"His blood be on us and on our children!" Matthean irony and the ratification of covenant through blood

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“HIS BLOOD BE ON US AND ON OUR CHILDREN!” MATTHEAN IRONY AND THE RATIFICATION OF COVENANT THROUGH BLOOD.

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This thesis contains no material that has been extracted in whole or in part from a thesis that I have submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. The problem of Matt 27:25.

The presentation of Jesus before the Jerusalem crowd is a memorable scene in all four canonical Gospels. Matthew's account uniquely illustrates Pilate's handwashing and proffered surrender of responsibility for his prisoner's fate onto those gathered, after which Matt 27:25 reads: *And all the people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children!"* (RSV, καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς πᾶς ὁ λαὸς εἶπεν Τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἐφ' ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν). This striking moment echoes prior narrative motifs and language, acting as a signpost that directs readers to ponder the significance of such troubling words.[1]

Historically, the verse has been used to substantiate theological positions critical and sometimes overtly hostile to Jewish religion and culture, and is "something of an interpretive crux" in understanding the relationship between Jesus and other Jews in the story, between the Matthean community and non-Christian Jews of the first century, and between the Church and wider Jewish population since.[2] Furthermore, construing this declaration by "all the people" as perpetual national guilt for Christ's wrongful execution has regrettably contributed to justifying their mistreatment; many have commented how "[t]his text has often been used to base the idea of a divine curse upon the Jewish people, condemning them to wandering and persecution, for having put to death the Son of God".[3] Dunn's observation that it has "probably been used more than any other NT text to legitimate anti-semitism" is arguably accurate.[4] Hagner and Luz similarly encapsulate the persistence of this most "fateful verse for the history of Jewish-Christian relations in the whole Bible", which "[i]n large measure… continues to influence the Christian view of Israel".[5]

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[1] Cousland contends Matt 27:25 is "perhaps the most notorious verse in the gospel, and, increasingly one of the most hotly debated". J.R.C. Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew* (Leiden, Boston and Köln: Brill, 2001), 81.

[2] Catherine Sider Hamilton, *The Death of Jesus in Matthew: Innocent Blood and the End of Exile* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 3.

[3] Daniel J. Harrington, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1991), 392.

[4] James D.G. Dunn, "The Question of Anti-Semitism in the New Testament Writings of the Period," in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways AD 70 to 135*, ed. James D.G. Dunn (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1992), 203. See also R. Alan Culpepper, *Matthew: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2021), 547.

[5] Donald A. Hagner, *World Biblical Commentary, Volume 33B: Matthew 14-28* (Dallas: Word Books, 1995), 253; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 508. O'Collins is another voice repeating the sentiment that this verse has "probably has done more than any other sentence in the New Testament to feed the fires of anti-Semitism". Gerald O'Collins, "Anti-Semitism in the Gospel,"

Despite the admirable desire to distance the Gospel, Church and Christian faith from antisemitism, Matt 27:25 is notoriously difficult to make sense of freed from its traditional mooring. Harrington effectively raises the dilemma that confronts scholars:

> What are we to make out of "His blood be upon us and upon our children" (Matt 27:25)? A now standard approach to the text is to limit the responsibility to the small group of Jews who might have made up the crowds at Passover time in AD 30… *But this approach does not really fit Matthew… Matthew meant more than the small group of Jews who gathered around Pilate's judgement seat at Passover time in AD 30*.[6]

The problem remains how to determine the verse's intended meaning relative to the socio-historical circumstances of its original reception while honestly admitting any negative nuances it may contain. Its inclusion was singularly important to the storyteller since it shares no common tradition with his Markan source or Q. Yet, neither the older view that imprecates Jews universally for Jesus' death as a kind of "second original sin" (which rubs strongly against the Jewish character of the Gospel and Matthew's community) nor the one that limits responsibility to the Jerusalem crowd and leadership (underplaying the text's linguistic cues, typology, and irony) sufficiently explain the passage's function in the overall narrative.[7]

1.2. The *adversus Iudaeos* background.

An interpretive tradition associating Matt 27:25 with anti-Judaism (which is, broadly, a theological attitude of rejection and occasionally animosity towards Jewish religious adherents, their beliefs and practices) dates from the early Church and developed prominence in *adversus Iudaeos* literature. There has been considerable debate over whether

Theological Studies 26 (1965), 663. Schnackenburg affirms that "[a] false interpretation of this passage later had disastrous effects on the relationship between the church and the Jews". Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew*, trans. Robert R. Barr (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2002), 285. Nolland likewise maintains Matt 27:25 "has been used as a basis for holding as responsible for Jesus' death, not just the Jews of Jesus' generation, but also the Jews of every subsequent generation". John Nolland, "The Gospel of Matthew and Anti-Semitism," in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gunter (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008), 163. Kampen sums up: "In terms of derogatory and vicious treatment of Jews throughout Christian history, the bloodguilt of Matt 27:25 has been most ubiquitous. No other verse in the New Testament has been so influential in promoting the development of anti-Semitic activity." John Kampen, "The Problem of Christian Anti-Semitism and a Sectarian Reading of the Gospel of Matthew: The Trial of Jesus," in *Matthew Within Judaism: Israel and the Nations in the First Gospel*, eds. Anders Runesson and Daniel M. Gurtner (Atlanta: SBL, 2020), 372.

[6] Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 392 (emphasis added).

[7] Fadiey Lovsky, "Comment Comprendre 'Son Sang Sur Nous et Nos Enfants'?" *Études Théologiques et Religieuses* 62 (1987): 356.

these apologetical works were addressed towards genuine Jewish recipients or were merely rhetorical in nature. While some scholars contend that in the rivalry for converts they sought to deprecate Judaism as an unworthy faith, others believe they were produced as a Christian identity marker (especially against paganism and perceived heretics), where Jews became symbolic figures for the Church to define itself against whilst appropriating their sundry beliefs and practices.[8] According to Fredriksen, *adversus Iudaeous* writings represented one way the orthodox party could mediate a stance between the extremes of Marcionites and Valentinians, who roundly rejected anything connected with Judaism, and those "Judaisers" who required neophytes to become practically Jewish to follow Christ.[9] Thus, authors like Justin, Tertullian and Origen regard Jews with ambivalence, acknowledging them as biblical, divinely-chosen people but conversely criticising what they deem to be a misreading of scripture and failure to authentically obey God, challenging the extent to which one could be a Christian Jew.[10]

Both perspectives likely contain elements of truth considering the persistent (and sometimes intimate) interaction between Jews and (Gentile) Christians in many parts of the empire, where the parent religion was extremely attractive.[11] Church Fathers during the fourth and

[8] James Carleton Paget, *Jews, Christians and Jewish Christians in Antiquity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010), 46-48; Andrew S. Jacobs, "Christians, Jews, and Judaism in the Eastern Mediterranean and Near East, c. 150-400 CE," in *The Cambridge Companion to Antisemitism*, ed. Steven Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 88-89. *Dialogue with Trypho* reflects a little of this hostility, where Justin thrice states (chs. 16, 47 and 96) that Jews (real or imagined) scoff Jesus and curse Christians – a claim equally attested by Origen, Jerome and Epiphanius – whereas Augustine professes Jews aid Christian self-identification by becoming an unappealing comparison in order that Gentiles realise gospel truths against the falsity of Judaism. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 16:4; 47:4; 95:4, trans. Thomas B. Falls (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2003), 28, 72, 147; Louis H. Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World: Attitudes and Interactions from Alexander to Justinian* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 370-371, 373; Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms* 56:9 (trans. J.E. Tweed, *NPNF* 1/8), 448-449; Jeremy Cohen, "Alterity and Self-Legitimation: The Jews as Other in Classical and Medieval Christianity," in *The Jew as Legitimation: Gentile-Jewish Relations Beyond Antisemitism and Philosemitism*, ed. David J. Wertheim (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 37; Joshua Garroway, "Church Fathers and Antisemitism from the 2nd Century through Augustine (end of 450 CE)," in *The Cambridge Companion to Antisemitism*, ed. Steven Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 66-70, 76-81.

[9] Paula Fredriksen, "The Birth of Christianity and the Origins of Christian Anti-Judaism," in *Jesus, Judaism and Christian Anti-Judaism: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust*, eds. Paula Fredriksen and Adele Reinhartz (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 25-26.

[10] Edward Kessler, *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 57; Peter M. Marendy, "Anti-Semitism, Christianity, and the Catholic Church: Origins, Consequences, and Responses," *Journal of Church and State* 47:2 (2005): 294; Paget, *Jews, Christians and Jewish Christians in Antiquity*, 61.

[11] Harold Remus, "Justin Martyr's Argument with Judaism," in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity, Volume 2: Separation and Polemic*, ed. Stephen G. Wilson (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 72; Feldman,

fifth centuries voiced concerns to restrict these mutual associations, partially enforced by later Roman legislation.[12] According to canon 50 of the Council of Elvira (c. 304-5) neither clergy nor laity should accept Jewish hospitality, as presumably they were. Chrysostom's anti-Judaic sermons are frequently directed towards his congregants in Antioch for fear that contact with the local synagogue would threaten their faith (and his own authority).[13] Likewise, Rufinus, in *Apologia Contra Hieronymum*, highlights the appeal of Judaism, cynically stating that if several Jews instituted new rites the Church would immediately adopt them; Augustine too recognises this threat by identifying Christian communities in North Africa calling themselves "Jews". As late as the mid-400s, Cyril of Alexandria describes his parishioners visiting their Hebrew-speaking neighbours to discuss scripture.[14] Such a principled insistence upon Jewish-Christian separation continued to prune Christianity's historic roots so that over time "[t]he [gospel] message became less Jewish, non-Jewish, and then all too quickly anti-Jewish".[15]

Within this climate of increasing ecclesial antipathy and segregation, it was not uncommon for theologians to appeal to Matt 27:25 to support arguments subordinating Judaism and its followers, and one may frankly speculate how much the verse's exegetical tradition was tarnished by social and political affairs of the time. This is a question considered in the next chapter, where it will be seen that the passage featured in the strongest invectives of writers like Chrysostom and Jerome. Although Kessler believes their hyperbolic language was utilised for entertainment and polemical purposes rather than as incitements to violence, they surely expose a pervasive negative attitude towards Jews and their religion which, along with citations of the verse in *adversus Iudaeous,* would have less irenic consequences as subsequent generations grew ignorant of the literary and oratorical conventions predecessors employed but were nonetheless formed by their interpretive conclusions.[16]

Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World, 413-414; Jacobs, "Christians, Jews, and Judaism in the Eastern Mediterranean and Near East, c. 150-400 CE," 89-91.

[12] Paula Fredriksen, "What 'Parting of the Ways'? Jews, Gentiles, and the Ancient Mediterranean City," in *The Ways that Never Parted: Jews and Christians in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Adam H. Becker and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 61.

[13] Kessler, *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations*, 51.

[14] Feldman, *Jew and Gentile in the Ancient World*, 373, 405-407; Kessler, *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations*, 50, 58; Paget, *Jews, Christians and Jewish Christians in Antiquity*, 53-54.

[15] David Mishkin, "Introduction," in *A Handbook on the Jewish Roots of the Christian Faith*, eds. Craig A. Evans and David Mishkin (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2019), 4.

[16] Kessler, *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations*, 46, 58-59.

From these early centuries in Church history, the people calling Christ's blood upon themselves and their children was marshalled as a compelling prooftext to consolidate certain doctrinal positions: Jewish responsibility for Jesus' execution; charges of deicide; blood curse; supersessionism; and that the misfortunes of AD 70 and thereafter were divine punishment for rejecting Christian conversion.[17] Throughout the medieval period it continued to shape theology and harm Jewish-Christian relations by bolstering anti-Judaic antagonism and providing a basis for ethnocultural antisemitism.[18] During the Protestant Reformation, Luther could confidently reference Matt 27:25 as testimony to his commentary on Psalm 78 that the Jews were the bow that killed Jesus and are suffering as a result, asserting: "I am of the opinion that this is a curse which is still bearing down hard upon them."[19] Even presentations of the Passion today are sensitive to the verse's offensive potential and regularly gloss over it, as witnessed in Mel Gibson's 2004 production *The Passion of the Christ*.[20]

1.3. Defining terms.

Any study of this kind warrants an initial, albeit short, review of how the Gospel uses language to situate Jewish identity, a topic that shall be returned to in forthcoming chapters. Nouns such as "Israel" (Ἰσραήλ) and "Jews" (Ἰουδαῖοι) were not functionally equivalent during the Second Temple period, contemporary writings do not use "Judaism" (Ἰουδαϊσμός) to describe the more settled religious system the term would later acquire, and the correlative notion of what it meant to be Jewish was highly contested.[21] Having noted this, for the sake of modern

[17] Harold Brackman, "'Christ-Killer' – The Long Shadow of a Blood Libel," *Midstream* 50:2 (2004): 15; Robert Michael, *History of Catholic Antisemitism: The Dark Side of the Church* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 24.

[18] Dunn, "The Question of Anti-Semitism in the New Testament Writings of the Period," 180; Marendy, "Anti-Semitism, Christianity, and the Catholic Church," 290.

[19] Martin Luther, *Selected Psalms III*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, LW 14 (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1958), 267.

[20] Gibson faithfully recreates the Matthew 27 scene but the verse, while present, is barely audible in Aramaic and not subtitled. The director's associate suggested Matt 27:25 was muted because it "was thought to be too hurtful, or taken not in the way it was intended. It has been used terribly over the years". Sharon Waxman, "Gibson to delete a scene in 'Passion'," *New York Times*, 4 February 2004.

[21] Steven Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaising, Judaism: Problems of Categorisation in Ancient History," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 38:4-5 (2007): 460, 471; Shaye J. D. Cohen, "Common Judaism in Greek and Latin Authors," in *Redefining First-Century Jewish and Christian Identities: Essays on Honour of Ed Parish Sanders*, ed. Fabian E. Udoh (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), 82.

convention this thesis shall frequently use "Jew"/"Jewish" as interchangeable with "Israel" (except where specified) but cautions readers to remain cognisant of the discussion below.[22]

Literature from the time employs Ἰουδαῖος as a referent to either: a native or inhabitant of the Roman province of Judea (a "Judean"); or a member of a largely ethnic category holding distinct beliefs and practices that would come to be characterised as "Judaism" (a "Jew"), including the worship of a monotheistic deity (attached to Jerusalem's temple cult), Sabbath observance, circumcision, and purity laws.[23] An additional complication arises with the nomenclature often being restricted to descendants of the kingdom of Judah, and this overlap makes translation sometimes uncertain.[24] It is left to a passage's context to largely govern which meaning is probable, for instance, when Paul refers to himself as Ἰουδαῖος, he does so as a Benjaminite adherent of the "Jewish" faith, not as a native of Judea (Phil 3:5; Rom 11:14; Acts 21:39; 22:3).[25]

However, Matthean usage of Ἰουδαῖος is apparently limited to "Judean" rather than the broader religious definition.[26] Of the text's five instances of the word, four occur on Gentile lips in the phrase βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων ("king of the Jews/Judeans", Matt 2:2; 27:11, 29, 37), a title bestowed on Herod and his heirs by the Senate with his jurisdiction corresponding to the Roman province (cf. Luke 1:5, where he is designated βασιλέως τῆς Ἰουδαίας, "king of Judea"); he has no political authority over Jews in other provinces or the Diaspora.[27] This suggests regionalism. A geographical boundary is perhaps also indicated by the repetition of "Judea" as Jesus' birth place (Matt 2:1, 5) and the citation of Mic 5:1, which contrasts both the circumscribed "land" (γῆ) and "rulers of Judah" (ἡγεμόσιν Ἰούδα, that is, the southern kingdom) with the wider category of "my people Israel" (τὸν λαόν μου τὸν Ἰσραήλ; see also

[22] While "Jew", "Jewish" and "Israel" relate to the ethno-religious identity of a people group, the term "Hebrew" is used in this work to refer to the language mostly native to these people.

[23] E.P. Sanders, *Judaism: Practice and Belief 63 BCE – 66 CE* (London and Philadelphia: SCM and Trinity International, 1992), 236-237; Daniel R. Schwartz, "'Judean' or 'Jew'? How Should we Translate *Ioudaios* in Josephus?" in *Jewish Identity in the Greco-Roman World*, eds. Jörg Frey, Daniel R. Schwartz and Stephanie Gripentrog (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 7-8.

[24] Jason A. Staples, "What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with 'All Israel'? A Fresh Look at Romans 11:25-27," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 130:2 (2011): 375.

[25] John Kampen, *Matthew Within Sectarian Judaism: An Examination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 17.

[26] Contra Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaising, Judaism," 503-504.

[27] Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.14.4; 1.20.1; Wayne Baxter, "Whose King is He Anyway? What Herod Tells Us about Matthew," in *Matthew Within Judaism: Israel and the Nations in the First Gospel*, eds. Anders Runesson and Daniel M. Gurtner (Atlanta: SBL, 2020), 241-242.

Matt 2:20-22, where "Galilee" is a district of the "land of Israel" but not of "Judea"), and Herod's illegitimacy as a client king compared to the Davidic Messiah's divinely-appointed sovereignty. Similarly, the narrator's parenthetical comment in Matt 28:15 explaining the origin of the rumour spread παρὰ Ἰουδαίοις might plausibly be rendered "among the Judeans". Not only is the Matt 28:11-15 pericope bracketed by another territorial noun ("Galilee", Matt 28:10, 16) that focuses the action within Jerusalem – the sole setting of the characters mentioned (chief priests, elders, soldiers, governor) – but an ethno-religious sense would signify that "the author and his readers no longer considered themselves Jews", an inference contradicted by much of the Gospel's content.[28]

Instead, the evangelist refers to the general Jewish population as Ἰσραήλ and this term carries greater meaning in his story.[29] Whereas it is spiritualised in other NT books (for example, Rom 9:6-8) and replacement theology, "Israel" is here primarily an ethnic indicator denoting those who claim Abraham and Jacob as familial ancestors, and along with common descent, other identifiable shared ways of life (laws, mores, political arrangements, a national cult) that served to identify a people group during the first century.[30] Of its fourteen occurrences, the word generally parallels λαός ("people"), and chapter 4 will explore how this association is relevant to unpacking Matt 27:25.[31] Israel is evidently more expansive than Judea, with borders incorporating the traditional land of all twelve tribes that formed part of David's domain (Matt 2:6, 20-23; 8:10-12; 9:33; 10:5-6, 23; 15:24, 31; 19:28) and where the title βασιλεὺς Ἰσραήλ is recognised by Jews as claiming rulership over the entire nation (Matt 27:42), although by the time of Jesus the land and people obviously no longer correlated (Jews

[28] Wim J.C. Weren, *Studies in Matthew's Gospel: Literary Design, Intertextuality, and Social Setting* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2014), 260.
[29] Jason A. Staples, *The Idea of Israel in Second Temple Judaism: A Theory of People, Exile, and Israelite Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 52-53; Baxter, "Whose King is He Anyway?", 253.
[30] Mason, "Jews, Judaeans, Judaising, Judaism," 484. There was nevertheless fluidity in all these categories, even in ethnic background, where kinship was open to adoption and Gentiles could become Jews. See Eric Gruen, "Kinship Relations and Jewish Identity," in *Jewish Identities in Antiquity: Studies in Memory of Menahem Stern*, eds. Lee I. Levine and Daniel R. Schwartz (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 101-116; Shaye J.D. Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties* (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1999), 137.
[31] Brian J. Kinsel, "Jesus as Israel in Matthew's Gospel," in *A Handbook on the Jewish Roots of the Gospels*, eds. Craig A. Evans and David Mishkin (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2021), 104-105.

resided beyond these geographical boundaries, for instance, Simon of Cyrene in Matt 27:32, and not all within were considered part of the "people", such as the Samaritans, Matt 10:5).[32]

Any simple classification of who was an authentic Jew or rightfully represented Israel is problematic as different groups proposed alternative perspectives. Schwartz highlights, for example, the distinction between those who derived significance from nature and birth, such as the Sadducee priestly caste ("men of the temple"), and others, like the Pharisees and scribes ("men of the synagogue"), whose authority was self-made, with an attendant conflict arising between the settled, inherited system and human decision-making respectively.[33] Matthew's own position seems to reflect the latter, performance-oriented construction of identity since entering Christ's reformed kingdom requires a covenantal choice rather than reliance on some predetermined birthright (Matt 4:18-22; 6:19-21, 33; 7:13-14, 21; 12:46-50; 18:1-4; see chapter 6).

This issue is further complicated as the expression of Jewish lifestyle, though historically-grounded and shared in several respects, was mutable and open to competing interpretations. In spite of various basic beliefs being held without question (like the Torah's inspiration), it did not result in a uniform orthodoxy or orthopraxy, and whether a substantial consensus existed among Jews is a matter of continued controversy.[34] Among scholars, Sanders champions the idea of a normative "common Judaism" while Neusner, accepting the development of formative Judaism, considers it emerging amidst several discrete Jewish movements. These positions call for refinement and Satlow pithily concludes: "If *Judaism* suffers from its neglect of diversity, *Judaisms* neglects the aspect of unity."[35] A moderated

[32] Staples, "What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with 'All Israel'?", 374-377; Jason A. Staples, "Reconstructing Israel: Restoration Eschatology in Early Judaism and Paul's Gentile Mission," Ph.D. Thesis (University of North Carolina, 2016), 60.
[33] Daniel R. Schwartz, *Judeans and Jews: Four Faces of Dichotomy in Ancient Jewish History* (Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press, 2014), 22, 26-28.
[34] Stuart S. Miller, "Stepped Pools, Stone Vessels, and other Identity Markers of 'Complex Common Judaism'," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 41:2 (2010): 215, 218-219; Staples, *The Idea of Israel in Second Temple Judaism*, 6-9; Staples, "Reconstructing Israel," 41; Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 7.
[35] Michael Satlow, *Creating Judaism: History, Tradition, Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 5, 289.

stance is usually adopted today that recognises a "complex common Judaism" involving one's status as a Jew being formed through compromise amidst conflict.[36]

This is the domain inhabited by Matthew's Christ-following community, whose Jewishness might best be spoken of as commitment to Israel, with its fundamentally ethnic and religious restorationist outlook. The author undoubtedly discloses some southern sympathies (emphasising the Davidic monarch and respecting Jerusalem's temple) but his ultimate concern goes beyond Judah (for example, Matt 4:12-25; 10:5-6; 19:28). While the Mattheans shared a common identity with rival Jewish groups, their unique faith did not help to soothe tensions (Matt 13:52; 23:34). However, such a context reveals the theological importance of the Gospel's "Israel" discourse as it recalls a national memory uniting Jews irrespective of sectarian affiliation. Consequently, if "all the people" in Matt 27:25 corresponds to "Israel", it would be hardly possible to escape the universal nature behind the passage's meaning.[37]

1.4. Methodology.

This thesis accepts Markan priority and believes comparisons with Matthew can elicit perspectives peculiar to the latter. Nevertheless, the tendency towards redaction criticism among prior exegetes of Matt 27:25 has repeatedly undervalued the verse's range of meaning by conforming it to preconceived historical scenarios and sociological models. Given this fact

[36] Martin Hengel and Roland Deines, "E.P. Sanders' 'Common Judaism', Jesus, and the Pharisees," *The Journal of Theological Studies* 46:1 (1995): 8, 53; Miller, "Stepped Pools, Stone Vessels, and other Identity Markers of 'Complex Common Judaism'," 215. Miller (p. 243) too holds a mediating position: "Neusner is incorrect; but so is Sanders. The discrete Judaisms that Neusner sees both in the Second Temple period and behind each rabbinic document were not disconnected entities. At the same time, there was no prevailing, easily defined and unified 'Judaism', that 'served to sustain all Judaisms'. Commonness should not be confused with unity." Cohen is more sceptical as "there were few mechanisms in antiquity that would have provided empirical or 'objective' criteria by which to determine who was 'really' a Jew and who was not". Cohen, *The Beginnings of Jewishness*, 3. Nonetheless, he defends "complex common Judaism": "The collective testimony of the Greek and Latin authors surveyed… not only confirms the plausibility of Sanders's reconstruction of the common Judaism of the late Second Temple period and the utility of common Judaism as a heuristic category, it also confirms the plausibility and utility of the concept of Judaism in the singular." Cohen, "Common Judaism in Greek and Latin Authors," 82.

[37] James Carleton Paget, "Jewish Christianity," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism, Volume 3: The Early Roman Period*, eds. William Horbury, William D. Davies and John Sturdy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 734; Staples, "Reconstructing Israel," 43, 60.

and the literary quality of this study, narrative criticism recommends itself as more suitable to engaging dialogue and characters embedded within the Gospel drama.[38]

The approach examines "the formal features of narrative… and the rhetorical techniques employed to tell the story", such as plot, characterisation, setting, and authorial point-of-view.[39] Powell, Kingsbury, McDaniel and other commentators have profitably used it to expose the way textual elements like irony interconnect seemingly separate episodes into an integrated "artistic whole".[40] The author, Matthew, is treated as a purposeful crafter of the narrative's cosmos (not simply its editor), which he uses to communicate an "evaluative point of view", mainly through the voice of his omniscient, reliable narrator, and from it something of his motivations may be gleaned.[41]

Conventionally, this critical method analyses the exchange between two theoretical entities: the "implied author" and "implied reader". These idealised figures serve as structural principles to uncover a writing's underlying compositional elements.[42] The implied reader is extrapolated from the manner in which the narrative presents itself; she is positioned to react sympathetically to the implied author's worldview and possesses the repertoire of knowledge required to comprehend the story, including certain competencies (like being literate in OT scripture), familiarity with local customs (that Jerusalem is the "holy city", Matt 4:5; 27:53; or falling on one's face is a posture of prayer rather than clumsiness, Matt 26:39), and affirmation of values and beliefs (the shamefulness involved in pregnancy outside of marital relations, Matt 1:19).[43] Some claim the implied author and reader allow literature to speak for itself. Be that as it may, it is doubtful whether such a hermeneutic can escape the subjective pitfalls of exegesis or penetrate a real-life writer and audience, which would

[38] Mark Allan Powell, "Toward a Narrative-Critical Understanding of Matthew," *Interpretation* 46:4 (1992): 341-342; Francois P. Viljoen, "Reading Matthew as a Historical Narrative," *In die Skriflig* 52:1 (2018): 1-2.
[39] David Rhoads, "Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 50:3 (1982): 411-412.
[40] Thomas R. Blanton, "Saved by Obedience: Matthew 1:21 in Light of Jesus' Teaching on the Torah," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 132:2 (2013): 395-396.
[41] Janice C. Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web: Over, and Over, and Over Again* (London and New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 1994), 27-32; Jack D. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 1-2.
[42] Mark Allan Powell, "Literary Approaches and the Gospel of Matthew," in *Methods for Matthew*, ed. Mark Allan Powell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 60-61; Dan Shen, "What is the Implied Author?" *Style* 45:1 (2011): 89.
[43] Warren Carter, "Narrative Readings, Contextualised Readers, and Matthew's Gospel," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Narrative*, ed. Danna Nolan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 307-308; Powell, "Literary Approaches and the Gospel of Matthew," 65-66.

require a level of transparency whose justification is undermined by the conflicting solutions offered by different interpreters to narrative puzzles. To avoid this, analysis of the inner story world should be in dialogue with alternative critical methodologies and historical data.[44]

Grounding narrative criticism using historical reconstruction, tenuous though it may be, helps establish an "authorial audience" that steers clear from a solely text-oriented reading. As Carter notes, this method does not necessitate relying on "implied" interlocutors at the expense of actual recipients whose responses are shaped by ideological preconceptions and culturally conditioned prejudices.[45] Of course, being dogmatic about the precise circumstantial provenance of the First Gospel is inadvisable, and chapter 3 will explore how the Jewish concerns it embodies are sufficient to provide an interpretive milieu that offsets the anti-Judaism of later periods.

As a storyteller, Matthew readily utilises literary techniques to frame his plot and guide readers. The most germane for this thesis are typology, allusion, and irony/double entendre. Beale defines biblical typology as "the study of analogical correspondences among revealed truths about persons, events, institutions, and other things within the historical framework of God's special revelation, which, from a retrospective view, are of a prophetic nature and are escalated in their meaning".[46] It involves an author's deliberate parallel between OT and NT subjects that is mutually enlightening and forward-looking, moving beyond mere analogy to posit the antitype as a fulfilment or recapitulation of the type.[47] Although there are many typological considerations in this Gospel, two are especially noteworthy for explicating Matt 27:25: the presentation of Jesus as a Mosaic antitype and, complementarily, his sacrificial covenant as a recapitulation of the one at Sinai.

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[44] See, for instance, the following on the need to balance literary criticism alongside historical information and other critical methods: James L. Resseguie, "Reader-Response Criticism and the Synoptic Gospels," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 52:2 (1984): 308-309; Graham N. Stanton, "The Communities of Matthew," *Interpretation* 46:4 (1992): 381; Powell, "Toward a Narrative-Critical Understanding of Matthew," 341-345; Karl J. McDaniel, *Experiencing Irony in the First Gospel: Suspense, Surprise and Curiosity* (Bloomsbury: T&T Clark, 2013), 7-8, 14, 117; Matthew Anslow, "The Prophetic Vocation of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew: A Narrative and Socio-Historical Study," Ph.D. Thesis (Charles Sturt University, 2017), 5.

