

MATTHEW AS EXEGETE
The Unity and Function of the Formula Citations
in Matthew 1:1–4:16

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Introduction

When scholars approach the subject of Matthew as an interpreter of Old Testament Scripture, most of their attention goes to a feature unique to Matthew among the synoptics, the so-called “formula citations.” In some fourteen places, Matthew pauses his story to state explicitly that these events happened to fulfill certain prophecies. Since these prophetic citations offer the narrator’s reflection on the meaning of his story, they are often called *Reflexionszitate* (reflection citations), but among English-speaking scholars they are usually dubbed “formula citations” because of the set formula Matthew uses to introduce them.¹ Of the fourteen, only one is shared by the other synoptic gospels. So the formula citations present an approach to the Old Testament that is distinctively Matthean, both in form and content.

However, there is very little agreement about what Matthew is doing in his formula citations. Raymond Brown comments:

In finding this fulfillment, Matthew makes no attempt to interpret what we might consider the full or contextual meaning of the OT text that he cites; rather he concentrates on features of the text wherein there is a resemblance to Jesus or the NT event. His method of quoting the prophet directly rather than weaving an allusion into the wording of the Matthean narrative is an indication of a Christian effort to supply the story of Jesus with OT background and support.²

1 For a discussion of opinions on how many formula citations Matthew presents, see George M. Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew: An Enquiry into the Tradition History of Mt 1–2*, *Analecta biblica* 63 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1976), 24–25. For an older but classic treatment of the same question see Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), 97–127, at 97.

2 Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, rev. ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 97.

Brown seems to be echoing the opinion of Barnabas Lindars, who argues that Matthew looks for Old Testament texts that bear a pictorial resemblance to the life of Jesus, and that he deploys these texts for apologetical purposes.³ S. V. McCasland sums up this apologetic approach to Matthew's exegesis in the title of his article, "Matthew Twists the Scriptures."⁴ By contrast, R. T. France argues that beyond the surface meaning of Matthew's citations—the pictorial resemblance accessible by any reader—there is a deeper meaning. What precisely that deeper meaning may be can be difficult to assess, but France concedes that the basic motive for the citations is apologetic.⁵ Donald Hagner understands the formula citations as appealing to a *sensus plenior*, a meaning of the Old Testament beyond that which the original author could have known, and flatly denies that they are meant to serve as apologetical arguments. Rather, he says, they interpret Jesus Christ for those who already believe.⁶ This lack of agreement among scholars suggests that we need to rethink Matthew's use of the Old Testament.

The focus of this article will be on what Matthew is doing with the formula citations in a small section of his Gospel, namely 1:1–4:16, the entire portion of the story that takes place before Jesus' public preaching begins. Many scholars take chapters 1–2 as the first major division of Matthew's Gospel, but, for reasons that will become clear later, I will follow Jack Dean Kingsbury and others who have seen the phrase "from that time Jesus began" in 4:17 as significant for the structure of the Gospel.⁷ The advantages of taking 1:1–4:16 as a unit will emerge as we proceed. For the moment, let me simply point out that 4:16 offers the last of seven formula citations in this section—a number suggestive of unity and completion.

3 Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quotations* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961), 259–260.

4 S. Vernon McCasland, "Matthew Twists the Scriptures," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 80 (1961): 143–48. Such negative comments about Matthew's awareness of context could be multiplied: see, for example, Howard Clark Kee, Franklin L. Young, and Karlfreid Froehlich, *Understanding the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 321–323.

5 R. T. France, "The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2 and the Problem of Communication," in G. K. Beale, ed., *The Right Doctrine from the Wrong Texts? Essays on the Use of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1994), 114–134; reprinted from *New Testament Studies* 27 (1981): 233–251.

6 See Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14–28*, Word Biblical Commentary Series 33B (Dallas: Word, 1995), lv–lvi and 20–21. Raymond Brown also suggests this position in "The *Sensus Plenior* of Sacred Scripture" (Ph.D. diss., St. Mary's University, 1955), 102 and 143, classifying it as the "prophetic *sensus plenior*." Later in his career, Brown moved away from the *sensus plenior* in favor of a purer historical-critical approach. For the evolution of his thought, see his article "The *Sensus Plenior* in the Last Ten Years," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 25 (1963): 262–285, and his article on "more-than-literal senses" in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary*, ed. Raymond E. Brown, S.S., Joseph A. Fitzmyer, S.J., Roland E. Murphy, O. Carm. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1990): 71:31–77. In his later work, Brown puts some distance between himself and those who interpret Matthew's citation of Isa. 7:14 in this way (*Birth*, 146, fn. 9 and 149–150, esp. 150, fn. 53).

7 Jack D. Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975).

Exodus Typology in Matthew 1–4

However, one cannot discuss the formula citations in isolation. Donald Senior has rightly pointed out that Matthew's use of the Old Testament is all too often reduced to the formula citations, as though he did not use the Old Testament in any other way. He calls this "the lure of the formula citations."⁸ The prophetic citations do not stand alone, but have to be appreciated within the context of Matthew's more allusive use of Scripture in the surrounding narrative. While it would be impossible in the present article to cover all of Matthew's allusions in detail, fortunately one can discuss most of Matthew's biblical allusions under one rubric: the Exodus. Most scholars are convinced of a Moses typology in Matthew 1–2, and many favor a more extended Exodus typology stretching as far as chapter 7. Before taking up the formula citations in 1:1–4:16, therefore, let me walk quickly through the Exodus typology surrounding them. Here I am particularly indebted to Dale Allison's *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology*.⁹

Jesus is born in chapter 1 of Matthew. In chapter 2, Jesus, like Moses, is threatened by an attempt to destroy all the children in his region; like Moses, he is forced to flee into exile; like Moses, he returns only when those persecuting him have died. When extra-biblical traditions are taken into account, the parallelism is more detailed. Jewish tradition portrays Amram, who will be the father of Moses, concerned because of the Pharaoh's edict against male children and considering a divorce with his bride-to-be. He is told in a dream that the child resulting from his marriage will be the deliverer of Israel, so he proceeds with the marriage. The parallel to Joseph's situation is apparent.¹⁰ Other traditions, which retain the dream of Amram without the preceding concern about Pharaoh's edict, show Pharaoh being told of the coming deliverer through a dream which is subsequently interpreted for him by scribes and magicians. This parallels the magi's obscure announcement to Herod of the deliverer's coming, which must then be interpreted by scribes. In both cases, the result of the prediction is fear on the ruler's part and an edict decreeing the death of all the male children.¹¹

Matthew concludes this part of his story with the angel's command that Joseph return with his family from exile: "Arise, take the child and his mother and

8 Donald Senior, "The Lure of the Formula Quotations: Re-assessing Matthew's Use of the Old Testament with the Passion Narrative as Test Case," in *The Scriptures in the Gospels*, ed. C. M. Tuckett, Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium 131 (Louvain: Louvain University Press, 1997), 89–115. Many years previously, Robert H. Gundry made the same point at length in *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel with Special Reference to the Messianic Hope*, Novum Testamentum Supplement 18 (Leiden: Brill, 1967).

