

EVOKING ISAIAH:
MATTHEAN SOTERIOLOGY
AND AN INTERTEXTUAL READING OF
ISAIAH 7–9 AND MATTHEW 1:23 AND 4:15–16

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Since the 1960s, redaction critics have focused considerable attention on Matthew's fulfillment citations (1:22–23; 2:5–6 [?], 15, 17–18, 23; 4:14–16; 8:17; 12:17–21; 13:35; 21:4–5; 26:54, 56 [?]; 27:9–10).¹ The 1980s and 1990s have

¹ Monographs include, e.g., K. Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968); R. H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel with Special Reference to the Messianic Hope* (NovTSup 18; Leiden: Brill, 1967); W. Rothfuchs, *Die Erfüllungszitate des Matthäus-Evangeliums: Eine biblisch-theologische Untersuchung* (BWANT 88; Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1969); R. S. McConnell, *Law and Prophecy in Matthew's Gospel: The Authority and Use of the Old Testament in the Gospel of Matthew* (Diss., University of Basel, 1969); G. Soares Prabhu, *The Formula Quotations in the Infancy Narrative of Matthew* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976); L. Cope, *Matthew: A Scribe Trained for the Kingdom of Heaven* (CBQMS 5; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1976).

Among many articles, see R. Pesch, "Der Gottessohn im matthäischen Evangelienprolog (Mt 1–2): Beobachtungen zu den Zitationsformeln der Reflexionszitate," *Bib* 48 (1967): 395–420; F. Segbroeck, "Les citations d'accomplissement dans l'Évangile selon saint Matthieu d'après trois ouvrages récents," in *L'Évangile selon Matthieu: Rédaction et théologie* (ed. M. Didier; BETL 29; Gembloux: Duculot, 1972), 107–30; M. Oberweis, "Beobachtungen zum AT-Gebrauch in der Matthäischen Kindheitsgeschichte," *NTS* 35 (1989): 131–49; G. Stanton, "Matthew's Use of the Old Testament," in *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992), 346–63.

See also the following sections of monographs and commentaries: G. Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit* (2d ed.; FRLANT 82; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966), 21–30, 49–85, esp. 55–57, 63–66; A. Sand, *Das Gesetz und die Propheten: Untersuchungen zur Theologie des Evangeliums nach Matthäus* (BU 11; Regensburg: Pustet, 1974), 151–56; U. Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989), 156–64; W. D. Davies and D. Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew* (ICC; 3 vols.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988–97), 3:573–77.

seen further work on particular citations or aspects of the issue,² but for whatever reasons, scholarly interest has perhaps declined.³ Recent narrative or audience-oriented work has made a minimal contribution.⁴

Yet literary approaches may offer some fresh perspectives. Redaction criticism's attention to the form,⁵ origin,⁶ and authorial intent of the citations⁷ has produced valuable insight about the Gospel author's work. But these foci do

² For instance, for work on Jeremiah (more extensive than the fulfillment citations attributed in 2:17–18 and 27:9–10), see M. Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew's Gospel: The Rejected Prophet Motif in Matthean Redaction* (JSNTSup 68; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993); R. Witherup, "Jeremiah and the Gospel of Matthew: An Audience-Oriented Perspective" (paper presented at the Catholic Biblical Association Meeting, Seattle, 1997); for the passion narrative, see D. Senior, "The Lure of the Formula Quotations: Re-assessing Matthew's Use of the Old Testament with the Passion Narrative as a Test Case," in *The Scriptures in the Gospels* (ed. C. M. Tuckett; BETL 131; Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1997), 89–115.

³ Note the absence of any contribution focused explicitly on the fulfillment texts from two excellent, recent English-language collections of twenty-two essays on Matthew spanning the mid-1980s to early 1990s: D. L. Balch, *Social History of the Matthean Community: Cross-Disciplinary Approaches* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991); D. R. Bauer and Mark Allan Powell, eds., *Treasures New and Old: Recent Contributions to Matthean Studies* (SBLSymS 1; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1996). This collection contains twelve studies from the Matthew Group of the Society of Biblical Literature.

⁴ J. D. Kingsbury, *Matthew As Story* (2d ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988): "narrative commentary" (p. 33); D. B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel* (JSNTSup 42; Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990): "direct commentary" (p. 179); J. C. Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web: Over, and Over, and Over Again* (JSNTSup 91; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994): "explicit commentary" (pp. 52–53, 59–61); W. Carter (*Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996], 136) follows Howell and includes a brief reference in a discussion of "Maintaining God's Point of View."

⁵ There seems to be significant support for the position that the text forms are mixed, deriving from various Greek (LXX and non-LXX), Aramaic, and Hebrew (MT) traditions. Claims of targumic influence (A. Baumstark, "Die Zitate des Mt.-Evangeliums aus dem Zwölfprophetenbuch," *Bib* 37 [1956]: 296–313) have generally not convinced, except in support of the notion that "Matthew was his own targumist" (Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, 172–74; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:575).

⁶ Stendahl's argument (*School of St. Matthew*) of a school using pesher interpretation has generally not persuaded. Nor has Strecker's argument for collections of testimonia (*Der Weg*, 49–51, 65–66, 82–85). Luz (*Matthew* 1–7, 159–61) has revived G. D. Kilpatrick's thesis (*The Origins of the Gospel According to St. Matthew* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1946], 56–58) of oral tradition. But if the author is using traditional material, there would be no need to draw attention to the citation. And greater conformity with the LXX would be likely if the author were not conforming material to his narrative. These factors suggest that the author is responsible for the citations he did not receive from Mark or Q. Emphasis on the author's role is evident, to varying degrees, for instance, in Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament* (who sees considerable continuity with Jesus); Rothfuchs, *Die Erfüllungszitate des Matthäus-Evangeliums*; McConnell, *Law and Prophecy*; R. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah* (new updated ed.; New York: Doubleday, 1993), 101–4; and Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:575–77.

⁷ While some have emphasized an apologetic intent, especially in relation to the synagogue (B. Lindars, *New Testament Apologetic: The Doctrinal Significance of the Old Testament Quota-*

not circumscribe all possible investigation of the citations. They do not, for example, consider the role of an audience—authorial⁸ or actual⁹—in making meaning.

Attention to the audience's role was anticipated in the 1980s in two articles that discussed the citations in relation to "the problem of communication." Lars Hartman suggested that an author quotes others to invoke their authority, to utilize their preferable words, or to point beyond the citation to a larger "bundle of ideas." Communication between author and audience occurs as both share a common tradition or cultural context in which the citation's authority and content are recognized.¹⁰ R. France develops Hartman's notion of "different levels of understanding" in arguing that the citations can be understood at different levels of complexity by different audiences.¹¹

tions [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1961]), most see a didactic intent to sustain the christological claims of followers (Brown, *Birth*, 96–99; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:576–77).

