

A RESPONSE TO "MATTHEW AND MIDRASH"

Robert H. Gundry*

Thanks to Douglas Moo for his kind words about my "persuasive defense of Matthean authorship and numerous fresh exegetical insights." A genuine dialogue is taking place between him and me. He recognizes that evangelicals have too often turned a blind eye to synoptic problems. He also recognizes the tendentiousness of the synoptics and the resultant need to use redaction criticism. And he recognizes that differences of authorial intent and literary genre allow in principle a mixture of historical narrative and unhistorical embellishment without damage to a high view of Scripture. He only thinks that I have gone too far in seeing such a mixture in Matthew. As he refers to Donald Carson's review of my Matthew commentary for a more detailed criticism, so I may refer to my paper, "A Response to Some Criticisms of *Matthew*," which answers that review and other reviews by Philip Payne and Royce Gruenler. The paper consists of fifty-one pages and may be gotten by sending \$1.00 to me at Westmont College, Santa Barbara, California 93108.

Moo thinks that I almost always assume Matthean redaction wherever Matthew differs from Mark, and that the assumption suffers from lack of argumentation for Mark's priority and from failure to allow for Matthew's occasionally preserving more primitive tradition even if Mark wrote first. No one can speak to me of such an assumption, however, for at the beginning of my work on Matthew I had in mind to disprove Mark's priority but came to the conclusion that the details of the text answer far better to Mark's priority than to any other view. As for argumentation, my *Commentary* shows how thoroughly and economically Mark's priority, plus Matthew's literary and theological tastes, accounts for the wording of their parallel passages. This adequacy and economy offer a powerful argument, which Moo has failed to recognize as such. A critic will have to show in what ways the fit between hypothesis and textual phenomena is not so good as it appears to be. Otherwise we have no need to talk of more primitive traditions in Matthew.

My theory of an enlarged Q comes in for severer criticism. Moo argues that "many scholars in fact are not convinced that Q was a single written source of the sort Gundry supposes." Yet as an equal matter of fact I myself am unsure whether Q was a single document. In particular, it seems doubtful to me that the nativity tradition (which I assign to an enlarged Q only in the sense that Q represents non-Markan traditions shared by Matthew and Luke) was written in the same document with the sayings tradition. But nothing in my thesis rides on the singleness of an enlarged Q. The crucial point is use of the same traditions, not Matthew's and Luke's finding them all in the same place.

*Robert Gundry is professor of New Testament and Greek at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California.

Furthermore, the view that Matthew and Luke shared more non-Markan traditions than most scholars have thought does not form an essential part of my *Commentary*. Without it the *Commentary* would still provide massive evidence for an amount of Matthean redaction that Moo shies away from. Indeed (here I take up his example of the nativity story), the rough draft assumed the usual view that Matthew and Luke reflect different traditions. Later this question arose in my mind: If Matthew can treat Mark and Q so freely as to transfer the desire to kill John the Baptist from Herodias to Herod so that Herod no longer appears as John's protector (see pp. 286-289 in the *Commentary*); have the Jewish leaders say in self-condemnation what Jesus said to them according to Mark (428); make the fig tree wither immediately rather than over the course of a day (415-418); make Judas Iscariot get his money, not just a promise, at the striking of a bargain to betray Jesus (523, 535); transfer the purchase of the field from Judas to the Sanhedrin, make the purchase take place before, not after, Judas' death, and change Judas' death from an accident to a suicide (552-558); make the Sanhedrin seek false testimony instead of true (541-542); convert Pilate from a weak and vacillating pagan into a defender of Jesus who takes the initiative for his release, twice confesses him as the Christ,¹ and shows his innocence of Jesus' blood by going through a ceremony prescribed in Deuteronomy 21 for showing true innocence (560-565)—if Matthew can change Mark and traditional Q so freely, I asked myself, could it be that he had a nativity tradition like Luke's and changed it with similar freedom? Would the kinds of changes differ greatly? So I went back, re-worked Matthew 1-2, and discovered that the kinds of changes would not differ greatly.

On the whole, the changes might be somewhat freer than those elsewhere in the gospel. But we know that ancient people tended to embellish the birth stories of great men more than they embellished other parts of their life stories. We think, for example, of the embellishments on Noah's birth in *1 Enoch* 106:1-19; on Moses' birth in Josephus *Ant.* 2.9.3-7 § § 210-237; on Alexander the Great's birth in Plutarch's *Life of Alexander* 2.1-3.5; on the birth of Sargon of Agade in *ANET* 119. Therefore, if Matthew's habits can account for the differences between his and Luke's versions of Jesus' birth, the law of parsimony works against the supposition of another tradition. Why not suppose that Matthew "Gentilizes" the shepherds at the nativity as he Christianizes Pilate at the trial? And though it would be ridiculous to say that the main impetus behind Matthew's creating the slaughter of the innocents and the flight to Egypt came from the sacrifice of doves or pigeons and the trip to Jerusalem, why not say that the sacrifice and the trip provided the occasion and that the main impetus came from Matthew's interests in the theme of persecution, including flight from persecution, and in OT typology (here, Israel's Egyptian sojourn and return), plus the infamous cruelty of Herod the Great? Admittedly the hypothesis rests in large part on Matthew's treatment of Mark and traditional Q elsewhere in his gospel.² But for that very reason Moo should have concentrated his efforts there rather than plunging immediately into the nativity story and calling attention to some items that in isola-

¹*Legomenos* does not mean "so-called"; cf. 1:16; 27:16.

²Cf. my *Commentary* xi, 20.

tion look questionable. A successful debater overcomes the strongest arguments of the view he opposes. Exposing some dependent points gives only the appearance of success.