9 Dale Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993). For an extensive review of "New Moses" typology in the work of previous scholars, see Allison, *New Moses*, 293–328; for further bibliography see Allison, *New Moses*, 140, n. 3. See also Allison, *New Moses*, 161–162 for a glance at ancient authors who detected the same typology.

10 Allison, *New Moses*, 144 and 159–160.

11 Allison, *New Moses*, 145 and 156–157.

return to the land of Israel, for those seeking the life of the child have died.”¹² This parallels the command given to Moses in Exodus: “Go, depart into Egypt, for all those seeking your life have died.”¹³ The last clause is particularly impressive with regard to the parallel between Matthew’s Greek and the Septuagint.¹⁴ If we see Jesus as a type of Moses, then like Moses he is returning to his home after an exile. If Jesus can also be seen as a type of the nation of Israel, as will be argued below, then, unlike Moses, he is leaving Egypt, the place of bondage. Moses’ exile from and return to Egypt foreshadows in its own way the bondage and release of the nation to which he was sent.

Matthew’s story goes on in chapter 3 to describe Jesus’ baptism in the river Jordan. Because this story comes immediately after a typological re-play of the Exodus, we are prepared to see Jesus’ baptism as re-presenting the crossing of the Red Sea. Three factors favor this view. First, Paul states that baptism was foreshadowed by the crossing of the Red Sea, indicating that this understanding of the Red Sea event existed previous to Matthew’s writing.¹⁵ Second, the Jordan is most notable in the Old Testament for Joshua’s crossing of the Jordan, which is undoubtedly portrayed in the book of Joshua as a re-enactment of the crossing of the Red Sea—accomplished in fact by one who shares Jesus’ Hebrew name. Third, an argument can be made that John the Baptist should be understood in light of the angel who went before Israel in the Exodus.¹⁶

Immediately after Jesus’ baptism, Matthew describes how he went out into the wilderness where he fasted “forty days and forty nights” and was tempted by the devil. This fits quite well with the Moses theme, because immediately after crossing the Red Sea Moses led Israel into the desert, whereupon he went up on a mountain and did not eat for forty days and forty nights. The parallel accounts in

12 Matt. 2:19.

13 Exod. 4:19.

14 Allison, *New Moses*, 142–143.

15 1 Cor. 10:1–2; see Allison, *New Moses*, 195, especially n. 131.

16 Matthew quotes Isa. 40:3 as applying to John: “The voice of one crying in the wilderness, prepare the way of the Lord.” Only two places in the Masoretic Text speak of “preparing” the “way” of the Lord: Isa. 40:3 and Mal. 3:1. Mark 1:2–3 conflates the two verses in applying them to John, while Matthew quotes Isa. 40:3 alone in 3:3 and Mal. 3:1 alone in 11:10. Malachi 3:1 is closely related to Exod. 23:20 inasmuch as the phrase “behold I will send my messenger [angel]” appears only in these two passages in the Masoretic Text or the Septuagint, and all three synoptics conflate these two passages to some degree. Malachi 3:1 is closely related in context to the prophecy in Mal. 4:5 that “I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes.” This seems to identify the “messenger” or “angel” of Mal. 3:1/Exod. 23:20 with “Elijah.” If Matthew 3:3 pursues the connections from the “voice” of Isa. 40:3 through the “angel” of Mal. 3:1 and Exod. 23:20 to “Elijah” of Mal. 4:5, then this explains the description of John’s clothing in Matt 3:4, which alludes to the description of Elijah in 2 Kings 1:8 (compare the description of John as “Elijah who is to come” in Matt. 11:14). From the same set of connections, John is implicitly cast as the angel of Exod. 23:20 who went before Israel in the Exodus as John now goes before Jesus.

Mark and Luke mention the “forty days,” but do not add “and forty nights,” a small but significant addition, since “forty days and forty nights” is a phrase associated in the Old Testament almost exclusively with Moses and Elijah (who is portrayed as a Moses-figure in this respect).¹⁷ Moreover, a Rabbinic tradition, which perhaps predates Matthew, states that the golden calf incident happened because the devil tempted Israel and then accused them before God, but Moses stood in the breach and overcame the devil’s accusations.¹⁸ Jesus, like Moses, is tempted by the devil. Further, in the last temptation in Matthew’s Gospel, the devil takes Jesus up on a high mountain to show him all the kingdoms of the world. This is paralleled in Jewish traditions (developing Numbers 27) by the portrayal of Moses on the mountain receiving a cosmic vision of the whole world.¹⁹

In this desert scene, Jesus is portrayed not only as a new Moses, but as a new and faithful Israel. Just as the Lord says in Exodus that Israel is his “first-born son,” so he proclaims Jesus as his “beloved son” at the baptism in the Jordan, and Satan begins his temptation of Jesus with the challenge, “If you are the son of God. . . .”²⁰ Jesus draws each of his responses to Satan from a short section of Deuteronomy in which Moses is repeating for Israel the lessons they should have learned from their experiences in the desert—each one an area in which they had failed. Jesus is the faithful son of God, who heeds his father’s commands. Jesus is the antitype not only of Moses, but of the nation as well.²¹

From the wilderness scene, Matthew moves into the beginning of Jesus’ ministry, and then quickly into the Sermon on the Mount in chapter 5. Given that we have seen Jesus re-live the Exodus, the passage through the sea, and the time in the wilderness, it is hardly surprising that he next goes up on a mountain and gives a law. In fact, he explicitly points to the parallel between himself and Moses, clarifying that his project is not one of abandonment, but of fulfillment (5:17). Then, rather than interpreting the law as one of the scribes would, Jesus adds to the law as an authoritative law-giver—as a Moses figure.²²

The Exodus typology in the early chapters of Matthew could be developed at much greater length. For the purpose of interpreting the formula citations, though, I would like to draw attention to three main elements of this typology. First, it is about the Exodus. Second, it is typology: Moses or Israel stand as the types, and Jesus as the antitype. Third, this Exodus typology is sustained and coherent: rather than a collage of varying or competing typologies, Matthew presents us with a

17 Compare Mark 1:13 and Luke 4:2 with Matt. 4:2. See Allison, *New Moses*, 166–168. The phrase “forty days and forty nights” also occurs in connection with Noah in Gen. 7:4, 12.

18 Allison, *New Moses*, 169. Allison adds a caution here about the dating of such Rabbinic sayings.

19 Allison, *New Moses*, 169–172.

20 Exod. 4:22; Matt. 3:17; 4:3.

21 Allison, *New Moses*, 165–166.

22 Matt. 7:28–29; see Allison, *New Moses*, 182–190.

typological narrative extending over several chapters. This will be important to keep in mind as we turn to see how the formula citations, like jewels, are placed in this golden setting.

