



The Conflict Stories in the First Gospel

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Biblical scholars and exegetes have been grappling with a number of historical contexts of the Gospel of Matthew: Was Matthew himself a Jew, or was he a Gentile who drew on earlier traditions which had been shaped by tensions between Christians and Jews? Were the communities to whom he writes still facing hostility...from local Jewish leaders? Or was Jewish persecution of Christians a matter of past history? Why are apocalyptic motifs borrowed from Jewish writings and utilized so much more extensively in this Gospel than in other three? Did Matthew still hope that some Jews would accept Christian claims concerning Jesus? Or was missionary activity in the evangelist's day largely confined to the Gentiles? And finally and perhaps, the most puzzling question of all, why is this Gospel both profoundly Jewish and anti-Jewish? Several reasons justify such interest. Part of the reason for this focus on the Jewish background of Matthew is the renewed interest exhibited by scholars on the social setting of the New Testament. Another plausible reason is the growing body of historical information about first-century Judaism obtained through archeological research and other related sources. Since traditional interpretation of Matthew has often underscored the Gospel's negative and prejudicial view of Judaism this paper, employing the historical critical method and social theories on deviance will throw light on the context or the reasons behind the conflict between the followers of Judaism and the followers of Jesus as represented by the Matthean community.

INTRODUCTION

In the introduction to the first volume of their three-volume commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison (1988), forecasted a resurgence of interest in Matthean studies. Nearly a decade later, in the preface to their final volume published in 1997, these authors underscored that their prediction had come true. Indeed, as pointed out by Senior (1996), numerous books, articles, and commentaries have been published on the First Gospel.

But what are the notable social conditions of the Gospel that fascinate and puzzle Matthean scholars? Stanton provides a compendium of the contentious issues concerning the Gospel:

Was Matthew himself a Jew, or was he a Gentile who drew on earlier traditions which had been shaped by tensions between Christians and Jews? Were the communities to whom he writes still facing hostility...from local Jewish leaders? Or was Jewish persecution of Christians a matter of past history? Why are apocalyptic motifs borrowed from Jewish writings and utilized so much more extensively in this Gospel than in other three? ... And finally and perhaps, the most puzzling question of all, why is this



Gospel both profoundly Jewish and anti-Jewish? (Stanton, 1992, pp. 1-2).

Certainly the list is limited. But judging from the avalanche of materials published on the Gospel these topics Senior held, seem to be at the center of recent Matthean scholarship (1996).

But one issue feeding this interest in the gospel is the question of Matthew's relationship to first-century Judaism. This can be gleaned from the more recent scholarly expositions that have been devoted to this topic alone (Overman, 1990; Stanton, 1992; Saldarini, 1994, Harrington, 1994). Since traditional interpretation of Matthew has often underscored the Gospel's prejudicial view of Judaism, there is a need for a careful investigation of the reasons behind the Jewish-Christian conflict in the First Gospel.

THE MATTHEAN COMMUNITY

Reconstructing the *Sitz-im-Leben* of the Gospel of Matthew and his community, is undoubtedly one of the most difficult task that confronts the Gospel's expositors (Meyer, 1994). Although a challenging task, when one understands something about the life setting of the Matthean community, who they were and what concerned them, much else about the Gospel becomes clearer. Unfortunately, Matthew offers only a limited sampling of the religious thinking of the early Christians. This difficulty is further compounded by the dearth of evidences about the Matthean community outside the Gospel. This situation compels expositors to go back to the New Testament (NT). In this task, they have to "eaves drop" on the NT authors. Moreover, according to Brown (1993) uncovering the traces of life-and the beliefs of the first-Christian communities require interpreters to "be attentive to things which the authors reveal only in passing, or even unintentionally" (p. 13).

Following such approach, W. Carter (1993, p. 80) surmised that the religious community behind the Matthean Gospel was probably small. He further proposed on the basis of other NT texts that this fledgling group possibly gathered and met in houses, or perhaps in rented rooms (Rom 16:15; 1 Cor 16:19). Several texts in Matthew's Gospel seem to confirm the minority status of this community. In Mt. 18:6, 10, 14, the Evangelist describes the disciples as "these little ones," while in 11:25, Matthew calls the recipients of Jesus' revelation, "infants." Although these conjectures are contestable, the foregoing verses somehow present the community as, distinctly small and powerless.