With regard to Luke's reflecting Q, on page 3 of my *Commentary* I explicitly say that although Luke "usually" preserves its wording, statistics sometimes point to his redaction. The *Commentary* notes quite a number of Luke's redactions,³ and since I was not writing a commentary on Luke I mentioned only those examples that seemed pertinent to comments on Matthew. It is common to regard Luke as sticking closer to Q than Matthew does, "for the differences on Matthew's side usually turn out to be the same kinds of differences that characterize Matthew in comparison with Mark (cf. G. B. Caird in *ExpTim* 87 [1976] 169-70)."⁴ W. G. Kümmel writes that "in the narrative material, especially in the introduction to the pericopes, the Lukan linguistic peculiarities are four times as frequent as in the sayings of Jesus [which Q primarily consists of]," but that Luke "has imposed on himself narrower limits for the passing on of the sayings of Jesus."⁵ F. W. Danker states that a recent study by J. Jeremias "confirms a growing consensus that Luke's respect for his sources and tradition is quite strong, and that he is especially reluctant to alter dominical words."⁶

Moo identifies as my fourth hypothesis "that Matthew used [better than "had access to" in an earlier statement] very little material of any sort beyond the tradition already identified in Mark and Q" and thinks it strange that an apostle like Matthew would not have written down his own reminiscences of Jesus more often than my *Commentary* admits. But to the degree that Moo presses this argument, other scholars will ask him how he can think that an apostle depended on Mark and Q rather than on his own reminiscences for most of his gospel. And Moo will find himself on my side arguing that, in ancient Jewish culture, respect for already published tradition—especially that so close to eyewitnesses as Mark and Q apparently were—may well have caused Matthew to depend on such tradition. I can then ask why such great respect for Mark and Q cannot have led to more embellishment than addition of further historical data, for embellishment was as much a part of the culture as was respect for already published tradition. The question whether Matthew in fact embellished the tradition more than he made historical additions to it, or vice versa, will now come up in answer to the charge that I have attributed too much redaction to him. Only the textual phenomena will tell us, however. Advance judgments on what is more likely are scientifically uncontrollable and culturally suspect.

"Gundry exaggerates the extent of Matthean redaction . . . by categorizing too many words as distinctly Matthean." In Moo's opinion, I should have based my statistics concerning Matthew's insertions on the sentence rather than on the

³See pp. 56, 57, 58, 74, 120, 121 (possibly), 132, 206, 207, 209-210, 463, 487 (possibly), 495-496, 505 (probably).

⁴My *Commentary* 5.

⁵W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (2d ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1975) 138.

⁶Review of J. Jeremias, *Die Sprache des Lukasevangelium* (MeyerK Sonderband; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1980), in *CBQ* 43 (1981) 468.

paragraph as a unit of comparison. As it is, he argues, I am assuming what I claim to be proving when it comes to Matthew's creating extra sentences in a paragraph. But Moo's position carries an equal assumption—viz., anything as large as a sentence is likely to have come from tradition rather than from Matthew's creativity even though the other gospels provide no parallel. Which assumption fits the textual phenomena better? Mine, because it allows Matthew's creativity to account for the absence of non-Mattheanisms in the unique sentences, whereas we would have expected a reasonable number of them, as there are in material paralleled in Mark and Luke, if Matthew was drawing on other traditions or on his reminiscences (more on this point later). The situation obtains even though on Moo's advice we shift some occurrences from insertions to usage in unique passages, where they still do not count as non-Mattheanisms. Typically Matthean theological emphases, tight parallelism, and OT phraseology team up with the absence of non-Mattheanisms to support greater openness to Matthew's creating a whole sentence. Besides, if he can add a word of his own or create a phrase, perhaps as much as a clause—as Moo would probably admit—is it so unreasonable or daring to think of sentences, too?

The attempt to scale down the number of Matthew's insertions needs further scrutiny. Moo says that making the sentence the unit of comparison brings down the insertions of *dynamai* from 13 to 7. True, but he overlooks that the occurrence in Matt 22:46a represents an editorial comment the whole of which needs to be counted as an insertion, indeed as a parallelistic addition to the rest of the verse, which has its counterparts in Mark 12:34b; Luke 20:40. Eight insertions of *dynamai* is still a notable figure. Similarly, Moo seems to have overlooked that *ethnos* in Matt 10:18 should count as an insertion even by his standard. Perhaps the arrangement of columns in Aland's *Synopsis* caused an oversight. In addition, though 4:15; 12:18, 21 have no corresponding sentences in Mark or Luke, the OT quotations in these verses are generally acknowledged to be Matthew's insertions into traditional material. The three occurrences of *ethnos* in the OT passages appear to have helped influence him to quote them. So again the number of insertions rises higher than Moo's strictures at first seem to allow.

Of course I recognize that my statistics vary in significance from one word to another. They vary in significance not only because of differences in the sheer numbers of insertions and occurrences in unique passages, but also because the different meanings of words lead us to expect some words to be used more or less often than others. A smaller number of insertions of relatively unexpected words may be more significant than a larger number of insertions of a relatively expected word. Thus to a degree I can accord with Moo's casting doubt on the significance of Matthew's insertions of *hygiēs*—only two of them. On the other hand, this is a word we would not expect to see so often as many other words. And Moo does not tell us that both insertions of *hygiēs* come in sentences that have parallels in Mark (so that by his own strict standard they may be significant). Nor does he mention that my description "well liked by Matthew" does not apply to *hygiēs* alone, but covers a trio of words the others of which have more impressive statistics: *hōs* (23 insertions, 8 occurrences in unique passages) and *allē* (14, 4).

If Moo will show me how to use comparative percentages and standard deviations in a way that avoids treating literary texts in a mechanical way, I shall be glad to learn. But in his statement that "the number of unique occurrences of a

particular word in Matthew becomes significant . . . only if it is demonstrated that Matthew used the term with greater frequency than would be the average for a Greek author writing on a similar subject," the qualification "on a similar subject" throws a joker into the deck because the determination of a similar subject calls for many subjective judgments. To the extent the gospels are *sui generis* in their subject matter my statistics meet much of Moo's demand. I still think therefore that Matthew's insertions in Mark-Q materials give us the best handle on his diction, and the words he uses in unique passages the second-best handle, especially when linked with the absence of non-Mattheanisms and the presence of tight parallelism, OT phraseology, and typically Matthean theology—all of which additional features characterize Matthew's generally admitted redaction of Mark and Q.