[45] Carter, "Narrative Readings, Contextualised Readers, and Matthew's Gospel," 309-311, 315-316.

[46] Gregory K. Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament: Exegesis and Interpretation* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2012), 54.

[47] He postulates several criteria to establish a case of typology: (i) analogical correspondence between the subjects; (b) historicity (fitting within the outline of God's special revelation); (c) foreshadowing (a sign of future realisation); (d) escalation in the antitype by the type; and (e) retrospection (a recognition of types after the antitype's revelation). Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 23-26, 34.

Since typology concerns analogy it may depend on instances of allusion, a device that "point[s] a reader back to a single identifiable source, of which one or more components must be remembered and brought forward into the new context in order for the alluding text to be understood fully".[48] Unlike quotation, where references are direct and phraseology linear, allusion is indirect (but must be overt enough to be recognised) and may be periphrastic or fragmentary in nature, as in a "word cluster". Its presence can be almost certain in some cases or vague (as an echo) in others, and frequently relies on the "unique parallel in wording, syntax, concept, or cluster of motifs in the same order or structure".[49] Beetham and Hays propose several criteria for identifying allusions that are quite instructive and shall be raised at a future point, where it will be argued that they reveal an association between Moses' covenant in Exodus and Matt 27:25.[50]

Lastly, irony is replete throughout the story, accentuated during Christ's Passion, where dramatic moments are repeatedly couched in ambiguity. Booth uses the term "stable irony" to define the rhetorical technique that brings substance and comprehension to an otherwise vague or contradictory text. The covert nature of irony demands decoding and reconstruction to deliver a satisfying interpretation; however, this process is finite and usually limited to a specific passage or situation.[51]

As a subset of stable irony, double entendre is central to understanding Matt 27:25. It works by encouraging readers to reconsider surface-level problems encountered in a narrative and move beyond their misunderstanding to explore deeper layers of meaning.[52] Unlike "most forms of irony", Cargal explains, double entendre maintains "that the two levels of meaning are not opposed to one another. The reader is not asked to decide which one of the two meanings the narrator wishes to present to the exclusion of the other", and both the primary (plain) and the secondary (alluded to) levels are paradoxically true for the audience.[53] Thus,

[48] Christopher A. Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2008), 20.
[49] Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 34; Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, 12-17.
[50] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), 29-31; McDaniel, *Experiencing Irony in the First Gospel*, 30-31.
[51] Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 5-6; James L. Resseguie, "A Glossary of New Testament Narrative Criticism with Illustrations," *Religions* 10:3 (2019): 13-14.
[52] Resseguie, "A Glossary of New Testament Narrative Criticism with Illustrations," 10-11.
[53] Timothy B. Cargal, "'His Blood be Upon Us and Upon Our Children': A Matthean Double Entendre?" *New Testament Studies* 37 (1991): 110.

the senses operating in any given context, while appearing initially to be mutually exclusive, are not reducible to one another but are reconciled as complementary parallel meanings.[54]

1.5. Interpretations of Matt 27:25.

Matt 27:25 continues to arouse a good deal of academic discussion by virtue of its anti-Judaic past and recent Christian reflection shaped by the tragedies of the Holocaust. Four exegetical positions can be roughly sketched (a full assessment is found in chapter 5):

(i) *Universal meaning and responsibility* – On this view, the most historically prevalent, "all the people" connotes global Jewish responsibility. By actively accepting accountability for Jesus' death, Israel is culpable of national bloodguilt (some use the expression of being under a curse) which, when coupled with other passages (like Matt 21:43), confirms supersessionism. Schweizer, for example, argues that "not just their leaders" but "the people of God's own covenant" share the fate of Judas as they "call on him [God] to bring judgement down upon them".[55] Basser and Cohen, in a study that spotlights Matthew's dependence upon Jewish traditions and texts, state: "While some see an oath here that extended to only two generations, there can be little doubt that the text conveys the understanding that Jews incriminated themselves and all future generations of Jews."[56] The outcome is everlasting exile which, as Gundry adds, "implies the transferal of the kingdom from the Jewish people to the church… their words an acknowledgement of their guilt".[57]

(ii) *Restricted meaning and responsibility* – A contrary position requires that the verse has a limited discourse of meaning where πᾶς ὁ λαὸς, the subject of the clause, merely substitutes for ὁ ὄχλος ("the crowd", Matt 27:15, 20, 24), Jerusalemites and/or their leadership. Responsibility and concomitant punishment for Christ's execution is thereby limited to a Jewish faction. Lovsky supposes Matthew's totalising language is possibly exaggerated for artistic effect and applies only to the generation present,

[54] McDaniel, *Experiencing Irony in the First Gospel*, 28-29.
[55] Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Matthew* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1975), 509.
[56] Herbert W. Basser and Marsha B. Cohen, *The Gospel of Matthew and Judaic Traditions: A Relevance-Based Commentary* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015), 696.
[57] Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution, Second Edition* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994), 565.

more precisely, to revolutionaries hostile to Roman rule.[58] Davies and Allison maintain the context limits culpability to those pitted against Jesus by the socio-religious authorities: "Matthew excoriates an actual political and social segment of Judaism, not the people of Israel as a symbolic whole."[59] These thinkers frequently conclude that the crucifixion's outcome manifests itself in the fall of Jerusalem, and the passage assumes an aetiological quality, which "accords with the Jewish habit of associating disaster with sin", where guilt being "on us and on our children" has a literal application to Christ's contemporaries and the next generation.[60]

(iii) *Universal meaning but restricted responsibility* – A third viewpoint understands the author's words as having a corporate meaning yet implying only limited responsibility. It emphasises the representative function of Jewish religious leaders in addition to OT citations that involve collective judgement and punishment but are evidently not taken literally, for instance, in OT blasphemy laws (the exact charge against Jesus, Matt 26:65), where criminals were to be stoned by "all the congregation" (Lev 24:10-16).[61] In spite of Matt 27:25's universal phraseology, responsibility is confined to those individuals within the story and any external referent was unintended by Matthew.

By restricting or broadening the scope of meaning and/or punishment, each approach attempts to resolve one area of exegetical difficulty while introducing another, and concessions made by commentators have frustrated the explanatory power and scope of their respective arguments. Indeed, several pertinent questions are either ignored, explained away or insufficiently addressed: (i) *Why is there a lexical shift from "the crowd" in vv. 15-24 to "all the people" in v. 25?*; (ii) *How does the condemnation of "all the people" cohere with Jesus' mission to "save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21)?*; (iii) *How is blood imagery here related to other scenes in the story?*; (iv) *How do OT allusions aid readers in understanding the passage?*; and (v) *How do these various explanations harmonise with the text's Jewishness?*

(iv) *The irony of redemption and judgement* – These shortcomings have motivated a re-evaluation of Matt 27:25 guided by narrative criticism and the Gospel's Jewish

[58] Lovsky, "Comment Comprendre 'Son Sang Sur Nous et Nos Enfants'?", 348-351, 359.
[59] William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *The International Critical Commentary: The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 591-592.
[60] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3*, 592.
[61] Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew*, 82-83.

character, as Sullivan urges: "There is evidence… to indicate that Matthew was a Jew and understood himself to be a Jew. The question then is: *can we find a more authentically Jewish understanding of the passage in Matthew 27:24-25 which preserves the integrity of the gospel as a Jewish document in its historical context?*"[62] Some scholars respond affirmatively and propose that the verse's ambiguity invites both redemption and judgement.

This line of thought agrees in part with the universal view: the entire people of Israel accept responsibility for Jesus' death; yet, this is presented ironically, where the blood of the ostensibly guilty man they eagerly welcome is the very righteous, sacrificial blood that redeems them from sin.[63] What appears to be condemnation is, in fact, the author signalling Jewish salvation. Cargal and Heil understand Christ's remarks at the Last Supper as qualifying the efficacy of his blood, which provides Matt 27:25 a double entendre gloss because "[o]ne level of meaning that Matthew does intend to assert is that the Jewish nation must accept at least partial responsibility for the execution of Jesus. But at a second level of meaning, he also relates the words of the cry of 'all the people' to the possibility of forgiveness opened to the Jewish people and others by Jesus' shed blood".[64] This insight raises a central Matthean theme: the worth of innocent blood, which is explored by Sider Hamilton to uncover its OT purgative and destructive functions: "Innocent blood defiles, and so the people are cast out. But the innocent blood *of Jesus* brings finally… the cataclysm, and so the new creation."[65] Sullivan writes that Matt 27:25 echoes Moses at Sinai, where the author uses a Jewish idiom to express the people's unwitting but prophetic commitment to the covenant in Christ's blood that, like the first Passover, effects forgiveness.[66]

[62] Desmond Sullivan, "New Insights into Matthew 27:24-25," *New Blackfriars* 73:863 (1992): 453 (emphasis added). The first substantive works defending this view were 1991-1992 articles by Cargal, Heil and Sullivan. More recently in 2014 a book-length treatment by InHee C. Berg was published.
[63] Cargal, "'His Blood be Upon Us and Upon Our Children': A Matthean Double Entendre?", 109-110; Culpepper, *Matthew*, 547-549.
[64] Cargal, "'His Blood be Upon Us and Upon Our Children': A Matthean Double Entendre?", 109-110; John Paul Heil, "The Blood of Jesus in Matthew: A Narrative-Critical Perspective," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 18 (1991): 124.
[65] Sider Hamilton, *The Death of Jesus in Matthew*, 227 (emphasis in original).
[66] Sullivan, "New Insights into Matthew 27:24-25," 455-457.

1.6. Thesis.

The final model outlined purports to settle many of the verse's interpretive issues by concentrating on Matthean irony in positing the shedding of Jesus' blood for covenantal judgement and salvation. Nonetheless, it remains preliminary and many are unconvinced that "the case for this double entendre has been successfully made".[67] Davies and Allison, for example, call attention to the scene's tragic tone, concluding that "[a]lthough the cry of the people offers irony, it seems excessively subtle".[68] Hagner too believes that "one can hardly read from Matthew's text the idea that the blood is upon the Jews in a redemptive sense".[69] More consideration is clearly needed to defend what may be the most promising avenue for resolving these problems.

This is the aim of the present work. It contends that a double entendre reading of Matt 27:25 overcomes many difficulties associated with other exegetical approaches and conforms more readily to the Gospel's character and narrative content. Additionally, it continues the conversation by demonstrating how the author re-presents the Sinai covenant through various Passion scenes as the theological foundation for redemption and condemnation in Christ's blood. Four supporting arguments are discussed throughout this thesis.[70]

The first involves the scarce early evidence for the national bloodguilt and curse views of Matt 27:25. Chapter 2's study of reception history reveals that the "people's cry" was not related to these readings until at least six generations of Church Fathers had passed and only became the norm late in the fourth century.[71] They originated as part of *adversus Iudaeous* rhetoric responding to contemporaneous socio-political and religious conditions, suggesting commentators were influenced in their exegesis by prior ideological convictions absent from previous thinkers, which may militate against a Jewish indictment underlying authorial intent.[72]

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[67] Nolland, "The Gospel of Matthew and Anti-Semitism," 168.
[68] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, *Volume 3*, 592.
[69] Hagner, *Matthew 14-28,* 828.
[70] This is chiefly a literary study that shall not evaluate the historicity of Matt 27:25.
[71] Lovsky, "Comment Comprendre 'Son Sang Sur Nous et Nos Enfants'?", 346-347.
[72] Benno Przbylski, "The Setting of Matthean Anti-Judaism," in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity, Volume 1: Paul and the Gospels*, eds. Peter Richardson and David Granskou (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998), 182.

Rejecting an imprecatory or bloodguilt interpretation is further justified by the Jewishness of Matthew's story. Chapter 3 examines textual features indicating a worldview consonant with that held by first century Jews, like the identity and mission of the protagonist, the plot's structure and content, and extensive academic agreement concerning the historical evangelist's community. Such a background highlights an incongruity if, on the one hand, the Gospel ardently affirms Jewish ethnicity and religion (probably reflecting an audience principally composed of Jews) yet concludes by wholly denouncing their present and future generations. Instead, apparent anti-Judaic language serves a plot purpose in demonising Christ's opponents as well as expressing intra-sectarian rivalry.

Following this, chapter 4 delves into key literary aspects of the Matt 27:25 pericope: Jesus' depiction as the Mosaic prophet; the role of antagonists (Judas, Jewish leaders and Pilate); the differentiation between "crowd" and "people"; the theme of innocent blood; and how irony is used by the author in constructing his Passion. This analysis will furnish details incorporated into the closing chapters' two arguments.

Chapter 5 reviews the merits and deficits of scholarly perspectives in detail. It reiterates limitations found in the national bloodguilt model as being unable to accommodate the Jewishness of the text. However, readings that restrict the meaning of "all the people" to a Jerusalem lynch mob and its leadership are also explanatorily inadequate and fail to do justice to important story elements. Alternatively, an ironic, specifically double entendre, exegesis is laid out as best accounting for the narrative material.[73]

The final chapter expands upon previous positive arguments and groundwork for accepting a double entendre understanding of Matt 27:25. The dual action of redemption and judgement resulting from Jesus' death derives from the Gospel's re-presentation of the Sinai covenant, instituted (with attendant blessings and curses) by the protagonist as "a typological fulfillment of the first Moses… in keeping with anticipations already embedded within the prophetic expectations of the OT itself and in Judaism".[74] Regarding salvation, this correlates the character of Christ, his mission and the theme of righteous blood with "the eucharistic saying that it is the blood of Jesus 'which is poured out… for the forgiveness of sins' (Matt 26.28)…

[73] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, *Volume 3*, 591.
[74] Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 30, 87.

that it is the blood of Jesus upon his people which saves them from their sins". [75] Condemnation comes with covenantal rejection by those who do not accept the blood of Jesus on themselves (and their children) or else fail to obey the reformed law: Matthew's antagonists (perhaps a criticism of socio-religious rivals). This becomes the cornerstone of reinterpreting the verse and coheres with the Judaic belief that redemption occurs within covenantal parameters.

[75] Cargal, "'His Blood be Upon Us and Upon Our Children': A Matthean Double Entendre?", 111.

Chapter 2: Matt 27:25 and the Emergence of a Tradition

2.1. Introduction.

The wide circulation of Matthew's Gospel afforded it a privileged place within the Church, establishing a formative theological influence so that early on "the first gospel remained the gospel par excellence… [and] created the background for ordinary Christianity".[76] Its dissemination occurred alongside deepening tensions between Jewish and increasingly Gentile Christian communities, which found expression in the acerbic *adversus Iudaeos* works of Tertullian and subsequent commentators. Observing this coincidence, several scholars attribute an aspect of developing anti-Judaism to the Gospel's popularity, judging Matt 27:25 as particularly blameworthy in cursing Jews with national guilt for having unjustly shed Jesus' blood.[77]

Can the claim be validated? Before engaging the story's literary elements and socio-historical background, this chapter addresses that which is "in front of the text" by interrogating interpretations of the verse during the patristic period to determine whether they were invariably perceived through a lens hostile to Judaism.[78] Such a foreground study helps to expose how *Wirkungsgeschichte* predisposes the manner of textual interaction over time and what readings would hence become neglected.[79] Lovsky initially recommended revisiting the accepted reception tradition of Matt 27:25 when he noticed its anti-Judaic gloss only became commonplace during the fourth century.[80]

Certainly by the 400s, Jerome and Chrysostom figure as the premier voices articulating the verse as a condemnatory prooftext conveying perpetual punishment on all Jews. Their discussions are often in the context of Christian defensiveness rather than stemming from a

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[76] Édouard Massaux, *The Influence of the Gospel of Saint Matthew on Christian Literature Before Saint Irenaeus, Volume 3*, trans. Norman J. Belval and Suzanne Hecht, ed. Arthur J. Bellinzoni (Macon: Mercer University, 1993), 186-87; Russell Morton, "Early Reception of Matthew," in *A Handbook on the Jewish Roots of the Gospels*, eds. Craig A. Evans and David Mishkin (Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2021), 31.

[77] Kessler, *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations*, 36. See also Donald A. Hagner, "Anti-Semitism," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2012), 20; Dunn, "The Question of Anti-Semitism in the New Testament Writings of the Period," 179; Morton, "Early Reception of Matthew," 38.

[78] Markus Bockmuehl, *Seeing the Word: Refocusing New Testament Study* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), 65.

[79] Powell, "Literary Approaches and the Gospel of Matthew," 56-57.

[80] Lovsky, "Comment Comprendre 'Son Sang Sur Nous et Nos Enfants'?", 348-349.

fundamental reassessment of the Jewish people and their faith, suggesting that contemporary conditions and prejudices contributed to a specific gloss absent from prior generations that significantly shifted the exegetical trajectory of the passage. Cognisant of the limited extant sources, it is nevertheless remarkable that the earliest Church Fathers do not reference Matt 27:25 to reinforce arguments on identical issues and themes covered by later ones, perhaps evidencing how it was received closer to the original audience. Altogether, these details can lead us to question the extent to which the evangelist intended a Jewish anathema.

This examination represents a fresh reading of the primary material and covers references found in the first five centuries of Christian literature outside the NT canon. The passages not only quote the verse but exhibit familiarity with Matthew's Gospel, so that it is not received in isolation from its narrative environment. While some citations merely state or allude to Matt 27:25, those that elaborate are the most informative to this inquiry by directly disclosing the author's thoughts. A full list of references can be found in Appendix I.

2.2. Conceiving a curse: Jerome and Chrysostom on Matt 27:25.

Among the ecclesial writers who flourished in the 300s-400s, Jerome and Chrysostom are generally recognised as the most prominently anti-Judaic. In this respect, they understand Matt 27:25 as indicting Jews universally for the crucifixion, which now subjects the nation to a divine curse. While their perspective bears resemblance to those of previous interpreters, the following sections will reveal critical fundamental differences in how the text is being read.

In the West, Jerome's tone is usually derisive towards Judaism and its adherents, though the close academic relationship he shared with Hebrew teachers accounts for his admiration of certain individuals.[81] He is the first to identify Jews with Judas in their immoral use of money and betrayal of Christ, sermonising: "Whom do you suppose are the sons of Judas? The Jews… Judas is cursed, that in Judas the Jews may be accursed [Judas maledicitur, ut in Juda Judaei maledicantur]."[82] This attitude is also apparent in Jerome's *Commentary on Matthew*. Pilate

[81] Kessler, *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations*, 62.

[82] Jerome, *The Homilies of Saint Jerome, Volume I (1-59 On The Psalms)* 108, trans. Marie Liguori Ewald (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1964), 259, 262; Michael, *History of Catholic Antisemitism*, 28.

(representing Gentiles) is declared innocent, having washed his hands of Jesus' blood; contrarily, the Jews are proved the guilty party by demanding the death of an innocent man. He forcefully states: "*This imprecation* [*imprecatio*] *upon the Jews continues until the present day*. The Lord's blood will not be removed from them… The Jews have left the best heritage to their children, saying: 'His blood be upon us and upon our children'."[83]

In *Commentary on Jeremiah,* Jerome likewise declares:

> But it [Jerusalem's destruction] was fulfilled more fully and more perfectly in Christ, when the city was overthrown and the people were massacred by the Roman sword, not because of idolatry… but because they killed the Son of God, when all the people cried out together: "Away, away with such a one! We have no king but Caesar!" And the *curse of eternal damnation* against them was fulfilled [*Et imprecatio eorum aeterna damnatione completa est*]: "His blood be on us and on our children!"[84]

In another part of this work, he argues: "For daily they [Jews] are devastated by their blasphemies… Sons follow the blasphemies of their fathers, and *every day they receive this curse* [*imprecationem*]*:* 'His blood be on us and on our children!'… all of them perish equally because all have sinned equally."[85] Throughout these passages, the term "imprecation" indicates Jerome's conviction of a Jewish curse: their guilt and punishment are not transitory phenomena limited to the first century. While Gentiles have turned to faith, "the indelible sin of Judah… has no reason to be abolished… and it lasts because *it is inscribed for eternity* [*et duret quod scriptum est, in perpetuum*]. For they themselves said, 'His blood be upon us and upon our children'… so that the sacrilegious work should be held in memory forever".[86]

For the Latin Father, Matt 27:25 substantiates a theology of penal suffering for Jews' "many crimes" and explains why "[i]t is now a little less than four hundred years after the demolition of the temple, and nothing remains of the city and temple ruins". What evil has caused this fate? "Don't you know? Remember the cry of your fathers: 'His blood be on us and on our children'…" It is the idolatrous choice of Caesar over God (Christ), which he imputes on both former and present-day Jews.[87] The verse thus defines the moment when Israel wholly

[83] Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew* 4:27.25, trans. Thomas P. Sheck (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), 313 (emphasis added).
[84] Jerome, *Commentary on Jeremiah* 18:19-22a, trans. Michael Graves (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 116 (emphasis added).
[85] Jerome, *Commentary on Jeremiah* 6:21, p. 46 (emphasis added).
[86] Jerome, *Commentary on Jeremiah* 17:1, p. 104 (emphasis added).
[87] Jerome, "Letter 129: To Dardanus," in *Saint Jerome Letters Volume 7: 121-130*, trans. Jerome Labourt (Paris: The Beautiful Letters, 1961), 165. This motif of choosing earthly powers over God is repeated in Jerome's

condemned itself, with recourse to repentance and conversion scarcely mentioned as available, a narrative that would prevail in medieval discourse.[88]

Jerome's position was crystalised by Eastern Christianity's zealous exponent of anti-Judaism, John Chrysostom. Any cursory survey of his corpus demonstrates a stark antagonism towards this religion and he arduously implores believers to break ties with anyone from the Jewish nation. The significance of Chrysostom's *adversus Iudaeos* and the place of Matt 27:25 within it should not be understated, as Kessler remarks: "Chrysostom's writings have perhaps been the most damaging and influential in the popular imagination and his denunciations of Judaism gave the Church for centuries a pseudo-religious basis for persecuting Jews."[89] He charged them with deicide (*theoktonian*) and presented in embryonic form the concept of blood libel (human sacrifice).[90]

In Discourse 1 of *Discourses Against Judaising Christians*, Chrysostom cites the verse to dissuade listeners from sharing festivals "with those who have committed outrages against God Himself… those who crucified Him".[91] He speaks of contemporary Jews as "guilty" and unworthy of association, as if personally responsible for the past event, advising: "We must hate both them and their synagogue all the more because of their offensive treatment of those holy men [Moses and the prophets]."[92] He further characterises them as having "present madness" and that "demons dwell in their souls", so "reared amid slaughter and bloodshed" because of the OT actions of Israel: "What tragedy, what manner of lawlessness have they not eclipsed by their blood-guiltiness [μιαιφονίαις]?"[93] While this rhetoric is undoubtedly amplified to frustrate potential Judaising, Chrysostom's visceral language and blunt accusations blame Jews of his day in a manner less apparent among earlier theologians.

Commentary on Daniel, where he discusses Daniel's "weeks" and cites Matt 27:25 without remark. Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel* 9:24-27, trans. Gleason L. Archer (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1958), 547.

[88] Matt 27:25 is also quoted in *Apostolic Constitutions*, exhorting believers to pray for Israel's repentance for impiously having "cried out, His blood be on us and on our children". The implication is that the people shared responsibility, which may be to some extent continuing: "For to Jews the Lord is still dead, but to Christians He is risen." *Apostolic Constitutions* 5:3.19, trans. James Donaldson (*ANF* 7), 986.

[89] Kessler, *An Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations*, 61.

[90] Marendy, "Anti-Semitism, Christianity, and the Catholic Church," 295; Brackman, "'Christ-Killer' – The Long Shadow of a Blood Libel," 15.

[91] John Chrysostom, *Discourses Against Judaising Christians* 1:5.1, trans. Paul W. Harkins (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1979), 18. Regard the translator's footnote: "Chrysostom obviously holds the position… that all Jews are responsible for Christ's passion and death."

[92] John Chrysostom, *Discourses Against Judaising Christians* 1:5.4, p. 19.

[93] John Chrysostom, *Discourses Against Judaising Christians* 1:6.5-7, pp. 24-25.

In the second Discourse, synagogue attendance is portrayed as a Satanic ritual since "demons dwell in the very souls of the Jews and in the places in which they gather".[94] The Church Father references Matt 27:25 in Discourse 6, contending that Christian martyrs would relish his anti-Judaic invective since they sacrificed their blood for the Saviour whose own blood his murderers called down upon themselves and their children.[95] This is not simply an historical reflection as he underscores the bloodguilt Jews of his time have accrued for past actions and intimates blood libel, addressing them:

> You did slay [ἀπεκτείνατε] Christ, you did lift violent hands against the Master, you did spill his precious blood. This is why you have no chance for atonement, excuse, or defence… This is why the penalty you now pay is greater than that paid by your fathers… Is it not clear that you dared a deed much worse and much greater than any sacrifice of children or transgression of the Law when you slew Christ?[96]

In Chrysostom's eyes, every Jew stands condemned for violence against God's holy people.[97] Consequently, the Spirit has abandoned them, manifested in the cessation of their sacrificial system, so that it is "obvious that the priest among the Jews today is unordained, unclean, under a curse [ἐναγὴς, or impure due to bloodshed], and profane".[98]

Other sermons attest to a similar message. In his collection on Acts of the Apostles, Chrysostom suggests the initial Jewish believers after Jesus' resurrection had agitated souls with his "very blood being yet upon their hands".[99] In another homily on how tribulation confirms the gospel, he recounts the Acts 5 arrest of Peter and John in relation to Christ's treatment and how Jews had called for his death, citing Matt 27:25 as an instance of "madness" by those who had "lost [their] mind", where the blood covering them was a reason to fear damnation.[100]

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[94] John Chrysostom, *Discourses Against Judaising Christians* 2:3.5, p. 44.
[95] John Chrysostom, *Discourses Against Judaising Christians* 6:1.7, p. 149.
[96] John Chrysostom, *Discourses Against Judaising Christians* 6:2.10, p. 154. The plural aorist indicative ἀπεκτείνατε perhaps alludes to Acts 3:15, assimilating Chrysostom's Jewish "audience" implicitly with those during the Passion. Additionally, the Greek in this passage is quite emphatic: διὰ τοῦτο οὐκ ἔστιν ὑμῖν διόρθωσις, οὐδὲ συγγνώμη λοιπὸν, οὐδὲ ἀπολογία.
[97] John Chrysostom, *Discourses Against Judaising Christians* 6:3.3, pp. 155-156.
[98] John Chrysostom, *Discourses Against Judaising Christians* 6:5.9, p. 167.
[99] John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles* 4, trans. J. Walker, J. Sheppard and H. Browne (*NPNF* 1/11), 59.
[100] John Chrysostom, *Homily Delivered in the Church of Saint Anastasia*, trans. Roger Pearse, PG 63 (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1862), 493-500. In Chrysostom's *Homilies on the Start of Acts*, the same scene is depicted as the Church Father speaks directly to Jews rather than through Peter and John: "And while they [the Jews] crucified him, they cried out, 'His blood be on us and on our children'; so they despised his blood. But after the passion, when they saw the radiant power [of Christ], they were scared and suffering, and said, 'Are you trying to bring this

This motif of quasi-possessed lunacy is repeated in *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew*. When illustrating the trial scene before Pilate, Chrysostom depicts present Jews alongside their former countrymen: "See here too their great madness. For passion and wicked desire are like this… For be it that ye curse [ἐπαρᾶσθε] yourselves; why do you draw down the curse [ἀρὰν] upon your children also?"[101] As with Jerome, Matt 27:25 is seen as supporting an anathema in Jesus' blood on the Jewish nation as they "acted with so much madness, both against themselves, and against their children".[102] Though some might convert, "if some continued *in their sin*, to themselves let them impute their punishment", implying that guilt is preserved for those who do not.[103]

2.3. The fourth century revision.

From where did Jerome and Chrysostom inherit this perspective of the verse as signifying universal bloodguilt for Jews, enduring as a curse? The ecclesial writers of the 300s do not provide a clear answer; even so, the seeds of this interpretive shift are possibly found along two paths: the impact of Origenist theology, which informed the most anti-Judaic patristics (Eusebius, Didymus, Basil, Chrysostom, and Jerome); and the increased political prestige and power of Christian leaders following the Edict of Milan (313), accompanied by social and legal separation from Jewish communities as the empire under Constantine and later rulers promoted uniformity: "When these institutional threads of episcopacy, empire, and orthodoxy came together in the later 4th century they reworked earlier discourses of difference into their totalising worldview, including discourses about Jews."[104]

For instance, while fourth century Western Fathers affirm Jewish responsibility for the crucifixion and the consequent replacement of their status by the Church, they lack the imprecatory judgements of later interpreters, instead tending to regard contemporary Jews as recapitulating the former rejection of Jesus through their own failure to convert. This is

man's blood upon us?'… O unholy Jews, why are you afraid of his blood?" John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Start of Acts* 1-4, trans. Roger Pearse, PG 51 (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1862), 110-111.

