountain to share in the eschatological feast in Isaiah (25:6–8) seems to be contingent on the restraint of both human and heavenly malign forces (24:19–22).¹⁴⁸ Similarly, in the parable of the royal wedding feast, all those gathered together at the wedding may not be able to enjoy the feast until the king’s attendants bind the feet and hands and cast out into darkness the one with power to harm them—as the archangel Raphael is commanded to do to Asael (1 En. 10.4).

In the Book of Watchers, God protects the righteous elect by commissioning his angels to bring the tyranny of watchers to an end, to remove oppressors from the face of the earth, and to destroy evil (1 En. 10.18–20). Philip Esler considers God’s ultimate defeat of evil to be the central concern of the Book of Watchers (1 En. 1–36), with the objective reality of evil, the tendency of humankind to cave in to evil and perpetrate violence, and the multitudes of humans who fall prey to others all necessitating God’s intervention to remove the sources of evil.¹⁴⁹

The divine king’s command to bind the watcher Asael by the hands and feet and to cast him into darkness (1 En. 10.4) has such strong intertexture with the king’s command in Matt 22:13 that it provokes the question of whether there is a similar dynamic of removing an oppressor and encourager of evil in the restraint and removal of the wedding guest in the parable of the royal wedding feast.

145. Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 201.

146. Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 9, 19.

147. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 221.

148. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 56.

149. Philip F. Esler, “*Deus Victor*: The Nature and Defeat of Evil in the Book of Watchers (1 Enoch 1–36),” in *The Blessing of Enoch: 1 Enoch and Contemporary Theology*, ed. Philip F. Esler (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2017), 166–90.

The appropriateness of reading 1 En. 10.4 as intertexture for Matt 22:13 is then underlined by ἐκλεκτοί (chosen or elect), which is characteristic of 1 Enoch and other apocalyptic literature featuring in the next verse, Matt 22:14.

4.4. Intertexture of Matthew 22:14: Many Called, Few Chosen

The parable of the royal wedding feast concludes with πολλοὶ γάρ εἰσιν κλητοὶ ὀλίγοι δὲ ἐκλεκτοί, usually translated as “for many are called, few chosen” (22:14). The latter part of this statement, ὀλίγοι ἐκλεκτοί, is a topos that develops in Jewish apocalyptic writing.¹⁵⁰ My exploration of the oral-scribal intertexture of Matt 22:14 begins by considering the pairs many-few (πολλοί-ὀλίγοι) and called-chosen (κλητοί-ἐκλεκτοί).

4.4.1 Many and Few, πολλοί ... ὀλίγοι

In the concluding statement, “many are called, but few chosen,” the few seem to be a subset of the many. Ben Meyer proposes that, based on possible Semitic antecedents for Matt 22:14, πολλοί is better translated as “all” and ὀλίγοι as “not all.”¹⁵¹ This linguistic explanation is helpful, and understanding the “few” as “not all” predates Meyer. A sixteenth-century theologian poignantly translates Matt 22:14 as “all are called, too few are chosen.”¹⁵²

In the Sermon on the Mount, not all of the many (πολλοί) who call on the name of the Lord on the day of judgment will enter the kingdom of heaven, only those who obey the Father (Matt 7:21–23).¹⁵³ Some of the references to “many” and “few” in Matthew’s Gospel distinguish between two groups. Many (πολλοί) take the road that is easy and leads to destruction, whereas few (ὀλίγοι) take the road that is difficult and leads to life (Matt 7:13–14, Luke 13:24).¹⁵⁴ Many of the first will be last (19:30); there

150. Krister Stendahl, “The Called and the Chosen: An Essay on Election,” in *The Root of the Vine: Essays in Biblical Theology*, ed. Anton Fridrichsen (London: Dacre, 1953), 71; Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 306.

151. Ben F. Meyer, “Many (= All),” 89–97.

152. Stendahl, “Called and the Chosen,” 73.

153. In Matt 7:21–23 many call (λέγων), whereas in Matt 22:14 many are called (καλέω).

154. Stendahl, “Called and the Chosen,” 71.

will be many false prophets (24:5, 11) who will deceive many (24:5; Mark 13:6); and many will fall away (24:10). Eschatological reward for the faithful few is a characteristic of apocalyptic literature.¹⁵⁵

The Most High made this world for the sake of many but the world to come for the sake of only a few. (2 Esd 8:1 NRSV)

Many have been created, but only a few shall be saved. (2 Esd 8:3 NRSV)

Inasmuch as you have said that the righteous are not many but few (2 Esd 7:51 NRSV)

There are more who perish than those who will be saved. (2 Esd 9:15 NRSV)

We are left few in number among the nations where you have scattered us (Bar 2:13 NRSV)¹⁵⁶

The Babylonian Talmud also recognizes that the righteous are few with respect to number (b. Menah. 29b).¹⁵⁷

Blickenstaff invites a resistant reading of the parable of the royal wedding feast in which the individual without wedding clothing represents the righteous few. She suggests that this person has adhered to Jesus's exhortation not to worry about clothing (6:25–31); has remained steadfast in the face of persecution before governors and kings, about which Jesus warns (10:17–18); and, like Jesus, has kept silent before his accusers regardless of the potential punishment (22:13; cf. 26:63).¹⁵⁸ Blickenstaff proposes that this parabolic figure may be an exemplar of Matthean discipleship, one of few who have persevered, been found worthy, and hence will receive the eschatological reward (Matt 5:10–12, 10:39, 11:28–30, 16:24–27, 19:29).¹⁵⁹ This reading appropriately acknowledges apocalyptic nuances associated with the “few” who remain righteous in the face of persecution

155. Stendahl, “Called and the Chosen,” 71.

156. Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 306; Stendahl, “Called and the Chosen,” 78.

157. Stendahl, “Called and the Chosen,” 71.

158. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 69, 73–75.

159. Marianne Blickenstaff, “Matthew’s Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matt 22:1–14),” *RevExp* 109 (2012): 269.

(4 Ezra 9.16, 2 Bar 44.15, Barn. 4.14).¹⁶⁰ More attention, however, needs to be given to the immediate narrative context of the parable of the royal wedding feast as one of three parables told in the Jerusalem temple in confrontation with religious leaders (Matt 21–23). The parable's audience in Matthew's narrative are not the righteous few experiencing persecution but rather religious leaders (21:45, 22:15) who may well have considered themselves heirs of the kingdom (8:11–12, 21:33–46) associated with being the chosen people of Israel.¹⁶¹

4.4.2 Called and Chosen, κλητοί ... ἐκλεκτοί

In New Testament usage, there is little to distinguish between κλητοί (called) and ἐκλεκτοί (chosen or elect).¹⁶² For example, the recipients of 2 Peter (1:10) are exhorted to “be all the more eager to confirm your call and election” (NRSV; σπουδάσατε βεβαίαν ὑμῶν τὴν κλήσιν καὶ ἐκλογὴν ποιεῖσθαι). In the book of Revelation, both the called and the chosen, as well as the faithful, are with the victorious Lamb, καὶ οἱ μετ’ αὐτοῦ κλητοὶ καὶ ἐκλεκτοὶ καὶ πιστοί (Rev 17:14).¹⁶³

The chosen, ἐκλεκτοί, is derived from the verb ἐκλέγομαι, which literally means “to pick out, choose, or select.”¹⁶⁴ Apart from Matt 22:14, all other occurrences of ἐκλεκτοί found in this gospel are in the Eschatological Discourse (Matt 24–25), each with a parallel in Mark 13 (Matt 24:22; cf. Mark 13:20, Matt 24:24; cf. Mark 13:22, Matt 24:31; cf. Mark 13:27).¹⁶⁵ The opening of 1 Enoch states that it is written for the “elect and the righteous” (1 En. 1.1–7), and the word translated as “elect” or “chosen” occurs thirty-two times in this text.¹⁶⁶ Originally *the chosen* referred to God's election of the people of Israel, but it came to refer only to part of the nation, the true Israel, the holy remnant chosen and righteous living out covenantal

160. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 75.

161. Sim, “Man Without the Wedding Garment,” 165–78.

162. Stendahl, “Called and the Chosen,” 73.

163. Stendahl, “Called and the Chosen,” 73.

164. Examples include Exod 2:2; 34:15; Num 25:2; Judg 14:15; 1 Sam 9:13; 16:3, 5; 1 Kgs 19:26.

165. Stendahl, “Called and the Chosen,” 72.

166. A. Chadwick Thornbill, *The Chosen People: Election, Paul and the Second Temple Judaism* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2015), 34; Thornbill, *Chosen People*, 34, 48.

responsibility (1 En. 1.8), who will receive eschatological blessing (1 En. 5.7–10, 38.1–12, 39.6–7, 58.1–6).¹⁶⁷

The election of Israel is a major theme in the Hebrew Bible.¹⁶⁸ It begins with the call of Abraham (Gen 12:1–3), which includes the promise that this blessing is so substantial that through him all the families on earth will be blessed.¹⁶⁹ One reason given for the God of Israel's selection of his people is that they are the fewest of all peoples, γάρ ἐστε ὀλιγοστοὶ παρὰ πάντα τὰ ἔθνη (Deut 7:6–7).¹⁷⁰ The Lord, however, cares for other nations (Ps 36:7, Amos 9:7), and the Lord's chosen people will be a light to the nations (Isa 42:6–7) so that salvation may reach to the ends of the earth (Isa 49:6, Tob 13:11).¹⁷¹ Given that these themes are also reflected in Matthew's Gospel (Matt 8:11–12, 28:16–20), Schottroff argues that in Matt 22:14, the “many” includes those of all nations, whereas the “few” refers to the people of Israel.¹⁷² To emphasize this, the English translation of her conclusion to Matt 22:1–14 is “God calls all peoples, but loves the weakest most.”¹⁷³ This, however, does not fit with the preceding narrative of the parable, a difficulty Schottroff resolves by arguing that Matt 22:14 is probably a preexisting logion attached to the parable of the royal wedding feast.

4.4.3. Matthew 22:14 as *Nimshal*

“Many are called, but few chosen” is not an obvious conclusion to the parable of the royal wedding feast. There is also a misfit between the parable proper (*mashal*) and concluding statement (*nimshal*) in the parable of the ten virgins. Here, the concluding statement focuses on staying awake (Matt 25:13), whereas in the preceding parable, both groups of bridesmaids, those with and those without oil supplies, fall asleep (Matt 25:1–12).¹⁷⁴

167. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 147; Thornbill, *Chosen People*, 34–35, 49–51.

168. Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of the Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 61–64.

169. Joel N. Lohr considers the nuances of this blessing in detail. See Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen: Conceptions of Election in the Pentateuch and Jewish-Christian Interpretation* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 30.

170. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 46–47.

171. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 47; Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen*, 22; Brueggemann, *Reverberations of the Faith*, 62–63; Lohr, *Chosen and Unchosen*, 22–26.

172. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 48.

173. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 38, 46.

174. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 46, 34; Amy-Jill Levine, “Matthew,” in *Wom-*

Kiperwasser identifies an occasional lack of cohesion between *mashal* and *nimshal* in rabbinic literature. He suggests that the *mashal* associated with Qoh 9:8 may have originated elsewhere and then been reworked as an illustration of the importance of always being in a state of readiness for the eschatological banquet.¹⁷⁵ The argument that Matt 22:14 may be a pre-existing logion stitched to Matt 22:2–13, perhaps with the verb καλέω,¹⁷⁶ is supported by this saying's also appearing at the conclusion of the parable of the generous employer (Matt 20:16) in some manuscripts.

Olson argues that Matt 22:14 is a carefully constructed combined proof-text-*nimshal* rather than a clumsy addendum, suggesting that its brevity is due to the self-evident nature of the allegory of the *mashal*.¹⁷⁷ He contrasts this with the parable of the tenants (Matt 21:33–44), which concludes with both a proof-text (Ps 118:22, Matt 21:42) and a *nimshal* beginning with “therefore” (21:42–44).¹⁷⁸ Olson argues that “for many are *invited*” appeals to Zeph 1:7 as a proof-text, with “but few are *chosen*” as an allusion to the Book of Watchers (1 En. 1–36).¹⁷⁹ He suggests that by creating a combined *midrash* on these two particular texts, Matthew emulates the author of the Parables of Enoch (1 En. 37–71).¹⁸⁰ This document probably predates Matthew's Gospel, so the author of the gospel might have known of it, especially the Son of Man tradition.¹⁸¹ Olson explores parallels between passages from the Parables of Enoch (1 En. (52.7–9, 54.4–6, 55.4) and Matt 22:1–14, noting that both have verbal correspondences with Zeph 1 and with 1 En. 10.4–6, and both feature a prophecy related to the fall of Jerusalem.¹⁸² Ultimately, however, the parable of the royal wedding feast is part of Matthew's story of Jesus and is not found in *midrashic* commentary on either of these two texts.

en's Bible Commentary: Expanded Edition with Apocrypha, ed. Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 348.

175. Kiperwasser, “Bizarre Invitation,” 154.

176. Allen, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 236.

177. Olson, “Matthew 22:1–14 as Midrash,” 437.

178. Olson, “Matthew 22:1–14 as Midrash,” 437.

179. Olson, “Matthew 22:1–14 as Midrash,” 437.

180. Olson, “Matthew 22:1–14 as Midrash,” 437.

181. Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 72; Olson, “Matthew 22:1–14 as Midrash,” 452.

182. Olson, “Matthew 22:1–14 as Midrash,” 449–52.

4.4.4. Conclusion: Many Called, Few Elect

Matthew 22:14 is a *nimshal* to the *mashal* (22:2–13) that precedes it, albeit not an especially good fit. It suits better when Meyer's suggestion is adopted to translate the saying as "all are called, not all are chosen." This solves the grammatical problem of number, but not the contrast drawn between two terms, *κλητοί* (called) and *ἐκλεκτοί* (chosen), the meanings of which are difficult to distinguish. The people of Israel are both the called and the chosen people. Schottroff suggests all peoples are *called* by God, drawing on the prophetic tradition of looking to the inclusion of all nations under God's reign, but a special relationship of *election* with his chosen people continues.¹⁸³ This rightly sets this logion in the Jewish context of Matthew's Gospel, but it does not take into account the development of *ἐκλεκτοί* (chosen or elect ones) in apocalyptic literature to describe not the whole people of Israel but the faithful few, the righteous remnant, as in 1 Enoch. The language of "few chosen" in Matt 22:14 seems dependent on apocalyptic traditions because *ἐκλεκτοί* only appears elsewhere in Matthew in the part of the Eschatological Discourse heavily dependent on Mark 13. This final chord (22:14) seems to encourage hearing Matt 22:11–13 in an apocalyptic key.¹⁸⁴

4.5. Conclusion

Exploring the intertexture of Matt 22:11–13 leads me to conclude that, to make meaning of the expulsion of the inappropriately attired wedding attendee, it is more helpful to focus on how the individual is cast out from the wedding feast than on what *ἔνδυμα γάμου* represents. Exploring the intertextual threads of "wedding clothing" reveals an enormous network of possible significations. Therefore, as Snodgrass concedes, "precise identification is both impossible and inappropriate."¹⁸⁵ Most of the intertextual evidence that the wedding clothing simply needed to be clean clothing seems to be drawn from Qumran documents and the Babylonian Talmud tractate on Sabbath observance. This seems no more indicative of wedding-clothing customs in the first century than the nineteenth-century argument that wedding raiment would be supplied by the host. The prac-

183. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 46–48.

184. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:204–8.

185. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 321.

tice of providing clothing as an act of hospitality for those travelling is evident in 2 Kgs 5:22, and in apocalyptic literature the Lord or his angels will provide the righteous with heavenly garments. The Lord provides righteousness and salvation represented by wedding apparel imagery in Isa 61:10. To explore why such a generous Lord might deem it necessary to cast someone out of the “wedding feast,” it is important to follow the intertextual threads related to the king’s command in Matt 22:11–13.

Exploring the intertextures of Matt 22:13 provides clues as to why an individual might be expelled from the wedding feast. The most compelling intertexture is the divine command for the angel Raphael to bind the fallen angel Asael by *the hands and feet* and to cast him into *darkness*, because he has taught humankind mysteries that not only endanger the human species but also damage the earth (1 En. 10.4–6). In Jude and 2 Pet 2, the deepest darkness is preserved for those who lead others astray and feed only themselves, unlike true shepherds of Israel. In Jas 5, the rich are warned they will weep (κλαίω), and their clothes will be moth-eaten when they face the consequences of getting fat living in luxury while not paying their laborers. Biblical intertexts with respect to *gnashing of teeth* appear either in pleas from the vulnerable to be saved from their oppressors or in proclamations of praise that it is possible for the righteous to feast in the face of the enemy unharmed. The wicked who would otherwise devour them are kept at bay and can do no more harm than grind their teeth in frustration while the righteous feast.

In accord with these intertextual associations with Matt 22:13, the restraint and removal of an individual may well relate to the well-being of the whole community, including the most vulnerable, allowing them to eat in peace without fear of being devoured or harmed in some way. In Esther, Tobit, and 1 En. 10, the removal of an individual (Haman, Asmodeus, and Asael) brings about a reversal of fortunes for many. In Esther the Jews are not massacred; in the book of Tobit, the extended family of Tobit has a future; and in 1 Enoch the human species is saved and the whole earth healed.

Expulsion, binding, darkness, weeping and gnashing of teeth (Matt 22:13), and describing the faithful as the chosen few (Matt 22:14; 24:22, 24, 31) concludes the parable of the royal wedding feast on an apocalyptic note, which suggests a sectarian worldview. In the next chapter, I explore the orientation to the wider world promoted in the Gospel of Matthew and the extent to which this is sectarian.

Social Rhetoric of Matthew's Gospel

In both this chapter and the next, the focus shifts from exploring the intertexture of the parable of the royal wedding feast to exploring its social and cultural texture. This analysis makes explicit use of anthropological and sociological theory to explore sociocultural phenomena behind Matthew's Gospel.¹ In this chapter, I consider what Robbins calls specific social topics or social rhetoric, that is, what the text of the Gospel of Matthew reveals about how the ecclesia (literally, those called out) view the wider society and how this impacts social dynamics within the ecclesia.² The next chapter, chapter 6, begins by "exploring the social and cultural 'location' of the language and the type of social and cultural world the language evokes or creates."³ Then I discuss what Robbins calls the final cultural categories or cultural rhetoric of the text, that is, the extent to which the Gospel of Matthew reflects or critiques aspects of the dominant culture.

In the first part of this chapter, I identify the social rhetoric of Matthew's Gospel according to the categories Robbins develops from Wilson's typology of sects and religious minorities.⁴ As well as establishing differences between sects, Wilson also outlines sectarian characteristics common to all sect types: the identity of being a chosen few, the demand for total allegiance, the distrust of dominant authorities, the need for perfection, the requirement to be better than others, and processes for expelling individu-

1. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 71; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 144.

2. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 72; Robbins, *Sea Voyages and Beyond*, 167–68.

3. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 71.

4. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 72–74; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 147–58; Robbins, *Sea Voyages and Beyond*, 145–81.

als who do not meet the high standards expected of sect members.⁵ In the second part of this chapter, I explore how these first five sectarian topoi are configured in the Gospel of Matthew. In the third and final part of the chapter, I consider the expulsion of the individual from the royal wedding feast (22:11–13) alongside protocols for expelling a member of the ecclesia in Matt 18:15–17.

5.1. Studies of Sectarianism and Matthew's Gospel

To explore the social rhetoric of a New Testament text, Robbins recommends identifying which of Wilson's sect types best describes the orientation towards the wider world evident in the text.⁶ Wilson identifies seven different kinds of response to the world apart from acceptance of the status quo of the prevailing culture and established religious system:⁷

1. Conversionists view the world as corrupt because people are corrupt and believe salvation lies in transformation of self through supernatural power. They believe God will change individuals who then change the world.
2. Revolutionists, also known as millennials or Adventists, believe that only the destruction of the world, including the social order, will save people. Supernatural powers are needed to recreate as well as to destroy the world, and humans assist this by testifying to this power by their words and actions. They believe God will overturn the world.
3. Introversionists, also known as isolationists, consider the world irredeemably evil and advocate the fullest possible withdrawal

5. Wilson, "Analysis of Sect Development," 3–15; Wilson, *Religious Sects*, 28–35; Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, 91–93. This summary also draws on John H. Elliott, "The Jewish Messianic Movement: From Fraction to Sect," in *Modelling Early Christianity: Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in its Context*, ed. Philip F. Esler (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 75–95; Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 72–73; Duling, *Marginal Scribe*, 26.

6. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 72–74; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 147–58.

7. Wilson, *Religious Sects*, 37; Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 72–74.

- from the world, insulation from wider society, and a focus on holiness. They believe God calls them to abandon the world.
4. Manipulationists, whom Robbins refers to as gnostic-manipulationists, believe it is possible to live in the world, but it needs to be "manipulated" by religious knowledge or supernatural agency. They believe God helps them to achieve aims within the world, often through ritual and mental ability.
 5. Thaumaturgical groups focus on the individual's relief from present and specific ills and not on the "world." Their concern is with immediate responses to personal requests for supernatural help in the form of healing, comfort, and the promise of eternal life.
 6. Reformists believe that the world is corrupt because the social structures are corrupt but that by having hearts and minds open to supernatural influence, individuals can know the ways in which social organization needs to be changed. They believe God calls them to amend the world.
 7. Utopian groups believe that the entire social world needs reconstruction according to divinely given principles and that humans have the capacity to establish the new social order that will eliminate evil. They believe God calls people to reconstruct the world.

There are some significant concerns about using Wilson's sectarian typology in New Testament studies that require attention. First, Pieter Craffert questions the "goodness of fit" of Wilson's sect model for the study of first-century Jewish and Christian documents because Wilson's typology derives from the studies of societies other than of the first-century Mediterranean world.⁸ Second, different definitions and models of sects complicate the extensive discussions of sectarian traits in Matthew's Gospel in terms of the relationship of the Matthean ecclesia to formative Judaism.⁹ For example,

8. Pieter F. Craffert, "An Exercise in the Critical Use of Models: The 'Goodness of Fit' of Wilson's Sect Model," in *Social-Scientific Models for Interpreting the Bible: Essays by the Context Group in Honor of Bruce J. Malina*, ed. John J. Pilch (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 40–46.

9. J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1990); Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994); David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 109–64; Boris Repschinski, *The Controversy Stories in the Gospel of Matthew:*

Eyal Regev argues that, unlike the groups associated with Qumran, no early Christian groups were sufficiently separated from the wider society to be called “sects,” and therefore it is inappropriate to apply Wilson’s sect model to the early Christian communities.¹⁰ Third, Petri Luomanen argues that the sect model presumes a normative Judaism, whereas following the destruction of the temple, the late first-century Jewish world was too diverse and decentralized to function as the parent body of a deviant sect.¹¹ Fourth, there is concern about the heuristic value of using Wilson’s sect typology in New Testament studies because individual texts as a whole do not represent one sect type or another.¹² Craffert considers Wilson’s definitions to be too vague, to involve too many variables, and to be so manipulated in New Testament studies that nothing is excluded, with the result that little is illuminated.¹³ Each of these four main concerns is addressed before discussing the social rhetoric of Matthew’s Gospel according to Wilson’s typology.

5.1.1. Sociological Models and the Ancient World

Wilson’s categories emerged from his studies of both modern Christian sectarian groups and minority religious-protest movements in traditional African, Native American, Maori, and Chinese societies, which were undergoing great social change and were often under duress.¹⁴ John Elliott convincingly argues that Wilson’s sect typology cannot be

Their Redaction, Form and Relevance for the Relationship between the Matthean Community and Formative Judaism (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2000), 50–56; Petri Luomanen, “The Sociology of Sectarianism in Matthew: Modelling the Genesis of Early Jewish and Christian Communities,” in *Fair Play—Diversity and Conflicts in Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Heikki Räisänen*, ed. Ismo Dunderberg, Christopher Mark Tuckett, and Kari Syreeni (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 107–30; Luomanen, “Social-Scientific Modeling in Biblical and Related Studies,” *Perspectives on Science* 21.2 (2013): 202–20; Anthony Ovayero Ewherido, *Matthew’s Gospel and Judaism in the Late First Century C.E.: The Evidence from Matthew’s Chapter on Parables (Matthew 13:1–52)* (New York: Lang, 2006), 211.

10. Eyal Regev, “Were the Early Christians Sectarrians?,” *JBL* 130 (2011): 771–93.

11. Petri Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven: A Study on the Structure of Matthew’s View of Salvation*, WUNT 2/101 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 274; Craffert, “Exercise in the Critical Use,” 40.

12. Craffert, “Exercise in the Critical Use,” 44.

13. Craffert, “Exercise in the Critical Use,” 37–45.

14. Bryan Wilson, *Sects and Society: A Sociological Study of the Elim Tabernacle, Christian Science, and Christadelphians* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press,

“summarily dismissed as an anachronistic model” because there are sufficient parallels with pre-industrial societies experiencing significant social change for this model to be helpful in analyzing and understanding the Jesus movement in the Mediterranean world of the first century.¹⁵

Significant societal change fosters the development of sectarianism and factionalism. During the Second Temple period, differentiation in Judaism developed due to the extent to which Hellenism was avoided, adopted, or accommodated in the political, cultural, and social spheres of life.¹⁶ Factionalism increased from 165 BCE to 100 CE due to the instability of rule and the different responses to the Seleucid rulers and then to the Hasmonean, Herodian, and Roman rulers.¹⁷ The Dead Sea Scrolls attest to sectarian developments as an integral part of this period of history.¹⁸ The Jerusalem Talmud (y. Sanh. 10.6.29c) attributes the fall of the temple in 70 CE to the existence of twenty-four sects at the time, and although this number is probably hyperbolic, it does suggest many different factions at the time.¹⁹

When Wilson's typology is used to describe first-century Jewish groups, Sadducees and priests are characterized by acceptance of the established religious institution; Pharisees are reformist; Essenes, Qumran, and Therapeutae are isolationist; apocalyptic groups, Zealots, and Josephus's fourth philosophy are revolutionist; and Gnostics are manipulationist.²⁰

1961); Wilson, *Magic and Millennium: A Sociological Study of Religious Movements of Protest Among Tribal and Third-World Peoples* (London: Heinemann, 1973).

15. John H. Elliott, “On Wooing Crocodiles for Fun and Profit: Confessions of an Intact Admirer,” in *Social-Scientific Models for Interpreting the Bible: Essays by the Context Group in Honor of Bruce J. Malina*, ed. John J. Pilch (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 18.

16. Shaye J. D. Cohen, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*, 2nd ed. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2006), 49–50; Anthony Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1988), 59.

17. J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 8–9.

18. John Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism* (New Haven: Yale University, 2019), 49.

19. Louis H. Feldman and Mayer Reinhold, *Jewish Life and Thought among Greeks and Romans: Primary Readings* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 236; Cohen, *From the Maccabees*, 23–24; Donald Harman Akenson, *Surpassing Wonder: The Invention of the Bible and the Talmuds* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1998), 133.

20. Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 72; Pierluigi Piovaneli, “Was There Sectarian Behavior before the Flourishing of Jewish Sects? A Longterm Approach to the History and Sociology of Second Temple Sectarianism,” in *Sectarianism in Early Judaism: Sociological*

Wilson's typology is applicable to first-century Jewish groups as a means to summarize their attitude to the world because factionalism and sectarianism tend to develop in times of great social change. Whether it is then appropriate to call these first-century groups "sects" is the focus of the next sub-section.

5.1.2. Definitions of *Sect* and the New Testament

The different definitions of *sect* employed in the discussions of whether early Christian groups were sectarian or not contribute to the development of different conclusions.²¹ For example, Elliott identifies no less than twenty-one "salient sectarian features" in the writings of the New Testament, whereas Regev argues that none of the New Testament writings is sectarian because there is a lack of evidence of "a *distinct social body* apart from the larger Jewish society."²² Although the Matthean group had not withdrawn from society and established alternative social structures to the extent evident in the literature from Qumran, there is evidence of three significant sectarian elements: differentiation between insiders and outsiders, antagonism towards competing groups, and even some separation.²³

According to Wilson, not all sect types withdraw from society and establish alternate structures, and his definition of *sect* incorporates "religious minorities" and "protest movements."²⁴ Luz focuses on minority status in his definition of a sect: "exclusive minority groups that people join by choice and that control the reception of new members and the exclusion of unworthy members with a normative self-definition."²⁵ John

Advances, ed. David J. Chalcroft, rev. ed. (London: Routledge, 2014), 156–79; Feldman and Reinhold suggest the *Therapeutae*, a contemplative group of healers that included both men and women, may have been a radical offshoot of the Essenes (*Jewish Life and Thought*, 253).

21. Craffert, "Exercise in the Critical Use," 29–46; Regev, "Were the Early Christians Sectarian?," 772–81; Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, 40–44, 47.

22. Elliott, "Jewish Messianic Movement," 80–84; Regev, "Were the Early Christians Sectarians?," 771, emphasis original.

23. Regev, "Were the Early Christians Sectarians?," 791; Kampen, *Matthew within Jewish Sectarianism*, 48–49, 155.

24. The subtitle of Wilson's *Magic and Millennium* is *A Sociological Study of Religious Movements of Protest among Tribal and Third-World Peoples*. See above.

25. Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, trans. James E. Crouch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), 453.

Kampen favors Albert Baumgarten's definition of a sect, which emphasizes the notion of protest movement: "a voluntary association of protest which utilizes boundary marking mechanisms—the social means of differentiating between insiders and outsiders—to distinguish between its own members and those otherwise normally regarded as belonging to the same national or religious entity."²⁶

The etymology of the word *sect* provides grounds for defining it broadly. Derived from the verb *sequi*, "to follow," the Latin *secta* describes the mode of thought and the manner of life followed by a political party or philosophical school.²⁷ The Greek word αἵρεσις (*hairesis*) has a similar semantic range: it transliterates as "heresy" but is better translated as sect, school, or philosophy. It comes from the verb αἰρέομαι, which means to take or choose for oneself.²⁸ Anthony Saldarini defines *hairesis* as "a coherent and principled choice of a way of life, that is, of a particular school of thought."²⁹ Josephus describes the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes as *hairesis* in *B.J.* 2.8.2–14 and adds a fourth *hairesis* in *A.J.* 18.1.2–6.³⁰ In the Greco-Roman world, adherence to a philosophy involved a change of lifestyle in accordance with the beliefs and values of that particular philosophy.³¹ There was also a political dimension to the *hairesis* of the Pharisees that extended beyond the role of most philosophical schools, conveyed by the words *party* or *faction*.³² In some English translations, *party* stands for *hairesis* to describe the Sadducees in Acts 5:17 and the Pharisees in Acts 15:5,³³ possibly to avoid the connotation that a "sect" seeks to be an exclusive replacement for the dominant religion, which is not true of the

26. Kampen, *Matthew within Jewish Sectarianism*, 48; Albert I. Baumgarten, *Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 7.

27. Edwin A. Judge, *The First Christians in the Roman World*, WUNT 229 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 608–9.

28. Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 63, 107–8.

29. Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 123.

30. Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 107–9, 124–30.

31. Judge, *First Christians*, 6–9; Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 124.

32. Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 127; E. P. Sanders uses *party*. See Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE–66 CE* (repr., Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2016), 17.

33. In English, the KJV and NSRV use *sect*; NIV, *party*; and ESV, *believers*. In German the Luther Bible and 1951 translation use *Sekte*, whereas the 2000 *Richtung und Hoffnung für Alle* uses *Partei*.

Sadducees and Pharisees.³⁴ Anders Runesson describes the Pharisees as a “denomination” of Judaism who sought to reform rather than to replace the dominant religion.³⁵ Kampen identifies the Pharisees as “a competing force in the Jewish community of which Matthew was a part.”³⁶

Wilson's sect typology is based on a broad enough understanding of *sect* to include both reform movements within a dominant religion and separatist groups that see themselves as an exclusive replacement of the dominant religion. Using Wilson's typology, most emergent Christian communities are conversionist rather than isolationist.³⁷ Elliott considers the first letter of Peter to represent a conversionist approach to the world.³⁸ Margaret MacDonald identifies the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline literature as predominantly conversionist.³⁹ Esler argues that conversionist rhetoric is most evident in Luke-Acts.⁴⁰ John's Gospel, like the literature of Qumran and 4 Ezra, is one New Testament writing considered introversionist.⁴¹ The book of Revelation is the only New Testament writing categorized as revolutionist.⁴² Whether a sectarian group seeks to reform, replace, or revolt

34. Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 124; Judge, *First Christians*, 608.

35. Anders Runesson, “Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic Intragroup Conflict,” *JBL* 127 (2008): 115; cf. Runesson, *Divine Wrath*, 254, in which he calls Pharisees a Jewish group or coalition.

36. Kampen, *Matthew within Jewish Sectarianism*, 10.

37. Duling, *Marginal Scribe*, 25.

38. John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Social-Scientific Criticism of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy: With a New Introduction* (repr., Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1990), 76.

39. Margaret Y. MacDonald, *The Pauline Churches: A Socio-historical Study of Institutionalisation in the Pauline and Deutero-Pauline Writings*, SNTSMS 60 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 34–35; Macdonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: The Power of the Hysterical Woman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Macdonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, SP (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2008), 236–238.

40. Philip F. Esler, *Community and Gospel in Luke-Acts: The Social and Political Motivations of Lucan Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 49, 59–60.

41. Philip F. Esler, “Introverted Sectarianism at Qumran and in the Johannine Community,” in *The First Christians in Their Social Worlds: Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1994), 70–91; Esler, “The Social Function of 4 Ezra,” in *The First Christians in Their Social Worlds: Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation* (London: Routledge, 1994), 110–30.

42. Esler, *Community and Gospel*, 59. See also John E. Stanley, “The Apocalypse and Contemporary Sect Analysis,” in *Society of Biblical Literature 1986 Seminar Papers*, SBLSPS 25 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1986), 412–21.

against a dominant authority, there needs to be a dominant authority or “parent body” to subject to reform, replacement, or revolution.

5.1.3. Jewish Sectarianism in a Post-70 CE World

After the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem, there was no normative, “monolithic” Judaism.⁴³ Nor was there a clear leadership to represent the “parent body” against which a sect would define itself.⁴⁴ Sects, however, are often understood as protest groups that express hostility towards the dominant religious power or social system,⁴⁵ which may be applied retrospectively. J. Andrew Overman notes that following significant historical disasters, such as the invasion of Jerusalem by Pompey (64 BCE) or the destruction of the Jerusalem temple (70 CE), Jewish sectarian groups argued that this was God's rejection of the corrupt Jerusalem priesthood or the Hellenized Hasmonian rulers (1 Enoch, Psalms of Solomon, 2 Baruch, and 4 Ezra).⁴⁶ In the case of Matthew's Gospel, such criticism is directed at the Pharisees. As outlined below, there are four different suggestions about how the Pharisees function as a “parent body” for the Matthean group: for David Sim, the Pharisees have become the dominant group in late first-century Judaism; for Saldarini, the Pharisees are dominant at a local level; for Runesson, the Mattheans are a sect with Pharisaic origins; and for Kampen, Matthew associates the Pharisees with the center of power in the Jerusalem temple.

Sim argues that of all the Jewish groups, the Pharisees were in the best position to survive the Jewish war and step into the power vacuum created by the destruction of Jerusalem.⁴⁷ Therefore, he argues, they became the

43. James Hamilton Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament: Prolegomena for the Study of Christian Origins* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 61. Kampen, *Matthew within Jewish Sectarianism*, 10.

44. Craffert, “Exercise in the Critical Use,” 41–43; Runesson, “Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations,” 109; Runesson, “Behind the Gospel of Matthew: Radical Pharisees in Post-War Galilee,” *CurTM* 37 (2010): 471.

45. Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, 91–93, sectarian characteristic 8; Elliott, “Jewish Messianic Movement,” 80–81, sectarian feature 3.

46. Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 30–31.

47. David C. Sim, “Fighting on All Fronts: Crisis Management in the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Ancient Jewish and Christian Texts as Crisis Management Literature: Thematic Studies from the Centre for Early Christian Studies*, ed. David C. Sim and Pauline Allen (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 64.

de facto dominant group of formative Judaism as a whole and hence the target for the sectarian rhetoric of Matthew's Gospel.⁴⁸

Saldarini suggests that the sectarian rhetoric in Matthew concerns what was happening at a local level when, in the aftermath of the Jewish war, different groups vied for influence with various levels of success in each place. He argues that the early rabbis, composed mainly of scribes and Pharisees, with some priests and landowners, exerted more influence in the local synagogue than the Matthean group, who then targeted them with sectarian rhetoric.⁴⁹

Runesson questions the influence of the Pharisees in the prewar and immediate postwar period because they were drawn from the retainer class, which only made up about 5 percent of the population.⁵⁰ He argues that even if their membership grew in the aftermath of the Jewish War, their greatest influence would be in their association-based synagogues. Runesson proposes that the Matthean group had its origins in Pharisaic synagogues and that the conflict evident in Matthew is not only intra-Jewish but also intra-Pharisaic.⁵¹

Kampen considers the Pharisees the closest competitors of the Mattheans, who the author of Matthew presents in such a way that they are aligned with the Sadducees, chief priests, and elders.⁵² Members of this coalesced group are then portrayed as failing in their responsibilities as leaders of Israel. This is particularly evident in the debates in the temple precincts in which Pharisees play a uniquely significant role in Matthew's Gospel (Matt 21–23) and even appear in the account of trial itself. This is

48. Sim, "Social and Religious Milieu," 17–19.

49. Anthony J. Saldarini, "Delegitimation of Leaders in Matthew 23," *CBQ* 54.4 (1992): 664–65.

50. Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations," 111–12; Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 40–44.

51. Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations," 111; Runesson ("Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations," 129) notes Pharisaic origins of Mattheans have been proposed by others, including Sean Freyne, "Vilifying the Other and Defining the Self: Matthew's and John's Anti-Jewish Polemic in Focus," in *To See Ourselves as Others See Us: Christians, Jews, "Others" in Late Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner and Ernest S. Frerichs (Chicago: Scholars, 1985), 138. Akiva Cohen agrees that Mattheans belong to Pharisaic association synagogues. See Cohen, *Matthew and Mishnah: Redefining Identity and Ethos in the Shadow of the Second Temple Destruction*, WUNT 2/418 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 38–39, 152–63.

52. Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, 45, 160, 201, 208.

the closest Pharisees come to the center of power and responsibility in all the Synoptic Gospels.⁵³

The level of vehemence in Matthew's anti-Pharisee rhetoric is that of closeness rather than distance, as has been convincingly argued for the more general anti-Jewish rhetoric in this gospel.⁵⁴ The author of Matthew's Gospel identifies as Jewish by describing gentiles as "other" (5:47; 6:7, 32; 10:18; 12:18; 18:17; 20:19, 25), whereas only once are Jews described as "other" (28:15). By comparison, there is no internal evidence that the author of Matthew's Gospel considers Pharisees as anything other than "other." The attitude to scribes is more mixed, with a possible autobiographical reference to being a scribe in Matt 13:52.⁵⁵ Regardless of the exact origins of the Matthean group, the sectarian rhetoric of Matthew's Gospel is directed at Pharisees in particular and not against what all Jews had in common: the law and, until its destruction, the temple.⁵⁶

5.1.4. Wilson's Typology and the Gospel of Matthew

In a New Testament document as extensive as a gospel, there is likely to be evidence of more than one type of social response to the world. Robbins argues that Mark's Gospel, for example, demonstrates primarily thaumaturgical and revolutionist responses to the world with some utopian, reformist, introversionist, and conversionist argumentation embedded.⁵⁷ If one wants to categorize the community behind the text as a particular sect type, this is of concern,⁵⁸ but it is not if the focus is on either rhetorical analysis or changes in attitude over time, such as in the work of Robbins and Saldarini, respectively.

Robbins focuses on the "rhetorical" as well as on the "social" element of sociorhetorical interpretation by adapting Wilson's sect typology into a means by which to identify various types of argumentation. For exam-

53. Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, 25.

54. See for example Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:133–38; Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, 8–11, 156–83.

55. Duling outlines mixed attitudes to scribes in Matthew (*Marginal Scribe*, 199–203). David E. Orton notes it is "generally agreed that in 13:52 the First Evangelist indulges in some self-reference." See Orton, *The Understanding Scribe: Matthew and the Apocalyptic Ideal*, JSNTSup 25 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1989), 165.

56. Sanders, *Judaism*, 17, 69.

57. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 74–75.