⁸ I understand the "authorial audience" to be the receptor or audience which the author has "in mind" in writing the text. It is the author's image of the audience being addressed, which approximates, though is not the same as, the actual audience. It is a "contextualized implied reader" not so much present in the text as presupposed by the text and reconstructed in part by textual features and by an examination of the interrelation between the text and the context in which the work was produced (contra the misunderstandings of P. Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven* [WUNT 2.101; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1998], 56–58). This audience is understood to have the necessary linguistic competence and sociocultural knowledge to actualize the text (in diverse ways). This audience is my creation, constructed out of various historical, literary, and Gospel data. But while it is an interpretive strategy, it embraces and overlaps a real audience. It is useful in that, when elaborated (not so here because of space; see Carter and Heil below), it identifies specific factors and contexts that contribute to an interpretation. This audience bears some relation to an actual first-century audience, as well as to its contemporary constructor. The use of the term "audience" rather than "reader" indicates that the gospel was probably encountered in being read aloud; so Stanton, *Gospel for a New People*, 73–76. For the notion of authorial audience, see P. J. Rabinowitz, "Whirl without End: Audience-Oriented Criticism," in *Contemporary Literary Theory* (ed. G. D. Atkins and L. Morrow; Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1989), 81–100, esp. 85; idem, *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987), 15–46; idem, "Truth in Fiction: A Reexamination of Audiences," *Critical Inquiry* 4 (1977): 121–42; W. Carter and J. P. Heil, *Matthew's Parables: Audience-Oriented Perspectives* (CBQMS 30; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association, 1998), 9–17.

⁹ F. F. Segovia, "And they began to speak in other tongues": Competing Modes of Discourse in Contemporary Biblical Criticism," in *Reading from This Place*, vol. 1, *Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in the United States* (ed. F. F. Segovia and M. A. Tolbert; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994), 1–32; idem, "Cultural Studies and Contemporary Biblical Criticism: Ideological Criticism as Mode of Discourse," in *Reading from This Place*, ed. Segovia and Tolbert, 2:1–17.

¹⁰ L. Hartman, "Scriptural Exegesis in the Gospel of St. Matthew and the Problem of Communication," in *L'Évangile*, ed. Didier, 131–52.

¹¹ R. France, "The Formula-Quotations of Matthew 2 and the Problem of Communication," *NTS* 27 (1981): 233–51. On a communication model, see M. A. Powell, "What Is 'Literary' about Literary Aspects?" in *Society of Biblical Literature 1992 Seminar Papers* (ed. E. H. Lovering Jr.; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 40–48; Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 34–44.

Hartman's attention to a larger "bundle of ideas" or tradition that a citation evokes counters the pervasive atomistic treatment of the citations. This latter approach detaches them from any scriptural context and ignores the audience's knowledge of a larger common tradition whether at a general thematic level or a more detailed narrative level. J. M. Foley's work in orally derived and performed narratives, particularly his discussion of "traditional referentiality," supports and develops Hartman's claim.¹² Foley argues that in an oral culture such as that for which the Gospel is written to be heard, spoken texts frequently are metonymic, employing brief references—whether phraseology, themes, character traits, events, or narrative structures—that have extratextual connotations.¹³ The part summons the whole; the citation echoes a much larger tradition.

Foley utilizes *Rezeptionsästhetik* to articulate the audience's active role in constructing meaning.¹⁴ An audience elaborates the gaps or indeterminacies of a text to build a consistent understanding not by supplying whatever content it likes but by utilizing the tradition it shares with the author. The common traditions provide the audience with a frame of reference, the "perceptual grid," for its interpretive work. Precisely this phenomenon is evident through the Gospel's opening genealogy (Matt 1:1–17). The list of names (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc.) requires the audience's elaborative work by evoking its knowledge of much more extensive and common traditions.

The dominant redaction focus on the textual form that most influenced a cited text may not, then, be the most helpful approach in determining a citation's meanings and functions. Rather, focus on the role of an audience's knowledge of the larger traditions or narratives evoked by the cited text may be more productive.¹⁵ This focus raises further questions about the meaning-making process. How does intertextual knowledge relate to that derived from the immediate context of the verse's Matthean placement, or from the audience's own sociohistorical situation? How does an audience use citations in formulating understandings of and questions about the ongoing narrative?

¹² J. M. Foley, *Immanent Art: From Structure to Meaning in Traditional Oral Epic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), esp. 1–60. Foley works especially with Homer and with Serbo-Croatian epic narratives. It should be noted that studies of orality in relation to the Gospels have often focused on Mark.

¹³ See the discussion in D. Allison, *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 1–23, esp. 19–20. My focus, though, concerns what an audience does rather than what the elusive author intends.

¹⁴ Foley, *Immanent Art*, 38–60; W. Iser, *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1974); H. R. Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (Theory and History of Literature 2; Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); Rabinowitz, "Whirl without End"; idem, *Before Reading*.

¹⁵ For a somewhat similar approach, see W. Weren, "Jesus' Entry into Jerusalem: Mt 21:1–17 in the Light of the Hebrew Bible and the Septuagint," in *Scriptures in the Gospels*, ed. Tuckett, 117–41.

A full-length study could engage these and other questions about the audience's work with each of Matthew's citations. This discussion will consider the citations from Isa 7:14 and 8:23–9:1 which appear in the Gospel's opening section (Matt 1:1–4:16)¹⁶ in 1:23 and 4:15–16.¹⁷ Specifically, following Foley's approach, what happens if an audience utilizes not just the isolated verses but the evoked common tradition, namely, the larger context of Isa 7–9? Is it significant that Isa 7–9 is cited twice in the Gospel's opening section? Does Isaiah have some relevance other than being the only scroll available in the Matthean library¹⁸ or being the (rejected) proclaimer of God's salvation to Israel and to Gentiles?¹⁹ And what contribution does this intertext make to the presentation of Jesus' mission and ministry in the Gospel? That is, what happens if, in interpreting these two Isaiah citations, we attend to the audience-oriented concerns of progressive and retrospective movement in a text, of making explicit the knowledge or experience assumed of an audience, and of intertextuality or the connections between these texts which an audience creates?²⁰

I will argue that the double citation from Isaiah in the Gospel's opening section contributes to a primacy effect²¹ that influences the hearing of the whole Gospel. The Isaiah texts evoke a situation of imperial threat, thereby

¹⁶ It is widely recognized that 4:17 introduces a major development; E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus* (KEK; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1958); E. Krentz, "The Extent of Matthew's Prologue," *JBL* 83 (1964): 409–14; J. D. Kingsbury, *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 7–17; A. Sand, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (RNT; Regensburg: Pustet, 1986), 83; R. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 61; J. Gnlika, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (HTKNT; Freiburg: Herder, 1986), 1:99–100; W. Carter, "Kernels and Narrative Blocks: The Structure of Matthew's Gospel," *CBQ* 54 (1992): 463–81. I omit the Isaiah citation from 3:3 because it is used in relation to John, is not a fulfillment citation, and does not come from Isa 7–9. It should be noted, though, that by citing Isa 40:3 it evokes another imperial context, that of Babylonian control.