The Formula Citations

As mentioned above, Matthew puts seven formula citations in the first four chapters of his Gospel: (1) when Jesus is born of a virgin mother, Matthew adds, “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: ‘Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel’ (which means, God with us);”²³ (2) when Herod inquires of the scribes where the Messiah will be born, they reply, “In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it is written by the prophet: ‘And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will govern my people Israel’;”²⁴ (3) when Herod slaughters the infants of Bethlehem as Jesus flees into Egypt, Matthew comments, “Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: ‘A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more’;”²⁵ (4) when Jesus (with Mary and Joseph) came back from Egypt: “This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, ‘Out of Egypt have I called my son;’”²⁶ (5) when Joseph returns to Israel and finds that he must settle in the north, in Nazareth, Matthew says, “And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, ‘He shall be called a Nazarene’;”²⁷ (6) when, thirty years later, Matthew introduces John the Baptist with the comment, “For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said, ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight’;”²⁸ and (7) when Jesus, after his baptism and temptation, goes to Capernaum in Galilee to begin his ministry, Matthew states that the move was so “that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ‘The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.’”²⁹

23 Matt. 1:22–23.

24 Matt. 2:5–6.

25 Matt. 2:17–18.

26 Matt. 2:15.

27 Matt. 2:23.

28 Matt. 3:3.

29 Matt. 4:14–15.

Thematic Unity in the Formula Citations

Is there any unifying theme or structure to these seven citations, taken from various prophets? Do they relate in any definite way to the Exodus typology Matthew develops at the level of biblical allusion?

As a springboard into these questions, I would like to start with Matthew 1:17, which seems to be a quasi-formula citation in the way it presents Matthew's authorial reflection on the meaning of his genealogy: "So all the generations from Abraham to David were fourteen generations, and from David to the deportation to Babylon fourteen generations, and from the deportation to Babylon to the Christ fourteen generations." Matthew has structured his genealogy into three sets of fourteen, even leaving out certain names to achieve this effect, in order to highlight four very significant events in the history of Israel: the covenant with Abraham, the covenant with David, the Babylonian exile, and the coming of the Christ.

These four moments form a coherent picture: the covenant with Abraham was in part fulfilled by the glory of the Davidic monarchy; the promises made to Abraham and to David seem to have been destroyed by the Babylonian exile; the Christ comes to restore the kingdom and the promises. In other words, Matthew uses his genealogy to highlight Jesus' role as the one who will restore Israel after the exile.

Jesus' role as *restorer* is a very important idea for Matthew: all seven of the formula citations in Matthew 1:1–4:16 are drawn from contexts that speak about the restoration of Israel. But there is more. All seven are drawn from passages that portray the restoration of Israel as a *new Exodus*. As of old God rescued Israel from Egyptian bondage and made them into a nation, so now he will rescue them from exile and re-form them as a nation. Outside of Second Isaiah, which is rife with Exodus imagery, I have found the new Exodus theme only in the following prophetic texts: several points within Isaiah 2–12; in Isaiah 19:19–25 (although this is very different from other new Exodus passages); possibly in Isaiah 26:20–27:1; in Jeremiah 16:14 (= 23:7), and 30–31; in Hosea 1–3, 8–9, and 11; in Micah 7; and in Zechariah 10:11.³⁰

In other words, there are only a limited number of new Exodus passages in the prophets—between ten and fifteen, depending on how one counts them—and Matthew has drawn all seven of his formula citations from these passages. His interest in the Exodus—evinced by his copious use of Mosaic typology (see above)—is apparently paralleled by an interest in the New Exodus. He does not always cite the particular verses that manifest the New Exodus theme, but it is there in the background for those who know the surrounding contexts of his citations.

30 Helpful overviews of the use of Exodus themes in the OT can be found in David Daube, *The Exodus Pattern in the Bible* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), and—covering more ground in less space—Michael Fishbane, *Text and Texture* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 121–140.

Textual Links between Formula Citations

The seven formula citations share more than a common theme: they are also united by an important theme and textual proximity.³¹ Three of Matthew's citations are drawn from the same oracle within Isaiah: Matthew 1:23 cites Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 2:23 cites Isaiah 11:1 (probably), and Matthew 4:15–16 cites Isaiah 9:1–2. These are not only within the same oracle (Isaiah 2–12), but are drawn from the three points within that oracle where Isaiah speaks of a divinely given child. Micah 5:2, cited in Matthew 2:6, can be attached to this group. It too speaks of a divinely given child, and in vocabulary so reminiscent of Isaiah 7:14 that some have seen Micah 5:2 as a literary reference to the prophecy in Isaiah.³² This group of four citations is bound together by proximity in context and by shared vocabulary and themes.

The passages Matthew cites from within Isaiah 2–12 are tightly bound to Second Isaiah (chapters 40–55 of canonical Isaiah), so much so that scholars dispute among themselves whether Isaiah of Jerusalem is responsible for all of Isaiah 9 and 11, or whether his later followers added to these passages on the model of Second Isaiah. It is not surprising, therefore, to find that Matthew 3:3 cites Isaiah 40:3, from the opening of Second Isaiah—especially since Second Isaiah is the primary Old Testament locus for the new Exodus theme.

Second Isaiah is a highly allusive text, weaving in allusions to many other prophets and biblical texts, but the source singled out by scholars as most important for Second Isaiah is Jeremiah, with Jeremiah 30–31 (the so-called “Book of Consolation”) being the richest source of allusions.³³ In fact, Isaiah 40:10, a few verses away from the text cited in Matthew 3:3 (Isa. 40:3—see preceding paragraph) alludes to Jeremiah 31:16; it is not surprising to find that Matthew cites Jeremiah 31:15. Jeremiah 31 in turn is heavily dependent on Hosea 11, and so again we are not surprised to find that Matthew cites Hosea 11:1.³⁴ These three

31 Carol Stockhausen pioneered the exploration of key-word links in her work on St. Paul. She bases her work on the rabbinical technique of *gezera sheva*, “an analogy which rests on a similarity of *verbal expression* in two separate texts, which on the basis of this verbal similarity are linked and used to explain, clarify or amplify one another.” See Stockhausen, *Moses' Veil and the Glory of the New Covenant: The Exegetical Substructure of II Cor. 3,1–4,6*, *Analecta biblica* 116 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1989), 26–27.

32 See Hans Walter Wolff, *Micah: A Commentary*, trans. Gary Stansell (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990), 136.