58. Craffert, "Exercise in the Critical Use," 27, 44.

ple, in his case study of Luke 1:26–56 (reprinted twice as an exemplar of sociorhetorical criticism), Robbins concludes that there is a dynamic interaction between thaumaturgical and conversionist approaches that emphasize a reformist response to the systems of distribution throughout the Roman Empire.⁵⁹ He considers it inevitable that a document as long as a letter or gospel includes more than one social response to the world.⁶⁰

Saldarini also argues that New Testament writings include more than one response to the world even if one response is usually dominant.⁶¹ Furthermore, he notes that in the formation and development of emergent Christianity, the dominant attitudes to the world of the early Christian groups changed.⁶² Saldarini identifies such shifts in his analysis of the Gospel of Matthew.⁶³ He describes the Matthean community's response to the world as a development from the first-generation Jesus movement in Palestine, identified as primarily a reformist group within Judaism with thaumaturgical and millennial characteristics, and a revolutionist "kingdom of God" rhetoric.⁶⁴ This orientation to the world is similar to James Wilde's analysis of the Gospel of Mark as primarily revolutionist with thaumaturgical and conversionist elements.⁶⁵ Saldarini describes the orientation to the world that develops in the Gospel of Matthew as follows:

First, it is still residually reformist and millenarian/revolutionist. Second, it has de-emphasized the thaumaturgical. The final commission to the disciples is to preach, teach, and baptize (28:19–20), not exorcise and heal (contrast 10:7–8).... Third, Matthew's emphasis on bringing non-Jews into the community (28:19) ... suggests that the community is moving towards a conversionist orientation that seeks to bring a mixed

59. Robbins, "Socio-rhetorical Criticism: Mary, Elizabeth and the Magnificat," 164–209.

60. Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 150, 176–79.

61. Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 72.

62. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 113.

63. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 115; Anthony J. Saldarini, "The Gospel of Matthew and Jewish-Christian Conflict," in *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches*, ed. David Balch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 58–59.

64. Saldarini, "Gospel of Matthew and Jewish-Christian Conflict," 58–59.

65. James A. Wilde, "The Social World of Mark's Gospel: A Word about Method," in *Society of Biblical Literature 1978 Seminar Papers*, SBLSPS 15.2 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1978), 47–67; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 150–52.

group of people into the community (21:43). For the author, that new community is still Jewish and will still adhere to the bulk of Jewish law and custom. The author still has a waning hope that other Jews will join him. However, the orientation of the Matthean community is changing from reformist to isolationist (vis-à-vis Jewish society), and it is beginning to create a new community withdrawn from Judaism and Empire as well.⁶⁶

To explore this in more detail, I respond to each of Saldarini's three points. First, I agree that reformist and revolutionist rhetoric is evident in Matthew's Gospel: reformist in the calls to obey the Law more fully (Matt 5:15–48, 19:8, 23:23) and revolutionist in some of the Son of Man sayings (Matt 10:23, 24:3–31). Second, Saldarini draws attention to a lack of healing and exorcism in the Great Commission to argue convincingly that the thaumaturgical responses are de-emphasized. Third, Saldarini argues that the Matthean community is becoming more conversionist and isolationist. I agree that the narrative flow of the gospel does emphasize conversionist responses by culminating in the Great Commission (28:16–20), but this is less, rather than more, isolationist with respect to the wider world.

There is little introversionist rhetoric in Matthew's Gospel. Even when faced with persecution, Matthean missionaries are encouraged to flee to the next town to continue their mission because time is of the essence (10:23). They are not to withdraw from the world completely to escape persecution; rather, when persecuted and falsely accused, they are encouraged to rejoice because "your reward is great in heaven" (5:11–12 NRSV). The Matthean Jesus sends out disciples like sheep into the midst of wolves (10:16). Admittedly, he also warns against false prophets, describing them as wolves dressed as sheep, infiltrating the community (7:15), but his wariness need not characterize a community as isolationist. MacDonald describes both the tension between avoiding and evangelizing outsiders and the tension between the desire to remain distinct from the world and the goal of mission as being characteristic of a conversionist response to the world.⁶⁷

Exploring Matthew's use of *κόσμος* (world) does not suggest a rhetoric of withdrawal from the world, despite the negative assessment of the

66. Saldarini, "Gospel of Matthew and Jewish-Christian Conflict," 59–60.

67. MacDonald, *Pauline Churches*, 41–42; MacDonald, *Colossians and Ephesians*, 174–75.

world in, "Woe to the world because of stumbling-blocks!" (18:7 NRSV) and contrasting "gaining the whole world" with "losing the soul" (16:26). The devil tempts Jesus by showing him all the kingdoms of the world (4:8), and the field into which both good and bad seed is planted represents the world (13:38). The Matthean Jesus situates his audience in a time frame that extends backward to "since the foundation of the world" (13:35, 24:21, 25:34 NRSV), but not before then (cf. John 17:24, Eph 1:4, 1 Pet 1:20). Most significantly, Jesus commands his followers to shine as a light in the world (5:14) and to proclaim the gospel in the whole world in memory of the woman who anoints him (26:13). These two exhortations, which bracket most of the references to "the world," actively promote being in and going into the world.

Overall, Matthew's Gospel is more conversionist than introversionist because it does not advocate "the establishment of a separate community preoccupied with its own holiness and its means of insulation from the wider society."⁶⁸ The disciples are encouraged to go into the world to engage in the conversionist activity of making disciples in the knowledge that Jesus promised "I am with you to the end of the age." I suggest that Matthew's Gospel advocates more a gnostic-manipulationist than isolationist response to the world.

5.1.5. Gnostic-Manipulationist Rhetoric and Matthew's Gospel

One of Craffert's criticisms of the use of Wilson's sect categories in New Testament studies is that they are too vague.⁶⁹ A consequence of this is evident in the different descriptions of gnostic-manipulationist rhetoric in the work of two sociorhetorical interpreters: Robbins and Bloomquist. Despite this lack of consistency—and the clumsy and confusing title—the gnostic-manipulationist category is of some help in characterizing the social rhetoric of Matthew's Gospel.

When employing the category "gnostic-manipulationist," Robbins focuses on the "gnostic" changed perception of the world,⁷⁰ whereas

68. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 73; cf. Overman, who suggests that turning the cheek and giving the coat (Matt 5:39–40) are to avoid court because the Matthean community was withdrawn from and wary of the civic realm (*Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 107–8).

69. Craffert, "Exercise in the Critical Use," 37.

70. Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 151–52.

Bloomquist focuses on the “manipulationist” cause-and-effect understanding of divine-human interaction. Bloomquist describes gnostic-manipulationist groups as dealing with being in the world through “vigorous and disciplined ritual.”⁷¹ In his discussion of miracle discourse, he contrasts gnostic-manipulationist and thaumaturgical ideologies. The first attributes healing to the application of logical and proper use of techniques and words of a priestly or magical nature, whereas in thaumaturgical discourse there is a rift between cause and effect, and the sacred intervenes in some wondrous, uncontrolled, and unanticipated way to bring about the miracle.⁷² Compared to Mark, Matthew de-emphasizes “magical manipulation” as well as thaumaturgy,⁷³ but the cause-and-effect understanding of divine-human interaction is evident in the Matthean focus on “reward” (5:12, 46; 6:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 16, 18; 10:41, 42; cf. Mark 9:41; Luke 6:23, 35). In Matthew this is awarded in the heavenly realm, which raises the question of how this helps people on earth, an essential part of gnostic-manipulationist rhetoric. Here Robbins’s employment of the gnostic-manipulationist category is helpful.

Robbins stresses the attitude of “God calls us to change perception” typical of gnostic-manipulationist rhetoric to argue that Mark’s Gospel is more in this category than the conversionist “God will change us” response.⁷⁴ He identifies an emphasis on listening, seeing, and “understanding what is hidden, secret and mysterious,” especially in reference to the parables (Mark 4:11–12).⁷⁵ Matthew’s Gospel also has the logion about secrets of the kingdom being given to disciples (13:10–17; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10) and three additional uses of *secret* not found in the other Synoptic Gospels (6:4, 6, 18). Disciples are to give alms, pray, and fast in secret in the assurance that these actions are seen and will be rewarded by the Father in heaven, albeit not seen and rewarded by people on earth (5:12, 46; 6:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 18; 10:42). Although this is not “gnosis” in the

71. Bloomquist, “Rhetoric, Culture and Ideology,” 120.

72. L. Gregory Bloomquist, “The Role of Argumentation in the Miracle Stories of Luke-Acts:

Toward a Fuller Identification of Miracle Discourse for Use in Sociorhetorical Interpretation,” in *Miracle Discourse in the New Testament*, ed. Duane F. Watson (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 85–124.

73. H. Daniel Zacharias, *Matthew’s Presentation of the Son of God* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 92.

74. Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 151–52.

75. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 74–75; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 151.

sense of secret knowledge and superior understanding, this information about the Father's oversight is specialized knowledge that supports members of the Matthean community to live in the world as it is—typical of gnostic-manipulationists.⁷⁶ The depiction of the separation between sheep and goats when the Son of Man comes in glory provides further examples of what hidden actions will be divinely revealed and rewarded (25:31–46).

Matthew's Gospel could be described as predominantly gnostic-manipulationist rhetoric, but doing so complicates rather than clarifies what social response to the world is promoted by Matthew's Gospel. This hyphenated term is misleading: "gnostic" suggests the need for esoteric knowledge of a spiritual truth associated with second-century groups; "manipulationist" has the unfortunate verbal association of "being manipulative." Furthermore, interpreters have described the gnostic-manipulationist category in quite different ways, and this breadth of interpretation presents difficulties for identifying an alternative term. Identifying sect types, such as gnostic-manipulationist, creates a circuitous route to arrive at the conclusion that the rhetoric of Matthew's Gospel is formulated to persuade potential disciples to obey the will of the Father in heaven because he sees and eventually rewards those who do.

The complicated process of exploring the social rhetoric of New Testament writings by using Wilson's typology might explain why there has been little new engagement in recent years, apart from Terence Callan's categorization of Second Peter as revolutionist, introversionist, and gnostic-manipulationist.⁷⁷ Most recent publications in sociorhetorical interpretation of the New Testament do not use Wilson's typology of sects as part of their exploration of the textures of Philemon, 2 Corinthians, and Acts 16.⁷⁸ This raises the question of the usefulness of identifying what Robbins calls social rhetoric by using Wilson's sect typology.

5.1.6. Sectarian Rhetoric and the Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast

Wilson's sect typology provides the opportunity to identify sectarian rhetoric in Matthew's Gospel without needing to assume that this gospel

76. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 73.

77. Terence Callan, *Acknowledging the Divine Benefactor: The Second Letter of Peter* (Cambridge: Clarke, 2015), 18.

78. Jeal, *Exploring Philemon*; B. J. Oropeza, *Exploring Second Corinthians: Death and Life, Hardship and Rivalry*, RRA 3 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016); Gruca-Macaulay, *Lydia*.

portrays an isolationist response to the world.⁷⁹ The social rhetoric identifiable in Matthew's Gospel does not conform to any one category; it is an interplay of gnostic-manipulationist, conversionist, reformist, and revolutionist argumentation. The focus of Matthew's Gospel is on how to live a righteous life in the world until the end of the age, both encouraging reform of formative Judaism and the conversion of all nations. This it does in the assurance that "I am with you to the end of the age" (Matt 28:16–20) and that the Father in heaven sees and rewards those who obey his will.

In the context of this mixture of social rhetoric, the person without wedding clothes in the parable of the royal wedding feast may represent someone who does not do the will of the Father. Some things only the Father in heaven sees will be fully revealed and recompensed at the end of the age, when the Son of Man comes in glory. To explore what might be so contrary to the will of the Father that this inappropriately dressed person needs to be restrained and removed, further investigation of the sectarian rhetoric of Matthew's Gospel is needed.

5.2. Sectarian Rhetoric and Matthew 22:11–13

In *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, Kampen considers the sectarian rhetoric of Matthew's Gospel under three headings: difference, antagonism, and separation.⁸⁰ He argues that the sectarian identity of the Mattheans is evident from the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount with each of these three elements of sectarianism expressed in the Beatitudes.⁸¹ Then the antitheses highlight difference with the focus on countering certain practices and attitudes that can be identified within the sectarian compositions of the scrolls from Qumran and hints of a more open attitude to interactions with the wider community. The Community Discourse (Matt 18) also highlights the element of difference, modifying earlier sectarian separation rhetoric to form, maintain, and retain Matthean group membership.⁸² The escalation of conflict once Jesus enters Jerusalem (Matt 21:1–11) develops into sustained antagonism as Jesus engages in debates about authority and

79. Cf. Regev, "Were the First Christians Sectarians?" 771.

80. Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*.

81. Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, 110.

82. Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, 155.

is most evident in the rhetoric of Matt 23.⁸³ The sectarian elements of difference, separation, and antagonism are expressed through specific topoi. For example, legal material from Qumran is likely to be bracketed with rhetoric associated with righteousness and perfection.⁸⁴

Topoi identified by Wilson as common to all sects include (1) the identity of being the chosen few, (2) the demand for total allegiance, (3) the distrust of dominant authorities, (4) the need for perfection, (5) the requirement to be more righteous than others, and (6) procedures for the expulsion of unworthy adherents.⁸⁵ In this section, I consider Matthew's configuration of each of the first five of these sectarian topoi and the implications for interpreting Matt 22:11–13. The following section (5.3) is dedicated to exploring the sectarian characteristic of providing a rationale and procedure for expelling individuals, with a strong focus on the Community Discourse in Matt 18.

5.2.1. Protecting the Elect Few

Sects are relatively small in size and in the struggle to maintain social cohesion, especially under conditions of hostile external pressures and internal conflict,⁸⁶ a sect tends to identify as “an elect, gathered remnant of the parent body.” The terms *remnant* (e.g., Rom 11:5) and *elect* (e.g., 1 Pet 2:4–10) are found in New Testament writings, and extra-biblical sectarian groups described themselves as the righteous *few* (e.g., 4 Ezra 7.47, 51, 60; 8.13) who are specifically chosen or *elect* (e.g., 1 En. 1.1–2).⁸⁷ The language of being a chosen few is found at the end of the parable of the royal wedding feast in the logion “Many are called, but few are chosen” (22:14 ESV). Both the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7) and the Eschatological Discourse (Matt 24–25) also contrast the many (πολλοί) and the few (ὀλίγοι).

The Sermon on the Mount sayings about the many and the few bracket the warning about false prophets that come in sheep's clothing (Matt 7:15).

83. Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, 157–65.

84. Kampen, *Matthew within Jewish Sectarianism*, 92.

85. Wilson, “Analysis of Sect Development,” 4; Wilson, *Religious Sects*, 28–35; Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, 91–93; Elliott, “Jewish Messianic Movement,” 80–84.

86. Elliott, “Jewish Messianic Movement,” 83, sectarian features 14 and 17.

87. Elliott, “Jewish Messianic Movement,” 82; Wilson, “Analysis of Sect Development,” 4, sectarian characteristic 3; Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 9–12, 30.

In Matt 7:13–14, many take the road that is easy and leads to destruction, whereas few find the narrow gate and take the road that is difficult and leads to life.⁸⁸ In Matt 7:21–23 not all of the many who call on the name of the Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven. These *logia* refer to entry, whereas in Matt 22:11–13 the person has already gained entry, but the implication is that this occurred under false pretenses. This evokes the advice to be wary of “false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves” (7:15 NRSV), which is situated between sayings related to the many and the few (7:13–14, 21–23). These “wolves” are to be identified by whether they produce good or bad fruit (7:15–20), and this language of good and bad provides a verbal link with Matt 22:10. The verbal threads of both many and few and good and bad invite association between the person cast out for wearing the wrong clothes and a false prophet wearing sheep’s clothing.

In the Eschatological Discourse, the audience is also warned against false prophets because *many* false prophets will lead people astray (24:11), causing *many* to fall away and betray and hate one another (24:10). Here the many are not construed positively (cf. 8:11–12) or even neutrally (cf. 19:30). The many include false messiahs (24:5) as well as false prophets who lead even the elect astray (24:24). Most Matthean references to the chosen, ἐκλεκτοί, occur in the Eschatological Discourse (24:22, 24, 31) and parallel those found in Mark (13:20, 22, 27).⁸⁹ The closing logion of the parable of the royal wedding feast (22:14) evokes this sectarian rhetoric of being a “chosen few” who need to protect themselves from many false prophets and false messiahs (24:10). Seen in this context, the person without wedding clothes could represent a false prophet who has infiltrated the chosen and, if left unchecked, would lead many to stray, betray, and hate one another.

5.2.2. No One Can Serve Two Masters

Sects are exclusive voluntary organizations that demand total allegiance of sect members.⁹⁰ The need for total allegiance in Matthew’s Gospel is

88. Stendahl, “Called and the Chosen,” 71. The similar saying in Luke 13:24 is in the second person in the form of an exhortation and lacks the words *few* and *many*.

89. Stendahl, “Called and the Chosen,” 72.

90. Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, 91–93, sectarian characteristics 1 and 7. Elliott, “Jewish Messianic Movement,” 82, sectarian feature 11.

evident in the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl, both of which involve someone selling all that they have (13:44–46).⁹¹ For a number of first-century voluntary associations, group cohesion and allegiance was expressed in the language of fictive kin.⁹² There is only one fictive kin passage in the Gospel of Mark (3:31–35; cf. Matt 12:46–50, Luke 8:19–21),⁹³ whereas the Gospel of Matthew has seven (5:21–26, 7:1–15, 12:46–50, 18:15–22, 23:8–10, 25:40, 28:10). In the Synoptic Gospels Jesus describes as his brother, sister, and mother those who hear and do the word of God (Mark 3:35, Luke 8:21). Matthew extends the familial metaphor by describing obedience to God as obedience to *his Father* in heaven (Matt 12:50). In Matthew's Gospel, obedience to the will of the Father is paramount. Using the name of the Lord to prophesy, cast out demons, and do deeds of power is not enough to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matt 7:21–23), whereas in Mark and Luke such a person if “not against us is for us” (Mark 9:38–41 NRSV; Luke 9:49–50).⁹⁴

In Matthew's Gospel, the disciples James and John are denoted “brothers” when they behave as disciples, but when they behave in ways that are inappropriate for “true” brothers of Jesus, their filial relationship with Zebedee is stressed.⁹⁵ James and John, like Simon Peter and Andrew, behave as brothers of Jesus when they leave their fishing nets to follow Jesus (4:18–22), are named as disciples (10:2), and are present at the transfiguration (17:1). By contrast, they are “sons of Zebedee” when their mother requests seats of honor for them (20:20–21), when they fall asleep in the Garden of Gethsemane (26:37), and when they are absent from the crucifixion (27:56).⁹⁶ From this observation, Sheffield concludes: “Just as

91. The Gospel of Thomas parables of the hidden treasure (109) and pearl (76) have a different focus.

92. Duling, *Marginal Scribe*, 186–87; Elliott, “Jewish Messianic Movement,” 82, sectarian feature 8; Bruce J. Malina, “Early Christian Groups: Using Small Group Formation Theory to Explain Christian Organizations,” in Esler, *Modelling Early Christianity*, 108–10.

93. In addition, there is the passage about abandoning for the kingdom and then receiving kinship relationships in Mark 10:29–30 and Luke 18:28–30.

94. Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 110.

95. Julian Sheffield, “The Father in the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Feminist Companion to Matthew*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 52–69.

96. Sheffield, “Father in the Gospel,” 61–63.

one cannot serve two masters, one cannot be the son of two fathers. The heavenly father must displace the earthly in the disciple's allegiance."⁹⁷

The Matthean Jesus advises, "Call no one your father on earth, for you have one Father—the one in heaven" (23:9 NRSV). The author of Matthew's Gospel (unlike Mark and Luke) chooses not to use the descriptor *father* for the paternal care exercised by human fathers (Matt 7:9; cf. Luke 11:11). This applies even for a father seeking healing for a daughter (9:18–26; cf. Mark 5:21–43, Luke 8:40–56) or a son (17:14–20; cf. Mark 9:14–27, Luke 9:37–43).⁹⁸ Sheffield suggests this ensures that the focus is on care of the children.⁹⁹

To become part of the family of Jesus, disciples need to leave their home, family, and field (Matt 10:37, Mark 10:29–30, Luke 14:26). The Lukan Jesus requires that disciples hate (μισέω) their family members (Luke 14:26), where "hate" is to be understood as the opposite of love in terms of group attachment and functions as an indication of formal rejection and denial of loyalty (Luke 1:71, 16:13, 19:14).¹⁰⁰ The Matthean Jesus expresses the need for allegiance using the language of worthiness: "Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me" (Matt 10:37 NRSV). In the parable of the royal wedding feast, those who choose not to come are also deemed unworthy (22:8); they value their allegiance to familial ties more highly than to the king.

Joseph Nalpathilchira argues that when one invitee to the king's wedding feast goes to his field and another to his business (22:5), the "claims of Mammon take precedence over the claims of God."¹⁰¹ He contends that this is also true of the person expelled from the wedding feast. The king calls him Ἐταῖρε (friend), thereby inviting an association with the only others called "friend" in Matthew's Gospel: Judas, who accepts thirty pieces of silver (26:50), and one of the vineyard workers who murmurs against the owner's goodness and generosity (20:13).¹⁰²

97. Sheffield, "Father in the Gospel," 63.

98. Sheffield, "Father in the Gospel," 63–64.

99. Sheffield, "Father in the Gospel," 64.

100. Jerome H. Neyrey, "Loss of Wealth, Loss of Family, Loss of Honor: The Cultural Context of The Original Makarisms in Q" in Esler, *Modelling Early Christianity*, 139–58.

101. Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready*, 183.

102. Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready*, 210–12.

In the parable of the workers in the vineyard, when the owner speaks to one of the workers who has worked all day and is complaining that all the other workers have received the same payment, he stresses that this worker is questioning his *will* by using the verb θέλω twice (20:14, 15).¹⁰³ In the Matthean context, obeying the *will* of the Father is crucial (7:21–23, 21:29), and his will is ἔλεος, “mercy” or “compassion” (9:13, 12:7). In response the worker is asked if he is jealous: ἡ ὁ ὀφθαλμός σου πονηρός ἐστίν ὅτι ἐγὼ ἀγαθός εἰμι (20:15), literally translated as “is your eye evil because I am good?” In the Sermon on the Mount, the teaching about the evil eye (6:22–23) follows teaching about not accumulating treasures on earth (6:19–21) and precedes the statement that “no one can serve two masters” (6:24 NRSV).¹⁰⁴

Choosing to come to the wedding feast demonstrates allegiance to the king rather than to finances, family, or fields. This allegiance also requires recognizing and accepting the will of the host to be generous to others. In this framework of unquestioning allegiance to a generous God, not wearing wedding clothes suggests an unwillingness to participate in the festivities because amongst those present are “the bad,” who are perceived as not deserving their place (22:10; cf. 20:12). Unless removed, such a person might cast an evil eye in the direction of those he considers unworthy, thereby demonstrating a lack of allegiance to the will of the Father, who desires mercy and compassion.

5.2.3. Call No One on Earth Your Father

Sects are usually lay movements that seek to ensure that all have equal access to the truth.¹⁰⁵ They are opposed to the authority structure of the existing religious system and in response some construct their own hierarchies, whereas others deny the existence of any formal organization or intermediaries.¹⁰⁶ Elliott suggests that, in comparison to mainstream Judaism, the Jesus messianic sect was less formal, using generalized reci-

103. Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready*, 210.

104. Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready*, 210.

105. Wilson, *Religious Sects*, 28–35, under the heading “legitimation”; Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, 91–93, where sectarian characteristic 3 is to “tend to be lay organisations,” and sectarian characteristic 4 is “to reject religious division of labour.”

106. Wilson, *Religious Sects*, 34.

procity typical of family relations.¹⁰⁷ Matthew certainly makes extensive use of ἀδελφός (brother) to describe members of the community (5:22, 23, 24, 47; 7:3, 4, 5; 18:15, 21; cf. Mark 3:34; Luke 6:42; 8:21).¹⁰⁸ Elliott notes, however, that even brothers can be unequal in position and privilege due to age, birth mother, and strength, as well as having advantages over sisters.¹⁰⁹

In Matt 23:8–10, Jesus speaks very strongly against using titles that reflect some sort of hierarchy or intermediary, such as ραββί (rabbi), πατήρ (father), and καθηγητής (teacher or instructor). In this triad, the first and last instructions address would-be rabbis and instructors to remind them that they are part of a community of fellow students of the one great teacher, Jesus the Messiah. The middle instruction in the triad addresses all community members, encouraging them not to call anyone on earth father (23:9). Even Jesus does not refer to himself as father, describing whoever does the will of “my Father” as “my brother and sister and mother” (Matt 12:50 NRSV; Mark 3:35).

When Elliott states, “New Testament evidence indicates that Jesus’ followers did not understand Jesus as ever prohibiting respect towards teachers or spiritual fathers,”¹¹⁰ none of his examples of this “social reality” are from the gospels. Matthew 23:9 clearly speaks against using the title of father, and in Matthew’s Gospel, even Jesus only identifies as “brother.” By contrast, Paul identifies as father to both Timothy (1 Cor 4:17) and to some communities (1 Cor 4:14–15, Gal 4:19).¹¹¹ His rhetoric suggests that of being the paterfamilias of the Christian household group

107. John H. Elliott, “Temple Versus Household in Luke–Acts: A Contrast in Social Institutions,” in *The Social World of Luke–Acts: Models of Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 211–40, especially 231–35. Elliott describes sectarian feature 9 as one that “promotes equity or is egalitarian in its orientation” (“The Jewish Messianic Movement,” 84). However, he later critiques the use of the term “egalitarian” in New Testament studies. See John H. Elliott, “Jesus Was Not an Egalitarian: A Critique of an Anachronistic and Idealistic Theory,” *BTB* 32.2 (2002): 75–91; and Elliot, “The Jesus Movement Was Not Egalitarian, but Family Orientated,” *BibInt* 11.2 (2003): 173–210.

108. Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 95.

109. Elliott, “Jesus Was Not an Egalitarian,” 82.

110. Elliott lists Rom 16:1; 1 Cor 4:1–2, 14–16; 16:15–16; Gal 4:13–14; 1 Thess 5:12–13; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 2:7–8; Heb 13:7, 17; 1 Pet 5:5a, 13 (“Jesus Was Not an Egalitarian,” 83).

111. Elliott, “Jesus Was Not an Egalitarian,” 83.

in Corinth.¹¹² Perhaps Matt 23:8–10 is not only a criticism of the rabbis of formative Judaism but also of early Christian leaders such as Paul, who describe themselves as fathers and teachers.¹¹³

The advice about avoiding honorific titles immediately follows criticism of Pharisees for choosing seats of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogue (23:6), and it is followed by the warning that all who exalt themselves will be humbled (23:12). This evokes earlier advice given to the disciples, including the instruction not to be tyrants or to lord it over one another (20:25–27).

In the context of this teaching about relative status, perhaps the person expelled for not wearing wedding clothes (Matt 22:13) represents someone who is not prepared to recognize others present as sisters and brothers of the same heavenly Father but instead claims status, title, honor, and privilege over other community members.

5.2.4 Be Perfect, as Your Heavenly Father Is Perfect

Sects are concerned with personal perfection.¹¹⁴ The language of perfection features in the legal and communal discipline texts of the Qumran corpus as a description of holiness and separation in accordance with divine will.¹¹⁵ The call to “be perfect” is particularly prominent in the Damascus Document and its associated manuscripts, 4Q274 (Tohorot A) and the Temple Scroll (11Q19, 11Q20), where it applies to a much broader range of behaviors than the cultic applications in the Bible.¹¹⁶ Concerns with perfection are also found in other Qumran texts, such as 4Q525 (Beatitudes) and 4Q510–11 (Songs of the Sage).¹¹⁷ There is a house of perfection (1QS VIII, 9), people of perfection (1QS VIII, 20; CD XX, 2, 5, 7), and perfection of the way (1QS V, 24; cf. I, 9, 13; II, 2; VIII, 1, 10, 26; IX, 2, 5, 6, 8, 9; X, 21; XI, 2; 1QM XIV, 7; 1QH I, 36).¹¹⁸

112. Stephan J. Joubert, “Managing the Household: Paul as *Paterfamilias* of the Christian Household Group in Corinth,” in Esler, *Modelling Early Christianity*, 213–23.

113. T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (repr., London: SCM, 1971), 226.

114. Wilson, “Analysis of Sect Development,” 4; Elliott, “The Jewish Messianic Movement,” 83, sectarian feature 15; Kampen, *Matthew within Jewish Sectarianism*, 207.

115. Kampen, *Matthew within Jewish Sectarianism*, 110.

116. Kampen, *Matthew within Jewish Sectarianism*, 92.

117. Kampen, *Matthew within Jewish Sectarianism*, 110.

118. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:561–62.

Different degrees of perfection are expected between initiates and novices (1QS V, 24).¹¹⁹

The Matthean Jesus challenges a young man who already fulfils all the requirements of the law to total allegiance with the words: "If you wish to be perfect, go, sell your possessions, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me" (19:21 NRSV).¹²⁰ Even more challenging than these pre-entry requirements is the exhortation "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (5:48 NRSV).¹²¹

Perfection can mean "without blemish" in the sense that an offering needs to be perfect (Exod 12:5); however, τέλειος can also be translated as "complete," "undivided," "whole," "fully grown," or "mature."¹²² In the immediate context of the exhortation to be perfect,¹²³ the example of the Father is that he has such complete, absolute, and impartial love that he makes the sun rise on the evil and on the good (ἐπὶ πονηροῦς καὶ ἀγαθοῦς), and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous (Matt 5:44). This impartiality is also evident in the inclusion of both the evil and good (πονηροῦς τε καὶ ἀγαθοῦς) in the king's wedding feast (Matt 22:10). To emulate this complete and perfect love of the Father, the call is to love enemies as well as neighbors and to greet all, not only brothers and sisters (Matt 5:46–47). "To love utterly ... in this lies perfection."¹²⁴

Matthew employs the sectarian topos of perfection to advocate against a defensive and introversionist approach to the wider world and to promote an outward-looking one. The challenge is to emulate the complete love of the Father for both the righteous and the unrighteous. Reading Matt 22:10–13 within this framework suggests the person without the wedding clothes represents someone who does not extend the impartial love of God to both the bad and the good assembled together at the wedding feast.

119. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:562.

120. The parallels have "you lack one thing" rather than "if you wish to be perfect" (Mark 10:21, Luke 18:12).

121. Usually τέλειος is translated as "perfect" in this verse, e.g., NRSV, NIV, ESV, KJV, GNT.

122. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:561.

123. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:562.

124. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:563.

5.2.5 Be More Righteous Than the Pharisees

Sects consider their beliefs and practices to be truer to tradition than those of their contemporaries, especially those with power or influence.¹²⁵ The Matthean Jesus warns his audience, “unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (5:20 NRSV). The importance of being righteous features strongly in the self-understanding of the Qumran sect, especially in the legal literature including the Temple Scroll (11Q19, 11Q20), Jubilees, the Zadokite Documents (CD), and the Community Rule (1QS).¹²⁶ Davies and Allison suggest that because the words of Jesus in Matt 5:21–48 are more demanding than the words of Moses, “those who obey the Messiah [Jesus] will inevitably find that their ‘righteousness’ exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees.”¹²⁷

When the Matthean Jesus comes into conflict with the Pharisees, the author of Matthew's Gospel portrays him as the better interpreter of the law.¹²⁸ When faced with criticism about inadequate observance of the Sabbath, the Matthean Jesus argues for a better understanding of Hos 6:6: “I desire mercy and not sacrifice” (Matt 12:1–8 NRSV; cf. Mark 2:23–28, Luke 6:1–5), and he illustrates that “it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath” by healing a man with a withered hand (Matt 12:12 NRSV). When the Pharisees accuse Jesus's disciples of eating with unwashed hands, Jesus responds by arguing that the Pharisees have emphasized their traditions at the cost of keeping the commands of God in their heart (Matt 15:3, Mark 7:8). In addition to these two conflicts, Matthew also contextualizes the question of what is the most important part of the law within a conflict story (Matt 22:34–40; cf. Mark 12:28–34, Luke 10:25–28).¹²⁹ After Jesus combines the commands to love God (Deut 6:5) and to love your neighbor (Lev 19:18), he concludes that “on these two commandments hang all the

125. Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 8. Wilson discusses this under the “elite” heading (*Religious Sects*, 28–35); Wilson has sectarian characteristic 2 as the “claim to have a monopoly of the complete religious truth” (*Religion in Sociological Perspective*, 91–93). Elliott has sectarian feature 21 as “critical of outsider beliefs and behavior, the sect nevertheless shares many of the values of the parent body” (“Jewish Messianic Movement,” 84).

126. Kampen, *Matthew in Jewish Sectarianism*, 91

127. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:498.

128. Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 79–80.

129. Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 80–85.

law and the prophets" (22:39 NRSV). Overman argues that this passage articulates the hermeneutical principle that informs the Matthean community's understanding of the law, with compassion the "core value" that guides any application of the law.¹³⁰ The scribes and Pharisees are charged with neglecting the weightier matters of the law, such as justice and mercy and faith (23:23). To be more righteous than the Pharisees is to be more obedient to the law of love, expressed as justice, mercy, and faith.

In the Matthean perspective, it is particularly important not only to hear and know the law but also to do it. This is stressed in the verse leading into the challenge to be more righteous than the Pharisees (5:19–20) and in the parable of the two builders, which concludes the Sermon on the Mount (7:24–27).¹³¹ The Matthean Jesus recognizes the authority of the Pharisees as interpreters of the law because they occupy the "Seat of Moses," but he questions their practice, which burdens others (23:4; cf. 11:30), and their preoccupation with appearing righteous (23:5).¹³² The scribes and Pharisees are criticized for wearing long fringes, the *tzitzit* worn on the corners of the clothing of righteous Jews (23:5).¹³³ This critique of public displays of piety occurs within the context of the charge of burdening others (23:4) with such strict adherence to the detail of the law that some are locked out of the kingdom of heaven (23:13). Seven times Jesus accuses the scribes and Pharisees of being "hypocrites" (23:13, 15, 23, 23, 25, 27, 29), a word which encapsulates a discrepancy between appearances and actions.¹³⁴

The Matthean Jesus calls the Pharisees "hypocrites" on two other occasions (15:7, 22:18). Hypocrites are also construed negatively in his

130. Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 81, 84–85.

131. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:498–99.

132. Kampen notes that there may not literally have been a seat of Moses in first century meeting halls but nonetheless scribes and Pharisees had assumed a role as authoritative interpreters of Torah (*Matthew in Jewish Sectarianism*, 161); Kampen, *Matthew in Jewish Sectarianism*, 161; Noel S. Rabinowitz, "Matthew 23:2–4: Does Jesus Recognise the Authority of the Pharisees and Does He Endorse Their Halakhah?," *JETS* 46 (2003): 423–47.

133. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 63. See also Magness, who notes that *χράσπεδον* means "hem" or "edge" but can refer to the *tzitzit* fringe (*Stone and Dung*, 117–18; see Num 15:37 LXX).

134. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:581; Christopher Tuckett, "Matthew and Hypocrisy," in *Jesus, Matthew's Gospel and Early Christianity: Studies in Memory of Graham N. Stanton*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner, Joel Willits, and Richard A. Burridge (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 155.

teaching (6:2, 5, 16) and in his parables (7:5, 24:51). In the parable of the unfaithful slave, the slave who “begins to beat his fellow slaves and eats and drinks with drunkards” (24:49 NRSV) is put with “hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (24:51 NRSV). This is the only time that this punishment is associated with being a hypocrite—when someone charged with responsibility for others not only fails to fulfill that responsibility but also causes harm to those placed in their care. By association, the individual cast out from the wedding feast into the outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth, might represent someone who abuses the responsibility with which they have been entrusted to care for fellow slaves (22:13; cf. 24:51). Similarly, in the parable of the two debtors in Matt 18, the slave who seizes a fellow slave by the throat to demand repayment of a comparatively minor debt also faces dire consequences.

5.3. Expulsion from the Ecclesia in Matthew 18

One of the characteristics Wilson names as common to all sects is that they have a process for expelling adherents deemed unworthy.¹³⁵ For example, the Qumran community has documented reasons for expelling members who fall short in some way.¹³⁶ Matthew's Gospel provides one of the few New Testament guidelines regarding expulsion of an individual (Matt 18:15–17; cf. 1 Tim 5:19, Titus 3:10).¹³⁷ This three-step process is considered within the wider context of Matt 18, in order to suggest what might plausibly lead to the expulsion of an individual from the wedding feast in Matt 22:11–13.

135. Wilson, “Analysis of Sect Development,” 4, sectarian characteristic 2; Wilson, *Religious Sects*, 28–35, under “expulsion”; Wilson, *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, 91–93, sectarian characteristic 6. Elliott states that, sectarian feature 16 “expels from its midst those who contravene doctrinal, moral or organizational precepts” (“Jewish Messianic Movement,” 83).

136. Eyal Regev, *Sectarianism in Qumran: A Cross-Cultural Perspective* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2007), 40, 120–21.

137. Forkman, *Limits of the Religious Community*, 186; cf. Regev, who considers Matt 18:15–17 the sole example of expulsion in the New Testament (“Were the Early Christians Sectarious?,” 778).

5.3.1. Matthew 18:15–17

Matthew 18:15–17 is a carefully constructed protocol involving three main steps, which have some parallel with the Damascus Document (CD) and are “remarkably similar” to 1QS V, 24–VI, 1 in the Community Rule of the Qumran community.¹³⁸ The first step is to reprove the person who has sinned in a one-to-one setting in the hope that the one who has strayed can be restored (Matt 18:15). There is a significant textual variant regarding whether the sin is “against you” (εἰς σέ).¹³⁹ Given the “brother” language and the immediate context of not despising little ones (18:6–10), there is an argument for the omission of “against you” because the “sin” might have been against “little ones.”

Traditions of “brotherly reproof” (Lev 19:17, Deut 19:15) are woven together both in Matt 18:15 and in Qumran texts (1QS V, 24–VI, 1; IX, 16–17; CD IX, 2–4).¹⁴⁰ Leviticus 19:17 consists of two parts, each with its own interpretive history.¹⁴¹ From the first part, “You shall not hate your brother in your heart” (ESV), the purpose of reproach was understood as externalizing hurt so as not to hold hatred in the heart and hence sin (e.g., Prov 26:24–26; Sir 19:13–17, 20:2; T. Gad 6:3–4). From the second part, “you shall reprove your neighbor, or you will incur guilt yourself” (NRSV), reproach was considered a judicial requirement (CD IX, 2–8; T. Gad 4.3; Sifra; Philo, *De specialibus legibus* 4.183), with avoidance of compassionate confrontation considered a “sin” (Sir 21:6, 32:17). Rabbinic literature includes discussion of whether the failure to reprove contributed to the destruction of Jerusalem (b. Shabb. 119b).¹⁴² The advantage of discussing a “sin” one-to-one is that it might emerge that no reproof is required because either no actual sin was committed or it was not done intentionally (Sir 19:13–16).¹⁴³

138. Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, 142.

139. Metzger rates this variant as “C” and recommends using square brackets for “against you,” which is found in D K L X Cyrian but not in the Codices Sinaiticus and Vaticanus (*Textual Commentary*, 36); Talbert, *Matthew*, 219.

140. Forkman, *Limits of Religious Community*, 127–28; Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:805; Talbert, *Matthew*, 222.

141. James L. Kugel, “On Hidden Hatred and Open Reproach: Early Exegesis of Leviticus 19:17,” *HTR* 80 (1987): 61.

142. Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, 141.

143. Duling, *Marginal Scribe*, 228–29.

The second step, if the person continues to be unrepentant, is to go before two or three witnesses as recommended in the Torah (Matt 18:16, Deut 19:15–21), a tradition also followed in the New Testament letters (2 Cor 13:1, 1 Tim 5:19).¹⁴⁴ The need of witnesses also found in Qumran documents (CD IX, 3–9; 1QS VI, 1).¹⁴⁵ The third step, if needed, is to go before the whole assembly, and it is from here that an individual could be expelled (Matt 18:17). Similarly, in Qumranic documents there is a need to go before a larger group, described as either elders (CD IX, 4) or the many (1QS VI, 1).¹⁴⁶ At Qumran, the purpose of the council, consisting of twelve men and three priests, was to apply the law in order to “implement truth, justice, judgment, compassionate love and unassuming behaviour of one for another” (1QS VIII, 2).¹⁴⁷ Those who sinned in these ways, including looking down on or taking advantage of another member of the community, needed to atone for their sin by doing justice and undergoing trials (1QS VII, 3).¹⁴⁸ Depending on the severity of the sin and the level of defiance involved in the transgressing, there was provision for both permanent expulsion and temporary exclusion. This ranged from ten days for interrupting or falling asleep in session (1QS VII, 7–11) to more than two years for more serious offenses that required reintegration processes (1QS VII, 18–21).¹⁴⁹

If someone had been a member of the community council for more than ten years and committed a serious offense against “the many,” they would be expelled with no opportunity for reintegration (1QS VII, 22–24).¹⁵⁰ Shemesh identifies two reasons for expulsion from Qumran that are common to both the Community Rule and Damascus Document. One is for slandering “the many”; the other rule states that any who complain against the foundation of the community (in the Community Rule) or against the fathers (in the Damascus Document) “shall be expelled and

144. Talbert, *Matthew*, 220.

145. Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, 142.

146. Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, 143.

147. Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 89.

148. García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 89.

149. Aharon Shemesh, “Expulsion and Exclusion in the Community Rule and Damascus Document,” *DSD* 9 (2002): 44–74. For examples, see Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 87.

150. García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 89.

never return.”¹⁵¹ Whether expulsions authorized by following the guidelines of Matt 18:15–17 are considered permanent or not depends on the interpretation of what it means to be treated like “a Gentile and a tax collector” (18:17 NRSV).