Carter (2000, pp. 25-27) likewise held that several texts in the NT convey the impression that the members of the Matthean community represented a cross section society. In 1 Cor 1:26-28, Paul tells his followers that "not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth..." This passage clearly shows that the early Christian communities, and for that matter the Matthean community, had a small number of members who were privileged, albeit the majority were poor, powerless and without noble birth.

Moreover, this small, mixed and marginalized congregation was probably "made up largely of Jews" (Minear, 1982, p. 8) "who have become Christians" (Long, 1997, p. 2). Another possibility is that the original readers were Hellenistic/Diaspora Jews rather than Palestinian Jews (Beare, 1980, p. 10). In this regard, Kummel (1990) concludes that "it is certain that the author of Matthew lived in a Greek speaking area and wrote for Greek-speaking Christians, most of whom were of Jewish origin" (p. 119).

Notwithstanding the distinctive Jewish orientation of the Gospel, Matthew also stands out for his fierce denunciations of the Jewish authorities, which appears to be the central theme of the Gospel. This observation can be deduced in the following instances:

Matthew repeatedly employs the phrase "their synagogue" to suggest a wedge between the followers of Jesus and Judaism (4:23; 9:55; 10:17; 12:9). Although the Gospel portrays the leadership group as opposed to Jesus and it does not speak of "Jews" in the generic sense (Harrington, 1991, p.393), the general populace does not escape the Gospel's tirade. Thus, while the Gospel portrays the "crowd" as basically a neutral group, swayed by the leaders, they demanded the crucifixion of Jesus and accepted responsibility for his death (Mt 27:24-25).

The withering denunciations of the Pharisees in Mt 15 and 16, as well as the Great Discourse of Woes on the scribes and Pharisees in Mt 23 are so bitter and unjust that no Jew could have condemned and railed against fellow Jews so harshly (Meier, 1976, pp. 14-21).

The Gospel also anticipates that the Jewish leaders would oppose the mission and they will persecute the disciples (10:17). Matthew nullifies the ritual laws (15:11, 20b; 23:25-26). The Gospel's critique of the law. This is especially evident in the Sermon on the Mount (5:21-48) where Jesus places his



authority above than that of Moses “for which there is no parallel in ancient Judaism” (Schnelle, 1998, p. 221).

In the Gospel, (Schnelle, p. 21), ritual prescriptions for Sabbath have lost their importance (12:1-8). With the rejection of Israel, she has lost her distinct place in the history of salvation (21:43; 22:9; 8:11-12; 21:39ff; 27:25; 28:15).

The foregoing discussions show that Matthew’s Gospel exhibits an ambivalent stance towards Judaism. It is thoroughly Jewish in orientation, yet unrelenting in its criticism especially of the Jewish leadership. What explains this distinctive trait of the First Gospel?

This researcher holds that this polemical relationship between Matthew’s community and the parent Jewish community, can be partly explained by sociological theories on deviance. In employing these theories, this paper will discuss the following: (1) clarify deviance processes and relationships; (2) correlate these processes and relationships with data or information from Matthew’s Gospel and, (3) define Matthew’s community against known types of deviant groups or associations, including sects.

DEVIANCE AS PART OF A FUNCTIONING SOCIETY

The terms “deviance” or “deviant” is equated with non-conformity, unconventionality, aberration, unorthodoxy, abnormality. Due to the negative connotations of the term, calling someone a deviant person is a derogatory labeling. As such, most ancient and modern societies, consider deviant behavior as evil because it does not conform to divine or natural order or because it is inspired by evil powers (demonic possessions, witchcraft, etc.). In the ordinary course of things, moral and cultural norms are right or good, and that which is different is either strange and at worst wrong and evil.

A study of the different cultures, however, shows that the consensus and norms used in judging deviant behaviors are not constant; they change with time. This means that customs, perceptions, practices, and laws, evolve and adapt to new situations. Thus, some behaviors previously deemed deviant and unacceptable, eventually end up accepted.