33 See Benjamin D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 315–325. Sommer finds Jer. 30:10–11 alluded to in Isa. 41:8–13, 43:1–6, and 44:1–2, Jer. 31:16 in Isa. 40:8–10, Jer. 31:31–36 in Isa. 42:5–9, Jer. 31:7–9 in Isa. 42:10–16, Jer. 31:1–8 in Isa. 43:6–9, Jer. 30:14 in Isa. 47:9, Jer. 33:3 in Isa. 48:6, Jer. 31:32 in Isa. 51:7, Jer. 31:35 in Isa. 51:14, Jer. 31:33–35 in Isa. 54:10–13, and Jer. 31:8 in Isa. 55:12. See also the treatment in Shalom Paul, “Literary and Ideological Echoes of Jeremiah in Deutero-Isaiah,” in *Proceedings of the 5th World Congress of Jewish Studies* (Jerusalem: Hebrew University Press, 1969), 104–110.

34 For Jeremiah's dependence on Hosea, see Lindars, “Rachel, Weeping for Her Children—Jer-

texts cited by Matthew—Isaiah 40, Jeremiah 31, and Hosea 11—are connected by shared vocabulary and themes that lead modern scholars to posit a chain of literary dependencies; the same shared vocabulary and themes may have led Matthew to see a connection between them.

Typology in the Formula Citations

To sum up what we have done so far: we have seen that Matthew uses biblical allusions to construct a sustained typological narrative in which Jesus re-enacts the Exodus. We have seen further that Matthew's explicit prophetic citations betray an interest in the restoration of Israel seen as a new Exodus. Lastly, we have seen that Matthew's citations are connected one to another not only by the common theme of "new Exodus," but also by more particular themes and shared vocabulary. The unified Exodus typology that scholars have unearthed in the early chapters of Matthew serves as a background for a unified set of new Exodus citations. If the Exodus theme in Matthew's narrative corresponds to a new Exodus theme in his citations, and if the unity of Matthew's Exodus allusions is matched in some way by a unity among his citations, one may well ask whether the typology he employs in his Exodus allusions corresponds to any typology in the citations.

Two of Matthew's citations are commonly interpreted as typological. When Jesus is forced to stay some time in Egypt, Matthew says, "This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, 'Out of Egypt have I called my son.'"³⁵ In its original context in Hosea 11, this is not a prophecy of a future event but a statement about what happened in the past, namely, that God brought Israel out of Egypt. But since we have seen that Matthew portrays Jesus typologically in the wilderness scene as a new Israel, the faithful son of God, it makes sense to suppose that the same typology is at work here. While Hosea speaks of Israel as God's son and complains of his infidelity in the wilderness, Matthew sees in this description a type of Christ the faithful son of God. As Israel came out of Egyptian bondage, so Jesus will return from his forced Egyptian exile. Further, Hosea's words apply even more dramatically to Jesus than to their original referent, because Jesus is the "son of God" beyond all others. This view of Matthew's intention is all the more plausible because Hosea 11 itself takes the original Exodus as a type of a future event, a future "Exodus" that Israel must accomplish after the exile.

Similarly, when Herod has the infants of Bethlehem slaughtered, Matthew comments, "Then was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophet Jeremiah: 'A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children;

emiah 31:15–22," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 12 (1979): 47–62, at 47.

35 Matt. 2:15. For the view that Matthew is interpreting Hosea typologically see, for example, Brown, *Birth*, 214–215; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 3 vols., International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 1:263; John P. Meier, *Matthew*, New Testament Message 3 (Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, 1980), 13–14.

she refused to be consoled, because they were no more.”³⁶ In its original context, this saying of Jeremiah is not a prophecy of a future event but a statement about a past event, when the southern kingdom of Israel was taken into captivity. Rachel’s tomb was supposed to be somewhere near Ramah, where the captives were held in preparation for transport to Babylon. The statement that her children “were no more” means that the inhabitants of the kingdom of Judah were taken away into exile. Jeremiah employs the phrase “were no more” to use death as a metaphor for exile while Matthew cites it as pointing to the slaughter of the infants in Bethlehem—a case of literal rather than figurative death—but Jesus himself does go into exile as would be indicated by the original metaphorical meaning of Jeremiah’s phrase. Given the typology of Jesus as Israel, Matthew sees the forced exile of Jesus and the slaughter of the infants as foreshadowed by the Babylonian captivity.

W. D. Davies and Dale Allison have this to say about these two citations from Hosea and Jeremiah:

There is in 2.13–23 a Jesus/Israel typology, a typology which will be taken up once again in chapters 3 and 4 (where Jesus passes through the waters of baptism and then enters into the desert). In 2.15, for instance, the “son” of Hos 11.1, originally Israel, becomes Jesus. And behind the quotation of Jer. 31.15 in 2.18 there apparently lies, as argued, a typological equation of Jesus with Israel: in Jeremiah’s prophecy of return for the exiles Matthew discerns a cipher for the Messiah’s return to Israel. We may say, then, that while Jesus culminates Israel’s history in chapter 1, in chapter 2 he repeats it.³⁷

Many of Matthew’s other formula citations are to be understood as similarly typological. Indeed, Matthew uses his formula citations to interpret the events of Jesus’ pre-ministry period as a unified story in which Jesus relives the history of the exile and then symbolically returns from exile to inaugurate Israel’s own return. Like the Suffering Servant of Second Isaiah, Jesus first takes on himself the punishment of Israel and then comes bearing the light of God’s salvation.

This approach unlocks some problems that have puzzled scholars for centuries. For example, Matthew’s citation of Isaiah 7:14 (referencing a “young woman” or “virgin” bearing a son) has been a source of controversy since the patristic era. Almost every thesis imaginable has been proposed to explain his intentions. The many views can be arranged under four general headings: (1) until the modern era, most interpreters took Matthew as saying that the words of Isaiah apply at

36 For the view that Matthew is interpreting Jeremiah typologically here, see Brown, *Birth*, 216–217; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:267–268.

37 Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:282.

the literal level to the birth of Christ;³⁸ (2) some have argued that Matthew took Isaiah's words to be partially fulfilled in Isaiah's own time but completely fulfilled only at the birth of Christ;³⁹ (3) others have argued that Matthew took Isaiah to be speaking of an event in his own times, but that Matthew's confidence in the divine authorship of Scripture led him to see further significance in Isaiah's choice of words;⁴⁰ (4) still others believe that Matthew lifted the text completely out of context and interpreted it without regard for its original significance—this seems to be the majority view today.⁴¹

The problem is that, in context, the child is supposed to know how to “refuse the evil and choose the good” before Assyria devastates Syria and Israel, while Matthew cites Isaiah's words as pointing to an event long after the demise of the Assyrian empire itself. Exegetes have debated endlessly about whether or not the word used for the child's mother means “young woman” or “virgin.” In the end it does not make a difference: all that “virgin” would have to mean in context is that the woman in question was a virgin at the time of Isaiah's prophecy, not that she was a virgin even after conception.⁴²

But the view that Matthew interprets Isaiah 7:14 *typologically* solves the questions posed by all of the above views. To begin with, it fits well with the context of Matthew's citation. Isaiah says of himself and his own child Mahershalalhashbaz that “I and the children whom the Lord has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of Hosts,”⁴³ meaning here not “proofs” but “signifiers.” Since the child of Isaiah 7:14 is also given as a “sign,” it is natural to take him not as a proof but as a signifier, and so the question becomes: What does this child signify? It is a response to Ahaz's concern about an attempt by Syria and Israel to remove

38 For a summary of the patristic tradition, see D. A. Carson, *Matthew*, ed. Frank E. Gaebelien, Expositor's Bible Commentary 8 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1984), 77–81. See also M. -J. Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Matthieu* [The Gospel According to Saint Matthew] (Paris: J. Gabalda, 1948), 16–17.