5.3.2. To Be as a Gentile and a Tax Collector (Matt 18:17)

Once expelled from the ecclesia according to the process outlined in Matt 18:15–17, a person is to be treated as ὁ ἔθνικὸς καὶ ὁ τελώνης, a gentile and tax collector (Matt 18:17).¹⁵² This implies that both these categories of people are outside the community. Carter argues that because both gentiles (28:19) and tax collectors (11:19) are objects of mission, to be treated as a gentile and tax collector does not necessarily mean permanent exclusion.¹⁵³ In rabbinic literature, those who became tax collectors were expelled, but this could change if they stopped collecting taxes (t. Demai 3:4–49).¹⁵⁴ In Greco-Roman literature, the word τελώνης, “tax farmer” or “tax collector,” is often used with a sense of reproach or condemnation.¹⁵⁵ Tax collectors were feared, disliked, and considered to be of poor moral stature (Matt 5:46).¹⁵⁶

The enormous debt owed by the first-mentioned slave in the parable of the two debtors (Matt 18:23–35) is equivalent to many years wages and the sort of amount that only a satrap or ruler of a province could owe, which suggests that this debtor is an official with tax collecting responsibilities.¹⁵⁷ Ten thousand talents is an enormous debt but credible if this *doulos* is a tax farmer because Josephus records a tax farmer

151. Shemesh, “Expulsion and Exclusion,” 45.

152. Forkman distinguishes between tax collectors (officials who only collected direct taxes) and toll collectors, τελώνης (business men who bought the right to collect tolls and other indirect taxes), but notes that the Talmud questions membership of both (*Limits of Religious Community*, 127).

153. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 368.

154. Forkman also cites b. Bek. 31a and y. Demai 2:3, 23a (*Limits of Religious Community*, 90).

155. Liddell and Scott, *A Greek-English Dictionary*, 9th ed. (Oxford; Clarendon, 1966), 1774; BDAG, s.v. “τελώνης.”

156. Otto Michel, “τελώνης,” *TDNT*, 8:88–105.

157. Hultgren, *Parables of Jesus*, 210; Warren Carter, “Resisting and Imitating the Empire: Imperial Paradigms in Two Matthean Parables,” *Int* 56.3 (2002): 265; Luz, *Matthew 8–20*, 472–74.

(identified as Joseph son of Tobias) offering to collect taxes totaling sixteen thousand talents for Syria, Phoenicia, Judea, and Samaria on behalf of the Egyptian king Ptolemy Philadelphus (A.J. 12.4.4).¹⁵⁸ In the parable of the two debtors, despite being forgiven an enormous debt, the slave seizes a fellow slave by the throat to demand payment of a much smaller debt. This does not present tax collectors in a positive light; however, in the wider context of Matthew's Gospel, Jesus eats with "tax collectors and sinners" (9:10, 11 NRSV; 11:19), and he warns that tax collectors and prostitutes will enter the kingdom of heaven ahead of the Jerusalem leaders (21:31–32). The parable of the two debtors suggests, however, that if a tax collector acts in violent and intimidating ways toward another person, he is liable to suffer consequences administered by "my heavenly Father" (18:35 NRSV).

5.3.3. "My Father in Heaven" Cares (Matthew 18:10–35)

The protocol for expelling someone from the community (18:15–17) is followed by Jesus granting his disciples the authority to both bind and loose (18:18–20) and then to exercise this authority by forgiving someone who has sinned seventy times seven times (18:21–22). This emphasizes that expulsion is considered a last resort.¹⁵⁹

The protocol that provides for expulsion if necessary is preceded by the parable of the lost sheep (18:10–14) and followed by the parable of the two debtors (18:23–35). The introduction to the first and the conclusion to the second both refer to "my Father in heaven," forming an *inclusio* that frames Matt 18:10–35. This section opens with, "Take care that you do not despise one of these little ones; for, I tell you, in heaven their angels continually see the face of my Father in heaven" (18:10 NRSV), and closes with, "So my heavenly Father will also do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother or sister from your heart" (18:35 NRSV).¹⁶⁰ The "little ones" of Matt 18:10 are to be considered "brothers and sisters," children of the same heavenly Father, which is emphasized in the incorporated *inclu-*

158. Martinus C. De Boer, "Ten Thousand Talents? Matthew's Interpretation and Redaction of the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matt 18:23–35)," *CBQ* 50.2 (1988): 217; Derrett, *Law*, 36.

159. Forkman, *Limits of the Religious Community*, 129–30.

160. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:803.

sio of the "Father in heaven" and "little ones" which frame a chiasm in Matt 18:10–14.¹⁶¹

The opening to the parable of the lost sheep (18:10–14) stresses the need to seek out "the one" who goes astray without despising and looking down on them (*καταφρονέω*).¹⁶² The "little ones" refers to believers, who are not necessarily children, and could represent missionaries, catechumens, recent converts, or lowly converts.¹⁶³ If any little ones stray, they are to be sought out and brought back, and their angels, who have proximity to the Father in heaven, are watching to see that this happens.¹⁶⁴

At the end of the parable of two debtors, the Father in heaven is likened to the king who punishes the individual who showed no mercy to the much smaller debtor (Matt 18:35). This emphasizes the need for mercy and the severity of consequences for abusing any hold or authority one might have over another. If the king of Matt 22:1–14 parallels the king of 18:23–35, then the person without wedding clothes plausibly represents someone who lacks mercy and has inflicted harm on one of the "little ones."

5.3.4. Protection of "Little Ones"

In Matt 18:6–7 the greatest punishment is not for sinning or stumbling per se, but rather for causing one of *οἱ μικροί* (the little ones) who believe in Jesus to stumble and sin (*σκανδαλίζω*). The root of this word means "snare," and Luz argues that "offend" and "seduce" are too weak as translations because the concern is with what is destructive of life.¹⁶⁵ The warning uses powerful imagery of forced removal and restraint: "It would be better for you if a great millstone were fastened around your neck and you were drowned in the depth of the sea" (18:6 NRSV). The millstone (*μύλος ὀνικῶς*) mentioned is a large, heavy millstone, usually worked by a donkey, horse, or slave rather than a hand mill.¹⁶⁶ Putting people to death by drown-

161. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:768.

162. Talbert, *Matthew*, 219.

163. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:761–63; Luz, *Matthew* 8–20, 432.

164. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:763.

165. Luz, *Matthew* 8–20, 432.

166. Luz, *Matthew* 8–20, 433; Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:763.

ing was considered a particularly barbaric form of execution because the corpse could not be buried, so it was reserved for perpetrators of the most terrible crimes.¹⁶⁷ This image of being drowned with a large millstone fastened around the neck has two features in common with being bound and cast out of the king's wedding feast. First, the movement of the person is restricted, either by having a millstone hung around the neck or by being bound hand and foot. Second, one is cast into the depths of the sea, which is dark, and the other is cast out into the outer darkness. Both are places from which a person is unable to exert any negative influence over other community members, with the consequence that little ones are protected.

5.3.5. Conclusion: Expulsion from Community in Matthew 18

Matthew 18:15–17 includes a protocol for dealing with sin in the community, which begins with private reproach and only moves to expulsion as a last resort. In the wider context of Matt 18, the heavenly Father particularly cares about the fate of his “little ones” (18:6, 10), who are to be sought out if they stray (18:10–14). The worst punishments are inflicted on those who do not show mercy (18:34–35) and cause the “little ones” to stumble (18:6–7). Reading the parable of the royal wedding feast against the background of Matt 18, the person expelled from the wedding feast plausibly represents someone who causes others to stumble (18:6–7) or shows no mercy (18:23–35) and hence for the protection of little ones needs to be restrained and removed.

5.4. Conclusion

To conclude, Matthew's Gospel employs sectarian rhetoric, but this is not introversionist, which would encourage withdrawal from the world and a focus on holiness; rather, it is more conversionist and gnostic-manipulationist. It calls those who listen to the Sermon on the Mount to go out into the world and lead righteous lives, even though they are more likely to be persecuted than praised for doing so, in the knowledge that the Father in heaven sees and rewards those who are righteous regardless.

Matthew's Gospel resists classification into one sect category; however, it employs several topoi that are common to all sect types. Sectarian

167. Luz lists examples (*Matthew* 8–20, 433 n.18).

topoi evident in Matthew's Gospel include election (chosen few), exclusivity (no one can serve two masters), egalitarianism (call no one on earth Father), high expectations (be perfect), elitism (be more righteous than the Pharisees), and the exclusion of members if deemed necessary. Matthew's configuration of these sectarian topoi informs my interpretation of the expulsion of the individual from the king's wedding feast.

In Matthew's Gospel, the sectarian rhetoric of being a "chosen few" warns disciples that they need to watch out for false prophets (7:15), who will lead many astray, causing people to "betray and hate one another" (24:10–12 NRSV). The possible association of the person expelled from the wedding feast with such a false prophet intensifies with the use of the clothing metaphor: "Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves" (7:15 NRSV). They are to be identified by the fruit they bear (7:16–20), and false prophets presumably generate the bad fruit of hatred, which destroys community rather than fostering the growth of love, which builds community (24:11–12). In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the king may be acting like a good shepherd by removing a ravenous wolf who would otherwise disrupt and destroy the flock. Perhaps only the father of the bridegroom can identify who is a wolf because only the Father in heaven knows what is inside a person's heart and sees what individuals do in secret.

The sectarian rhetoric of Matthew's Gospel demands such total obedience to the will of the Father from brothers and sisters of the ecclesia that it is inappropriate to question the Father's will to extend generosity to others. This is evident in the owner's words to the "friend" who complains in the parable of the vineyard workers (20:1–16). By association through the vocative use of *friend*, it seems that to participate in the king's wedding feast requires not only responding to the call to come, see, and enjoy the generous hospitality of the host but also to allow others to do so without casting an evil eye at them, even if they are prostitutes and tax collectors (21:32).

Matthew's Gospel includes sectarian rhetoric critical of established authorities and of establishing authoritative roles. The scribes and Pharisees who have the authority associated with sitting on the seat of Moses are heavily criticized for not practicing what they preach (23:2–4). The Matthean Jesus advises his disciples not to lord it over one another (20:25–26), and his audience is not to call any one on earth "father" (23:9) or to accept honorific titles, such as teacher (23:8, 10). In Matthean parables, individuals who abuse their authority over others are removed from their

position and physically punished (18:33–35, 24:51). Anyone in a position to look down on anyone else is reminded that angels who see the Father in heaven are looking out for the little ones (18:10), and “woe” is pronounced on gatekeepers who prevent people from entering the kingdom of heaven (23:23). Perhaps the individual cast out from the wedding feast represents such a “gatekeeper,” who uses his responsibility as a teacher of the law to enforce such a rigorous dress code for entry into the kingdom of heaven that, unless he is silenced, restrained, and removed, would deter many others from entering.

Matthew's Gospel includes the sectarian rhetoric of being perfect and “better” than other people, but here the perfection topos is not about being unblemished but rather about love as indiscriminately and impartially as the Father in heaven (Matt 5:40–48). The sectarian rhetoric associated with being “better” than others does not focus on personal polishing but the quality of interpersonal engagement. To enter the kingdom of heaven, Matthew's audience needs to be more righteous than the Pharisees (5:20) by not neglecting the weightier matters of the law, such as justice, mercy, and faith (23:23), and by adhering to the Law and Prophets, which are summarized as loving both God and neighbor (22:34–40). Matthew reconfigures the sectarian rhetoric of perfection and of being more righteous than others to emphasize the need for loving, just, and merciful human interactions. It is by love and mercy that love of God, and hence adherence to the law, is evident. To enter the kingdom of heaven it is necessary to *do* the will of the Father in heaven (7:21). In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the one cast out is already at the feast, presumably partaking of the king's hospitality, and the appropriate response to royal generosity and mercy is to extend generosity and mercy to others (cf. 18:23–35). Perhaps this person has not obeyed the will of the Father in this regard.

Sectarian groups have procedures for expelling affiliates deemed to be unworthy, and Matt 18:15–17 includes protocols for such a procedure. This is a three-step process, and if the “sinner” does “not listen,” then the decision to exclude him or her is that of the gathered community; it is not an arbitrary or autocratic decision. In the immediate literary context, every effort is to be made to seek out those who stray (18:10–14), and forgiveness is to be extended to a brother or sister who sins seventy times seven times (18:20–22). Unlike the expulsion of the individual from the wedding feast (22:11–13), there is no mention of restraint or physical violence in the protocols for exclusion (18:15–17). In Matt 18 such punishment is not applied to all who sin, stumble, or incur debt; rather, it is threatened for

those who cause little ones to stumble and sin (18:6–9) or who refuse to extend mercy to others (18:32–35). When reading Matt 22:13 in the context of the heavenly Father's care and concern for "the little ones" (Matt 18:6, 10, 14, 35), this inadequately attired individual may be understood to represent someone who causes little ones to stumble and stray. Consequentially, to protect such little ones from further harm, this person needs to be restrained and removed. To explore what might constitute sin, stumbling, and straying for the first-century audience of Matthew's Gospel, the gospel's cultural rhetoric is identified in the next chapter.

Social Location and Cultural Rhetoric

In this chapter, as in the previous one, I explore the social and cultural texture of the Gospel of Matthew to interpret the parable of the royal wedding feast (22:1–14) within its sociocultural context. In chapter 5, I considered the social rhetoric of Matthew's Gospel and concluded that the author employs sectarian topoi, such as a process for expelling unrepentant sinners from the ecclesia (18:15–17), without promoting an isolationist response to the world. In this chapter, I consider the cultural rhetoric of Matthew's Gospel with respect to three elements of Matthew's social location: formative Judaism, agrarian social structures, and the honor code. "Social location," as defined by Robbins, is a position in a social system that includes the perception of how things work, what is real, where things belong, and how things fit together.¹ This social location, either consciously or unconsciously, shapes the text an author writes.² I suggest Matthew's social location of a Jewish man contributes to mixed rhetoric in his gospel with respect to gentiles (18:17; cf. 28:19), tax collectors (18:17; cf. 21:32), and women (5:28; cf. 12:50).

Cultural rhetoric, which Robbins also calls "final cultural categories," is the extent to which a text either reflects or resists the attitudes and values of the dominant culture.³ He defines *dominant culture* rhetoric as a system of attitudes, values, dispositions, and norms that the speaker either presupposes or asserts are supported by social structures vested with power to impose its goals on people in a significantly broad

1. Vernon K. Robbins, "The Social Location of the Implied Author of Luke–Acts," in *The Social World of Luke–Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 306.

2. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 75–76.

3. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 86.

territorial region.⁴ *Subculture* rhetoric “imitates the attitudes, values, dispositions, and norms of dominant cultural rhetoric, but it claims to enact them better than members of the dominant culture.”⁵ In Matthew's Gospel, this form of rhetoric is evident in the exhortation to be more righteous than the Pharisees (5:20). *Counterculture* rhetoric evokes the creation of “a better society, not by legislative reform or by violent opposition to the dominant culture” but by presenting an alternative vision and hoping that the dominant society will “see the light.”⁶ The Sermon on the Mount could be considered countercultural rhetoric. *Contraculture* rhetoric is that of cultures that are simply reactionary to a dominant culture without presenting an alternative way of life. Such cultures tend to be short-lived, and there is little evidence of contracultural rhetoric in Matthew's Gospel. *Liminal culture* is associated with rites of passage that involve separation from the main culture, experience of liminality, and then aggregation back into the main culture.⁷ Some people or groups are liminal or marginal because they have never been able to establish a clear social and cultural identity in their setting.⁸ Robbins describes Jesus when on trial and on the cross as “a liminal cultural figure—outside of Jewish culture and outside of Greco-Roman culture.”⁹

In the first section of this chapter, I argue that Matthew's Gospel is written from a Jewish social location and that the criticism of Jewish authorities is indicative of subcultural rhetoric rather than countercultural rhetoric. In the second section, I consider the social location of Matthew within the social structures of the Roman Empire and argue that Matthew's Gospel expresses a mainly countercultural attitude to *kyriarchy*, that is, hierarchical structures dominated by an elite male.¹⁰ In the third section, I argue that although the parable of the royal wedding feast may be understood in an honor-shame framework, Matthew's Gospel exhibits countercultural rhetoric with respect to honor. I conclude that, accord-

4. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 86.

5. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 86–87.

6. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 86–87.

7. Stuart L. Love, *Jesus and Marginal Women: The Gospel of Matthew in Social-Scientific Perspective* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 189–98.

8. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 87–88.

9. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 88.

10. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston: Beacon, 1992), 8, 105–18.

ing to the cultural rhetoric of the Gospel of Matthew, the restraint and removal of the individual from the royal wedding feast is not for reasons related to ethnicity, social status, gender, or the honor code.

6.1. Jewish Social Location

Interpretation of the parable of the royal wedding feast is influenced by whether the Gospel of Matthew is considered as addressing Jewish, gentile, or an ethnically mixed group of Christians. In the Gospel of Matthew, mission begins with the lost sheep of Israel (10:6, 15:24), and the protocols for expelling an unrepentant sinner state that such a person is to be treated as an ἔθνηός, that is, a gentile (18:17), which implies gentiles are “outsiders.” In this gospel, however, Jesus commissions the disciples to go to all nations, inviting them to be baptized and therefore become “insiders” (28:19), and Jewish leaders are warned that the kingdom of God will be given to a new ἔθνος (21:43), which has been used to argue that gentiles or a mixed group will replace Jews. In this section, I first outline the recent history of interpretation of this parable according to ethnic categories; second, I summarize the discussion of whether the Matthean Christians represent a community that had separated from first-century Judaism; third, I argue the social location of Matthew to be Jewish; and fourth, I propose that the Matthean criticism of Jewish leaders is best understood as subcultural rather than countercultural rhetoric.

6.1.1. Matthew 22:1–14: A Summary of Salvation History?

Most scholars assume that the destruction of the city in Matt 22:7 is an allusion to the 70 CE destruction of Jerusalem and that the Gospel of Matthew postdates this event.¹¹ Even Nolland, who is among the minority

11. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical*, 1:131; Sim, “Social and Religious Milieu,” 16–19; cf. Nolland who reflects on the use of the fall of Jerusalem as a “Watershed for Dating” in some detail (*Gospel of Matthew*, 14); Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:128–38; John P. Meier, “Antioch,” in *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity*, by Raymond E. Brown and John P. Meier (New York: Paulist, 1983), 15–18; Daniel J. Harrington, *Gospel of Matthew*, 120–21; Saldarini, “Gospel of Matthew and Jewish–Christian Conflict,” 39; Sim, *Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 31–40; Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 6.

who argue for the possibility of a pre-70 CE date for Matthew's Gospel, considers Matt 22:7 a possible allusion to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE, albeit as a prediction about the future rather than by postdating this significant event.¹² The destruction of cities is a topos found in biblical and postexilic writing (Judg 1:8, Isa 5:24–25, 1 Macc 5:28, T. Jud. 5.15), and in Jeremiah the destruction of Jerusalem tends to be associated with divine response to apostasy (e.g., Jer 6:6–8).¹³

The burning of “their” city (Matt 22:7) rather than “the city” or “our city” evokes the Matthean references to “their synagogues” (4:23, 9:35, 10:17, 13:54; also “your synagogues” in 23:34).¹⁴ During the twentieth century, some scholars argued that a gentile Christian wrote Matthew's Gospel for a predominantly gentile audience well after the fall of Jerusalem, once the “church” had separated from the “synagogue.”¹⁵ Any Jewish flavor of the gospel was credited to the inclusion of pre-Matthean traditions.¹⁶ The rejection of Israel was considered to be a major theme of the gospel, with the trilogy of parables in Matt 21:1–22:14 presented as evidence for this.¹⁷ Schweizer suggests these three parables portray Israel on trial (21:27), with the first parable providing the verdict (21:32), the second the sentence (21:41–43), and the third the execution (22:7).¹⁸ It is presumed that the ἔθνος who produces the fruit of the kingdom (Matt 21:43) refers to a new people including gentiles.¹⁹

12. Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 14–16. Those who argue for a pre-70 CE date include John A. T. Robinson, *Redating the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1976), 19–25, 104–5; Bo Reicke, “Synoptic Prophecies on the Destruction of Jerusalem,” in *Studies in the New Testament and Early Christian Literature*, ed. D. E. Aune (Leiden: Brill, 1972), 123; Gundry, *Matthew*, 599–609; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 19; Nolland, *Gospel of Matthew*, 14–16.

13. K. H. Rengstorff, “Die Stadt der Mörder (Matt 22,7),” in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche*, ed. W. Eltester (Berlin: Töpelman, 1960), 106–29; Kenneth R. Jones, *Jewish Reactions to the Destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70: Apocalypses and Related Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 112.

14. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 31.

15. See, for example, Kenneth W. Clark, “The Gentile Bias in Matthew,” *JBL* 66.2 (1947): 165–72; Meier, *Vision of Matthew*, 17–23.

16. David Flusser, *Judaism and the Origins of Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes, The Hebrew University, 1988), 552.

17. Clark, “Gentile Bias in Matthew,” 165–72; Meier, *Vision of Matthew*, 149–52.

18. Schweizer, *Good News*, 402.

19. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, 632.

The parable of the royal wedding feast has been considered a summary of salvation history, marking the shift from the mission to Israel, represented in Matt 22:2–8, to gentiles, who are represented in the ingathering of Matt 22:9–10. Such interpretations have a long history. John Chrysostom considered the destruction of “their city” (Matt 22:7) as historic prophecy-fulfillment of the destruction of Jerusalem.²⁰ Madeleine Boucher provides a recent example of salvation-history interpretation: “Matthew has so edited this parable as to present it as a schematic outline of the history of salvation embracing the Israelite prophets, the Christian missionaries, the fall of Jerusalem, and the messianic banquet in the new age. The outline explains the shift of the mission to Israel, which rejected it, to the Gentiles.”²¹

Replacement theology is closely related to “supersessionism,” in which the church is considered to supersede Israel in one of three ways: in punitive supersessionism, Israel is displaced as a judgment for its sin (cf. Matt 22:7); in economic supersessionism, there is a transfer of being God’s chosen people from ethnic Israel to the universal church; and in structural supersessionism, the emphasis on the New Testament as the fulfillment of the Old Testament is so pronounced that much of the Old Testament disappears into a blurry background.²² The Jewish scholars Herbert Bassler and Marsha Cohen identify supersessionist “replacement theology” tendencies in Matthew’s Gospel, arguing that in the parable of the royal wedding feast those who do not come represent Israel (22:3–7), who are replaced by gentiles (22:9–10).²³ They consider the giving of the vineyard to a “new people” in the parable of the tenants (21:42–43) immediately preceding this parable as “Christian exegesis in the extreme” because this reverses the roles of Jews and gentiles in the Scripture cited. Isaiah’s vineyard imagery symbolizes Israel, and the foundation stone in Ps 118:22–23 is that of Israel and the house of Aaron (Ps 118:2–3). They suggest that this replacement theology was probably already becoming “the normative perspective of the Christ followers in Matthew’s day.”²⁴

20. Parris, *Reception Theory*, 231–32.

21. Boucher, *Parables*, 109.

22. Michael J. Vlach, “Various Forms of Replacement Theology,” *MSJ* 20.1 (2009): 57–69; Vlach, *The Church as a Replacement of Israel: An Analysis of Supersessionism* (New York: Lang, 2009); Vlach, *Has the Church Replaced Israel? A Theological Evaluation* (Nashville: B&H Academic: 2010), 13–17.

23. Bassler and Cohen, *Gospel of Matthew*, 557, 568.

24. Bassler and Cohen, *Gospel of Matthew*, 557.

By contrast, another Jewish scholar, Amy-Jill Levine, has persuasively argued that the unreceptive guests in the parable of the royal wedding feast refer to members of the Jewish elite and not the Jewish people generally.²⁵ Thus the final invitation is extended to all who lack status and authority in the social structure, with the focus on those from the margins of Jewish society, which could include gentiles, but it is wrong to assume that they dominate.²⁶ A shift in understanding the ethnicity of those gathered into the feast from predominantly gentile to predominantly Jewish can be identified in two commentaries by Richard France. In 1985, he wrote that “those included would not be restricted to Gentiles,” whereas in 2007 he suggests that the replacement guests come from the crossroads of the king’s own city, and he notes they are not described as foreigners.²⁷ There is now appropriate reluctance to take the supersessionist view that the parable of the royal wedding feast is about the replacement of Israel with a new people who are mainly gentiles.²⁸ For example, Turner considers supersessionist interpretation as positing something “extraneous to Matthew’s context: gentiles replacing Jews in redemptive history.”²⁹ He argues that both the “recently enfranchised replacements and the disenfranchised former leaders are both Jewish.”³⁰ This view parallels the argument that the Gospel of Matthew does not concern the replacement of Israel with gentiles but the ecclesia formed around Jesus replacing the Jewish leadership.³¹

6.1.2. Matthean Christians: Christian Jews or Jewish Christians?

In recent scholarship there is widespread agreement that the author of Matthew is Jewish, but there is continued debate about whether or

25. Levine, *Social and Ethnic Dimensions*, 212–13; Duling acknowledges Levine’s role in changing perception in this matter (*Marginal Scribe*, 40–41).

26. Levine, *Social and Ethnic Dimensions*, 212–13.

27. R. T. France, *The Gospel according to Matthew: An Introduction and Commentary*, TNTC 1 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 313; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 822.

28. For example, Turner considers it doubtful that the parable of the royal wedding feast portrays a redemptive-historical transition from Jews to Gentiles (*Matthew*, 208).

29. David L. Turner, *Israel’s Last Prophet: Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew 23* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 149–50.

30. Turner, *Israel’s Last Prophet*, 150.

31. Matthias Konradt, *Israel, Church and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew*, trans. Kathleen Ess (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2014).

not he and his community had separated from formative Judaism in the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE.³² The level of animosity in the anti-Pharisaic polemic of Matthew's Gospel (5:20, 16.1–12, 23:1–36) is no more bitter than examples of intra-Judaic conflict using the ancient conventions of polemic.³³ Vitriol was heightened during the Jamnian period of Jewish reconsolidation (80–85 CE).³⁴ Some argue that the Matthean group consisted of Jewish Christians who had recently experienced a painful parting from Judaism and were now extra muros, whereas others argue that they were law-observant Jews who believed in Jesus the Messiah, that is, Christian Jews who were intra muros within the diverse expression of Judaism of the time despite some obvious tensions.³⁵ The helpfulness of the *muros* metaphor and

32. Brian C. Dennert, *John the Baptist and the Jewish Setting of Matthew*, WUNT 2/403 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 7. Formative Judaism recognizes a transitional stage in the development of rabbinic Judaism, predominantly from the Pharisees of the prewar times. Jacob Neusner has several publications with “formative Judaism” in the title, including *Formative Judaism: History, Hermeneutics, Law and Religion: Ten Recent Essays* (New York: Global Publications, 2000). See also Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*; Repschinski, *Controversy Stories*, 346–47; Warren Carter, “Matthew's Gospel: Jewish Christianity, Christian Judaism, or Neither,” in *Jewish Christianity Reconsidered: Rethinking Ancient Groups and Texts*, ed. Matt Jackson-McCabe (Minneapolis, MI: Fortress, 2007), 155–79; Dennis C. Duling, “The Gospel of Matthew,” in *Blackwell Companion to the New Testament*, ed. David E. Aune (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 296–306.

33. Luke T. Johnson, “The New Testament's Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic,” *JBL* 108 (1989): 436–40.

34. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:133–38; Michael P. Theophilos has a recent discussion on this. See Theophilos, *The Abomination of Desolation in Matthew 24.15* (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 9–10.

35. Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 54–55; Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom*, 5; Stanton, *Gospel for a New People*, 124–28; Wayne A. Meeks, “Breaking Away,” in “To See Ourselves as Others See Us”: *Christians, Jews, “Others” in Late Antiquity*, ed. Jacob Neusner, Ernest S. Frerichs, and Caroline McCracken-Flesher (Chico, CA: Scholars Press, 1985), 93–115; Douglas R. A. Hare, “How Jewish Is the Gospel of Matthew,” *CBQ* 62 (2000): 164–177; Amy-Jill Levine, “Matthew's Advice to a Divided Readership,” in *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study: Studies in Memory of William G. Thompson, S.J.*, ed. David E. Aune (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 30; Donald A. Hagner, “Matthew: Apostate, Reformer, Revolutionary?,” *NTS* 49.2 (2003): 193–209; Ewherido, *Matthew's Gospel and Judaism*, 20–27; Roland Deines, “Not the Law but the Messiah: Law and Righteousness in the Gospel of Matthew—An Ongoing Debate,” in *Built upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. David M. Gurtner and

the historical reality of a definitive “parting of the ways”—separation and independent development of both Jews and Christians from a common source—are questioned.³⁶ For example, Saldarini argues for significant local variation in the first couple of centuries following the fall of Jerusalem, when neither Judaism nor Christianity had a fixed center.³⁷ Depending on location, some Christian communities were separated from the local synagogue, whereas others constantly drew deeply upon their Jewish roots and may have attended synagogue as well as a Christian fellowship.³⁸ Kampen argues that it is not helpful to locate Matthew on a “parting of the ways” spectrum because “there is no clear evidence in this composition of a *move away* from the Jewish community; it is rather *within* the Jewish community that such a sectarian reading finds explanation.”³⁹

John Nolland (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 53–84; Gerhard Barth, “Matthew’s Understanding of the Law,” in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, ed. Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth and Heinz Joachim Held (London, SCM, 1963), 58–164; W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963); Schuyler Brown, “The Matthean Community and the Gentile Mission,” *NovT* 22 (1980): 193–221; Levine, *Social and Ethnic Dimensions*, 78; Alan Segal, “Matthew’s Jewish Voice,” in *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches*, ed. David Balch (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 3–37; Overman, *Matthew’s Gospel and Formative Judaism*; Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel According to Matthew* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996); Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*; Sim, *Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*; Sim, “Christianity and Ethnicity in the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Ethnicity and the Bible*, ed. M. G. Brett, *BibInt* 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 171–95; Sim, “The Gospel of Matthew and the Gentiles,” *JSNT* 57 (1995): 19–48; Benedict T. Viviano, *Matthew and His World: The Gospel of the Open Jewish Christians: Studies in Biblical Theology* (Fribourg: Academic, 2007); Frederick J. Murphy, “The Jewishness of Matthew: Another Look,” in *When Judaism and Christianity Began: Essays in Memory of Anthony J. Saldarini*, ed. Alan J. Avery-Peck, Daniel Harrington, and Jacob Neusner, 2 vols. (Leiden: Boston, 2004), 2:376–403.

36. Judith Lieu, “‘The Parting of the Ways’: Theological Construct or Historical Reality,” *JSNT* 56 (1994): 101–9; Paula Fredriksen, “What ‘Parting of the Ways?’ Jews, Gentiles and the Ancient Mediterranean City,” in *The Ways That Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, ed. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 35–64; Dennert, *John the Baptist*, 6–7; Runesson, “Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations,” 95–132.

37. Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, 20–21.

38. Saldarini, *Matthew’s Christian-Jewish Community*, 203.

39. Kampen, *Matthew within Jewish Sectarianism*, 205.

Matthew's Gospel reflects bitter tensions between the community it represents and other forms of Judaism in the late first century. Regardless of whether leaders of formative Judaism deemed Matthean Christians sufficiently Torah observant to be welcome in their synagogues, the author and authorial audience of Matthew's Gospel share a Jewish worldview.⁴⁰

The Gospel of Matthew advocates an alternative *Jewish* identity, promoting the best way to live as a Jew in the late first century CE.⁴¹

6.1.3. Jewish Social Location of Matthew's Gospel

The Gospel of Matthew is grounded in Jewish culture, presumes Jewish practices, assumes knowledge of Jewish scriptures, and presents Jesus as the fulfillment rather than replacement of the law (5:17). Kampen argues that "the tendency of the author to portray this sect as uniquely legitimate within the Jewish community is evident throughout the composition.... For Matthew there is no other group that understands what God wants from and for the Jewish people at the end of the first century."⁴²

Matthew's Gospel assumes knowledge of practices and traditions central to Jewish identity: prayer (6:5–7), almsgiving (6:3–4), fasting (6:17–18), dietary laws (15:1–20), other purity laws (8:4, 5–13; 23:25–26), Sabbath observance (12:1–14, 28; 24:20), celebrating the Passover festival (26:2, 17–35), tithing (23:23), temple-based practices and taxation (5:23–24, 12:3–5, 17:24–27, 23:19–21), and the public reading of the Torah in synagogue settings.⁴³

The Gospel of Matthew is written in "synagogue Greek," a more polished Greek than the popular Semitic Greek of Mark and Q.⁴⁴ The language of Matthew's Gospel is strongly influenced by the Septuagint.⁴⁵ The use of

40. Donald Senior, "Between Two Worlds: Gentiles and Jewish Christians in Matthew's Gospel," *CBQ* 61 (1999): 1–5. Ian Boxall draws an analogy with the Methodist movement beginning in Anglicanism, then as the breach widened Anglican authorities might have considered them beyond the boundaries of Anglicanism, but Methodists regarded themselves as still within the walls. See Boxall, *Discovering Matthew: Content, Interpretation, Reception* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 68.

41. Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, 205.

42. Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, 183.

43. Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations," 95–132; Runesson, "Behind the Gospel of Matthew," 465.

44. Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 22, style point 1.

45. Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 22, style point 4.

repetition, formulas, leading words, chiasms, and inclusions reflects the style of the Priestly source and Chronicler.⁴⁶ Matthew's Gospel shows a relationship to linguistic development in formative Judaism.⁴⁷ Matthew's advocacy of strong adherence to the Law exceeds that of other early writings with close ties to Judaism, like Hebrews, James, and the Didache.⁴⁸

The phrase "the law and the prophets," used by Jewish and Christian sources of this period to refer to authoritative writings (2 Macc 15:9, 4 Macc 18:10, Sir 1:1, Luke 16:16, John 1:45, Acts 13:15, Rom 3:21),⁴⁹ occurs four times in Matthew's Gospel. The Matthean Jesus does not only refer to prophecy recorded in "the law and the prophets" (Matt 11:15; cf. Luke 16:16) but also speaks of not abolishing "the law and the prophets" (Matt 5:17), and he connects both the golden rule (Matt 7:12) and law of love (Matt 22:40) to them.

Some scholars argue that Matthew rewrote Mark to emphasize the Jewishness of the Christian gospel, to uphold the importance of the law, and to counter the influence of Pauline theology.⁵⁰ It has even been suggested that "if party feeling ran high enough," the individual expelled in Matt 22:13 could represent Paul.⁵¹ The sectarian rhetoric of Matthew's Gospel, however, is more focused on right application of the law within first-century Judaism than developing an anti-Pauline rhetoric.⁵² The most heated diatribe in Matthew's Gospel criticizes the Pharisees who adhere to the law as they understand it, with little effort made to counter those who consider the law to be superseded by faith in Christ as suggested by

46. Luz, *Matthew* 1–7, 22, style point 3.

47. Luz, *Matthew* 1–7, 22, style point 5; see also Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:133.

48. Boris Repschinski, "Conclusions," in *Matthew and His Christian Contemporaries*, ed. David C. Sim and Boris Repschinski (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 173.

49. Antoinette Clark Wire, "Gender Roles in a Scribal Community," in Balch, *Social History of the Matthean Community*, 87–121; Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:484.

50. Anne M. O'Leary, *Matthew's Judaization of Mark: Examined in the Context of the Use of Sources in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (London: T&T Clark, 2005); David Sim, "Matthew's Anti-Paulinism: A Neglected Feature of Matthean Studies," *HvTSt* 58 (2002): 767–83; Daniel J. Harrington, "Matthew and Paul," in *Matthew and His Christian Contemporaries*, ed. David C. Sim and Boris Repschinski (London: T&T Clark, 2008), 11–26.

51. Manson, *Sayings of Jesus*, 226.

52. Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, 13, 42, 47.

Paul (Gal 3:23–26, 4:14–16). Paul vehemently warns against “Judaizers” who insist on the necessity of circumcision for both Gentile and Jewish Christians (Gal 2:12, 3:1–5), whereas Matthew is silent regarding whether circumcision is needed or not. This silence suggests that circumcision was not a matter of current debate when Matthew’s Gospel was written because either baptism had replaced circumcision or it was assumed that the audience was Jewish and therefore circumcised.⁵³

Matthew situates Jesus in Jewish history and tradition by introducing him as “the Messiah (Christ), the son of David, and the son of Abraham” (1:1), the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy (1:22–23).⁵⁴ This opening to the gospel views history from an insider Jewish perspective without explaining the significance of the Messiah, Abraham, David, and the exile to his audience, thereby assuming that they share a familiarity with Jewish history and tradition.⁵⁵ Furthermore, the opening words of Matthew’s Gospel evoke the opening words of Genesis.⁵⁶ Unlike Luke, Matthew does not explicitly place Jesus within the political history of the Roman Empire by naming who was Emperor at the time Jesus emerged on the scene (cf. Luke 2:1–7, 3:1). The Roman Empire is part of the sociohistorical background of the Gospel of Matthew, as is evident in references to paying taxes (22:15–22), place names such as Caesarea Philippi (16:13), Pilate as governor of Judea (27:2), and the presence of centurions from the Roman army (8:5–13, 27:54), but Matthew is more concerned with locating Jesus in Jewish tradition than in relation to Roman history.

The geography of Matthew’s Gospel presents Jesus both as following in the footsteps of the people of Israel and as the fulfillment of prophecy. In the opening chapters of this gospel, Jesus journeys through the same geographical regions as the Exodus journey of the Hebrew people: Egypt (2:13–15, 19), the desert as a place of testing (4:1–11), and the giving of the Law on a mountain top (Matt 5–7). It is explicitly stated that it is to “fulfill prophecy” that Jesus is born in Bethlehem of Judea (2:5–6), comes out of Egypt (2:15), lives in Nazareth to be called a Nazorean (2:23), and then moves to Capernaum in the land of Zebulun and Naphtali (4:13–14).⁵⁷

53. Repschinski, “Conclusions,” 175; Boxall describes the view that baptism had replaced circumcision as an “argument from silence” (*Discovering Matthew*, 67).

54. Senior, “Between Two Worlds,” 18.

55. Senior, “Between Two Worlds,” 3; Robbins, “Social Location,” 312–14.

56. Luz, *Studies in Matthew*, 19.

57. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:235.

When Jesus begins his ministry in Galilee, Matthew describes his fame spreading throughout all Syria, whereas the Marcan parallel does not mention Syria (Matt 4:24–25; cf. Mark 1:28–29).⁵⁸ For this and other reasons, many scholars consider Matthew's Gospel to have been composed in Syria.⁵⁹ Many consider Antioch on the Orontes the most likely city.⁶⁰ The Gospel of Matthew was available in Antioch by the early second century; elements unique to this gospel feature in the letters of Ignatius of Antioch and the Didache.⁶¹ Other cities from the regions named in Matt 4:25 have also been proposed.⁶² These include Edessa from elsewhere in Syria, Caesarea, Damascus (Decapolis), Pella (Transjordan), and Tiberias or Sep-

58. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 16.

59. Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 56–57; Jack Sanders, *Schismatics, Sectarians, Dissidents, Deviants: The First One Hundred Years of Jewish-Christian Relations* (London: SCM, 1993), 155. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 11, 26. Jack Dean Kingsbury, "Conclusion: Analysis of a Conversation," in Balch, *Social History of the Matthean Community*, 264: "not necessarily Antioch."

60. Davies and Allison make this assessment and present their argument for Antioch on page 145 (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:138–47). An early example is Burnett H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels* (repr., London: Macmillan 1957), 500–507. See also Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity International, 2001), 36–37; Gundry, *Matthew*, 609; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 41–42; Ewherido, *Matthew's Gospel and Judaism*, 11; Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, lxxv; Senior, *Matthew*, 82; Meier, "Antioch," 22–26; Sim, *Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 53–62; Michelle Slee, *The Church in Antioch in the First Century C.E.: Communion and Conflict*, JSNTSup 244 (London: Sheffield Academic, 2003), 188–22; Rodney Stark, "Antioch as the Social Situation for Matthew's Gospel," in Balch, *Social History of the Matthean Community*, 189–210; Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 17–24; Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 36–50; L. M. White, "Crisis Management and Boundary Maintenance: The Social Location of the Matthean Community," in Balch, *Social History of the Matthean Community*, 214.

61. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary* 1:130; William R. Schoedel, "Ignatius and the Reception of the Gospel of Matthew in Antioch," in Balch, *Social History of the Matthean Community*, 130, records that Eusebius dated the death of Ignatius to 107 CE in *Chronicon*, but that "when he came to write his church history, he was satisfied to place the martyrdom of Ignatius in the days of Trajan, 98–117 CE (*Historia ecclesiastica* 3:21–22)." Sean Freyne notes material unique to Matthew alluded to in the writings of Ignatius (2:1–12, 3:15, 10:16b). See Freyne, *The Jesus Movement and Its Expansion: Meaning and Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 29.