[101] John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew* 86:2, trans. George Prevost (*NPNF* 1/10), 513.

[102] John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew* 86:2, p. 513.

[103] John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew* 86:2, p. 513. Chrysostom cites the verse another time in Homily 87:1 (p. 516) as part of exonerating Pilate and utterly blaming Jews.

[104] Jacobs, "Christians, Jews, and Judaism in the Eastern Mediterranean and Near East, c. 150-400 CE," 87.

evident in chapter 33 of Hilary's *Commentary on Matthew* (c. 350), where he pictures them as typologically emulating their ancestors' acceptance "upon themselves and their children the crime of shedding the Lord's blood" because of continued resistance to Christianity, while pagans "by washing themselves [in baptism], are daily passing over to a confession of faith".[105] Here, the actions of historical figures are symbolically re-presented in present-day effects. Similarly, Hilary asserts in *Tractatus mysteriorum* that as the righteous blood of Abel was prefigured in Cain as his murderer, thus in persecuting "the body of Christ… it is the blood of all the righteous that their race and their entire posterity took on themselves according to their cry, 'His blood be upon us and on our sons'".[106]

Ambrose and Augustine are more circumspect when attaching accountability for Jesus' death to Jews of their day. In his *Letter to Irenaeus*, the bishop of Milan recognises a Satanic voice in those who called for Christ's execution; however, the cry that "His blood be on us and on our children" is that of sin "in everyone who was vain and faithless", not uniquely castigating Israel.[107] In another letter to Horontianus, Ambrose repeats this connection (referencing Matt 27:25) but maintains that God "even pardons that persecuting people".[108]

Augustine continues this approach, contending (in *The Creed*) that there was no greater sin than in killing the Messiah, still "the Jews killed Him, and afterwards many believed in Him, and drank His Blood. The sin which they had committed was forgiven them".[109] The notion that spilled innocent blood affords the opportunity for repentance rather than simply judgement shall surface on several occasions in relation to Matt 27:25.

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[105] Hilary, *Commentary on Matthew* 33:1, trans. Daniel H. Williams (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 287. A similar "Jewish" (Herod)/Gentile (the magi) dichotomy occurs in 1:6 (p. 46).

[106] Hilary, "Tractatus mysteriorum," 1:7, in *S. Hilarii Pictauiensis Opera* (CSEL 65), ed. Alfred Feder (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1916), 9-10. In *Tractatus super psalmos*, Hilary cites Matt 27:25 when discussing Psalm 2 but without comment.

[107] Ambrose, *Saint Ambrose: Letters* 75, trans. Mary Melchior Beyenka (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1954), 426. See also Garroway, "Church Fathers and Antisemitism from the 2nd Century through Augustine (end of 450 CE)," 72-76.

[108] Ambrose, *Saint Ambrose: Letters* 51, p. 275. A work once falsely attributed to Ambrose but belonging to Ambrosiaster: *Questions on the Old and New Testaments*, written after 350, refers to Matt 27:25. Much like Ambrose's *Letter to Irenaeus*, it alludes to Cain's sin and affirms the gravity of the evil committed by those who cried for Christ's blood and would not even spare their children but without mentioning Jewish guilt in general or a curse. Ambrosiaster, *Questions on the Old and New Testaments* 98, trans. John Litteral (South Carolina: CreateSpace, 2018).

[109] Augustine, *The Creed* 7, trans. Mary Liguori (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1955), 305.

His commentary on the psalms further brings the verse to focus. On Psalm 17, he envisages Jesus (and by extension, the Church) praying for divine judgement on his enemies, the ungodly, whose sinfulness persists in their children's behaviour, exclaiming: "This sin be upon us and upon our children."[110] It is uncertain whether this means punishment towards Jews in particular since these opponents are unnamed. He describes them as treading underfoot the pearls of God's words (Matt 7:6) having "been filled with swine's flesh" (mixing Matthean metaphors), which ostensibly expresses a Jewish subject, until he qualifies this unlawful food as "evil works": "Now by 'children' we understand works; and as by good children, good works, so by evil, evil."[111] Indeed, Augustine is reasoning that everyone who lives sinfully is against Christ. In Psalm 59, he identifies those culpable for the cross as "men of blood" who attempted to pass this crime onto their children, "giving it [righteous blood] to their posterity to drink" (citing Matt 27:25), but this was not the entire people for he concedes the Church grew out of the Jews. He is concerned to associate the Saviour's persecution by "men of blood" with that of the Church, involving Jews (for example, in Stephen's martyrdom) but Gentiles too, and he emphasises "the fierceness of that kingdom [of the Romans] against the witnesses of Christ".[112]

It is with these symbolic connotations that one must also read Augustine's response to the Donatist Petilian, which contains an indirect reference to Matt 27:25, stating that though Pilate gave the capital sentence, it was the Jewish people who bore ultimate responsibility, "whose blood Pilate prayed might remain in vengeance upon them and on their children".[113] This partiality towards the Roman governor and attribution of blood vengeance to him results in a very unusual interpretation if taken literally. Two additional expositions cite the verse: on Psalms 64 and 109, where he argues that those Jews who cried out against releasing Jesus were truly cognisant of their evil act, so much so as to swear upon their children, and that by killing him they refused his blessing and demonstrated their love of cursing.[114]

[110] Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms* 17:13, pp. 111-112.
[111] Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms* 17:13, p. 112.
[112] Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, 59:5, pp. 479-480.
[113] Augustine, *Letters of Petilian, the Donatist* 2:93, trans. J.R. King (*NPNF* 1/4), 1141-1142.
[114] Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms*, 64:7, p. 534; 109:17, pp. 1061-1062. This distinction between Christians, pagans and Jews (the latter two rejecting the resurrection) continues in an Easter octave sermon (c. 418): "Ask a Jew whether Christ was crucified, he confesses the crime of his ancestors; he confesses the crime in which he also has a share. You see, he drinks what his ancestors poured out for him: His blood be upon us and

Lastly, in one of Augustine's sermons preached on Easter Monday, there is a statement that anticipates a double entendre reading of the verse, where the Saviour's blood could be accepted as a vehicle of either salvation or destruction contingent on one's subsequent response:

> …many of those who crucified the Lord, who defiled themselves by shedding his blood; many of those who said, *His blood be upon us and upon our children* (Mt 27:25), later on came to believe the apostles bringing them the good news of the resurrection. His blood was indeed upon them, but it was to wash them, not to destroy them; well, upon some to destroy them, upon others to cleanse them; upon those to be destroyed, in justice; upon those to be cleaned, in mercy.[115]

This view may be observed elsewhere, such as in the aforementioned *Creed*, and by one of his Carthaginian correspondents, the bishop Quodvultdeus, who in his *Book of the Promises and Predictions of God* describes, like Tertullian before him, Joseph as a type of Christ betrayed by his brothers into captivity (the first to pharaoh, the second to Pilate), and yet they repented upon realising their sin; so, too, Jesus' Jewish brothers repented when confronted with their guilt: "Likewise the Jews who had said to Pilate, 'His blood be upon us and upon our children,' say to the apostles [in Acts], 'What should we do?'"[116]

Throughout these works, Hilary, Ambrose and Augustine clearly distinguish between the Jewish people broadly and those who were immediately blameworthy for the crucifixion. They accuse the latter group but maintain that Jesus' blood is a source of forgiveness to those who repent, undermining the perspective of national guilt or curse and therefore contrasting in important respects with Jerome and Chrysostom, whose reading aligns more closely with the Eastern Fathers of this period.[117]

The earliest text from the East is Lactantius's *Divine Institutes* (c. 303). He asserts that Jews are "defiled by all sins and stained with the sacred blood of Him upon whom they laid wicked hands [and] are destined for eternal punishments".[118] While restricting retribution to those involved in Christ's trial, his allusion to Matt 27:25 and insistence to "convict them of error

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upon our children." Augustine, "Sermon 234," in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III – Sermons, Volume 7*, trans. Edmund Hill (New Rochelle: New York City Press, 1993), 38.

[115] Augustine, "Sermon 229F," in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III – Sermons, Volume 6*, trans. Edmund Hill (New Rochelle: New York City Press, 1993), 285.

[116] Quodvultdeus, *Book of the Promises and Predictions of God* I:30, ed. René Braun (Paris: Cerf, 1964).

[117] In *The Harmony of the Gospels*, Augustine cites Matt 27:25 in recounting the Passion but without commentary. Augustine, *The Harmony of the Gospels* 3:8, trans. Stewart D.F. Salmond (*NPNF* 1/6), 433-434.

[118] Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 7:1, trans. Mary Francis (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1964), 473-474; see also 4:10, pp. 263-266 and 4:18, pp. 291-296.

and crime" strays close to extending fault to the entire nation.[119] Additionally, in chapter 48 of *Epitome of the Divine Institutes*, Lactantius echoes this by commenting that "no hope remains to the Jews, unless, turning themselves to repentance, and being cleansed from the blood with which they polluted themselves, they shall begin to hope in Him whom they denied". [120] This oblique reference occurs together with concepts of divine rejection, supersessionism and racial guilt.

Like Lactantius, the Church historian Eusebius of Caesarea had a close relationship with Constantine and voices a comparable viewpoint. In a number of writings he openly "blames the Jews for the crucifixion of Jesus, but he nevertheless also states that forgiveness can be granted even for this sin". [121] Sometimes, Matt 27:25 occurs incidentally and without elaboration, such as in *Encomium of the Martyrs*, where Eusebius accuses the Pharisees specifically of being "partakers of his [Jesus'] blood";[122] or *On the Celebration of the Pascha*, where he portrays Jews "at the Pascha that was injurious to their own souls, and asked for the Saviour's blood – not on their own behalf, but to their own detriment". [123] His commentaries are more substantive.

In *Commentary on Isaiah*, Eusebius accounts for "the removal of the gifts of God that shone in the old days" from Israel because of their lawlessness and provoking Him to anger through treasonous tongues and blood defilement, quoting the verse as the prime instance of this, for though the people "may not have been the murderers of the Saviour… they demanded that 'his blood be on them and on their children'".[124] To some degree, he understands these consequences remaining on Jews for their resolute rejection of the gospel, appealing to Constatine's favourable treatment of Christians as proof that God had abandoned and replaced them.[125] Likewise, in his exposition of Psalm 21, Eusebius denounces the Jewish leaders' demand for Christ's blood (citing Matt 27:25) as akin the roaring lion in the scripture,

[119] Lactantius, *Divine Institutes*, 7:1, p. 474.
[120] Lactantius, *Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 48, trans. William Fletcher (*ANF* 7), 549.
[121] Jonathan J. Armstrong, trans., Eusebius, *Commentary on Isaiah* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2013), 35.
[122] Eusebius, *Encomium of the Martyrs*, trans. Benjamin H. Cowper, in William Wright, "The Encomium of the Martyrs," *Journal of Sacred Literature* 5 (1864), §2.
[123] Eusebius, *On the Celebration of the Pascha*, trans. Andrew Eastbourne, in Angelo Mai, *Novae Patrum Bibliotheca* 4 (1847), §10.
[124] Eusebius, *Commentary on Isaiah* §23, p. 64; §362, p. 504.
[125] Armstrong, trans., Eusebius, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 35.

noting "that their children be responsible for the blood of the Saviour".[126] This indictment is found in Psalm 17 as well, where he envisions David praying to be delivered from the contradictions of "the entire people" who "angrily shouted and yelled… 'His blood be upon us and on our children'", and who the king reckons them "against God in this impiety".[127]

Another telling passage occurs in *Demonstratio Evangelica*. In explaining why Jerusalem had been cast down from "the centre of study and education" to become "a Roman farm like the rest of the country… now destroyed, or better, as the Hebrew has it, a stone-quarry", Eusebius appears to raise the idea of generational punishment for the first time in the literature: "Yes, this was the cause of their final misery, for that they pronounced the *impious curse* upon themselves, saying, 'His blood be on us and on our children'."[128] Ferrar's translation is somewhat suspect, however, as the Greek text reads: τῶν ὑστάτων κακῶν (the worst/ultimate of evils), without the gloss of strict chronological "finality", and the cry is not described as an imprecation but as τὴν ἀσεβῆ φωνὴν (the ungodly/impious voice). Nonetheless, while not quoting Matt 27:25, Eusebius does later speak of Jews who "now… draw down the curse [ἀρὰν] of their fathers upon themselves, and are wont with blasphemy and impious words to anathematise [καταναθεματίζειν] our Lord and Saviour and all that believe on Him," so they "shall curse themselves [καταράσονται αὐτοὶ]" (Psalm 109:27).[129] Whether he intends to relate the verse to retribution remaining on Israel is unclear.

In book 9 of *Demonstratio Evangelica*, Eusebius contrasts the success of the Christian mission among Gentiles with "the Jewish nation [τό δε Ιουδαίων έθνος], [which] not receiving Him that was foretold, has paid the fit penalty according to the divine prediction [πρόρρησιν]".[130] This sense of prophetic fulfilment intimates perpetual blame for Jesus' torment: "Surely He has avenged on that people all the blood poured out on the earth, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, yea, even to crown all to the Christ Himself, whose blood they called down not only on themselves but on their children, and *even now they pay the penalty of*

[126] Eusebius, *Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. Roger Pearse, PG 23 (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1857), 208-209.
[127] Eusebius, *Commentary on the Psalms*, 183-184. Eusebius also quotes Matt 27:25 without elaboration when discussing Psalm 58.
[128] Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica* 8:3.3, trans. William J. Ferrar (London: SPCK, 1920), 140 (emphasis added).
[129] Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica* 10:3.20, p. 206. Another reference in 10:8 (p. 231) is restricted to "the rulers of the Jews, the scribes and high priests, and the pharisees, who spurred on the whole multitude to demand His blood against themselves and against their own children".
[130] Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, 9:11.3, p. 176.

their presumptuous sin [εισέτι νύν τής τολμηθείσης αντοίς άσεβείας τήν τιμωρίαν ύπέχουσιν]."[131] The expression is vague and may connote an abiding punishment for past sin or else suffering the effects of refusing conversion.

In *Prophetic Extracts*, Eusebius again ponders God's vengeance on all who have taken innocent blood, especially "all those who dared to yell at him, 'Crucify, crucify him! Away with him from the earth! His blood be upon us and upon our children", and accordingly "God vindicated the blood of Christ upon them and their children. For the punishment has so followed them, that *from the past until the present the whole race has hardly been able to hold up its head* [ως εξ εκείνου είς δευρο μὴ δ' όλως άραι κεφαλὴν τὸ παν έθνος δυνηθήναι]".[132] Here is another illustration of Matt 27:25 substantiating the correspondence between previous sin and contemporary suffering as an enduring penalty, almost suggestive of a curse. These examples from Eusebius's corpus are ambiguous enough to invite the readings we have encountered in the fifth century.

As a student and intellectual descendant of Origen, Didymus the Blind reflects an outlook not unlike Eusebius. His *On the Holy Spirit*, preserved only in a Latin translation by Jerome, reiterates the theme of divine wrath against Jews instantiated by their defeat under the Romans: "They received in due course precisely what they had done to their prophets and their Saviour." [133] The theologian argues for some sense of Jewish national guilt and continuing punishment because "the Lord fought against them, not just for a short time but for every age until the consummation of the world [*sed ad omne futurum saeculum usque ad consummationem mundi*]"; still, this is balanced with the promise of forgiveness that God "freely grants them the opportunity to change their mind about Him". He also ameliorates his severe judgement by remarking that those who executed Jesus lacked "any real thought to what they were doing", citing Matt 27:25 to suggest their recklessness.[134] In *Fragments on the Psalms*, Didymus reflects on Psalm 54 that the "men of blood" had called for Christ's – in

[131] Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica*, 9:11.13-14, p. 176 (emphasis added).
[132] Eusebius, *Prophetic Extracts* 1:15, trans. Thomas Gaisford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1842), 51 (emphasis added).
[133] Didymus, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. Thomas Harry Dallianis (Massachusetts: HCHC, 2003), §48.
[134] Didymus, *On the Holy Spirit*, §48.

fact, all – righteous blood on themselves (quoting the verse), though without charging present Jews specifically.[135]

In a sermon on prayer, Basil of Caesarea imputes the extension of Jews' arms in worship as symbolic of hands full of Jesus' blood for which their forefathers were responsible, yet they too are for "as they persevere in their blindness, they are heirs to the paternal murder [τῆς πατρικῆς μιαιφονίας κληρονόμοι ὑπάρχουσι]", using Matt 27:25 to justify his claim.[136] This image is repeated practically verbatim in Basil's *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah*, where, as with Origen before him, he conjoins Isa 1:15 with Matt 27:25 to depict the outstretched hands of contemporary prayerful Jews as "full of blood", and that their hard-heartedness convicts them as "heirs of their ancestral blood-guilt".[137]

Other authors that reference the verse in this century reflect thinking similar to Western Fathers. For instance, Gregory of Nyssa claims it exemplifies Christ's dishonour by those who are "enemies" and "haters of God".[138] Asterius of Cappadocia (the Sophist) in a homily on Psalm 11 accuses Pilate and Jews as "Lord-killers": Pilate is represented by the water gushing from Christ's side on the cross but the Jews are convicted by the Saviour's blood, mentioning Matt 27:25.[139] Cyril of Jerusalem references the verse in his *Catechetical Lectures*, omitting "on our children", to argue that the blood that flowed from Jesus' side at his death was an indictment on those who plotted against him (past tense) but the water was salvation, prefiguring baptism for those who believed.[140]

Having reviewed interpretations of Matt 27:25 during the 300s, the equivocal language and theology that arises from Eastern writers (especially influenced by Origen) does lend itself to the distinct bloodguilt and curse developments found in Chrysostom and Jerome. A socio-political climate doubtlessly added to this, with increasing separation and hostility between

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[135] Didymus, *Fragments on the Psalms* 54:24, ed. Ekkehard Mühlenberg, *Psalmenkommentare aus der Katenenüberlieferung, Volume 2* (Berlin: Patristische Texte und Studien 16, 1977), 16.
[136] Basil of Caesarea, "Sermon 9: Of Prayer," in *Sermones de moribus a Symeone Metaphrasta collecti*, trans. Roger Pearse, PG 32 (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1857), 1116-1381.
[137] Basil of Caesarea, *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah* 1:37, trans. Nikolai A. Lipatov (Cambridge: Cicero, 2001), 50-51. Some consider this work spurious.
[138] Gregory of Nyssa, "In luciferam sanctam Domini resurrectionem," in *Gregorii Nysseni Opera Volume 9*, ed. Ernestus Gebhardt (Leiden: Brill, 1967). Gregorian authenticity is widely rejected and it is instead attributed to Gregory's contemporary, Amphilochius of Iconium. See *The Brill Dictionary of Gregory of Nyssa*, eds. Lucas Francisco Mateo-Seco and Giulio Maspero (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 162.
[139] Asterius, *Commentary on the Psalms*, ed. Marcel Richard (Oslo: Brogger, 1956), 21:14.
[140] Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 13:21, trans. Edward Hamilton Gifford (*NPNF* 2/7), 263-264.

Christian and Jewish communities. In either case, these conditions were foreign to Matthew's primary audience, whose reading of the verse would thereby likely be distinct from this tradition. The next section will strengthen this inference by exhibiting further differences in how Matt 27:25 was understood.

2.4. The earliest witnesses.

To appreciate the fourth century change facilitating the national curse and bloodguilt interpretations, it is helpful to reflect on earlier citations of Matt 27:25. In doing so, it becomes apparent that the passage gains something of an exegetical snowball effect: it is initially not referenced in anti-Judaic discussions, then becomes broadly associated with justifying past Jewish responsibility for Christ's death and supersessionism in the 200s, before intensifying in the East until it was eventually marshalled to confirm the perspectives of Chrysostom and Jerome.

Tertullian's *Against the Jews* contains the first use of Matt 27:25 in existing patristic literature. For Gaston, this theologian represents a turning point in the development of Christian doctrine as his confrontation with Marcionism motivated him to clarify and solidify the strong anti-Judaic beliefs that were only occasional in preceding eras.[141] In this text, he deems those of Jesus' generation liable for his unjust sentence: he is sold into death as Joseph was sold into slavery by his brothers and "was so remarkably crucified by the people" (a sentiment similarly articulated in *Adversus Marcionem* 3:18).[142] As punishment, Tertullian credits the temple's destruction, Jewish exile and their displacement by the Church as God's people – Dunn calls him "an out-and-out supersessionist; for him, Christianity had replaced the Jews" – as a repetition of the Babylonian deportation for unfaithfulness.[143] This provides the background for quoting Matt 27:25 in *Against the Jews* 8:

> In fact, it had been foretold that anointing was to be eliminated there [the temple]… in the month of March at the time of Passover, on the 25th of March, on the first day

[141] Lloyd Gaston, "Retrospect," in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity, Volume 2: Separation and Polemic*, ed. Stephen G. Wilson (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 163-164; David P. Efroymson, "The Patristic Connection," in *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, ed. Alan T. Davies (New York, Ramsey and Toronto: Paulist, 1979), 105.
[142] Tertullian, *Against the Jews* 10:14, trans. Geoffrey D. Dunn (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 65.
[143] Tertullian, *Apology* 21, trans. Emily Joseph Daly (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1950), 61-62; Dunn, *Tertullian*, 44.

> of unleavened bread on which they slew the lamb at evening, just as Moses had instructed. And so the entire synagogue of the children of Israel killed him, saying to Pilate, when he wanted to release him, "His blood be upon us and upon our children," and, "If you release him you are not a friend of Caesar," in order that everything might be fulfilled that had been written about him.[144]

In this passage, the verse acts as a prooftext to underscore essential Jewish accountability for Christ's death (not merely their leaders: "the entire synagogue of the children of Israel"; or Rome, whose blame Tertullian is eager to dismiss). It functions to explain why cultic sacrifices have ceased and Israel lost her prophetic status. The absence of commentary suggests his audience received this reading straightforwardly and without controversy.

Tertullian's other work that includes Matt 27:25 is *Adversus Marcionem*, where he defends the reasonableness of the OT God's severity in His treatment of Israel. Chastisement, particularly retributive justice on children for their parents' sins, was remedial and not arbitrary, where the promise of generational punishment is intended to temper hardened hearts by persuading potential sinners to reconsider based on the dire consequences faced by their progeny. However, as Israel became softened under God's law, it was "justice [to] no longer judge the nation but individuals".[145] In this context, he writes:

> And yet, if you were to accept the gospel in its true form, you would learn to whom applies this judgement of God who turns the fathers' sins back upon their children, namely to those who were, at a tune [sic] then future, going of their own will to call down this judgement upon themselves, *His blood be on our heads and on our children's*. So then God's foresight in its fullness passed censure upon this which he heard long before it was spoken.[146]

Matt 27:25 reinforces an allusion to Romans 11 and Tertullian's own supersessionism that, providentially, "a hardening has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in" (Rom 11:25). It attests to this intransigence through the self-condemnation of Jews willing to destroy their own children as well as corroborating continuity between the OT and NT, for in the justice of the God of Jesus is recognised the same justice as the OT deity. Tertullian seemingly means the suffering of the immediate Jewish generation subsequent to Christ's death as punishment inflicted "on their children", explored further in *Adversus Marcionem* 3:23 and 3:6. Certainly, the verse here cannot be taken as denouncing the entire race as he previously declared that individuals and not family generations are presently

[144] Tertullian, *Against the Jews* 8:17-18, p. 58.
[145] Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 2:15, trans. Ernest Evans (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 129.
[146] Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 2:15, p. 129.

subjected to divine judgement.[147] As with *An Answer to the Jews*, Tertullian has applied the verse to assert Jewish responsibility for the crucifixion and explain why Gentiles have responded more favourably to conversion.

Another Western Father and a disciple of Irenaeus, Hippolytus of Rome, argued that the Jews killed the true Passover, and resultingly suffered "their celebrated temple" to be destroyed and perpetual servitude (*Expository Treatise Against the Jews* 6; noticeably, this book does not cite Matt 27:25 to support these claims).[148] In his commentary *On Genesis*, Hippolytus refers to Matt 27:25 in a typological exposition of Gen 49:5-7. He Identifies the hamstrung oxen as a type of Christ, with Simeon and Levi symbolising the scribes and priests respectively. Like a strong bull, Jesus is the sacrificial victim who was hamstrung (killed) by the Jews who boasted: "His blood (be upon us), and so forth."[149] He notes that Simeon and Levi were "cursed" for their anger, and nothing more than a parallel fate for the scribes and priests – those direct participants at the time – can be ascertained from this, certainly not an indictment of all Jewish people.[150] (In fact, Hippolytus concludes that this tribal "curse" was recalled and converted into a blessing for Levi because of their zeal; only Simeon retained it.)

In the East, only one theologian remarks upon the verse in the 200s: Origen.[151] Amidst the plethora of Origen's works, a view comparable to his contemporaries' surfaces. For instance, he believes the devastating First Roman-Jewish War was an outcome of Jesus' unlawful execution, and he reflects that Josephus "sought for the cause of the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. He ought to have said that the plot against Jesus was the reason why these catastrophes came upon the people, because they had killed the prophesied Christ".[152] However, he neither imputes a curse nor continued Jewish guilt; in fact, according to Origen, Christ himself desired that his people be spared torment when he prayed: "Father,

[147] Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 2:15, p. 129.
[148] Hippolytus, *Expository Treatise Against the Jews* 6, trans. S.D.F. Salmond (*ANF* 5), 539. See also Carolyn K. Sanzenbacher, "Early Christian Teachings on Jews: A Necessary Cause of the Antisemitism that Informed the Holocaust," M. Arts Thesis (University of North Carolina, 2010), 22.
[149] Hippolytus, *On Genesis* 49:5, trans. S.D.F. Salmond (*ANF* 5), 408-409.
[150] Erwin Buck, "Anti-Judaic Sentiments in the Passion Narrative According to Matthew," in *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity, Volume 1: Paul and the Gospels*, eds. Peter Richardson and David Granskou (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1998), 170-171, 178.
[151] The only other extant work from the Eastern Church that cites Matt 27:25 during the 200s is *Didascalia Apostolorum*, recounting it as part of the Passion without interpretive comments. *Didascalia Apostolorum: An English Version with Introduction and Annotation* 21, trans. Alistair Stewart-Sykes (Belgium: Brepols, 2009), 221.
[152] Origen, *Against Celsus* 1:47, trans. Henry Chadwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 43; see also 2:78 and 4:22.

if it be possible, let this cup pass from me."[153] The cup of national punishment was unwelcome to God, and the theologian's generally mild treatment of Judaism mostly eschews the bitter tone soon to proliferate in Christian apologetics.[154] While he regarded acceptance of the gospel as a prerequisite for redemption, a view of the transtemporal nature of OT truths and progressive revelation tempered his replacement theology.[155]

Origen refers to Matt 27:25 in several sermons. In *Homilies on Joshua*, the red ribbon Rahab tied to her window as a sign to prevent the bloodshed of her family (Josh 2:17-20) is understood typologically as carrying the blood of Christ, the source of salvation and life. "Therefore," he elucidates, "if anyone wants to be saved, let him come into the house of this one who was once a prostitute… Let him come to this house in which the blood of Christ is the sign of redemption. For among those who said, 'His blood be upon us and upon our children,' the blood of Christ is for condemnation. For Jesus had been appointed 'for the ruin and the resurrection of many'. Therefore, for those refuting his sign, his blood effects punishment; for those who believe, salvation."[156] A double-sense meaning of Jesus' blood is given here: it is destructive to those rejecting it but salvific to believers. Nevertheless, even judgement is limited to "among those" who called for Christ's death and does not in principle involve successive generations.

In a later homily, Origen engages another typology of Aaron standing between those who survived or perished during the plague in Numbers 16. Likewise, Jesus is the antitype who intercedes between the living and the dying, between "those Jews who accepted his presence and those who not only did not accept but killed themselves more completely than him, saying, 'The blood of that one be upon us and upon our sons!'"[157] Again, limited judgement is proposed for active persecutors, not those "who accepted his presence", because his blood has the double effect of life-giving and life-destroying.

[153] Origen, *Against Celsus* 2:25, p. 90.
[154] See, for instance, Nicholas R.M. De Lange, *Origen and the Jews: Studies in Jewish-Christian Relations in Third-Century Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 64-76.
[155] Michael G. Azar, "Origen, Scripture and the Imprecision of 'Supersessionism'," *Journal of Theological Interpretation* 10:2 (2016): 157-172.
[156] Origen, *Homilies on Joshua* 3:5, trans. Barbara J. Bruce (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 49-50.
[157] Origen, *Homilies on Joshua* 26:3, p. 219.

Origen's *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* includes two other citations of Matt 27:25. The first reference survives in the Greek original while the second below only from a later Latin recension. He uses a marital analogy to illustrate how the "the mother of the people [Israel] separated herself from Christ, her husband", with the bill of divorce being the old covenant law.[158] Christ has now wed himself to the Gentiles and the annulment of the previous relationship was manifested when "Jerusalem was destroyed along with what they called the sanctuary" and "the altar of burnt offerings", the cessation of sacrifices and feasts.[159] Why did this separation occur? Because, according to Origen, the former wife (the Jews) did something unseemly in preferring Barabbas over her true husband. He then quotes the verse in the context of this scene before Pilate. Still, the citation goes without commentary, and this argument does not entail that all Jews have been disconnected from God, for in the same passage, he states that this divorce has happened to only "some of that synagogue". For Origen, responsibility and guilt for Jesus' death belongs to those who perpetrated it and refused to repent.