After attacking my word statistics, Moo retreats: "My point is not that Gundry is always wrong in his identification of Mattheanisms or even that he is wrong most of the time. But I would contend that his statistical procedure results in a significant exaggeration of the number of Mattheanisms." How significant is the supposed exaggeration if Moo cannot prove the statistics wrong most of the time? Apparently he regards the statistics as correct most of the time. Should not the greater significance lie there even in his view? His caution that "the radically different theological concerns attributed to the first gospel by different Matthean scholars should give us all pause in relying overmuch on this criterion" can be turned around in two ways: (1) Word statistics might provide a reliable criterion by which to adjudicate the scholarly disagreements (which, however, Moo may exaggerate with his description "radically different"—I have the impression of a growing consensus on Matthew's theological concerns); (2) at least as different estimates of how much historical data Matthew had at his disposal outside Mark and traditional Q should give us equal pause in relying overmuch on a presumption of historicity in the extra material.

Since Matthew's verbal insertions help bear his message, the charge that I over-theologize his redaction naturally comes next. Moo cites without argument my theological explanation of Matthew's adding "and his brothers" to Judah's name in 1:2. But Matthew's insertions and theological use of "brother" elsewhere in his gospel bear out the explanation (see esp. 4:18-22 with my comments, which highlight other indications of more-than-physical brotherhood). Moo thinks the third person plural "they will call" in 1:23 might reflect an Aramaic indefinite such as I admit in 5:11-12. But there Matthew is simply following a tradition (see Luke 6:22-23, 26), whereas in 1:23 he goes against all known textual traditions of Isa 7:14. Therefore "they" looks like a theologizing reference to "his people," just mentioned. Moo notes my admission that "when evening came" characterizes Matthew's diction, but omits my observation that "with the possible exception of 16:2 v. l., only in the present passage [14:15] does Matthew go out of his way to insert it."⁷ Furthermore, my discussion of the surrounding pericope details a number of other indications, also noticed by others, that Matthew is tailoring his narrative of the feeding of the five thousand to his later narrative of the institution of the Lord's supper. What testable reasons do we have to think that Moo's assertion, "Surely many more [of Matthew's changes] than Gundry allows are due to

⁷Page 291 of my *Commentary*.

more prosaic factors such as variant traditions, stylistic considerations and the like," is more than a guess?

Matthew's theological concerns bring us to the question of his creativity. Mattheanisms, OT phraseology, tight parallelism, and discrepancies with Mark and Luke (especially as those discrepancies fall into tendentious patterns observable throughout Matthew) favor embellishment. This view produces a remarkably systematic explanation of the textual phenomena—one that is coherent, adequate and economical.⁸ Moreover, in material Matthew takes from Mark and Q we discover non-Mattheanisms. They escaped redaction because he could hardly have changed everything to suit his preferences without losing the brute data altogether. Hence if he drew on his own reminiscences or on other historical traditions in passages peculiar to his gospel, we should expect to find non-Mattheanisms in those passages too, for he surely would have had as much respect for the brute data of Jesus' words and deeds in his own memory and in other borrowed traditions. But excepting items derivable from the OT (which Matthew habitually raids for phraseology) and from Mark-Q material in the context (which naturally provides a springboard for embellishment), we rarely discover non-Mattheanisms in peculiar passages. We find, rather, a profusion of Mattheanisms.

Let us take Matt 13:1-9 and 6:1-4 as examples chosen by John Nolland in a forthcoming review. The first has parallels in Mark 4:1-9; Luke 8:4-8, while the second has no parallel. Concerning the first, I ask myself whether apart from the parallels Matthew is likely to have made it up out of his favorite diction and theological interests plus help from the context and OT phraseology. I have to answer "no," because (1) evidence of borrowing OT phraseology is lacking; (2) paralleled elements from the context seem to be missing; (3) the tight parallelism that characterizes Matthew's style seems also to be missing; and (4) the following expressions are non-Mattheanisms, yet they form most of the backbone of the passage: *embainō*, *speirō*, *peteinon*, *katesthiō*, *petrōdēs*, *exanatellō*, *bathos*, *kaumatizō*, *rhiza*, *xēraino*, *akantha*, *apopnigō*, *hekatōn* and *hexēkonta*. It is entirely understandable that some other expressions in the passage should be favorites of Matthew even though Mark and Luke have them. It is also understandable that the editorial seam, the introduction in vv 1-3, has a greater concentration of Mattheanisms than the rest of the passage does. But it would not be understandable that so many non-Mattheanisms could have slipped into the passage without help from the context or from the OT if Matthew was making up the whole thing. By contrast, 6:1-4 consists almost entirely of Mattheanisms (too many to list here, but listed in the *Commentary*). In addition we see tight parallelism, a dash of help at the end of v 2 from a contextual parallel, several echoes of distinctively Matthean elements in the context, and a typically Matthean genitive absolute at the beginning of v 3. Other passages peculiar to Matthew often exhibit OT phraseology as well.

Am I guilty of inconsistency, then, to propose a historicizing defense of the story concerning the guards at Jesus' tomb? No, for in Matt 27:62-66; 28:11-15 we find a number of words, most of them central to the story, that elsewhere Matthew shows no special interest in: *epaurion*, *asphalizō* (ter), *koustōdia* (ter),

⁸Cf. I. G. Barbour, *Issues in Science and Religion* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1966) 144-148.

sphragizō, *hikanos*, *stratiōtēs* and *diaphēmizō*. Furthermore the closing line in 28:15b, "And this report was spread among the Jews [and persists] to the present day," favors an historical substratum. And elsewhere, if I am correct, Matthew builds his embellishments on earlier traditions: He switches the annunciation of Jesus' birth from Mary to Joseph, changes the sermon on the plain to the sermon on the mount, spins Peter's walking on the water out of Jesus' walking on the water. We have nothing elsewhere in the NT that Matthew could have used to develop the story of the guards. With Luke but not Acts we would lack the runway from which Matthew's version of Judas Iscariot's death takes off. Therefore the story of the guards, embellished though it is by its many Mattheanisms, seems to stem from tradition unrecorded in the rest of the NT. Not so with other peculiar passages lacking a healthy dose of non-Mattheanisms.