¹⁷ Isaiah is named six times (3:3; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14; 15:7). Four texts relate to Assyrian imperialism (1:23; 4:14; 13:14; 15:7–9) and three to Babylonian imperialism (3:3; 8:17; 12:17). I set aside the possible use of Isa 4:2 in Matt 2:23, and of Isa 62:11 in Matt 21:5.

¹⁸ Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 157–58, disputed by Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 3:576.

¹⁹ Rothfuchs, *Die Erfüllungszitate*, 40–44, 103; van Segbroeck, "Les citations," 126–28; Sand, *Das Gesetz*, 156; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:292–93.

²⁰ In addition to Rabinowitz cited above, see W. Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978); and *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (ed. S. Suleiman and I. Crossan; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980); *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings: Essays in Honor of Bas van Iersel* (ed. S. Draisma; Kampen: Kok, 1989); R. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1989), 14–19; *Reading between Texts: Intertextuality and the Hebrew Bible* (ed. D. N. Fewell; Literary Currents in Biblical Interpretation; Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992).

²¹ M. Perry, "Literary Dynamics: How the Order of a Text Creates Its Meaning," *Poetics Today* 1 (1979–80): 35–64, 311–64, esp. 53–58.

establishing an analogy with the situation of the Gospel's authorial audience also living under imperial power, that of Rome, and also promised God's salvation (1:21). The Isaiah texts provide perspective on the imperial situation and give content to God's salvific promise. But they also raise the questions of how people will respond, and how God will deliver on the promise of salvation through Jesus.

I

In Matt 1:22–23 an audience encounters the first fulfillment citation, from Isa 7:14. An audience can use the citation in several ways. It confirms and expands the understanding built up through vv. 18–21 that Jesus' origin (γένεσις, 1:18) is located in the purposes of God.²² The citation also gives the child a new name, which helps the audience clarify Jesus' significance. It knows from its cultural context that conception from the interaction of a human and the divine establishes the importance of a child.²³ It knows from 1:1, 16, 17, 18 that Jesus is the Christ, anointed by God to perform a special role on God's behalf.²⁴ The new name "Immanuel," like "Jesus" in 1:21, denotes a life's work. The child is anointed to "save his people from their sins" and to manifest "God with us."²⁵

Most of this is readily available to any audience. But Foley's emphasis on the metonymic function of oral-derived texts prompts elaboration of Isaiah. Several markers specifically invite the audience to pursue the citation's Isaianic context,²⁶ though much contemporary Matthean scholarship neglects this intertextuality. It is content to note briefly the woman's sexual experience and her and the child's possible identity, or to quickly summarize Ahaz's situation, without integrating the material into an interpretation.²⁷ Audience-oriented

²² The term "virgin" restates the information that Joseph and Mary have not yet "come together" (1:18) either for sexual intercourse or residence. It emphasizes the double reference to God's work through the spirit in conceiving the child (ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου, 1:18, 20). The audience can judge the Gospel's narrator to be reliable, as is God who acts consistently to accomplish God's will revealed previously in the scriptures. It can judge Joseph's proposed action of a quiet divorce (1:19) to be inappropriate despite its conformity with cultural practices (cf. Deut 24:1).

²³ See, e.g., C. Talbert, "Prophecies of Future Greatness: The Contribution of Greco-Roman Biographies to an Understanding of Luke 1:5–4:15," in *The Divine Helmsman* (ed. J. L. Crenshaw and S. Sandmel; New York: Ktav, 1980), 129–41.

²⁴ Compare Ps 2:2 (the king); Lev 4:3, 5, 16 (a priest); 1 Kgs 19:16 (Elisha the prophet); Isa 44:28; 45:1 (Cyrus the Persian).

²⁵ Gnllka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 1:21.

²⁶ The focus in this discussion on Isa 7–9 does not preclude an audience evoking other intertexts (cf. Deut 20:1). See W. C. van Unnik, "'Dominus Vobiscum': The Background of a Liturgical Formula," in *New Testament Essays* (ed. A. J. B. Higgins; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1959), 270–305.

²⁷ E.g., P. Bonnard, *L'Évangile selon Saint Matthieu* (CNT 1; Geneva: Labor et Fides, 1963, 1982), 21–22; W. Grundmann, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (THKNT 1; Berlin: Evangelische

work, though, seeks to make explicit the knowledge or experience that an audience supplies, including intertextual links.

The citation is introduced in 1:22 as “what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet.” The lack of the prophet’s name is usually explained in terms of emphasis on the citation’s divine origin or christological content,²⁸ but one wonders if the presence of one name could be so distracting. The phrase “through the prophet” (διὰ τοῦ προφήτου) indicates that the prophet’s identity and agency do matter. It specifies a particular prophet and set of circumstances in which his word was spoken. That the prophet’s name is absent suggests, rather, an audience very familiar with this part of the common tradition.²⁹

Moreover, an audience has learned from the genealogy (1:1–17) that the Gospel’s hearers are to supply information from the biblical tradition to expand cryptic textual references and to elaborate names. Sometimes the elaboration is directed or restricted. The audience uses the occasional qualifiers—“and his brothers”; “by Tamar/Rahab/Ruth”; “David the king”; “by the wife of Uriah”; “at the time of the deportation to Babylon”—to focus on specific events within a larger story of the person’s interactions with God. So by 1:22–23 an audience knows that the reference to “the prophet” requires elaboration, while citing a particular verse (Isa 7:14) restricts the elaboration to the circumstances in which the verse appears. The audience is to bring into play Isa 7–8 as it interprets 1:22–23. What happens when it does?³⁰

Matthew 1:23 cites Isa 7:14 (essentially following the LXX). The prophet addresses King Ahaz of Judah (cf. 1:9) under threat from imperial aggression (Isa 7:1–2; cf. 2 Kgs 16).³¹ The greater northern powers of Syria under King

Verlagsanstalt, 1968), 70; Sand, *Das Gesetz*, 151–56; Gnlika, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 1:20–21; D. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (SP 1; Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 35–36, 39; U. Luck, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (ZBK; Zurich: Theologischer Verlag, 1993), 21–23; H. Frankemölle, *Matthäus: Kommentar 1* (Düsseldorf: Patmos, 1994), 148–59, 191–95. M.-J. Lagrange sees no reference to Isaiah’s time in Isa 7:14 (*Évangile selon Saint Matthieu* [Paris: Lecoffre, 1948], 16).