The study of deviance is important to the understanding of culture and community. What a society considers deviant is closely related to its identity as it shows where it draws its boundaries, and betrays key structures and values in its social and symbolic system. This means that even though

deviant communities are often perceived as outside the pale, sociologically and historically they are part of a functioning society. Specifically, they are part of the larger social processes associated with stability, change, continuity and adaptation. They keep the society from rigidifying or from becoming stiff and inflexible and from failing to fulfill its functions. This can be gleaned from the reformation movement. From the Catholic perspective, Luther’s movement was a deviant position. Yet, notwithstanding the havoc that such deviance had wrought in the unity and stability of the Catholic Church, the challenges which the reformation movement posed to the Church also provided the necessary impetus for the *aggiornamento*.

Moreover, the struggle to define and sanction deviant behaviors is necessarily political since it involves a power struggle for control of society. Rival political groups advocate specific lifestyles and criticize others who are different. Far from being subjective, conflicts on preferences are actually conflicts concerning the basic shape of the society; they are really disputes about relationships and symbolic universe that hold the society together and provide meaning out of life. This political dimension in deviant conflicts was evident in salvation history.

A reading of the Old Testament reveals the constant conflict between the Yahweh-only Israelites and the Yahwist-Baalist Israelites. For the most part of the Monarchic Israel period, majority of the Israelites would worship not only Yahweh, but for practical reasons they would also worship Baal. It was only during the exile that the Yahwist Israelite group prevailed and stigmatized or denounced their opponents in the Hebrew Scriptures. In like manner, the Matthean community, the early rabbinic community, and other Jewish groups competed for the control of the Jewish society, e.g., Sadducees, Scribes and Pharisees, Essenes, Herodians.

DEVIANCE IN THE FIRST GOSPEL

One cannot be considered deviant unless one is a member of the community. The Gospel of Matthew and the community behind it are patently Jewish since they accept all the fundamental commitments of the first-century Judaism. This could be seen in the following:

1. A noteworthy feature of the Gospel Brown held (1979, p. 98), is the manner and the frequency with which the Evangelist appeals to the OT. More than any other Gospel writer, Matthew often quoted from the OT (Reddish, 1997, p. 111). Matthew connects numerous events of Jesus' life with specific passages from the Hebrew Scriptures. The most obvious of these texts are the so-called "formula" or "fulfillment" quotations. Senior contends (1996, pp. 51-52) that these verses "span the entire Gospel, covering the events of Jesus' birth (1:23; 2:6; 15, 18, 23), his entry into Galilee (4:15-16), his healing (8:17), his compassion and gentleness (12:18-21) his teaching in parables (13:35), his entry into Jerusalem (21:5), and his passion and death (26:56; 27:9-10)." Repeatedly observes Brown (1979, p. 98), the Evangelist used the distinctive formula "this happened in order to fulfill what was spoken by the prophets." (Mt 1:22-23; 2:5-6, 15, 17-18; 3:3; 4:4-16; 8:17).
2. Carter also pointed out that Matthew does not explain Jewish customs and modes of expressions (Mt 15:2). Hebrew words are untranslated (Mt 27:6) (2000, p. 30).
3. Garland (1993, p. 7) likewise claims that Matthew formulates materials he has taken over in typical rabbinic patterns (Mt 19:1ff/Mk 10:1-10).
4. Many Biblical laws, Jewish laws and community norms are affirmed by Matthew: the commandments (19:18), alms, prayer and fasting (6:1-18), care for the poor, powerless and sick, biblical virtues (5:1-12; 11:5; 12:17-21), faith (17:14-20);
5. Matthew's theology also betrays his Jewish identity (Schnelle, 1998, p. 220). In Mt 5:17-18, the Evangelist writes: "Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill...." In 23:2-3a, the Matthean Jesus admonishes his listeners: "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; therefore, do whatever they teach you and follow it."
6. Harrington pointed out (1990, p. 37) that the structure and composition of the Gospel demonstrate that the Evangelist was influenced by Jewish milieu, customs and traditions as shown by the Jewish expressions employed in the Gospel (e.g., *paraskueē* [27:62], *Raca*, *Gehenna* [Mt 5:22], *Beelzebul* [Mt 10:25]) and allusions to Jewish customs and practices, e.g., ritual; washing of hands before eating), which for the author seem unnecessary to explain.
7. According to Weiss (1990, p. 6), the Matthean community still keeps the Sabbath (Mt 24:20).
8. The Gospel according to Schnelle (1998, p. 221) shows that the Matthean community lives within the jurisdiction of Judaism (Mt. 17:24-27, 23:1-3).
9. The Moses typology in Mt 2:13ff; 4:1-2; 5:1 and the five great discourses in the *Gospel which* present Jesus as having affinity with Moses. (Schnelle, 1998).
10. Jewish community leaders and standard community disciple according to Saldarini (1991, p. 49), are presumed (10:17, 23; 23:2-3).
11. Kummel also notes (1990, p. 119), that Matthew is the only Gospel that records Jesus' startling words, which confines his and the disciples' mission to Israel (Mt. 10:5-6; Mt15:24).
Clearly, these emphases are in harmony with the Jewish orientation of the Gospel. Although the Jewishness of Matthew is incontrovertible, Matthew's community is, nonetheless, a deviant community. Although he shares enumerable practices and symbols with his fellow Jews, in many instances Matthew modifies the interpretation of the law so that it conflicts with the understanding or interpretation of the other Jewish groups, especially the scribes and the Pharisees.
Matthew's dispute over how Jewish laws and life are to be interpreted should not lead one to the conclusion that he is no longer Jewish nor to the assumption that during this period normative Judaism was already in place. It must be underscored that in the first century, there was no normative Jewish teachings, practices, or authority. During this period, Judaism was lived out with many local variations. It was only after a century or two of recruiting followers and gaining community influence that rabbinic Judaism could claim to be normative.
Indeed, Matthew's community is a deviant community not only because of his disagreement with normative Judaism, but because he is a minority against the majority and because he advocates a fundamental re-orientation of the tradition held by the dominant rabbinic Judaism. In his advocacy, Matthew modifies or rejects many Jewish teachings and practices which he attributes to the scribes and Pharisees. Overman (1990) surmises that Matthew is probably responding to the leaders of the early form of Rabbinic



Judaism who were his competitors in winning the allegiance of local Jews.

Matthew's modifications can be classified under five headings: core symbols, cosmology, boundaries, laws and social structures.

Core Symbols. A fundamental departure from the dominant Jewish view introduced by Matthew is on Jesus. Unlike the dominant Jewish view which considers the Law as its core symbol, Matthew replaces it with Jesus. As a result of this focus on Jesus as central authority and symbol, Toral becomes subordinate to Jesus and his interpretation of its provisions.

The law as a core symbol has an altered status and role in Matthew's symbolic world. Though the law and the commandments are affirmed (5:17-19; 19:16-20), in each instance Matthew counsels a further effort to reach perfection (5:48; 19:21-22). The commandments themselves aside from being modified, are also subsumed under the greatest commandments of love of God and neighbor (22:34-40). When Matthew criticizes the scribes and the Pharisees' practice of tithing, he affirms tithing itself, but puts the emphasis on "the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy and faith" (23:23). All these central symbols are Jewish, but Matthew's community has rearranged and reweighted them.

Cosmology. A strong apocalyptic orientation with the promise and threat of divine judgement is a characteristic of a deviant minority under pressure. Divine mandate and sanction justify change and invalidate the current norms in view of the apocalyptic crisis. Future orientation produces a revised version of what a society should be. It is no accident then that Matthew under the guise of immemorial tradition adopted apocalypticism as a fundamental principle for reform. Nowhere is this orientation more clearly seen in Matthew than in Jesus's eschatological discourse (chapters 24-25).

Boundaries. The boundaries of the Matthean community are more open and the membership requirements have been modified. Sinners and tax collectors, those marginalized in Jewish society, are welcomed (9:10-11; 11:19; 21:31-32). Enemies must be pacified (5:38-48). The clannishness of the dominant Jewish community has been qualified (chapters 21-22) and non-Jews are included systematically from the Magi in chapter 2 to the command to preach the Gospel to all nations unto the ends of time in 28:16-20). Though the Matthean community is thoroughly Jewish, it opened its boundaries to non-Jews.