The Latin iteration of Origen's *Commentary* strikes a slightly divergent chord from his other writings that may raise questions about its authenticity. In one passage on Matthew 27, he quotes v. 25 and affirms that by calling Christ's blood upon themselves and their children, the Jews "are as a matter of fact not only guilty of the blood of the prophets, but… they are guilty also of the blood of Christ". Isa 1:15 is cited to again intimate the same divorce theme as before: God will turn away from them as their hands are "full of blood". Then, however, the ecclesial writer curiously states that this blood is not solely "blamed upon their leaders, who were alive then, but also on all the generations of the Jews, even to the consummation of the world [propterea sanguis non solum super eos factus est, qui tunc fuerimt, verum etiam super omnes generationes ludaeorum post sequentes usque ad consummationem]". [160] This sentence is somewhat unclear, apparently suggesting guilt in virtue of shedding Christ's blood, though some scholars provide a more neutral translation.[161] If not a redaction, this Latin

[158] Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* 14:19, trans. John Patrick (*ANF* 9), 1007-1008
[159] Origen, *Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* 14:19, pp. 1007-1008.
[160] Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* §124, ed. Erich Klostermann and Ernst Benz (Leipzig: Teubner, 1933).
[161] See, for example, Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave, Volume 1* (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 384.

version represents the sole interpretation of the passage to date that supports enduring national condemnation for Jesus' crucifixion.[162]

Before concluding, it is worth noting the silence on the part of second century Fathers who, though familiar with Matthew's Gospel, do not reference Matt 27:25 in writings where one might expect them to do so. Justin, for example, holds Jews accountable for the crucifixion and is a seminal figure in connecting the Roman destruction of Jerusalem with punishment for this injustice.[163] Lauding Gentile acceptance of the faith, he censures Christ's contemporaries for his death (chapters 35 and 49 of *First Apology*, repeated in *Dialogue with Trypho,* mainly in chapters 133-137).[164] Justin knows Matthew's Passion intimately and quotes from it in the vicinity of chapters 94-96 of the *Dialogue* but does not even allude to Matt 27:25. Since these chapters contain an extensive discourse on covenant imprecations and claims that "the Father of the Universe willed that His Christ should shoulder the curses of the whole human race… not because the Crucified One is cursed by God, but because God predicted what would be done by all of you Jews", such an exchange with his Jewish interlocutor on themes ostensibly corresponding to Matt 27:25 (Jesus' execution and who is at fault, curses resulting from sin) welcomes citing the verse as added evidentiary weight to his apologetic, as future writers like Origen and Eusebius do.[165] It would also be an ideal appeal to repentance: "But, if you curse Him and those who believe in Him, and, whenever it is in your power, put them to death, how will you prevent retribution from being demanded of you for having laid hands on Him, as of unjust and sinful men who are completely devoid of feeling and wisdom?"[166] Lovsky candidly notes the patristic author's omission here: "Il est troublant de remarquer qu'il ne cite pourtant pas le v. 25, comme si celui-ci n'avait pas encore la signification qu'il recevra plus tard."[167]

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[162] A work previously attributed to Origen but now commonly considered by Gregory of Elvira, *Tractates on the Books of Holy Scripture*, references Matt 27:25 twice. The first instance occurs without commentary. In tractate 9, Gregory explains how Jesus' death is "bitter food for you [the Jews] in future", especially those who shouted: "His blood be upon us and upon our children." Gregory of Elvira, "Origen's Tractates on the Books of Holy Scripture," in *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers*, trans. Jean Danielou (London: Burns & Oates, 1960), tract. 9; see also tract. 3.

[163] Sanzenbacher, "Early Christian Teachings on Jews," 23.

[164] Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 35, 49, trans. Thomas B. Falls (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1948), 72-73, 85-86; Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 133-137, pp. 353-360.

[165] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 95-96, pp. 298-300.

[166] Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 95, pp. 298-299.

[167] Lovsky, "Comment Comprendre 'Son Sang Sur Nous et Nos Enfants'?", 346.

Similarly, Irenaeus may have had cause to refer to Matt 27:25 in his defence of Christian orthodoxy. Throughout *Against Heresies* he identifies the Jews as having "in themselves jealousy like to Cain; therefore they slew the Just One" and, as with Justin, compares this persecution to Christians of his own day.[168] His anti-Jewish polemic is not incidental but, like Tertullian after him, theologically driven to counter Marcionism and explain the continuity and divergence between the OT and NT people of God.[169] In *Against Heresies* 5:14, Irenaeus examines divine concern for innocent blood unjustly taken and the requisite redemption, referencing Cain (Gen 4:10), Noah (Gen 9:5-6) and Jesus' very words in Matt 23:35-36. As a means of atoning for the murder of God's holy ones, Christ's death recapitulates the blood-debt in himself. Again, it is striking that someone well acquainted with the First Gospel and contemplating key ideas from our Matthean text (the shedding of righteous blood, subsequent guilt incurred and Jesus' sharing of both parties involved) should not raise Matt 27:25 if its standard interpretation convicted Jews in this manner. Lovsky too notices this in relation to *Against Heresies* 3:23, where Irenaeus defends the belief that Adam is the first to be saved by Christ while Cain is cursed for murder, contending that in the mind of theologians the verse's association with malediction for killing an innocent had not yet been formed.[170]

2.5. Concluding remarks.

Surveying reception history from the late first century to the early 500s has revealed several points of interest. Foremost among these is that available documentation challenges the long-held belief that Matt 27:25 was originally and incontestably read through a lens of bloodguilt or curse upon Israel. It was instead a later development. Despite growing hostility between Jews and Christians throughout the empire and the proliferation of ideas reflecting this antagonism, such as the belief that Jesus was primarily crucified by the Jews (and only secondarily by Roman authorities), whose accountability has resulted in a loss of temple, exile and covenantal status (a budding supersessionism), there is little sense of perennial national guilt (and certainly no blood curse), outside of Origen's Latin translation, which, if genuine

[168] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4:18.3, 21.3, trans. James Donaldson and Alexander Roberts (*ANF* 1), 1211, 1227.
[169] Efroymson, "The Patristic Connection," 106.
[170] Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3:23.4, pp. 1147-1148; Lovsky, "Comment Comprendre 'Son Sang Sur Nous et Nos Enfants'?", 346.

(though unlikely), may explain why those directly influenced by him tended to adopt this perspective. Furthermore, the earliest patristic sources, while unanimously maintaining that contemporary Jews needed to convert to be saved (as did Gentiles), tend to emphasise the double-effect of Jesus' blood and do not reference the verse to justify anti-Judaic arguments.

The curse and national bloodguilt interpretations hold little currency until the mid-300s (and even then had far from global acceptance), found largely among those ecclesial figures influenced by Origen: Eusebius, Basil, Chrysostom, and Jerome.[171] This interpretive change corresponded with the improved social status of the Christian Church and escalating tensions against Jewish communities. Theologians were likely solidified in anti-Semitic attitudes that then predisposed their exegesis, with fifth century authors repeating and consolidating the perspective that would become the norm during the medieval period, including: Pseudo-Athanasius, Maximinus the Arian, Peter Chrysologus, Leo the Great, Cyril of Alexandria, Theodoret, Procopius of Gaza, *The Passing of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, and *Gospel of Nicodemus*. Ultimately, these details demonstrate how the passage has hitherto generally served to sustain polemics rather than chiefly engaging with the story world of the Gospel, the subject to which this thesis now turns.

[171] Lovsky, "Comment Comprendre 'Son Sang Sur Nous et Nos Enfants'?", 348-349.

Chapter 3: The Jewish Character of Matthew's Gospel

3.1. Introduction.

The oldest extant witnesses attach the First Gospel to Hebrew origins.[172] Notwithstanding the unreliability of such a compositional tradition, it is impossible to evade the worldview premised by the text: "The story is a story about the Jewish people and, more specifically, about a Jewish individual whom the narrator claims is their Messiah. The default position of the narrative, one might say, is Jewish."[173] Examining Matthew's distinctive characteristics exposes an authorial identity, audience and discourse of meaning consistent with a first century Jewish *Sitz im Leben*.[174] The narrative world's integral Jewishness shall serve as a framework through which to engage its specific exegetical features in subsequent chapters and govern how Matt 27:25 is interpreted, contesting a reading that condemns Israel.[175] Although this literary analysis is methodologically independent from those historical and sociological, it will incorporate their insights to provide a more holistic account.[176]

3.2. The Jewishness of Jesus, the Gospel's hero.

The Gospel of Matthew is a biography of Jesus, its protagonist, whose life is inextricably associated with the Jewish people.[177] Throughout the plot, readers are positioned to adopt the role of Christ's followers and evaluate various character groups from his ideological point

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[172] Papias's account of the Gospel's original Hebrew or Aramaic composition (c. 130) is recorded in Eusebius *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.16 and supported by many, including Irenaeus, Origen, Clement of Alexandria, Jerome, Epiphanius, and Augustine. David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew: New Century Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 23, 27; Boris Repschinski, *The Controversy Stories in the Gospel of Matthew: Their Redaction, Form and Relevance for the Relationship Between the Matthean Community and Formative Judaism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Reprecht, 2000), 13-14.

[173] Anders Runesson, "Aspects of Matthean Universalism: Ethnic Identity as a Theological Tool in the First Gospel," in *Matthew Within Judaism: Israel and the Nations in the First Gospel*, eds. Anders Runesson and Daniel M. Gurtner (Atlanta: SBL, 2020), 107, 113.

[174] Petri Merenlahti and Raimo Hakola, "Reconceiving Narrative Criticism," in *Characterisation in the Gospels: Reconceiving Narrative Criticism*, eds. David M. Rhoads and Kari Syreeni (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1999), 47-48; Viljoen, "Reading Matthew as a Historical Narrative," 1.

[175] Przbylski recognises the significance of this background for "if the final redaction has a Jewish Christian setting, then Matthean anti-Judaism must be seen in terms of an *internal* Jewish dispute" rather than "Gentiles *versus* Jews". Przbylski, "The Setting of Matthean Anti-Judaism," 184.

[176] Anslow, "The Prophetic Vocation of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew," 8-9.

[177] Graham N. Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus, Second Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 13-18. See also Richard A. Burridge, *What are the Gospels? A Comparison with Greco-Roman Biography* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004).

of view where "the fundamental significance of Israel's theological tradition emerges… from beginning to end".[178]

The opening genealogy situates the hero within a family that includes notable individuals from Israel's past and "firmly places Jesus in the context of the sweep of Jewish history"; particularly, the nation's experience of covenantal faithfulness, infidelity and deportation that culminates in the hope of messianic redemption (Matt 1:16-17, 21).[179] This beginning chapter additionally applies to Jesus important titles that outline his identity and mission: several times he is called a "son of Abraham", Israel's primeval patriarch (Matt 1:1-2, 17), and the "Christ" and "son of David", the ideal Jewish king (Matt 1:1, 6-7, 17; see also Matt 1:20; 12:23; 15:22, 24; 21:9; 21:15), with other titles like "Son of God" and "Lord" referring to the monarch who, as God's powerful representative, teaches, heals, and restores the Davidic kingdom, all tasks the protagonist undertakes.[180] In similar fashion to other Jewish messianic movements, Matthew partly justifies his Christological convictions by accommodating OT texts to cohere with Jesus' life story.[181]

Plot events further depict the Gospel's protagonist recapitulating key salvific moments from Israel's history as the narrative's "creative combination of many of the archetypal figures, leaders, and roles found in the Bible" forms his character "into *the* transcendent teacher, revealer, ruler, and saviour authorised by God".[182] Apart from extended Mosaic imagery (discussed below), the quotation from Jer 31:15/Matt 2:18 recalls Rachel, the favoured wife of Jacob/Israel, and identifies the persecuted children of Israel with the threatened Christ

[178] Matthias Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2014), 369; Viljoen, "Reading Matthew as a Historical Narrative," 3.
[179] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 111; Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 50.
[180] Joshua W. Jipp, *The Messianic Theology of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), 9-24; Anthony J. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 192; James D.G. Dunn, "Matthew – A Jewish Gospel for Jews and Gentiles," in *Matthew and Mark Across Perspectives: Essay in Honour of Stephen C. Barton and William R. Telford*, eds. Kristian A. Bendoraitis and Niljay K. Gupta (London: Bloomsbury, T&T Clark, 2016), 127. Throughout the narrative, Jesus is identified, sometimes ironically, as the Davidic Messiah and "King of the Jews": by the magi (Matt 2:2, 11); Herod (Matt 2:8, 16); the chief priests and scribes (Matt 2:5-6; 26:68; 27:42); John the Baptist (Matt 11:2-3); his own disciples (Matt 16:16); people seeking Jesus' aid (Matt 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31); Romans, like Pilate and his soldiers (Matt 27:11, 17, 22, 29, 37); and, significantly, Christ (Matt 16:20; 24:5) and the narrator (Matt 1:1, 16-18) themselves.
[181] Matthew V. Novenson, *The Grammar of Messianism: An Ancient Jewish Political Idiom and Its Users* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 206-207.
[182] Jack D. Kingsbury, "The Plot of Matthew's Story," *Interpretation* 46:4 (1992): 347; Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 193.

child. Both also cross through water (Exod 14:21-22/Matt 3:16) to endure a period of forty years/days in the wilderness (Deut 8:2/Matt 4:1-2), with citations from Deuteronomy during Jesus' temptation deriving from the parallel OT situation (Matt 8:4/Deut 8:3; Matt 4:7/Deut 6:16; Matt 4:10/Deut 6:13).[183]

Such a portrayal invites us to recognise that "[t]he story of Israel and the story of Jesus become one and the same"; the Gospel continues the Jewish people's history and presents its concerns as corporately shared by the audience.[184] This familial connection is highlighted using the metaphor of Israel as the "lost sheep" of Christ the shepherd (Matt 9:36; 10:6; 15:24; 25:31-33; 26:31, critiquing contemporary Jewish leadership as false shepherds and traffickers in the sheep: Matt 27:3-5/Zech 11:11-13), whose gathering activity signifies the restoration of the twelve tribes, through twelve apostles as their judges (Matt 10:1; 19:28).[185]

In substantiating Jesus' messianic claim, he is given the prophetic appellation "Emmanuel" (Matt 1:23/Isa 7:14). Matthew translates the Hebrew (the only time he does so outside two Aramaic expressions borrowed from Mark: Matt 27:33/Mark 15:22; Matt 27:46/Mark 15:32), which does not simply educate readers that "Emmanuel" means "God with us" (supernatural manifestation through Christ) but underscores that "us" co-identifies the author and audience with Israel. Likewise, when he references Mic 5:1 there is a slight but significant alteration from existing MT and LXX versions to include a possessive adjective: "a ruler who will govern [literally 'shepherd'] *my* people Israel" (Matt 2:6), signifying those to whom the divine voice is committed.[186] Finally, Matthew correlates Jesus and Israel with Isaiah's Servant (directly, in Matt 12:18/Isa 42:1; see also Matt 21:33-41/Isa 5:1-7), who comes as light to the nations and bears testimony through suffering (Matt 10:17-18; Matt 20:18-19).[187] This

[183] The period of temptation undergone by Christ and the threat to his life also recall Israel's patriarchal heroes, such as Abraham and Moses. Culpepper, *Matthew*, 69.

[184] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 110, 113; Charles H. Dodd, *The Founder of Christianity* (London: Collins, 1970), 106; Amy-Jill Levine, "Matthew, Mark, and Luke: Good News or Bad?" in *Jesus, Judaism and Christian Anti-Judaism: Reading the New Testament after the Holocaust*, eds. Paula Fredriksen and Adele Reinhartz (Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 88; Francois P. Viljoen, "Matthew, the Church and Anti-Semitism," *Verbum Et Ecclesia*, JRG, 28:2 (2007): 705-706.

[185] Staples, "Reconstructing Israel," 464-467; Repschinski, *The Controversy Stories in the Gospel of Matthew*, 15; Culpepper, *Matthew*, 368-369.

[186] Compare Matt 2:6: "…ἡγούμενος ὅστις ποιμανεῖ τὸν λαόν μου τὸν Ἰσραήλ" with MT: "…להיות מושל בישראל" and LXX: "…ἄρχοντα ἐν τῷ Ἰσραήλ". The verb "will shepherd" again employs the Jesus/shepherd and Israel/sheep metaphor.

[187] Note the application of this Suffering Servant passage to Jesus with reference to the one whom God "loves" and whose Spirit has come upon him, Matt 3:16-17: "Ἰδοὺ ὁ παῖς μου ὃν ᾑρέτισαὁ ἀγαπητός μου ὃν εὐδόκησεν ἡ ψυχή μου θήσω τὸ Πνεῦμά μου ἐπ' αὐτόν…" Cf. the MT which reads "uphold" rather than "the beloved" and

intimate relationship between the protagonist and Jewish people reveals a profound interest in Israel's fate that was evidently meaningful to the Gospel's recipients.

3.3. The Jewishness of the story world.

Matthew's narrative is informed by and affirms a Jewish worldview consistent with first century Judea. Most notable is its treatment of Torah, which is proposed as a means of justification (Matt 5:18; 7:19-23; 12:33-37; 19:17; 21:34, 41; 25:31-46) and aspects of the law treated as commonplace, for example: "Or have you not read in the law how on the sabbath the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are guiltless?" (Matt 12:5; cf. Mark 2:23-28 and Luke 6:1-5, which lack this insert); or the divorce exception clause unique to this Gospel (Matt 5:32; 19:9; cf. Mark 10:11-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Cor 7:10-13) and appearing to weigh in on a debate between the schools of Shammai and Hillel.[188] Emphasis is consistently placed on Christ's legitimate legal and ethical interpretations, and that he and his followers preserve and fulfill rather than violate the law; there is no sense of antinomianism (Matt 5:17-19; cf. Luke 16:17).[189] Such is the author's respect for Torah and its foundational prophet that Jesus even enjoins the disciples to obey his ideological opponents, the scribes and Pharisees, because they are authorised exponents of Mosaic teaching (Matt 23:2-3).[190]

This equally relates to specific Jewish traditions, such as observant dress (phylacteries and fringes, Matt 9:20; 14:36; 23:5; Exod 13:9, 16; Num 15:38; Deut 6:8; 11:18), being called "rabbi" (Matt 23:7; cf. 23:8), harvest tithes (Matt 23:23; Deut 14:22), and cleanliness prescriptions (Matt 23:25-26; Lev 11:32-38).[191] The teachings discussed within the text are therefore

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the LXX, which specifies Jacob and Israel as upheld and elected (associating the people with the servant). The text has possibly been adapted to clarify to readers that Jesus is not only God's Servant, as prophesied, but also takes on the vocation of his people, Israel.

[188] Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 8-10; Repschinski, *The Controversy Stories in the Gospel of Matthew*, 15; Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 37-38.

[189] Stephen G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians 70-170 CE* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 49.

[190] Culpepper, *Matthew*, 441-442.

[191] J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 148.

instances of Jewish halakhah, affording a definitive guiding axis for living according to the law.[192]

Indeed, the narrator recognises not only the Pentateuch but the whole OT as testifying to his Messiah. It is cited extensively, authoritatively and repeatedly for apologetic reasons and occasionally without specifying sources, implying an audience knowledgeable enough to understand the evidentiary case being made (and perhaps, therefore, one with a Jewish background).[193] The harmony between Jesus' story and that of Israel's scriptures is reinforced through twelve fulfilment formulae: "This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet…" (Matt 1:22/Isa 7:14; Matt 2:15/Hos 11:1, 17/Jer 31:15, 23; Matt 4:14/Isa 9:1-2; Matt 8:17/Isa 53:4; Matt 12:17/Isa 42:1-4; Matt 13:14/Isa 6:9-10, 35/Ps 78:2; Matt 21:4/Zech 9:9/Isa 62:11; Matt 26:56/?; Matt 27:9/Zech 11:13). These testify to Matthew's belief that Christ continues God's redemptive work among His people and through his solidarity with Israel replaces not the nation but obsolete authority structures.[194]

Israel's institutions are treated with reverence as well. The temple and its cult are honoured (Matt 5:23-24; 12:3-6; 23:19-21),[195] with Jesus assenting to pay the temple tax (Matt 17:24-27, a vignette solely in Matthew that is quite remarkable since it may be read in the context of criticism towards its annual payment) and a revising of critical Markan passages (the absence, for instance, of Christ sitting "opposite" [κατέναντι] the treasury/temple, Mark 12:41; 13:3).[196] Readers are expected to be familiar with synagogue attendance (Matt 6:2, 5),

[192] Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 48; Roland Deines, "Not the Law but the Messiah: Law and Righteousness in the Gospel of Matthew – An Ongoing Debate," in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gunter (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008), 55, 62; Donald A. Hagner, "Holiness and Ecclesiology: The Church in Matthew," in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gunter (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008), 172-173.

[193] Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 148; Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 17; Donald Senior, "Directions in Matthean Studies," in *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study: Studies in Memory of William G. Thompson, SJ*, ed. David E. Aune (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2001): 11-12.

[194] Kinsel, "Jesus as Israel in Matthew's Gospel," 102-103; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 107; Dunn, "Matthew – A Jewish Gospel for Jews and Gentiles," 128.

[195] Cohen writes: "The Matthean Jesus affirms the validity of Israel's cult, the offering of sacrifices on its θυσιαστήριον (5:23-24), and tithing to the temple's priests (23:23c)… The contribution of recent scholarship related to Matthew's view of the temple has advanced the discussion and provided a strong case for Matthew's *positive view of the temple*." Akiva Cohen, "Matthew and the Temple" in *Matthew Within Judaism: Israel and the Nations in the First Gospel*, eds. Anders Runesson and Daniel M. Gurtner (Atlanta: SBL, 2020), 76, 83-84, 87 (emphasis in original).

[196] Jodi Magness, *Stone and Dung, Oil and Spit: Jewish Daily Life in the Time of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 101-102. Matthew's cursing of the fig tree (Matt 23:37-24:2; cf. Mark 11:12-14, 20-25) removes the Markan sandwich and transforms an episode centred on the temple's judgement into one about the power of prayer. Furthermore, placing the prediction of the temple's destruction (Matt 23:37-24:2) alongside the

presenting as norms (Matt 15:1-6; cf. Mark 7:1-13) Jewish religious practices like avoiding unclean animals (such as swine, Matt 7:6), maintaining lawful Sabbath living (Matt 12:1-14; 24:20), and celebrating festivals (Matt 26:2, 17-35).[197] Another probable indicator of a Jewish setting is knowledge of Semitisms like Ῥακά (Matt 5:22) and κορβανᾶν (Matt 27:6), which are assumed without elaboration, as are the expressions "kingdom of heaven", "I adjure you by the living God" (Matt 26:63), "brood of vipers" (Matt 3:7; 12:34; 23:33), or traditional metaphors of magisterial teaching: "binding and loosing" (Matt 16:19; 18:18), sitting on "Moses' seat" (Matt 23:2), and "practice and observe" (Matt 8:4; 23:3).[198]

Jerusalem is regarded somewhat ambiguously. The protagonist is identified as a Galilean despite being born in Bethlehem (Matt 2:23; 21:11; 26:69, 71) and that region becomes a place of relative safety compared to the city, whose inhabitants are "troubled" and "stirred" at his arrival (Matt 2:22; 4:12; cf. Matt 2:3 and 21:10; it is the "crowds that went before him", fellow pilgrims to the city, that hail "the prophet Jesus from Nazareth of Galilee", Matt 21:9-11). It is in Jerusalem where Christ will eventually be executed and his resurrection covered up (Matt 28:11-15), with the single post-resurrection appearance occurring elsewhere (Matt 28:10, 16). Still, there are several indications that Jerusalem is held in esteem. It is called the "holy city" (Matt 4:5; 27:53) of "the great king" (Matt 5:35) and remorse is expressed over its future (Matt 23:37-39).[199] Strikingly, it is here where the dead are raised and appear to many (Matt 27:52-53). The lexical composition of this last passage links their resurrection (v.52) to Jesus' (v.53), and the "bodies of the holy ones" (σώματα τῶν ἁγίων, v.52) with Jerusalem,

condemnation of the scribes and Pharisees rather than after the story of the poor widow and the temple treasury (Mark 12:41-13:2, a story absent in this Gospel), transfers guilt for the sanctuary's fate onto the socio-religious leaders rather than cultic practice itself. Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 55; Daniel M. Gurtner, "Matthew's Theology of the Temple and the 'Parting of the Ways': Christian Origins and the First Gospel," in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gunter (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008), 140-141, 152.

[197] Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 121, 141; Anthony J. Saldarini, "Reading Matthew without Anti-Semitism," in *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study: Studies in Memory of William G. Thompson*, *SJ*, ed. David E. Aune (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2001): 168-169.

[198] Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 40; Resseguie, "Reader-Response Criticism and the Synoptic Gospels," 308-309; Powell, "Literary Approaches and the Gospel of Matthew," 60, 65-66. In addition, several scholars have argued for Hebrew and/or Aramaic grammatical and stylistic features of the Gospel, or at a minimum, that the present Greek betrays a background knowledge of Semitic languages. J Engelbrecht, "The Language of the Gospel of Matthew," *Neotestamentica* 24:2 (1990): 202-208.

[199] Richard T. France, "Matthew and Jerusalem," in *Built Upon the Rock: Studies in the Gospel of Matthew*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner (Grand Rapids and Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2008), 114, 126.

"the holy city" (τὴν ἁγίαν πόλιν, v.53), which accentuates the "holiness" of all three subjects: Christ, the risen dead, and Jerusalem.

3.4. Understanding pro-Gentile and supposedly anti-Judaic language.

Matthew's story maintains an obvious affinity with Israel through the presentation of its hero and endorsement of Jewish scripture, traditions and religious outlook. Many scholars accept without controversy that, in Levine's words, this "most Jewish" of Gospels "is replete with explicit fulfilment citations, references to biblical instruction, appeals to biblical characters. These references are almost unanimously positive… the covenant with Israel is preserved".[200]

However, Matt 27:25 has historically been cast alongside other passages that appear to carry a pro-Gentile bias or be anti-Judaic in tone, and this impression needs to be explained to coherently defend Matthew's Jewish provenance. While the next section hypothesises a socio-historical account that explicates this inconsistency as arising from the rivalry between competing sects, a literary response can also be drawn from the narrative itself. This lies in the story's drama, where certain non-Jewish characters behave as Jews should do to purposely reinforce their righteousness in contrast to those within Israel (especially authority figures) who, despite their privileged position vis-à-vis the covenant, fail to live justly, and whose animosity towards Christ is rooted in such shortcomings.