²⁸ Van Unnik, “Dominus Vobiscum,” 287; Pesch, “Gottessohn,” 403–11; Gundry, *Matthew*, 24; Sand, *Das Gesetz*, 153–56.

²⁹ Rothfuchs’s claim (*Die Erfüllungszitate*, 40–44) that Matthew omits the name “Isaiah” in 1:22 because he wishes to associate Isaiah’s name with Jesus’ saving work in Israel (so 4:14; 8:17) makes little sense, given that 1:22 follows the commission of 1:21.

³⁰ I have justified elaborating Isa 7–9 on the basis of the metonymic function of 1:23, the phrase “through the prophet,” and by the audience’s experience of 1:1–17. Alternately, or in addition, one could “justify” doing so by invoking the notion of play, “what happens if . . .”

³¹ For some contemporary scholarly readings of the difficult Isa 7–9, see A. H. Bartelt, *The Book Around Immanuel: Style and Structure in Isaiah 2–12* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 114–31; H. Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1991), 279–396; S. A. Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz, and the Syro-Ephraimite Crisis* (SBLDS 123; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990); R. E. Clements, *Isaiah 1–39* (NCBC; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 78–106; O. Kaiser, *Isaiah 1–12: A Commentary* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 86–127.

Rezin and Israel under King Pekah, themselves vulnerable to Assyria, threaten to take Jerusalem and overthrow the king (Isa 7:6). Ahaz and his people shake with fear (Isa 7:1–2). But God instructs Isaiah to assure Ahaz that the Syro-Ephraimite imperialism is doomed (Isa 7:3–9).

A second encounter follows (Isa 7:10–25). Through Isaiah, God invites Ahaz to request a sign to confirm the word, but he declines. Isaiah's harsh rebuke in 7:13 suggests that Ahaz expresses not pious reluctance to test God (Deut 6:16; cf. Matt 4:6–7) but fear and distrust. Ahaz does not accept Isaiah's word, just as Isaiah had been warned in his call (6:9–13). God, though, will provide Ahaz a sign anyway, the conception of a child to be named Immanuel (Isa 7:14). The child graciously ensures that the Davidic line will continue,³² and that the Syro-Ephraimite imperialism will fail. The child signifies God's presence with the people ("will call him Immanuel") and God's resistance to imperial aspirations. And God promises that during the baby's life, the land of the two imperial powers Syria and Israel will be laid waste (Isa 7:16).

So far, the news seems good for Judah and Ahaz, but then comes a dramatic turn. Isaiah declares that God's presence with Judah will mean not only salvation but destruction. God will bring Assyria to punish Judah for its unbelief (7:17–25). The sign that should express grace ("The Lord is with you") functions to express judgment ("The Lord is against you").

Its ambivalence matches that of another child, Isaiah's son Shearjashub, whose name means "A remnant shall return." His presence at the first meeting with Ahaz seemed to underline God's salvation (Isa 7:3). But in the context of Assyria's promised role, a reference to a remnant indicates punishment and destruction. Yet it also anticipates a future, offering the hope of new life since "a remnant shall return."

The emphasis on Immanuel in Matt 1:23 suggests that the audience continue into Isa 8, where the term appears two more times (8:8, 10). Chapter 8 essentially parallels ch. 7. In 8:1–4 the birth of another child, a son for the prophet called Maher-shalal-hash-baz, which means "Spoil speeds, prey hastes," unambiguously attests the sure demise of Syria and Israel. A second encounter between God and Isaiah in 8:5–15 concerns God sending Assyria to punish unbelieving Judah.

I have elaborated Isa 7–8 on a narrative level. At a thematic level, the elaboration is more general. The cited verse (Isa 7:14) evokes themes of resistance and the refusal to trust God's saving work, of imperial power as a means of divine punishment, and of God saving the people from imperial power. Foley's

³² The identity of child and mother has been extensively debated. See Irvine, *Isaiah, Ahaz*, 159–71; his view, represented here, is that the woman is "a wife of Ahaz, whose son (perhaps Hezekiah) would represent the future of the Davidic dynasty" (p. 169; also Wildberger, *Isaiah 1–12*, 306–14). Clements identifies the child as the prophet's son (*Isaiah 1–39*, 85–88).

metonymic approach recognizes that these themes are not unique to Isa 7–9 but are part of a larger pattern of God’s ways of working. If space permitted, similar themes of imperial power as a means of punishment for disobedience and of God’s salvation from it could be elaborated in relation to the exodus,³³ to prophetic views of Babylon’s roles (Jeremiah, Deutero-Isaiah), to the Deuteronomistic view of exile (cf. Deut 28:15–68; 29:24–29; 1 Kgs 8:46–53; 2 Kgs 21:10–16), to 2 Maccabees’ perception of Antiochus Epiphanes as punisher of the people and as the one from whom God will liberate the people (2 Macc 5:17–20; 6:12–17; 7:30–42), and to Pompey’s violation of Jerusalem and the temple (*Pss. Sol.* 2). Because of space, our focus here will be limited to Isa 7–9.

How, then, does evoking and elaborating the Isaianic context help the Gospel’s audience? The presence of three children, whose names interpret the larger action, focuses attention on the child Jesus’ name and mission as Immanuel. His name is double-edged, promising salvation from imperial power but delivering judgment if God’s action is rejected. This naming is part of the primacy effect, creating an expectation at the Gospel’s outset that he will effect both salvation and judgment. The audience must continue on to find out who is saved and who is judged, who welcomes God’s action and who resists it, and how it happens.

Evoking Isaiah also elucidates the situation in which Jesus performs his saving/judging work (cf. 1:21). To elaborate Isa 7–8 is to evoke a context of pronounced imperial threat, from the Syro-Ephraimite alliance and from Assyria. While this context is sometimes noticed, scholars often spiritualize and dismiss it.³⁴ But this situation of imperial threat is very relevant to the sociohistorical situation of the Matthean audience. Perhaps located in Antioch in Syria,³⁵ the administrative capital of the Roman province of Syria, this small marginal community knows daily the political, socioeconomic, legal, religious, and cultural reality of Roman imperial power and presence.³⁶

For this audience in its somewhat analogous situation, the Isa 7–8 passage provides three perspectives on imperial power. First, God opposes it. Syria and Israel will be rebuffed (Isa 7:1–9, 16; 8:1–4). Second, God uses it to punish God’s sinful people (Assyria, 7:17–25; 8:5–15). Third, the punishment does not

³³ Scholars have often noted Mosaic-exodus echoes in these opening chapters. See Allison, *New Moses*.