Laws. The reinterpretation of many laws, customs, and outlooks has a collective effect on Matthew's community and alienates it from the

majority of Jewish communities. A stress on inwardness, rather than adherence to traditional practices, institutions, and leaders (chaps. 5, 6, 23) opens the way for change, legitimates the deviants through appeal to different norms and higher authorities, and shakes their existing norms and their advocates notable the scribes and the Pharisees. Matthew specifically rejects the washing of hands (15:20) and qualifies the importance of purity laws without rejecting them totally (15:11; cf. Mark 7:19). He opposes the use of oaths emphatically (5:33-37; 23:16-22) and rejects divorce except for some kind of immorality (5:31-32; 19:1-12). He modifies the interpretation of Sabbath (12:1-13) and subordinates it to other values. He likewise affirms tithing, but puts "weightier matters of law: justice, mercy and faith" (23:23).

Social Structures Matthew has moved away from the prevailing leadership and social organization in his time. The temple and its priestly and aristocratic leadership had already been destroyed. In the Matthean narrative the temple and its supporting institutions function as part of Judaism, but their legitimacy is severely qualified. The temple will be destroyed (24:2,15), must be cleansed (21:12-13), is less important than mercy (Hos 6:6 quoted in 9:13; 12:7) and is subordinate to something greater, that is, Jesus (12:6). The leaders "sit in the chair of Moses (23:2) but are hypocrites who give bad example. The Matthean community has its own inner order (18) and its own mode of leadership (23:4-12, 34) which conflict with those of the larger Jewish community. Matthew's community, like most new groups stresses egalitarian relationships with little differentiations. Fellowship rather than hierarchy keeps the community together.

The choice and arrangement of materials in the Gospel suggest that the author envisioned a reformed Jewish society. He expounds his own program and seeks to delegitimize his opponents program, an exercise typical for the leader of a deviant community or group. The first of Matthew's five discourses begins with the beatitudes proposing fundamental attitudes and behavior for Matthew's community. The fifth and final discourse of Matthew on the end times (24-25) is preceded by seven woes against the scribes and the Pharisees who are called hypocrites and blind guides (23:13-36). These blessings and curses defined the broad outline of how



Matthew conceives and what he opposes in the dominant Jewish society surrounding him (Cf. Davies, 1964, pp. 291-2).

A careful investigation of the seven woes in chap. 23 shows that these indictments are not a random selection of complaints, but a structured series of charges aimed at key aspects of the outlook, attitudes and behaviors of the leaders of Judaism. The first two woes concern membership in the community. The Jewish leaders prevent their members from joining the Matthean community and they attract gentile to the Jewish community. This undermines the recruitment efforts of Matthew and his community. The next three woes, are concerned with oaths, tithes, and purity, and attack the legal system (oaths), economy (tithes or taxes), and customs (purity laws) that hold the Jewish community together and give its identity. Finally, the last two woes bring to a climax the attack against their personal ethics and intentions of the scribes and Pharisees with charges of lawlessness and murder. In doing so, Matthew seeks to present the current form of Jewish society as misguided and corrupt in its practices and leadership.

Like the woes in chap. 23, the Sermon on the Mount (chap. 5-7) likewise stress the inner attitudes required of the Matthean Christians. They should be merciful, meek, pure of heart, peacemakers, they should mourn and seek justice; they are familiar with suffering for they are poor in spirit and persecuted. The recompense or reward offered to those who abide with this norm is the Kingdom of God. They shall see God, possess the land, enjoy justice, mercy, peace and comfort. This is diametrically opposed to the society fostered by the scribes and Pharisees which according to Matthew neglects justice and mercy (23:23), burdens people (23:4), keeps cups and dishes pure, but not their hearts (23:25), seemingly just, but hypocritical (23:28), and murders God's heralds (23:31-32). With such view, Matthew supports his narrative of Jesus' words and deeds with a vision of a new society while at the same time attacks an alternate program (Saldarini, 1994, p. 53).