Several Gentile characters emerge from the story as positive figures: the magi (Matt 2:1-12), centurion (Matt 8:5-13), and Canaanite woman (Matt 15:21-28). They find favour in the audience's eyes precisely because they act in ways non-Jews customarily do not.[201] In particular, they exhibit faith in Jesus and God thereby realising Israel's vocation of evangelisation to the nations, a minor mission that is expanded at the Gospel's conclusion (Matt 4:15-16; 12:18-21; 24:9-14; 28:19-20).[202] As Kampen observes, Christ's parting commission continues but enlarges the missionary task of Matt 10:5-6, with Gentiles having

[200] Amy-Jill Levine, "Anti-Judaism and the Gospel of Matthew," in *Anti-Judaism and the Gospels*, ed. William R. Farmer (Harrisburg: Trinity International, 1999), 19, 21.
[201] Runesson, "Aspects of Matthean Universalism," 114.
[202] Viljoen, "Matthew, the Church and Anti-Semitism," 709-710. In reflecting on the Great Commission, Levine states: "The Jews do not lose any soteriological privilege; rather, in light of the change in Jesus' status (28:18), the Gentiles gain the privilege that they did not have prior to the cross and resurrection…" Levine, "Anti-Judaism and the Gospel of Matthew," 14-15.

an essential place in Jewish eschatology from a "vision of exclusive inclusivity described in the final chapters of Isaiah" where "[f]oreigners are an integral part of the description of the faithful returnees as they gather in Jerusalem (Isaiah 60; 66:20) and recognise the activity of God in its restoration".[203]

That such favourable depictions occur because these characters inhabit a Jewish space is made clearer by comparison with the otherwise uniformly negative gloss on foreign culture. Gentiles are coupled with tax collectors (also targets of evangelisation) as lacking divine graciousness and to be shunned (Matt 5:46-47; 18:17), pray in a superstitious manner (Matt 6:7), overly worry about earthly concerns (Matt 6:32; cf. Luke 12:30, which lacks this criticism), rule without Jesus' servant mind (Matt 20:25), and persecute him and his followers (Matt 20:18-19; 24:9).[204] Moreover, the protagonist instructs the twelve to "go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans" (Matt 10:5) but only "all the towns of Israel" (Matt 10:23). Such injunctions against non-Jews do not generally occur in the other Synoptics (where, for instance, Christ has no hesitation in visiting the Decapolis region, Mark 5:1-20; 7:31, or Samaria, Luke 9:51-53, with their characterisation being more agreeable, Luke 10:30-37; 17:11-19; also note the possible ethnocentrism regarding the temple in Matthew, where the phrase "a house of prayer *for all the nations*" is removed from its description, Mark 11:17a/Isa 56:7; cf. Matt 21:13). The narrative largely takes for granted that non-Jews generally live unjustly and encourages readers not to identify with them but consider them as potential converts.[205]

Paradoxically, while the Gospel accepts some Gentiles as worthy followers of God's Messiah but criticises their lifestyle, it rejects some Jews as unworthy while affirming their traditions. The presentation of these latter characters serves the plot's drama by establishing formidable villains, evoking sympathy towards the hero and his allies, and providing a justification for certain Jewish people rejecting Jesus. Readers are moved to beware the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matt 16:12; cf. Mark 8:15) because of their offence at Christ and his ministry (Matt 9:3, 11, 34; 12:2, 14, 24, 38; 15:1-2, 12; 16:1; 19:3; 22:15), defining their

[203] Kampen, *Matthew Within Sectarian Judaism*, 127, 135.
[204] Anders Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations: Matthean Community History as Pharisaic Intragroup Conflict," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127:1 (2008): 104; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 47.
[205] Runesson believes the text's rhetoric "results in a pairing of 'unrepentant Jews' within the primary in-group [chiefly, the Pharisees and scribes] with the out-group, the non-Jews… they live in ways similar to those who do not have the Torah in the first place". Runesson, "Aspects of Matthean Universalism," 111-112.

key quality as "evil" and so sharing an affinity with Satan (especially during moments of intense conflict in chapters 9, 12, 19 and 23), describing their leadership as "hypocritical" (Matt 15:7; 22:18; 23:13-36) and "blind" (Matt 15:14; 23:16-26), and lacking wisdom as illustrated by the protagonist confounding them in five controversies during chapters 21-23.[206] Matthew 23 is especially excoriating: the scribes and Pharisees are likened to those who persecute and murder the prophets and Jesus' own disciples, and upon whom will come divine judgement (Matt 23:30, 34, 36).[207] The chief priests and Pharisees also realise that the threatening ending of the parable of the vineyard is directed towards them (Matt 21:43).

Nonetheless, some commentators note that the Gospel's semantics occasionally seem to contradict its Jewish character. One case is the use of the pronominal "their" (αὐτῶν) when describing synagogues (Matt 4:23; 9:35; 10:17; 12:9; 13:54; 23:34 "your"), which may convey that the author contrasts them with the "church" (ἐκκλησία, Matt 16:18; 18:17) as an outside community. This distinction is problematic. Not only does "synagogue" sometimes occur with just the definite article (Matt 6:2, 5; 23:6), it is generally a neutral location in the plot, where Christ teaches, heals, and performs miracles (Matt 2:23; 9:35; 12:9-13; 13:54). Saldarini explains: "In context, the expression 'their' refers to the people's synagogues, that is, to the assemblies found in towns and villages… not to assemblies hostile to him [Jesus] or to the Matthean group, not to assemblies controlled by Jesus' competitors."[208] The exceptional verses here are Matt 10:17 and 23:34 (doublings of Mark 13:9), that involve Christ's followers being abused in synagogues but pinpointing criticism towards the scribes and Pharisees, not the general Jewish populace.[209]

Another passage that arouses doubt regarding Matthew's sympathy with Israel is Matt 8:11-12, where Jesus proclaims: "…many will come from east and west and sit at table with

[206] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 23; Kingsbury, "The Plot of Matthew's Story," 349-353; Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 64.
[207] Repschinski, *The Controversy Stories in the Gospel of Matthew*, 44-45.
[208] Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 67. See also Przbylski, "The Setting of Matthean Anti-Judaism," 195-197; David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1998), 143-146; Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations," 117-119; Matthias Konradt, "Matthew Within or Outside of Judaism? From the 'Parting of the Ways' Model to a Multifaceted Approach," in *Jews and Christians – Parting Ways in the First Two Centuries CE?*, eds. Jens Schröter, Benjamin A. Edsall and Joseph Verheyden (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2021), 130-131.
[209] Dunn, "The Question of Anti-Semitism in the New Testament Writings of the Period," 206-207; Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations," 112, 123-124.

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness." There are several reasons for rejecting this interpretation. The verses do not define who the "many" (πολλοὶ) are and could indicate, besides Gentiles, the Diaspora among Israel's twelve tribes, whose ingathering is inaugurated by the messianic age (a prominent motif in the Gospel).[210] Moreover, the only other use of the phrase "sons of the kingdom" occurs in Matt 13:38 where it is undeniably positive: they are the "good seed", are free from tribute (Matt 17:26), and peacemakers are described as "sons of God" (Matt 5:9). Instead, Jesus contrasts "sons" of the kingdom and God (see Matt 5:44-45; 13:38) with "sons of the evil one" (see Matt 13:38; 23:31), the second category relating to those who do not follow him but rather the Jewish authorities, who are depicted using language and imagery that aligns them with Satan.[211] Consequently, these texts can be understood as juxtaposing two sons and kingdoms *within* Israel rather than the entire nation. As Repschinski notices in discussing the parable of the vineyard on this topic, "while Matthew speaks of a people bringing fruit as new tenants in 21:43, he does not speak of another people but of a different group of people without envisioning another nation".[212] This is substantiated by the story immediately antecedent to Matt 21:33-46, where the disobedient son represents the chief priests and elders Jesus addresses, whereas "sinners" (tax collectors, harlots) "go into the kingdom of God" first because they do the Father's will (Matt 21:28-32).

Therefore, the story's treatment of Jewish and Gentile characters is relative to their fidelity to Israel's God, law and traditions, as understood by Christ. Passages that intimate the Jews' displacement as chosen people are, when closely studied, judgements based on failed socio-religious leadership (for instance, Matt 3:7-10; 21:33-41), a theme resonant with apocalyptic literature, like the Enoch material, various works among the Dead Sea Scrolls, *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch*.[213] This bitter verdict culminates in a series of "woes" against the scribes and Pharisees

[210] In fact, Culpepper states: "Those who come 'from the east and the west' represent the eschatological gathering of Israel (Ps 107:3; Isa 43:5; Bar 4:37). This saying, therefore, anticipates the mission to the gentiles. The boundaries between Jew and gentile will be overcome and the excluded will be included…" Culpepper, *Matthew*, 170.

[211] Levine, "Matthew, Mark, and Luke: Good News or Bad?", 88-89. A single example that associates the Pharisees, scribes and Sadducees with "evil" is the expression "brood of vipers", applied to them in Matt 3:7; 12:34; 23:33. These passages also reference Satan, Beelzebul, demons, evil, sin, blasphemy, murder, condemnation, wrath, judgement, and hell.

[212] Repschinski, *The Controversy Stories in the Gospel of Matthew*, 41-42. See also Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 58-60, 81; Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 19, 303-304.

[213] France, "Matthew and Jerusalem," 114, 126; Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 12-13

in Matt 23:13-36 (present but somewhat moderated in Luke 11:42-52) that, along with the acknowledgment of a Mosaic teaching authority (Matt 23:2-3), has suggested for many commentators an intra-communal Jewish debate.[214]

3.5. Sectarianism and the evangelist's community.

The past fifty years have marked a growing consensus in scholarship that locates the Gospel's "anti-Judaic" expressions within sectarianism during the first century period of formative Judaism.[215] Rival Jewish groups such as the Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes and Christians, competed against one another as they attempted to legitimate divergent theological viewpoints. In a post-AD 70 context devoid of temple worship and the extinction of several of these communities, the Pharisees ultimately dominated what would become the normative understanding of the Mosaic Law (as developed in the Mishnah).[216]

A sociological exploration of how sects operate casts some light on this situation. These groups are characterised as "a voluntary association of protest, which utilises boundary marking mechanisms – the social means of differentiating between insiders and outsiders – to distinguish between its own members and those otherwise normally regarded as belonging to the same national or religious entity".[217] Baumgarten, who offers this definition, proposes that Ancient Jewish factions treated outsider Jews in ways similar but not identical with Gentiles, and such rhetoric is employed prominently against Pharisee characters in Matthew's narrative, where his community likely saw themselves as a holy minority against the aberrant "parent body".[218]

Other signs of sectarianism are discernible in the Gospel too, including: a shared binding code validly reinterpreted by a revelatory divine agent (Jesus, Matt 5:17-18); a formulated credo of beliefs and practices; the language of the "righteous" (the Mattheans, for example, Matt

[214] Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 46.
[215] Senior, "Directions in Matthean Studies," 9.
[216] Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 12-19; Wilson, *Related Strangers,* 51; Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 113-114; Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations," 116-117.
[217] Cited in Kampen, *Matthew Within Sectarian Judaism*, 43.
[218] Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 9, 15-16; Przbylski, "The Setting of Matthean Anti-Judaism," 198-199; Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 50; Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations," 108-110.

5:3-12, 20; 13:41-43, 47-50; 21:32; 25:31-46) versus the "unrighteous" (opponents, for example, Matt 3:7-10; 12:34-39; 16:1-4; 23:1-36); and an unrelenting criticism of established leadership while having tendencies towards egalitarianism (Matt 18:15-17).[219]

Although the location of the evangelist's community continues to be disputed, cities in Judea, Galilee, Syria (principally Antioch but possibly Damascus or Edessa) or the Transjordan region (Pella or a city in the Decapolis) are conjectured as likely possibilities.[220] In such a setting, the Mattheans would have been disaffected and "struggling to define and defend a Jewish-Christianity to the Jews on the one hand and to realise their identity with gentile Christianity on the other".[221] Deines summarises the current academic consensus that the author and most, if not all, of his intended audience were Christian Jews in the last third of the first century, who continued to share the Jewish *ethnos* despite pressures to separate, and lived according to Torah as reformed by the halakhic interpretations of their Messiah.[222]

This fact contextualises, nuances and accounts for both the very Jewish *and* seemingly anti-Judaic language in the text. It explains how the Mattheans laid claim to being authentically part of Israel whilst engaging in harsh polemics against sectarian counterparts. As Viljoen remarks: "The author and readers' understanding… is not opposed to Judaism but a certain interpretation of the religion by leaders who rejected the Matthean community."[223] Sim

[219] Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 16-19, 29-30; Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 110-142. Overman (pp. 18, 23) writes: "The rejection of the Jewish leadership during this period within Judaism was widespread among these sectarian communities. These communities viewed leaders as dishonest and corrupt. They were far from God and did not understand or follow God's laws and statues. Their inheritance was lost, and their fate had been sealed. The righteous few were the ones truly called by God to lead. They possessed the true understanding of God's law… The Matthean community fits easily into this world and reflects much of the same hostility toward the Jewish leadership. *It is within this milieu and context that Matthew's Gospel must be read and understood*" (emphasis added).

[220] Harrington, Overman, Runesson, Saldarini, and Segal favour Palestinian provenance due to the region's prominence in the plot and considerable Pharisaic presence there. Others (Allison, Davies, Hare, Sim, Streeter) prefer Syria, partly because of the importance of Peter and his leadership role in Antioch. Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 34; Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 9-10; Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations," 106-107; Stanton, "The Communities of Matthew," 380; Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 10, 31-62, 106-107; Douglas R.A. Hare, "How Jewish is the Gospel of Matthew?" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 62:2 (2000): 264; Senior, "Directions in Matthean Studies," 8-9.

[221] Donald A. Hagner, "The *Sitz im Leben* of the Gospel of Matthew," in *Treasures New and Old*, eds. David R. Bauer and Mark Allan Powell (Michigan: Scholars, 1996), 27.

[222] Deines, "Not the Law but the Messiah," 53-55. See also Hare, "How Jewish is the Gospel of Matthew?", 266; Graham N. Stanton, "The Origin and Purpose of Matthew's Gospel: Matthean Scholarship from 1945 to 1980," *Rise and Decline of the Roman World, Volume 2* 25:3 (1984): 1916-1921; Anthony J. Saldarini, "Delegitimation of Leaders in Matthew 23," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 54 (1992): 659-90.

[223] Viljoen, "Matthew, the Church and Anti-Semitism," 702, 704-705.

similarly assesses the First Gospel as demonstrative of "an inner Jewish debate… and not a dispute between Judaism and Christianity".[224]

There is additionally much discussion concerning the Mattheans' relation to synagogue participation and whether they operated within the bounds of orthodoxy according to other Jewish communities, that is, to what extent this was an *intra muros* rivalry.[225] The complexities of such matters have been addressed elsewhere, and perhaps the efficacy of using the *muri* metaphor is itself uncertain; nevertheless, the community had become somewhat segregated from their non-Jesus-following Jewish contemporaries.[226] Some scholars like Stanton and Hare argue a "parting of ways" with formative Judaism had taken place but this is neither reflected in the text nor does the diverse contemporary socio-religious climate afford a monolithic and fixed concept of Jewish identity.[227] What *is* reflected through the story is an incontrovertible competition and discord between the evangelist's community and the Pharisees, who feature more prominently here as Jesus' opponents than in Mark and Luke.[228]

3.6. Concluding remarks.

The Jewish orientation and sympathies of Matthew's Gospel are evident throughout the narrative. The framing of the protagonist's character and mission, in addition to affirming

[224] Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 109; Buck, "Anti-Judaic Sentiments in the Passion Narrative According to Matthew," 179.
[225] Konradt, "Matthew Within or Outside of Judaism?", 122-123.
[226] Kampen, *Matthew Within Sectarian Judaism*, 38; Konradt, "Matthew Within or Outside of Judaism?", 124, 144; Cohen, "Matthew and the Temple," 82-83.
[227] Stanton and Hare's views are articulated in part in: Graham N. Stanton, "Matthew's Christology and the Parting of the Ways," in *Jews and Christians: The Parting of the Ways AD 70 to 135*, ed. James D.G. Dunn (Tübingen: JCB Mohr, 1992), 99; Graham N. Stanton, "Revisiting Matthew's Communities," *HTS Theological Studies* 52/2 and 52/3 (1996), 380, 384-385; Hare, "How Jewish is the Gospel of Matthew?", 268-271. For contrasting positions, see Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 2-4; Anders Runesson and Daniel M. Gurtner, "Introduction: The Location of the Matthew-within-Judaism Perspective in Past and Present Research," in *Matthew Within Judaism: Israel and the Nations in the First Gospel*, eds. Anders Runesson and Daniel M. Gurtner (Atlanta: SBL, 2020), 3-4, 9-10; Christoph Markschies, "From 'Wide and Narrow Way' to 'The Ways that Never Parted'? Road Metaphors in Models of Jewish-Christian Relations in Antiquity," in *Jews and Christians – Parting Ways in the First Two Centuries CE?*, eds. Jens Schröter, Benjamin A. Edsall and Joseph Verheyden (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2021), 24, 28; and Anders Runesson, "What Never Belonged Together Cannot Part: Rethinking the So-Called Parting of the Ways between Judaism and Christianity," in *Jews and Christians – Parting Ways in the First Two Centuries CE?*, eds. Jens Schröter, Benjamin A. Edsall and Joseph Verheyden (Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2021), 35-56.
[228] Kampen, "The Problem of Christian Anti-Semitism and a Sectarian Reading of the Gospel of Matthew," 387.

specific traditions, law and scripture, help establish that "[t]he evangelist and his readers were first and foremost Jews who accepted without question the eternal validity of the ancient covenant between God and the people of Israel, and the necessity of law-observance for remaining within the covenant community".[229] This qualifies apparently anti-Judaic passages, which serve the literary function of creating villains to oppose Jesus and develop dramatic tension; contrarily, positive portrayals of Gentiles are based on their association with his messianic activity as an extension of Israel's vocation. Furthermore, it witnesses to an historical situation in which "the evangelist's group was a sect *within Judaism*… the Matthean community was still fundamentally Jewish in practice and belief and perceived itself to represent the true version of Judaism".[230]

In short, the text's anti-Judaic rhetoric is both limited and directed, and since it likely represents an intra-Jewish dispute, "it is unwarranted to conclude that it was the intention of the final redaction of the Gospel of Matthew to instil hatred of Jews in general. Rather, Matthean anti-Judaism deals with the problem of the correct interpretation of Judaism".[231] This realisation provides a surer basis from which to interpret Matt 27:25 and question whether its purpose in the story could be to entirely condemn the very people and culture from which it springs, as Culpepper opines, "the first hearers/readers did not regard 'the people' as others (Jews) distinct from themselves (Christians)" .[232]

[229] Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 162-163.
[230] Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism*, 142 (emphasis in original); Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 1, 110-111.
[231] Przybylski, "The Setting of Matthean Anti-Judaism," 199.
[232] Matthew, *Culpepper*, 548.

Chapter 4: A Narrative Analysis of Matt 27:25

4.1. Introduction.

Our examination of the Gospel's background and reception tradition goes some way to unsettle the long-standing national bloodguilt and curse interpretations of Matt 27:25 as both appear inconsistent with a purported Jewish author and surface during a late, increasingly anti-Judaic period of Church history. Before considering further criticisms or alternative perspectives, it is worthwhile exploring how the verse's pericope and related story features guide the audience's reading. Several compositional elements contextualise and elucidate Matt 27:25: its place and function within the plot; the key characters of the protagonist, antagonists, and the role of the crowd; the significant theme of innocent blood; and the use of irony as a rhetorical device to situate readers vis-à-vis the various narrative layers. These determinations will furnish details towards properly addressing different interpretive models in chapter 5.

4.2. The pericope and its function within the plot.

Matt 27:25 is a decisive moment that effectively closes the second act in the tripartite drama of Jesus' arrest, trial and execution. Its immediate setting depicts Pilate before the Jerusalem crowd on the day after Passover, assembled to adjudicate his prisoners' fates (Matt 27:15-26), and the interplay between characters and themes present bring together several strands of Matthew's Passion.

The pericope is structured much like the preceding section (Matt 27:11-14), comprised of a series of questions and responses, with interruptions by the narrator:

i) Introduction to the scene and characters (vv. 15-16).

ii) Pilate's first question and answer (vv. 17-18, 20).

iii) Narrative interruption (v. 19).

iv) Pilate's second question and answer (vv. 21-22).

v) Pilate's third question and answer (v. 23).

vi) Narrative interruption (vv. 24-25).

vii) Conclusion to the scene and characters (v. 26).[233]

While the dialogue between the governor and crowd closely echoes Mark 15:6-15, the interruptions are singularly Matthean, developing its characters and evoking the righteous blood motif central to the Gospel.[234]

This episode heightens and begins to resolve the conflict Jesus has encountered throughout the plot, which has intensified since his arrival in the city (Matt 21:15-16; 45-46). He participates in three trials at the end of his ministry: the definitive public judgement before the crowd (Matt 27:15-26) follows Pilate's private but indeterminate court hearing (Matt 27:11-14) and the confidential council that condemns him (Matt 26:57-68; 27:1-2). These tribunals correspond to link the political force of Rome (the governor) with the religious institution of Jerusalem (the chief priests and elders), and persuade the crowd to destroy the Messiah they had formerly endorsed, a reprise of Herod's scheme at the commencement of the story.

Contextually, Matt 27:24-25 serves as the climax of Christ's trial by securing a verdict of guilt that instigates the crucifixion.[235] Dramatic tension is established via the author's terse writing style and the presence of several competing characters: the protagonist; forces hostile to him (chief priests and elders); those more ambiguous (Pilate and his wife); and those neutral or approving (the crowd). The interactions between these diversely motivated individuals and groups, and their anticipated final verdict, positions readers to puzzle over how the hero will triumph in such threatening circumstances (he is alone and defenceless since his primary supporters, the disciples, are absent).

Aware of the enmity roused against Jesus by the Jewish authorities and Pilate's own vacillation, readers are moved to speculate regarding the crowd's ultimate response, having thus far been positively disposed towards him. This uncertainty is underscored by the governor's insistent pleas and provision of a balanced option between "Jesus who is called Christ" and "Jesus Barabbas", with the latter's reprehensible qualities softened by Matthew, who describes him as a "notorious prisoner" (δέσμιον ἐπίσημον, Matt 27:16) rather than a

[233] This outline borrows from Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3*, 578.
[234] Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 826.
[235] Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 392; Heil, "The Blood of Jesus in Matthew," 123; Callie Callon, "Pilate the Villain: An Alternative Reading of Matthew's Portrayal of Pilate," *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 36 (2006): 65.

στασιαστῶν (rebel) who had committed murder during an insurrection (Mark 15:7).[236] By v. 24 it becomes clear that Pilate and the crowd no longer side with the protagonist; yet even amidst such disappointment, there remains one last stunning revelation: the apparent bloodthirsty interjection of "all the people" (v. 25), who now accept the responsibility of his execution.[237]

After this histrionic confrontation, the scene ends in a starkly matter-of-fact manner as Barabbas is released and Christ, rejected by everyone, sentenced to death, with the latter's lack of agency accentuating the varying degrees of culpability shared by those involved.[238] The circle of those abandoning Jesus has expanded as the Passion progressed: at his arrest, the disciples (one of whom betrays him, Matt 26:14-16, 47-50; 27:3-10, another denies knowing him, Matt 26:69-75, and the rest flee, Matt 26:56b); at his trial, the priests, elders, scribes and crowd (Matt 26:66; 27:20-23); and as he breathes his last, seemingly God Himself (Matt 27:46). The triumphal Jerusalem entry (Matt 21:1-11), his witness in the city through healing (Matt 21:14), wisdom (for example, Matt 21:23-27; 22:15-22, 23-32, 41-46) and judgement (for example, Matt 21:12-13; 33-45; 23:13-36), moreover, his popularity among the crowd (Matt 21:9, 46; 22:33), have all suddenly been reversed. He is now moving inexorably towards the cross, having ostensibly failed, spurned by those whose vocation he adopted and whose ambition it was to save (Matt 1:21; 15:24).

However, this is a surface reading of the story and the meaning of Matt 27:25 within it. Indeed, the audience is unsurprised by this turn of events, having been expectantly awaiting the fulfillment of what had been previously prophesied (Matt 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19; 26:2). What appears to be the sad end of an innocent man is part of God's providence (Matt 16:21-23; 26:39, 42) and the protagonist's deliberate actions (Matt 20:28). The first (human) level presentation of the trial, arrest and execution is paralleled by the second (divine) level movement where Jesus inaugurates a covenant of forgiveness through the festal celebration of the Last Supper, his atoning death and the resurrection.[239] Instead of loss, the trope of the

[236] Matthew L. Skinner, *The Trial Narratives: Conflict, Power, and Identity in the New Testament* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2010), 60.
[237] Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew,* 2.
[238] Daniel Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 376; Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 821; Skinner, *The Trial Narratives*, 61.
[239] Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (Collegeville: Michael Glazier, 1990), 119-121; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 135.

tragic hero is subverted through a precise use of irony instantiating Christ's very own words: "He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt 10:39; 16:25). Readers are thereby prompted to recognise in the verse and its pericope a similar reversal of the narrative's plain meaning; in fact, this moment is integral as only here in the Gospel is the whole of Israel gathered: "all the people" and the "chief priests and elders of the people" to welcome the sacrifice that will accomplish the Messiah's mission.

4.3. The main characters.

The events proximate to Matt 27:25 contain three character-types: Jesus, the protagonist, a "round" character with varied traits and motivations; the antagonists who collude to bring about his destruction: Judas, the Jewish authorities, and Pilate; and the uncommitted crowd or people, who will play a consequential part in the final judgement.[240]

4.3.1. Jesus, the Mosaic prophet.

Matthew's narrative centres around Christ, whose intimacy with his Father is a privileged one shared with those he calls (Matt 10:1; 13:11-12) and through whom the narrator discloses the divine perspective.[241] Kingsbury describes him as "the supreme representative of God's system of values who understands himself to be God's unique Son and the decisive figure in the history of salvation".[242] Accordingly, readers are inclined to be favourably disposed towards him, adopting his beliefs as normative and appraising other characters based on their reactions to him.

Despite his messianic authority, it is remarkable that Jesus stays largely silent throughout his imprisonment as political events unfold. Though cognisant of and consenting to his fate (Matt 12:40; 16:21; 17:12, 22-23; 20:18-19, 28; 26:2), this apparent vulnerability is best explained by the way the character is fashioned to conform to two OT types: the Mosaic prophet (Deut

[240] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 10.
[241] Kingsbury, "The Plot of Matthew's Story," 347-348; Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 192-193; Viljoen, "Reading Matthew as a Historical Narrative," 4.
[242] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 13.

18:15-19) and the Isaian Suffering Servant (Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-6; 50:4-11; 52:13-53:12).[243] While both roles are important, Christ's personification as a new Moses is especially informative to this study; certainly, this presentation has notable Servant connotations too, as Beale elaborates: "It is striking... that the well-known Suffering Servant prophecy of Isaiah 53 is itself a typological expectation of an anticipated second Moses, who was to do everything and more than the first Moses."[244] Mosaic typology is a prominent literary and theological paradigm shaping the text's presentation of the protagonist's identity and mission.[245] It establishes and fulfills the audience's expectations that he will act as God's mediator in teaching Torah, possessing divinely-ordained leadership and renewing covenant, recognising how "the histories of these two men were… strikingly similar even down to details".[246] Parallels with Moses are interwoven throughout the plot and unify many discrete episodes.[247]

As the story opens there is a juxtaposition between the endangered lives of Jesus and Moses, Jewish babies threatened by Gentile kings (Herod and pharaoh) concerned to preserve their power (Matt 1:18-2:23/Exodus 1-2).[248] Subsequently, these two saviours of Israel escape to lands of relative safety (Egypt, Matt 2:13-15/Midian, Exod 2:15), finding reprieve to return home with the former rulers' passing (Matt 2:19-21/Exod 2:23; 4:19-20).[249] Scholars have also recognised the author's reliance on first century Jewish tradition in constructing a Jesus/Moses correlation, with details in the Gospel matching Josephus's account of the infant

[243] Throughout the Gospel, Jesus is likened to the Servant of Isaiah, sharing God's favour and endowed with His Spirit (Matt 3:16-17/Isa 42:1), gathering Israel as lost sheep (Matt 9:36; 10:6; 15:24/Isa 53:6), bearing the people's infirmities (Matt 8:17/Isa 53:4), and giving himself as a sin offering (Matt 1:21; 20:28; 26:28/Isa 53:10-12). The Passion intensifies this resemblance, where Christ's refusal to answer his accusers reminds readers of memorable Servant passages (Matt 27:12-14/Isa 42:2; 53:7). Another descriptor applied to both characters is: "righteous one" (δίκαιος) (Matt 3:15; 27:19/Isa 42:6; 53:11), further substantiating Jesus' messianic claim (Ps Sol 17). Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew*, 26-30.

[244] Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 89.

[245] An extensive discussion of Mosaic parallels can be found throughout Dale C. Allison Jr., *The New Moses: A Matthean Typology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1993); and Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution,* 7, 33-38, 54, 65-69, 78-100, 137-138, 297, 317-318, 342-346, 444, 517, 593-597. For an overview of modern scholarship on Mosaic typology, including a critical appraisal, see Michael P. Theophilos, *Jesus as New Moses in Matthew 8-9: Jewish Typology in First Century Greek Literature* (New Jersey: Gorgias, 2013), 1-18.

[246] Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 46-47; Allison, *The New Moses*, 7, 140-144.

[247] Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 68; Culpepper, *Matthew*, 20, 48-49.

[248] Allison, *The New Moses*, 140.

[249] Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 85-86; Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew*, 21.

Moses having a miraculous birth, bearing a divine image, being heir to the kingdom, and his name related to a vocation to liberate his people.[250]

Beyond childhood, Christ's salvific activity and providing halakhic commentary places him alongside Moses as the main prophetic teacher and embodiment of wisdom, with whom he undergoes re-presented Exodus and Sinai events.[251] His five didactic discourses are bracketed by clauses patterned after the Deuteronomic verse: "When Moses had finished speaking all these words to all Israel" (Deut 32:45; marked at Matt 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1 by: "...when Jesus [had] finished [all] these sayings/instructing/parables"). [252] As someone restoring and reinterpreting the *telos* of covenantal law, Jesus is "not Moses come as Messiah... so much as Messiah... who has absorbed the Mosaic function", a typological realisation of the first Moses that accorded with anticipations already embedded in the OT and Second Temple Judaism.[253] Unsurprisingly, titles of "prophet" and "Messiah" are carefully and frequently connected (Matt 5:10-12; 10:41-42; 13:17, 57; 16:14; 21:11, 46; 23:29, 34, 37; 24:5, 11, 24; even ironically in Matt 26:68), especially as Christ fulfils "the law and the prophets" (a phrase encapsulating the understanding of Moses, Matt 5:17; 7:12; 22:40).