³⁴ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:210.

³⁵ The debate is well rehearsed (see the contributions in Balch, *Social History*). Certainty is not possible, but Antioch is at least a viable location. If it could somehow be established that Galilee was the location of the Gospel’s audience, the proposed reading would stand. See n. 8 above for the relation of the authorial audience to the Gospel’s actual first-century audience.

³⁶ K. Wengst, *PAX ROMANA and the Peace of Jesus Christ* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 1–54; G. Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), 163–210.

last forever. While imperial power accomplishes God's purposes, it does not control its own destiny. It too falls under judgment. There is salvation for God's people; "A remnant shall return." The three perspectives exist in tension. While imperial powers accomplish God's purposes, God ultimately opposes them. For the Gospel's audience living under Rome's power, the Isaiah material provides perspectives on its present and future. Its present under Roman power is punishment for sin as Jerusalem's fall in 70 C.E. exhibited,³⁷ but there is hope for its future. God will save God's people from Roman imperial control.³⁸ How they are to live in the empire in the present is not addressed in this passage (see 5:38–42; 17:24–27), but God's future plans do not suggest positive relations with the empire in the meantime.³⁹

These claims of God's control of history and of the nations collide with a cultural value with which the audience is familiar, but which has been neglected by contemporary Matthean scholarship focused on Matthew's relation to a synagogue. Roman imperial "theology,"⁴⁰ represented in Antioch by the military personnel of three or four legions, *Judaea capta* coins, statues, buildings, administrative officials, temples, festivals, displays of booty seized from the conquered Jerusalem temple, and a tax on Jews, asserts that Rome and the Flavians rule by Jupiter's will and accomplish the will of the gods (Stadius, *Silv* 4.3.128–40; 5.1.37–39; Silius Italicus, *Punica* 3.570–630).⁴¹ The defeat of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 seems to legitimate such claims (see Tacitus, *Hist.* 5.13, "the gods are departing"). How, post-70, is God's presence known after the temple and land have been devastated by Rome? The text of Isa 7:14, forged in one situation threatened by imperial power, speaks to another time which knows the same danger. It provides assurance that, despite all appearances to the contrary, the empire does not hold sway, the empire is not

³⁷ This perspective of punishment is explicit in 21:41; 22:6–7 concerning the fall of Jerusalem, and in 23:37–39 with its pattern of sin, exile/punishment, and restoration (Stanton, *Gospel for a New People*, 247–55). 2 *Baruch* (1:1–4; 13:2–10), 4 *Ezra* (unjustly, 2:7; 3:2, 28–36; 4:23; 5:28–30; 6:18–19; 10:48), *Apocalypse of Abraham* (25–27, 28–32), and Josephus (*J.W.* 6 §§99–110) also view the fall of Jerusalem as punishment, but not as the removal of Israel from the status of being God's people (so also Isa 7–9 and Matthew). Knowles, *Jeremiah*, 265–311.

³⁸ For comparable analyses of God's control and victory over Rome, see 4 *Ezra* 11:1–12:30, 31–35; 2 *Bar.* 13:4–12; 40:1–4; 72:2–6; *Apoc. Ab.* 31–32.

³⁹ W. Wink, "Beyond Just War and Pacifism: Jesus' Nonviolent Way," *RevExp* 89 (1992): 197–214; W. Carter, "Paying the Tax to Rome as Subversive Praxis: Matt 17:24–27," *JSNT* 76 (1999): 3–31.

⁴⁰ E.g., J. R. Fears, "The Cult of Jupiter and Roman Imperial Ideology," *ANRW* 2.17.1:3–141; D. N. Schowalter, *The Emperor and the Gods: Images from the Time of Trajan* (HDR 28; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993).

⁴¹ For support and bibliography, see the series of articles by W. Carter, "Toward an Imperial-Critical Reading of Matthew's Gospel," *Society of Biblical Literature 1998 Seminar Papers* (SBLSP 37; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), 1:296–324; idem, "Contested Claims: Roman Imperial Theology and Matthew's Gospel," *BTB* 29 (1999): 1–10; idem, "Paying the Tax to Rome."

sovereign, and God is not powerless. In these circumstances God's presence and saving purposes made known through God's designated agent, Jesus, are to be embraced.

As with Isaiah's Immanuel, the child Jesus is a sign of resistance to imperial power. The name Immanuel contests imperial claims that Domitian is a *deus praesens* (Stadius, *Silv.* 5.2.170) or θεός ἐπιφανής.⁴² It confirms Jesus as the one who manifests God's will and blessings on earth. Through him God's purposes and reign will prevail.

Evoking Isaiah, then, destabilizes the status quo. To evoke a prophet is dangerous in an imperial context, since prophets point to different realities.⁴³ They contest the dominant reality, locating imperial claimants in the much larger context of God's purposes, reframing the present and future. They keep alive visions of a different order which challenge the claims made by powers such as Syria-Israel, Assyria, and Rome. Just as the eighth-century prophet countered and relativized imperialist claims, so does his word for the Matthean audience. Matthew 2 will narrate the thwarting of the murderous plans of Herod, vassal king of the Romans and, like Ahaz, resistant to God's purposes. This story, along with its evoking of the Moses–Pharaoh struggle, continues to affirm God's control of the nations.⁴⁴

Pursuing the intertextual link with Isa 7–9 underlines this context of imperial threat, offers three perspectives on it, and asserts God's ultimately salvific intentions. In the conception of Jesus, God again promises salvation (1:21). In a context of Roman imperial power, how will Jesus save his people from their sins?

II

Isaiah 7–9 is evoked for a second time in Matt 4:14–16 with a citation from Isa 8:23–9:1. As with 1:22–23, Matthean scholars have generally not given the Isaian intertext any power.⁴⁵

⁴² K. Scott cites a letter from the proconsul of Achaëa to the people of Delphi that refers to Domitian as τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ ἐπιφανεστάτου Αὐτοκράτορος (*The Imperial Cult under the Flavians* [Stuttgart/Berlin: Kohlhammer, 1936], 107). On ἐπιφάνεια, see D. Cuss, *Imperial Cult and Honorary Terms in the New Testament* (Paradosis 23; Fribourg: University Press, 1974), 134–44.