Moo thinks such literary traits, with the theological emphases they carry, do no good in deciding the question of Matthew's creativity. In the absence of surviving eyewitnesses and nonliterary archaeological remains, however, what criteria besides literary ones does Moo suggest we appeal to in making an historical-critical judgment? What different criteria does he himself use to argue for historicizing explanations of Matthew's peculiarities? I can find only what he calls "the Church's traditional view of Matthew's intent." That view, we might note, arose before modern historical criticism with its concern for detailed historical accuracy. In his *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, Albert Schweitzer wryly notes that D. F. Strauss' *Life of Jesus* stimulated positively Roman Catholic reactions from orthodox Lutherans. Ironically, those Lutherans appealed to Church tradition rather than to Biblical data.⁹ My position differs radically from Strauss' anti-supernaturalism, but I often wonder whether the objections to my position do not boil down to Church traditional bias.

As mentioned earlier, discrepancies between Matthew and the other synoptics favor an unhistorical view at a number of points. "But they are not enough," Moo writes, "to bear the weight of the theory resting on them." Of course, the theory rests not only on them but also on other features of the text already discussed. To me the discrepancies seem too many, too serious, too plain and too tendentious to kiss away. We might consider the following—only a sample, including a few briefly alluded to above—with parenthesized page numbers referring to fuller discussions in my *Commentary*:

Matthew replaces the disciples' lack of faith with little faith, which he inserts several times in his gospel (156; cf. 350).¹⁰

The prohibition of a staff and sandals goes against Mark's allowance and falls in line with increased rigorism throughout Matthew (186-187).

Matthew makes seeing and not seeing the already existing reason for rather than the yet-to-be-attained goal of Jesus' speaking in parables. This change fits Matthew's interest in Church discipline and the distinction between true and false disciples, which replaces the contrast in Mark between disciples and nondisciples (255-256).

⁹A. Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (3d ed.; London: Black, 1954) 100.

¹⁰See my ETS paper, "A Response" 38-39, on Carson's misrepresentations of the Biblical text for the purpose of easing the discrepancy ("Gundry on Matthew: A Critical Review," *Trinity Journal* 3 [1982] 80).

To associate lack of understanding with guilt and to align Herod Antipas with Herod the Great and the Jewish leaders whose antagonism to John the Baptist and Jesus Matthew heightens throughout his gospel, the desire to kill John shifts from Herodias to Herod Antipas. Associated changes too numerous to detail here follow in the story of the Baptist's martyrdom (286-289).

Matthew often exchanges the disciples' ignorance for their understanding. At the feeding of the five thousand Mark's Jesus says, "Give them to eat." The disciples ask incredulously, "Should we go away and buy bread for five hundred denarii and give them to eat?" Jesus asks how many loaves they have. They have to go and see. In Matthew Jesus says, "Give them to eat." They immediately announce how much they have. There is no incredulous question. They do not mistakenly think Jesus means for them to go and buy food. They do not even have to go and see how much they have (292-293). Matthew's omissions do not merely take away "material that could be taken as heightening the disciples' misunderstanding." What does Moo mean by "*could* be taken"? Does "heightening" mean "emphasizing" or "exaggerating"? The ambiguous language betrays a loose argument. Moo's attempt to keep misunderstanding in Matthew's account by appealing to "only" in the disciples' phrase "only five loaves and two fish" (14:17) misses Matthew's calling attention to little faith rather than to misunderstanding. Nor does "only" negate Matthew's elimination of the disciples' mistakenly thinking Jesus might want them to go and buy food. Even though "only" did preserve a bit of misunderstanding, my point that Matthew reduces the misunderstanding to such a degree that we get an historically distorted picture of the disciples stands firm.

Matthew regularly plays up Jesus' "lonely majesty":

Thus, where Mark's Jesus sails with the disciples from the place where the four thousand were fed to the districts of Dalmanutha, Matthew's Jesus sails alone from the place where the four thousand were fed to the boundaries of Magadan (possibly, Magdala). And in Mark Jesus sails again with the disciples to the side opposite the districts of Dalmanutha, but in Matthew Jesus goes from the place where he confronted the Pharisees and Sadducees yet stays inside the boundaries of Magadan rather than go [*sic*, "going"] back across the lake. Only then do the disciples come to the other side (322-325).

Toward the start of chap. 16 Matthew cannot get away from the disciples' failure to understand the miracles of feeding. But he takes care to end the paragraph with the statement that after Jesus' explanation they did understand. The corresponding paragraph in Mark ends with the question, "Don't you understand yet?" (325-328).

According to Mark, Jesus raises a question and leaves it unanswered. Matthew amplifies the disciples' understanding by making them raise the question (which presupposes an understanding of the coming passion) and by making Jesus answer the question in order that they may have more understanding (347).

In Mark the disciples dispute about greatness, Jesus asks why, and they keep quiet. But in Matthew the disciples do not keep quiet. They do not even dispute. Rather, they themselves ask Jesus—and what they ask is an innocent question, even a knowing one based on their understanding of what Jesus has just said (359).

Concerning divorce, Mark's Jesus appeals to Genesis in order to qualify Deuteronomy. In Matthew the Pharisees appeal to Deuteronomy in order to qualify Genesis. That difference may not pose a formal contradiction, but it looks contradictory when set beside the further difference that for Moses' teaching on divorce Mark's Jesus uses the verb "commanded" and the Pharisees use the verb "permitted," whereas in Matthew we have the reverse. Next Matthew changes the address of Jesus' crucial saying on divorce from the disciples to the Pharisees. As usual, then, his Jesus stands out as the true representative of the OT (379-380).