39 See, for example, Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church Under Persecution*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 24–25; Craig L. Blomberg, “Interpreting Old Testament Prophetic Literature in Matthew: Double Fulfillment,” *Trinity Journal* 23 (2002): 17–33; Walter C. Kaiser, “The Promise of Isaiah 7:14 and the Single-Meaning Hermeneutic,” *Evangelical Journal* 6 (1988): 55–70.

40 See Hagner, *Matthew*, lv–lvi and 20–21, and Brown, “*Sensus Plenior*,” 102 and 143.

41 In addition to the scholars cited above, see C. D. F. Moule, *The Origin of Christology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 128: “Ignoring the context and doing violence to the original meaning, the Evangelist fits the ancient words by force into a contemporary, Christian meaning. . . .”

42 As Joseph Blenkinsopp comments, “Neither the context nor biblical usage in general provides much help in establishing the identity of either the prospective mother or her child, with the result that by now the scholarly debate on the designation of the woman and the name of the child practically defies documentation. . . .” See Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, Anchor Bible 19 (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 232–233.

43 Isa. 8:18.

him from the throne of Judah, and so in a general way “Emmanuel” must signify the divinely guaranteed continuance of the Davidic kingship even in the face of hostile plots.

But more specifically, the child’s significance is brought out by the contextual parallel between Emmanuel and the Davidic scion of Isaiah 9:6–7 and 11:1–12:6. The child of 9:6–7 is also divinely “given to us,” and his names, which include “Mighty God,” recall the name “Emmanuel” or “God-with-us.” So it seems reasonable to conclude, even before looking to Matthew, that the child “Emmanuel” is a sign of the Davidic messiah.⁴⁴

At the same time, we saw that in both of Matthew’s commonly recognized typological interpretations (namely Hos. 11:1 and Jer. 31:15), Matthew found texts whose wording applies better to Matthew’s use of them than to their original situation. The same is true here. The word used to designate the child’s mother can be taken to mean a virgin, and was so taken by the Septuagint translators. But the phrase “the virgin shall conceive” takes on a startling depth of meaning when we see that the savior signified by Emmanuel was born of one who remained a virgin after conception. The name “God with us” applies to the child Emmanuel because he signifies one who will bring God’s salvation, while Jesus not only is that one but makes God present in a unique way.

Consequently, we can affirm the strengths of all the views concerning Matthew’s intentions: (1) Matthew understood and interacted with the literal meaning of Isaiah’s words; (2) he saw the literal meaning as fulfilled in a child born in Isaiah’s day, but he saw the meaning of that child himself as fulfilled only at Christ’s birth; (3) as he does elsewhere, he finds a divine depth of meaning in the words that fit the typological meaning even more closely than the literal; and (4) his dependence on the original literal and contextual meaning of the words for his typological interpretation shows that it would be a mistake to take that meaning as Christ’s birth straightaway.

Typological Narrative in the Formula Citations

We began by seeing how Matthew constructs a detailed and sustained typological story of the Exodus in the early chapters of his Gospel. Then we found that all of the formula citations in those chapters are connected by a new Exodus theme and by key-words. Next we discovered that Matthew’s formula citations interpret the Old Testament typologically. It would be reasonable therefore to ask whether Matthew’s formula citations offer a sustained typological narrative to match the typological Exodus story of their surrounding context in Matthew’s Gospel.

44 For a similar argument, see Craig L. Blomberg, “Interpreting Old Testament Prophetic Literature in Matthew: Double Fulfillment,” *Trinity Journal* 23 (2002): 17–33, at 20–21; Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 66, 73, 80–81; compare Childs, *The Struggle to Understand Isaiah as Christian Scripture* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2004), 9–11.

If the formula citations are taken as telling a *story*, the resulting picture of Matthew's use of the Old Testament is neither purely literal nor purely typological. Most of the citations in 1:1–4:16 should be taken as typological, but as Jesus' typological re-living of Israel's history brings him closer to the time of his ministry, he begins to carry Israel's history forward: Israel's history finds its continuation in Jesus. Thus we find that certain of the citations, specifically those about a Davidic Messiah who will restore Israel, are interpreted as applying literally to Jesus. The constant in Matthew's citations turns out to be not a textual theory, whether typological or literal, but the conviction that Jesus bears the identity of Israel.

The following analysis will summarize the *story* of Matthew's citations.

(1) *Isaiah 7:14*

Isaiah 7:14 (cited in Matt. 1:23) refers to a child born during the 8th century B.C., just before the exile of the northern kingdom. Seeing this child as a type of Christ, we can understand Jesus' birth as symbolically re-enacting this period before the exile.

(2) *Jeremiah 31:15*

Jeremiah 31:15 (cited in Matt. 2:18) speaks of the time just after the last stage of the deportation of Israel, when Judah was taken away to Babylon. Understanding these events typologically, we see Jesus, as a *Judean*, take part in the exile of the southern kingdom.

(3) *Hosea 11:1*

Hosea 11:1 (cited in Matt. 2:15) speaks of Israel coming out of Egypt, but this event, as the context in Hosea implies, should be understood as a foreshadowing of the return from exile; by applying this text to Jesus, Matthew portrays him as Israel returning from exile.

(4) *Isaiah 11:1 / 4:3*

The next prophecy cited in Matthew 2:23, that "He shall be called a Nazorean," is hard to pin down, but most scholars identify the primary referent as either Isaiah 11:1 or Isaiah 4:3. This identification is based on a word play between "Nazorean" and the Hebrew words for "branch" or "holy."⁴⁵ Isaiah 11:1 describes a "branch" springing up from the root of Jesse, while Isaiah 4:3 states that the one who survives after the devastation of Israel shall be called "holy." Applied to Jesus, either text would name Jesus as a survivor of the exile. In the typological *story* of the

45 See Brown, *Messiah*, 207–213 and 223–225; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:276–281; Stuart Chepey, *Nazirites in Late Second Temple Judaism: A Survey of Ancient Jewish Writings, the New Testament, Archaeological Evidence, and Other Writings from Late Antiquity*, Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity 60 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 151–155.

formula citations, therefore, Jesus is born before the very beginnings of the exile, suffers exile with Judah, returns from exile, and is named as a survivor of the exile.