Jesus' "mighty deeds" also have Mosaic resonance. Ecclesial writers such as Pseudo-Clement and Eusebius note that Christ, like Moses before him, authenticated his message through miracles.[254] These are noteworthy in Matthew 8-9, where the protagonist engages in actions related to those of Israel's foundational liberator, including healing victims of Deuteronomic

[250] Moses' name is understood as indicative of his mission: "for the Egyptians called water *môu* and those who are saved *esês*" (Ant. 2.9.6), as the infant saved from drowning in turn rescued Israel through the sea. In like manner, Jesus' name is given by the angel principally for his mission to "save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21). Josephus relates how pharaoh's daughter, Thermuthis, adopts Moses and comments on the child's "divine beauty" or "form" (see Matt 1:23), who was birthed through the "miracle" of the "river's bounty" (see Matt 1:18, 20) as the kingdom's heir (see Matt 1:1, 17) (Ant. 2.9.7). Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities, Volume 1*, trans. Henry St John Thackeray (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1930), 263-265. Moreover, in this account pharaoh is threatened by Moses' birth *specifically* through the foretelling of a scribe, just as Herod is informed of the location of the Messiah's birth (see Matt 2:3-7) (Ant. 2.9.7). Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities, Volume 1*, 267. See also Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism*, 77; Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 48.

[251] Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 183; Kampen, "The Problem of Christian Anti-Semitism and a Sectarian Reading of the Gospel of Matthew," 379-382.

[252] William G. Thompson, *Matthew's Story: Good News for Uncertain Times* (New York and Mahwah: Paulist, 1989), 28, 49.

[253] William D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), 93; Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 109, 119-120. Davies elsewhere writes: "We can safely assert that the figure of Moses had drawn into itself messianic significance for Matthew and that his Jesus and his messianism have inescapable Mosaic traits." William D. Davies, *Christian Engagements with Judaism* (Harrisburg: Trinity International, 1999), 183.

[254] Allison, *The New Moses*, 104; Theophilos, *Jesus as New Moses in Matthew 8-9*, 50-51.

covenantal curses and leprosy, exhibiting power over nature (stilling the storm), and the restoration of tribal organisation.[255]

This portrayal is further underscored by the Gospel's ὄρος or "mountain" motif. Christ fasts for "forty days and forty nights" (Matt 4:2; cf. "forty days", Mark 1:13; Luke 4:2) consonant with Moses' stay on Mount Sinai (Exod 24:18; 34:28; Deut 9:9, 11, 18, 25; 10:10).[256] He "sits" on a mountain (Matt 5:1) to propound law; the transfiguration occurs on a "high mountain" and elicits Sinaic imagery: a mountain, cloud, shining appearance of Jesus/Moses, a voice from the cloud, and the interval of "six days" (Matt 17:1-8/Exodus 24 and 34); and, finally, his parting commission to the disciples is from a mountain just as the former leader passed authority to Joshua, instructing him to lead the people in obeying the commandments, promising God would remain with them (Matt 28:16-20/Deut 31:23; 32:44-47; 34:1-12; Josh 1:1-9).[257] Therefore, the narrative begins and ends with Mosaic parallelism that effects an *inclusio*.[258]

These key elements impress the audience to read the protagonist's words and actions through a Mosaic profile. Although Jesus accomplishes much that is typologically hoped for, his essential purpose to "save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21) is untouched until near the story's climax, when he consecrates a covenant in his own blood "for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:28). Through this critical episode, which many commentators believe recollects the Sinai compact in Exodus 24, he more fully assumes the role of Moses. Chapter 6 shall explore how such covenantal re-enactment links Matt 27:25 with redemption through the shedding of innocent blood.

4.3.2. Judas, who betrayed him.

Although occupying the margin of this pericope, Judas is part of the triumvirate of Jesus' opponents during the Passion. By delivering Christ up (Matt 26:14-15) and renouncing guilt

[255] Theophilos, *Jesus as New Moses in Matthew 8-9*, 159-160.
[256] Allison, *The New Moses*, 166-170.
[257] Davies, *Christian Engagements with Judaism*, 182-183.
[258] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 143-145.

for having done so (Matt 27:3-4), his actions correlate to those of the chief priests, elders and Pilate, and position readers to collectively evaluate these characters.

Judas's defining trait is "betrayal" (Matt 10:4; 26:14-16, 25, 47-48; 27:3). His depiction is suffused with tragic irony, where ordinarily sympathetic acts like a kiss and being identified as a "friend" are inverted in their meaning (Matt 26:49-50). ("Friend" also occurs in Matt 20:1-16; 22:2-14 to expose false discipleship so "the ironist indirectly reveals Judas' falling short of grace and his conscious separation from Jesus".)[259] His references to Jesus as "Master" (ῥαββί, Matt 26:25, 49), though outwardly respectful, are problematic as Christ is ambivalent about this title (Matt 23:5-8) and other followers refer to him as "Lord" (Κύριε, Matt 26:22), as do several positive characters (such as the leper, Matt 8:2; centurion, Matt 8:6, 8; two blind men, Matt 9:28; and the Canaanite woman, Matt 15:22, 25, 27).[260] The text draws from Zechariah during the arrest scene to liken Judas to the "worthless shepherd" who "deserts the flock" (Matt 26:31/Zech 11:4, 7, 15, 17; 13:7), paid "thirty shekels of silver" from corrupt leaders who are "traffickers in the sheep" (Matt 26:31/Zech 11:7, 11).[261] His confession for having "sinned in betraying innocent blood" and subsequently throwing the coins in rejection into the temple treasury (Matt 26:14-16; 27:3-5/Zech 11:12-13/Jer 32:6-16; 18:1-11) do little to mitigate his guilt, having been lured by the corrupting power of wealth his teacher himself explicitly warned against (Matt 6:24; 26:15; cf. Mark 14:10-11, where he does not ask for anything), implicating him alongside the religious authorities he desires to shoulder the blame.

Ultimately, while others forsake or deny their Messiah (Matt 26:56; 69-75), it is Judas who epitomises failed discipleship. He finds no redemption in a post-resurrection meeting with Jesus (Matt 28:16-20) and his apparent contrition (μεταμέλομαι, Matt 27:3, a carefully selected verb that differs from μετανοεῖν, which is used otherwise to denote repentance and a change of spiritual orientation, Matt 3:2, 8, 11; 4:17; 11:20-21; 12:41; 21:29, 32) is undermined by the ominous warning that it were better if he "had not been born" (Matt 26:24), revealing the ignominious status in Jewish eyes of those who forsake the innocent for

[259] InHee C. Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 139.
[260] Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew*, 63.
[261] Craig A. Evans, *Matthew* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 448.

riches (Deut 27:25), compounded by the character's demise, hanging on a tree (Matt 27:5/Deut 21:22-23; see also David's treacherous counsellor Achitophel, 2 Sam 23:17).[262]

The way Judas's actions reflect, bolster and amplify those of Pilate and the religious leaders is particularly conspicuous and brings them into the same character orbit. They are involved, to greater or lesser degrees, in delivering (παραδίδωμι) Jesus over to be crucified (Matt 26:15; 27:2, 18, 26), as the plot foreshadows: "…the Son of Man will be delivered [by Judas] to the chief priests and scribes, and they will condemn him to death, and deliver him to the Gentiles [through Pilate] to be mocked and scourged and crucified" (Matt 26:2). Jesus also responds to these antagonists' questions with: "You have said so" (Matt 26:25; 26:64; 27:11), which demonstrates their mutual misunderstanding of him.[263] Lastly, Judas's dialogue is combined with the words of the chief priests and elders to be repeated through Pilate as they attempt to distance themselves from responsibility for Christ's death (Matt 27:4, 24) – or, more specifically, *from his blood* – claims that are illegitimate according to Matthew: Judas, who sees he has betrayed "innocent blood" (Matt 27:4-5); the priests and elders who retort by returning the onus onto the disciple and rejecting the "blood money" (Matt 27:4, 6); and Pilate, who is told to have "nothing to do" with Jesus' blood and consequently washes his hands of the affair (Matt 27:19, 24).[264] Patte concludes that the phrase "innocent blood… see to it yourself/yourselves" is repeated by these characters to defer accountability so it can be appropriated by the people at Matt 27:25.[265]

4.3.3. Jewish leaders… but which ones?

The chief priests and elders are the main adversaries during the Passion (Matt 26:3-4, 14-15, 47, 57-66; 27:1-2, 11-12, 18, 20, 41-43, 62-66). As characters, they are closely aligned with Jerusalem (their only setting) and political authority (collaborating with Herod and Pilate). Their hostility towards Jesus is manifested upon his entering the city (Matt 21:15-16, 23-27,

[262] Heil, "The Blood of Jesus in Matthew," 121; Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 280; Evans, *Matthew*, 448.
[263] Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 388.
[264] Cargal, "'His Blood be Upon Us and Upon Our Children': A Matthean Double Entendre?", 102, 108; Helen K. Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 124.
[265] Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 380.

46; 26:3-5, all from Mark) until the story's conclusion, when they bribe guards to spread rumours regarding the whereabouts of his body (Matt 28:11-15).

Like Judas, the chief priests and elders have associated money with Christ's betrayal but then attempt to discharge themselves from this treachery: "What is that to us? See to it yourself" (Matt 27:4). Ironically, they are concerned with the temple's holiness over the minor matter of depositing "blood money" into the treasury (Matt 27:6) but are untroubled that their payment has bought innocent blood (like the Pharisees and scribes, Matt 23:23), their trial involves false testimony (Matt 26:59), their economic activity contributes to the sanctuary's defilement (Matt 21:12-13; the first instance of their attack on Jesus occurs after this event, Matt 21:23, 45), and, unlike the audience, they are unaware that the man they persecute is greater than the temple (Matt 12:6) and its original builder, Solomon (Matt 12:42).[266]

While the Gospel has obviously redacted its Markan source to increase the incidence of Pharisaic and scribal opposition to Jesus in Jerusalem, they are curiously absent from the Passion narrative (only appearing again after the entombment, Matt 27:62-66).[267] Instead, the role played by the scribes is diminished to enhance that of the elders alongside the priests (cf. Mark 14:1-2/Luke 22:2: "the chief priests and the scribes"; Mark 14:43: "the chief priests and the scribes"; Mark 15:1: "the chief priests, with the elders and scribes"; Mark 15:3, 31/Luke 23:3-4, 13, where Matthew includes "elders": Matt 26:3; 27:12, 29, 41 are all Matthean additions). Readers may duly ask why, given the author's undeniable antipathy towards the Pharisees and scribes, he has reduced their part in the Messiah's arrest, trial and execution.[268]

This revision seems to achieve two effects. It separates the scribes and Pharisees from the crowd/people while associating the "chief priests and elders" with them, and this pairing is overwhelmingly qualified by the genitive "of the people" (οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι τοῦ λαοῦ, Matt 21:23; 26:3, 47; 27:1, 20; cf. Matt 2:4, "chief priests and scribes of the people"; Mark never includes the adjectival phrase "of the people", whereas Luke uses it twice with

[266] Heil, "The Blood of Jesus in Matthew," 121.
[267] See, for instance, Matt 21:45; 22:15, where the Pharisees are the primary instigators against Christ (cf. Mark 11:27; 12:13), or how hostile groups of scribes in Mark 12:28, 35 are ascribed to the Pharisees (Matt 22:34, 41), all of chapter 23, and that in Mark and Luke the Pharisees make no appearance in Jerusalem (with the exception of Mark 12:13).
[268] Buck, "Anti-Judaic Sentiments in the Passion Narrative According to Matthew," 166-168.

slight alterations and under different circumstances: Luke 19:47; 22:66). This depicts a single group calling for Jesus' blood in Matt 27:25 and one that can reasonably be construed as "Israel", as does the subtle change to Mark's phraseology, where the "crowds" are "persuaded" (ἔπεισαν τοὺς ὄχλους, Matt 27:20, using a plural noun and involving a conscious decision by participants) rather than "stirred up" (ἀνέσεισαν τὸν ὄχλον, Mark 15:11, which is singular and involves an emotional reaction by participants).[269]

Secondly, by denying the Pharisees and scribes a visible presence in this scene, the text precludes them from participating in Christ's sacrificial blood despite fastening upon them the guilt of persecuting his followers and murdering the righteous prophets (Matt 23:29-35), a subject we shall return to further on. Considering the narrative's critical portrayal of these characters and the unmistakeable sectarianism underlying it, their removal from the Matt 27:25 pericope may signify that *the people's cry is not primarily or merely to be interpreted in a negative sense*. It is conceivable that the evangelist has deliberately marginalised his enemies during the Passion to prevent their involvement in what he is expressing through Matt 27:25. In addition, Runesson states: "The only logical characters available for someone like Matthew writing within a Second-Temple Jewish ritual worldview about *a sacrifice generating atonement for the people of Israel* are the chief priests," further explaining why Pilate too detaches himself from the affair.[270]

4.3.4. Pilate, the governor.

The final antagonist germane to the Matt 27:25 pericope is Pilate. Matthew sketches him as a man of political and military power: he is explicitly introduced as "the governor" (ἡγεμὼν, Matt 27:2) and called by this title on seven other occasions (Matt 27:11 twice, 14, 15, 21, 27; 28:14; replacing or adding to where Mark merely uses a name or pronoun: Mark 15:1, 2, 5, 6, 9, 16); he controls a battalion (Matt 27:27), in whom he inspires fear (Matt 28:14); and is also addressed as "Sir" (Κύριε, Matt 27:63) by the chief priests and Pharisees.[271] Such a portrait is

[269] Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation*, 126.
[270] Anders Runesson, "Who Killed Jesus and Why? The Jewish Nature of Matthew's Anti-Imperial Polemics," in *The Composition, Theology, and Early Reception of Matthew's Gospel*, eds. Joseph Verheyden, Jens Schröter and David C. Sim (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 185 (emphasis added).
[271] Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation*, 135.

supported by Jesus' warning that the disciples will be at the mercy of "governors" (Matt 10:17-18), and Pilate is able to interrogate (Matt 27:11-14), judge (Matt 27:19), incarcerate or release prisoners (Mat 27:15), scourge and crucify (Matt 27:26), and then have final say over their remains (Matt 27:58).[272]

While this suggests the character has a commanding demeanour, many propose that a more agreeable image emerges when compared to his presentation in Mark. Evidence such as Pilate wondering "greatly" after his questioning goes unanswered (Matt 27:14; cf. Mark 15:5), his wife's intervention (Matt 27:19), and subsequent hand washing (Matt 27:24) are marshalled to argue he is, in Hagner's words, "perhaps inclined" to free Jesus or at least reluctant to kill him.[273] Moreover, he is shown in a comparatively weaker position against a potentially riotous crowd (Matt 27:24; cf. Mark 15:15).[274] This revision engenders readers' sympathy and essentially exonerates the Romans by placing culpability for Christ's death squarely on the Jews.[275] Kampen, for instance, contends the author has framed the conflict in this manner to accuse the competitor Pharisee sect with the crucifixion as well as denouncing those disciples who violate group solidarity (epitomised by Judas); Gentiles are only peripherally guilty because Matthew's community do not principally define themselves in relation to such foreigners.[276]

These claims are difficult to justify. It is not the Pharisees but the chief priests, elders and the Jewish people who demand Jesus' execution, and a solution originating from sectarianism cannot explain this anomaly. Pilate's villainy does not escape attention in the story either. Matthew reports that the governor was "accustomed" (εἰώθει, Matt 27:15) to release someone as a Paschal pardon, implying the ability to simply liberate prisoners was his alone

[272] Dorothy Jean Weaver, "'Thus You Will Know Them by Their Fruits': The Roman Characters of the Gospel of Matthew," in *The Gospel of Matthew in its Roman Imperial Context*, eds. John Riches and David C. Sim (London: T&T Clark International, 2005), 112-113.
[273] Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 824. Davies and Allison also think Pilate is unwilling to execute Jesus. Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3*, 583-585.
[274] Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 561.
[275] Beare acknowledges the "widespread agreement among interpreters that the purpose of the tradition about Pilate washing his hands before the crowd is to exonerate Pilate and the Romans" and this perspective is related in early Christian documents like *Gospel of Peter* 1:2; *Acts of Pilate* 1.9.4; Tertullian, *Apology* 21; Origen, *Commentary on Matthew*, 118; and Melito of Sardis, *On Pascha* 92. Francis Wright Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Commentary* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981), 530-531.
[276] Kampen, "The Problem of Christian Anti-Semitism and a Sectarian Reading of the Gospel of Matthew," 391-392.

and he chose not to exercise it; in fact, the editorial comment that Pilate knew Jesus was handed over "out of envy" (Matt 27:18) reveals his acceptance of the latter's innocence. Likewise, the crowd in this Gospel displays a more deferential disposition towards the ruler's authority: "Let him be crucified" (Σταυρωθήτω, Matt 27:22), a passive imperative compared to Mark 15:14's more forceful active imperative: "Crucify!" (Σταύρωσον).[277]

Rather than being merciful or feeble, Pilate is gambling with Jesus' life in attempting to satisfy the Jerusalem crowd while undermining the Jerusalem elite without he himself being compromised. Unlike in Mark, where he simply asks whether his prisoner should be freed (Mark 15:9), here he proffers an alternative (Matt 27:17, 21).[278] He even uses the Jewish term "Christ" with the crowd (ὁ λεγόμενος χριστός, Matt 27:17, 22) to endear himself to them, in contrast to: "the king of the Jews" he and other Gentiles use elsewhere (ὁ Βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων, Matt 2:2; 27:11, 29, 37; compare Mark 15:9, 12, where: "the man whom *you* call the King of the Jews" puts space between Pilate and the crowd).[279] This political game, which the governor eventually loses and almost results in inciting a riot, is captured by the author's statement: "So when Pilate saw that he was gaining nothing…" (ἰδὼν δὲ ὁ Πειλᾶτος ὅτι οὐδὲν ὠφελεῖ, Matt 27:24; cf. Mark 15:15). Matthew's Pilate is not weak-willed yet well-meaning but a shrewd politician, as Skinner summarises: "Pilate's prevarication while conducting the trial shows him both guilty of an unwillingness to do what is right and capable of a cunning ability to use his power to avoid openly acknowledging his role."[280]

Further evidence of the author's disdain towards Pilate can be seen in the way exemplar characters retain their dignity before him. While Gentile guards, the crowd, and Jewish leaders curry favour with the governor, Jesus "stood before" him giving "no answer, not even to a single charge" (Matt 27:11, 14, a Servant allusion with Mosaic overtones, Isa 52:15; Exod 9:10, 13). Even Joseph of Arimathea does not need courage to approach Pilate but has his wish obeyed, not "granted" (Matt 27:58; cf. Mark 15:43, 45). These details support Callon's belief that the evangelist's audience would have retained the memory of this callous ruler and she reads within the text a "strongly negative depiction" of the character "that would

[277] Donald Senior, *Matthew: Abingdon New Testament Commentaries* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 321.
[278] Evans, *Matthew*, 452.
[279] Matthias Konradt, "The Role of the Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew," in *Matthew Within Judaism: Israel and the Nations in the First Gospel*, eds. Anders Runesson and Daniel M. Gurtner (Atlanta: SBL, 2020), 227.
[280] Skinner, *The Trial Narratives*, 60-63; see also Culpepper, *Matthew*, 545.

have been understood as such by and found resonance with his community".[281] It also fits the general impression of contemporary Jewish accounts, like Josephus (*Antiquities* 18.3-4; *Jewish War* 2.9) and Philo (*Embassy* 299-305) of Pilate as insecure, harsh and unjust in administering his office.

Given this image of Pilate, how do we make sense of the two narrative interruptions in Matt 27:15-26 that supposedly show him in a more agreeable light? The vignette of Pilate's wife exhibits typical Matthean characteristics, including the role of dreams to convey divine knowledge and inspire courageous action amidst danger (Matt 1:20, 24; 2:13, 19), and references to Jesus as a "righteous man" (Matt 27:19).[282] Nonetheless, when studied against prior accounts of dreaming some salient distinctions come to light. The audience is uninformed as to content of her dream except that she "suffered much" over Christ, and if any angelic instruction was communicated, the outcome is strikingly opposite to what would be expected. Whereas responses by Joseph (Matt 1:20-21; 2:13, 19-22) and the magi (Matt 2:12) result in the protection of Jesus' life, the advice she gives her husband after the revelation is to "have nothing to do with" him rather than to save him. Her prompt words might appear commendable but her recommendation is precisely what motivates the governor's indifference by washing his hands to the injustice perpetrated. Davies and Allison understand Pilate as "the antithesis of Joseph, Mary's husband; for the latter is just and obeys divinely sent dreams... The ineffectual Pilate, having ceded justice to mob rule, remains, despite his handwashing, responsible". [283] And whereas positive Gentile characters demonstrate an eagerness to meet Christ in faith: the magi (Matt 2:2), centurion (Matt 8:5, 8-9), and the Canaanite woman (Matt 15:22, 27), Pilate and his wife, on the other hand, want to distance themselves from him.[284] Ironically, by trying to avoid involvement in Jesus' death, they have helped accomplish it.

The governor's handwashing (Matt 27:24) is another event peculiar to Matthew. While there is scope for this to be understood as a Greco-Roman custom, OT precedents are likely intended. Commentators are generally agreed on the relationship this verse shares with Deut 21:1-9, which outlines the ritual performed when someone's murderer has not been

[281] Callon, "Pilate the Villain," 62-64.
[282] Nolland, "The Gospel of Matthew and Anti-Semitism," 164-166.
[283] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3*, 590.
[284] Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 75.

identified. Gathering before the priests, the elders wash their hands over a sacrificed heifer and swear personal and tribal innocence: "Our hands did not shed this blood, neither did our eyes see it shed. Forgive, O Lord, thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and set not the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of thy people Israel; but let the guild of blood be forgiven them" (Deut 21:7-8). This practice acts to "purge the guilt of innocent blood", declaring righteousness and seeking forgiveness (Deut 21:9).[285] Though the similarities between these two passages are substantial: handwashing (Matt 27:24/Deut 21:6), an appeal made to the innocence of a party involved (Matt 27:24/Deut 21:7-8) – specifically relating the terms "innocent" and "blood" (Matt 27:24/Deut 21:8-9) – before priests and elders (Matt 27:20/Deut 21:5-6) and in the midst of the people (Matt 27:25/Deut 21:8), Smith is correct that a literal reading of Pilate's actions does not work narratively if, as seems probable, the Deuteronomic parallel is meant. The author could not be affirming that it is unknown who executes Jesus or that the governor and those gathered are not responsible.[286] Instead, irony is being employed, partly to convey that Pilate is not exonerated by his sarcastic reproduction of the Mosaic Law (he is the "elder of the city" washing his hands over the sacrifice and claiming innocence yet nevertheless authorises the judicial killing, Matt 27:24, 26/Deut 21:6-7), and partly to focus accountability on the people of Israel.[287]

As noted above, the narrator's use of language provides another clue that Pilate's proclamation of innocence should be read unsympathetically as his response to the crowd: "see to it yourselves" (ὑμεῖς ὄψεσθε, Matt 27:24) is practically verbatim to that of the chief priests and elders towards Judas: "see to it yourself" (σὺ ὄψῃ, Matt 27:4), and he applies "innocence" to himself rather than to his prisoner, inverting Judas's words (Matt 27:4, 24), and so is associated with these two antagonists.[288] Additionally, the governor's handwashing fulfils his wife's advice to have "nothing to do" with Jesus – it is a ritual of total non-involvement – and avoiding participation in the sacrificial blood about to be shed is a double

[285] Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew*, 117-118; Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 826-827; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3*, 590; David L. Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet: Jesus and the Jewish Leaders in Matthew 23* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2015), 258.
[286] Robert H. Smith, "Matthew 27:25: The Hardest Verse in Matthew's Gospel," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 17 (1990): 426.
[287] John P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew: Christ, Church, and Morality in the First Gospel* (New York: Paulist, 1979), 199; Nolland, "The Gospel of Matthew and Anti-Semitism," 166-167; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 132.
[288] Cargal, "'His Blood be Upon Us and Upon Our Children': A Matthean Double Entendre?", 104-105, 110-111; Callon, "Pilate the Villain," 69; Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation*, 134.

failure: not only does he remain guilty for having sanctioned the crucifixion despite attempting to transfer blame, he also rejects Christ's blood that allows for the forgiveness of sins.[289]

4.3.5. The crowd and the people.

Matthew's Passion progressively increases suspense by isolating Jesus from his disciples and placing him at the mercy of adversaries whose cooperation exacts the hero's downfall. This culminates in Matt 27:15-26, where the lingering question over how the crowd will respond to charges brought against their putative Messiah is eventually answered. At this juncture in the narrative, the attentive reader observes that it is not "the crowd" (Matt 27:15, 20, 24) but "the people" (Matt 27:25) whose words carry the day. In what sense are these two distinct?[290]

The "crowd" (ὁ ὄχλος) are an amorphous group that derives from various regions: Judea, Galilee, the Decapolis, Syria, and beyond the Jordan (Matt 4:25; 19:1-2; 20:29). Based on their heterogeneous and consistently changing nature it would be a mistake to consider one crowd as identical to another (for instance, the "great crowds" pursuing Jesus differ from the "crowd" mourning the death of the ruler's daughter, Matt 9:23-25).[291] They are neither a flat nor passive character, and their attitude towards Christ is driven by plot events and the manipulation of more potent personalities.[292]

For most of the story, the crowd are the immediate recipients of Jesus' missionary activities. Like the disciples, they follow him (Matt 4:25; 8:1, 18; 13:2; 14:13; 16:30; 19:2; 20:29), are taught by him (Matt 5:1; 11:7; 13:2-9; 23:1), are astonished at his teaching and miracles (Matt 7:28-29; 9:8, 33; 22:33), hail his entrance into Jerusalem (Matt 21:8-9) and recognise him as a prophet and Son of David (Matt 12:23; 16:4; 21:9, 11, 46). He even has compassion for them (Matt 9:36; 14:14-21; 16:32-38) and they are introduced as potential followers, the target of his messianic "shepherding".[293]

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[289] Andrew Simmonds, "Uses of Blood: Re-Reading Matt. 27:25," *Law Critique* 19 (2008): 172, 187; Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation*, 124-128, 134-135.
[290] Runesson and Gurtner, "Introduction," 24.
[291] Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative*, 118-119; Konradt, "The Role of the Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew," 214-215, 229; Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation*, 132.
[292] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 24.
[293] Konradt, "The Role of the Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew," 217-223.

In spite of such promise, the crowd are unreliable and remain outsiders: the kingdom is communicated to them purely in parables (Matt 13:13-15, 34) and Christ dismisses them when desiring intimacy with his disciples (Matt 8:18, 23; 9:25; 14:22-23; 15:39). Having encountered moments of salvation (such as Matt 11:4-6), they lack sufficient faith and understanding, as evidenced by their wrongful chastisement of the two blind men who seek healing (Matt 20:31). Such deficient devotion makes them susceptible to the influence of rival teachers opposed to Jesus (Matt 11:16-19; 27:20) and, in the end, their fickleness becomes a liability as they turn against him, aiding in his arrest (Matt 26:47, 55) and judgement (Matt 27:20-24).[294]

In comparison, the collective noun "the people" (ὁ λαός) occurs fourteen times in the text. Five of them are as periphrastic genitives to describe Jewish authorities: "the chief priests and elders/scribes *of the people*" (Matt 2:4; 21:23; 26:3, 47; 27:1), which likely defines their religio-political leadership over all Jews. Runesson remarks that "although the people as a whole are implied in the expression, the narrative makes a clear distinction between the leaders of the people and the people themselves, the latter often referred to as 'crowds'".[295]

Of the remaining nine occurrences, four are OT quotations. (i) Matt 2:6/Mic 5:1: has no parallel in other Synoptics and presents a positive relationship between Jesus and Israel, the sheep/"my people" who he will "shepherd" (ποιμανεῖ), a rich pastoral metaphor throughout Matthew (Matt 9:36; 10:6; 15:24; 25:32-40). (ii) Matt 4:16/Isa 9:2: again, without parallel in Mark (cf. Luke 2:32), intimates a similarly favourable relationship between Christ and Israel (specifically, the northern tribes), whom he delivers from "darkness" and the "shadow of death" under Gentile occupation. (iii) Matt 13:15/Isa 6:10: is partly repeated in Mark 4:12 and Luke 8:10 but greatly extended here, with both positive and negative connotations, relating to Jerusalem's destruction as well as hope that some will return to God's covenant. (iv) Matt 15:8/Isa 29:13: paralleled in Mark 7:6-7, it is negative but "people" here refers specifically to the Pharisees and scribes. In summary, of the four uses of λαός that quote scripture, those

[294] Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 37; Runesson, "Rethinking Early Jewish-Christian Relations," 119-120; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 50.
[295] Anders Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew: The Narrative World of the First Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2016), 297.

unique to Matthew that apply to Israel in its entirety are positive, while those from his Markan source are mixed.