THE MATTHEAN COMMUNITY AS A DEVIANT GROUP

The modifications Matthew has introduced in his interpretation of Judaism are typical of deviant and religious sects. Deviant movements usually stemmed from problems within the society. These movements respond to what they perceive as lack of focus, direction, and meaning in the society. Thus,

they attempt to resolve these contradictions in the social, political, religious and economic orders by offering reinvigorated or revitalized symbols and behavior. When groups of people are labeled deviant by the dominant groups in the society, the former respond by organizing themselves into groups to defend and justify their deviant behaviors. As such, they question the conventional standards in the society, delegitimize or discredit the authority of those who define the standards in the society, and ultimately seek to change the social order. Simply stated, deviant communities or groups employ the very technique used to label them deviant in order to justify their deviance and turn the table against the dominant groups in the society. This method is evident in the First Gospel. Matthew employs all the Jewish tradition, teachings, and authority to achieve legitimacy. He likewise constructs an alternate community based on Jesus and his teachings. In doing so, the fabric of Jewish are interwoven into a new embroidery.

The controversies with the dominant Jewish community leadership have led the Matthean community to form its own congregation to compete with other Jewish communities for membership. This can be gleaned from a number of passages where the Matthean Jesus employs "your" or "their synagogue" a number of times to denote opposition between him and the teachers in the synagogue (4:23; 9:35; 12:9). This apparent wedge between Jesus and the religious leaders has led Bornkamm (1964) to argue whether or not during this period the Matthean community has already parted ways with Judaism (p. 43). It may be so. But what is more probable is that Matthew thinks that his community is faithful to Jewish traditions, but is perceived by the parent community as deviant. This explains Matthew's withering denunciations of the scribes and Pharisees and his impassioned defense of the faith in Jesus as the correct way of living out God's will.

Moreover, the Matthean community engages in many functions observable in deviant communities. For instance, the community recruits members, develops an articulate worldview and belief system, employs its own expression and language to support its behavior. All these are carried out in the narrative or story of Jesus, his words and his deeds. In the words of Stanton, "the Evangelist is, as it were, coming to terms with the trauma of separation from Judaism and



with the continuing threat of hostility and persecution. Matthew's anti-Jewish polemic should be seen as part of the self-definition of the Christian minority" (Saldarini, 1994, p. 55).

In studying new religious movements, anthropologists and sociologists came up with a bewildering categories and terms. Deviant communities have been classified into four types: conformative, alienative, expressive and instrumental.

Those who seek acceptance by the society are *conformative*. Those who focus on the needs of their own members are *expressive*. Those who seek reforms in the society are *alienative*. And those who seek to have impact on the society are deemed *instrumental*. In spite of these categories, few movements fit neatly into one category as a group may be inclined to more than one category and overtime may swing from one to another. To what category or categories does the Matthean community belong?

Probably at an earlier stage in the community's history, before opposition has solidified, the Christian-Jews were an *alienative-instrumental* group seeking to change the social order and worldview of the dominant parent Judaism. At the time the Gospel was written the Matthean community, however, seems to be an *alienative-expressive* group since it offers to its members a new Christian-Jewish world which is an alternative to the dominant Jewish world.

Aside from the above categories, deviant communities can also be categorized according to Bryan Wilson's typology or classifications of seven types of sects. These classifications are based from the group's relationship and reaction to the host society. These typology focus on the goals of the groups. Thus, sects are not simply groups with doctrinal vies, but active units in the society that cause reactions among other groups and effect changes in the society. A review of Wilson's typology according to Saldarini will aid in understanding the nature of Matthew's community and other Jewish groups (1991, p. 58)..

The seven types of sects can be sorted according to three larger categories, namely: (1) *objectivist*, (2) *subjectivist*, and (3) *relationists* sects.

1. **Objectivist** sects seek change in the world. There are four sects under this category:
 - 1.1. Revolutionists who await the destruction of the social order by divine forces, e.g., apocalyptic groups.
 - 1.2. Introversionist withdraws from the world into a purified community, e.g., essenes.