Matthew, who usually deletes the notion of immediacy from Mark's material, inserts it twice to stress that the fig tree withered as soon as Jesus cursed it. Matthew also omits the phrase "from the roots up," which in Mark implies a gradualness of withering over the course of an intervening day, and likewise omits Peter's remark that the fig tree has withered, since in Matthew's version it withers so quickly that everybody is still looking on. Matthew does not omit indications of time in favor of a topical arrangement. He creates indications of time that go against Mark's chronology.¹¹ The resultant immediacy of the withering fits his heightening the guilt and judgment of the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem throughout his gospel, especially the later chapters (415-418).

Again in agreement with his magnifying the wickedness of the Jewish leaders, Matthew makes them say in self-condemnation what Jesus said according to Mark (428).

Matthew revises Mark's order of events to satisfy his appetite for conformity to OT passages: The Pharisees gather together *à la* Ps 2:2 after hearing that Jesus silenced the Sadducees, and then one of them questions him, whereas in Mark the questioner approaches, hears Jesus' answer to the Sadducees, and asks him a further question then and there (447).

In Mark the Sanhedrin seek true testimony, in Matthew false. In this way Matthew again increases the guilt of the Jewish leaders (541-542).

Matthew has Judas Iscariot receive his payment, not merely a promise as in Mark, at the striking of a bargain to betray Jesus. Thus Judas has the money to throw back as a warning example of the hopeless remorse false disciples feel after betraying others (cf. esp. 24:10, which is unique). Matthew intensifies the warning by making Judas' death a suicide (523, 535, 552-558 with further details that go far beyond the simplistic harmonization that "the rope broke").

Matthew changes Mark's myrrhed wine (a delicacy) to wine mixed with gall to conform as usual to the OT (in particular, to Ps 69:21 [LXX 68:21]) and to increase the indignity of Jesus' suffering (as he does elsewhere). This increase heightens the Jewish leaders' guilt (569).

"In Mark, somebody tries on behalf of all the bystanders to prolong Jesus' life with a little refreshment. . . . Matthew's expansion transforms this effort into the bystanders' frustrating the attempt by one of their number to ease Jesus' suffering. . . . Thus Matthew heightens the indignity" (574).

Close reading shows, then, the presence of many more discrepancies than those traditionally recognized. Besides old and new ones we now recognize tendentiousness where formal contradictions would be hard to prove. The old problems of harmonization, the new ones, and the merely tendentious items fall into

¹¹See D. Patte, *Early Jewish Hermeneutic in Palestine* (SBLDS 22; Missoula: Scholar's Press, 1975) 68-74, for comparable telescoping of dates and upsetting of chronological order for theological reasons in the targums.

patterns that permeate Matthew's gospel. Taken together and related to comparable Jewish literature of the NT era, these phenomena provide cumulative evidence much stronger than did the old, isolated problems of harmonization taken by themselves—evidence that Matthew often embellished and otherwise changed the historical facts. Such changes suggest not that he was making historical mistakes (and if not, the term "discrepancies" applies only under the wrong assumption that he was always trying to write historically) but that he was taking homiletic liberties with Mark and Q much as Jewish midrashists of his era took homiletic liberties with the OT. To say so is not to claim that Matthew as a whole can be explained by this similarity,¹² but it is to say that most of Matthew's distinctive features may well be explained by it.

But Moo levels criticisms that would go against even a qualified correlation of Matthew with midrash, criticisms that scholars have not reached agreement on the proper definition of midrash, that their opinion seems to be moving in the direction of restricting the term to Jewish literature later than the NT and therefore irrelevant to Matthew, that my list of comparable midrashic literature suffers from too much diversity, that Matthew differs too much from the midrashic literature in that list, that Matthew lies closer to Mark and Luke in showing historical interest, and that even first-century readers of Matthew would hardly have recognized midrash in it.

Experts certainly disagree on the proper definition of midrash. Emphasis on form and content tends to restrict the term to late, rabbinic midrashim that comment on consecutive passages of Scripture and tell illustrative stories that may have no historical referent. Emphasis on technique tends to take in Jewish literature from the late OT period onward by putting as much stress on the contemporization of Scripture as on its interpretation. The forms as well as the contents of the literature vary widely—and so obviously that the point hardly needs mention: paraphrase, quotation-plus-comment, imaginative retelling, and so on; narrative, eschatology, apocalyptic, legal discussion, and so on. But where the pieces of this literature touch the OT, we discover in them a spirit of free adaptation and embellishment. That is my sole point of comparison. It is also a sufficient point of comparison, for if a spirit of free adaptation and embellishment runs through a large body of Jewish literature extending from the late OT period to a time several centuries after the NT was written, and runs through this body of literature in spite of diversity in the forms and contents of its representatives, the chronological position of Matthew in the middle of that era favors the possibility of our discovering the spirit of free adaptation and embellishment in that Jewish Christian gospel, too—and the different form and content of Matthew put up no barriers to our doing so.

It does not matter whether "midrash" and "literary genre" are the right terms to use for the phenomenon of free adaptation and embellishment. I am inclined to think that "literary genre" is not (because it usually connotes a particular form and content) and that "midrash" is (but a midrash by any other name would look as free). Can Moo point to any piece of Jewish literature from the NT era that shows less, or at least significantly less, freedom in treating the OT than Matthew shows in treating Mark and Q? If he can, it is surely exceptional. I do not say that

¹²See my *Commentary* 599, 628, *et passim*; my ETS paper, "A Response" 21-23.

Matthew midrashed the OT but that the freedom with which he treated the dominical traditions he found in Mark and Q is analogous to the freedom with which Jewish authors of the era treated the traditions they found in the OT. In neither case did the sacredness of the traditions forestall the taking of liberties.