(5) *Isaiah 40:3*

A shift occurs in the story at this point. Jesus has re-lived the history of Israel all the way up to the present, and has experienced in himself the restoration he must bring to the nation. This brings us to Matthew chapter 3, where John is identified as the “voice” that cries out in Isaiah 40:3, the beginning of Second Isaiah.⁴⁶

This chapter in Isaiah begins with a command from God: “Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins.” In response to God’s command,

A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

What the “voice” announces is a summary of the whole message of Second Isaiah. As we read on through chapters 40–55, it becomes clear that the preparation required for the way of the Lord is repentance and conversion of heart. When the hearts of the people of Israel return to God, he will bring them through the wilderness in a new Exodus. The glory of the Lord will be revealed to all flesh when all mankind sees the salvation God brings for his people.

Further, regarding Matthew’s use of Isaiah 40:3—again, a text connected to all of Isaiah 40–55—it is of crucial importance to note that the key figure in this new Exodus is the so-called “Suffering Servant.” The Suffering Servant bears the identity of Israel in himself, to the point that his suffering and death are counted as Israel’s suffering and death: he himself bears the punishment of the people.⁴⁷ John the Baptist is the “voice” who cries out that the time of the new Exodus is at hand, and that the Suffering Servant is coming—Jesus, who carries the identity of Israel.

(6) *Isaiah 42:1*

When Jesus is baptized by John, the Holy Spirit descends upon him and God’s voice says, “This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased,”—an allusion to the description of the Servant in Isaiah 42:1.⁴⁸

46 Matt. 3:3.

47 Isa. 53.

48 Matt. 3:17.

(7) *Isaiah 8:23–9:1*

Jesus then goes out into the wilderness, endures the time of temptation, and moves his residence to Capernaum. This, Matthew tells us, happened “that what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah might be fulfilled: ‘The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, toward the sea, across the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles—the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.’”⁴⁹ The region of Zebulun and Naphtali is at the very northernmost part of Northern Israel, and was the first part of Israel to suffer exile, right about the time of Emmanuel’s birth. The typological story has come full circle: born just before the beginning of the exile, Jesus suffers the exile himself, returns from exile, is named as a survivor of the exile, and comes as the Suffering Servant to bring restoration to Israel. He then begins his ministry in the very place where the exile began, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali.⁵⁰

Matthew’s narrative operates on three levels at once: (1) it is the story of Jesus’ pre-ministry period, (2) it reenacts the history of the exile, and (3) it reenacts the Exodus from Egypt. Since Matthew sees the restoration of Israel as a new Exodus, these levels of story line are not independent but mutually supportive. The relationship among these three levels of the story can be put in chart form as follows:

	Matt. 1:23 / Isa. 7:14	Matt. 2:18 / Jer. 31:15	Matt. 2:15 / Hos. 11:1	Matt. 2:23 / Isa. 11:1 / Isa. 4:3	Matt. 3:1 / Isa. 40:3	Matt. 4:15–16 / Isa. 8:23–9:1
1 Pre-ministry Story of Jesus	Jesus is born	Jesus flees to Egypt / death of Bethlehem infants	Jesus returns to Israel	Jesus becomes a Nazarean	The preaching of John	Jesus moves to Capernaum
2 History of the Exile Reenacted	Emmanuel is born	Exile of Israel	[No corresponding event]	The names to be given the future remnant	The messenger of Isa. 40:3	The place where the exile began
3 History of the Exodus Reenacted	Moses is born	Death of Hebrew infants / flight of Moses	Exodus from Egypt	[No corresponding event]	Angel of the Lord goes before Israel	[No corresponding event]

49 Matt. 4:14–16.

50 Because it is placed on the mouths of characters within the story, the citation of Mic. 5:2 in Matt. 2:6 regarding the Messiah’s birth-place speaks about *the present arrival* of the Messiah instead of his *typological reenactment* of a past event. With this exception, all of the citations attach to Matthew’s narrative in the order of their place within the typological story.

Note that when Jesus reenacts the return of Israel from exile, there is no historical return from exile that Matthew can interpret typologically (see column 3, position 2). As a result, he cites a text that describes the original Exodus instead of a text concerning the history of the exile (see column 3, position 3).

This multi-level, unified interpretation of the formula citations in Matthew 1:1–4:16 is supported by three considerations:

- (1) First, the typological story of exile and restoration lines up perfectly with the Exodus typology we find in Matthew's use of the Old Testament outside of his formula citations. The Exodus story we find in Matthew's biblical allusions matches the new Exodus story of his biblical citations. As Jesus bears the identity of Israel in re-living the captivity in Egypt and the Exodus, so he bears the identity of Israel in re-living the exile and pre-living the restoration.
- (2) Second, Matthew has chosen all of his citations in 1:1–4:16 from passages describing the restoration of Israel in imagery borrowed from the Exodus. Further, his citations are all interconnected by key-words and particular themes. These two observations suggest that Matthew's use of these citations are unified in some way. One would expect that the commonly held typological interpretations of Jeremiah 31:15 (Jesus going down into Egypt) and Hosea 11:1 (Jesus coming out of Egypt) are connected to Matthew's understanding of the surrounding formula citations.
- (3) That the formula citations fall into the narrative outlined above—when placed in their order as Matthew has attached them to the events of Christ's life—is an argument in its own favor. It seems improbable that such order could appear by chance. Micah 5:2 is the only one out of order, and it is also the only one spoken by characters within Matthew's narrative; the exception thus proves the rule.

The Proleptic Function of the Formula Citations

It should be clear by now why I have chosen to treat Matthew 1:1–4:16 as a unit rather than introducing a major break after chapter 2. Having made an argument for Matthew 1:1–4:16 as a unit, I would further argue that this unit has an identifiable function within the larger context of Matthew's Gospel.