⁴³ For the role of prophecy in resistance and attempts to control it, see R. MacMullen, *Enemies of the Roman Order: Treason, Unrest, and Alienation in the Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1966), 142–62; see also D. Potter, *Prophets and Emperors: Human and Divine Authority from Augustus to Theodosius* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 171–82.

⁴⁴ Allison, *New Moses*, 140–65; D. J. Weaver, "Power and Powerlessness: Matthew's Use of Irony in the Portrayal of Political Leaders," in *SBL 1992 Seminar Papers* (ed. E. H. Lovering Jr.; SBLSP 31; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 454–66, esp. 456–60.

⁴⁵ E.g., Lagrange, *Évangile*, 67–69; Bonnard, *L'Évangile selon Saint Matthieu*, 47–48; Grundmann, *Das Evangelium*, 105–6; Sand, *Das Evangelium*, 75–76; Luck, *Das Evangelium*, 43–44.

The section 4:12–16 closes the first narrative block and prepares for the beginning of Jesus' public ministry at 4:17.⁴⁶ After his escape from the Roman vassal and tyrant Herod in ch. 2, after his baptism and then temptation by the one who claims control of all the kingdoms of the earth (4:8), Jesus hears of the imprisonment of the prophet John the Baptist by another Roman vassal, Herod Antipas, and withdraws⁴⁷ to settle in Capernaum in Roman-controlled Galilee (4:12–13).⁴⁸ Jesus' withdrawal does not mean a retreat to safety since Herod Antipas rules Galilee (see 14:1–12). His move, rather, challenges the Roman vassal's power by asserting there a different reign, God's empire (see 4:17).

The naming of Capernaum utilizes the audience's knowledge.⁴⁹ It was a small agricultural and fishing village (population around one thousand) on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Significantly, Jesus does not move to the larger cities, Tiberias (built to honor and named after the emperor Tiberias) or Sepphoris, the centers of imperial political, economic, social, and cultural power in Galilee, which maintain the elite's interests and control over the surrounding villages through taxation and military force. As a Jew in Roman-dominated territory, Jesus is located among the marginal, with the rural peasants not the urban wealthy, with the ruled not the rulers, with the powerless and exploited not the powerful.⁵⁰ As is typical of the Gospel, the challenge to the imperial center comes from apparently inconsequential places like Capernaum (so Jerusalem and Bethlehem in 2:1–11⁵¹).

Several geographical qualifiers expand the reference to Capernaum. It is

⁴⁶ See n. 16 above.

⁴⁷ As D. Good notes ("The Verb ΑΝΑΧΩΡΕΩ in Matthew's Gospel," *NovT* 32 [1990]: 1–12), 4:12–17 is an example of a threefold pattern—hostility/withdrawal/prophetic fulfillment. This pattern appears four times (2:14, 22; 4:12–16; 12:15–21), not seven as Good claims (p. 1). It does not fit 2:12–13; 14:13; 15:21; 27:5. See the nuanced discussion by Soares Prabhu, *Formula Quotations*, 123–26.

⁴⁸ Note that the magi withdraw from Herod's threatening power in 2:12–15, as does Joseph from Archelaus in 2:22–23. Moses withdraws from Pharaoh (Exod 2:15), and Judas Maccabeus from Apollonius (commander of Antiochus Epiphanes [2 Macc 5:27]).

⁴⁹ Or perhaps its nonknowledge. Maybe it has never heard of Capernaum, an inconsequential place. But that's the point.

⁵⁰ On Galilee under Roman rule, see R. Horsley, *Archaeology, History, and Society in Galilee: The Social Context of Jesus and the Rabbis* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996); see pp. 112–18 on Capernaum. See also R. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1995); S. Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus, and The Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); see pp. 70–90 for Galilee in Matthew, and 135–218 for social, political, economic, and religious analysis of Galilee. See also S. Freyne, *Galilee, from Alexander the Great to Hadrian, 323 B.C.E. to 135 C.E.: A Study of Second Temple Judaism* (Studies in Judaism and Christianity in Antiquity 5; Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier; Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1980).

⁵¹ A.-J. Levine, *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Salvation History* (Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 14; Lewiston: Mellen, 1988), 99–102.

“by the sea, in the territory of Zebulun and Naphtali” (4:13). The audience knows the importance of geographical markers from previous fulfillment citations: Bethlehem in 2:5–6, Egypt in 2:15, Nazareth in 2:23. It is no surprise, then, that a fulfillment citation should follow Jesus’ move to Capernaum. The audience learns that this move fulfills “what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet” (4:14). Utilizing both “prophet” and “Isaiah,” as well as the citation’s metonymic function, the audience again contemplates what Isaiah the prophet said.

But Isa 7–9 does not mention Capernaum, so that Jesus’ move to Capernaum in and of itself cannot be the focus of the citation. More is to be observed than that Jesus’ living or ministering in the geographical environs of Capernaum was God’s will.⁵² Yet geography matters. Unusual is the inclusion of Zebulun, when Capernaum is in Naphtali. The double location Zebulun and Naphtali in 4:13 prepares for the citation of Isaiah in 4:15,⁵³ but what is the significance of Naphtali *and* Zebulun? The Matthean form of the Isaiah citation emphasizes this double location. The initial placement of “land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali” results from omitting “in the former time he brought into contempt” (Isa 8:23/9:1a). In addition to this prominent placement, the repetition from 4:13 emphasizes these locations.

Their importance is elaborated by the Isa 7–9 narrative. The citation in Matt 4:15–16 from Isa 8:23/9:1–2, which does not exactly follow any textual tradition,⁵⁴ depicts the end of God’s judgment announced in Isa 7–8 and evoked by Matt 1:22–23. Isaiah’s word about disaster came to pass when the capital, Samaria, fell in 722 to Assyria, who exiled the leadership and occupied the land (see 2 Kgs 15:29). Isaiah 8:16–9:1a narrates the terrible results for a (faithless) people subjected to imperial power. “Greatly distressed and hungry” because of appropriated resources, they know “distress and darkness, the gloom of anguish; and they will be thrust into thick darkness” (Isa 8:22). Isaiah 9:1a repeats the impact of Assyria’s punishment, calling it “anguish” and “contempt.” But “in the latter time,” perhaps the coronation of Hezekiah in 716/715 B.C.E. (2 Kgs 18:13),⁵⁵ God will reverse these circumstances. Light shines in the darkness.