Degrees of freedom vary within Matthew (e.g., the account of John the Baptist's martyrdom [14:1-12] shows more redaction than the account of his public ministry does [3:1-12]) just as they do outside Matthew (e.g., *Jubilees* 4-5; *1 Enoch* 6-16, 86-88 take far more expansive liberty with Gen 6:1-4 than Josephus does in *Ant.* 1.3.1 §§ 72-74). Likewise, the proportions of distortions and creations vary within Matthew (e.g., Matthew distorts certain aspects of Jesus' walking on the water, but creates Peter's walking on the water [14:22-36 with comments]) as well as outside Matthew (e.g., Josephus or his source distorts certain aspects of Moses' flight to and arrival in Midian [*Ant.* 2.11.1-2 §§ 254-263], but creates Moses' becoming general of the Egyptian army and leading them to victory over the Ethiopians [*Ant.* 2.10.1-2 §§ 238-253]). In this example and other examples about to be cited we should note that despite claims to the contrary midrash, particularly the haggadic kind of midrash, includes the creation of events that did not occur as well as the embellishment of events that did occur. Matthew's taking less liberty here and more liberty there need not have raised people's eyebrows then, and it need not seem unlikely to us now.

My *Commentary* does not offer very many comparative data, so the time has come to bolster it with such data. Here is an ample selection starting with the OT itself. The Chronicler's making David nearly faultless looks like Matthew's painting a flattering though not faultless portrait of the disciples. For details, see the devastatingly excellent summation by R. B. Dillard in his article, "The Chronicler's Solomon."¹³ In another article Dillard also shows that the Chronicler stresses long periods of peace during Asa's reign, over against 1 Kgs 15:16 ("Now there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days"), and disarranges the chronology of Asa's reign according to 1 Kings in order to support the theology of blessing for obedience but punishment for disobedience—a theology the Chronicler imports throughout his work.¹⁴ Similarly, though the discovery of the Book of the Law triggers Josiah's reforms in the eighteenth year of his reign according to 2 Kings 22-23, the Chronicler, eager to enhance Josiah as a Davidic figure, makes him zealous for God since his youth: starting to seek God in the eighth year of his reign and instituting religious reforms in the twelfth year, long before the reforms growing out of the discovery of the Book of the Law (2 Chronicles 34).

Samuel-Kings and Chronicles do not present the only example in the OT of tendentious changes that play loose with historical facts. According to Joshua 1-12, all Israel conquered all Palestine from the Lebanon to the southern desert and ruthlessly exterminated the entire population (see esp. the strong language in 10:40-43, describing the central and southern campaigns, and 11:16-23, summarizing all the campaigns—northern, central and southern). Thus in chaps. 13

¹³R. B. Dillard, *WTJ* 43 (1981) 289-300, esp. 290-292.

¹⁴Dillard, "The Reign of Asa (2 Chronicles 14-16): An Example of the Chronicler's Theological Method," *JETS* 23 (1980) 207-218.

ff. the Israelites merely have to settle in their allotments. But Judges mentions—indeed, emphasizes—that the conquest was only partial (see esp. 1:1-2:5). Israel as a united body does not seize the land in a single series of major campaigns, as in Joshua. No, we read about a variety of campaigns conducted by solitary tribes, sometimes by a pair of tribes, with mixed success and failure. Not only did these tribes fail to exterminate all the Canaanites, but also some tribes lived peacefully with them. The large cities (with a few exceptions), the fertile valleys, the sea-board plain, and scattered enclaves stayed in Canaanite hands. It seems plain that we have in Joshua a theologically idealized picture. The silences and hints of less-than-total success in Josh 11:13, 22; 13:2-6 are hardly recognizable apart from our knowing the historical reality described in Judges and reflected elsewhere in the OT. The slight inconcinnity shows that the author of Joshua knew the facts. He probably assumed that knowledge on the part of his readers as well. In each of the two main synoptic problems of the OT, then, we see that one side says something less historical and more theological. Matthew is following canonical precedent.

In his *Antiquities* Josephus gives “a creative adaptation of the tradition, which makes that tradition relevant, comprehensible and attractive in a new environment.”¹⁵ Despite his disingenuous claim, “Nothing have we added for the sake of embellishment” (*Ant.* 4.8.4 §196; cf. 8.2.8 §§55-56; 10.10.6 §218), “it is obvious that Josephus does not abide strictly by his pronouncements and he admits as much in the preface to Bk. XIV. . . . In embellishing the scriptural text he follows the literary conventions of historiography in general.”¹⁶ His best-known embellishments consist of extensive additions to the story of Moses (*Ant.* 2.9.1-2.11.2 §§201-263; cf. Pseudo-Philo’s *Bib. Ant.* 9:1-15). H. W. Attridge details Josephus’ moralizing alterations of and additions to OT narrative outside the story of Moses, too.¹⁷ Anyone can look up the cited passages, compare them with the OT text, and see for himself what Attridge is talking about. The alterations and additions include sayings and speeches created by Josephus. We may think of Matthew’s moralizing alterations in 5:17-18 and creative addition of 5:19-20. Josephus’ attributing Abraham’s conversion to his “ready intelligence in all matters” (*Ant.* 1.7.1 §§154-155) sounds like Matthew’s attributions of understanding to the disciples where Mark attributes ignorance to them. King Saul, who looks weak and vacillating in 1 Samuel, becomes an outstanding exemplar of courage in Josephus’ portrait (*Ant.* 6.14.4 §§343-350), rather as Pontius Pilate, who looks weak and vacillating in Mark, takes the initiative for Jesus’ release, confesses him as the Christ, and in accordance with the OT law refuses to cooperate in the condemnation of Jesus in Matt 27:17, 22, 24. Similarly, but in the opposite direction, the Herod Antipas who does not want to kill John the Baptist in Mark 6:17-31 turns into a Herod who does want to kill John in Matt 14:3-12. In 1 Kgs

¹⁵H. W. Attridge, *The Interpretation of Biblical History in the Antiquitates Judaicae of Flavius Josephus* (HDR 7; Missoula: Scholar’s Press, 1976) 181.

¹⁶Attridge, *Interpretation* 58-59; cf. modern preachers who emphasize not adding to or subtracting from the Bible, but who embellish it a great deal in their sermons—and do so with acceptance, understanding, and appreciation by their audiences.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 109-144.