62. Sim, "Social and Religious Milieu of Matthew," 20. Davies and Allison have lists (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:138–39).

phoris in Galilee, with the latter gaining support in this century.⁶³ Stanton convincingly argues that the author of Matthew's Gospel wrote his account of Jesus and his teaching for a cluster of Christian communities loosely linked over a wide geographical area.⁶⁴ Segal describes Galilee, Pella, and Syria as forming a "Jewish Christian heartland" following the resettlement of refugees after the fall of Jerusalem.⁶⁵ He suggests these regions were linked by constantly travelling missionaries.⁶⁶ The author of Matthew's Gospel may have been one such missionary; he seems more familiar with the geography east of the Sea of Galilee than Mark does (19:1).⁶⁷

Matthew's Gospel draws heavily on prophetic literature. The prophet Isaiah is named more often in Matthew than in the other Synoptic Gospels,⁶⁸

63. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew*, 15–23; J. Spencer Kennard, "The Place of Origin of Matthew's Gospel," *ATR* 31 (1949): 243–46; Robert E. Osborne, "The Provenance of Matthew's Gospel," *SR* 3 (1973): 220–35. Davies and Allison argue that if Matthew's Gospel originated in Edessa, it would be more likely to be written in Syriac than in Greek (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 1:142). See also Viviano, *Matthew and his World*, 9–23; Joachim Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 2 vols., HTKNT 1 (Freiburg: Herder, 1986, 1988), 2:515; Luomanen considers Damascus more likely than Antioch (*Entering the Kingdom*, 275–76); Willi Marxsen, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968), 153; H. Dixon Slingerland, "The Transjordanian Origin of St Matthew's Gospel," *JSNT* 3 (1979): 18–28; Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 158–59; Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis*, 16–19; Saldarini argues that Sepphoris, Tiberias, Capernaum, and Bethsaida are large enough cities to be contenders ("Gospel of Matthew and Jewish-Christian Conflict in the Galilee," in *The Galilee in Late Antiquity*, ed. L. I. Levine [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992], 26–27). Aaron M. Gage argues that there is more archaeological and textual evidence for Sepphoris than for Antioch to be the location of Matthew's community (Gage, *Redefining Ancient Borders: The Jewish Scribal Framework of Matthew's Gospel* [New York: T&T Clark, 2005], 41–63). Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations," 107. Wainwright singles out Sepphoris "as a potentially participating city in the circulation of traditions shaping the Matthean narrative" (*Habitat, Human, and Holy*, 27). For a critique of the Galilean hypothesis, see Sim, "Social and Religious Milieu of Matthew," 20–25; Kampen, *Matthew within Jewish Sectarianism*, 14 (notes scholars employing methodologies developed from the social sciences tend to favor a Galilean location for Matthew's Gospel), 37 (considers Sepphoris).

64. Graham N. Stanton, "Revisiting Matthew's Communities," *HvTSt* 52.2/3 (1996): 378–94.

65. Segal, "Matthew's Jewish Voice," 26.

66. Segal, "Matthew's Jewish Voice," 26–27.

67. Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom*, 276–77.

68. Matt 3:8, 4:14, 8:17, 12:17, 13:14, 15:7; cf. Mark 1:2; 7:6; Luke 3:4; 4:17.

and the only three New Testament references to the prophet Jeremiah are found in Matthew (2:17, 16:14, 27:9). Bassler and Cohen consider Jeremiah a model for the Matthean Jesus, especially in the temple narrative of Matt 21–23.⁶⁹ Knowles argues that in Second Temple Judaism, Jeremiah was “both the suffering prophet par excellence and the prophet par excellence of the fall of Jerusalem,”⁷⁰ so by appealing to Jeremiah, Matthew was establishing an analogy between the fall of Jerusalem in 587 BCE and that in 70 CE.

The Matthean Jesus tells the parable of the royal wedding feast, which seems to include an allusion to the first-century fall of Jerusalem, as a warning to Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. In its narrative setting, this parable is not for a gentile audience. Matthew's Gospel is not directed at a gentile audience because gentiles are usually depicted as “other.” They are talked about as a group rather than addressed directly (Matt 5:47; 6:7, 32; 12:21; 18:17; 28:19).⁷¹ Admittedly, groups within first-century Judaism—Pharisees, Sadducees, Herodians, high priests, and elders—are also talked about as “other” from a Matthean perspective, but they are also addressed directly (Matt 21–23). Furthermore, large groups of Jews are designated as the people, *λαός* (27:45), or crowds, *ὄχλος* (e.g. 9:23; 12:23), and not “Jews.”

6.1.4. Subcultural Rhetoric with Respect to Judaism

The Matthew Gospel exhibits a subcultural (rather than countercultural) attitude to Judaism, with the author assuming knowledge of Jewish practices and history.⁷² He vehemently presents the case that the pattern of righteousness he advocates fulfils, rather than abolishes, the Law and the Prophets (5:17).⁷³ This is evident in the discussion about Sabbath observance, when the Matthean Jesus exhorts his hearers to learn the meaning of Hos 6:6 rather than simply stating that the Sabbath was made for humans (Matt 12:1–8; cf. Mark 2:23–28).⁷⁴ Followers of the Matthean Jesus are to be more righteous than the Pharisees (5:20). An attitude of being better

69. Bassler and Cohen, *Gospel of Matthew*, 533.

70. Michael Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel: The Rejected Prophet Motif in Matthean Redaction* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic: 1993), 188–89.

71. Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 239.

72. Kampen, *Matthew within Sectarian Judaism*, 49.

73. Senior, “Between Two Worlds,” 18.

74. Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 79–86.

than those exercising religious leadership (23:1–3) is consistent with sub-cultural rhetoric.⁷⁵ According to this rhetoric, the expelled individual in the parable of the royal wedding feast may have neglected to keep the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faith—an accusation levelled at the Pharisees (23:23).

For Matthew, the issue is to keep the law properly, and at no point does he advocate that anyone who adheres to Jewish law per se is to be excluded or punished because they do so. It would be inconsistent with the subcultural rhetoric of Matthew as a Jewish text for the individual cast out from the royal wedding feast to represent a Jew. For the parable of the royal wedding feast to serve as a warning to the Jerusalem leaders, as it does in the narrative context of Matt 21–23, the expelled person would not represent a gentile either despite gentiles being portrayed as outsiders in Matt 18:17. Matthew's Gospel expresses a subcultural rhetoric with respect to first-century Judaism but a countercultural rhetoric with respect to the social hierarchies maintained by the honor code in New Testament times.

6.2. Social Location of Matthew and Anti-kyriarchy Rhetoric

Exploring the social location of an evangelist involves consideration of social arenas evident in a gospel: history (previous events), geography, resources, technology, population structure, socialization, culture, foreign affairs, belief systems, and political-military-legal system.⁷⁶ The importance placed on particular past events, description of geography, culture, and attitude toward foreigners (gentiles) strongly suggest that the Gospel of Matthew was written from the location of a Jewish belief system. It was also written from the social location of social structures of the first century under the political-military-legal system of Roman imperial rule. In this era, social stratification was based on political status, property ownership, slave or free, occupation, ethnicity, education, religion, gender, and kinship.⁷⁷ The term *kyriarchy* describes hierarchical social structures in which elite adult males have power (lordship) over younger men and slaves of both genders; the term also incorporates patriarchy.⁷⁸ In this section, I

75. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 86–87.

76. Robbins, "Social Location," 306.

77. Dennis C. Duling, "Matthew as Marginal Scribe in an Advanced Agrarian Society," *HTS* 58.2 (2002): 530.

78. Schüssler Fiorenza elaborates on "kyriarchy" (*But She Said*, 8, 105–18).

outline the probable social location of Matthew as a male scribe. I explore how he addresses "brothers" in his community, although said community includes women, with counter-cultural rhetoric with respect to social hierarchies. This anti-kyriarchy stance suggests that Matthew, as a follower of Jesus, has chosen to identify with those on the margins of society although not structurally marginal himself.

6.2.1. Social Location of Matthew

First-century social structures in the Mediterranean region may be represented as either pyramids or series of concentric circles. New Testament scholars have adapted Gerhard Lenski's macrosocial model of advanced agrarian society to describe the social structures at the time of the Roman Empire.⁷⁹ This model is usually presented as a vertical pyramid of power with very few elites at the top and the majority low in status, literacy, and most socioeconomic measures. Located within this pyramid, merchants and retainers of the elite are found near the governing class at the top, with artisans lower in status, sometimes ranking below peasants.⁸⁰ Those on the bottom of the social pyramid represented in Matthew's narrative include forced laborers, day laborers, some slaves, the urban poor, the ritually unclean, dishonored women, physically sick and disabled people, demon-possessed individuals, bandits, and prostitutes.⁸¹

The author of Matthew's Gospel is likely to be from the retainer class,⁸² which represented about 5 percent of the population. Retainers included military officers, tax officials, and religious leaders, who were more likely to be literate than the ruling class.⁸³ Matthew has a high level of literacy, writes in Greek, is schooled in the scriptures, and refers to large financial

79. Duling, "Matthew as Marginal Scribe," 520–575; Denis C. Duling, "Matthew and Marginality," *HvTSt* 51.2 (1995): 365; Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 18; Evert-Jan Vledder, *Conflict in the Miracle Stories: A Socio-exegetical Study of Matthew 8 and 9*, JSNTSup 152 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 69–76, 99–129; Louise Joy Lawrence, *An Ethnography of the Gospel of Matthew: A Critical Assessment of the Use of the Honor and Shame Model in New Testament Studies*, WUNT 2/165 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2000), 73–74.

80. Duling, *Marginal Scribe*, 70; Richard Rohrbaugh, "The City in the Second Testament," *BTB* 21.2 (1991): 68–69.

81. Duling, "Matthew and Marginality," 367–70.

82. Saldarini, *Pharisees*, 157–73; Talbert, *Matthew*, 5.

83. Wire, "Gender Roles," 89.

sums involving gold, silver, and talents,⁸⁴ which suggests he has proximity to the ruling elite even if not wealthy himself.

The author of Matthew's Gospel may well have been a scribe. In this gospel, scribes do not feature as opponents of Jesus per se; rather, as Orton puts it, "they are tainted by the company they keep," which includes Pharisees (5:20; 12:38; 23:2, 13, 15, 23, 25, 27, 29), high priests (2:4, 20:13, 21:15), elders (26:57), and both elders and high priests (16:21, 27:41).⁸⁵ Unique to Matthew's Gospel, scribes are among those sent out by Jesus (23:34; cf. Luke 11:49), and a scribe is inferred to be a disciple (Matt 8:19–21; cf. Luke 9:57–60).⁸⁶ The reference to "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" (13:52 NRSV) may be a self-portrait by the author.⁸⁷ This imagery of selecting materials to bring out for public consumption evokes Ben Sira's depiction of the ideal scribe as someone who understands prophecies, parables, and proverbs and then mediates their understanding of divine revelation to others.⁸⁸ Similarly, from a Greco-Roman perspective, handbooks of classical rhetoric taught the reconfiguration of fables, anecdotes, events, and sayings to generate new arguments by mixing new material with existing materials.⁸⁹ Matthew's Gospel might have been written as a script for conveying authoritative speech to a mainly illiterate society.⁹⁰

Social hierarchies differ according to Roman and Judean world-views.⁹¹ For a Roman, the social ranking would begin with Romans at the top, closely followed by Greeks, with barbarians (including Judeans), further down, and Galileans and Samaritans among those at the bottom.⁹² For a Judean, the temple in Jerusalem was at the apex: geographically,

84. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 25; Lawrence, *Ethnography*, 63.

85. Orton, *Understanding Scribe*, 28; Duling, *Marginal Scribe*, 197–99, 272.

86. Duling, *Marginal Scribe*, 199–201, 274–75.

87. Harrington, *Matthew*, 208; Duling, *Marginal Scribe*, 203, 275; Orton, *Understanding Scribe*, 230–31.

88. Duling, *Marginal Scribe*, 207; Orton, *Understanding Scribe*, 120.

89. Vernon K. Robbins, "Writing as Rhetorical Act in Plutarch and the Gospels," in *Persuasive Artistry: Studies in New Testament Rhetoric in Honor of George A. Kennedy*, ed. Duane F. Watson (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 144–47.

90. Wire, "Gender Roles," 98.

91. Duling, "Matthew as Marginal Scribe," 531.

92. Duling, "Matthew as Marginal Scribe," 530.

economically, and in terms of purity and status as an Israelite.⁹³ Galileans and Samaritans were at the periphery, and the outermost group, beyond the perimeter, were gentiles.

Social stratification may be envisaged as concentric circles, with the ruler at the top of the vertical model at the center of the circle, and those on the bottom of the pyramid, the bulk of society, in the outermost circle, closest to the margins.⁹⁴ This symbolic social stratification mirrors the social mapping of the pre-industrial city.⁹⁵ The palace, temple, and residences of the religious and political elite were in a walled-off central area. The nonelite lived in cramped conditions between the inner and outer walls. The most marginalized, such as tanners, lepers, beggars, and robbers, lived outside the city walls, as did peasants working the fields.⁹⁶ Centralized land control and the religious and political systems of taxation linked preindustrial cities of agrarian societies to agricultural lands.⁹⁷

Rohrbaugh argues that the three groups of people invited in the Lukan parable of the great banquet (14:15–24) represent three tiers of social hierarchy: at the center those identified by their excuses as urban elite (14:18–20); in the second group, those from streets and lanes still within the town boundaries (14:21, τὰς πλατείας καὶ ῥύμας τῆς πόλεως); and in the third group, those from even further afield where hedges mark the property boundaries (14:23, τὰς ὁδοὺς καὶ φραγμοὺς).⁹⁸ A similar case can be made for Matthew's parable of the royal wedding feast, with those who attend to their farming or business interests (rather than come to the feast) representing the urban elite (22:5), and replacement guests from either the city exits or country roads, depending on how τὰς διεξόδους τῶν ὁδῶν is translated (22:9), representing those both lower on the social scale and further from the city center.

93. Hannah K. Harrington outlines the ten degrees of holiness described in the Mishnah, with the Holy of Holies (only accessible by the high priest on the day of atonement) at the center and the Land of Israel (which produces holy agricultural gifts) as the outermost level of holiness (*Holiness: Rabbinic Judaism and the Graeco-Roman World* [London: Routledge, 2001], 4, 7). Bruce J. Malina identifies five categories of belonging based on the capacity to transmit Israelite status (*New Testament World*, 174–76).

94. Duling, "Matthew as Marginal Scribe," 545.

95. Rohrbaugh, "Pre-industrial City," 133–46.

96. Talbert, *Matthew*, 5.

97. Rohrbaugh, "The Pre-industrial City," 141; Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 132–33.

98. Rohrbaugh, "Pre-industrial City," 142–43.

Matthew's Gospel is likely to have been composed in an urban setting; it includes twenty-six instances of *city* (πόλις) and only four of *village* (κώμη). This is in contrast to Mark's Gospel, with only eight instances of *city* and seven of *village*.⁹⁹ The parables in Matthew suggest an audience familiar with more than growing crops as tenant farmers (13:3–9, 24–32; 21:33–46; cf. Mark 4:3–9, 26–32; 12:1–12) because Matthean parables include imagery about building houses (7:24–27), buying and selling (13:44–46, 25:1–13), keeping sheep (18:10–14), hiring daily labor (20:1–16), making investments (24:13–40), and the affairs of kings (18:23–25, 22:1–14). These parables suggest that the community associated with Matthew's Gospel is situated closely enough to observe such transactions, even if not wealthy enough to participate in such activities themselves.¹⁰⁰

6.2.2. Women in the Matthean "Brotherhood" Community

In this subsection, I outline indications that the Matthean community included women but argue that "Matthew" writes from a male perspective, with the Matthean Jesus referring to his followers as "brothers." Probably due to their allegorical nature, neither of the Matthean wedding parables mentions a bride despite either implicit or explicit references to a bridegroom (22:2; 25:1, 6, 10). It is to be noted, however, the first is told to an audience of religious leaders, presumably all men, and the second does suggest women have roles to fulfill in the Matthean community.

In Matthew's Gospel, women belong to the community of Jesus followers. Jesus describes those who do the will of the Father in heaven as "my brother and sister and mother" (12:50). Even though his biological sisters are not with his mother and brothers who come to speak with Jesus (12:46–50), sisters are nonetheless included in this "kinship of Jesus" statement. Women and girls are healed by Jesus and feature in stories demonstrating faith and service (8:14–15; 9:18–26; 15:21–28, 38).¹⁰¹ Matthew names women and children as among those fed by the miraculous multiplication of loaves and fishes (14:21, 15:38), even

99. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 152.

100. Sean Freyne, "Herodian Economics in Galilee: Searching for a Suitable Model," in Esler, *Modelling Early Christianity*, 23–46.

101. Wire, "Gender Roles," 104; Yolanda Dreyer, "Gender Critique on the Narrator's Androcentric View of Women in Matthew's Gospel," *HvTSt* 67.1 (2010): 1–5, art #898; In-Cheol Shin states that "male followers are called to be disciples; female

though, unlike the men, they are not counted in the narrator's census.¹⁰² Women travel with Jesus and his disciples from Galilee to Jerusalem (20:20–23, 27:55). According to the Eschatological Discourse, community members include women nearing childbirth and breastfeeding (Matt 24:19).¹⁰³ Women who witness the crucifixion of Jesus provided for him on the journey from Galilee (27:55).¹⁰⁴ When the male disciples put themselves in a liminal position by deserting Jesus at the cross, their aggregation back into community with Jesus is mediated through women.¹⁰⁵

When Jesus speaks of his followers needing to break existing family ties to create new bonds of fictive kin,¹⁰⁶ three hierarchical relationships are mentioned: sons against their fathers, unmarried daughters against their mothers, and married women against their mothers-in-law (10:35). This suggests that the Matthean community included both married and unmarried women as well as men. The women in Matthew's Gospel are usually identified as wives (18:25, 27:19), mothers (2:13, 20:20), mothers-in-law (8:14), or sisters (13:55–56) of a male relation,¹⁰⁷ with the Canaanite mother of a daughter (15:22) and prostitutes (21:31–32) being rare exceptions to this tendency. While in the temple, Jesus warns his audience of religious leaders that “the tax collectors and the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you” (21:31 NRSV).¹⁰⁸ The inclusion of both these categories of those considered sinners emphasizes that women, including prostitutes, as well as men, including tax collectors, are welcome in the kingdom.¹⁰⁹

followers are called to serve.” See Shin, “Matthew's Designation of the Role of Women as Indirectly Adherent Disciples,” *Neot* 41.2 (2007): 407.

102. Kathleen E. Corley, *Private Women, Public Meals: Social Conflict in the Synoptic Tradition* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 160–64; Stuart L. Love, “The Place of Women in Public Settings in Matthew's Gospel: A Sociological Inquiry,” *BTB* 24.2 (1994): 58.

103. Levine, “Matthew,” 348.

104. The Greek work is *διακονοῦσαι*, literally meaning “to serve at tables.”

105. Love, *Jesus and Marginal Women*, 217–18.

106. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 114.

107. Wire, “Gender Roles,” 103; Anthony J. Saldarini, “Absent Women in Matthew's Households,” in *A Feminist Companion to Matthew*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 162.

108. Love, “Place of Women,” 58–59.

109. Love, “Place of Women,” 60.

In the parable of the ten virgins (25:1–13), which the Matthean Jesus tells to his disciples as part of the Eschatological Discourse, women have a role to play in the Matthean community while waiting for the return of the “bridegroom.”¹¹⁰ If the virgins are imagined as servants waiting for the return of their master, the bridegroom, then this parable has a similar theme to one that precedes it about faithfulness in the absence of the master (Matt 24:45–51).¹¹¹ Two resonances of the parable of the ten virgins with the Sermon on the Mount suggest that the five women who had sufficient oil supplies to keep their lamps burning serve as exemplars of discipleship. First, by lighting their lamps, the prudent virgins are letting their light shine (5:15–16) by “doing one’s own good works, dedicating one’s life to Jesus, and being prepared for the end time,” even though “sexual division of labour” continues until the end of the age in Matthew’s Gospel (24:40–41; cf. Luke 17:34–35).¹¹² Second, the bridegroom’s rejection of the unprepared virgins with “I do not recognize you” (25:12) echoes the “I never knew you” that will be told to those who say “Lord, Lord” but do not do the will of the Father (7:23 NRSV).¹¹³ This echo associates the five foolish virgins with false prophets, bearing bad fruit, and foolishly building on sand (7:15–27) and associates the five wise virgins with shining, bearing good fruit, building on firm foundations, and doing the will of the Father.¹¹⁴

Despite evidence for women among the community of Jesus followers who do the will of the father and inclusion of female examples of faithfulness by the Matthean Jesus, he tends to use ἀδελφός (brother) to refer to a member of the community (5:22–24, 47; 7:3–5; 18:15, 21, 35; 25:40, 45). Thirty-nine occurrences of *brother* in Matthew outnumber both Mark, with twenty, and Luke, with twenty-four.¹¹⁵ Sometimes ἀδελφός literally means “brother” (e.g., 1:2, 4:21, 10:2, 12:46–47); occasionally it is paired with *sister* (e.g., 12:50, 19:29); but even when referring to another member of the fictive kinship group, *sister* does not always accompany *brother* (e.g., 5:22–24, 47; 7:3–5; 18:15, 21, 35; 25:40, 45). Although *brother* alone is

110. Jarvis et al., “Matthew 22:1–14,” 185.

111. Levine, “Matthew,” 348.

112. Levine, “Matthew,” 348.

113. Marie-Eloise Rosenblatt, “Got into the Party after All,” in *A Feminist Companion to Matthew*, ed. Amy-Jill Levine and Marianne Blickenstaff (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 2001), 188–89.

114. Rosenblatt, “Got into the Party,” 188–89.

115. Duling, *Marginal Scribe*, 186–87.

also used in some English translations, most recent English translations adopt a gender-inclusive approach, and thus translate ἀδελφός with one or more of these alternatives: “brother or sister,” “member of the church,” “someone,” “follower,” “believer,” “neighbor,” and “friend.”¹¹⁶ These gender-inclusive translations are appropriate for present-day private devotion and public worship; however, they shroud the fact that the Matthean Jesus addresses his speech to “brothers.” Duling even suggests that to call the Matthean group a “brotherhood association” appropriately encapsulates the language of family ties in first-century associations.¹¹⁷

Probably due to their allegorical nature, neither of the Matthean wedding parables refers to a bride (22:1–14, 25:1–13),¹¹⁸ and unlike other New Testament weddings (Matt 25:1–13, John 2:1–12), the parable of the royal wedding feast makes no explicit mention of women at all. It is the third of three parables told in the temple (21:23–22:14), all of which are “stories about males told to a male audience” and “especially rich in male-oriented analogies.”¹¹⁹ All three parables concern a man with at least one son: a man with two sons (21:22), a landowner (21:33), and a king (22:2). Male pronouns portray at least two of those who decline the wedding feast invitation as men (22:5). The king sees an ἄνθρωπος not wearing wedding clothing, which translates as a “person,” not necessarily male. Any gender ambiguity is removed, however, when the king calls him “friend,” Ἐταῖρε, using the masculine vocative form (22:12). The audience told these parables, which includes high priests, elders, Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees contesting Jesus’s authority (21:23, 45; 22:16, 23, 34), is almost certainly composed of men. For the parable of the royal wedding feast to serve as a warning to them rather than a judgment on others, the expelled person is depicted as a man.

Even when Jesus speaks to a crowd in which women may be part of the audience, they are not addressed directly. The “images, illustrations

116. ESV has *brother* in 5:22–24; 7:3–5; 18:15, 21, 35; NIV in 5:22–24; 18:15, 21, 35; NRSV in 5:22–24; 47; 18:35; NRSV in 18:15, 21; NLT in 5:22–24, 18:21; CEV in 5:22–24, 18:15; CEV in 18:15, 21; NLT in 18:15; NRSV in 7:3–5; NLT in 5:47; CEV in 5:47; 7:3–5.

117. Duling notes Matthew does not use the word ἀδελφότης, “brotherhood,” although 1 Pet 2:17, 5:9 does (*Marginal Scribe*, 186–87).

118. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 154–57. Cynthia Briggs Kittredge considers this consistent with the patriarchal context of the first century. See Jarvis et al., “Matthew 22:1–14,” 183.

119. Love, “Place of Women,” 61.

and issues” of the Sermon on the Mount are predominantly male concerns considered from a male perspective, especially regarding adultery and divorce (5:27–32).¹²⁰ Women are noticeably absent from the family-household imagery used to depict the Christian community in Matt 18–20.¹²¹ When the mother of James and John requests that her sons have positions on the right and left side of Jesus when he comes in glory, Jesus directs his response to the two men (20:20–23).

As Saldarini argues, the author of Matthew’s Gospel addresses men who have social power in his world so they might reshape the community from the top down without promoting “the cultural dominance of the male head of the household.”¹²² Men are to turn away from the competition for social power and honor by adopting the low status symbolized by children and slaves,¹²³ to see themselves as “brothers,” and to reserve the title of “father” for the Heavenly Father (23:9).

The Gospel of Matthew embodies the patriarchal constructs of Matthew’s social location, telling the story of Jesus from a “pervasive androcentric perspective.”¹²⁴ Matthew’s Gospel does not exhibit a countercultural attitude towards the social status of women in first-century patriarchy in terms of what Weaver calls the “lower level perspective” evident in the expression of sociocultural norms in the text.¹²⁵ From the higher-level perspective, however, Matthew’s narrative includes women where they might not be expected from the beginning to the end. They break into the genealogy of Jesus in the opening and are vital witnesses to the resurrection in the closing.¹²⁶ Notwithstanding this, countercultural rhetoric is expressed more strongly with respect to kyriarchy than patriarchy per se.

120. Love, “Place of Women,” 59; Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 165, 211.

121. Saldarini, “Absent Women,” 158–59.

122. Saldarini, “Absent Women,” 158–59, 170.

123. Saldarini, “Absent Women,” 159.

124. Janice Capel Anderson, “Matthew: Gender and Reading,” *Semeia* 28 (1983): 3–27; Elaine M. Wainwright, *Towards a Feminist Critical Reading* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1991), 354; Wainwright, “Feminist Criticism and the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Methods for Matthew*, ed. Mark Allan Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 85–90.

125. Dorothy Jean Weaver, “‘Wherever This Good News Is Proclaimed’: Women and God in the Gospel of Matthew,” *Int* 64:4 (2010): 390–401.

126. Weaver, “Wherever,” 393–401.

6.2.3. Matthew Countercultural with Respect to Kyriarchy

The author of Matthew's Gospel portrays Jesus challenging kyriarchy, that is, the hierarchical social structures in which elite adult males have power over all the members of their household estate, including younger men, workers, servants, and slaves.¹²⁷ In contrast to the gentiles, the disciples of Jesus are not to lord it over (κατακυριεύω) one another (20:25). The Matthean Jesus presents a child, a eunuch, and a servant as exemplars of those who belong to the dominion of heaven (18:1–5, 19:12–14, 20:27). “Little ones” are not to be looked down upon (18:10). No one is to be called father and looked up to as such other than the heavenly Father (23:9).

Greco-Roman understanding of masculinity was structured with adult male citizens, especially heads of households and powerful patrons, at the top, and “unmen,” including eunuchs as well as women, boys, slaves of both sexes, sexually passive or effeminate males, and barbarians, at the bottom.¹²⁸ Eunuchs symbolized shame associated with impotence, effeminacy, and impurity.¹²⁹ The Matthean presentation of a eunuch (19:12), like that of a child (19:13–14) or servant (20:27), as an ideal member of the kingdom of heaven is “at odds” with kyriarchal structures.¹³⁰ Countercultural rhetoric regarding kyriarchy is also evident in the encouragement to value childhood (19:13–15) and to renounce possessions and biological family ties (19:16–30).¹³¹

One of the most obvious reshapings of kyriarchal social structures advocated by the Matthean Jesus is the exhortation to call no one “father” other than the heavenly Father (23:9). Sheffield illustrates how consistently the author of Matthew's Gospel adheres to this directive.¹³² For example, even the men who seek healing for a daughter (9:18–26) and a son (17:14–21) are not identified as fathers, unlike the parallel accounts in Mark (5:21–23, 9:14–43) and Luke (8:40–56, 9:37–43).¹³³

127. Schussler Fiorenza, *But She Said*, 105–18.

128. Janet Capel Anderson and Stephen D. Moore, “Matthew and Masculinity,” in *New Testament Masculinities*, ed. Stephen D. Moore and Janet Capel Anderson (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 67–69.

129. Rick Talbott, “Imagining the Matthean Eunuch Community: Kyriarchy on the Chopping Block,” *JFSR* 22.1 (2006): 21–43.

130. Talbott, “Imagining the Matthean Eunuch,” 38.

131. Anderson and Moore, “Matthew and Masculinity,” 90.

132. Sheffield, “Father in the Gospel,” 63–64.

133. Sheffield, “Father in Matthew,” 64.

By contrast, there seems to be a role for mothers in the Matthean community. Matthew's genealogy names three women, Tamar, Rahab, and Ruth (1:2–5), who all took high-risk initiatives that thereby ensured their place as foremothers of King David and the Messiah, Son of David. Within the main body of Matthew's Gospel, mothers take initiative in approaching Jesus to speak up for their children. The most obvious example is the Canaanite woman who seeks healing for her demon-tormented daughter (15:21–28). In Matthew's Gospel, she persists through three rejections from Jesus, whereas in Mark's she prevails after one (Mark 7:24–30). The mother of James and John (20:20–24) also speaks up for her children by seeking positions of honor for her sons. Portrayed as "a mother acting on behalf of her children," she is also among the women who witness the crucifixion, having provided for Jesus as they followed from Galilee (27:55–56).¹³⁴ Two of these three women who provided for Jesus, travelled with him, and were witnesses to the crucifixion are identified as being mothers of particular people in the discipleship group. There may not be a place for fathers in Jesus's fictive kinship group, but there is a place for mothers alongside sisters and brothers (12:50).¹³⁵ Perhaps that place is to speak up for "little ones," even if this means challenging men in authority (15:21–28). The feminist scholars Blickenstaff and Luise Schottroff, like Matthean mothers, speak up for one they consider a "little one," the wedding guest without wedding garb (22:13).¹³⁶ If, however, the person was expelled because of his or her marginal, sinful, or unclean status, the parable of the royal wedding feast would not shock the religious leaders debating with Jesus into conspiring against him (22:15). In the light of Matthew's countercultural rhetoric with respect to kyriarchy, I consider that the expelled person is not to be considered marginal in any way, despite Matthew's mixed rhetoric regarding tax collectors and gentiles.

6.2.4. Voluntary Marginality

According to Matt 18:17, a person expelled from the ecclesia is to be treated as a gentile and a tax collector, contradicting attitudes to gentiles and tax collectors evident elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel. The Matthean Jesus commissions his disciples to go to the gentiles (28:19). Jesus eats with

134. Sheffield, "Father in Matthew," 67–69.

135. Sheffield, "Father in Matthew," 64.

136. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 70–71; Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 38–48.

tax collectors and sinners (9:10), calls a tax collector to be a disciple (10:3), and describes tax collectors and prostitutes as among the first to enter the kingdom of heaven (21:31). I suggest the concept of voluntary marginality holds the original social location and cultural location of Matthew, a Jewish male scribe, in tension with being part of a community of Jesus followers who behave counterculturally by choosing to associate with tax collectors, gentiles, and other marginal people.

There are three main categories of marginality: involuntary or structural marginality, voluntary or ideological marginality, and cultural marginality.¹³⁷ Involuntary or structural marginality is the experience of those who live on the margins of society, usually in poverty and under oppression, without access to goods and services, and unable to share in political, social, and economic power. Ideological or voluntary marginality pertains to people who freely choose to follow a lifestyle outside the conventional statuses, roles, and offices of everyday society. Cultural marginality involves living in between two different, antagonistic cultural worlds without fully belonging to either. For example, the children of immigrant families might find themselves caught between two competing cultures: the old world of their parents and the new world in which they live.¹³⁸

Meier draws on several dimensions of marginality to describe Jesus as a "marginal Jew." Jesus is born socially and structurally marginal because he came from rural Galilee. He becomes voluntarily marginal by choosing to leave his job as a carpenter to become an itinerant preacher. He aligns as ideologically marginal because of his religious views on issues such as divorce.¹³⁹ Carter identifies no less than twelve ways in which the Matthean Jesus followers are voluntarily and ideologically marginal with respect to the Hellenistic Roman worldview and social structure.¹⁴⁰

Social structures involve stratification according to several scales: political status, property ownership, occupation, ethnicity, education, religion, gender, and kinship.¹⁴¹ There is usually a correlation of social status across all these criteria, but when the rankings on the different scales do

137. Duling, *Marginal Scribe*, 251–55, 337; Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 43–45.

138. Duling, *Marginal Scribe*, 253.

139. John P. Meier, *The Roots of the Problem and the Person*, vol. 1 of *A Marginal Jew* (New York: Doubleday, 1991), 6–9.

140. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 45–49.

141. Duling, "Matthew as Marginal Scribe," 530.

not match, there is status dissonance. For example, tax collectors might have amassed wealth and perhaps property, but they remained low on the social scale due to their occupation (Matt 5:46).¹⁴² Therefore, they are not economically marginal but are, nevertheless, socially and religiously marginal. Their marginal status is evident in the criticism the Pharisees level at the Matthean Jesus for befriending and eating with tax collectors (9:10–11, 11:19) and when tax collectors are associated with gentiles as examples of people who are considered outsiders (18:17). Elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel, however, a tax collector is called to be a disciple (10:3), and tax collectors are said by Jesus to be among the first to enter the kingdom of heaven (21:31). The concept of voluntary marginality provides one way of holding these contradictory attitudes to tax collectors in tension.¹⁴³

The author of Matthew's Gospel is voluntarily marginal by associating with a community of Jesus followers that includes structurally marginal people, such as tax collectors and prostitutes (21:31–32). The worldview associated with the social location of Matthew also finds expression, resulting in "status incongruity," conflicting messages, and unresolved tensions.¹⁴⁴ In Matthew's Gospel, tax collectors and gentiles are portrayed as both outsiders (18:17) and present or future insiders (21:31; 28:16–20), and community members are called brothers, despite the presence of sisters and mothers in the fictive kinship group of Jesus who obey the will of the heavenly Father (12:50). The instruction to call no man on earth "father" expresses a countercultural rhetoric with respect to both kyriarchy and the honor code that helps to maintain such hierarchical social structures.

6.3. Honor in the Social World of Matthew's Gospel

In the social-world model of the New Testament developed from the findings of cultural anthropology, honor is considered the core, or pivotal, cultural value in the Mediterranean world of the first century.¹⁴⁵ Honor

142. Vledder identifies tax collectors as retainers (*Conflict in the Miracle Stories*, 123), whereas Lawrence lists tax collectors with the elite rather than nonelite (*Ethnography*, 76).

143. Luz offers four possible resolutions to the tension between Matt 18:15–17 and the rest of Matthew (*Matthew 8–20*, 450).

144. Duling, *Marginal Scribe*, 245–46.

145. Malina, *New Testament World*, 28–32; Richard L. Rohrbaugh, "Honor: Core Value in the Biblical World," in *Understanding the Social World of the New Testament*,

has an important role to play in all “the common social and cultural topics” of the New Testament: honor-shame, challenge-riposte, patronage, benefaction, limited goods, hospitality, sickness, household structures, and kinship patterns.¹⁴⁶ The parable of the royal wedding feast may be considered in terms of the honor dynamics of the first-century world, but, as I argue, the expulsion of the inappropriately dressed person from the wedding feast is not primarily about a lack of honor because the Matthean Jesus expresses a countercultural attitude to honor.

6.3.1. The Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast in Its Social World

The king in the parable of the royal wedding feast may be considered to have both kinds of honor identified in ancient social interaction: ascribed and acquired.¹⁴⁷ The power associated with inherited ascribed honor would enable him to enforce acknowledgment of that honor.¹⁴⁸ The king may also acquire honor through the social interaction of challenge and riposte in a society where nearly every interaction involves the honor code.¹⁴⁹

There are three main phases in the challenge-riposte interaction: action, perception of the action, and response.¹⁵⁰ In the first phase, the challenger sends a message, such as a word, gift, or invitation, by culturally recognized channels.¹⁵¹ The one challenged then assesses how best to respond, including consideration of the affordability of reciprocating the

ed. Dietmar Neufeld and Richard E. DeMaris (London: Routledge, 2010), 109–25; David A. deSilva, *Honor, Patronage, Kinship and Purity: Unlocking New Testament Culture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 23–24; John J. Pilch and Bruce J. Malina, *Handbook of Biblical Social Values*, 3rd ed. (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2016), 89–96.

146. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 75–86; Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 159–66. Such topics are considered under other headings by others, such as Malina, *New Testament World*; deSilva, *Honor*; Gowler, *Host, Guest, Enemy, and Friend*, 359–76, “cultural scripts.”

147. Malina, *New Testament World*, 28–29; deSilva, *Honor*, 23–24; Pilch and Malina, *Handbook*, 89.

148. Malina, *New Testament World*, 32.

149. Malina, *New Testament World*, 33, 36.

150. Malina, *New Testament World*, 34.

151. Malina, *New Testament World*, 34.

honor.¹⁵² In the parable, the king sends out a challenge by inviting guests to his son's wedding feast (Matt 22:2–4). Keener describes it as common practice for kings and other elites to throw wedding banquets for sons as expensively as possible.¹⁵³ The wealth on display at a royal wedding feast would elicit acknowledgment of the monarch's excellence, worth, and honor.¹⁵⁴ Weddings required major preparations, and it was difficult to determine when they would be ready, so the practice of sending a summons following an initial invitation was common, both among the upper class and in regular village life.¹⁵⁵ Attendance at weddings was a social obligation in Palestinian Judaism, and the lower a person's status the greater the punctuality required.¹⁵⁶

The second phase of challenge-riposte is the perception of the message by both the individual who receives it and the public at large.¹⁵⁷ In the Mediterranean world, meal invitations both confirmed and challenged who was in and who was out.¹⁵⁸ Eck argues that in between the initial invitation to a feast and the summons to "come now," gossip played an important role.¹⁵⁹ In an oral culture, gossip facilitates social control by maintaining group boundaries and ranking people on the scale of community values.¹⁶⁰ To protect their honor, guests might refuse to come to a particular person's banquet if others did.¹⁶¹ For all the invited guests to refuse to come would

152. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 519; Rohrbaugh, "Pre-industrial City," 141; Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 169.

153. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 518.

154. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 60.

155. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 519.

156. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 519. See also Joseph Bonsirven, *Palestinian Judaism in the Time of Jesus*, trans. William Wolf (Austin, TX: Rinehart & Winston, 1964), 151; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 516.

157. Malina, *New Testament World*, 34, fig. 2: challenge and response.

158. Van Eck, "When Patrons Are Patrons," art. #1375; Hal Taussig, *In the Beginning Was the Meal: Social Experimentation and Early Christian Identity* (Minneapolis, Fortress, 2009), 22; and Jerome H. Neyrey, "Ceremonies in Luke–Acts," in Neyrey *The Social World of Luke–Acts*, 363.

159. Ernest van Eck, "Invitations and Excuses That Are not Invitations and Excuses: Gossip in Luke 14:18–20," *HvTSt* 68.1 (2012): 1–10, art. #1243.

160. Van Eck, "Invitations and Excuses," 3; Richard L. Rohrbaugh, "Gossip in the New Testament," in *Social Scientific Models for Interpreting the Bible: Essays by the Social Context Group in Honor of Bruce J. Malina*, ed. John J. Pilch (Leiden: Brill, 2001), 239–59.

161. Rohrbaugh "Gossip," 142; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 520.

dishonor the host and could be perceived as a concerted plan to insult the host.¹⁶² It was, however, more common to accept dinner invitations even if one did not like the host (Plato, *Phaedr.* 4.26.17–19).¹⁶³ In the Matthean parable, the invitation is from a king, which provides those invited with an opportunity to acquire honor by being seen to be of sufficient status for the king to include them in his invitation. If they attend, this also ascribes honor to the king by demonstrating that his feast is well-provisioned and well-attended with well-to-do people.

The third phase of challenge-riposte is the actual response to the challenge, for which there are three possibilities: acceptance, which entails counter challenge; passive refusal by not responding, which dishonors the challenger; or active rejection of the challenge by showing scorn, disdain, or contempt.¹⁶⁴ Active rejection requires vengeance if the challenger and receiver are of similar honor status, especially in the cases of extreme dishonor, such as murder and adultery, for which no revocation is possible.¹⁶⁵

The elite first invited to the dinner passively refuse the invitation. They dishonor the king by choosing not to come (22:3) then disregarding the restated invitation and going their own ways (22:5).¹⁶⁶ Rejecting such an invitation could be perceived as a declaration of rebellion.¹⁶⁷ One group much more actively rejects the king's invitation by killing his slaves (22:6). Such extreme dishonor to the king is akin to the Jewish revolutionaries slaying Roman soldiers in blatant violation of a truce, which Josephus only needed to mention for his audience to perceive it as a challenge demanding a swift and severe response (*B.J.* 2.450–456).¹⁶⁸ Greco-Roman literature records similar responses to treachery.¹⁶⁹ In reference to the king in the

162. Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, 171; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 520.

163. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 519.

164. Malina, *New Testament World*, 34.

165. Malina, *New Testament World*, 44.

166. Van Eck discusses how the excuses in Luke 14 identify those initially invited as being “elite,” and a similar case could be made for Matt 22:5 (“When Patrons Are Patrons,” 7–8).