⁵² The claims of scriptural support for a Galilean ministry (McConnell, *Law and Prophecy*, 117–18; Grundmann, *Das Evangelium*, 106; D. Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* [NCB; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972], 104; Gnlika, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 1:95–96; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:379–80) or of theologically prefiguring Gentile mission (Soares Prabhu, *Formula Quotations*, 134; Gnlika, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, 1:98; Luz, *Matthew 1–7*, 195; Luck, *Das Evangelium*, 44; Frankemölle, *Matthäus: Kommentar 1*, 191–94) do not go far enough.

⁵³ Lagrange, *Évangile*, 68; Bonnard, *L’Évangile selon Saint Matthieu*, 47–48; Gundry, *Use of the Old Testament*, 197; Soares Prabhu, *Formula Quotations*, 133–34.

⁵⁴ See, e.g., Soares Prabhu, *Formula Quotations*, 86–106.

⁵⁵ Clements, *Isaiah 1–39*, 106: a “reasoned conjecture.”

The names Zebulun and Naphtali underline the horror of Assyria's actions in seizing the land. They evoke further intertexts in which these names refer to tribal allocations of the land that God had sworn to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, shown to Moses (Deut 34:1–4), and apportioned under Joshua (Josh 18:3; 19:10–16 [Zebulun in the Galilean highlands] and 19:32–39 [Naphtali, to the west and north of the Sea of Galilee]).⁵⁶ The phrase “across the Jordan” (πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου) recalls the exodus and the occupation of the God-given land.⁵⁷ Evoking these events (and so continuing the numerous exodus/occupation echoes throughout the Gospel's opening chapters) underlines how gravely Assyria has violated God's purposes by seizing the God-given land of Naphtali and Zebulun.

Again the Isaiah text evokes a context of imperial aggression that, as with 1:23, is analogous to the Gospel audience's situation under Roman rule. The Isaiah text connects one situation of imperial aggression to another. The audience knows that it is no longer Assyria but Rome that claims this territory, and it knows from its own experience what that means. Since 67 C.E., Vespasian and Titus claimed control of Galilee (Josephus, *J.W.* 7 §§216–17), redistributed land among loyal supporters, and ensured economic control of land and resources through taxation of the largely peasant economy.⁵⁸ Loyal local elites, who secured their own social and economic power through cooperation with Rome, assisted in maintaining control. The few and the powerful benefited at the expense of many. This institutionalized injustice, sustained by the memory of the recent defeat and the threat of military violence and reinforced, for instance, by the presence of Vespasian's and Titus's images on coins,⁵⁹ was a far cry from the vision of the promised land which acknowledged God's sovereignty and justice.

This imperial context, emphasized by “Zebulun and Naphtali,” enables an audience to interpret a further puzzling geographical identifier. The “land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali,” a phrase that evokes the sacred traditions of God's liberation and gift, is also “Galilee of the Gentiles” (4:15; cf. Isa 9:1). The term does not mean, as some have claimed, that Galilee was inhabited by non-Jews, or was particularly susceptible to Hellenization, or that Jewish ethnicity and piety had almost disappeared, or that Jesus was looking only for Gentiles (see 4:18–22, 23–25!).⁶⁰ While some of these options are accurate, the term desig-

⁵⁶ This is another frequently overlooked dimension of the text.

⁵⁷ The phrase is a refrain throughout Deuteronomy, Joshua, and Judges, e.g., Deut 3:20, 25; Josh 1:15; 22:4; 24:8.

⁵⁸ Horsley, *Archaeology, History, and Society*, passim; Freyne, *Galilee, from Alexander*, 155–207, esp. 166–68, 180, 193–94.

⁵⁹ Freyne, *Galilee, from Alexander*, 144. C. H. V. Sutherland, “The Intelligibility of Roman Imperial Coin Types,” *JRS* 49 (1959): 46–55.

⁶⁰ See Freyne, *Galilee, from Alexander*, passim, esp. 138–45.

nates Galilee's occupied status, a land possessed by, belonging to, ruled or controlled by Gentile imperialists, Assyria and Rome (see 2 Kgs 17:24–27).⁶¹

The nomenclature “land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali” and “Galilee under the Gentiles” locates Jesus not merely in Capernaum but in the promised land, which God gave to the people and over which God has sovereignty. The land is now occupied by Rome as it was previously by Assyria. The names Zebulun and Naphtali are a daring reminder of God's sovereignty in the face of Roman claims on Galilee, the presence of Roman client rulers like Herod, and an imperial “theology” that sees Jupiter's will being done. The terms challenge Roman claims by evoking another perspective. It is left to the audience to articulate the counternarrative, which exposes and reframes Rome's claims within God's purposes.

The reality of Roman imperial presence is imaged in phraseology that describes “Galilee under the Gentiles” as a place of darkness and death into which light shines (4:16). The audience's knowledge of the symbolic associations of “darkness” enables it to elaborate the very nature of imperial aggression. While darkness symbolizes various realities,⁶² it especially portrays that which is contrary to God's life-giving purposes: the chaos before God's creative light and life (Gen 1:2), the oppressive slavery in Egypt (Exod 10:21, 22; 14:20), exile in Babylon (Isa 42:7; 47:5; 49:9), and in Isa 8:22–9:2 Assyria's imperial rule. Darkness images the wicked, who do injustice to the weak and needy (Ps 81:5; Job 24:2–17). By contrast, the righteous, those who fear the Lord, who deal in justice, who are secure in the Lord, who give to the poor are lights in the darkness (Ps 111:4). Darkness denotes not some spiritual condition⁶³ but political, social, economic, and religious acts and structures (such as imperialism) contrary to God's purposes. It is the rejection of God's call to a changed society, the call to repentance that John brings (3:2), for which he is arrested (4:12). To “sit in darkness” or “death” is to live in the midst of actions and structures contrary to God's will.

Yet such darkness is not the final word. It is always subject to God's power (Isa 45:7). Light, an image of God's life and saving power (Ps 27:1), dawns and

⁶¹ In addition to the context, the genitive of relationship (Γαλιλαία τῶν ἐθνῶν) indicates possession. See BDF §162.5, 7. For parallel constructions, see Matt 15:21 (τὰ μέρη Τύρου καὶ Σιδῶνος, “the territories controlled/ruled by Tyre and Sidon”); 16:13 (τὰ μέρη Καισαρείας τῆς Φιλίππου); and 22:21 (τὰ Κάισαρος . . . τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ). Gentiles have diverse significance in the Gospel. They are included in God's purposes (e.g., the women in 1:1–17 and the magi in ch. 2, though ethnicity is by no means their only importance; 8:5–13; 12:18, 21; 28:19), yet they also display practices and commitments contrary to God's purposes (5:47; 6:7, 32; 10:18; 20:19, 25).