8:56-61 Solomon stresses obedience to God's laws. Josephus expands Solomon's remarks so as to state that the righteousness of the Israelites caused them to gain the Temple (*Ant.* 8.4.4. §121). Similarly, Matthew's expansion in 3:14-15 makes Jesus' baptism a fulfillment of all righteousness, with the result that the Spirit's coming on him becomes a reward. Comparable to Matthew's repeatedly magnifying the evil of Jewish leaders is Josephus' magnifying King Manasseh's crimes by saying he killed all the righteous and slew some of the prophets daily (*Ant.* 10.3.1 §38), whereas 2 Kgs 21:16 says merely that he shed innocent blood. Josephus makes God rather than Adam name the animals (*Ant.* 1.1.2 §35), just as Matthew makes Joseph rather than Mary name Jesus (1:21; Luke 1:31).

In 16:21-28 Matthew softens the rebuke of Peter considerably. Likewise *Jub.* 13:11-15 omits Abraham's lying about Sarai when he went to Egypt (cf. Gen 12:10-20); *Jub.* 26:13 changes Jacob's lie, "I am Esau your firstborn" (Gen 27:19), into the truthful statement, "I am your son"; and *Jub.* 48:2-4a keeps the threat to Moses' life in Exod 4:24-26 but makes the attacker Prince Mastema (Satan) rather than God, and the cause of the threat not Moses' failure to circumcize his son but Mastema's desire to protect the Egyptians from Moses. God rather than Zipporah rescues Moses from the threat. As *Jub.* 12:25-26 makes Abraham into a scribe, so Matt 8:18-22; 13:52 make scribes out of Jesus' followers (contrast Luke 9:57-62).

Pseudo-Philo's *Bib. Ant.* 6:15-18 has Abraham put in a fiery furnace, but God sends an earthquake that causes the flames to burst out of the furnace and burn up the bystanders so that Abraham comes out unscathed. Similarly, Matthew adds an earthquake to Jesus' resurrection and makes an earthquake split the tombs of the saints so that they can come out (27:51b-52, 60; 28:2). *Bib. Ant.* 32:2-4 has Isaac offer his life freely and willingly, though Genesis 22 does not so indicate. We might compare Matthew's conforming Jesus' prayer in Gethsemane to the Lord's prayer, in particular to its second petition (which is peculiar to the gospel of Matthew), in order to stress Jesus' desire that the Father's will be done. *Bib. Ant.* 8:7-8 makes Job marry Dinah after she has relations with Shechem, and makes her bear Job's children—much as Matthew makes Rahab the wife of Salmon and the mother of Boaz (1:5). According to Num 22:17 Balak asks Balaam, "Please come and curse this people for me." *Bib. Ant.* 18:7 writes that Balak no longer asked for a curse, but that Balaam should pray and offer burnt offerings for him. Similar reversals of meaning occur in Matthew's turning the saying concerning tolerance (Mark 9:40) into a saying concerning persecution (Matt 12:30), and the figure of the strong man concerning exorcism (Mark 3:27) into a figure concerning persecution (Matt 12:29).

As 1QpHab 2:10 ff. turns the Chaldeans into the Romans, so Matthew turns the shepherds into the Magi. As 4QpIsa^c gathers together different prophetic passages from the OT and omits verses and whole sections of the primary passage in Isaiah, so Matthew gathers together materials that are scattered in Mark and Q (as reflected in Luke) and omits verses and whole sections as well. As the word "fire" in 1QpHab 10:5 (commentary on Hab 2:10b) anticipates "fire" in the next lemma (Hab 2:12-13), and the phrase "and all the inhabitants of the world" in 4QpNah 1-2 ii 9 (commentary on Nah 1:4b) anticipates "the world and all who inhabit it" in the next lemma (Nah 1:5), and the word "filth" in 4QpNah 3-4 iii 1 (commentary on Nah 3:5) anticipates the next lemma (Nah 3:6-7a), so Matthew

often anticipates coming material by interjecting it in earlier material he takes from Mark and Q.¹⁸

Gen 13:17 does not tell whether Abraham obeyed God by walking through the length and breadth of the land. 1QapGen 21:15-19a creates such a journey and describes it in detail (cf. Matthew's creation of the journey to Egypt; 2:13-14). 1QapGen 19:14-19 inserts into the story of Abraham's sojourn in Egypt (Gen 12:10-20) a dream he had regarding a threat to his life (cf. Matthew's inserting the warning dreams of the Magi and Joseph [2:12-13] and of Pilate's wife concerning the threat to Jesus' life [27:19]). Matthew heightens the eschatological element in Jesus' teaching (see his addition of chap. 25 to the Olivet discourse, not to list many smaller heightenings) and ascribes the kingdom and angels to Jesus as the Son of Man and chief actor (Matt 13:41; 16:27-28; 20:21; 24:31; 26:53) much as 11QMelch eschatologizes parts of Leviticus 25 and imports Melchizedek as chief actor.

G. Brin's description of ways the author of the Temple Scroll treated OT materials¹⁹ reads like a description of ways Matthew treated materials he took from Mark and Q. The Temple Scroll is a mosaic of Biblical passages, but when the author does not find suitable verses in the OT he inserts his own compositions. He deliberately changes the Biblical materials, organizes them thematically (cf. especially the five discourses in Matthew), and usually avoids repetitions. But when he uses a piece of material more than once, he does not feel strictly bound by its text-form in the OT (cf. Matthew's free treatments of the stories he repeats concerning the two blind men and the deaf mute; 9:27-34; 12:22-23; 20:29-34). The transformation of Deuteronomy's third-person account of divine revelation into God's direct speech—with editorial insertions following suit—is comparable to Matthew's transforming Mark's editorial note of time at 14:1 into part of another passion prediction spoken by Jesus (Matt 26:2-3; cf. the transformation of statements about Abraham into statements by Abraham in 1QapGen *passim*).