This function becomes apparent in the story of the slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem. Matthew finds a text in Jeremiah 31:15 that not only advances his ty-

political narrative about Jesus but uses wording more applicable to the slaughtered infants than to its original referent. However, the neat applicability of Jeremiah's wording to the infants of Bethlehem highlights the difference between their fate and Jesus' successful escape. While they literally died and thus "were no more," Jesus went into exile like the original subjects of Jeremiah's text. Considered in its original sense as a metaphor, Jeremiah 31:15 might indeed be more applicable to Jesus than to the infants, but Matthew has applied it to the victims who suffer death in the literal sense. Commentators note that Jesus' flight into Egypt and the massacre of the innocents both fall under an exile typology, but Jean Miler points out that the difference between the two raises an important question: what is the relationship between the infants' death and Jesus' escape?⁵¹

To answer the question, we have to see that Matthew has crafted this portion of his infancy narrative to foreshadow the passion account. Herod is said to assemble "all the chief priests and scribes of the people" in Matthew 2:4. Elsewhere in Matthew, the phrase "chief priests and scribes" occurs only in connection with Jesus' final rejection and passion in Jerusalem.⁵² In Matthew 2:4 the "chief priests and scribes" are consulted about the birth-place of the "king of the Jews," a title that appears elsewhere in Matthew only in the passion narrative. As Raymond Brown has noted, Matthew 1–2 follows the sequence of revelation, proclamation, and two-fold reaction, giving the infancy narrative the shape of a "gospel in miniature."⁵³

This foreshadowing makes sense inasmuch as the climax of Jesus' redemptive action, and therefore of Matthew's Gospel, is not in the infancy narrative but in the paschal mystery. Although Jesus appears in the infancy narrative as the one who bears Israel's identity, takes on himself the punishment of Israel, and returns from exile, still, Matthew knows that it was on the cross that Jesus offered his blood for the forgiveness of sins.⁵⁴ The flight into Egypt is not his final salvific work. The time will come when Jesus will indeed share the fate of the innocents by dying at the hands of a foreign ruler, but that time is not yet. The discrepancy between Jesus' fate and that of the infants of Bethlehem hints already at what Jesus must ultimately do in order to bear the punishment of Israel. In the meantime, his solidarity with the infants is expressed by suffering at the level of metaphor what they suffer literally.

51 Jean Miler, *Les Citations d'accomplissement dans l'évangile de Matthieu: Quand Dieu se rend présent en toute humanité* [The Accomplishment Citations in the Gospel of Matthew: When God Makes Himself Present in All Humanity], *Analecta biblica* 140 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1999), 60.

52 See, for example, Matt. 16:21, "From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." The other occurrences of the phrase are similar: 20:18, 21:15, and 27:41.

53 For commentary on the parallels between this scene and the Passion see Brown, *Birth*, 183.

54 Matt. 26:28.

If the infants' death looks forward to the end of the Gospel, it is also true that the end of the Gospel sheds light on the infants' fate. Jeremiah 31:15 says that Rachel refuses to be consoled for her children "because they are no more." However, Jeremiah 31:16–17 continues:

Thus says the LORD: Keep your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded, says the LORD, and they shall come back from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your future, says the LORD, and your children shall come back to their own country.

One might think that Matthew's awareness of the context has failed here. While the exiles may have come back from Babylon, the infants of Bethlehem are dead, and for them there will be no return. But when Jesus comes to share in their fate by dying, his death is in fact followed by a restoration. Matthew and his readers knew that there is a return from death, and for them there would be no problem in applying Jeremiah 31:16–17 to the Jewish infants. Richard J. Erickson's remarks are apt:

The death of the Innocents, like the death of the male Hebrew babies in Egypt, is a harbinger of the coming New Exodus. Tragic though the massacre in Bethlehem may be, it is in the end no more tragic than the death of any single human being in the history of the human race. The one who escaped at Bethlehem comes back to endure it all himself, *and to reverse it!* Therefore, says Matthew by implication, weep no more!⁵⁵

That Matthew lines up the exile with the death of the infants of Bethlehem, and ultimately with Jesus' death, gives us new ground for examining Matthew's understanding of the exile, which we have seen to be so dominant a theme in this first part of his Gospel. In some way, the exile is death, and the promised restoration is resurrection from the dead.⁵⁶

While commentators have seen that the slaughter of the infants has a prophetic function in Matthew's Gospel, Matthew 4:16–17 (about Jesus beginning his ministry in the northern parts of Galilee) and its citation of Isaiah 8:23–9:1 appear to foreshadow later events in Matthew's story. According to most commentators, the reason Matthew cites Isaiah 8:23–9:1 is his interest in the mission to the Gentiles. Ulrich Luz lays out the majority position clearly, and his comments are worth citing at length:

⁵⁵ Richard J. Erickson, "Divine Injustice?: Matthew's Narrative Strategy and the Slaughter of the Innocents (Matthew 2.13-23)," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 64 (1996): 5–27, at 26 (my emphasis).

⁵⁶ Compare Ezek. 37:1–14.

In the quotation, the phrase “Galilee of the Gentiles” ... is most important to Matthew. With that it is clear that he does not mean that Galilee is settled by Gentiles or that Jesus’ ministry had taken place entirely or partly among Gentiles. Matthew in his Gospel makes it clear that Jesus was the Messiah of Israel, ministered in Israel’s synagogues, and forbade his disciples to work outside of Israel (10:5f). ... Thus the designation “Galilee of the Gentiles” has a fictive character. With this Old Testament designation Matthew intends to point on a second level to that which the sending of Jesus has started in the history of salvation: the way of salvation to the Gentiles. In Galilee, the risen Lord will give the disciples the command to make disciples of all Gentiles (28:16–20). Under the future perspective of salvation which is to come to the Gentiles and precisely in agreement with God’s plan, Jesus in v. 17 begins his proclamation to Israel. Matthew wants to point to a perspective which applies to the entire ministry of Jesus in Israelite Galilee.⁵⁷

Luz goes on to explain that the motivation behind the quotation is polemical, inasmuch as Matthew wants to claim the Hebrew Bible for Christianity against the Jews. Davies and Allison add that Matthew was trying “to make an asset out of a liability,” that is, to counteract the negative image associated with Galilee by citing this from the prophet Isaiah.⁵⁸ These latter commentators argue that this is the *only* function of the citation, and that Galilee does not have any theological significance for Matthew beyond the need to offer an apologetic for the geographical details of Jesus’ life.⁵⁹ Similarly, Luz remarks that “it is very difficult to judge how far the evangelist has interpreted the other statements of the quotation aside from ‘Galilee of the Gentiles.’” Indeed, Luz does not succeed in finding anything but dissonance between the rest of the citation and Matthew’s use of it.⁶⁰

I have already responded to the view that would reduce Matthew’s interest in Galilee to the keyword “Gentiles” by arguing that, in the context of his new-Exodus typological story, Matthew wants to emphasize that Jesus begins his ministry of light in the very region where the darkness of exile began for Israel.⁶¹ But Luz is

57 Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Commentary*, trans. Wilhelm C. Linss (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 194–195. He is followed by Davies and Allison (*Matthew*, 1:383–4), and Gundry (*Matthew*, 60).

58 Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:379 and 383.

59 Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:379–380.

60 Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 196.

61 St. Jerome offers the following comment: “The Hebrews who believe in Christ explain this passage thus: In former times, these two tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali were taken captive by the Assyrians and led away to an enemy land, and Galilee was deserted; but the prophet says here that it has been relieved, because [Christ] would bear the people’s sins. And later not only

right to point out that Matthew has a special interest in Galilee: in addition to citing the text from Isaiah, Matthew emphasizes Jesus' residence in Galilee more than the other synoptics do.