Aside from Matt 27:25, there are four remaining instances of "people" in the Gospel. (i) Matt 1:21: a Matthean clause, it occurs in the prologue and frames the story by providing the protagonist's *raison d'être*; it is unreservedly positive and probably means the nation of Israel, coming as it does directly after the genealogy that establishes Jesus as part of this family. (ii) Matt 4:23: similar to Mark 1:39 and Luke 4:14-15 but adds ἐν τῷ λαῷ ("among the people"), this usage is undoubtedly favourable and alludes to Christ gathering Israel as God's Servant (Isaiah 53; Matt 8:17; see Matt 4:24-25, which lists regions corresponding to the Davidic kingdom). (iii) Matt 26:5: identical to Mark 14:2, the chief priests and elders fear an uprising "among the people" if the crucifixion occurs during Passover (which ironically almost eventuates in Matt 27:24 – θόρυβος is used in both passages), a group including pilgrims from throughout the Jewish world as representative of the nation. (iv) Lastly, Matt 27:64: exclusive to this Gospel, where the chief priests and Pharisees are anxious the resurrection will be preached "to the people" and try spreading a contrary report (Matt 28:13); the presence in Jerusalem of a substantial pilgrim populace and Christ's global commission in subsequent verses (28:19-20) points to a universalised sense contrary to Runesson's claim that "[*l*]*aos* here can only refer to the crowds of Jerusalem".[296]

Unlike the crowd, the people are a protected character. One clear example is in the text's citation of Isa 29:13, where a harsh indictment of Israel is transferred onto the Pharisees and scribes: "And why do *you* [Pharisees and scribes] transgress the commandment of God for the sake of *your* tradition?... So, for the sake of *your* tradition, *you* have made void the word of God. *You* hypocrites! Well did Isaiah prophesy of *you*…" (Matt 15:3, 6-9). This is emphasised by the disciples immediately asking Jesus: "Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying?" (Matt 15:12).[297] For the most part, these inflections are Matthean additions to Mark.[298] Furthermore, criticism from Isaiah 6 quoted after the parable of the sower (Matt 13:10-15) is softened by removing the description of the people being

[296] Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew*, 300.
[297] Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew*, 298-299.
[298] Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 30.

"outside" the kingdom (cf. Mark 4:11), as well as redirecting blame in the parable of the vineyard towards the chief priests and Pharisees (Matt 21:33-45; Isa 5:1-7).

These are some generalisations in the way the First Gospel employs λαός, though a passage's context may nuance this outline. Typically, the term is *positive* (focused on salvation, especially when not reliant on Mark), *universal* ("all" Jews and not merely a subset, like Judeans; in Matt 27:25 this is reinforced by a pair of inclusive qualifiers: "all" and "us and our children"), *refers to ethnic Israel* (never Gentiles in a primary sense) or else to a specific segment within *the Jewish people inclusive of their leadership*, and is *related to God's covenantal relationship with them*.[299] This accords with how the phrase πᾶς ὁ λαὸς appears in the OT, where it "serves… to represent the people *as* a people, the covenant people of God".[300] Therefore, we can agree with Konradt that in Matthew: "The term λαός remains reserved for Israel," and Kinsel that "people" and "Israel" are analogous terms for the nation, and those sub-categories that compose it.[301] Sider Hamilton and Culpepper agree, and while the former states that in Matt 27:25 specifically "all the people" refers to "not only the people of Jerusalem but the whole people of God, Israel", the latter's conclusion is more general: "For Matthew, 'the people' are the biblical people of Israel."[302] Staples too remarks that the addition of the quantifier "all" to "Israel" relates solely and consistently to the seed of Abraham and tribal structure of Jacob in Second Temple literature.[303]

If "people" reliably equates to "Israel", could the latter incorporate foreigners? For example, Jackson alleges that while "[i]n seemingly every other place it is used in Matthew, λαὸς, refers to the Jewish people," in Matt 4:12-16, 23-25 the passages include Gentiles.[304] This may represent a form of theological foreshadowing; however, it is not the foundational meaning of "people". According to Staples:

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[299] Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew*, 300-301; Culpepper, *Matthew*, 548.

[300] Catherine Sider Hamilton, "Innocent Blood Traditions in Early Judaism and the Death of Jesus in Matthew," Ph.D. Thesis (University of St Michael's College, 2013), 55.

[301] Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew*, 378; Kinsel, "Jesus as Israel in Matthew's Gospel," 104-105. Hill too agrees: "Matthew… uses the two noble words 'Israel' and 'the people' to designate his own people." Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 69-70. As do Beare, where "people" means "the chosen race in its entirety", and Harrington: "The word *laos* carries a collective sense and refers to Israel as a whole." Beare, *The Gospel According to* Matthew, 531; Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 390.

[302] Sider Hamilton, *The Death of Jesus in Matthew*, 187; Culpepper, *Matthew*, 78.

[303] Staples, "What Do the Gentiles Have to Do with 'All Israel'?",375-376.

[304] Mark Randall Jackson, "Atonement in Matthew's Gospel," Ph.D. Thesis (Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2011), 29-31.

> "Israel" is consistently understood to be a larger entity than "the Jews", who are a subset of larger Israel *still awaiting a reversal of the covenantal curses and a renewal of God's favour* toward the full people of Israel. That renewal is consistently expected to involve not only the establishment of an independent *Jewish* state but a restored and reconstituted *Israel* including the restoration of the northern tribes of Israel…[305]

In sum, the "crowd" and the "people" emerge as somewhat distinct characters in the story, and in spite of "considerable semantic overlap" positing a one-to-one correspondence or interchangeability between the two (notably, Matt 9:36-38; 13:2-17; and the disputed verse that is the subject of this thesis) is "too simplistic".[306] The first constitute multi-ethnic, diverse gatherings with shifting loyalties, and "are never the whole Jewish people, nor are they the institutionally constituted society of Israel" as the "people", with whom God has a covenantal bond.[307] For this reason, what "all the people" demand in Matt 27:25 should not be read as a continuation of the *crowd's* dialogue. This begins to answer the issue raised by Fitzmyer: "The real problem here is to explain why the Evangelist had shifted from 'the crowd'… to 'all the people'."[308] Repschinski agrees that "[p]robably the change from the repeated use of ὄχλος in the preceding material to λαός in 27:25 has some significance".[309] The discussion will be taken up in our final chapter.

4.4. The theme of innocent blood.

Unlike the other canonical trial accounts that confine the congregation's demand to Jesus' crucifixion (Mark 15:13-14; Luke 23:21, 23; John 19:6, 15), Matthew's "people" personalise their appeal by calling his blood down upon themselves and their children. This expression returns the narrative to a prominent Matthean theme: the role of taking "innocent" (ἀθῷον) or "righteous" (δίκαιον) blood (analogous language is absent from Mark and Luke, for example, the Matt 23:34-35 duplication in Luke 11:50-51 lacks the two descriptors).[310] These adjectives are practically synonymous in the Gospel (Matt 3:15; 23:35; 27:4, 19): "[t]o talk about 'righteous blood'... is to talk about innocent blood," and they are occasionally

[305] Staples, "Reconstructing Israel," 62.
[306] Stanton, "Revisiting Matthew's Communities," 381-382; Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative*, 119.
[307] Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 38.
[308] Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Anti-Semitism and the Cry of 'All the People' (Matt 27:25)," *Theological Studies* 26:4 (1965): 669.
[309] Repschinski, *The Controversy Stories in the Gospel of Matthew*, 46.
[310] See Sider Hamilton, "Innocent Blood Traditions in Early Judaism and the Death of Jesus in Matthew," 56-63, 64-213, 217-289 for an in-depth study of Matthew's innocent blood motif.

paralleled in the LXX context of bloodshed, as in Exod 23:7 (ἀθῷον καὶ δίκαιον οὐκ ἀποκτενεῖς, "do not slay the innocent and the righteous") and Ps 94:21 (LXX 93:21, θηρεύσουσιν ἐπὶ ψυχὴν δικαίου καὶ αἷμα ἀθῷον καταδικάσονται, "they band together against the life of the righteous, and condemn the innocent to death").[311]

This motif derives from the centrality of blood in Jewish scripture and tradition. As the essence of life (Gen 9:4-5; Lev 17:11, 14; Deut 12:23) it is endowed with immense worth, used in covenant ratification or as a sacrificial offering for protection and reconciliation (for instance, Gen 15:8, 18; Exod 12:13; 24:8; Leviticus 4-5); contrarily, it can become a means of contracting spiritual impurity and guilt (for instance, Gen 4:11; 42:22; Lev 15:19-30; 17:2-4).[312] During the Passion, the gulf separating the antagonists from obeying the Mosaic Law is illustrated by their inability to properly value innocent blood. Judas considers its price as calculable to a mere thirty pieces of silver (Matt 26:15); Pilate takes few pains to defend it (Matt 27:19, 24 26); and the chief priests deem the "blood money" as potentially defiling (Matt 27:6).[313]

The sacrifice of righteous blood bookends the life of Christ. Herod's slaughter of the male children (Matt 2:16) prefigures the Matt 27:25 pericope: with the two episodes portraying civic leaders attempting to remove a political threat by killing innocent victims. There are additional corresponding details: a Jerusalem setting where the city "troubled" and "stirred" by Jesus' arrival (Matt 2:3; 21:10); a "gathering together" and conflict of hegemons (συναγαγὼν, Matt 2:4; συνηγμένων, Matt 27:17); references to "children" (Matt 2:18; 27:25; cf. 23:37); the occurrence of dreams (Matt 2:12-13; 27:19); and quoting the formula: "Then was fulfilled what was/had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah" (Matt 2:17-18; 27:9-10).[314]

Along with the massacred infants, the death of John the Baptist anticipates Christ. The two are identified as prophets (in John's case, Matt 11:9; 21:26; an identical expression to Matt 14:5 applies to the protagonist in Matt 21:46); are seen as exacting righteousness (Matt 3:15; 21:32); begin preaching with: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt 3:2; 4:17);

[311] Sider Hamilton, "'His Blood Be Upon Us': Innocent Blood and the Death of Jesus in Matthew," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 70:1 (January 2008): 85.
[312] See, for instance, David Biale, *Blood and Belief: The Circulation of a Symbol between Jews and Christians* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007).
[313] Heil, "The Blood of Jesus in Matthew," 121; J. Andrew Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis: The Gospel According to Matthew* (Harrisburg: Trinity International, 1996), 382-383; Sider Hamilton, "'His Blood Be Upon Us': Innocent blood and the Death of Jesus in Matthew," 96-97.
[314] Sider Hamilton, "Innocent Blood Traditions in Early Judaism and the Death of Jesus in Matthew," 47-49.

and are closely linked in their ministry (Matt 3:13; 4:12; 11:2-3, 18-19; 14:2, 12-13; 16:14). John is also "arrested" (παρεδόθη, Matt 4:12) and executed by a wicked ruler (Matt 14:1-11).

Parallels like these prepare readers for the intensification of "blood" imagery in several key passages towards the end of the Gospel. (i) Matt 23:35: Jesus' forewarning that "…upon you [scribes and Pharisees] may come all the righteous blood [αἷμα δίκαιον] shed on earth, from the blood of innocent [τοῦ αἵματος τοῦ δικαίου] Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar". (ii) Matt 26:28: Jesus giving the cup as "my blood of the covenant [τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης], which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins". (iii) Matt 27:4, 6: Judas's confession that "I have sinned in betraying innocent blood [αἷμα ἀθῷον]", followed by the chief priests' recognition of the returned payment as "blood money [τιμὴ αἵματός, lit. 'the price of blood']". (iv) Matt 27:19: Pilate's wife advising her husband: "Have nothing to do with that righteous man [τῷ δικαίῳ]…" alongside (v) Matt 27:24-25: Pilate's declaration that "I am innocent of this man's blood [Ἀθῷός εἰμι ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος τούτου]", and the people's cry for "his blood [τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ] be on us and on our children". These verses apply "blood" language in ways that are negative (associated with sin and punishment) and positive (associated with forgiveness and salvation).

The forthcoming offense committed by the antagonists against the Messiah in chapters 26-27 is qualified by Matthew denouncing the violation of "all the righteous blood on earth" (Matt 23:35), referencing Abel to Zechariah as a biblical beginning-to-end idiom. The two passages associate the unjust slaying of God's holy ones using similar phraseology: "all" and "children" (Matt 23:37; 27:25), and "upon you may come all the righteous blood shed" (ὅπως ἔλθῃ ἐφ' ὑμᾶς πᾶν αἷμα δίκαιον, Matt 23:35)/"his blood be on us" (Τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἐφ' ἡμᾶς, Matt 27:25).[315] Sider Hamilton notes that this theme mentioned in the context of Abel and Zechariah raises eschatological connotations regarding judgement on a sinful people or city, and Christ's prediction connects Jerusalem's downfall in Matt 23:37-39 with the murdered prophets (cf. the altered account in Luke 13:34-35). Biblical and later Jewish literature demonstrate some support for this idea. For example, the spilling of Abel's blood initiates a cycle of violence that ends with the Flood's devastation (Genesis 4, *1 Enoch* 6-11) and Zechariah's murder results in conquest and exile (2 Chr 24:20-22). The *Lives of the Prophets*

[315] Cargal, "'His Blood be Upon Us and Upon Our Children': A Matthean Double Entendre?", 109.

(of contestable provenance) repeats a comparable situation with explicit parallels to Matthew 23: blood being poured out, Zechariah's death occurring "between the sanctuary and the altar" (Matt 23:35), and the pollution of this injustice causing the cessation of oracles.[316]

Sider Hamilton considers these allusions serve as "a meditation on the problem of Jerusalem's destruction (or the land's devastation) based on one biblical story about the murder of an innocent or righteous person… a problem centred in innocent blood,"[317] writing:

> By describing Jesus' death in terms of innocent blood, Matthew sets his passion narrative within a paradigm of bloodguilt and purgation, purity and pollution, which is deeply rooted in the Hebrew Scriptures and still current in the Judaism of Matthew's own time and after.[318]

Her reflections are endorsed by many scholars who recognise that the Gospel relates the wrongful killing of Jesus (together with the Bethlehem innocents, John and the prophets) to the destruction of the holy city and temple. That Matthew had this idea in mind when composing the Matt 27:25 pericope may be suggested by the related handwashing ritual in Deuteronomy 21, which was enacted "to purge the guilt of innocent blood" (Deut 21:9). The condemnation of those guilty manifests in divine judgement and considerably explains the blood motif present throughout the story.[319]

However, this is an incomplete picture. One important aspect of innocent blood in the OT is its redemptive value, and the plot presents Christ's life and death within a paradigm of forgiveness for his people, notably through his covenantal sacrifice (Matt 26:28). Hence, the citation of Abel and Zechariah in Matthew 23 features another element frequently missed that connects these passages with Matt 27:25: their shed blood belongs not simply to murdered prophets but is *priestly blood during the act of sacrifice*; the priest himself becomes the victim. Chapter 6 shall continue to explore this theme with specific reference to the verse.

4.5. The use of irony in Matthew's Gospel.

Matthew employs several rhetorical devices to create drama and move his audience to adopt a specific interpretive point of view. The most provocative of these in the Passion is irony, a

[316] Sider Hamilton, "'His Blood Be Upon Us': Innocent blood and the Death of Jesus in Matthew," 89, 94-95.
[317] Sider Hamilton, "Innocent Blood Traditions in Early Judaism and the Death of Jesus in Matthew," 35.
[318] Sider Hamilton, "'His Blood Be Upon Us': Innocent blood and the Death of Jesus in Matthew," 84.
[319] Josephus, *Jewish War* 4.386-388; Culpepper, *Matthew*, 548.

literary technique that inverts the expressed meaning of a statement so that its contrary is the one intended by the writer, as Cicero famously defined it: *aliud dicere ac sentias* ("to say something other than what is felt").[320] Its purpose is misdirection of its victim by dissembling the professed meaning of a discourse through apparent contradiction, paradox, ambiguity or incompatibility. Under this dualistic model, the surface-level understanding, which is false or only superficially true, is taken as certain by irony's victim while the upper-level one is recognised as the deeper truth and literary deception by the ironist and reader.[321] It is thus an economical tool to emotionally involve readers by welcoming them as insiders into the reality of the story world that is missed by characters within the text.

The two types of irony commonly found in the Gospel are situational irony and verbal irony. The first arises from an incoherence between two plot lines, where the narrator's assertions become unreliable and the tale's genuine nature occurs behind characters' backs, as McDaniel explains: it is when "the reader perceives an incongruity between what is happening in the story and what is happening in the reader's understanding of the story".[322] One such example is the anointing of Jesus in Matt 26:6-13. At face value, a woman has wasted "very expensive ointment" (v.7) which, as the disciples protest, could have been sold and the proceeds donated to the poor. Outwardly, the characters are acting out of Christ's concern for the needy (Matt 5:3; 11:5; 15:32; 19:21), yet irony enters at the very moment where he contradicts their expectations: "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a beautiful thing to me" (v. 10). Although they have been close to him from the beginning, Jesus' students understand their teacher's vocation less than the stranger who proleptically and timely anoints him for his sacrificial purpose (v. 12), a destiny his chief follower, Peter, wanted to previously forestall (Matt 16:22-23) and one that immediately inspires another disciple to gain financially by betraying him (vv. 14-16). Meaning is turned upside down and the expense of the ointment intended to prepare the Messiah's anointing is juxtaposed by the disciple selling the sacrificial victim for an equally large sum (v. 15).[323]

[320] Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 93.
[321] Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative*, ix, 1; Resseguie, "A Glossary of New Testament Narrative Criticism with Illustrations," 13.
[322] Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *The Concept of Ambiguity: The Example of James* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 49; McDaniel, *Experiencing Irony in the First Gospel*, 34.
[323] Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative*, 130.

In comparison, verbal irony refers to "the use of words to convey the opposite of their literal meaning", usually through paradox or puns, where a statement's initial connotation occurs in a context that retrospectively requires the audience's reinterpretation.[324] Jesus' preaching and parables display ample evidence of this. For example, his admonition to the hypocrite who notices a "speck" in someone else's eye but is unable to see the "log" in his own (Matt 7:3-5) or the parable of the blind man leading another blind man (Matt 15:15). His adversarial encounters involve this form of rhetoric too, like the false praise by the Herodians' and Pharisees' disciples that Christ "teach[es] the way of God truthfully" (Matt 22:16), his remark to the Pharisees that he came "not to call the righteous, but sinners" (Matt 9:13) and commentary on their Mosaic authority (Matt 23:1-12).

By couching his narrative in irony, the author invites readers into the drama and discloses to them God's wisdom underlying apparent earthly foolishness. This method is typical of such literature, as Berg writes: "In ancient narratives including religious texts such as biblical writings, irony is predominantly a tool for communicating the divine, or the higher power, beyond human reach. In this sense, *irony is a revelatory language*."[325] Appropriately, Matt 27:25 and the scenes that encompass it are rich in ironic reflection because it is specifically in these moments where the disjunction between divine victory and human failure is at its apex with the storyteller regularly contrasting Jesus' perspective (which he shares) with that of the human characters.[326]

During the protagonist's arrest, the prior bravado of the disciples is undermined by their cowardice and Judas's contrived affection. James and John, having assured Jesus of their ability to drink the cup he does in his kingdom, sitting on his right and left (Matt 20:21-23), flee to avoid capture (Matt 26:56); unlike the audience, they do not comprehend this signifies self-sacrificial suffering and kingship on a cross, with condemned criminals "enthroned" on either side (Matt 26:39, 42; 27:37-38). Peter is the greatest victim of irony here: after swearing he would rather die for his teacher than forsake him (Matt 26:33-35), he cannot remain awake and keep watch in the garden (Matt 26:40), and denies him by invoking oaths and curses before a young girl and others three times (Matt 26:69-75).

[324] McDaniel, *Experiencing Irony in the First Gospel*, 15; Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative*, 81, 88.
[325] Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative*, 5 (emphasis added).
[326] Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative*, 15.

This ironic undercurrent continues throughout the trial and crucifixion; indeed, Davies and Allison consider it the "chief literary feature" of these passages.[327] In the false testimony given against him that he would "destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days" (Matt 26:61; 27:40), the narrator uses Jesus' enemies' own words to intimate how his hero would restore the temple's purpose by the very means they are pursuing: his death, as exemplified with the tearing of the veil (Matt 27:51).[328] Kingsbury and Gundry note the extreme irony of Christ being convicted for blasphemy in identifying himself intimately with God, whereas readers have been twice informed that the divine perspective considers Jesus His Son as well as naming him "Emmanuel" (Matt 3:17; 17:5; 1:23), so that the Sanhedrin, holding themselves to be God's legitimate representatives, are the ones who are, in fact, blaspheming![329]

Perhaps the most glaring instance of verbal and situational irony occurs when the Jewish council (Matt 26:8) and authorities (Matt 27:42), Roman guards (Matt 27:29), Pilate (Matt 27:37) and bystanders (Matt 27:40) all hail Jesus as "Christ" or "king" but do so mockingly, as with the scarlet robe and crown of thorns (Matt 27:28-29). The interpreter, though, cannot miss the latent truth here as the Messiah's opponents in ridiculing his kingship, unwittingly acknowledge him as the Davidic monarch, who by submitting to death under their power fulfills his vocation (Matt 20:28).[330]

Recognising the Passion's substantial reliance on irony and Matthew's purposes behind it prime the audience to approach Matt 27:25 in this spirit, and defending a double entendre interpretation shall require some discussion below of how this literary device is effectively employed. Of course, irony creates a problem in that, when it arises, the story's appreciation cannot continue until it has been resolved, which first requires rejecting the plain meaning and then considering alternative readings that harmonise best with the clues the writer has made available.[331] Double entendre is specifically able to accommodate the first- and second-

[327] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3*, 537.
[328] Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative*, 150.
[329] Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 87; Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution,* 546.
[330] Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet*, 163; Resseguie, "A Glossary of New Testament Narrative Criticism with Illustrations," 13-14.
[331] R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983), 167; Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative*, 19.

storey levels together; they are not opposed to one another and the audience can recognise truth in the paradoxical meaning that eventuates.[332]

4.6. Concluding remarks.

The Gospel's composition guides our understanding of the Matt 27:25 pericope. This scene occurs at the crux of the narrative, where the supposed failure of the hero is actually his – and God's – predetermined moment of triumph. Such reversal is achieved by the dual-layered nature of the Matthean Passion: a surface level understood by the antagonists (who are associated in condemning Jesus but shun any blame) and a more profound reality that the author (who carries divine insight) imparts to readers. What remains is the role of "all the people", distinguished from the crowd, who accept responsibility for shedding Christ's innocent blood, a significant theme that has positive and negative consequences.

[332] Cargal, "'His Blood be Upon Us and Upon Our Children': A Matthean Double Entendre?", 110.

Chapter 5: Contemporary Interpretations of Matt 27:25

5.1. Introduction.

There is undoubtedly some complexity involved in reading Matt 27:25 in a manner respecting the Gospel's Jewishness and the tragic "good news" of its irony-infused Passion. Such difficulty is reflected by the variety of scholarly interpretations attempting to articulate its precise literary and historical meaning. Let us examine four recent perspectives, evaluating arguments in favour and against each, and begin to consider how the double entendre one persuasively articulates the verse within a paradigm of redemption and judgement, providing insight into Jesus' Mosaic role in covenant formation.

Traditionally, the proscriptive view of Matt 27:25 that condemned Israel without possibility of salvation was the most common in the Church and academy.[333] Little revisionism was seriously entertained until recent times when political events accelerated the desire to improve Jewish-Christian relations, accompanied by a quest in biblical studies to situate NT material within first century Judaism. Contemporary discussion duly tends to distance the passage from indicting Jews in perpetuity for the crucifixion by contending that only immediate participants are punished with the fall of Jerusalem.

Certainly, the Roman destruction of the temple and holy city shattered the religious landscape of many Jews – Christians and non-Christians alike – and the earliest recurrent treatment of Matt 27:25 among the Church Fathers justified this misfortune as a penalty for sin analogous to suffering during the Babylonian conquest centuries prior. Matthew also intimates that AD 70 was the result of Christ's death and covenantal disobedience, and so the success of the models below will depend in part on how effectively they account for this devastation of the Jewish cultic system.

5.2. Matt 27:25 as universal meaning and responsibility.

The most widespread exegetical model interprets the verse's subject: πᾶς ὁ λαὸς as denoting Israel, God's OT people. Accordingly, since the narrator proposes that the entire Jewish nation

[333] Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew*, 271.

is somehow represented rejecting their divinely-chosen Messiah (and not solely a Jerusalem mob), the scene enacts a conclusive recapitulation of previous covenant infractions, incurring collective guilt and ending in similar exile.[334] Furthermore, calling Jesus' blood "on our children" is regarded, for instance, by Beare and Crossan, as marking the displacement of Jews' chosen status, confirmed over time by their marginalisation and the successful Gentile adoption of Christianity, and while this convinces some commentators to doubt the incident's historicity, a fictional account hardly lessens its theological significance or alters its meaning within the story.[335]

In defending this approach it is argued that the noun "people" (λαὸς) is generally synonymous with "Israel" throughout the plot and the replacement of "crowd" (ὄχλος) in v. 25, which populates the surrounding verses (Matt 27:15, 20, 24), is no mere aesthetic substitute but gestures that the storyteller has introduced a different character into the drama, with the descriptor "all" indicating a broadened semantic range. Schnackenburg, for instance, maintains that biblically "Matthew's sense cannot be restricted to the assembled throng since the 'people as a whole' in the Greek (*laos*) means Israel".[336] Meier too considers this terminological shift signifies that "the whole people of Israel" have taken upon themselves "and their children forever the responsibility for Jesus' death".[337] They understand the Gospel's theological purpose as marking the cessation of Israel's salvific prerogative and replacing it by "the founding of the church as the new people of God", which, along with other passages (such as Matt 8:10-12; 21:43), explains why the globally-directed mission (Matt 28:19-20) supersedes one previously devoted to Jews alone (Matt 10:5-6; 15:24).[338]

Three ancillary points are offered as support. First, it is argued Pilate's handwashing and public renunciation of responsibility (Matt 27:24) evoke the Deut 21:1-9 ritual to cleanse the governor and his people (the Gentiles) of guilt for Christ's unjust sentence while transferring

[334] Senior, *Matthew*, 321-325; Runesson, "Who Killed Jesus and Why?", 179-180.
[335] Dominic M. Crossan, "Anti-Semitism and the Gospel," *Theological Studies* 26:2 (May 1965): 189-214; Fitzmyer, "Anti-Semitism and the Cry of 'All the People' (Matt 27:25)," 669-670; Beare, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 531; Levine, "Anti-Judaism and the Gospel of Matthew," 33-34.
[336] Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 285; Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 827.
[337] John P. Meier, *Matthew* (Dublin: Veritas, 1980), 342-343.
[338] Meier, *Matthew*, 342-343; Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 508; Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew*, 1-2.

it onto the Jewish religious leaders and their nation.[339] This is reinforced by his attempt to free Jesus, which is subverted through the crowd's choice of Barabbas (Matt 27:17, 21, a stark comparison provided to Israel – and readers – between the peaceful "son of the Father" and the violent political revolutionary).[340] Meier states: "Writing after AD 70, Mt sees the self-inflicted curse of 27:25 visibly fulfilled in the disaster of the Jewish War and the destruction of Jerusalem. The Jews chose Barabbas and the Zealot party instead of Jesus the meek and lowly King." [341] These actions moderate Roman guilt but conversely accentuate Jewish accountability.

The phraseology of Matt 27:25 is noteworthy too. Insisting that Jesus' "blood be on us and on our children" (τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἐφ' ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν) mirrors and fulfills his very pronouncement of judgement a few chapters before that "upon you may come all the righteous blood… upon this generation" (ἔλθῃ ἐφ' ὑμᾶς πᾶν αἷμα δίκαιον… ἐπὶ τὴν γενεὰν ταύτην, Matt 23:35-36). This brings into focus the relationship between the innocent blood of the murdered prophets and Christ's own (Matt 23:34-36; 27:4), and helps create the sombre mood that dominates the scene.[342]

Finally, it is argued a number of OT passages clarify the meaning of the expression "blood upon someone", including: Lev 20:9, 11-13, 16, 27; Deut 19:10; Josh 2:19; 2 Sam 1:16; 3:29/1 Kings 2:33; Jer 26:15; 51:35; Ezek 18:13; 33:4-5; see also 2 Sam 21:1.[343] These texts share several commonalities: the statement "blood upon someone" arises as a response to unlawful killing; it is usually declared by a third party as an imputation of responsibility and guilt on another subject; and, with the exception of 2 Sam 3:29/1 Kings 2:33, it relates to the specific person held blameworthy and not future generations (as a curse).[344] Of the examples cited, 2 Sam 3:29/1 Kings 2:33 are the closest instances in the Hebrew Bible of generational culpability for shedding innocent blood and many scholars believe they inform the construction of Matt

[339] Callon, "Pilate the Villain," 68; Sider Hamilton, "'His Blood Be Upon Us': Innocent blood and the Death of Jesus in Matthew," 93.
[340] Evans, *Matthew*, 453; Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet*, 258; Bond, *Pontius Pilate in History and Interpretation*, 127-128.
[341] Meier, *Matthew*, 343.
[342] Heil, "The Blood of Jesus in Matthew," 120.
[343] Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 389-390; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3*, 591-592; Senior, *Matthew*, 321-325; Richard Groves, "'His Blood Be on Us': Matthew 27:15-26," *Review and Expositor* 103 (2006): 227-228.
[344] Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 827-828.