167. Gundry, *Matthew*, 436.

168. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 520.

169. Keener cites Diodorus Siculus, *Bib. hist.* 30.4.1; Livy, *Ab urbe cond.* 21.10.9; Appian, *Hist. Rom.* 6.8.43, 6.9.52, 6.10.60; and Cornelius Nepos, *Miltiades* 4.1, and notes rulers slew those who revolted, often enslaving some (Arrian, *Anab.* 3.25.7), especially women and children, as in Ovid, *Metam.* 13.497; and Appian, *Hist. Rom.* 3.6.1 (*Gospel of Matthew*, 520).

parable, Malina and Rohrbaugh consider that “nothing less than such vengeance as verse seven depicts would satisfy his honor.”¹⁷⁰

In Matt 22:7, the king may well be protecting his honor by commanding the destruction of those who killed his slaves, but defending his honor is not the only dynamic involved. When the guests initially choose not to come (22:3), the king does not cross them off his invitation list. He does not even get angry at this point (cf. Luke 14:21); rather, he practically begs them to come (22:4). The king only sends out armed forces after his slaves are killed. Using the word *φονεύς* (murderer) to describe those who killed the slaves gives the slaves a certain status as human beings rather than simply being collateral damage because eight of the twelve New Testament occurrences of the related verb *φονεύω* refer to “no murder” in the Ten Commandments.¹⁷¹ I propose that this king is not only defending his honor and status as king but is also extracting retribution for the death of his slaves. Gentile rulers may be tyrannical and lord it over others with no apparent reason (Matt 20:25, Mark 10:42, Luke 22:25), but the other king found in a Matthean parable is concerned with retributive justice for a lowly slave (18:22–35).

In both Luke’s parable of the great banquet (14:15–24) and Matthew’s parable of the royal wedding feast (22:1–14) the host responds to the situation by bringing in nonelite people to share table fellowship, which was rare in ancient societies. Not only were those of low status unlikely to be invited to recline at the table, but lower-quality food and wine was often served to those of lower honor ranking, who were seated at a distance from the host, possibly even in another room.¹⁷² Such stratification is evident in the criticism Jesus makes of those who jostle for positions of honor at festive meals (Matt 23:6, Mark 12:39, Luke 20:46), weddings (Luke 14:7–11), and in other settings (Matt 20:20, Mark 10:35–40).

The host’s extension of hospitality to the nonelite could be understood as an attempt to salvage honor through the patron-client benefaction system. To accept a benefit, gift, or invitation to a meal implied participation in a process of reciprocity.¹⁷³ If both parties were of the same social

170. Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 135.

171. BDAG, s.v. “*φονεύς*”; H. Balz, “*φονεύω*,” *EDNT* 3:435–36.

172. Martial, *Epig.* 1.20, 3.60; Juvenal, *Sat.* 5; Pliny, *Ep.* 2:6; Taussig, *In the Beginning*, 22; Neyrey, “Ceremonies in Luke-Acts,” 363; Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 136.

173. Malina, *New Testament World*, 94.

standing, the relationship is in the form of a colleague contract, concerned with achieving balanced reciprocity.¹⁷⁴ The first invitations in Luke's parable of the great banquet (14:15–24) suggest a colleague contract between people of elite status who have the capability to reciprocate with another dinner invitation.¹⁷⁵ When the participants in an exchange are not social equals, the reciprocal relationship is the asymmetrical one of patron to client. A patron provides something that is in short supply. Clients respond by enhancing the name and honor of the patron by the means of public praise and concern for their reputation and by informing patrons of devious plots against them.¹⁷⁶ In Matthew's parable of the royal wedding feast (22:1–14), those first invited could be considered clients because the host is a king.¹⁷⁷ Neyrey describes the king acting as a patron to his nobles by offering the benefaction of inducement in the form of attendance at a royal wedding feast.¹⁷⁸ Following the initial refusals, the king sends out another round of slaves with a more insistent invitation, to which these clients "return no honor to the king but instead treat him with contempt."¹⁷⁹ When they kill the king's messengers, they "fatally break the patron-client relationship. Instead of benefaction, the clients receive the vengeance of the patron-king."¹⁸⁰

Even if the king had already "recouped quite a bit of honor by killing those who offended him," sending slaves out to ensure that the dining hall is full of guests (Matt 22:9–10) might, like the actions of the snubbed tax collector Bar Ma'jan, be an attempt to salvage some honor by acting as a patron.¹⁸¹ If those brought in from the streets (Matt 22:10, Luke 14:21–23) are in effect clients, they need to repay their patron and benefactor in the form of honor, loyalty, obedience, and submission.¹⁸² Clients may receive

174. Malina, *New Testament World*, 95.

175. Van Eck, "When Patrons Are Patrons," 12.

176. Malina, *New Testament World*, 96.

177. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 517.

178. Jerome H. Neyrey, *Render to God: New Testament Understandings of the Divine* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 76–82.

179. Neyrey, *Render to God*, 76.

180. Neyrey, *Render to God*, 76.

181. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 521.

182. Malina, *New Testament World*, 95–96; Malina and Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary*, 134; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 517–22; Neyrey does not extend his patron-client analysis of the parable of the royal wedding feast to Matt 22:11–13 (*Render to God*, 77).

the benefaction of free food from their patrons, but it does not come without strings attached—in this parable of the royal wedding feast certain clothing is required (Matt 22:11–13).

6.3.2. Clean Clothing

Since the lack of written evidence for provision of wedding clothing by the host has been stressed, most interpreters of the parable of the royal wedding feast consider clean clothes as needed to honor the king. France describes what is required as “decent, clean white clothes such as anyone would have available.”¹⁸³ Derrett points out that, despite the apparent short notice, “all the others had the correct dress,” and he asserts, “even beggars can manage to wash a garment.”¹⁸⁴ In what follows, I assess the availability of changes of clothing and access to clothes-washing facilities in the first century.

In New Testament times, clothing was a valuable commodity, a “limited good.”¹⁸⁵ The exhortation not to worry about food and clothing (Matt 6:25–34, Luke 12:22–31) suggests that both may have been in short supply. Soldiers cast lots for the robe (ἱμάτιον) that Jesus had been wearing (Matt 27:35, Mark 15:24, Luke 23:34, John 19:24). Because peasants would use their ἱμάτιον, “outer garment,” as a blanket at night, biblical law does not permit it to be kept as a pledge overnight (Exod 22:26–27, Deut 24:12–13).¹⁸⁶ If, in adherence to Matt 5:40, a disciple were to give his robe (ἱμάτιον) as well as his shirt (χιτῶν) to one who sues them, nakedness could result, an “intolerable dishonor” (Gen 3:7, 10–11; 9:22; Jub. 3.21–22, 30–31; 7.8–10, 20; 1QS VII, 12; Sifre Deut. 320).¹⁸⁷ Even if ordinary villagers during the time of the Roman Empire had a set of clothes for special occasions distinct from their work clothes, as Craig Keener argues by extrapolating from Egyptian sources,¹⁸⁸ the process for washing clothes was a time-consuming one.

183. France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 826.

184. Derrett, *Law*, 154.

185. Malina, *New Testament World*, 89–105.

186. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 198; Richard A. Horsley, “Ethics and Exegesis: ‘Love Your Enemies’ and the Doctrine of Non-Violence,” *JAAR* 54 (1986): 18; Walter Wink, *Powers That Be: Theology for a New Millennium* (New York: Doubleday, 1998), 98–111.

187. Wink, *Powers That Be*, 104–6.

188. Keener cites Naphtali Lewis, *Life under Egypt under Roman Rule* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 69 (*Gospel of Matthew*, 522).

In ancient times clothes were usually washed by women at the water's edge of a river, canal, or sea and then spread out to dry.¹⁸⁹ In the urbanized centers of the Roman Empire, however, clothes would be sent to fullers because cleaning clothes required space, time, labor, and materials not usually kept at home, and it was a malodorous process.¹⁹⁰ In *fullonica* clothes would be soaked in a series of vats with various concentrations of urine and sometimes fuller's earth and niter, both to absorb grease and act as a scourge as boys would trample on the clothes.¹⁹¹ After clothes were rinsed and hung to dry, they might be brushed, hung over burning sulfur to whiten the clothes further, and then rinsed, dried, beaten flat, and folded ready to return to the customer.¹⁹² Fullers were part of city life in two of the most likely locations for the writing of Matthew's Gospel. Maps of Antioch include a fullers' quarter and an inscription about digging a fullers' canal on the right bank of the Orontes River in 73–74 CE.¹⁹³ In the Jerusalem Talmud there is mention of a fuller being in court in Sepphoris.¹⁹⁴

The poor of a city would be unlikely to afford the services of a fuller, so I am not as convinced as Derrett that it would be a straightforward matter for beggars to wash their clothes.¹⁹⁵ Even if someone of low social status had a second set of clothes, the process of washing clothes was lengthy, laborious, and probably beyond their means, and it would be difficult to achieve between the king's summons and arriving at the wedding feast (22:9–10). The need for “only” a clean garment rather than a specific wedding garment does not create an equality of opportunity for all people to attend this wedding.¹⁹⁶ I suggest the concern for clean clothing is no less “exegetically untenable” than the provision of a festive robe as an expres-

189. Peter Lacovara, *The World of Ancient Egypt: A Daily Life Encyclopedia*, 2 vols. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO Greenwood, 2016–2017), 1:178.

190. James W. Ermatinger, *The World of Ancient Rome: A Daily Life Encyclopedia*, 2 vols. (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO Greenwood, 2015), 1:101–3; Mark Bradley, “Foul Bodies in Ancient Rome,” in *Smell and the Ancient Senses*, ed. Mark Bradley (London: Routledge, 2015), 140–41.

191. Ermatinger, *World of Ancient Rome*, 1:101–3.

192. Ermatinger, *World of Ancient Rome*, 1:101–3.

193. Getzel M. Cohen, *The Hellenistic Settlements in Syria, the Red Sea Basin, and North Africa* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2006), 3.

194. Heinrich W. Guggenheimer, ed., *The Jerusalem Talmud, First Order Zeraïm, Tractates Kilaim and Ševi'it: Translation and Commentary* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2001), 305.

195. Derrett, *Law*, 154.

196. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 68.

sion of hospitality or benefaction, especially as divine provision of robes of righteousness is implied in Isa 61:10.¹⁹⁷

Whether wedding clothing is provided or not, its absence is often considered an affront to the king's honor.¹⁹⁸ This assumption needs to be assessed in relation to the level of importance placed on honor in Matthew's Gospel because, as Louise Lawrence argues, the honor-shame model should not be applied uncritically to every New Testament scenario.¹⁹⁹

6.3.3. Countercultural Rhetoric with Respect to Honor in Matthew

In this subsection I argue that the Matthean Jesus makes little reference to the importance of attributing honor. Indeed, a countercultural rhetoric with respect to honor is evident in Matthew's Gospel, especially in the Sermon on the Mount, which does not promote balanced reciprocity (e.g., Matt 5:43–48). The eunuch logion in Matt 19:12 also challenges "men not to play the Mediterranean machismo contest, rooted in a culture characterised by an honor-shame protocol."²⁰⁰

The Matthean Jesus makes little reference to giving honor (τιμάω) apart from honoring parents (15:4–6, 19:19). He observes that prophets are not honored in their hometown (13:57) and that people can show honor with their lips but not in their hearts (15:8). He speaks against claiming places and titles of honor (23:2–12). He teaches that it is not enough to ascribe honor by saying "Lord, Lord"; one needs to do the will of the Father (7:21). Jesus seems to be more concerned about obeying the will of the Father (7:21, 12:50, 18:14, 21:31) than ascribing honor to God as "lord of lords" or "king of kings" (cf. Rev 17:14, 19:16). Jesus criticizes kings and rulers who "lord it over others" (Matt 20:25 NRSV; Mark 10:42).

Neyrey argues that in the Sermon on the Mount the Matthean Jesus advocates for a fundamental reform of "honor," including the redefinition of whose acknowledgment really counts.²⁰¹ In the ancient world, men acquired honor through verbal, physical, and sexual aggression, but in

197. Luz makes the assessment that provision of wedding clothing is "exegetically untenable" (*Matthew* 21–28, 58–59).

198. For example, Carter, "Resisting and Imitating the Empire," 271; Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 522.

199. Lawrence, *Ethnography*, 7–36.

200. Talbott, "Imagining the Matthean Eunuch," 21–43.

201. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 164–65.

Matt 5:21–48 Jesus forbids participation in any part of this honor contest.²⁰² Disciples are neither to make honor claims by boasting and verbose oaths (5:34–37) nor to initiate honor challenges by being physically, sexually, or verbally aggressive (5:21, 27–32, 33). If a disciple has already issued an honor challenge, it is to be withdrawn and reconciliation and settlement sought (5:23–26). If disciples are challenged, they are not to defend their honor or seek honorable satisfaction by any means, including verbal retaliation (5:22), but rather to turn the other cheek (5:39–42) and to love their enemies (5:43–45).²⁰³ Furthermore, in Matt 6:1–18, disciples are not only to desist from engaging in honor contests but also to “quit the playing field” by not practicing their piety “before others” (6:1).²⁰⁴ To receive the reward of the heavenly Father, men need to refrain from participation in honor contests, which challenges the patriarchal ordering of life in the first century.²⁰⁵

The Matthean Jesus exhorts his male followers neither to initiate nor to defend honor challenges of verbal, physical, or sexual aggression—regardless of how their manhood is judged by others.²⁰⁶ Neyrey proposes that those who practice this preaching of Jesus would be deemed weaklings, wimps, and worthless no-accounts unable to defend their honor.²⁰⁷ Shamed by their neighbors and shunned by their families, those dishonored by following Jesus would be likely to experience poverty, mourning, hunger, and thirst.²⁰⁸ Therefore, Jesus encourages and honors those who experience such privation with the words of the Beatitudes.²⁰⁹ In the Sermon on the Mount, true honor comes from living up to Jesus's new code and receiving one's reward from the heavenly Father.²¹⁰ Those who practice their piety according to the conventions of the existing honor code receive their reward in the here and now (6:2, 5, 16), whereas those who do so “in secret” will receive their reward from the Father in heaven in the hereafter (6:4, 6, 18).²¹¹

202. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 190–211.

203. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 210.

204. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 214.

205. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 164–228.

206. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 190–211.

207. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 211.

208. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 187.

209. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 164–89.

210. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 165.

211. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame*, 212–28.

Neyrey argues that in several Matthean parables, the world of honor and shame is “turned upside down” by actions of the main narrative agent.²¹²

One king inexplicably forgives a major debt, which calls into question not only the prudence of the act but also the savvy of the patron. If these materials describe God and the kingdom, then Jesus’ God-talk seems completely shocking, foolish, and even silly. Finally, the four parables in Matthew 20–22 describe a patron-father who appears to be a foolish landlord, a father who cannot control his sons, and a father-king who is shamed by his nobles and forced to bring untouchables to the marriage of his son.²¹³

Neyrey argues that because these are parables about the kingdom of heaven, they present God as foolish, weak, or inept according to the rules of the honor contest.²¹⁴ This God breaks the rules because he “hobnobs with the ‘wrong’ people, namely, the sinners, those on the margins, the unclean, and the expendables.”²¹⁵ Furthermore, he “allows himself to be put upon” by not immediately responding to insults with vengeance.²¹⁶ An example of this is the king’s initial response when those invited do not come to the wedding when called; he calls again, intensifying the invitation (22:3–4).

When parabolic representations of God pronounce violent punishment on individuals, it is usually a response to situations in which slaves have been victims of violence rather than merely a matter of honor (18:23–35, 24:45–51). In the parable of the two debtors (18:23–35), the major debtor, who demands debt payment from a fellow slave by grabbing him by the throat and putting him in prison, is sentenced to torture by the king—but only after the king hears what the debtor did to his fellow slave. In the parable of the unfaithful slave (24:45–51), the slave given stewardship responsibilities for ensuring the fair allocation of food to his fellow slaves chooses to eat and drink with drunkards and to beat his fellow slaves. Beating rather than feeding slaves is crucial to understanding why the householder has this managerial slave dichotomized and put

212. Neyrey, *Render to God*, 80.

213. Neyrey, *Render to God*, 77–78.

214. Neyrey, *Render to God*, 80.

215. Neyrey, *Render to God*, 81.

216. Neyrey, *Render to God*, 80.

with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.²¹⁷ In these two parables the king and householder do not authorize violence to defend their honor by punishing a debtor or a drunkard but rather to act on behalf of those abused by these two managerial slaves who “lord it over” their fellow slaves. By analogy with these two parables, I suggest a similar dynamic of acting on behalf of little ones might lie behind the king’s command to have the inappropriately dressed guest restrained and removed in the parable of the royal wedding feast (22:13).

The Matthean Jesus does not rate honor highly and there is evidence of a countercultural attitude to honor in Matthew’s Gospel. In the parables of the two debtors and of the unfaithful slave the most severe punishments are for harming other slaves rather than for dishonoring the king or householder. I propose that in the parable of the royal wedding feast, the restraint and removal of the individual without wedding clothing (Matt 22:11–13) is more about care of little ones than a matter of honor.²¹⁸

6.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have identified the social location of the author of the Gospel of Matthew as that of a Jewish man in a city within the Roman Empire, perhaps Antioch of Syria or Sepphoris in Galilee, in the late first century following the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Within the social structure of the period, the author of Matthew’s Gospel is likely to have belonged to the retainer class and probably worked as a scribe. As a disciple of Jesus, he advocates for identifying with the structurally marginal and therefore was, in effect, ideologically and voluntarily marginal. Matthew promotes an anti-kyriarchal, countercultural rhetoric with respect to the social structures of his day or, as in Carter’s terminology, he advocates for an alternate, anti-imperial community of brothers and sisters.²¹⁹ This tension between the social location of the author of Matthew’s Gospel and the ideals of the dominion of heaven contribute to a complex cultural rhetoric.

The cultural rhetoric of Matthew’s Gospel is subcultural in relation to a Jewish worldview and countercultural with respect to human hierarchy and the honor code. In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the individual would not be expelled because he is a Jew, for the story is told to Jewish

217. Howes, “Food for Thought,” 110–30.

218. Contra Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 522; Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 437.

219. Carter, “The Gospel of Matthew,” 82–86; Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 171.

leaders who are criticized not for being Jewish but rather for their poor leadership. Some scholars, such as Carter, consider Matt 22:11–13 to be a warning that those “who repeat the elite’s mistake and fail to recognize and honor God as king will also experience God’s violent punishment.”²²⁰ Matthew’s Gospel, however, expresses a countercultural rhetoric regarding honor and not every matter pivots on honor contests.²²¹ I consider the expulsion of the individual from the wedding feast to be more than a matter of dishonoring the king. Moreover, the Matthean Jesus is so critical of kyriarchal structures (20:25, 23:9) that it makes little narrative sense for the expelled person to be a marginalized person. The expelled person is more likely to represent someone with the means to cause harm to little ones in the household of faith.

The contradictions regarding gentiles, tax collectors, and women in the Gospel of Matthew may be a function of countercultural rhetoric employing the very language and imagery of the dominant culture it contests. Carter argues this with respect to the imperial paradigm in the two Matthean king parables (18:23–35; 22:1–14).²²² In his words,

The word of God comes to the gospel’s readers, as it always does, in cultural garb. There is no language for this gospel to employ other than the one that pervades and dominates its world. The gospel attests, then, the power of the imperial paradigm, the deep level at which it has been internalized, absorbed, and assumed by this gospel’s traditions, communities, and author—members of the imperially-controlled society who nonetheless criticize and resist it!²²³

Similarly, Matthew develops a patriarchal model of God as Father in heaven to conduct a countercultural critique of human hierarchies on earth. In the next chapter, I critique the ideological texture of the parable of the royal wedding feast and its interpretations from my social location.

220. Carter, “Resisting and Imitating the Empire,” 271.

221. Lawrence, *Ethnography*, 7–36.

222. Carter, “Resisting and Imitating the Empire,” 262.

223. Carter, “Resisting and Imitating the Empire,” 272.

Ideological Texture: Reading the Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast from My Social Location

In this chapter, I shift my focus from exploring the social world that lies behind the Gospel of Matthew to what lies in front of the text to explore the ideological textures of the parable of the royal wedding feast. I consider how this parable is understood by successive audiences of this text from the perspective of my social and cultural location. In chapter 6, I explored the social location of the author of Matthew's Gospel, a Jewish man living in a Middle Eastern land under the rule of the Roman Empire. In this chapter, I come to his text as a Christian woman living in twenty-first-century Australia with the responsibilities of a priest in the Anglican Church. In chapter 5, I explored how the Matthean Jesus criticizes the religious leaders of his day (Matt 21–23) and stresses the importance of caring for little ones in the community (Matt 18). The religious leaders of my day are criticized for their lack of concern for the well-being of little ones in churches and church institutions. The sins of which we are rightly accused are blindness, deafness, and inaction in response to allegations of clergy or church workers abusing their power by sexually assaulting children.

My exploration of the ideological textures of the parable of the royal wedding feast begins with a description of my social location and related ideological view of the world. In *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, Robbins recommends this as the first task of analyzing ideological texture.¹ I then follow the pattern for exploring ideological texture set out by Robbins in

1. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 96–100; elsewhere, Robbins identifies the social location of the interpreter following the exploration of the ideology of texts, authoritative traditions of interpretation, and ideology of intellectual discourse (*Tapstry of Early Christian Discourse*, 215).

Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse. This begins with an analysis of the power dynamics evident in the text and is followed by a consideration of the power relationships in authoritative traditions of interpretation and the content and mode of interpretation of the text by both individuals and groups.² Thus ideological critique is applied to commentaries as well as to the texts themselves.³

Ideological analysis involves descriptive and positive aspects, as well as criticism of ideology in the work of others.⁴ Description of the socioideological world, "the symbolic universe," of a text has significant overlap with sociocultural texture analysis because this identifies the interrelated beliefs, assumptions, and values in a culture's "system of viewing the world conceptually."⁵ Such understandings of ideology accept as inevitable that ideological presuppositions influence all text production and interpretation and are to be taken into account. Positive expressions of ideology actively promote an ideal and consciously seek to affirm, confirm, or change the audience's point of view to share that ideal and to help make it a reality.⁶ Martin Luther King Jr's "I Have a Dream" speech is an example of powerful rhetoric promoting a positive ideology, that of racial equality, rather than simply criticizing racism.⁷ Negative ideological critique seeks to unveil prejudice and expose racism, anti-Semitism, orientalism,⁸ sexism, elitism, colonialism, or some other form of now-unacceptable ideology.

My exploration of the political and power dynamics of the parable of the royal wedding feast—and its interpretations—is informed by feminist,

2. Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 192–236; Robbins summarizes these as spheres of ideology (*Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 111).

3. Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*, 235.

4. Kloppenborg, "Ideological Texture," 65–67; L. Bloomquist, "Paul's Inclusive Language," 167–70. Both note these three approaches to ideology.

5. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story*, 56.

6. Bloomquist, "Paul's Inclusive Language," 166.

7. David A. Bobbitt, *The Rhetoric of Redemption: Kenneth Burke's Redemption Drama and Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' Speech* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), 53–54. Keith D. Miller suggests his allusions to the Hebrew Bible counter supersessionist Christian ideology. See Miller, *Martin Luther King's Biblical Epic: His Final Great Speech* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2011), 121.

8. Kloppenborg, "Ideological Texture," 66–67; R. S. Sugirtharajah, *Exploring Post-colonial Biblical Criticism: History, Method, Practice* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 94–122.

imperial-critical, and postcolonial biblical criticism.⁹ These provide suitable lenses for exploring the ideological texture and power dynamics in this parable, in which the dominant narrative agent is a hegemonic male, a βασιλεύς, a “king” or “emperor.” Although imperial-critical and postcolonial approaches are similar, they approach imperial-colonial constructions from different perspectives.¹⁰ Imperial criticism focuses on the center of an imperial system and explores how, for example, a New Testament text relates to the Roman Empire, whereas postcolonial approaches critique the exercise of imperial power in a biblical text from a social location on the periphery of any power structure, that is, from the margins.¹¹

7.1. My Social Location

The social and cultural location from which I approach the parable of the royal wedding feast and its interpretations inevitably influence my understanding of this parable. I am a white, Australian Anglican woman priest. However, identifying my social location is more complex than simply naming gender and geography, race and religion. It also involves my location within societal and ecclesial structures. I am on different positions on various gradients of power and influence, much as Dennis Duling describes the complexities of social stratification in the social and cultural world of the Gospel of Matthew.¹² As a non-indigenous Australian, I have advantages simply because of when and where I was born and raised. I have some disadvantage as a woman, but as an ordained priest I have recognition and responsibility within the church denied to other women. Sharon Ringe also describes the ambiguity of her social position, including the marginality of being single in a world orientated to couples and

9. Warren Carter, “Towards an Imperial-Critical Reading of Matthew’s Gospel,” in *Society of Biblical Literature 1998 Seminar Papers*, SBLSPS 37.1 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 1998), 296–324; Carter, “An Imperial-Critical Reading of Matthew,” in *An Introduction to Empire in the New Testament*, ed. Adam Winn, RBS 84 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 71–90; Fernando F. Segovia, “Postcolonial Criticism and the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Methods for Matthew*, ed. Mark Allan Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 194–237; Sugirtharajah, *Exploring Postcolonial Biblical Criticism*, 42.

10. Segovia, “Postcolonial Criticism,” 213.

11. Segovia, “Postcolonial Criticism,” 213.

12. Duling, “Matthew as Marginal Scribe,” 545.

nuclear families.¹³ Tolbert summarizes the politics of location as assigning more worth, privilege, and power to people who have the following ingredients in their social location: "male, white, wealthy, First World, physically sound, heterosexual, Christian, middle- to upper-class."¹⁴

I read the parable of the royal wedding feast from the social location of an Australian Anglican woman priest at this point in history. I have always been a church insider. I was baptized when I was six weeks old; sought confirmation when barely a teenager; taught Sunday school; served, sang, and played in the church band; led youth groups; and taught in an Anglican school. In 1992, I attended the ministry-vocation conference and was accepted as a candidate for ordained ministry in my diocese. This was somewhat surprising—the interview regarding vocation and spirituality was facilitated by two bishops outspoken against the ordination of women in the many debates of the time. Later that year I was privileged to attend the first ordination of women to the priesthood in the Anglican Church of Australia.

Sitting in the overflowing Cathedral on December 5, 1992, was an exciting occasion. I knew the five women being ordained. The ordinal, like the wedding service of the time, provided an opportunity for anyone with a just cause to speak against anyone's ordination. As at most weddings, this is usually a mere formality, but at this ordination two people objected. An older conservative priest made his case against ordaining women, to which the ordaining bishop politely responded that it was allowed, following changes to legislation at the recent national synod. The other objection was much more distressing. A woman started screaming. Her tirade began with "cursed be the man who ordaineth women." I felt I had slipped from a dream into a nightmare.

This celebration of the ordination of nine priests into the church of God, five of whom were women, could not have happened without one outspoken woman being silenced. Perhaps there is a similar dynamic at work in the parable of the royal wedding feast. To enable tax collectors and

13. Sharon H. Ringe, "Solidarity and Contextuality: Readings of Matthew 18:21–35," in *Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States*, vol. 1 of *Reading from this Place*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 200.

14. Mary Ann Tolbert, "Afterwords: The Politics and Poetics of Location," in Segovia and Tolbert, *Social Location and Biblical Interpretation*, 312.

prostitutes to participate in the feast, those who would deny them a place at the table need to be silenced, restrained, and perhaps even removed.

In my social world, if someone in a position of authority and responsibility within the church sexually abuses children, there is little doubt that they should be “defrocked,” removed from their position of responsibility in the church. The more challenging question is whether—for the protection of little ones in and on the margins of the church community—those who sexually abuse children need to be removed from the church completely. Jesus commends visiting those in prison (Matt 25:31–46), befriends sinners (11:19), and welcomes tax collectors and prostitutes into the dominion of heaven (21:31). Would he not welcome all the marginalized, including those convicted of child sexual abuse?

My experience of hearing a woman cursing a bishop for ordaining women and of the revelation of prevalence of predatory behavior in the church raise the question of whether such individuals need to be removed for the well-being of the wider community. If so, I am concerned that once justification for the removal of anyone from the church community is accepted, it permits church communities to exclude or expel various categories of people on the pretext of enhancing the well-being of the community. This has the potential to further marginalize the marginalized—those with whom I like to consider myself in solidarity: an elderly gay man no longer welcome at his local church and a divorced woman shunned in the shopping center by those from her previous church more than ten years after she left her abusive husband.

To use the language of marginality discussed in chapter 6, I could describe myself as someone who seeks to be voluntarily marginal by choosing to identify with the structurally marginal. I can never really know the discrimination experienced by people with a different skin color or sexuality, the disadvantage of poor literacy, and the damage of growing up in a dysfunctional household. But I can do my best to avoid excluding, blaming, or ignoring those on the margins.

7.2. Ideological Presuppositions

From my social location of voluntary marginality, two significant ideological presuppositions emerge as integral to my approach to the parable of the royal wedding feast. They are a preferential option for the marginalized on the edge of community and a preferential option for the little ones within a community. These ideological stances are variants of “the preferential

option for the poor” hermeneutic that emerged from South America, which has been adopted more broadly by the Roman Catholic Church and is adapted by Nalpathilchira into a “preferential option for the reign of heaven” in his study of Matt 22:1–14.¹⁵ My preferential option for the marginalized draws on the practice of Jesus, who includes tax collectors, prostitutes, and sinners (9:10–11, 11:19, 21:31–32), the marginal people of his time. Naming this presupposition using *marginalized* draws on the development and application of theories of marginality in previous studies of Matthew's Gospel.¹⁶ My preferential option for little ones emerges from engagement with the Community Discourse in Matt 18.

Modes of biblical interpretation with an identified ideology—such as a preferential option for the poor or liberationist, feminist, queer, postcolonial, and ecological readings—both criticize ideological presuppositions evident in biblical texts and offer new readings. For example, Wainwright describes feminist critical interpretation of the Gospel of Matthew as consisting of two main moments.¹⁷ The deconstructive phase uses a hermeneutic of suspicion that begins with “the assumption that biblical texts and their interpretations are androcentric and serve patriarchal functions.”¹⁸ The reconstructive phase presumes the inclusion of women in the text and brings to light aspects of the text and subtext previously neglected, actively silenced, or simply forgotten.¹⁹

Inspired and informed by both feminist and postcolonial biblical criticism, I approach in this chapter the parable of the royal wedding feast with a hermeneutic of suspicion ready to deconstruct any reading that justifies the expulsion of a member of the church community on the grounds of gender, sexuality, divorce, ethnicity, disability, or socioeconomic disadvantage. My articulation of this ideological stance is a “preferential option for the marginalized,” that is, the inclusion of those in my world who are

15. Rohan M. Curnow, “Which Preferential Option for the Poor? A History of the Doctrine's Bifurcation,” *Modern Theology* 31.1 (2015): 27–59; Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready*, 372–73.

16. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 43–45; Duling, *Marginal Scribe*, 251–55; Love, *Jesus and Marginal Women*, 7–11; Reta Halteman, “Jesus and the Top Secret Empire: In Matthew's Gospel, the ‘Littlest Ones’ Are Key to the Upside-Down Kingdom,” *Sojourners Magazine* 42.8 (2013): 36–38.

17. Wainwright, “Feminist Criticism,” 95–96.

18. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread Not Stone: The Challenge of Feminist Biblical Interpretation* (repr., Boston: Beacon, 1985), 15–20.

19. Wainwright, “Feminist Criticism,” 96–98.

treated like the sinners, tax collectors, and prostitutes in the first-century world of Matthew's Gospel but whom Jesus makes a point of including (9:10–11, 11:19, 21:31–32). I pair this with a “preferential option for little ones,” that is, the valuing of vulnerable ones in the community of faith as advocated by Jesus in Matt 18.

7.3. Ideology of Power in Matthew 21–23

To apply preferential options for the marginalized and little ones, it is necessary to explore the power dynamics of the text and thereby identify those with less power than others. Elizabeth Castelli discusses five elements to creating and sustaining power relations: (1) systems of differentiation between people that allow dominant people to act towards others in particular ways, (2) articulated objectives for why those with power act as they do, (3) means for bringing power-imbalance relationships into being, (4) institutionalization of power, and (5) rationalization of power relations.²⁰ Each of these five elements is significant in the ideology of power in the parable of the royal wedding feast within its Matthean setting.

7.3.1. Power Relations in the Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast

The most obvious differentiation between people in the parable of the royal wedding feast is the king vis-à-vis all other narrative agents in the parable. The king exercises power over both those who do not come to the wedding feast (22:2–8) and those who do (22:9–13), which is most evident in sending out troops (22:7) and commanding the binding and expulsion of the person without wedding clothing (22:13). The king also has under his authority slaves (22:3, 4, 8, 10), troops (22:7), and attendants (22:13).

The parable includes articulated objectives for why the king acts as he does. The king organizes a feast and invites guests to celebrate the wedding of his son (22:2). He reissues the invitation because those who were invited first do not come (22:3–4). He sends out troops to “destroy the murderers” of his slaves (22:7 NCV). He sends out his slaves to gather more guests after he declares the first invited as unworthy because the food is ready (22:8–9). He commands that an individual be bound hand and foot and

20. Elizabeth Anne Castelli, *Imitating Paul: A Discourse of Power* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1991), 50, 122; Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 113.

cast into the outer darkness because this person is not wearing wedding clothing (22:13).

The means by which the power imbalance is introduced into the parable of the royal wedding feast is naming the main narrative agent as a βασιλεύς (king) no less than four times within the parable (22:2, 7, 11, 13). Elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel, rulers exercise power by killing infants (2:16, 22), John the Baptist (14:3–11), and Jesus (27:15–26).²¹ The Matthean Jesus compares kings with wolves (10:16–18), and he accuses them of collecting taxes arbitrarily (17:25) and of lording it over others with tyrannical behavior (20:25).²²

By having a king as the main narrative agent of Matt 22:1–14, the power imbalance already present in the preceding parables is amplified above that of the authority of a father over his sons (21:28–32) and a landowner over his tenants (21:33–41). In all three parables, some choose not to recognize the authority of the main narrative agent: the father, landowner, and king. The ideological alignment of the narrator is with these dominant narrative agents and not the disobedient son, the tenants, or those who do not come to the wedding feast or do come but without wedding clothing.

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, evidence of the institutionalization of power includes the authority of a master over his slaves and attendants, and of a king over his soldiers and his subjects. The king's slaves do not question the king's command to go and call people to the wedding feast on any of the three occasions they are sent out, even after other slaves are killed in the process (22:3, 4, 9–10). The king's commands issued to soldiers (22:7) and attendants (22:13) are also not challenged.

In this parable there is some rationalization of the exercise of power by the king. The narrator describes the king sending soldiers to kill "murderers" (φονέως), providing a rationale for the king's command (22:7). Even though there is a lack of clarity as to what wedding clothing is required, for the narrator an absence of such clothing merits the king's attention, interrogation, and command to cast out the one dressed inappropriately (22:11, 12, 13). Some rationalize the king's action against the inappropriately dressed individual by suggesting that this person does not give due honor to the king.²³

21. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 48.

22. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 48.

23. Carter, "Resisting and Imitating the Empire," 260–72.

Within the parable of the royal wedding feast, the king (βασιλεύς) is the dominant narrative agent. He occupies the top position in the power pyramid. His slaves, soldiers, and attendants respond to his commands without question. He exercises power over all those called to the wedding feast.

7.3.2. Power Relations in Matthew 21–23

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus recounts the parable of the royal wedding feast as part of a power contest between himself and various religious leaders (Matt 21–23). This begins with the chief priests, who represent institutionalized power, questioning the authority of Jesus to teach in the temple (21:23). They recognize themselves in the parables Jesus then tells (21:45). Early in Matthew's Gospel, the chief priests collude with Herod (2:4). They feature among those who will inflict great suffering on Jesus when he foretells his death and resurrection (16:21, 20:18) and are angry when the children cry out "Hosanna" in the temple (21:15). After the confrontation in the temple, the chief priests abet Judas in betraying Jesus (26:14), arrest Jesus (26:47), plot against Jesus (26:59; 27:1), accuse Jesus (27:12), persuade crowds to cry for Barabbas to be released instead of Jesus (27:20), and mock Jesus (27:41). With the Pharisees, the chief priests attempt to promulgate the story that the body of Jesus was stolen (27:62, 28:12).

Jesus recognizes the institutional authority of the scribes and Pharisees who "sit on Moses seat," but not their authority as exemplars of righteousness. He says, "Do whatever they teach you and follow it; but do not do as they do, for they do not practice what they teach" (23:3 NRSV). The scribes and Pharisees question the authority of Jesus over his disciples and over demons before Jesus arrives in Jerusalem (9:11, 34; 12:2, 22; 15:2), but after the confrontation regarding the authority of Jesus in the temple, the scribes and Pharisees dare ask no more questions (22:26). Then Jesus makes them the object of criticism (23:1–12) and directs a series of woes at them (23:13–36).

In Matt 21–23 Jesus is presented as being more authoritative on religious matters than the religious leaders. Moreover, this demonstration of his authority happens in the temple. The Jerusalem temple was the center of Jewish worship and identity, with different levels of access. Gentiles could only enter the outer court. Jewish women could progress to the Court of Women, where the treasury was located. Male Jews could enter the Court of Israel. Only a small subset of such men, those descended from Aaron, could enter the sanctuary, but only when it was their turn

(Luke 1:8–9). Whether or not any women were in the audience when Jesus told the parable of the royal wedding feast depends on where within the temple it was told.

7.3.3. Power and Gender in Matthew 21–23

The temple audience comprises high priests, elders, Pharisees, Herodians, and Sadducees (21:23, 45; 22:16, 23, 34). Throughout Matt 21:23–22:46 “the disciples and the crowds occupy a secondary position, almost as if they are not present.”²⁴ When Jesus enters the temple, Matthew does not specify which gate he comes through or in which court he is teaching (21:23).²⁵ The Gospels of Mark and Luke may provide a clue. In these synoptic parallels, while Jesus is debating religious leaders in the temple (Mark 11:15–13:1, Luke 20:1–21:4), he sees a widow putting coins into the temple treasury (Mark 12:41–44, Luke 21:1–4), which locates Jesus in the Court of Women, where the treasury is located. Regardless of whether any women are amongst the crowd, the issues debated concern patriarchal and imperial power.

The three parables Jesus tells in the temple pivot on the authority a father has over his sons, a landowner has over his tenants, and a king has over his subjects (Matt 21:28–22:14). The debates that follow these parables center on patriarchal concerns.²⁶ Paying taxes to Caesar is predominantly the responsibility of the male head of the household (22:15–22). A woman is central to the illustration in the question the Sadducees ask about levirate marriage and the resurrection (22:23–33), but this story is not told from her perspective: “which one will be my husband?” Rather it is from the perspective of seven brothers who marry the same woman: “whose wife will she be?”²⁷ Jesus’s summation of the law arises in response to a question about the teaching of the law, a responsibility given to men (22:34–40). The question Jesus asks about the Son of David concerns “male lineage and the lordship of the messiah” (22:41–46).²⁸

24. Love, “Place of Women,” 61.

25. If it is in the Portico of Solomon on the perimeter of the outer court (John 10:23), it is noteworthy that even though gentiles could come this far into the temple, Peter addresses his audience as “Israelites” (Acts 3:11).

26. Love, “Women in Public,” 61.

27. Love, “Women in Public,” 61.

28. Love, “Women in Public,” 61.

7.3.4. Conclusion: Ideology of Power in and of Matthew 22:1–14

Jesus tells the parable of the royal wedding feast as part of his confrontation with the religious authorities concerning his authority to teach in the temple (Matt 21:13–22:46). By eventually silencing his opponents, he wins the power play in the temple and moves from a defensive to an attacking position particularly focused on the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 23). Within the parable of the royal wedding feast, the most significant power differential is between the king and all the other narrative agents in the parable, especially the man without wedding clothing. This imperial power needs to be considered when interpreting this parable.

7.4. The Roman Empire and Matthew's Gospel

The significance of the Gospel of Matthew being written in the time of the Roman Empire is not to be underestimated.²⁹ Scholars vary in how they view the attitude to Roman imperialism expressed in Matthew's Gospel.³⁰ At the anti-imperial end of the spectrum, Sim argues that in Matthean eschatology, Rome is equated with Satan.³¹ Without taking such an extreme position, Carter also argues that Matthew's Gospel contests and resists Roman imperialism, albeit by relativizing and displacing it with another form of imperialism: divine sovereignty.³² Joel Willitts agrees that Matthew is an anti-imperial text, but argues that "Matthew was *not* preoccupied with Rome"; rather, the Roman Empire was simply the most recent in a series of imperial powers that dominated the people of Israel and Judah.³³ Both John Riches and Weaver observe that if there is anti-Roman

29. Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 1; Carter, "Matthew and Empire," in *Empire in the New Testament*, ed. Stanley Porter and Cynthia Long Westfall, McMaster New Testament Studies Series (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 90.

30. John Riches and David C. Sim, eds., *The Gospel of Matthew in Its Roman Imperial Context* (London: T&T Clark International, 2005); Joel Willitts, "Matthew," in *Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not: Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies*, ed. Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2013), 82–101.