⁶² Including the hiddenness and majesty of God (Deut 4:11; 5:22; 2 Kgs 22:12 LXX; Ps 17:11 LXX).

⁶³ Bonnard, *L'Évangile selon Saint Matthieu*, 48; McConnell, *Law and Prophecy*, 120; Hill, *Gospel of Matthew*, 104; Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:379–80.

rescues people from darkness, whether political oppression (Exod 10:21, 22; 14:20 [Egypt]; Isa 9:2 [Assyria]; 42:7; 47:5; 49:9 [Babylon]; *1 En.* 1:8–9) or personal misery (Pss 90:6; 106:10–16 LXX) such as hunger or affliction (Isa 58:10). Light means God’s reign of justice, righteousness, and peace, which breaks the “rod of their oppressor” (Isa 11:4–7).

Significantly, the contemporary imperial poet Statius uses imagery of light to praise the emperor Domitian, “that present deity” (*Silv.* 5.2.170). His “immortal brightness” (*Silv.* 1.1.77) shines even when he tries to dim it (*Silv.* 4.2.41–44). He outshines constellations and the sun. People reflect his light (*Silv.* 4.1.3–4, 23–27). Martial greets Domitian’s return to Rome as restoring light to the darkness (*Epig.* 8.21). But the light in 4:16 is not the presence of the Roman emperor who “rules” Galilee. Roman rule is part of the problem, the “darkness” and “shadow of death” under which “Galilee under the Gentiles” now suffers. The Gospel contests and counters such imperial claims. The light is Jesus’ presence in Galilee, the one commissioned to manifest God’s saving presence, to transform darkness with light. His public ministry is to commence (4:17).

Elaborating the Isaiah citation evokes both the reality of imperial power and the promise of God’s salvation. Jesus’ presence in Galilee promises liberation from Rome’s rule. This is the mission of Jesus the Christ (1:1, 16, 17, 18) and son (2:15; 3:17) presented in the opening narrative section (1:1–4:16), to save his people from their sins and to manifest God’s presence (1:21, 23). But the audience’s evoking of Isa 7–9 not only makes explicit this harsh imperial reality and God’s promised salvation, it also raises a question. How will Jesus carry out such a mission?

III

One approach to this question offers a “spiritual” answer. Jesus’ salvation is “religious and moral—as opposed to political.” There is “a shift from literal destruction and political plight to moral and spiritual darkness.”⁶⁴ While recognizing that the Matthean Jesus effects moral and religious transformation (e.g., 7:24–27), an approach that removes any sociopolitical component is inadequate in the light of the material from Isa 7–9, the analogous situation of the Matthean audience under Roman imperialism, the force of the repeated Naphtali and Zebulun, the phrase “Galilee under the Gentiles,” and the metaphors of light and darkness. Another unconvincing approach proposes a military solution in which Jesus leads violent rebellion against Rome.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Davies and Allison, *Matthew*, 1:210, 380, also 174.

⁶⁵ S. G. F. Brandon, *Jesus and the Zealots* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1967);

The only credible approach to this question is for the audience to continue on with the narrative. In 4:17 Jesus' public mission begins. In the "land of Zebulun, land of Naphtali," land given by God to the people, Jesus announces God's reign (or empire or sovereignty) and calls for repentance in recognition of that reign. In the land "beside the sea" (4:15, 18), he calls people to follow him, thereby forming an alternative community that acknowledges and anticipates God's reign. In Galilee "under the Gentiles," he proclaims the good news of God's empire, heals people of diseases, and casts out demons (4:23; see chs. 8–9). Miracles of healing and exorcisms of alien invading and controlling powers often reflect social conflicts. They express resistance to and liberation from imperial control⁶⁶ as well as anticipate the full establishment of God's reign (2 Bar. 73:1–2). Jesus goes up a mountain (5:1), a phrase that both evokes the liberation from Egyptian tyranny and anticipates the establishment of God's reign at Zion.⁶⁷ He teaches an alternative way of life that embodies God's empire (5:3, 10), extends cherished teaching (5:17–48), strengthens social relationships (5:21–26, 27–30, 33–37), encourages religious practices such as praying for daily bread and the fullness of God's reign and will (6:7–13), emphasizes communal economic practices which offer an alternative to indebtedness (5:42; 6:2–4), advocates nonviolent resistance (5:38–48), warns of conflict and persecution since the empire always strikes back (5:10–12), and anticipates throughout the yet-future completion of God's purposes. He carries out his mission in his subversive teaching and actions, in his life and death, in his resurrection and parousia which end all imperial claims. Along the way he creates a community with distinctive socioeconomic practices that recognizes and anticipates the full establishment of God's empire over all. Ironically, the Gospel ultimately envisages the replacement of one imperial ideology with another.

All of this could be developed at length. But a more modest goal has been in view here, notably to assess the contribution of evoking Isaiah 7–9 in Matt 1:22–23 and 4:14–16. The intertext recognizes the Gospel audience's experience of imperial power, provides God's perspectives on that situation, explains the present, underlines the hope of change, warns of rejection, and raises the

E. Bammel, "The Revolution Theory from Reimarus to Brandon," in *Jesus and the Politics of His Day* (ed. E. Bammel and C. F. D. Moule; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 11–68.

⁶⁶ P. Hollenbach, "Jesus, Demoniacs, and Public Authorities," *JAAR* 49 (1981): 567–88; J. P. Brown, "Techniques of Imperial Control: The Background of the Gospel Event," in *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics* (ed. N. Gottwald; Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 357–77; G. Theissen, *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 231–59; J. D. Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991), 313–32.

⁶⁷ For Moses, see Exod 19:3; 24:12, 13, 18; 34:2, 4; Deut 9:9; 10:1, 3; for Zion traditions, see Isa 2:3; Micah 4:2; Ps 23:3; Hag 1:8; 1 Macc 5:54; 7:33.

key question at the end of the first narrative block and on the brink of the beginning of Jesus' ministry of how God will accomplish that salvation through Jesus.⁶⁸ These two citations require the audience to look back to elaborate the prophet Isaiah and forward to answer this question.

⁶⁸ I am not claiming that only Isa 7:14 and 8:23/9:1–2 do these things. If space allowed, their contribution would need to be assessed in relation to intratextual features such as the other fulfillment citations, characters and events evoked by the genealogy, the Herod episode, John's ministry, the temptation including the devil's claim to have authority over all the kingdoms/reigns of the world (4:8), various ways of establishing the divine perspective (the baptism), and in a much fuller discussion of the sociohistorical experience of the Gospel's audience.