- 1.3. Reformists seeks gradual, divinely revealed alterations in the society, e.g., Pharisees.

- 1.4. Utopian seeks to reconstruct the world according to Divine principles without revolution, e.g., Jesus and his followers.

2. **Subjectivist** sect or conversionist seeks change in the person through emotional transformation with salvation presumed to follow in the future after evil has been endured, e.g., early Christians.

3. **Relationists** sects seek to adjust relation s with the world. There are four sects under this type:

- 3.1. Manipulationists seek happiness by a transformed subjective orientation which will control evil, e.g., Stoics and Gnostics.

- 3.2. Thaumaturgical sects relied from special ills by special, not general dispensations, e.g., Magicians and healers, including Jesus fit this type.

Like the previously discussed categories, a group can have more than one response to the world at one time, though one is usually dominant and the other subordinate.

The *first generation* Jesus movement in Palestine was probably a reformist group (seeks gradual divinely revealed changes in the world) that was also characterized by thaumaturgical (seeks relief from special ills through special dispensation) and millennial hopes. As such, Jesus was portrayed as preaching a reformed Judaism. He addressed people needs by miraculous cures and also offered comfort and solace to with a new economic, political, and religious order those in distress. Moreover, though Jesus was not a revolutionary leader, he threatens an apocalyptic revolutionary society ruled by God which sweep the evils of this world.

As the Jesus movement moved out of Palestine, it became more of a conversionist movement with the revolutionist emphasis left on the background (with the exception of the Book of Revelation). The late first century Matthean community had such close relations with the Jewish community that it had probably been a reformist movement that became a deviant community in response to the rejection of its reform program by the parent community. The Matthean community seems to have given up its reformist goal and deemphasized its apocalyptic hopes. At this point, it retained the millennialian orientation as a cosmic grounding an ultimate goal. Like



other religious movements and sects, the Matthean community did not achieve relief through sensible Divine intervention, but the intellectual and emotional engagement with such hope gave the community a sense of the future. The Matthean community developed an invigorating ethic and constructed new social arrangements. Yet, the author of this social vision was still closely connected to Judaism and did not yet involve the development of a new and independent identity.

Thus, the Matthean community is moving toward a new community organization. In this new organization, three things characterized the Matthean community:

1. It is residually reformist and millenarian/revolutionist;
2. It has deemphasized the thaumaturgical. The final marching order to the disciples is to preach, teach, and baptize (28:19-20), not exorcise and heal;
3. Matthews emphasis on bringing non-Jews into the community (28:19) suggests that the community is moving now to a conversionist community that seeks to bring a mixed group of people into the community (21:43). For Matthew, the new community is still Jewish and still adhere to almost all of Jewish law and custom. The orientation, however, 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.

CONCLUSION

A number of expositors and commentators, e.g., W.D. Davies, Ulrich Luz, Stephen Brooks, Warren carter, David Hill), hold that the Jewish-Christian conflict in the First Gospel indicates that at the time of the Gospel's writing, Matthew and his community has already severed ties with Judaism. This researcher, however, supports the contention held by other Matthean scholars such as Gunther Bornkamm, Anthony Saldarini, Andrew Overman, that the presence of anti-Jewish materials in the Gospel do not indicate a definitive break-up between Judaism and the Jewish-Christian community. Thus, the Matthew's "struggles with Israel," according to Gunther Bornkamm, "is still a struggle within its walls" (Barth, 1963, p. 39).

Though there are those who cannot conceive of Matthew retaining a Jewish identity, Matthew in fact accepts the identity of the Jewish community since it is the overwhelming or dominant presence in his world. Matthew insists on his allegiance to

Jesus by carving out a deviant Jewish identity for his sectarian Jewish community. From the viewpoint of a deviance theory, Matthew's community was overwhelmed by their deviant role and adopted their deviance as the set of values and characteristics that defined and controlled all other aspects of their lives (Schur, 1971, pp. 69-81). Within a short time, however, due to the rejection by the majority of the Jewish community and the dominance of non-Jewish believers, the Matthean community became sociologically Christian, that is, they lost their identification with Judaism and became a separate competing group.

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