Matthew's emphasis on Galilee becomes clearer when compared to the other synoptic gospels. Mark 1:14 reports that "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God," but Matthew 4:13 says specifically that Jesus went and lived in Capernaum, which Mark says later in 2:1 only implicitly. Similarly, Luke 4:14 says that Jesus returned from the wilderness to Galilee, and in 4:41 he says that Jesus went to Capernaum, but he does not say that Jesus actually dwelt in Capernaum. From this point on, Matthew and Mark are substantially the same with regard to where Jesus traveled. One or the other sometimes includes an additional name for the same region, but Matthew only includes one place name which Mark does not, a reference to Capernaum in the story of the temple tax, and Mark does not have any place names which Matthew does not.⁶²

However, there are interesting differences between the synoptics in how they handle the transition from Galilee to Judea. Luke goes his own way entirely, using the journey to Jerusalem as an opportunity to insert many of Jesus' sayings. His account of the journey begins at 9:51, but he does not have Jesus arrive at Jerusalem until 19:45. In Matthew and Mark, the journey is described in one verse: with regard to the departure from Galilee, Mark says simply, "He left there," while Matthew specifies that he "went away from Galilee." Mark's version seems to place the region of Judea as one more destination among many, while Matthew's version stresses that the journey to Judea is the end of the Galilean scene.⁶³ From this point to the end of the synoptic story, Matthew and Mark are almost interchangeable with regard to place-names, as before.

the two tribes but all the rest, who were dwelling beyond the Jordan and in Samaria, were led into captivity. And, [the Hebrew Christians] say, Scripture asserts here that the region whose people were first led into captivity and began to serve the Babylonians, and which first dwelt in the darkness of error, that same region would first see the light of Christ preaching, and from that region the gospel would be sown among all the nations." See Jerome, *Commentariorum in Esaiam libri I–XI*, Corpus Christianorum Series Latina 73 (Turnhout: Typographi Brepols Editores Pontifici, 1963), 123. Davies and Allison (*Matthew*, 1:381) and Luz (*Matthew 1–7*, 197) pass on this early Christian interpretation, but do not seem impressed by it.

62 See Matt. 17:24.

63 Sean Freyne points out Matthew's emphasis on this point in *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 76 and 89, but he does not see any particular emphasis on Galilee in Matthew as compared with Mark. Guido Tisera, borrowing from Freyne, also points out that Matthew is clearer on the Galilee-Judea transition than Mark, in *Universalism According to the Gospel of Matthew* (Berlin: Peter Lang, 1993), 293–294. Tisera goes beyond Freyne in pointing out connections in the meetings between the resurrected Jesus and others in Matthew 28, but the connection he sees is rather general.

This brings us to the resurrection account. In Matthew and Mark, an angel tells the women who come to the tomb to tell the disciples that Jesus will go before them to Galilee.⁶⁴ The women in Matthew then see Jesus, who repeats the instruction to tell the disciples that he is going before them to Galilee.⁶⁵ Mark never shows us the disciples arriving at Galilee. Luke has the disciples meet Jesus in Jerusalem. In Matthew's account, the disciples not only receive admonitions to go to Galilee, but they actually go there and see Jesus, and they do not see him before they see him there.⁶⁶ Once again, at an important juncture in the story, Matthew places emphasis on Galilee.

All of these observations can be summed up as follows. Matthew and Mark are very close to one another in describing where Jesus went, but Matthew puts more emphasis on Galilee at three important points: the beginning of Jesus' ministry in Galilee, the transition from Galilee to Judea, and the end of the gospel story. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry he gives Galilee a theological interpretation based on Isaiah 8:23–9:1. At the transition from Galilee to Judea he emphasizes that Jesus is no longer working in Galilee. At the end of the story he makes Galilee the actual and only meeting place between the disciples and the resurrected Jesus.

Given Matthew's sustained interest in Galilee, it seems reasonable to conclude with Luz that Matthew's citation in 4:15–16 of Isaiah 8:23–9:1 should be interpreted in light of Jesus' sending the disciples out to the nations from Galilee. Just as the slaughter of the infants and the flight into Egypt looks forward to Christ's death, and just as his return from Egypt looks forward to his resurrection, so the beginning of his preaching in Galilee looks forward to the beginning of the apostles' preaching at the end of the Gospel.

We can, therefore, add a fourth layer to the story of Matthew 1–4: as the story of the Exodus underlies the story of the exile, and the story of the exile underlies the infancy narrative, so the infancy narrative looks forward to the climactic events of Matthew's Gospel.

The story of Matthew 1:1–4:16 thus turns out to have an intermediate role: by having Jesus simultaneously recapitulate Israel's history and foreshadow his saving ministry, Matthew uses the infancy narrative as something like a lens to focus the light of Israel's history onto the coming ministry of Jesus. It can thus be compared to the prologue in John, which announces the major theological themes of his Gospel.

64 Matt. 28:7 and Mark 16:7. Luke refers to Galilee, but does not say that Jesus will go there.

65 Matt. 28:10.

66 Matt. 28:16.

Matthew as Exegete

At the beginning of this article, I suggested that the formula citations shed some light on how Matthew approaches the interpretation of Scripture. Having dealt with the formula citations at some length, I would like to make a few general observations about Matthew the exegete.

Contrary to some trends in scholarship, Matthew does not seek to construct an argument based on the Old Testament to convince or refute non-Christians. His intentions are not apologetic. Rather, he presumes a belief that Christ bears the identity of Israel, and on the basis of this belief he uses Old Testament citations to illuminate the mystery of Christ's life, death, and resurrection.

However, this does not mean that "ignoring the context and doing violence to the original meaning, the Evangelist fits the ancient words by force into a contemporary, Christian meaning."⁶⁷ Matthew sees his citations as parts of larger contexts, and he weaves these contexts together by way of keyword and thematic links to form a unified textual network with a meaning. In a wonderful way, he finds texts whose wording applies better to the story of Christ than to the original contexts, but the key to his interpretation of these same texts lies not in the words of the Old Testament but in the persons and events described by the words: he attends to the words but focuses on the realities behind the words. To use traditional Christian terms, Matthew seeks to bring out the spiritual sense of the Old Testament, a spiritual sense which he understands as grounded in the literal sense and, indeed, is unavailable without it.

Matthew's use of the Old Testament to illuminate the mystery of Christ reveals his conviction that the mystery of Christ unlocks the Old Testament, and this conviction itself leads him to a serious engagement with the Old Testament in the light of Christ. The result is a compelling, symphonic story in which the reader sees several layers of history converge in the death and resurrection of the Messiah. We have much to learn from Matthew about the relationship between the Old and New Testaments.

⁶⁷ Moule, *Origin*, 128.