Possibilities of such comparisons are so plentiful that we could go on and on. We have not even touched the imaginative expansions of the OT in books such as 1 Enoch, Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, Testament of Job, Testament of Abraham, Books of Adam and Eve, Martyrdom of Isaiah, and Assumption of Moses. But we have enough to falsify any suggestion that comparative data are not available to support my thesis. Though I have drawn some parallels of content, the main point of argument does not have to do with content so much as with freedom as such, the freedom felt and exercised to change meaning and add unhistorical material. Let it be noted again that such changes and additions appear in diverse documents.

Moo objects that mixture of history and nonhistory is "extremely difficult . . . to recognize." But this methodological scepticism works equally against a historicizing view of everything in Matthew. Especially given the differences among the synoptics, how is a reader to recognize that Matthew is thoroughly historical?

¹⁸See "Anticipation" in the Topical Index to my *Commentary*; cf. M. P. Horgan, *Pesharim: Qumran Interpretation of Biblical Books* (CBQMS 8; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1979) 245-246 n. 70.

¹⁹G. Brin, "The Bible as Reflected in the Temple Scroll," *Shnaton* 4 (1980) 182-224; cf. *JSJ* 12 (1981) 239.

The question remains even when the reader does not have another gospel for comparison. All views have to face the truism that no narrative can be transparent on historical fact, for to seem plausible is the aim of a great deal of fiction.²⁰ Since Matthew wrote in a culture much more memory-based than ours, his original readers presumably recalled well-learned dominical traditions that made his midrashic flourishes apparent, enjoyable, and powerful—just as those moderns who best know the Bible recognize homiletical flourishes the easiest, enjoy them the most (when they are done deftly), and feel their power the keenest. We should note, however, that having readers who neither knew nor venerated the OT did not deter Josephus and Philo from treating it freely any more than having non-Christians in an audience keeps many a modern preacher from treating the NT freely.

As I kept pointing out in the Theological Postscript to my *Commentary*, emphasis on the difficulty of distinguishing history from nonhistory betrays an anachronistically modern and scholarly preoccupation with historical-critical questions. It is no more important for everybody to know exactly what is historical and what is not than it is to know exactly what traditional harmonization is correct. Since old-fashioned harmonists allow uncertainties there, they have no basis on which to criticize uncertainty when it comes to midrash. They may counter that they know the Biblical texts to be historical even though certainty about the correct harmonization eludes them. But how can they be certain of historicity if they cannot be certain of the correct harmonization? If certainty of historicity rests on dogmatic grounds, we need to know why and how they are certain that midrash implies deception—and the exegetical discussion turns into a philosophical one.

"But scholars who have carefully scrutinized Mark and Luke find as much evidence of redactional activity in them as Gundry does in Matthew." Moo would be as sceptical of these other scholars' treatments of Mark and Luke, however, as he is of my treatment of Matthew, so he should not use their treatments against mine but assess each treatment individually. Besides, my *Commentary* (628) has already spoken to this point, with special reference to Papias' tradition and Luke's prologue. Moo's related argument that "it seems . . . difficult to associate Matthew's narrative more closely with that of Jubilees or the *Genesis Apocryphon* than with Mark or Luke" is like saying that Jubilees and the *Genesis Apocryphon* are more like Genesis than they are like the Testament of Job. They are in their subject matter simply because it stems from Genesis, whereas the subject matter of the Testament of Job stems from Job. Similarly in respect of subject matter Matthew is indeed more like Mark and Luke. But in style of taking liberties with traditional materials Matthew is often like Jubilees and the *Genesis Apocryphon* just as the latter are like the Testament of Job in the same respect. Given the tremendous impact of Jesus' life and ministry, which immediately sacralized Christian traditions about him, I see no reason why we cannot "legitimately compare the homiletical expansion of a centuries-old text [the OT] with Matthew's depiction of virtually contemporary events." The start of midrash in

²⁰The phraseology comes from F. Kermode, *The Genesis of Secrecy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1979) 101-123; see also J. R. Searle, "The Logical Status of Fictional Discourse," *New Literary History* 6 (1974/75) 325, 327; W. Nelson, *Fact or Fiction* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1973) *passim*.

the OT itself cuts into Moo's description "centuries-old." Jesus' recency and Matthew's having known him probably explain why midrash in Matthew is by and large less free and less inventive than that in Jewish literature of the era.

Moo's crowning argument against midrash in Matthew consists of Matthew's "conviction that the decisive revelation of God had recently been manifested in the historical actualities of Jesus' life and teaching," whereas midrash "attributes to Matthew an unconcern with history" and "assumes that Matthew was more interested in the tradition about Jesus than in the person of Jesus himself." But if the traditions are historical, his interest in them amounts to an interest in Jesus himself. And since Moo believes that Matthew used Mark and Q for the bulk of his gospel, Moo himself has Matthew more interested in traditions about Jesus than in the person of Jesus himself (if Moo's reasoning is correct). Against Moo's suggestion that "concern for historical actualities . . . kept him [Matthew] from combining history and nonhistory" I can just as easily say that concern for the ongoing theological significance of those actualities led him to embellish them for contemporary homiletical applications. He redacted Mark and Q midrashically not because he thought less of the historical Jesus but because he thought more of him. Updating and embellishing traditions had the purpose of making sure they would not fossilize but would breathe their life into a new set of circumstances.²¹

²¹The following important *errata* in my *Commentary* should be noted: Add to p. 4, l. 13: "To avoid exaggerating insertions, however, Matthew 1-2 counts as unique material despite Aland's listing some parallels"; on p. 7, l. 44, "17:13" should read "19:21"; p. 327, l. 32 should read: "16:11b-12 As indicated, the rest of v 11 and all of v 12 stand only in"; p. 420, ll. 38-39 should read: "policy of political expedience intensifies their guilt. The last clause in their reasoning according to Mark—viz., 'that he really was a prophet'—"; on p. 615, l. 40, "Asia" should read "Asia"; on p. 633, l. 2, "Matt 2:16" should read "Matt 2:6."