31. David Sim, "Rome in Matthew's Eschatology," in Riches and Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 91–106.

32. Warren Carter, "Matthean Christology in Roman Imperial Key," in Riches and Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 143–65; Carter, "An Imperial-Critical Reading of Matthew," 71–90.

33. Willitts, "Matthew," 85–87, emphasis original.

rhetoric in the Gospel of Matthew, it does not extend to significant Roman characters. There are positive portrayals of the centurion at Capernaum, Pilate's wife, and the centurion with those guarding Jesus when he dies on the cross (8:10; 27:19, 54).³⁴ At the other end of the spectrum, Musa Dube and Lynne Darden consider the Gospel of Matthew as not only aligned with the Roman Empire but also an imperializing text.³⁵

Interpreters consider the interaction between Jesus and the Canaanite woman in Matt 15:21–28 as pro-imperial or anti-imperial depending on the perspective from which they approach the text.³⁶ Dube considers the Gospel of Matthew and most interpretations of it—including feminist ones—as aligned with imperialism.³⁷ She observes that the Matthean Jesus responds to the centurion's request immediately (8:7) and is thereby compliant with Roman authority, whereas the Canaanite woman needs to persist through a prolonged exchange (15:21–28).³⁸ She argues that because Jesus pronounces the centurion's faith as greater than that of all Israelites (8:10), he elevates the representative of colonial power, the Roman Empire, over the colonized, here, the Jews. She concludes that this “has the effect of sanctifying the imperial powers.”³⁹

Carter argues that Matthew “writes back” to challenge imperial power and social structures from the subjugated margins.⁴⁰ He views Matt 8:5–13 as relativizing Roman imperialism because the centurion, a man of authority within the Roman army, recognizes the superior authority of Jesus to

34. John Riches, “Matthew's Missionary Strategy in Colonial Perspective,” in Riches and Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 139–40; Dorothy J. Weaver, “‘Thus You Will Know Them by Their Fruits’: The Roman Characters of The Gospel of Matthew,” in Riches and Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 119.

35. Musa W. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist Interpretation of the Bible* (St Louis, MO: Chalice, 2000), 111–24; Lynne St. Clair Darden, “Privilege but No Power: Women in the Gospel of Matthew and Nineteenth-Century African American Women Missionaries through a Postcolonial Lens,” in *Teaching All Nations: Interrogating the Matthean Great Commission*, ed. Mitzi J. Smith and Jayachitra Lalitha (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 106.

36. See Segovia, “Postcolonial Criticism,” 234–36.

37. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist*, 169–84.

38. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist*, 131.

39. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist*, 131–32.

40. Warren Carter, “The Gospel of Matthew,” in *A Postcolonial Commentary on the New Testament Writings*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia and R. S. Sugirtharajah (London: T&T Clark, 2009), 69–104.

heal. This, he argues, demonstrates the power of God's kingdom over the Roman Empire.⁴¹ Carter is a prolific and persuasive advocate of understanding the Gospel of Matthew as an anti-imperial text that "contests and resists the Roman Empire's claims to sovereignty over the world."⁴² Carter also uses the more nuanced language of Matthew's Gospel negotiating the Roman Empire.⁴³ He observes that despite the anti-imperial stance of this gospel, it cannot escape the imperial mindset, terminology, and symbolism of the dominant culture. In Carter's words, "Salvation comprises membership in a people that embodies, anticipates, and celebrates the violent and forcible establishment of God's loving sovereignty, God's empire, over all, including the destruction of oppressive governing powers like imperial Rome."⁴⁴ Carter draws on the parable of the royal wedding feast to illustrate the irony of Matthew's Gospel imitating as well as resisting the Roman Empire.⁴⁵ He describes the parabolic king as "an imperial tyrant."⁴⁶

The Gospel of Matthew was written when Roman emperors, some of whom were undoubtedly tyrants, came to be recognized as divine. Julius Caesar was the first emperor described in divine terms; this happened posthumously during the reign of his successor, Caesar Augustus, when the concept of the deification of the emperor was promoted. Divine appellations continued through the dynasties of Julio-Claudian and Flavian emperors.⁴⁷ Of particular interest in regard to the interpretation of Matt 22:7 is the Arch of Titus in Rome, which depicts scenes of the fall of Jerusalem and is dedicated to "the divine Titus Vespasian Augustus, son of the divine Vespasian."⁴⁸

41. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 200–206.

42. Judy Diehl, "Anti-Imperial Rhetoric in the New Testament," *CurBR* 10.1 (2011): 30; Willitts lists more than twenty publications by Warren Carter concerned with Empire in Matthew's Gospel ("Matthew," 83–84); Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 1.

43. Warren Carter, "Matthew Negotiates the Roman Empire," in *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance*, ed. Richard Horsley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 117–36.

44. Carter, *Matthew and Empire*, 171.

45. Carter, "Resisting and Imitating the Empire," 260–72; Carter, "Matthew's Gospel," 424–33.

46. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 433.

47. John Dominic Crossan, "Roman Imperial Theology," in *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance*, ed. Richard A. Horsley (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2008), 61.

48. Crossan, "Roman Imperial Theology," 61.

Crossan describes such Roman imperial theology as “the ideological glue that held Roman civilisation together.”⁴⁹ It did this by monopolizing four arenas of power: the military—control of force and violence; the economic—control of labor and production; the political—control of organization and institution; and the ideological—control of meaning and interpretation.⁵⁰ There are traces of each of these four bases of imperial power in the parable of the royal wedding feast.

7.4.1. Imperial Military Power

The military power of the king in the parable of the royal wedding feast manifests in his sending troops to destroy those who killed his invitation-bearing slaves and to burn their city (22:7). Carter argues that in this parable the king represents God, employing the imperial theology of the Roman-dominated world of the gospel.⁵¹ In Matthew's Gospel, God is depicted as sovereign over all nations, land, and sea (11:25), and ultimately, Carter argues, “God's empire will outmuscle and countermaster Rome's Empire.”⁵²

In the meantime, there is evidence of Roman occupation in the Gospel of Matthew, from reference to being forced to walk a mile (5:41), to centurions in Capernaum and at the cross (8:5, 27:54). Jesus is brought to the Roman Governor Pontius Pilate for trial and execution (27:2, 11–26). The Roman governor's soldiers mock Jesus, compel Simon to carry the wood, and nail Jesus to the cross with the title of his crime (27:27–37), and they also guard the tomb (27:62–66).

Despite this evidence of Roman occupation within Matthew's Gospel and the overt criticism of the rulers of the nations (20:25), there is little to identify an anti-Roman attitude in the parable of the royal wedding feast. Even if the burning of “their city” (22:7) alludes to the destruction of Jerusalem by imperial forces in 70 CE, the implied criticism is not of the Roman army but rather of those who brought it on themselves by “killing the king's slaves” (22:6). This army acts on behalf of the king, much

49. Crossan, “Roman Imperial Theology,” 59.

50. Crossan, “Roman Imperial Theology,” 60.

51. Carter, “Resisting and Imitating the Empire,” 272.

52. Carter, “Matthew and Empire,” 126–28; Carter, “God as Father in Matthew,” in *Finding a Woman's Place: Essays in Honor of Carolyn Osiek, R.S.C.J.*, ed. David L Balch and Jason T. Lamoreaux (Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011), 81–103.

as other imperial powers were understood to have acted on behalf of God previously, such as Assyria (Isa 10:1–7), Babylon (1 Kgs 9:19, Jer 25:1–11), Persia (Isa 44:28–45:13), and the Seleucids (2 Macc 6:12–17).⁵³ In biblical traditions, imperial powers may act as God's agents, but they are also subject to God's punishment, as recorded in regard to Assyria (Isa 10:12–34), Babylon (Isa 25:12–14), and Antiochus Epiphanes (2 Macc 7:32–36).⁵⁴ Within the limits of the parable of the royal wedding feast, however, the armed forces that attack "their city" (22:7) are not themselves subject to punishment by the king. In most allegorical readings of Matt 22:7, Rome acts as God's agent by attacking the Jewish religious leaders and destroying Jerusalem, thereby acting as their enemy rather than their ally.

The victory of Roman imperial forces over Jerusalem in 70 CE was depicted in Rome on the Arch of Titus with imagery of the removal of the menorah from the temple. *Judaea Capta* coins of various values were minted and in circulation throughout the Empire for the next twenty-five years.⁵⁵ The military might of the Roman Empire is part of the social world of Matthew's Gospel.

7.4.2. Imperial Economic Power

Imperial economic power is central to the parable of the tenants (21:33–46), which precedes the parable of the royal wedding feast, and the question about paying taxes to Caesar, which follows it (22:15–22). The landholder expects to exercise economic control over labor and production, which the tenants challenge. When the Herodians question Jesus about whether it is right to pay tax to Caesar, Jesus asks whose head is on the coin. Displaying the head of Caesar on coins demonstrates Roman dominance over economic affairs in Judaea at that time.

In analyses of this discussion about taxation, Carter considers the claims of God to sovereignty to outrank those of the Roman Empire, whereas Dube considers the conclusion to this debate to be an endorse-

53. Carter, "Resisting and Imitating the Empire," 271; Carter, "Matthew and Empire," 126.

54. Carter, "Matthew and Empire," 126.

55. Carter, *Matthew at the Margins*, 38; Joseph A. Dow, *Ancient Coins Through the Bible* (Mustang, OK: Tate, 2011) 264–67; Wayne Sayles, *Ancient Coin Collecting III: The Roman World—Politics and Propaganda* (Iola, WI: Krause, 2007), 237–40; Theophilus, *Abomination*, 75–76.

ment of imperial taxation systems.⁵⁶ Carter argues that the statement about giving to Caesar what is Caesar's and to God the things that are God's (22:21) does not mean Jesus recognizes equally legitimate claims.⁵⁷ Elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel, the sovereignty of God is greater than that of any human ruler, including Caesar. Divine dominion extends to heaven as well as to earth (11:25), and divine sovereignty over both land and sea is demonstrated in the instruction given to Peter to fish for the temple tax (17:24–27).⁵⁸ Carter argues that the king in the parable of the royal wedding feast, who provides resources needed to sustain life to all comers, parallels both divine provision and transgressing of social boundaries regarding meals elsewhere in Matthew's Gospel (6:11, 25–31; 9:10–13; 14:15–21).⁵⁹ He contrasts the king's generosity within the parable of the royal wedding feast (22:9–10) with the imperial taxation system.

The generosity of the king is somewhat compromised in the parable of the royal wedding feast, however, because people are only invited in from the streets after the initially invited choose not to come (22:8–10). Even when this parable is read allegorically, this raises the question of whether those from the social margins would have been drawn in to the feast if the elite had come. Derrett suggests that the number who did not come was relatively few, so there would have been plenty of food for the many people eagerly pressing in “at the back door.”⁶⁰ Such imagery depicts a certain desperation among the poor and hungry and emphasizes a social hierarchy among the guests. This is inconsistent with the Matthean Jesus, who advocates against human hierarchical structures (18:1–5; 23:8–10) and eats with those on the margins, such as sinners and tax collectors (9:10–11, 11:19).

In the debate that follows the parable of the royal wedding feast, Jesus instructs the audience to give back (*ἀποδίδωμι*) to Caesar (*Καῖσαρ*) what belongs to Caesar (22:21). Blickenstaff argues that this implies that the tax rightfully belongs to Caesar, thereby upholding the imperial taxation system.⁶¹ She provocatively asks if the guests in the parable of the royal wedding feast would have paid for the royal wedding feast through impe-

56. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist*, 133.

57. Carter, *Matthew and the Margins*, 440.

58. Carter, “Matthew and Empire,” 132, 151.

59. Carter, “Resisting and Imitating the Empire,” 269.

60. Derrett, *Law*, 151.

61. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 48.

rial taxes. Dube argues that Jesus appears to parallel faithfulness to an imperial institution by paying imperial tax to faithfulness to God (22:21).⁶² She suggests that this helps Western Christians “to serve the imperial interests of their countries with little or no reservation.”⁶³

One way of celebrating victories over other lands is by providing a feast for many people, including the otherwise disenfranchised, marginalized, and impoverished, to reinforce the power and status of the ruler.⁶⁴ In the Greco-Roman world, Hellenistic kings, Roman emperors, and provincial rulers who emulated them would for special occasions, such as victories in battle, provide food for thousands of people to enjoy their benevolence.⁶⁵ Alexander the Great is described as celebrating his victory over Darius with a banquet in a tent with seating for three hundred people (Diodorus Siculus, *Bib. Hist.* 17.16.4). According to Plutarch, after Julius Caesar triumphed over Gaul, Egypt, Pontus, and Africa, he organized a feast for the citizens of Rome with twenty-two thousand triclinia, feeding nearly two hundred thousand guests.⁶⁶ Leaders during the time of the Roman Empire were expected to provide food for a multitude of people following a triumph, an anniversary of a reign, a funeral, or a religious event.⁶⁷ Public munificence by the elite of the Roman Empire in the first two decades of the Common Era maintained the appearance of the classical civic ideal of political egalitarianism while glorifying such benefaction and thereby legitimizing the increasingly hierarchical nature of Roman society.⁶⁸

7.4.3. Imperial Political Power

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the king has political power over other narrative agents based on the institution of royalty. Rejection of the king's invitation by elites could be understood as a declaration of rebellion,

62. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist*, 141.

63. Dube, *Postcolonial Feminist*, 133.

64. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 40.

65. Angela Standhartinger, “‘And All Ate and Were Filled’ (Mark 6.42 Par.): The Feeding Narratives in the Context of the Hellenistic-Roman Banquet Culture,” in *Decisive Meals: Table Politics in Biblical Literature*, ed. Nathan MacDonald, Kathy Ehrensperger, and Luzia Sutter Rehmann (London: T&T Clark, 2012), 62–82.

66. Standhartinger, “And All Ate,” 64.

67. Standhartinger, “And All Ate,” 80.

68. Zuiderhoek, *Politics of Munificence*, 71.

especially as the royal messengers are killed (22:2–6).⁶⁹ The greater the power differential between the one inviting and the one invited, the more a request becomes a demand. This is evident in the wording of the similar parable in Luke's Gospel (14:15–24); the first round of replacement guests is to be led in (εἰσάγω) to the banquet (14:21), whereas the second group of lower status is to be compelled (ἀναγκάζω) to come into the banquet (14:23).⁷⁰

In Matthew's parable, the host is a king, and when summoned by a king, subjects have limited ability to refuse without facing serious consequences. Schottroff recounts an illustration of this from Seneca's *De ira*, written in the first century CE.⁷¹ Emperor Caligula organizes the arrest and then execution of the son of one of his knights because the emperor had taken offense at this young man's elegance and excessively well-groomed hair. Then the emperor invites the father of the son to dinner on the very day of the son's execution. The bereaved father attends the emperor's dinner, eating, drinking, receiving gifts of garlands and perfume, all without shedding a tear for his son because, it turns out, he has another son whose life he does not want to endanger in any way.⁷² This knight had little choice but to attend the royal feast.

The institutional power differential between the royal host and those who come to his wedding feast needs to be considered when interpreting the final scene of this parable (22:11–13). Snodgrass suggests the person without wedding clothing was expelled (22:11–13) because "the man made no preparation to wear something fitting to the feast he *chose* to attend" (emphasis added).⁷³ I question, however, whether those gathered in from the streets had any real choice regarding attendance at the royal feast when summoned by the king, who had political, economic, and military power over all in his domain (22:9–10).

69. Keener, *Gospel of Matthew*, 520; Gundry, *Matthew*, 436.

70. Rohrbaugh, "Pre-industrial City," 139–46.

71. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 40.

72. P. J. Davis provides an English translation of *De ira* 2.33. See Davis, "Seneca's *Thyestes* and Political Tradition in Roman Tradition," in *Brill's Companion to Roman Tragedy*, ed. George W. M. Harrison (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 151–70.

73. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent*, 321.

7.4.4. Imperial Ideological Power

Imperial power includes ideological power, the control of meaning and interpretation of imperial actions.⁷⁴ The audience of the parable of the royal wedding feast is invited to align ideologically with the king and against both those who do not come to the wedding feast (22:2–7) and the one who comes inappropriately dressed (22:10–13). As Jesus addresses challenges to his authority to teach in the temple (Matt 21–23), the audience of Matthew’s Gospel is invited to align with Jesus and against the religious and political leaders in Jerusalem. Jesus, the narrator of the parable, does not criticize the exercise of imperial power by this king. The audience is expected to accept the authority of the father in the parable of the two sons (21:28–32), the landowner in the parable of the tenants (21:33–46), and the king in the parable of the royal wedding feast (22:1–14). Consequently, the audience is encouraged to be critical of all those who respond to these authority figures negatively, including the individual without wedding clothes who remains silent when questioned by the king (22:12).

7.5. Silence, Servants of the King, and Child Sexual Abuse in the Church

Reading the parable of the royal wedding feast with a preferential option for little ones—in the light of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse—has heightened my awareness of the power differential between the king and the individual without wedding clothing who remains silent before him (22:12). In this section, I provide an overview of my interpretative journey from questioning the assumption that silence in response to being questioned by an authority figure indicates guilt to suggesting that the person expelled could represent someone guilty of abusing little ones. Furthermore, I argue that those who serve the “king” in the church today may have an important role in removing such a person from a position in the community from which they might harm others unchecked.

74. Crossan, “Roman Imperial Theology,” 60.

7.5.1. Silence when Questioned by Authorities (Matt 22:12)

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the audience is encouraged to align ideologically with the king so that when the individual without wedding clothing remains silent when questioned by the king (22:12), some consider this an admission of guilt. For example, William Yeomans describes the scene in this way: "The king's enquiry is polite and kindly. But the guest has absolutely nothing to say for himself. He has neither excuse nor pretext. The blame rests squarely on him. He deserves to be thrown out for his gratuitous insult to his host. The seriousness of his discourtesy would be almost incredible to the Eastern mind."⁷⁵ In Matthew's Gospel, however, silence does not always indicate guilt. Blickenstaff points out that Jesus is also silent before the authorities that interrogate him (26:63):

If we grant that Jesus' silence indicates integrity, resistance, and innocence in the face of false testimony, perhaps we should afford the garmentless man's silence a similar interpretation. The man without a wedding garment is speechless because, like Jesus standing before his interrogators, he has been "dragged before governors and kings," and he is innocent (Matt 10:18).⁷⁶

Her argument that silence when interrogated by authorities does not always indicate guilt reminds me of women who do not report rape, women who hide the evidence of domestic violence, and the many children who remained silent after suffering sexual abuse perpetrated by clergy and youth leaders. Silence in these scenarios is not evidence of guilt. It is a function of the power differential between the perpetrator of violence and their victim together with the fear that speaking up will only make matters worse. Historically, such concern is justified because the process of reporting sexual violence both to criminal and to church justice systems has tended to silence and marginalize such victims further by discounting the offense and discrediting the integrity of any witness and the victim.⁷⁷

75. William Yeomans, S.J., *The Gospel of Matthew: A Spiritual Commentary* (Dublin: Dominican, 1993), 158.

76. Blickenstaff, "Matthew's Parable," 266.

77. Jodi Death, "Identity, Forgiveness and Power in the Management of Child Sexual Abuse by Personnel in Christian Institutions," *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 2.1 (2013): 82–97.

There are many dimensions to the power exercised over their victim by a perpetrator of violence. The “muzzling” of a victim need not be physical. The unquestioned moral stature of clergy and church workers has enabled them to “groom” the parents of their victims,⁷⁸ who sometimes even invited them to be godparents and surrogate uncles to their children. This made it very difficult for children to speak up against adults whom their parents respected as church authorities. In many cases, they were considered friends of the family, which provided an environment within which abuse could continue for years. Further, 17 percent of the complaints made against Anglican clergy to the Royal Commission had a period of alleged abuse of more than five years.⁷⁹ The extent to which these children were silenced is evident in the statistic that the average length of time “between the alleged incidents of child sexual abuse and reporting is approximately twenty-nine years.”⁸⁰

When some pedophiles finally face allegations of child sexual abuse from the authorities, they choose to be silent, removing themselves from public scrutiny by committing suicide.⁸¹ For example, in 1999, when Bob Brandenburg, a South Australian leader of CEBS (Church of England Boys Society) for nearly forty years, was accused of abusing up to two hundred boys, he committed suicide before any court appearances.⁸²

I argue that in the parable of the royal wedding feast, the individual who is silent in response to the king’s question is more likely to represent

78. The question of whether it is best to refer to those who have experienced child sexual abuse as “victims” or “survivors” is evident in the title of the following report: Lara Fergus and Monique Keel, *Adult Victims/Survivors of Childhood Sexual Assault* (Canberra: Australian Institute of Family Studies, November 2005), tinyurl.com/SBL4829e.

79. Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Analysis of Complaints of Child Sexual Abuse Received by Anglican Church Dioceses in Australia* (Sydney: Commonwealth of Australia, 2017), 29, para. 86.

80. Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, *Analysis of Complaints*, 26, para. 79.

81. Tia A. Hoffer and Joy Lynn E. Shelton, *Suicide among Child Sex Offenders* (New York: Springer, 2014); Garry Walter and Saxby Pridmore, “Suicide and the Publicly Exposed Pedophile,” *Malaysian Journal for Medical Science* 19.4 (2012): 50–56.

82. Nance Haxton, “South Australian Church Child Abuse Inquiry,” *The World Today*, June 2, 2003, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL4829g>; Chris Pippas, “Church Sex Ring Revealed,” *The Advocate*, July 4, 2011, <https://www.theadvocate.com.au/story/695285/church-sex-ring-revealed/>.

a religious leader who abuses a position of authority than a little one or marginalized person. In Matthew's Gospel the only other occurrence of the verb *φιμώω*, which describes the individual remaining silent (*ἐφιμώθη*) when questioned by the king (22:12), is found when Jesus has silenced, *ἐφιμωσεν*, the Sadducees (22:34). When Jesus remains silent when questioned by the High Priest (26:63),⁸³ his silence is described using a different verb, *σιωπάω* (26:63). Matthew 22:12 therefore resonates more closely with the religious leaders silenced by Jesus than with Jesus remaining silent before his accusers.

7.5.2. Inadequate Church Responses to Allegations of Child Sexual Abuse

In this century, religious leaders are criticized for the lack of appropriate responses to allegations of child sexual abuse occurring within the church. When children have broken their silence and spoken of their experiences of sexual abuse, church authorities usually responded with disbelief and inaction. Any action taken tended to result in transferring the clergy person to another parish in another part of the country to protect the reputation of the church. Sometimes those who made complaints were discredited as adolescent troublemakers or neurotic mothers, so they were the ones shunned by the church community.⁸⁴ Some victims, bound and broken by physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual abuse, experience such darkness and despair that their lives are shortened by physical and mental illness, drug and alcohol addiction, and suicide.⁸⁵

The church despised and abandoned these “little ones” of the church community (cf. Matt 18:5, 10, 14) partly due to an inappropriate application of the principles found in Matt 18:15–17. These protocols advise first going to a “brother” who has sinned and pointing out the sin in private (18:15).⁸⁶ Sometimes bishops (who until 2008 within the Anglican Church

83. Blickenstaff, “Matthew's Parable,” 266.

84. Anne Manne, “Rape among the Lamingtons: Tragic Evidence of Child Sexual Abuse in the Newcastle Anglican Church,” *The Monthly*, May 2017, <https://www.the-monthly.com.au/issue/2017/may/1493560800/anne-manne/rape-among-lamingtons>.

85. Judith Cashmore and Rita Shackel, “The Long-Term Effects of Child Sexual Abuse,” Child Family Community Australia Paper No. 11 (Australian Institute of Family Studies, January 2013).

86. Jodi Death discusses the construction of gender in relation to child sexual abuse by church personnel. See Death, “Masculinity, Sexuality, Theology and Child

of Australia were men) would meet with clergy about whom there were suspicions or against whom complaints had been made (98 percent of whom were male).⁸⁷ If those accused denied the abuse, no further action was undertaken. These “brother-to-brother” conversations gave the benefit of the doubt to the clergy and church leaders without giving credence or weight to the testimony of children or concerns raised by other adults who cared for these children. Such behavior discounted the value of little ones, which is contrary to the exhortation that introduces the parable of the lost sheep in Matt 18:10.

Inadequate concern for the little ones evident in institutional church responses is being brought to light. In May 2003, I participated in a synod that resolved to constitute a Board of Inquiry into the handling of claims of sexual abuse and misconduct in the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide.⁸⁸ When a year later the Honorable Trevor Olsson and Dr. Donna Chung tabled their report, it included many examples of inadequate or inappropriate responses to complaints made against persons of interest.⁸⁹ On June 11, 2004, within a fortnight of the publication of the Olsson-Chung report, the Anglican Archbishop of Adelaide resigned.⁹⁰ In July 2018 the Catholic Archbishop of Adelaide resigned following calls to do so after being sentenced to a twelve-month jail term for failing to report child sexual abuse by another member of the clergy in the 1970s.⁹¹

Sexual Abuse by Personnel in Christian Institutions,” *Communities, Children and Families Australia* 8.2 (2014): 63–80.

87. The Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse records that nearly 98 percent of the complaints were against male perpetrators. See Royal Commission, *Analysis of Complaints*, 42, para. 118.

88. Haxton, “South Australian Church.”

89. Leslie T. Olsson and Donna Chung, *Report of the Board of Inquiry into the Handling of Claims of Sexual Abuse and Misconduct within the Anglican Diocese of Adelaide* (Anglican Church of Australia, Diocese of Adelaide, 2004).

90. Episcopal failure to respond adequately to complaints of child sexual abuse also prompted the resignation of the Governor-General in 2003. See Trevor Jordan, “Titular Trespasses: An Applied Ethics Reflection on the Hollingworth Controversy,” *St Mark’s Review* 194 (2003): 28–33.

91. “Calls for Archbishop Philip Wilson to Resign Following Conviction,” *The Guardian*, July 5, 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL4829i>; “Malcolm Turnbull Tells Pope to Sack Archbishop Philip Wilson after Court Ruling,” *ABC News*, July 19, 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL4829j>; “Adelaide Archbishop Philip Wilson Resigns amid Child Sex Abuse Cover-Up,” *ABC News*, July 30, 2018, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL4829k>.

Reports from hearings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse highlight situations where individuals who harm little ones need to be restrained and removed from community life.⁹² Church leaders are being made accountable by the courts for their failure to take responsibility. To protect little ones from lasting harm within the church, it is not enough to wait for ultimate justice to be done when the Son of Man returns to separate the sheep and goats (25:31–46) and the Lord of the harvest separates wheat from weeds (13:24–30, 36–43). Like the fellow slaves of the debtor seized by the throat, who report the violence and injustice to their master the king (18:23–35), fellow members of the church community have a responsibility to see, name, and report abusive behavior. Like the kings in Matthew's parables (18:23–35, 22:1–14), bishops and other church leaders need to protect little ones by restraining those who harm them. Too often the survivors of child sexual abuse were the ones forced out of the church while the perpetrators continued to abuse their position of power as parish priest or youth leader.⁹³

In Matt 21–23, Jesus tells the parable of the royal wedding feast as he challenges the religious leaders of his day about their use and abuse of power. I suggest that the implied author of Matthew's Gospel wants the emerging religious leaders in his own community to hear and heed what is communicated in Matt 21–23. Therefore, I suggest the expulsion of the wedding guest without wedding clothes (22:11–13) serves as more than a general warning against complacency and more than a reminder of the need for individual responsibility for righteousness.⁹⁴ This exclusion from the wedding feast is better understood in the context of the Matthean Jesus criticizing those who exercise religious leadership with hypocrisy, overburdening others, doing things to be seen to be righteous, taking seats at the tables where political decisions are made, claiming honor, and seeking titles (23:1–7). Similar accusations could be levelled at religious leaders in the church today.

When the Matthean Jesus speaks to would-be leaders among his disciples, he begins by placing a child at the center of the conversation. He exhorts them not to be a stumbling block to little ones (18:6–9), to search out those who stray (18:10–14), to act when “a brother” sins against

92. “Terms of Reference,” Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, November 2014, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL4829h>.

93. Anne Manne has several examples of this (“Rape among the Lamingtons”).

94. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 66; Jones, *Matthean Parables*, 75.

another (18:15–17), and to be servants, literally “deacons” (διάκονοι), of one another (20:26, 23:11).

7.5.3. The διάκονοι Commanded to Bind and Cast Out

The sayings about being servants of one another (20:26, 23:11) are the only occurrences of the word for servants, διάκονοι, in Matthew’s Gospel other than in the parable of the royal wedding feast. Within this parable, the king asks his διάκονοι to bind the one without wedding clothes by the feet and hands and to cast him into the outer darkness (22:13). The role of the διάκονοι here is similar to that of the harvest workers in the parable of the wheat and the weeds (13:24–30), who represent the angels of the Son of Man and who cast the wicked into the fiery furnace at the eschaton (13:36–43).⁹⁵ It is also an angel, Raphael, who binds Asael (1 En. 10.4), who later, on the day of great judgment, will be cast into eternal fire (1 En. 2.8). In the book of Revelation, an angel “seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years” (Rev 20:1–2 ESV). Only after that and a brief freedom in which to deceive people is the devil “thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur” (Rev 20:10a ESV). Without reference to fire in Matt 22:11–13, this scene may not represent final judgment despite its eschatological overtones.

Describing the king’s attendants as διάκονοι (deacons) may suggest an ecclesial as well as eschatological setting for this parable, especially since other occurrences of διάκονοι in Matthew’s Gospel are about serving one another in the here and now rather than hereafter (20:26, 23:11). In the book of Acts, διάκονοι are elected to ensure that everyone, including the widows, gets enough to eat (Acts 6:1–6). Perhaps being a deacon of the king extends to removing those who would deny others a place at the table. This is a troubling responsibility to give to humans who may be all too ready to hear a divine mandate to restrain and remove a member of the ecclesia rather than waiting for the return of the Lord of the harvest (13:24–30, 36–43) and for the Son of Man (25:31–46) to make the final determination of who is in and who is out. Twice, however, the Matthean Jesus seems to delegate such responsibility with the words “whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth

95. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:205; Jones, *Matthean Parables*, 409.

will be loosed in heaven" (NIV). First, he says this to Peter immediately after saying he will give him the keys to the kingdom of heaven (16:19). This is noteworthy, as in other post-70 CE Jewish literature of a sectarian nature priests forfeit their keys to the temple due to their failure to exercise proper stewardship of their divinely appointed trust.⁹⁶ Later in Matthew's Gospel, the authorization to bind is given to the whole ecclesia (18:18) immediately after the protocols to follow if expelling someone from the community (18:15–17), which emphasizes the importance of sharing such responsibility.

7.6. Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described my social location as a female Anglican priest whose reading stance is to look outward to welcome in those on the outside with a preferential option for the marginalized and to look out for the least within the ecclesia with a preferential option for little ones. From this ideological position, I cannot countenance that anyone be excluded from the heavenly feast because of their gender, their ethnicity, or a lack of resources, such as clean clothes.⁹⁷ However, living in the wake of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, there are occasions when those of us who serve God in the contemporary church may need to act decisively by expelling those individuals who harm little ones, on behalf of the heavenly Father who cares for all his children (18:10). I suggest this with great hesitancy, concerned that this provides a precedent for presuming to act on behalf of God. Such presumption may lead to some individuals becoming scapegoats rather than the whole community taking responsibility for the vulnerable.

My thesis that the expulsion of individuals from the church community is justifiable if they harm the little ones brings my paired theological presuppositions into potential conflict. To include in a faith community a marginalized person such as a sex offender may endanger children and other vulnerable people, which is counter to the preferential option for

96. Kampen, *Matthew within Jewish Sectarianism*, 151–52.

97. Sharon H. Ringe explores the question of whether women have a place at the table in Luke 14:7–14 according to the varied perspectives of women from different social locations. See Ringe, "Places at the Table: Feminist and Postcolonial Biblical Interpretation," in *The Postcolonial Bible*, ed. R. S. Sugirtharajah (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1998), 136–51.

the little ones. On the other hand, to give a preferential option to the little ones in community and their well-being might lead to the exclusion of marginalized groups, which is counter to the preferential option for the marginalized. Depending on what is considered harmful to the community, an AIDS sufferer, a black person, an asylum seeker, a homeless man, a mentally ill woman, or “anyone not like us” might be depicted as a danger to vulnerable ones in the community.⁹⁸ For example, in the Australian Anglican Church, strict protocols have been instituted to protect children and vulnerable adults from harm, and in the process gay and lesbian clergy have been debarred from some dioceses.⁹⁹ I suggest that the two preferential options need to be held in tension, both to include the sinners and tax collectors of our day and to ensure the well-being of the vulnerable in the church.

Focusing attention on punishing individual pedophiles or demoting particular bishops implies that child sexual abuse in the church is all due to a few bad apples, thereby excusing church institutions from the need to explore the possibility of being a “bad barrel.”¹⁰⁰ In the Community Discourse (Matt 18), the exhortation not to despise the little ones (18:10) calls those who exercise leadership in the emerging church to share the heavenly Father’s care about little ones, especially any who are lost.

In this chapter, I have explored the ideology of power dynamics evident in Matt 21–23, where Jesus eventually silences the religious leaders in a dispute about authority to teach in the temple. I have drawn parallels with the silence of the inappropriately dressed individual in response to the king’s question in Matt 22:12. Using deconstructive ideological criticism, I have illustrated how the king within the parable of the royal wedding feast draws on all four bases of imperial power associated with Roman emperors: military, economic, political, and ideological. In the next chapter, I adopt a reconstructive ideological approach to explore the relationship between this king within the parable of the royal wedding feast and the

98. Ruby Jones, “Christian Lobby Family Voice Calls for Exemption to Discriminate against Mentally Ill,” *ABC News*, June 13, 2017, <https://tinyurl.com/SBL4829m>.

99. Muriel Porter, *The New Scapegoats: The Clergy Victims of the Anglican Church Sexual Abuse Crisis* (Melbourne: Morning Star, 2017).

100. Jodi Death, “Bad Apples, Bad Barrel: Exploring Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse by Catholic Clergy in Australia,” *International Journal for Crime, Justice and Social Democracy* 4.2 (2015): 94–110.

heavenly Father of the Matthean Jesus. I also consider the question of how this troubling parable may continue to be read as sacred scripture.

Sacred Texture: Reading the Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast as Sacred Scripture

In chapter 7, I deconstructed the imperial ideology of the parable of the royal wedding feast from my social location concerned with the use and abuse of power from a postcolonial perspective. In this chapter, I explore the sacred textures of the parable of the royal wedding feast in a more reconstructive mode from my social location as a Christian. This involves more than simply describing and discussing the portrayal of God in the parable as an impartial bystander. I approach the text with an expectation that engagement with Scripture influences my faith and life and “yields fruit in human transformation.”¹ Using language from Matthew’s Gospel, it is necessary both to hear the Word of God (4:4) and to do the will of God the Father (7:21–27) to be able to enter the dominion of heaven (5:20, 18:3, 19:23). Therefore, my motivation to understand what leads to expulsion from the “king’s wedding feast” (22:11–13) extends beyond academic interest into the way I live so I may participate in the heavenly wedding feast.² This is a matter of sacred texture.

When Robbins first introduced sacred texture into his sociorhetorical interpretive analytic, he recommended exploring the text according to

1. V. George Shillington uses this phrase in his critique of ideological and sacred texture as presented in *Exploring the Textures of Texts* as inadequate theological criticism (*Reading the Sacred Text: An Introduction to Biblical Studies* [London: T&T Clark, 2002], 279–80). See a similar comment by Daniel J. Treier, *Introducing Theological Interpretation of Scripture: Recovering a Christian Practice* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 13.

2. Kevin J. Vanhoozer, introduction to *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005), 24.

the following categories: deity, holy persons, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, religious community, and ethics.³ Later, in *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, Robbins considers each of these sacred-texture categories in the matrix of the six main belief systems he proposes as the basis of emergent Christian discourse.⁴ These early belief systems of early Christian discourse, which Robbins calls "rhetorolects," focus on wisdom, prophetic, apocalyptic, priestly, miracle, and precreation discourse.⁵ Depending on which rhetorolects operate in a biblical text, "God" and other interrelated topoi of sacred texture are framed differently.

In this chapter, I first discuss the metaphor GOD IS KING and how God is both like and unlike the king in the parable of the royal wedding feast. Second, I explore the relationship between the king in the parable of the royal wedding feast and the Father of heaven in Matthew's Gospel. Third, I argue that by employing the GOD IS KING metaphor, this parable is primarily prophetic rhetorolect, which resonates with the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible. Fourth, I explore what this means for the other sacred texture categories: holy persons, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, religious community, and ethics.⁶

8.1. The GOD IS KING Metaphor in Matthew 22:1–14

Most interpretations of the parable of the royal wedding feast are allegorical with the king representing God the Father and the king's son, Jesus.⁷ The opening of this parable, however, introduces some ambiguity about whether this human king does represent God.⁸ Applying conceptual metaphor theory

3. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 120. Sacred Texture was not included in Robbins, *Tapestry of Early Christian Discourse*; or in Robbins, "Socio-rhetorical Interpretation," 192–220.

4. Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 495–517.

5. *Rhetorolect* was coined in Robbins, "Dialectical Nature of Early Christian Discourse," 353–62; Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 90–120.

6. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 120–30.

7. See, e.g., Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:198; Luz, *Matthew 21–28*, 52.

8. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 48, 87; Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 180; Marty Aiken, "The Kingdom of Heaven Suffers Violence: Discerning the Suffering Servant in the Parable of the Wedding Banquet," paper presented at the Colloquium on Violence and Religion, Innsbruck, 2003.

from the field of cognitive linguistics, I argue that the GOD IS KING metaphor includes the tension that this king is also not God.⁹

The parable of the royal wedding feast begins with the verb *ὁμοίω*, translated as “is like” or “compared to” (22:2). This occurs elsewhere in the Gospel of Matthew (6:8; 7:24, 26; 11:16; 13:24), most notably in the introductions to the other king parable (18:23) and to the other wedding parable (25:1). The use of *ὁμοίω* distances the king from God and this king’s wedding feast from the kingdom of heaven by stressing that this parable is a comparison and the king is not a synonym for God.¹⁰ The inclusion of *ἄνθρωπῳ* (human) immediately preceding *βασιλεῖ* (king) further emphasizes that the narrative agent is human. It also evokes the language of “flesh and blood king” (*melekh basar vadam*) used in rabbinic parables to differentiate human kings from the metaphor GOD IS KING.¹¹

Resistant readers argue that the king in Matt 22:1–14 does not represent God and consider the king’s wedding feast a counterexample to the kingdom of heaven rather than an analogy of the kingdom of heaven. Schottroff argues that, unlike the divine king’s eschatological feast to which all peoples are called, this human king’s feast “serves imperial purposes and ends in murder, war and darkness” intensified into an act of violence directed at an individual guest.¹² She considers that the parable ends with an implicit “but God does not act this way,” as in the tradition of rabbinic parables with a flesh-and-blood king as the narrative agent.¹³ In the rabbinic parable of the blind man and the lame man, however, the human king is differentiated from the divine king not by the violence of his actions but because the divine king would not need to ask questions—he would already know.¹⁴ Blickenstaff argues that the human king in the

9. Mary Therese DesCamp and Eve E. Sweetser, “Metaphors for God: Why and How Do Our Choices Matter for Humans? The Application of Contemporary Cognitive Linguistics Research to the Debate on God and Metaphor,” *Pastoral Psychology* 53.3 (2005), 207–38; Eve Sweetser and Mary Therese DesCamp, “Motivating Biblical Metaphors for God: Refining the Cognitive Model,” in *Cognitive Linguistic Explorations in Biblical Studies*, ed. Bonnie Howe and Joel B. Green (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2014), 7–23.

10. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 87.

11. Stern, *Parables in Midrash*, 121–26; Stern, “Rhetoric and Midrash,” 267–68; Bauckham, “Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast,” 474.

12. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 48.

13. Schottroff, *Parables of Jesus*, 48.

14. Bauckham states that it is “clear that it refers to a man, for God is ignorant of nothing” (“Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast,” 474).

parable of the royal wedding feast is no better than King Herod, who along with other rulers is depicted as a killer (2:16, 22; 14:3–11; 27:15–26).¹⁵ She concludes, “the king may just be a king, who is also a tyrant,” noting that in the social world of the Synoptic Gospels, earthly kings were more likely to be tyrants than benevolent, gracious, and just.¹⁶ Drawing attention to the exhortation not to worry about what to wear because God will provide (Matt 6:25–31), she argues that the host of the royal wedding feast does not represent God the generous provider.¹⁷ She draws parallels between the man without wedding clothes and Jesus because both are dragged before the ruling authorities and both silently resist a tyrant.¹⁸ Similarly, Marty Aiken proposes that the person without wedding clothing is representative of the “suffering servant” (Isa 52:13–53:12), who like Jesus is also bound and led away.¹⁹

To compare (ὁμοιῶω) involves exploring how the human king in the parable of the royal wedding feast “is” as well as “is not” like God, the latter of which is stressed in resistant readings. I consider the king in this parable to be like God as well as unlike God by holding the “is” and the “is not” dimensions in dynamic tension. Both Sallie McFague and Sandra Schneiders consider such tension an important feature of metaphors for God.²⁰ McFague argues that metaphors lose the shock value of their novelty when they concretize into models.²¹ She describes how the metaphor GOD IS FATHER has become so “reified, petrified, and expanded” that it is definitive and dominant, thereby excluding other models and metaphors for God.²²

As Schneiders argues, when the “is not” of a metaphor is suppressed, “the literalized metaphor goes underground and works on the subconscious level creating vast reservoirs of cognitive untruth and distorted affectivity.”²³ She chooses to use the metaphor of “cancer” to describe the

15. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 48.

16. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 5, 180.

17. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 69; Blickenstaff, “Matthew’s Parable,” 266.

18. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 180.

19. Aiken, “Kingdom of Heaven,” 1.

20. Sallie McFague, *Metaphorical Theology: Models of God in Religious Language* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 65; Sandra Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture*, 2nd ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 1999), 29.

21. McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, xii.

22. McFague, *Metaphorical Theology*, 39.

23. Schneiders, *Revelatory Text*, 30.

hidden and pathological damage done to the religious imagination by literalized metaphors of God.²⁴ Cancer cells are ordinary cells that start replicating in an uncontrolled fashion and then spread to other parts of the body and impair the healthy functioning of the body as a whole.²⁵ By analogy, the problem is not with the cells per se, that is, the “is” of the metaphor, but when the “is not” is suppressed and the cancer metastasizes, invading other parts of the body and so dominating them that healthy functioning is impeded.

In this exploration of the sacred texture of the parable of the royal wedding feast, I apply the metaphor GOD IS KING, with the proviso that in the metaphorical mapping, not all characteristics of the source domain are mapped onto the target domain. In cognitive metaphor theory, characteristics of the source domain (input 1) are mapped onto the target domain (input 2) to create a concept blend. Table 8.1 illustrates one of the concept blend mappings of biblical metaphors for God undertaken by Mary DesCamp and Eve Sweetser: GOD IS A SHEPHERD.²⁶

Table 8.1. Concept Blending in the GOD IS A SHEPHERD Metaphor²⁷

Generic	Input 1	Input 2	Blend
Agent	Shepherd: responsible for nurture and protection of sheep	God	GOD IS A SHEPHERD
Object	Sheep: ewes need leader, young are weak	Israel	God leads and feeds Israel, caring especially for the most vulnerable

A shepherd also slaughters sheep, but this characteristic is not included in the concept blend GOD IS A SHEPHERD.²⁸ Similarly, not all characteristics of the source domain are mapped into the blend GOD IS FATHER. For example, biological fathers die and some need care in their old age, but the

24. Schneiders, *Revelatory Text*, 30–32.

25. “Dictionary of Cancer Terms,” National Institutes of Health, National Cancer Institute, n.d., <https://www.cancer.gov/publications/dictionaries/cancer-terms>.

26. DesCamp and Sweetser, “Metaphors for God,” 219.

27. DesCamp and Sweetser present concept blending as a series of circles rather than as a table (“Metaphors for God,” 219).

28. Sweetser and DesCamp, “Motivating Biblical Metaphors,” 20.

characteristics of mortality and vulnerability are only rarely included in the concept blend GOD IS FATHER.²⁹

The inclusion of the otherwise redundant ἀνθρώπων (human) in the parable opening (22:2) highlights that God is not king as well as GOD IS KING. As Schneiders argues, if the “is” of a metaphor is suppressed, “one debilitates the metaphor, rendering it ineffectual.”³⁰ If the king does not represent God at all, the appropriate response to the call to come to the wedding feast is to turn away as those first invited do (22:2–5) because this is not an invitation to the kingdom of heaven. The parable of the royal wedding feast needs to be read with the grain, the “is” of the GOD IS KING metaphor, as well as against the grain, the “is not,” to achieve the full rhetorical force possible—otherwise there is no reason to come to the feast.

Blickenstaff observes that Matthew's Gospel does not present kings positively and argues that any allusions to GOD IS KING are faint.³¹ In Matthew's Gospel, however, heaven is described as God's throne and earth his footstool (Matt 5:34–35), which has strong oral-scribal intertexture with Isa 66:1. In prophetic literature, the “Lord of hosts” describes himself as king (e.g., Isa 43:15, 44:6) and the Lord God is named as king or ruler (Isa 6:5; 33:22; Jer. 10:7, 10; 46:18; 51:49; Ezek 20:33; Mal 1:14) who will rule on earth (Zech 14:9, 16, 17). The king in the parable of the royal wedding feast has some parallels with the “Father in heaven” in Matthew's Gospel.

8.2. The Kingdom of Heaven Ruled by the Father in Heaven

The author of Matthew's Gospel makes only few references to ἡ βασιλεία τοῦ θεοῦ (the kingdom of God) but many to ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν (the kingdom of heaven).³² When framing God's world as a kingdom, the associated metaphor for God is βασιλεύς, king of the kingdom or emperor of the empire. In Matthew's Gospel, however, God is more likely to be called

29. Sweetser and DesCamp, “Motivating Biblical Metaphors for God,” 16; cf. Brian Arthur Wren, whose verse 4 of the hymn “Bring Many Names” refers to “old, aching God, grey with endless care.” See Wren, *What Language Shall I Borrow? God-Talk in Worship: A Male Response to Feminist Theology* (New York: Crossroad, 1989), 187.

30. Schneiders, *Revelatory Text*, 31.

31. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 48.

32. For the former, see Matt 6:33; 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43; for the latter, see Matt 3:2; 4:17; 5:3, 10, 19–20; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:12; 13:11, 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47; 13:52; 16:69; 18:1, 4, 23; 19:12, 14, 23; 20:1, 22:2, 23:13; 25:1.

ὁ πατήρ ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, “the father in heaven” (5:16, 45; 6:1, 9; 7:11, 21; 10:32, 33; 12:50; 16:17; 18:10, 14, 19) or ὁ πατήρ ὁ οὐράνιος, “the heavenly father” (5:48; 6:14, 26, 32; 15:13; 18:35), than βασιλεύς (5:35). In addition, GOD IS KING may be implied in parables (18:23, 22:2–13), and there is some suggestion that JESUS IS KING (2:2; 21:2; 27:29, 37, 42); nevertheless, the main metaphor for God in Matthew’s Gospel is GOD IS FATHER.

The Matthean phrases, ὁ πατήρ ὁ ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς and ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν have *heaven* in common, thereby inviting an association between the monarch (king) of the “kingdom of heaven” and the “Father in heaven.”³³ DesCamp and Sweetser observe that the biblical metaphors GOD IS FATHER and GOD IS KING have a number of characteristics in common; each has the capacity to provide for, protect, punish, and exert physical and other forms of control over those in his domain.³⁴ The οἰκοδεσπότης, the head of the household and paterfamilias of an estate,³⁵ has a similar range of powers over those in his domain (13:27, 20:1, 21:33) to those of fathers and kings.

The Roman emperor Augustus in *Res gestae divi Augusti* is portrayed as the *pater patriae*, “father of the fatherland,” presiding over the Roman Empire as a household.³⁶ Carter argues that the imagery of *pater patriae* is used “to construct an idealized relationship between ruler and ruled, expressing the duties and obligations of the benign and beneficent patron-emperor and his client-subjects, the father’s children.”³⁷ He observes that “father” emerged as a political title in the Roman Republic during the first century BCE,³⁸ with Julius Caesar named as “father” in texts, coins, and inscriptions. These recognize him as a ruler with unlimited political power in terms of *patria potestas*, “binding his fellow citizens to him like sons to a father in *pietas*, the loyalty or allegiance of appropriate familial duties and obligations.”³⁹ In return, the ruled depend “on the ruler as father to preserve and prosper the life of city and empire.”⁴⁰ *Res gestae*

33. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth*, 231–52, 279–330.

34. DesCamp and Sweetser, “Metaphors for God,” 229, 232.

35. Richard P. Saller, “*Pater familias, mater familias*, and the Gendered Semantics of the Roman Household,” *CP* 94.2 (1999): 182–97.

36. Carter, “God as Father,” 81–103.

37. Carter, “God as Father,” 83.

38. Carter, “God as Father,” 83.

39. Carter, “God as Father,” 84.

40. Carter, “God as Father,” 85.

divi Augusti concludes with Augustus named “father of the fatherland,” thereby encapsulating his roles as the creator, benefactor, and preserver of the Roman Empire.⁴¹

Carter draws parallels between this portrayal of Caesar Augustus as *pater patriae* and the depiction of God in Matthew's Gospel as “Father, Lord of heaven and earth” presiding over a cosmic household (11:25). He identifies six characteristics common to both sovereign “fathers”: savior and benefactor, ruler of the world, judge and lawgiver, creator of a people, shaper of a community, sender of agents, and recipient of honors.⁴²

The king in the parable of the royal wedding feast also acts like a father of his people. There is a tendency to focus on the violence in this parable and overlook the king's provision and protection, with Nalpathilchira's thesis that this parable is primarily a “revelation” of the heavenly Father's goodness and benevolence being a rare exception.⁴³ In what follows, I explore how the king “fathers” his people through food provision, sending messengers, calling for allegiance, punishing, pronouncing who is in and out, creating community, seeing and rewarding, and having an interloper cast out.

8.2.1. The King Provides the Wedding Feast

The king provides a feast of generous proportions (22:2–4).⁴⁴ Roman emperors and the provincial rulers who emulated them would on special occasions provide food for thousands of people to enjoy their benevolence.⁴⁵ Caesar Augustus provided numerous benefactions as “the father” of the Roman Empire. He ensured sufficient supplies of grain (Res gest. divi Aug. 5, 15, 18), bought land for veterans (15–16), and undertook public works, such as building an aqueduct to ensure water supply (18–21).⁴⁶

The Matthean Jesus teaches that “your Father in heaven” provides food and clothing for all creatures (Matt 6:25–33) and all manner of good things for those who ask (7:11). He encourages prayer to “Our Father” to “give us our daily bread” (6:9–11). At the king's wedding feast, more

41. Carter, “God as Father,” 85.

42. Carter, “God as Father,” 85–96.

43. Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready*, 365–67.

44. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 216, 240.

45. Strandhartiger, “And All Ate,” 62–82.

46. Carter, “God as Father,” 85–86.

than daily bread is on offer. The king's menu is suggestive of sacrifice: οἱ ταῦροί μου καὶ τὰ σιτιστὰ τεθυμένα (Matt 22:4). Nearly half of the fourteen occurrences of the verb θύω in the New Testament concern sacrifice (Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7; Acts 14:13, 18; 1 Cor 5:7; 10:20; cf. John 10:10; Luke 15:23, 27, 30; Acts 10:13, 11:7). Two of the four occurrences of ταῦρος (ox) in the New Testament are in relation to the sacrificial tradition (Heb 9:13, 10:4). In the making of the Mosaic covenant, calves (Exod 24:5 LXX) are sacrificed, which is followed by many people sitting to eat together.⁴⁷ Assuming the king in Matt 22:2–13 represents God, it is noteworthy that the One to whom animals are sacrificed in Torah traditions here provides as food the same animals that are sacrificed in covenant ratification.

8.2.2. The King Sends Agents

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the king sends out three groups of slaves to invite people to the feast he provides (22:3, 4, 8–10). This action is somewhat like that of a royal benefactor sending out agents and envoys to command people to express their loyalty by coming to partake of his generosity.⁴⁸ For example, the inauguration of *Pax Augusta* included Caesar Augustus sending Marcus Agrippa to represent him in the cities of Asia and Syria, making sacrifices, gathering crowds for the Century Games, and adopting his grandsons, Gaius and Lucius, as his sons and heirs.⁴⁹

The king sending slaves as messengers also echoes the Lord God sending prophets and Jesus sending missionaries to call people to come and enjoy divine generosity (Isa 55:2, Matt 22:4). Prophets and missionaries call those who listen to serve God rather than mammon, with allegiance to only one master: God (Matt 6:24).⁵⁰ The Matthean Jesus sends out disciples with his authority to proclaim the good news of the kingdom and to enact it by curing the sick, raising the dead, cleansing lepers, and casting out demons (10:1–14). He assures them that the Spirit of the Father will speak through them (10:20). He exhorts community members to seek out straying members (18:10–14). After his resurrection, Jesus sends disciples

47. J. Todd Hibbard, *Intertextuality in Isaiah 24–27: The Reuse and Evocation of Earlier Texts and Traditions*, FAT 2 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006), 77–80.

48. Carter, “God as Father,” 95.

49. Carter, “God as Father,” 88. See also Lindsay Powell, *Marcus Agrippa: Right-hand Man of Caesar Augustus* (Barnsley, UK: Pen & Sword Military, 2015), 131–60.

50. Nalpathilchira, *Everything Is Ready*, 374.

to all nations to teach and baptize (28:16–20). Jesus laments Jerusalem's not being *willing* to be gathered, using the same verb, θέλω, to describe those who choose not to come to the wedding feast (22:3, 23:37).

The king calls and calls again. Like the God of the Hebrew Bible, he is "slow to anger" (Ex 34:6; Num 14:18; Pss 86:15, 103:8, 145:8; Sir 5:4; Joel 2:13; Jonah 4:2; Nah 1:3). When those first called do not come, he sends out messengers again, with a more insistent invitation (Matt 22:2–4) rather than getting angry at the first report of nonattendance (Luke 14:21). It is only after the killing of his messengers that he sends troops against "their city" (Matt 22:6–7 NIV).

8.2.3. The King Punishes by Sending in the Army

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the king eventually does get angry and punishes by sending in armed forces (22:7).⁵¹ In prophetic literature, foreign armies may function as God's agents, especially when the Lord is angered (Isa 5:25) and the Arameans and Philistines attack (Isa 9:11–12). The imperial powers of Assyria and Babylon function as God's agents to enact judgment against Israel and Judah, including the destruction of Jerusalem (Jer 25:9, 27:6, 43:10, 50:25; Isa 10:5, 13:5).⁵² In *Res gestae divi Augusti*, Caesar Augustus, the father of the fatherland, has half a million soldiers under a military oath of allegiance who participate in imperial campaigns on both land and sea.⁵³

8.2.4. The King Judges, Pronouncing Who Is Unworthy

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, after sending out his troops, the king pronounces who is not worthy of participating in his feast (22:8). The first mention of worthiness in Matthew's Gospel is in the proclamation of John the Baptist, who warns the Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism of the need to "bear fruit worthy of repentance" (3:7–10 NRSV). Based on this, the first invited to the king's feast make themselves unworthy because they have not borne such fruit.

51. Carter, "God as Father," 88, 95.

52. Terence E. Fretheim, *God and World in the Old Testament: A Relational Theology of Creation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 161–63.

53. Carter, "God as Father," 88.

The only other references to ἀξίος (to be worthy, to deserve, to merit) in Matthew's Gospel are in chapter 10 (10:10, 11, 13, 37; cf. 3:8, 22:8), when Jesus sends out the twelve disciples empty-handed because a laborer deserves his τροφή, that is, his "food ration" (10:10). These missionaries are to seek out homes that are "worthy" by providing such support and to move on from those that do not (10:10–13). The Matthean Jesus sets very challenging expectations of what constitutes worthiness (10:37–38 NRSV): "Whoever loves [φιλέω] father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me." Here, Jesus is to have priority over all other ties, including biological family and household ties.⁵⁴ This does not, however, leave individuals isolated. The Matthean Jesus names those who do the will of his Father as his brother, sister, and mother (12:50). He assures his followers that "everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or fields, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and will inherit eternal life" (19:29 NRSV). When the Son of Man comes in glory to judge the nations, he welcomes those who have served the least of his brothers and sisters in the eternal kingdom as their king (25:34, 40). It seems that to be worthy of entering the king's domain, it is necessary to respond to human need with compassion.

8.2.5. The King Gathers People Together

The king sends out his slaves to gather in the bad and good (22:9–10).⁵⁵ The God of the prophets will gather people from far and wide (Isa 11:12; 27:12–13; 43:5; 56:8; 66:18; Zech 8:7; 10:8, 10), like a shepherd (Isa 40:11, Jer 31:10). This gathering includes the vulnerable (Isa 60:4, Jer 31:8) and extends to all nations (Isa 49:18, Jer 3:17). The pattern of the king's actions in Matt 22:6–10 is akin to gathering following scattering (Jer 31:10) and feasting following destruction (Isa 25:1–10). In Isa 59:21–60:22, after the divine Lord dresses as a soldier, cloaks himself in fury, and intervenes in human affairs to mete out justice for injustice, God has mercy and gathers his people.

54. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 2:217.

55. Carter, "God as Father," 87, 94–95.

Carter identifies a similar pattern of community formation following military action in *Res gestae divi Augusti*. Augustus is presented as a “tender father” of the Roman people because he has established law and order by securing peace on land and sea. These victories are presented as uniting people “oppressed” by factionalism, but they also “forcibly expanded the empire’s membership as a household subjugated to Rome.”⁵⁶ Father imagery is emphasized in a speech attributed to Caesar by the Roman historian Dio Cassius. In this speech, following victories in 46 BCE, Caesar asks the people to set aside past differences, love one another without suspicion, consider him a father, and conduct themselves in accordance with this, while he promises to treat them as his children.⁵⁷

8.2.6. The King Sees and Rewards Accordingly

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, when the king comes in to see the good and bad gathered together to partake of the wedding feast, an infinitive (θεάσασθαι) is used (22:11), strengthening an implication of intentionality: the king came in (in order) to inspect the guests. This verb for seeing is only used on three other occasions in Matthew’s Gospel, always as an aorist infinitive in connection with outward personal appearance: (1) in the instruction not to practice piety in order to be seen by others (6:1); (2) in implied criticism of wearing fine clothes unlike John the Baptist (11:7); and (3) in criticism of the scribes and Pharisees for doing “all their deeds to be seen by others; for they make their phylacteries broad and their fringes long” (23:5 NRSV). These first and last occurrences of θεάομαι in Matthew’s Gospel suggest that if the king represents the heavenly Father, he is not interested in outward displays of piety; rather, he sees and rewards what happens in secret.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus gives assurances that “your Father in heaven” sees and rewards appropriate behavior and there is no need to make a public display of praying, fasting, or almsgiving (6:1, 4, 6, 14, 18). Whether one is wearing wedding clothes or not may not be obvious to the human eye because such attire is acquired “in secret,” when not even the left hand knows that the right hand is giving alms (6:3–4).

56. Carter, “God as Father,” 87.

57. Carter, “God as Father,” 84; Dio Cassius, *Hist. rom.* 43.17.4–6.

The heavenly Father who sees when piety is practiced in private presumably also sees when people are harmed in hidden ways, especially as his angels are also looking out for the little ones (18:10). Similarly, at the final judgment, the Son of Man can distinguish between those who have fed, clothed, sheltered, or visited someone sick or in prison and those who have not (25:31–46). Perhaps the king notices the lack of wedding clothes because, like the heavenly Father, he can see what human eyes might not be able to see and, like the Son of Man, knows what happens in secret outside the public gaze. I suggest the king sees through the person who gets into the wedding feast (22:12) and to protect the community, identifies the “wolf disguised in sheep’s clothing” who endangers said community, especially little ones (7:15).

8.2.7. The King Protects the Community

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the king expels the person not wearing wedding clothes (22:13), which is usually seen as an act of inexplicable punishment. By contrast, I argue that the verb ἐκβάλλω (cast out) portrays this as an act of protection by the Father in heaven, who has a concern for the little ones (18:10, 14). In Matthew’s Gospel, the verb ἐκβάλλω is used extensively, albeit not exclusively, for exorcism: casting out demons (7:22; 8:16, 31; 9:33, 34; 10:8; 12:24, 26, 27, 28), spirits (8:16), and unclean spirits (10:1, 12:43). It may have a more neutral sense of “taking out” (7:4, 5; 13:52; 12:35; 15:17) or “sending out” (9:38), but force is implied when the heirs of the kingdom, the wrongly dressed wedding guest, and a worthless slave are thrown into the outer darkness (8:12, 22:13, 25:30).

In Matthew’s Gospel, there is a pattern of ἐκβάλλω (expulsion) preceding θεραπεύω (healing). In a summary statement of Jesus’s ministry, Jesus first casts out (ἐκβάλλω) the spirits of those demon possessed and then heals (θεραπεύω) all the sick (8:16). Jesus gives his disciples authority to cast out (ἐκβάλλω) unclean spirits and then the ability to heal (θεραπεύω) every disease and sickness (10:1).

Prior to healing, Jesus casts out people as well as demons. He expels the crowd from the room before he raises the synagogue leader’s daughter from the dead (9:35). Jesus also drives the traders from the temple, and it is then that the blind and lame approach him for healing (21:12–17).⁵⁸ If the

58. Wainwright, *Habitat, Human, and Holy*, 179–82.

pattern of healing following expulsion applies to the parable of the royal wedding feast, then expelling the person without wedding clothes would allow for healing of those usually excluded.

In the parable the expelled man is to be bound by the feet and hands and then cast into darkness like the watcher Asael in 1 En. 10.⁵⁹ Noting this parallel, Davies and Allison suggest that the wedding garment is like the luminous heavenly raiment that the fallen angel Asael forfeits (Apoc. Ab. 13.14) and conclude, "Just as the righteous will wear garments of glory and so be like the heavenly angels, so will the wicked be unclothed and suffer like the fallen angels."⁶⁰ They have followed the Asael thread to find the missing wedding clothes, but it is also instructive to follow the Asael thread to find out why he needed to be bound and cast out into darkness. After Asael has been bound and removed, the earth made desolate by the teachings of Asael will be healed (1 En. 10.6–8).⁶¹ The desolation of the earth seems to be the inevitable outcome of Asael teaching humans metallurgy in order to make every instrument of war and to fashion jewelry and cosmetics (1 En. 8.1).⁶² If the one cast out from the wedding feast is associated with Asael, he is associated with the watcher who provides the means, and perhaps motivations, for waging war. By association with this intertexture the one bound and expelled from the king's wedding feast might represent one who harms the community in some way and therefore whose removal is necessary for the protection and healing of the community.

The parable of the royal wedding feast does not comfort disciples with assurance of future well-being, allowing hearers to safely distance themselves from the person without wedding clothing by identifying him as an evildoer. This parable challenges religious leaders about their use and abuse of authority over others. Therefore, in the next section, I argue that this parable employs more prophetic rhetorolect than apocalyptic rhetorolect.

8.3. Prophetic Rhetorolect

The parable of the royal wedding feast functions as powerful prophetic rhetoric. In what follows, I show how the Matthean Jesus confronts the reli-

59. Sim, "Matthew 22:13a," 215–16.

60. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:206.

61. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 215.

62. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 188.

gious leaders in the second person and employs both prophetic rhetology (reasoning) and rhetography (imagery), drawing on prophetic traditions in the Hebrew Bible. To use Robbins's categories of belief systems, I consider this parable to operate within a prophetic rhetorlect.

Robbins defines *rhetorlect* as "a form of language variety or discourse identifiable on the basis of a distinctive configuration of themes, topics, reasonings, and argumentations."⁶³ He proposes that there are six such belief systems by which first-century Jews and Christians viewed and evaluated the world: wisdom, prophetic, apocalyptic, priestly, miracle, and precreation rhetorlects.⁶⁴ He argues that the three categories of classical Greek rhetoric—judicial, deliberative, and epideictic—are associated with courtrooms, political assemblies, and civil ceremonies, whereas the distinctive rhetoric that emerged in early Christian discourse was associated with households, villages, synagogues, royal households, political kingdoms, the imperial army, and the temple.⁶⁵ Rhetorical analysis of New Testament texts according to Robbins's rhetorlects provides an alternative to the categories of classical rhetoric used by several scholars.⁶⁶

In *The Invention of Christian Discourse*, Robbins further developed the theoretical basis of rhetorlects by adopting the "idealized cognitive

63. Robbins, "Dialectical Nature," 353–62; Robbins explains why three of the rhetorlects have been renamed since this first publication regarding rhetorlects: opposition is now prophetic, death-resurrection is now miracle, and cosmic is now precreation (*Invention of Christian Discourse*, 112–14).

64. Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 90–120.

65. Robbins, "Socio-rhetorical Criticism," 313–14.

66. Vernon K. Robbins, "Sociorhetorical Interpretation of the Miracle Discourse in the Synoptic Gospels," in *Miracle Discourse in the New Testament*, ed. Duane F. Watson (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2012), 17–84; Robbins, "Priestly Discourse in Luke and Acts," in *Jesus and Mary Reimagined in Early Christian Literature*, ed. Vernon K. Robbins and Jonathan M. Potter, WGRWSup 6 (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 13–40; Wesley H. Wachob, "The Languages of 'Household' and 'Kingdom' in James: A Socio-rhetorical Study," in *Reading James with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of James*, ed. Robert L. Webb and John S. Kloppenborg (London: T&T Clark, 2007), 151–68; Duane Watson, "Comparing Two Related Methods: Rhetorical Criticism and Socio-rhetorical Interpretation Applied to Second Peter," in *Reading Second Peter with New Eyes: Methodological Reassessments of the Letter of Second Peter*, ed. Robert L. Webb and Duane F. Watson (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 55; Callan, *Acknowledging the Divine Benefactor*; Robert H. von Thaden Jr., *Sex, Christ, and Embodied Cognition: Paul's Wisdom for Corinth*, ESEC 16 (repr., Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017).

model,” defined by cognitive scientist George Lakoff as a “complex structured whole, a gestalt which uses four structuring principles.”⁶⁷ These are (1) propositional framing, which Robbins calls argumentative-enthymematic structuring or rhetology; (2) image-schematic structure, which Robbins calls rhetography; (3) metaphoric mapping of the characteristics of a source domain onto the target domain to create a new concept blend; and (4) metonymic use of a word or phrase.⁶⁸ In Robbins’s words:

Rhetorolects organize pictures of people and locations together in ways that nurture special cultural memories. Certain words and phrases evoke these memories in a manner that frames the reasoning about topics the discourse introduces to the hearer. As the discourse creates pictures in the mind of special social, cultural, religious and ideological places, it creates movements in the mind of association, disassociation, admiration, dislike, love, anger, courage, fear, etc.⁶⁹

Robbins developed a heuristic framework for exploring the sacred texture of a text by considering each belief system (rhetorolect) across three spaces.⁷⁰ He describes these three spaces as a blending of cognitive metaphor theory and critical space theory. As discussed earlier in this chapter, cognitive metaphor theory includes three domains: source, target, and concept blend.⁷¹ Independently of cognitive metaphor theory, a cross-disciplinary trialectic understanding of space has evolved in the social sciences.⁷² In critical space theory, *firstspace* is the physical empirical experience of space; *secondspace* is the imagined and ideological representation of space; and *thirdspace*, the social or lived space, is associated with the imagination and creativity because it provides “a way of envisioning alteration to the space one is in.”⁷³ Edward Soja describes thirdspace as where “subjectivity and objectivity, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable,

67. George Lakoff, *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 68–136; Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 104.

68. Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 104–9.

69. Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 107–8.

70. Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 88–89.

71. See section 8.1.

72. Patrick Schreiner, “Space, Place and Biblical Studies: A Survey of Recent Research in Light of Developing Trends,” *CurBR* 14.3 (2016): 349–50.

73. Schreiner, “Space, Place and Biblical Studies,” 350.

everyday life and unending history all collide.”⁷⁴ Robbins presents each of the six rhetorolects as a blend of these three spaces and the domains of cognitive metaphor theory, as displayed in table 8.2.

The purpose of identifying rhetorolects is to observe how they contribute to the rhetoric of a biblical text without forcing the text into one category.⁷⁵ The host rhetorolect of the parable of the royal wedding feast is prophetic, with some blending with wisdom rhetorolect where GOD IS FATHER is the primary metaphor for God because the king “fathers” in ways discussed in the previous section. The concluding verses of the parable (Matt 22:13–14) weave threads of apocalyptic rhetorolect into the sacred texture of this parable.

Table 8.2. Blended Spaces and Locations for Early Christian Rhetorolects⁷⁶

	Social, cultural, and physical realia (Firstspace)	Visualization, conceptualization and imagination of God's World (Secondspace)			Ongoing bodily enactments: Blending in religious life (Third-space)
Wisdom	household, vegetation, living beings	God as Father-Creator	Jesus: God's Son, light as mediator	people as God's children	human body as producer of good fruit and righteousness
Prophetic	political kingdom prophet's body	God as King in heaven	Jesus: prophet-messiah sent by God	some humans called to be prophets	human body as distributor and receiver of justice (food, honor)

74. Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 57.

75. Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 516–17.

76. Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 109, fig. 2, abbreviated and adapted.

Apocalyptic	political empire, imperial temple, imperial army	God Almighty	Jesus: King of kings, Lord of lords	heavenly assistants	human body as receiver of resurrection and eternal life in a "new" realm
Precreation	political empire and emperor's household	God as eternal Emperor-Father	Jesus: God's eternal Son		human body as receiver of eternal life through God's eternal Son
Priestly	altar, temple, and temple city	God: holy and pure, on priestly throne in heavenly temple	Jesus: priest-messiah	people as God's holy and pure priestly people	human body as giver of sacrificial offerings and receiver of holiness and purity from God
Miracle	human body and transformations in the natural world	God: transforming power, some human agents	Jesus: healer and miracle-worker	people healed and transformed by God	human body as healed and amazingly transformed

In what follows, I discuss indicators of prophetic rhetorolect in the parable of the royal wedding feast. The narrative setting of this parable is within the context of Jesus confronting the religious leaders of his day (Matt 21–23), the rhetoric of prophetic speech.⁷⁷ This parable communicates something about the kingdom of heaven, the secondspace of prophetic rhetorolect. The kingdom aspect is emphasized by the dominant narrative agent being a king (22:2, 7, 11, 13) who calls to his guests through his emissaries, much like the biblical prophets speak their Lord's words (22:5). The parable employs terminology and imagery associated with the prophetic literature of the Hebrew Bible, especially Isa 54–66.

77. Vernon K. Robbins, "The Rhetorical Full-Turn in Biblical Interpretation and Its Relevance for Feminist Hermeneutics," in *Her Master's Tools? Feminist And Postcolonial Engagements of Historical-Critical Discourse*, ed. Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd C. Penner (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 123.

8.3.1. Jesus Confronting Religious Leaders: Prophetic Rhetography

In Matt 21–23 Jesus confronts the religious and political leaders of his time and place with oppositional rhetoric so characteristic of prophetic rhetorolect that this particular rhetorolect was first called “oppositional rhetorolect.”⁷⁸ Jesus delivers the Sermon on the Mount, the Parables Discourse, and the Eschatological Discourse from a seated position (καθίζω: 5:1–2; κάθημαι: 13:1–2, 24:3), the posture of a teacher in antiquity.⁷⁹ Nothing suggests Jesus is seated to address the high priests, scribes, Pharisees, Sadducees, and Herodians in the temple precinct (Matt 21–23).

When Jesus tells his parable of the royal wedding feast, his stance is more that of a prophet than of a sage and he stands more in the prophetic than sapiential tradition of the Jewish scriptures.⁸⁰ These earlier prophets tell striking stories using figurative language to call the ruling class to righteousness at critical moments in Israel’s history.⁸¹ As Meier argues, if Jesus had been simply a sage, his fate could have been different:

Jesus was not put to death by the Roman prefect because he debated other Jews about divorce or the Sabbath. He was not executed because Pilate did not like some of his wisdom sayings. One more legal debater or popular sage could be tolerated. The eschatological Elijah-like prophet who attracted large enthusiastic crowds and who was believed by some of his followers to be the prophesied Son of David could not be tolerated as he formally entered the ancient Davidic capital at Passover amid acclamations and provocative symbolic actions.⁸²

The parables Jesus tells once he enters Jerusalem (Matt 21–23) echo those of the prophets. For example, the prophet Jeremiah criticizes other prophets and the priests of his day, prophesying that there will be “no figs on the tree, and their leaves will wither” (Jer 8:8–13 NIV), which resonates with the parable of the fig tree (Matt 21:19–20).⁸³

78. Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 114.

79. William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 2 vols. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1956), 2:99.

80. Meier, *Probing the Authenticity*, 40.

81. Meier, *Probing the Authenticity*, 41.

82. Meier, *Probing the Authenticity*, 40–41.

83. Bassar and Cohen, *Gospel of Matthew*, 535.

8.3.3. "Come to the Feast" and Direct Speech in Prophetic Literature

Prophetic literature includes oracles, in which the prophet utters God's words as direct speech.⁸⁴ Almost invariably, Matthew presents the quotations from prophets as speech by introducing them with λέγοντος (Hosea 11:1 in Matt 2:15; Jer. 31:15 in Matt 2:17–18; Isa 7:14 in Matt 1:22–23; Isa 40:3 in Matt 3:3; Isa 9:1–2 in Matt 4:14–17; Isa 53:4 in Matt 8:17; Isa 42:1–4, 9 in Matt 12:17–21). The formula "it is written" (γέγραπται) is only found in citations in common with the other evangelists: Mark (Matt 26:31, 34; Mark 14:21, 27), Luke (Matt 4:4, 6, 7, 10; Luke 4:4, 8, 10), and both Mark and Luke with respect to the one who prepares the way (Matt 11:10, Mark 1:2, Luke 7:27) and the house of prayer (Matt 26:13, Mark 11:17, Luke 19:46).⁸⁵ Otherwise in Matthew's Gospel, words attributed to the prophet Isaiah are "said" (3:3; cf. Mark 1:2, Luke 3:4; also Matt 4:14, 8:17, 12:17, 13:14, 15:7; cf. Mark 7:6).

Some introductions to prophetic quotations emphasize that these words are those of the Lord, albeit spoken through the prophet (1:22, 2:15). In addition to quotations from the prophets, the Matthean Jesus also introduces commandments written in the Torah with "you have heard it said" (5:21, 27, 33) before adding "but I say to you." Despite the suggestion that Matthew is a scribe, unlike Luke (Luke 1:3, 63; 16:6–7), he does not mention the physical act of writing. Matthew's Gospel might have been written as a script for conveying authoritative speech of Jesus, portrayed as both prophet and the fulfilment of prophecy.⁸⁶ Audiences of Matthew's Gospel are to tell the good news of the kingdom across the whole earth (24:14). Wherever the good news is proclaimed, the action of the woman anointing the head of Jesus is to be told in remembrance of her (26:13).⁸⁷

In the parable of the royal wedding feast only the king speaks (22:4, 8–9, 12, 13).⁸⁸ The king's slaves convey his feast invitation using the words of their master (22:4) like prophets convey the message of their Lord using first-person speech. The use of direct speech to invite (22:4) and question (22:13) has the effect of speaking to the audience in the second person

84. Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 224.

85. Both Mark (7:6; 9:12, 13) and Luke (2:23, 4:17, 24:46) include further occurrences.

86. Wire, "Gender Roles," 98.

87. Wire, "Gender Roles," 99.

88. See chapter 2 for a more detailed discussion.

rather than only relating a story in the third person. This speaks to both the narrative audience assembled in the Jerusalem temple and successive audiences who hear the parable by reading Matthew's narrative.

8.3.4. Prophetic Rhetology in Matthew's Gospel

Matthew's Gospel includes both the rhetology (reasoned argument) and the rhetography (imagery) of prophetic rhetorolect. The rhetology of prophetic utterances presents reasoned theses of blessing and of accusation.⁸⁹ The Matthean Jesus quotes from the prophet Isaiah to provide both words of blessing for his disciples (Matt 13:10–16; cf. Isa 6:9–10) and to utter words of accusation directed at the scribes and Pharisees (Matt 15:1–9; cf. Isa 29:13).⁹⁰

In the Jerusalem temple (Matt 21–23), Jesus directs his prophetic speech toward the religious leaders, particularly the scribes and the Pharisees, who are criticized most vehemently in Matt 23.⁹¹ Garland argues that this polemic is no more scorching than “the prophets and other Jewish literature that announce God's wrath on those who are judged to be false stewards.”⁹² He describes it as prophetic rhetoric that “chastises a stubborn people (see Jer 23:1; Ezek 34:1–6, 7, 9, 10; Isa 10:5–19).”⁹³ The pronouncement of “doom-laden woes” is characteristic of prophetic speech (Isa 5:8–23, Hab 2:6–20, Zech 11:17), and in Matt 23:13–36, seven woes are directed at the scribes and Pharisees.⁹⁴ Presenting woes in the “emphatic second-person plural” is unique to Matthew's Gospel, and as Davies and Allison argue, this is more than a literary device for disguising Christian paraenesis as polemic against opponents.⁹⁵ The woes (23:13–36) are addressed to the scribes and Pharisees as prophetic calls

89. Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 126–27.

90. Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 285–88.

91. Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 288–94.

92. David E. Garland, *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the First Gospel* (repr., Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2001), 228.

93. Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 228.

94. Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 228; Combrink, “Shame on the Hypocritical Leaders,” 17; David E. Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), 124–68; Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:282–311.

95. Here Davies and Allison disagree with Garland, *Intention of Matthew 23*, 117–24 (*Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:308–9). More recently, Combrink argues that through the use of *apostrophe* the main purpose of Matt 23:13–36 is to

for repentance, unlike the earlier criticism of scribes and Pharisees in the teaching addressed to the crowds and disciples (23:1–12). The use of second-person speech does, however, direct the woes beyond the narrative audience to subsequent audiences of religious leaders from the first-century leaders of Matthew's community through to twenty-first century Christians.

8.3.5. Prophetic Rhetography

The rhetography of early Christian prophetic rhetorolect redraws the imagery from the Hebrew Bible. The wisdom motifs and apocalyptic imagery within Jesus's parables have antecedents in prophetic literature.⁹⁶ The rhetography of the parable of the royal wedding feast draws on these prophetic traditions: "call," marriage imagery for divine-human relationships, and gnashing of teeth for the wicked.

The king invites people to come to the feast (22:4), echoing similar calls in Isa 55:1–2, Prov 9:1–6, and the book of Revelation,⁹⁷ which could be categorized as examples of prophetic, wisdom, and apocalyptic rhetorolect, respectively. In Isa 55:1–2, there is a threefold use of *come* in the Lord's invitation to any who are thirsty to drink and eat abundant and satisfying food. In Prov 9:1–6, Lady Wisdom, like the parabolic king, sends out her servants to invite people to "Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed" (9:5 ESV)—presumably also to eat of the animals she has slaughtered in readiness (9:2).⁹⁸ Invitations to "come" in the book of Revelation are many and varied (4:1, 11:1–2, 17:1, 18:4, 19:17–18, 21:9) and culminate in the Spirit and the bride saying, "Come" (22:16–17). Even though these invitations to come use different verbs for "come," there is a thematic resonance with the prophetic call to *come back* to the Lord (Isa 21:12; 31:6; Jer 3:14; 18:11; 25:5; 35:15; Ezek 14:6; 18:30; 33:11; Joel 2:12; Zech 1:3, 4; Mal 3:7).

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, invitees are called to come to celebrate the marriage of the king's son (22:2). This bridegroom is normally identified as Jesus due to descriptions of Jesus as the bridegroom

warn the "real rhetorical audience" of the disciples against following the example of the scribes and Pharisees ("Shame on the Hypocritical Leaders," 10–11).

96. Meier, *Probing the Authenticity*, 66.

97. Blickenstaff, *Bridegroom*, 60.

98. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:200.

(Matt 9:15, 25:1).⁹⁹ Prophetic literature is rich in imagery that presents God as the husband of an unfaithful and adulterous people who calls his people to come back into a renewed relationship. Twice in Matthew's Gospel, Jesus uses the topos of adultery (μοιχαλῖς) to refer to this "adulterous generation" (12:39, 16:4; cf. Mark 8:38). This adultery language evokes the prophetic tradition of using marriage imagery to describe the relationship between God and his people Israel, which has earliest expression in Hos 1–3.¹⁰⁰ Then in Isaiah (1–5), Jeremiah (3–4), and Ezekiel (16), the imagery of God's people as an unfaithful wife extends from Israel to Judah and Jerusalem.¹⁰¹

Those invited to the wedding in the parable of the royal wedding feast turn away intentionally (22:3, 5) and rebelliously (22:6). The verb, ἀμελέω, describes both the willful nonattendance of some of the invited guests in the parable (Matt 22:5) and the recalcitrant and rebellious behavior of the wayward wife Jerusalem (Jer 4:17 LXX).¹⁰² The king's anger and response to waywardness in Matt 22:7 has several oral-scribal connections with Isa 1:21–25. The formerly faithful city is described as a whore, full of murderers (Isa 1:21; cf. Matt 22:7). In response to this injustice the sovereign gets angry (Isa 1:24; cf. Matt 22:7) and avenges himself on his enemies, using imagery associated with burning a city (Isa 1:25; cf. Matt 22:7).

Prophetic literature depicts the restoration of the relationship between God and his unfaithful people with bridal imagery. In Hosea, Israel becomes a "new bride" (2:14–20).¹⁰³ In Isaiah, the survivors of the cleansing of Zion will be covered with a כַּפֶּה, the canopy associated with weddings (Isa 4:5; cf. Ps 19:6, Joel 2:16).¹⁰⁴ In Jer 31, the new covenant calls Israel as a (renewed) virgin (31:4) to return to the Lord her husband (31:32).¹⁰⁵ Isaiah 40–55 presents the return of exiles following the fall of Babylon as the restoration of Lady Jerusalem, adorned as a bride

99. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:198; Luz, *Matthew* 21–28, 52.

100. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 121, 146.

101. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 121, 124.

102. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 214.

103. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 114.

104. Long notes that this marriage is celebrated by the singing of "The Song of the Vineyard" (Isa 5), which is intertexture for the parable of the tenants, which immediately precedes Matt 22:1–14 (*Jesus the Bridegroom*, 124).

105. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 128–29.

(54:11–13), to her husband and redeemer (54:5–8).¹⁰⁶ Zion is adorned as a bride, being of good appearance, *εὐπρέπεια* (cf. Ezek 16:10), and wearing jewels (cf. Isa 61:10) to greet the returning exiles in Pss. Sol. 11 and Bar 5:1–9.¹⁰⁷ Zion, also named Jerusalem, is the site of the restoration of the marriage between God and his people (Isa 1–5, 40–55; Jer 3–4; Ezek 16) as well as the place where people come to participate in the eschatological banquet (Isa 24–25). These two themes come together in the parable of the royal wedding feast.

In prophetic literature, forgiveness of sin and restoration of fortunes involves the provision of clothing by the Lord or his agent. In Zech 3:1–5 the angel of the Lord provides the high priest Joshua with clean festive apparel to mark a new beginning. In Isa 61:10, the Lord provides garments of salvation and robes of righteousness, which are compared to a bridegroom's garland and a bride's jewels, thereby combining both wedding and clothing metaphors to describe the "good news" of the restoration of God's people (Isa 61:1–11).¹⁰⁸

In the parable of the royal wedding feast the expulsion of the wedding guest into the outer darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth (22:13) disturbs the imagery of the inclusion of both the bad and the good at the wedding feast (22:9–10). There is a similar dynamic at the end of the book of Isaiah (Isa 66:23–24 NRSV):

From new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath,
all flesh shall come to worship before me, says the LORD.
And they shall go out and look at the dead bodies of the people who have
rebelled against me;
for their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched,
and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh.

In Walter Brueggemann's words, "these final verses of the book of Isaiah exhibit a profound tension between magnanimous *inclusiveness* and intensely felt *exclusiveness*."¹⁰⁹ He suggests this represents unresolved conflict between those who favor inclusivity and those who maintain identity

106. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 133–38.

107. Long, *Jesus the Bridegroom*, 170.

108. Jeremias, *Parables of Jesus*, 189.

109. Walter Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40–66* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1998), 260, emphasis original.

through exclusivity and that this unfinished business is evident in “the later scribal note that in synagogue reading, after verse 24 is read, verse 23 must be repeated as the last word in order to overcome the venom of verse 24.”¹¹⁰

Brueggemann emphasizes that in Isa 66:24, it is not enough that those who rebel against God die. “They must *keep* dying, endlessly destroyed, perpetually humiliated, everlastingly remembered scornfully.”¹¹¹ These concluding words of the book of Isaiah are considered one of the earliest expressions of the idea of hell as a state of eternal dying.¹¹²

The words which conclude the parable of the royal wedding feast, “where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth” (22:13), are also considered suggestive of eternal torment. Kim Papaioannou argues, however, that Isa 66:24 and Matt 22:13 stress the irreversibility of God’s punishment and not necessarily everlasting punishment.¹¹³ Regardless of whether the punishment is eternal or not, both the last verse of Isaiah (66:24) and the last scene of this parable (22:11–13) mar the depiction of eschatological blessing by using graphic imagery of what will happen to the wicked. Rhetorically these endings function as a prophetic call to be righteous and to avoid the complacency of assuming that one is among the righteous. They are a kind of “proto-apocalyptic prophetic rhetoric,” which provides assurance of God’s sovereignty and protection by displaying the human enemy dead and impotent (Exod 20:47–48, Ezek 39:11–21, Mal 4:1–3).¹¹⁴

8.3.6. The Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast as Prophetic Rhetoric

The parable of the royal wedding feast weaves intertextual threads from prophetic literature, especially Isa 54–66, into prophetic speech directed to the religious and political leaders of Jerusalem, using the style (direct speech), rhetology (reasoning), and rhetography (imagery) of prophetic rhetoric. This has implications for exploring each of the sacred texture categories.

110. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 260.

111. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 260.

112. Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40–66: A Commentary*, trans. David M. G. Stalker (London: SCM, 1969), 428; Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 260.

113. Papaioannou, *Geography of Hell*, 29–32, 211–18, 234–42.

114. Papaioannou, *Geography of Hell*, 30.

8.4. Conclusion: Sacred Texture

I conclude my exploration of the sacred texture of the parable of the royal wedding feast by summarizing observations according to Robbins's categories: deity, holy persons, spirit beings, divine history, human redemption, human commitment, religious community, and ethics.¹¹⁵

8.4.1. God in the Parable of the Royal Wedding Feast

Over the centuries, interpreters have expressed concern about the portrayal of God as king in the parable of the royal wedding feast. In 1531, Luther expressed reluctance to preach on the "terrible gospel" of this parable, asking, "What kind of God is it who in the end consigns to hell people whom he himself has invited?"¹¹⁶ More recently, Barbara Reid has framed the concern as, "Which God is with us?"¹¹⁷ This question is premised on dichotomizing the portrayal of God in Matthew's Gospel into either a God of boundless graciousness (e.g., 5:43–48, 13:1–9, 18:12–14, 20:1–16) or a harsh and punishing God (e.g., 22:2–13).¹¹⁸ Allison outlines several contradictions in Matthew's Gospel, noting that discourse on the tension between the God of love and the God of wrath has a long history.¹¹⁹ This tension in the GOD IS KING metaphor was discussed in section 8.1.

In section 8.2, I argued that the king in the parable of the royal wedding feast, like the God of the prophetic writings, both provides and punishes, both scatters and gathers, both pronounces as unworthy and protects the community, especially the little ones. Like the heavenly Father, this king provides, sends prophets, insistently invites, is slow to anger, punishes injustice, pronounces who is in and out of the kingdom, gathers disparate and dispersed people into community, sees and rewards right behavior, and protects his people by casting out anyone who would harm them.

In section 8.3, I argued that this parable is primarily prophetic rhetorolect and suggested that some of the contradictory portrayals of God might arise from echoes of Isaiah in Matthew. Brueggemann reflects that in the book of Isaiah, "Yahweh is endlessly surprising, disjunctive,

115. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 120.

116. Luz cites Martin Luther, *Sermons 2.719 (Matthew 21–28, 59)*.

117. Barbara Reid, "Which God Is with Us?," *Int* 64.4 (2010): 380–89.

118. Reid, "Which God," 381–85.

119. Allison, *Studies in Matthew*, 237–50.

and elusive,” and as a result the presentation of God’s sovereignty includes passages that are “unbearably harsh” among those that are “astonishingly healing.”¹²⁰ In response to Reid’s question, Which God is with us? I suggest that in the parable of the royal wedding feast, it is the God of the prophets, particularly the Lord God of Isa 54–66.¹²¹

8.3.2. Prophetic Proclamation in Jerusalem

The goal of prophetic rhetoric is to create a governed realm on earth where God’s people enact God’s righteousness with the aid of God’s specially transmitted word in the form of prophetic action and speech.¹²² The prophetic rhetorolect blends the firstspace of the earthly kingdoms of Israel and Judah with the secondspace, “the realm of God,” to present God as the heavenly king with Jesus as his Messiah-prophet who proclaims and manifests this kingdom. Robbins considers the Synoptic Gospels exemplars of prophetic rhetorolect.¹²³

In Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus makes numerous pronouncements about the “kingdom,”¹²⁴ the secondspace of prophetic rhetorolect. These include several parables about the kingdom of heaven (13:24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47; 18:23; 20:1; 22:2; 25:1), with the parable of the royal wedding feast being one of only two in which the dominant narrative agent is named a βασιλεύς, “king” (18:23, 22:2). Both these parables portray their king as generous, either by forgiving a large debt (18:23–35) or by providing a large feast (22:2–13); however, the king in both parables also orders violent punishment of an individual.

Jesus tells the parable of the royal wedding feast in Jerusalem. Early in Matthew’s Gospel, Jerusalem is described as “the city of the great king” (Matt 5:34–35) in the context of heaven being the throne of God and earth being where God’s feet are planted (cf. Isa 66:1). When Jesus enters Jeru-

120. Brueggemann, *Isaiah 40–66*, 2.

121. Sebastian R. Smolarz, *Covenant and the Metaphor of Divine Marriage in Biblical Thought: A Study with Special Reference to the Book of Revelation* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2011), 157–61.

122. Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 110.

123. Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 110.

124. Kingdom of Heaven: 3:2; 4:17; 5:3, 10, 19–20; 7:21; 8:11; 10:7; 11:12; 13:11, 24, 31, 33, 44, 45, 47; 13:52; 16:69; 18:1, 4, 23; 19:12, 14, 23; 20:1, 22:2, 23:13; 25:1. Kingdom of God: 6:33; 12:28, 19:24; 21:31, 43.

saalem, he is hailed as “the Son of David” (21:9); then, when he enters the temple, casts out the traders, and heals people, he is again proclaimed as the Son of David (21:15), this time by children.¹²⁵ Jesus appeals to Ps 8, implying the children’s proclamation is evidence of the sovereignty of God (21:16).

The temple (ἱερόν) is usually the firstspace of priestly rhetorolect, but Jesus does not enter the temple as a priest or to make sacrifice (21:11). Despite recognition as the “Son of David,” he engages with the temple leadership as a prophet rather than as a prince (21:15). He introduces the first two of the three parables he tells in the temple by addressing the audience directly: the first is a question, “What do you think?” (21:28 NIV), and the second the imperative, “Listen to another parable” (21:33 NIV). Direct speech introduces these parables as prophetic speech, even though the content of these parables concerns fathers, sons, and work in the vineyard, all more suggestive of wisdom rhetorolect.

8.4.2. Holy Persons: Jesus and Prophets, Sages and Scribes

Holy persons are “those who have a special relation to God or have divine powers,” and in the New Testament, “the holy person par excellence is Jesus the Christ.”¹²⁶ In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the son of the king probably represents Jesus, who in Matthew’s Gospel is not only Emmanuel, the messianic fulfilment of prophecy, but also acts as a prophet himself. When the Matthean Jesus is in the temple, his words and actions parallel those of Jeremiah, “the celibate prophet predicting the destruction of the temple.”¹²⁷ Matthew is the only New Testament writer explicitly to refer to Jeremiah, namely, when the identity of Jesus is discussed (16:14) and in relation to fulfilment of prophecy (2:17, 27:9).

In prophetic rhetorolect, holy persons are prophets, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Hosea; in wisdom, sages, such as Solomon and Job; in apocalyptic, seers, such as Noah, Daniel, Ezekiel, and Joel; in priestly, priests, such as Samuel, Aaron and Levi; and in miracle, miracle workers,

125. Dennis C. Duling, “The Plurisignificant ‘Son of David’ in Social Scientific Perspective: Kinship, Kingship, Magic, and Miracle,” *BTB* 22 (1992): 112–13; Wainwright, *Habitat, Human, and Holy*, 179–82.

126. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 121.

127. Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel*; Bassler and Cohen, *Matthew and Judaic Traditions*, 532–37.

such as Elijah and Elisha.¹²⁸ Matthew's Gospel has a strong focus on the fulfilment of prophecy; however, prophets are not the only holy persons. In the temple, Jesus speaks of sending "prophets, sages, and scribes" to his audience of scribes and Pharisees, whom he accuses of killing them (23:34 NRSV).

In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the slaves (δοῦλοι) the king sends out to call people to come to the feast (22:3–6) represent such prophets, sages, and scribes. Verbs which describe the fate of the slaves, *seized* (κρατέω) and *killed* (ἀποκτείνω), echo what happens to John the Baptist (14:3, 5) and to Jesus (26:4). The possibility of an allusion to John the Baptist is strengthened by Jesus recognizing him as a prophet to hear and to heed (21:25–26, 32) during the contest for authority in the temple, both before and after telling the parable of the two sons (21:28–32).

For the audience of Matthew's Gospel, the slaves sent out to gather in the bad and the good (22:9–10) represent either more prophets or missionaries, like those sent out by Jesus on missionary journeys in Matt 10 and to all nations in Matt 28:16–20. The king's attendants are commanded to restrain and remove the individual without wedding clothing (22:13). The only other occurrences of the noun διάκονος in Matthew's Gospel appear in exhortations that "the greatest among you shall be your servant" (20:26 ESV, 23:11). This opens the possibility that the attendants may be considered humans serving in the ecclesia, not necessarily angels who assist the Son of Man on the final judgment day.¹²⁹

8.4.3. Spirit Beings: Angels

The parable of the royal wedding feast does not make explicit reference to any spirit beings, that is, "special divine or evil beings who have the nature of a spirit rather than a fully human being."¹³⁰ In Matthew's Gospel, however, angels appear at significant moments, implying that they are never too far away. Three times an individual angel appears to Joseph in a dream with a message about protecting the infant Jesus and his mother Mary (1:20, 2:13, 2:19). Angels minister to Jesus in the desert after his encounter with Satan (4:11) and specialize in watching out for the little ones (18:10). Legions of angels are ready to be deployed, but Jesus does not call on them,

128. Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 501.

129. Cf. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:205.

130. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 123.

neither when tested in the desert (4:6) nor when arrested (26:53).¹³¹ The most significant angelic intervention in human affairs is limited until the Son of Man comes in glory (13:39–42, 16:24–28, 24:29–31, 25:30–46).¹³²

Emphasizing the oral-scribal intratexture of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” invites paralleling the king’s attendants (22:13) with the angels of the Son of Man who separate the wicked from the righteous (13:39–42, 49–50).¹³³ By emphasizing the oral-scribal intertexture of “binding by the feet and hands,” however, the role of the king’s attendants more closely parallels that of the angel Raphael binding the fallen angel Asael (1 En. 10.4) and the demon Asmodeus (Tob 8:3). The coming of the Son of Man in glory, attended by angels, to sit in judgment on earth is set to occur at the end of the age (13:41, 16:17–28, 25:31). By contrast, the binding of Asael by the angel Raphael happens in the heavenly realm bringing healing to the earth, and the intervention of the angel Raphael in the book of Tobit happens on earth within human history.¹³⁴ This raises the question of eschatology in the parable of the royal wedding feast.

8.4.4. Divine History: Eschatology

Robbins describes divine history as “the realm of eschatology, apocalyptic, or salvation history.”¹³⁵ Parables about king’s banquets become a rabbinic way of communicating about the world to come,¹³⁶ and Matthew’s parable of the royal wedding feast also has strong resonances with this eschatological-feast topos. This parable, however, lacks reference to eternal fire often associated with eschatological judgment. There is no mention of either being thrown into the furnace of fire (εἰς τὴν κάμινον τοῦ πυρός) associated with final judgment in the parables of the wheat and the weeds (13:42) and the dragnet (13:50) or the eternal fire (εἰς τὸ πῦρ τὸ αἰώνιον) prepared for

131. Carter three times makes the point that in Matt 26:53, Jesus does not call on any of the seventy-two thousand angels and God does not opt for violence (“God as Father,” 93, 95, 98).

132. Robbins, *Invention of Christian Discourse*, 457.

133. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:205.

134. Nathan MacDonald, “Food and Drink in Tobit and Other ‘Diaspora Novellas,’” in *Studies in the Book of Tobit: A Multidisciplinary Approach*, ed. Mark Bredin (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 165–78.

135. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 123.

136. Kiperwasser, “Bizarre Invention,” 156–57, 170.

the devil and his angels in the depiction of final judgment as a separation between sheep and goats (25:41).

In apocalyptic literature, fire is reserved for the final judgment day, until then evil beings are bound and cast down into darkness. In the book of Revelation, an angel comes down from heaven to seize and bind “the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan” and then casts him into a pit for a thousand years (Rev 20:1–3 ESV). It is only after the thousand years that Satan is released, at which point he deceives the nations, rallying them for battle, until he “was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever” (Rev 20:7–10 NRSVA). Similarly, in 1 Enoch, the watcher Asael is only cast into the fire on the day of Great Judgment (10:6); until then he remains covered with darkness in the rocky wilderness where the angel Raphael has cast him, after binding his hands and feet (10:4–5).

Drawing on these parallels from apocalyptic literature, I suggest that, despite the weeping and gnashing of teeth, the outer darkness in the parable of the royal wedding feast (22:13) does not parallel the fiery furnace of final judgment by the Son of Man in the Parables and Eschatological Discourses (13:42, 50; 25:41). The restraint and removal of Asael, Satan, and the devil precedes the fiery fate of final judgment. Similarly, I suggest that this parable concerns the restraint of evildoers prior to the final judgment.

Apocalyptic threads, such as “outer darkness,” “weeping and gnashing of teeth” (22:13), and “chosen few” (22:14), are woven into the parable of the royal wedding feast, but apocalyptic rhetorolect is not the dominant belief system. The king is not the king of kings, nor is the focus of the parable on offering comfort to the righteous with an assurance of the reversal of fortunes. This parable is a prophetic warning addressed to religious leaders, whom Jesus later criticizes for focusing too much on outward displays of piety (23:1–7).

8.4.5. Human Redemption

Human redemption is defined by Robbins as “the benefit transmitted from the divine realm to humans as a result of events, rituals, or practices.”¹³⁷

137. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 125.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells his audience that the Father in heaven will see and reward almsgiving, prayer, and fasting practiced in private rather than paraded in public (6:1, 4, 6, 18). There are rewards for acts of hospitality (10:41–42). Those who feed the hungry, clothe the naked, shelter the homeless, visit the sick or imprisoned are rewarded with entry into the kingdom of heaven (25:31–46).

To avoid what Nathan Eubank calls “theological embarrassment” over the language of reward, debt, and wages of sin and righteousness, some distinguish between “getting in” and “staying in” the kingdom of heaven.¹³⁸ Runesson argues that in Matthew's Gospel, as in later rabbinic literature, “while condemnation is based on a person's ‘works,’ salvation can never be earned, only ‘inherited.’”¹³⁹ He discusses the parable of the royal wedding feast as an example of this dynamic between law and election. He observes that the invitations to the wedding feast are based solely on God's generosity, whereas human reactions and associated works matter when it comes to excluding people from participating. He concludes: “Invitation to salvation is, thus, by God's grace, if we may use such terms, but exclusion and condemnation are presented as self-imposed consequences of human behaviour.”¹⁴⁰

8.4.6. Human Commitment: Discipleship

Robbins's sacred texture category of human commitment is usually called *discipleship* in New Testament studies, and it concerns “the response of humans at the level of their practices.”¹⁴¹ In Matthew's Gospel, it is not enough to say “Lord, Lord,” to enter the dominion of heaven; rather, it is necessary to *do* the will of the heavenly Father (7:21–23, 25:1–13). Jesus says, “For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother” (12:50 ESV). This draws followers of Jesus into familial relationship with him, for whom there is only one father, the Father in heaven (23:9).

In prophetic literature God is described as the father of Israel (Jer 31:9). Calling God “our Father” is associated with the identity of being

138. Nathan Eubank, *Wages of Cross-Bearing and Debt of Sin: The Economy of Heaven in Matthew's Gospel* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013), 4–11; Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom*, 44–50, 168–79; France, *Gospel of Matthew*, 827.

139. Runesson, *Divine Wrath*, 171.

140. Runesson, *Divine Wrath*, 183.

141. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 126.

God's people and under his rule (Isa 63:15–19), with criticism directed at those who call God “Father” while doing evil and being faithless (Jer 3:4, 19–22). In Matthew's Gospel, to be “children of your Father in heaven” it is necessary to “love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you” (5:43–48 ESV). There are also implications for internal relationships in the ecclesia because “human commitment is not simply an individual matter but a matter of participating with other people in activities that nurture and fulfil commitment to divine ways.”¹⁴²

8.4.7. Religious Community: Ecclesiology

In Matthew's Gospel, the religious community develops into the ecclesia as those who obey the will of the heavenly Father are drawn into relationship with one another as brothers and sisters of Jesus (12:50). Marianne Thompson argues that “it is precisely the fact that the community knows and calls upon God as ‘our Father in heaven’ that obligates them in turn to treat each other with familial love and care.”¹⁴³ In Matthew's Gospel the language of ἀδελφός (literally, brother) is used to stress that among the children of the heavenly Father, it is important to seek reconciliation (5:22–24), to not judge (7:3–5), to address sin (18:15), to forgive (18:21), to be merciful (18:35), and to care for the lowliest (25:40). The emphasis on God as the heavenly Father in the Sermon on the Mount (5:16, 45, 48; 6:1, 9, 14, 26, 32; 7:11, 21) extends to care for others as brothers and sisters, as illustrated in the depiction of final judgment (25:31–45). Thompson describes the familial commitment to God as Father in this way: “God's fatherly goodness obligates those who are children of God: those who have learned faithfulness in the family of God must live it out. If God clothes the grass, God's children are to clothe the naked; if God feeds the birds, God's children are to feed the hungry.”¹⁴⁴

In the Gospel of Matthew, such generosity is undertaken not as benefactors but rather as fellow children of the heavenly Father, ruler of heaven and earth, who is the ultimate provider and benefactor. In Luke 14:15–24 the rhetorical force of the parable is to be generous benefactors like the

142. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 127.

143. Marianne Meyers Thompson, *Promise of the Father: Jesus and God in the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000), 110.

144. Thompson, *Promise of the Father*, 111.

host (Luke 14:12–14).¹⁴⁵ In Matt 22:1–14, however, there is no sense of “go and do likewise”; rather, the focus is on whether and how one comes to the wedding feast given by the king, the ultimate and only true benefactor.

In Matthew's Gospel, although disciples are authorized by Jesus to go out first to the lost sheep of Israel (10:1–10) and then to all nations (28:16–20), within the household of faith, delegated divine authority tends to be limited to working as managerial slaves subject to their master. Jennifer Glancy identifies what she calls “managerial slaves” in several Matthean parables (18:23–35, 21:33–41, 24:45–51, 25:14–30), who despite their “relatively prestigious work” are nevertheless subject to corporal punishment.¹⁴⁶ Glancy considers it the lot of all slaves in antiquity to be liable to abuse and punishment, especially as alternate names for slaves are *verbero* (flog-worthy), *mastigia* (whip-worthy), and *furcifer* (gallows bird).¹⁴⁷ She suggests the violence experienced by slaves in Matthew's Gospel (18:28, 30, 34; 21:35; 22:6; 24:49, 51; 25:30) to be relatively restrained because slaves could be subjected to hot tar, burning clothes, iron chains, restraining collars, the rack, the pillory, and the mill.¹⁴⁸

In two of Matthew's parables (24:45–51, 25:14–30), faithless slaves are subject to physical abuse, whereas the faithful slaves internalize the master's interests and are rewarded with additional responsibility, further forwarding their master's concerns.¹⁴⁹ In Matthew's Gospel, “the master” is concerned with the well-being of all in the household. For example, in the parable of the faithless slave, the only task named when the master places this managerial slave in charge of his household is “to give the other slaves their allowance of food at the proper time” (24:45 NRSV). The wicked slave, however, “begins to beat his fellow slaves, and eats and drinks with drunkards” (24:49 NRSV). He is cut into pieces and placed where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth *because he has not cared for the other slaves in the household*.

In these Matthean parables, the status of humans in the divine economy is that of slaves dependent on their master.¹⁵⁰ Children are also dependent, but the greatest in the kingdom of heaven are those who *ταπεινώ* (make

145. Eck, “When Patrons Are Patrons,” 1–14.

146. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 112–14.

147. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 118.

148. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 118.

149. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 115–16.

150. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity*, 121.

low, humble) themselves like a child (18:3–4). So low, indeed, that they cannot *καταφρονέω* (disregard, look down on, think little of) little ones (18:10) but rather seek them out as valued brothers and sisters. By the Matthean Jesus speaking of God as “my Father” and to the disciples of “your Father,” he “appeals to the righteous to show themselves to be true children of that Father.”¹⁵¹ This involves both tending to the needs of all the brothers and sisters in the household of faith (25:40) and emulating the impartial love of the heavenly Father for all people, including enemies (5:44–45).

8.4.8. Ethics

Ethics “concerns the responsibility of humans to think and act in special ways in both ordinary and extraordinary circumstances.”¹⁵² In the parable of the royal wedding feast, the king authorizes his attendants to bind and cast out an individual (22:13). Unlike the depictions of final judgment, this is neither a separation into two groups, nor is the expelled person cast into unquenchable fire (Matt 13:24–30, 36–43; 25:31–46). The king’s attendants are not necessarily angels, possibly giving responsibility to brothers and sisters of the ecclesia to act in accordance with the will of the Father to expel certain individuals.

The only guidelines for expelling an individual from the ecclesia (18:15–17) are found in the context of the heavenly Father’s concern for little ones (18:6, 10, 14). Moreover, here in the Community Discourse, responsibility for expelling a brother or sister does not rest with one person but rather with the whole ecclesia (18:17–18; cf. 16:19). Immediately after giving this authority, Jesus associates himself with community decisions, by saying, “Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them” (Matt 18:19–20 NRSV).

Almost immediately after making this statement, the Matthean Jesus tells the parable of the two debtors, in which slaves speak up for another slave (18:23–35). When the larger debtor seizes the smaller debtor by the throat, demands repayment, and throws him into prison, his fellow slaves

151. Thompson, *Promise of the Father*, 113.

152. Robbins, *Exploring the Textures of Texts*, 129.

are greatly distressed by what they see. They report what has happened to the king, who then forcefully restrains and removes the larger debtor (18:31–32). These fellow slaves take initiative in seeking justice and mercy for a fellow member of their household. They do not stand by silently, waiting for the wrong to be righted at the time of eschatological judgment. Being children of the heavenly Father is undoubtedly a relationship of dependence but not one without responsibility. The challenge is to be concerned for the welfare of all the members of the household of faith, especially the lowliest.

I argue that as prophetic rhetoric, the primary goal of the parable of the royal wedding feast is to call religious leaders and insiders to repentance, particularly with respect to their interaction with little ones in the community and marginalized people on the fringes of the community. In the thesis conclusion that follows, I draw together the interpretive threads that contribute to my proposal that the individual expelled from the wedding feast may well represent someone who would otherwise harm the community.

Conclusion

To conclude this exploration of the parable of the royal wedding feast (Matt 22:1–14), I draw together threads from each chapter to summarize the rhetorical force of this parable and what it implies about a dress code for heaven. The main advantage of using sociorhetorical interpretation as developed by Robbins is that it provided a framework for a multi-dimensional approach to Matt 22:1–14 that incorporates all three elements of the communication triangle—text, author, and audience. Even though I began with textual analysis in chapters 1 and 2 and considered this parable within the socioliterary and sociohistorical location of the author of Matthew's Gospel in chapters 3 to 6, my interpretation is inevitably influenced by my social location, both postcolonial and ecclesial, despite this not being discussed in any detail until chapters 7 and 8, respectively. The emerging evidence of institutional churches failing to protect little ones from child sexual abuse has been in the background while I have been exploring this parable. This has raised the question of whether there are times when individuals should be excluded from church communities because of the harm they do, especially to little ones, if they are not restrained and removed.

My thesis that the individual cast out from the wedding feast by royal command represents someone who would otherwise harm little ones in the community emerged as each texture was considered. Although a laborious process, exploring all five textures of sociorhetorical interpretation meant that I viewed this parable from several perspectives using different lenses. Without the application of this interpretive analytic as a whole, some features that proved significant in my exploration of this parable might have been missed. For example, within the analysis of inner texture, exploring sensory-aesthetic texture drew attention to the otherwise redundant reference to feet and hands. Intratextually, this invited consideration of possible resonances with excising a foot or hand in Matt 18. Intertextually, the angel of healing, Raphael, is commanded to bind the feet and hands of the fallen angel Asael and cast him into darkness, which then brings

healing to the earth damaged by the secrets shared with humankind (1 En. 10.4–10). Exploration of the inner, ideological, and sacred textures led to the conclusion that the human king in the parable of the royal wedding feast represents the heavenly Father of the Matthean Jesus. Restraining and removing the inappropriately dressed individual may be viewed as an act of protection for little ones in the household of faith by the Father-King rather than as excessive punishment of an unworthy person more typical of despotic rulers of the time than of God.

My proposed interpretation of the parable of the royal wedding feast differs from previous scholarship due to several shifts of emphasis. First, I consider the primary rhetoric of Matt 22:11–13 to depict the expulsion of an individual rather than to represent eschatological separation into two groups. Consequently, I stress intratextual connections with the Community Discourse (Matt 18) rather than with the Parables and Eschatological Discourses (Matt 13, 24–25), although these other discourses are not ignored. Second, I pay more attention to the means of expulsion (22:13) than the reason for expulsion (22:12). Third, with respect to Matt 22:13, I explore the intertextures of “binding feet and hands” in detail and place less stress on occurrences of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” elsewhere in Matthew’s Gospel. Fourth, I consider the king’s action from a community rather than from an individual perspective and thus regard expulsion as protection rather than punishment. Fifth, I emphasize that Jesus tells this parable to religious leaders, which suggests that more attention needs to be given to the criticism he makes of them in Matt 23 and less to Jesus’s teaching of disciples about what is needed to enter the dominion of heaven in the Eschatological Discourse (Matt 24–25).

My thesis that the expelled individual may be understood as someone who would otherwise harm the community is woven from five main interpretive choices. The first strand of my thesis is to agree with most interpreters by considering the parable of the royal wedding feast to be an allegory in which a human king represents God. In the inner-texture analysis of chapter 1, repetitive-progressive texture highlights the importance of the king as a narrative agent (22:2, 7, 11, 13) and his dominance of all the narrative planes of this parable narrated by Jesus. In chapter 2, parallels were drawn between Jesus’s dominance of the narrative planes of the Gospel of Matthew and the king’s dominance of the narrative planes of the parable of the royal wedding feast. In chapter 8, I presented the argument that even the warring and expelling action of the king (22:7, 13)

may be considered consistent with a βασιλεύς discipling and protecting his people as their “father.”

The second strand of my thesis is to highlight the significance of the king’s command that the one expelled be bound by feet and hands (22:13). Exploring the sensory-aesthetic texture of the parable of the royal wedding feast as part of inner-texture analysis drew attention to this otherwise redundant reference to feet and hands. Hands and feet symbolize the zone of purposeful action in the tripartite understanding of the human body, so being bound by both emphasizes the incapacitation of such a person to act in any way, including harming others. In the Community Discourse, Jesus speaks of cutting off one’s hand or foot if it causes sin and stumbling (18:8), where the worst punishment is reserved for those who cause little ones to stumble (18:6). In chapter 4, the oral-scribal intertextures of the angel of healing, Raphael, binding the feet and hands of the fallen angel Asael in 1 En. 10.4 and the demon Asmodeus in Tob 8:3 (Sinaiticus) were considered in their immediate literary context, where such restraining action contributes to healing and the well-being of community.

The third strand of my thesis is that the rhetography of the final scene of the parable of the royal wedding feast (22:11–13) depicts *expulsion* of an individual rather than *separation* of the good and the bad into two groups: those who enter the dominion of heaven and those who don’t. Therefore, more attention is given to Matthean texts concerned with expulsion of individuals in Matt 18. In this Community Discourse, not only is a process provided for the expulsion of unrepentant sinners (18:15–17) but also warning is given about both action and inaction with respect to harm done to little ones. The worst punishment is not for sinning per se but for causing others to sin, which merits excising the offending hand or foot (18:5–9). Criticism is made of inaction by failing to seek out a lost little one of special concern to the heavenly Father (18:10–14). The rhetography of expulsion also requires care to be taken not to overemphasize resonances with parables that involve separation into two groups, such as the parables of the wheat and the weeds (Matt 13:24–30, 36–43) and the dragnet (13:47–50) within the Parables Discourse and the parables of the ten virgins (25:1–13) and the separation of sheep and goats (25:31–46) within the Eschatological Discourse. These discourses are delivered by the Matthean Jesus to his disciples, whereas the parable of the royal wedding feast has a different audience.

The fourth strand of my thesis relates to the audience of the parable of the royal wedding feast within the opening-middle-closing textures of

Matthew's Gospel. The Matthean Jesus addresses the parable of the royal wedding feast not as teaching to the disciples but rather as a challenge to religious leaders during a confrontation about authority to teach in the temple (Matt 21–23). To identify the significance of the wedding clothing as a reason for expulsion from the wedding feast, it is important to look to the accusations Jesus levels against the religious leaders while he is in the temple. He criticizes the discrepancy between their outward appearance of righteousness and the inner reality (23:5–7, 25–27) as well as the negative impact they have on those over whom they exercise authority (23:3–4, 13–15). Specific concerns include failing to practice what they preach (23:1–3), burdening others (23:4), dressing to show off their piety (23:5), being gatekeepers (23:13), being hypocrites (23:27–28), and neglecting the weightier matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness (23:23). The Matthean Jesus describes the religious leaders as blind (23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26). This blindness associates them with those who willfully choose not to respond to the king's invitation to “come and see” the generous preparations he has made for his son's wedding feast (22:4).

The fifth strand of my thesis is to highlight that those who eventually come to the king's feast include both the bad and the good, *πονηρούς τε καὶ ἀγαθούς* (22:10). This phrase has a much closer parallel with God's indiscriminate provision (5:45) than with throwing out the bad fish in the parable of the dragnet (13:48). I view the person cast out of the wedding feast as an individual rather than as representative of all “bad fish.” I suggest that the audience of religious leaders in the temple may associate the “bad” who come into the king's wedding feast (22:10) with the tax collectors and prostitutes Jesus tells them will enter the kingdom of God ahead of them (21:31–32). It would be inconsistent with the ideologically marginal cultural rhetoric of Matthew's Gospel for a lack of *ἔνδυμα γάμου* due to poverty or other forms of marginality to merit expulsion. Matthew's Gospel does not promote an isolationist social rhetoric despite Matthean employment of sectarian topoi, such as the need to be more righteous than the scribes and Pharisees (5:20) and to be perfect like the heavenly Father (5:48).

Threads not woven into my proposed interpretation of the parable of the royal wedding feast include understandings of *ἔνδυμα γάμου* as entry criteria for heaven in Matthean and rabbinic eschatology. Threads left on the cutting room floor because Matt 22:11–13 concerns expulsion rather than entry requirements include clean clothing as in the rabbinic parable of a king's banquet with no set time (b. Shabb. 153b), adequate preparation

as in the parable of the ten virgins (Matt 25:1–13), readiness to repent as in Luke’s parable of the two sons (Luke 15:11–32), good works like those of the “sheep” separated from the “goats” (Matt 25:31–46), and deeds of the righteous with which the bride of the Lamb is clad (Rev 19:8).

Also not woven into my interpretation of the parable of the royal wedding feast is the suggestion that *ἐνδυμα γάμου* represents wearing clean clothing to give due honor to the king. Not only does limiting the clothing requirement to clean clothing fail to make wearing the appropriate clothing for the royal wedding any more accessible to the poor—given the costly, time-consuming process of cleaning clothes in the ancient world discussed in chapter 6—but Matthean rhetoric regarding honor, cleanliness, and clothing also needs to be taken into account. Honor may well be the pivotal cultural value in the social world of the New Testament, but the Matthean Jesus expresses a countercultural attitude towards acquiring and ascribing honor.

There is nothing in Matthew’s Gospel either to stress the importance of cleanliness or to encourage ownership of clothing. Jesus is unimpressed by the outward cleanliness of hands (15:1–20), cups (23:25–26), or hypocrites, whom he depicts as whitewashed tombs (23:27). Those who listen to the Sermon on the Mount are encouraged not to worry about what clothing they will wear (6:25, 28), and the Matthean Jesus commends John the Baptist, clothed in camel hair (3:4), over those who wear fine clothing in palaces (11:7–11). He discourages carrying spare clothing (10:9–10) and advocates giving clothing away (25:31–46). Like the paradoxical axiom that those who lose their lives for the gospel will gain it (Matt 10:39, 16:25), it is as if giving away clothing to those in need enables one to gain (eschatological) clothing. Such acts of charity or righteousness are not, however, to be undertaken to be seen to be doing them (6:1, 23:5).

The need to be wearing *ἐνδυμα γάμου* to remain within the king’s wedding feast in a parable about the kingdom of heaven suggests that there is a dress code for heaven. If there is such a requirement, however, it is not a specific garment and may not be evident to anyone other than the Father in heaven, who sees and rewards what others don’t see. In the parable of the royal wedding feast, attendance at the wedding feast requires wedding clothing (*ἐνδυμα γάμου*) in a general sense, not a long robe (*στολή*), as is associated with good standing and eschatological redemption in the New Testament (Mark 12:38; 16:5; Luke 20:46; Rev 6:11; 7:9, 13, 14; 22:14); nor a garment (*ἱμάτιον*) with christological associations in Matthew’s Gospel

(9:20, 21; 14:36; 17:2; 27:31, 35); nor a tunic (χιτών), which only appears twice in Matthew's Gospel (5:40, 10:10).

In Matthew's Gospel, ἔνδυμα not only refers to clothing in a general sense but also to clothing in a metaphorical sense. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Matthean Jesus warns to be wary of wolves in sheep's clothing, that is, false prophets who would presumably harm the community unless restrained (7:15). Given the emphasis on the king "seeing" his guests in Matt 22:11–12, perhaps he sees through the outward appearance of such a "wolf" to the heart inside (cf. 9:4, 12:34).

In Matthew's Gospel, ἔνδυμα also refers to heavenly clothing. The angel of the Lord who descends from heaven to communicate the news that Jesus is risen wears clothing white as snow, τὸ ἔνδυμα αὐτοῦ λευκὸν ὡς χιών (28:3). In apocalyptic literature, the righteous few are awarded heavenly raiment, which Asael forfeits (Apoc. Ab. 13.14) in addition to being bound hand and foot and thrown out into darkness (1 En. 10.4–5; cf. Matt 22:13).¹ In prophetic literature, the writer of Isaiah rejoices because the Lord provides garments of salvation and robes of righteousness, described using bridal wear imagery (Isa 61:10). I suggest that the lack of evidence for a first-century host providing wedding guests with festive garments is overemphasized. When ἔνδυμα is considered metaphorically, both prophetic and apocalyptic intertextures suggest it symbolizes divine provision of heavenly raiment.

The primary belief system (rhetorolect) of this parable is prophetic rather than apocalyptic despite some apocalyptic topoi in the parable of the royal wedding feast: "outer darkness," "weeping and gnashing of teeth," and "few chosen." Unlike apocalyptic literature, the rhetorical force of this parable is not to comfort the faithful few with vivid descriptions of the horrible fate of the wicked; rather, it is "to confront religious and political leaders who act on the basis of human greed, pride and power rather than God's justice, righteousness and mercy for all people in God's kingdom on the earth."²

In its narrative setting, the parable of the royal wedding feast is addressed to the political and religious leaders in the temple. Matthew

1. Davies and Allison, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary*, 3:206.

2. Vernon K. Robbins, "Conceptual Blending and Early Christian Imagination," in *Explaining Christian Origins and Early Judaism: Contributions from Cognitive and Social Science*, ed. Petri Luomanen, Ilkka Pyysiäinen, and Risto Uro (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 166.

22:11–14 counters complacency and superiority associated with the self-satisfaction of insiders who see themselves as the elect ones. This applies not only to Jewish leaders listening to Jesus in Jerusalem within Matthew's narrative (Matt 21–23) but also to religious leaders and insiders who hear or read Matthew's Gospel. The use of direct speech guards against considering this parable as condemnation of Israel. The use of second-person address in the parable calls listeners of Matthew's Gospel in every generation to "come" to the king's table (22:4), to "go" out to invite people in (22:9), and to restrain and remove individuals if so commanded by the king (22:13). If the king's feast is considered in an ecclesial setting with human attendants rather than only in an eschatological one with angelic attendants, these final words of the king seem to place responsibility on those who serve this monarch to ensure restraint and removal of individuals who threaten the well-being of the community. Investigations into church responses to reports of child sexual abuse reveal that churches have failed to restrain and remove perpetrators from positions of responsibility from which they can harm others. The means of expulsion of the inappropriately dressed wedding guest, that is, by binding of feet and hands before being cast out into darkness, suggests that this person would otherwise inflict harm.

I argue that in a Matthean framework, the dress code for heaven suggested by the parable of the royal wedding feast concerns one's attitude and actions with respect to little ones in the church and marginalized ones on the fringes of society. This parable provides no warrant to use the wedding-clothing requirement to marginalize the marginalized further or to belittle the little ones. In Matthew's Gospel, little ones are neither to be despised nor enticed to stumble and sin (18:5–14), and those on the margins are not to be overburdened and prevented from entering the king's domain (23:1–5, 13).

As prophetic rhetorolect, the parable of the royal wedding feast calls those in positions of power and responsibility to practice the weightier matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness (23:23). Followers of the Matthean Jesus are not to lord it over others (20:25) but rather to recognize all who do the will of the heavenly Father as brothers and sisters of Jesus and fellow children of the one heavenly Father (12:50). By doing this, followers of the Matthean Jesus do not need to worry about what to wear (5:25–33).

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