27:25.[345] But linguistically and thematically, Jer 26:15 (LXX 33:15) is a closer comparison; indeed, Brown regards it as the immediate backdrop to the scene: the prophet (Jeremiah/Jesus) warns the leaders and "all the people" (παντὶ τῷ λαῷ, Jer 26:11-12; πᾶς ὁ λαὸς, Jer 26:16/πᾶς ὁ λαὸς, Matt 27:25) that executing him will bring innocent blood (αἷμα ἀθῷον, Jer 26:15/αἷμα ἀθῷον, Matt 27:4) on those responsible (ἐφ᾽ ὑμᾶς καὶ ἐπὶ τὴν πόλιν ταύτην καὶ ἐπὶ τοὺς κατοικοῦντας ἐν αὐτῇ, Jer 26:15/ ἐφ᾽ ἡμᾶς καὶ ἐπὶ τὰ τέκνα ἡμῶν, Matt 27:25), implying harmful consequences would befall the temple and Jerusalem (Jer 26:12-13/Matt 23:37-39). By echoing these biblical precedents it is submitted that the author recalls the bloodguilt acquired for violating Torah by wrongfully pursuing someone's death.[346]

How convincing is this interpretation? Its strongest proof is that "all the people" in Matt 27:25 very probably refers to Israel. As observed in chapter 4, λαὸς is regularly used in the Gospel to connote the covenant nation. Moreover, this is arguably a plain reading of the phrase that provides a plausible rather than ad hoc explanation for why it replaces "crowd", particularly since its presence in the pericope does not overlap Mark (unlike the uses of ὄχλος: Matt 27:15/Mark 15:8; Matt 27:20/Mark 15:11; Matt 27:24/Mark 15:15), which suggests Matthew wished to nuance the meaning originally conveyed by his source. Even Senior, who rejects this perspective, acknowledges: "Almost all commentators agree that ὁ λαὸς here has the idea of the 'Jewish nation' and not just the 'crowd'."[347]

This is a mark in its favour, as is its ability to explain Jerusalem's terrible fate and the scene's bleak atmosphere. Still, the question remains whether a totalising critique against ethnic Israel accounts for the narrative and historical data, which we have already seen is undermined by reception history.[348] Unlike the remnant theology polemics expressed at times in contemporary sectarian literature, a view wholly convicting and replacing the Jewish people fails to cohere with the hypothesised background of the evangelist's community and Christian origins in general.[349] It is additionally complicated by the plot's portrayal of faithful Israelites (Joseph of Arimathea, Christ's female followers and the disciples, who are eventually

[345] Lovsky, "Comment Comprendre 'Son Sang Sur Nous et Nos Enfants'?", 352; Senior, *Matthew*, 324.
[346] Brown, *The Death of the Messiah, Volume 2*, 1450; Senior, *Matthew*, 324; Groves, "'His Blood Be on Us'," 227-228.
[347] Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew*, 258.
[348] Lovsky, "Comment Comprendre 'Son Sang Sur Nous et Nos Enfants'?", 346-347.
[349] Dunn, "The Question of Anti-Semitism in the New Testament Writings of the Period," 180; Wilson, *Related Strangers*, 51.

vindicated and authorised as his representatives).[350] Turner concludes that "[t]he national guilt interpretation is patently false on its surface, since all the founders of the church were Jewish and many Jews have believed in Jesus… Matthew is a Jew whose audience includes Christian Jews".[351]

Neither is the story evidence presented singularly persuasive. As previously discussed, Pilate's duplicitous character challenges a literal reading required of the Deuteronomy 21 ritual, which was conditional on the innocence of the parties involved to avoid the polluting effects of bloodguilt.[352] However, the governor treats it as a means of disavowing personal fault while sentencing Jesus, who he knows to be blameless, to be crucified (Matt 27:26), violating the premise of the OT practice.[353] If his handwashing is a plain reference to Deut 21:1-9, Matthew misunderstood the scriptural custom. Where the ritual is intended at all – and multiple parallel details point in that direction – it is done so ironically, as Smith writes: "The one way people can really be innocent is by *not* washing their hands of this man's blood! It is precisely contact with his blood which brings forgiveness and peace."[354] A similar case can be made regarding the prisoner's release: the crowd's choice of Barabbas over Jesus is, on the surface, fatal to Jerusalem and contributes to its destruction; yet, at the second-storey level (of which the audience is acquainted), this is precisely the decision required to effectuate God's atoning plan.

The contention that Christ's judgement in Matthew 23 is manifested in the people's cry is inaccurate. Closer scrutiny demonstrates that the scribes and Pharisees are explicitly the target of his criticism (Matt 23:29). According to the story, it is they who receive the curses or "woes" (Matt 23:13-16, 23, 25, 27, 29), who are culpable as children of those who murdered the prophets and will do the same to Jesus' followers (Matt 23:31-35), and whose failure in authority and covenantal fidelity causes the temple's ruin.[355] Even the idiom "brood of vipers" is reserved for them (Matt 12:34; 23:33; in addition to the Sadducees in Matt 3:7), and the

[350] Levine, "Anti-Judaism and the Gospel of Matthew," 33-34; Levine, "Matthew, Mark, and Luke: Good News or Bad?", 92.
[351] Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet*, 261.
[352] Callon, "Pilate the Villain," 68-69.
[353] Simmonds, "Uses of Blood: Re-Reading Matt. 27:25," 171.
[354] Smith, "Matthew 27:25," 426-427.
[355] Claudia Setzer, "Sinai, Covenant, and Innocent Blood Traditions in Matthew's Blood Cry (Matt 27:25)," in *The Ways that Often Parted: Essays in Honor of Joel Marcus*, eds. Lori Baron, Jill Hicks-Keeton and Matthew Thiessen (Atlanta: SBL, 2018), 176-177; Runesson, "Who Killed Jesus and Why?", 184.

expression “this generation” (Matt 12:38-42; 16:1-14; 23:36) forms part of the stylised polemic against non-Mattheans and failed discipleship rather than Israel.[356] While the chapter 23 passage does not impute future generations with guilt (the populace of Jerusalem is not subjected to a “woe”), it does, like Jeremiah 26, associate refusal to heed God’s prophet with sin (Matt 23:34-36/Jer 26:4-6) and desolation of the “house” (Matt 23:37-38/Jer 26:8-9). Reading Jesus’ warning against the Pharisees, scribes and holy city conjointly with Matt 27:25 and Jer 26:12-16 presupposes salvation follows faithfulness to the divine messenger and covenant, whereas defiance brings about the contrary.[357]

Lastly, the instances of “blood upon someone” in the OT do not elucidate the verse in a clear-cut manner. True, the expression serves to indict potential murderers; nevertheless, the group convened before Pilate understand themselves as legitimately exacting a capital sentence on a criminal (only the governor believes otherwise) and calling blood on their own heads (or on anyone else’s) is inconsistent with the scriptural precedents, as is involving descendants.[358] A direct parallel presents three alternatives, none of which acceptably harmonise with the plot: (i) *Jesus is not innocent and consequently no guilt is incurred by the people*; (ii) *the people are consciously lying, knowing the injustice of their actions*; or (iii) *Jesus is innocent and the people unwittingly bring about his death* – which seems feasible – *and by then demanding his blood they unjustly incriminate themselves before God*. The first two options are unworkable. For the third to be viable requires that the cry for Christ’s blood cannot be intrinsically condemnatory but, from a Matthean viewpoint, contingent on future informed responses to Christian evangelisation.

Furthermore, “blood upon someone” is not a curse formula and the one occurrence that intimates generational guilt in the duplicate passages 2 Sam 3:29/1 Kings 2:33 is not a self-imprecation (and rather disingenuous: was not Joab simply doing David’s dirty work when the latter blames him to escape recrimination?).[359] The perspective is dissonant with the biblical

[356] See Luke T. Johnson, “The New Testament’s Anti-Jewish Slander and the Conventions of Ancient Polemic,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 108:3 (1989): 433-441.
[357] Brown, *The Death of the Messiah, Volume 2*, 1450.
[358] The legality of Jesus’ trial is itself questionable, a catalogue of problems regarding its liceity are explored in Josef Blinzler, *The Trial of Jesus* (Westminster: Newman, 1959).
[359] Lovsky states: “Peut-on ignorer que nulle part, dans l’Ancien et le Nouveau Testament, cette formule (son sang sur…) n’est une formule de malédiction ?” Lovsky, “Comment Comprendre ‘Son Sang Sur Nous et Nos Enfants’?”, 356.

record and Jewish tradition, and specifically repudiated in a few places (for example, in Deut 24:16; 2 Kings 14:6; Jer 31:29-30; Ezek 18:2-4; 19-20).[360] Simmonds argues: "It is inconceivable that the author of Matthew's gospel, who went to great pains to show that Jesus fulfilled the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible, would portray Jesus' covenant as blatantly violating these bedrock legal principles against *delictual* self-curses."[361] Rather, as suggested by the phrase "on our children", Matt 27:25 likely expresses the established OT sense of familial solidarity, where parents' obedience or infringement of covenantal law results in real effects for their offspring: blessings and curses, as in the idiomatic "visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments" (Exod 20:5-6; see also 34:7; Num 14:18; Deut 5:9; Acts 2:38-39), a matter of transferring good and bad outcomes (like Jerusalem's destruction) but not guilt.[362]

Overall, this view correctly identifies the subject of Matt 27:25 as Israel, that the narrative connects the rejection of God's prophet with Jerusalem's destruction, and that shed innocent blood, under certain circumstances, brings judgement and punishment. Nonetheless, these points can be admitted without having to accept universal Jewish condemnation as found in the national bloodguilt position, which creates several narrative problems.

5.3. Matt 27:25 as restricted meaning and responsibility.

In reaction to exegetical concerns raised by the previous model, many commentators today favour another based on the conviction that πᾶς ὁ λαὸς could not mean Israel. Proponents argue the phrase is limited to the crowd gathered before Pilate who alone are guilty of the capital sentence that the governor has relinquished.[363] Hence, "us and our children" corresponds to "all the people" in Matt 27:25 as a literal and unequivocal pronouncement: "all of us, adults and children alike", with the text levelling fault at "the Jews of that generation

[360] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3*, 591-592; Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet*, 258-259.
[361] Simmonds, "Uses of Blood: Re-Reading Matt. 27:25," 176.
[362] Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 827-828; Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet*, 258-259.
[363] Hans Kosmala, "'His Blood on Us and on Our Children' (The Background of Matt. 27:24-25)," *ASTI* 7 (1968-1969): 97-98, 118; Vincent Mora, *Le Refus d'Israël (Matt 27:25).* Lectio Divina Collection 124 (Paris: Cerf, 1986), 135-140.

– and indeed, only *some* of them… [who] were responsible for the death of Jesus, not the Jews of later centuries".[364]

This perspective likewise avoids a sweeping supersessionism by rooting the verse in the exigencies of Matthew's socio-historical situation, that is, instead of disclosing Jewish salvific status the evangelist has penned it to criticise ideological opponents.[365] The failure of these leaders and the religious institution they falsely shepherd provides a theodicy for why God allowed the traumatic aftermath of war with Rome.[366] For in Jewish eyes, Runesson contends, the fall of Jerusalem could not be truly blamed on foreigners as that would entail pagan gods were more powerful than their own. A native aetiology must be sought for this catastrophe, such as the already established OT motif of punishment for sin, especially by those who led the covenant people (Matt 23:29-24:22-29).[367] In this sense, this interpretation agrees with the preceding one that the Gospel views the temple's destruction a punitive response to Jesus' wrongful execution.

Although these scholars reject many of the former interpretation's conclusions, they recognise the impactful nature of Matt 27:25 compels an explanation for why πᾶς ὁ λαὸς replaces ὄχλος at this point in the narrative. Lovsky favours the simple solution of authorial exaggeration to create drama, with no deeper meaning: "La distinction théologique entre 'les foules' e 'tout le peuple' est artificielle."[368] Turner agrees, suggesting it emphasises the unanimity with which the group spoke.[369] For Saldarini, any theological significance carried by "people" is relevant to solely the story's first four chapters, so that from Matthew 21 onwards the term simply constitutes "the bulk of Jews in Jerusalem", including their leaders, which Davies and Allison consider as "rightly observe[d]" since "Matthew excoriates an actual political and social segment of Judaism, not the people of Israel as a symbolic whole".[370]

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[364] Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 827; O. Lamar Cope, *Matthew: A Scribe Trained for the Kingdom of Heaven* (Washington: Catholic Biblical Association, 1976), 128-129; Nolland, "The Gospel of Matthew and Anti-Semitism," 167.
[365] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3*, 592.
[366] Overman, *Church and Community in Crisis*, 382-383.
[367] Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew*, 301-302.
[368] Lovsky, "Comment Comprendre 'Son Sang Sur Nous et Nos Enfants'?", 350-351.
[369] Turner believes the expression in Matt 27:25 "means that those present spoke with unanimity" that "may echo a common expression in Jeremiah". He adds, rather suggestively: "When all is said and done, Jesus came to save his *people* from their sins (Matt 1:21)." Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet*, 259.
[370] Saldarini, *Matthew's Christian-Jewish Community*, 32-33; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3*, 591-592.

In addition, the verse has been regarded by some as part of the Gospel's alleged diatribe against Jerusalem. Runesson, who similarly dismisses an accusation against Israel in this pericope because "[p]assages in which *laos* refers to the Jewish people as a whole may be focused on its salvation rather than its condemnation" – a telling, if not ironic, admission! – thinks the noun change conveys the ethnicity of those who cry.[371] This juxtaposes the city's Jewish population in opposition to the Gentile governor: "all" intends "all Jerusalem" as constitutive of the same national identity (as in Matt 2:3; 21:10), but not the pilgrim crowds or Pharisees, who are commonly active in Galilee.[372] Konradt too supposes the Jewishness of those assembled is indicated here, as in other instances: Matt 2:3; 16:21; 21:10-11; 23:37-39, and suggested by the use of "πᾶς" (linking with πάντες in Matt 27:22, πᾶσα ἡ πόλις in Matt 21:10, and πᾶσα Ἰεροσόλυμα in Matt 2:3).[373] For this reason, "on our children" relates and is limited to the offspring of that generation who crucified Christ and would experience the horrors of the Roman war.[374] "All the people" is therefore equivalent to "the entire people gathered there": the Jerusalem elite and the crowd under their influence.[375]

Another reason for rejecting a reading accusing ethnic Israel is the broadly Jewish *Sitz im Leben* manifested in this Gospel, which, as discussed in chapter 3, applies to his community and the early Church. According to Saldarini and Hagner, intra-Jewish conflict is the paradigm through which to properly understand apparently anti-Judaic statements like the people's cry.[376] This historical background clarifies the verse and restricts blame to Matthew's sectarian competitors.

The positive contributions this model makes to the debate can surely be appreciated. Its recourse to the Gospel's provenance anchors it temporally and avoids anachronisms found in other interpretations. However, it is not without issues, foremost among them being that πᾶς ὁ λαός does have universal overtones and is unlikely to signify some combination of Jerusalemites. Certainly, the entire Jewish population is not explicitly assembled in Matthew

[371] Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew*, 296.
[372] Levine, "Anti-Judaism and the Gospel of Matthew," 33-34; Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew*, 301-302.
[373] Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew*, 11, 372; Konradt, "The Role of the Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew," 228.
[374] Douglas R.A. Hare, "The Rejection of the Jews in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts," in *Antisemitism and the Foundations of Christianity*, ed. Alan T. Davies (New York, Ramsey and Toronto: Paulist, 1979), 38.
[375] Cope, *Matthew*, 128-129; Skinner, *The Trial Narratives*, 63.
[376] Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 828.

27, but the nation *is* genuinely represented by Passover pilgrims from throughout Judea, Galilee and the Diaspora, as well as by the priests and elders "of the people" whose liturgical function in leading ritual sacrifice is intrinsically corporate.[377] Davies, Allison and Senior grant that λαὸς "consistently had a collective sense; that is, not just a crowd but the people of Israel as a whole" and there is no exclusively exegetical reason to restrict the term to the city's population when it is used diversely throughout the narrative.[378] This position also underestimates the text's theological inclinations, considerably influenced by the OT and constructed in light of post-Easter reflection, where "all the people" presumably carries greater symbolic value beyond a local controversy.[379] It is unclear how interpreters who otherwise maintain that "people" bears the sense of Israel *except* for Matt 27:25 are not engaging in special pleading. France pointedly remarks: "It is presented not simply as the thoughtless words of a few hooligans who happened to be present, *not even as the words of 'the crowd',* but as the declaration of 'all the people', using the term λαὸς which in the LXX and later Jewish use is especially associated with Israel as God's chosen people. This is the voice of a representative group of Israel."[380]

Conscious of the dramatic weight Matt 27:25 and its pericope have within the plot, why would "crowd" and "people" be used equivocally here whereas nowhere else does the author, who carefully distinguishes between Jewish leaders and those they govern, alternate between the two terms?[381] Of the frequent occasions where Jesus ministers to or is followed by "great crowds", not once are they referred to as "[all the] people", a phrase only found in Matt 27:25. Konradt correlates occurrences of "all" in relation to a Jerusalem setting but the adjective occurs quite freely. Qualifiers like "all" (πᾶς, πᾶσα), "all kinds of" (πᾶν), "all/severally" (πάντας, πᾶσαι), "all/whole" (ὅλῃ), "all things" (ἅπαντα) and "each/every" (πάσῃ) describe locations, such as, "all Jerusalem" (Matt 2:3), "all the city" (Matt 8:34; 21:10, to mean "Jerusalem" in the latter case), "all that/the region" or "all Galilee/Syria" (Matt 2:16; 3:5; 4:23-24; 14:35), "all that district/land" (Matt 9:26, 31; 27:45), "all the cities and villages" (Matt 9:35), "all the towns of Israel" (Matt 10:23); and groups of people, such as, "all the people"

[377] Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew*, 81-83.
[378] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3*, 592; Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew*, 118.
[379] Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 501-502; Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet*, 262.
[380] France, "Matthew and Jerusalem," 121 (emphasis in original).
[381] Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew*, 296.

(lit. “crowds”; Greek: ὄχλοι, Matt 12:23), “all who were sick” (Matt 8:16), “all the disciples” (Matt 26:35, 56), “all the chief priests and elders” (Matt 27:1), “all the tribes” (Matt 24:30), and “all the nations” (Matt 24:9, 14; 25:32; 28:19). According to these other usages, the modifier “all” in “all the people” is likely to be expansive rather than restrictively mean a select gathering.

Runesson argues that in two uses of λαὸς in Jerusalem (Matt 26:5; 27:64), the chief priests, elders and Pharisees do not include themselves as part of the “people”, which contradicts the term being typically a referent for Israel.[382] Yet, these verses are notable ones: in the first instance, the tumult is feared among the entire pilgrim cohort who are loyal to Christ and regard him as a prophet (Matt 21:11, 46); and in the second, it is related to the preaching of the resurrection to all nations (Matt 28:19-20). On these occasions, while Jewish authority figures do indeed exclude themselves, the context favours the expression having a universal function because the “people” referred to consist of groups beyond the confines of Jerusalem.

Finally, the hypothesis that the passage criticises Matthew’s sectarian opponents encounters issues. Following the extensive denunciation of the Pharisees and scribes in chapter 23, they are curiously absent from this scene. This cannot be due to the Gospel’s fidelity to its Markan source since it has taken liberties to increase the presence of these characters in Jerusalem whereas in the other Synoptics the Pharisees make no appearance there, with the exception of Mark 12:13 (for instance, in Matt 21:45; 22:15, where the Pharisees instigate the action rather than the chief priests, scribes and elders, cf. Mark 11:27; 12:13; or Matt 22:34, 41, gatherings of Pharisees ascribed to scribes in Mark 12:28, 35). The author has intensified the role played by the elders alongside the chief priests in the Passion narrative while diminishing that of the scribes (cf. Mark 14:1-2/Luke 22:2: “the chief priests and the scribes”; Mark 14:43: “the chief priests and the scribes”; Mark 15:1: “the chief priests, with the elders and scribes”; Mark 15:3, 31/Luke 23:3-4, 13, where Matthew includes “elders”).[383] Despite the involvement of Pharisees and scribes in the city, Matthew has evidently lessened their part in Jesus’ trial scenes. If Matt 27:25 has primarily negative connotations and forms part of an attack upon ideological rivals, it would be natural to include them in the pericope.

[382] Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew*, 299-300.
[383] Buck, “Anti-Judaic Sentiments in the Passion Narrative According to Matthew,” 166-168.

Like the previous model, this one has elements recommending it, such as its consideration of the Gospel's Jewishness and probable audience to the conclusion that Matt 27:25 could not thereby condemn Israel. Nevertheless, narrowing "people" to a small, defined body, whether individuals assembled by the priests and elders, Jerusalem's inhabitants, or Matthew's religious competitors, is not persuasive, nor is reading sectarianism as underlying the verse.

5.4. Matt 27:25 as universal meaning but restricted responsibility.

A mediating position between these two theories retains the sense of πᾶς ὁ λαὸς as Israel while narrowing responsibility to those characters who actively condemn Christ in the narrative. It underscores the representative function of various groups during the trial: either Jerusalem, as the religious capital; or the Passover pilgrims as constituting Jewry from throughout the Roman world; but especially the chief priests and elders "of the people", in whom inheres corporate solidarity through their role as divine mediators. Moreover, the perspective calls attention to the consistent affirmation of collective judgement found in OT tradition, even in circumstances when only a segment of the population is directly accountable, as evident in Mosaic legal terminology, such as Lev 24:13-16; Num 15:32-36; Deut 21:18-21; and the prominent responses of "Amen" that "all the people shall say" following the Levites' declaration of covenant curses (Deut 27:15-26; LXX: καὶ ἐροῦσι πᾶς ὁ λαός, where there is verbal agreement in part of this formula with Matt 27:25: καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς πᾶς ὁ λαὸς).[384]

In this respect, these commentators recognise the verse as eliciting covenantal language, with a gathered congregation of "all the people", the liability of parents transferred to children (found prominently in Exod 20:5; 34:7; Num 14:18; Deut 5:9), and the reference to blood denoting the sacrifice that typically seals such compacts. Przybylski states: "Matthew depicts Christian Jews as those who accept the blood of the covenant for the forgiveness of sins (Matt 26:28). Non-Christian Jews are those who reject this blood (Matt 27:25)."[385] These contrasting scenes serve to challenge readers' Christian identity: *Will they react to Jesus in the same manner as "all the people"?* According to Dunn, the Gospel responds favourably because its

[384] Cousland, *The Crowds in the Gospel of Matthew*, 82-83; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3,* 592.
[385] Przbylski, "The Setting of Matthean Anti-Judaism," 200.

use of "people" suggests Israel can still be won to faith from the community's Pharisaic opponents (consider the preaching of the resurrection to the "people" in Matt 27:64), as well as its generally positive image of children (see Matt 18:2-4; 19:13-15; 21:15; 23:37), who would comprise future generations. He writes: "…even Matt 27:25 can be ranked as an intra-covenant statement… and so also holding out (by implication) the classical, covenant hope of restoration for those who experienced the curses of the covenant but who returned to the Lord their God, they and their children (Deut 30:1ff.)."[386]

A unique quality of this model is its insistence that, despite the passage theologically signifying Israel, the author's judgement is confined within the story's boundaries. Przybylski thinks the evangelist's literary flourish here is intended as an acknowledgement of real concerns held by his minority community that the majority of contemporary Jews had not accepted Jesus.[387] The rejection of Christ serves as an *explanatory* device, not of the tragedies of AD 70 as commonly found elsewhere, but for the torpidity of this conversion. It is unclear whether Matthew is confident that Jews will come in greater numbers to believe in his Messiah; however, the verse does not indict an historical community except "those who did not accept Jesus and who, under the sway of their leaders, were opposed to Matthew's Jewish-Christian community".[388] Any blame is simply limited to characters in the plot and no attempt to locate the "people" outside the text should be made.

There is considerable force presented by this argument and it resolves the two fundamental problems confronting the others: how λαὸς can mean Israel though not thereupon result in general condemnation. It credibly explains why Matt 27:25 switches from "crowd" to "people" and is aware of the text's Jewishness. Furthermore, its emphasis on the wording's covenantal implications is more narratively integrated and a key detail missing from alternative approaches. In fact, the next and last model we shall consider is, in many details, like this one but superior because it explains the mechanics of how the verse functions through double entendre.

Having said that, this view does suffer from several weaknesses. As the interpretive focus is restricted to the story world, there is insufficient engagement with Matthew's rhetoric to

[386] Dunn, "The Question of Anti-Semitism in the New Testament Writings of the Period," 208-209.
[387] Przbylski, "The Setting of Matthean Anti-Judaism," 200.
[388] Senior, *Matthew*, 324-325.

correlate it to the overall historical meaning of Matt 27:25. Thus, it is unclear to what extent the narrative is meant to connect to the real-life experience of Christian and non-Christian Jews, and does not treat Jerusalem's destruction in relation to sin or punishment.

5.5. Reading Matt 27:25 ironically: redemption and judgement.

Elements of the above viewpoints certainly progress our understanding of Matt 27:25, and can be summarised as follows: recognising significance in the noun change from "crowd" to "all the people", with the latter representing Israel; situating the passage within the Gospel story, and reflecting on relevant characterisation, themes and terminology; drawing a connection with Matthew 23 and OT texts that portend the dire fate of Jerusalem for transgressing God's law and abusing His prophet; and contextualising it within first century Judaism and the evangelist's Christian Jewish community. Inasmuch as any perspective has been predicated on adequately reconciling the verse with these aspects, it is to be preferred over others; however, none sufficiently addresses its exegetical scope and occasionally even introduces additional problems.

Let us turn to the most recent model, pioneered in the 1990s, that applies narrative criticism to analyse the pericope's underlying irony. While "all the people" calling for Jesus' blood gives the impression of Israel's judgement, its surface meaning is inverted: their words and actions effect a covenant sacrifice, which manifests redemption for those participating in the ritual, though the possibility of punishment is present too.[389] By making his audience aware of this blood motif and its conjunction with properties like "righteousness" (Matt 23:35; 27:19), "innocence" (Matt 23:35; 27:4, 24) and "forgiveness" (Matt 26:28), as well as informing them that Christ's death has the "awesome power to fulfill his calling as one sent to 'save his people'", the narrator signals the verse's subversive undertone.[390] Berg considers Matt 27:25 "the most ironically pregnant moment within the entire Gospel":

> The people's cry incubates a hidden meaning that underlines the significance of Jesus' death and his innocent blood… On the level of what it seems, the people's cry makes them responsible for Jesus' blood, and yet on the level of what it meant, they

[389] Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative*, 202.
[390] Smith, "Matthew 27:25," 427-428; Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 132.

> collectively assume the identity of its recipients without an understanding of the reality. They are, after all, the people whom Jesus initially came to save (1:21).[391]

This reading assumes Matthew's audience is apprised of the theological weight carried by the term λαός – Cargal says it is "inescapable for the reader" – via several clues, like the otherwise unwarranted substitution of ὄχλος on a story basis, it typically communicating the OT covenantal status of Israel (most frequently found in Exodus 18-34, thereby attending to Jesus' Mosaic portrayal), its being accompanied by the adjective "all" and the phrase "us and our children", and that it occurs in uniquely Matthean material.[392] The author expressly "identifies the entity who specifically claims the 'blood of Jesus' as ὁ λαός [the historic Jewish community] instead of ὁ ὄχλος [the varied masses]", correlating at this climactic moment those who demand his blood with those for whom his blood is shed (Matt 1:21), the passages functioning to bracket the theme of Christ's salvific mission.[393] Contrarily, if the nation's betrayal of their Messiah was meant, we should expect readers to have been prepared for such infidelity (as with the disciples Matt 10:4; 26:16, 21-25, 31, or Jewish leadership, Matt 16:21; 17:12b; 20:18), whereas "people" language throughout the narrative is fashioned to anticipate a positive usage during this scene.[394]

Cargal explores how situational and verbal irony foundational to Matt 27:25 is supported by the pericope's multilayered construction, which encourages us to look beyond the plain sense. For instance, the convergence of many parallel details between this passage and Deut 21:1-9 suggests the first has been crafted in juxtaposition to the second. Both involve: the gathering of a city's inhabitants (Matt 27:15/Deut 21:2); elders and priests as leading participants (Matt 27:18, 20/Deut 21:2-7); a scapegoat figure (Matt 27:16-17, 20-21, 26/Deut 21:3-4, 6); washing of hands (Matt 27:24/Deut 21:6); a plea to innocence for blood spilled (Matt 27:24/Deut 21:7-9); someone slain (Matt 27:22-23, 26/Deut 21:1-3); and occurring in the "midst of thy people Israel" (Matt 27:25/Deut 21:8-9). Yet, irony is not lost on those who perceive that in almost every way the author has reversed the conditions of the Deuteronomic passage, notably that it closes with a prayer requesting pardon for bloodshed among God's redeemed people (Deut

[391] Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative*, 171, 177.
[392] Cargal, "'His Blood be Upon Us and Upon Our Children': A Matthean Double Entendre?", 106; Setzer, "Sinai, Covenant, and Innocent Blood Traditions in Matthew's Blood Cry (Matt 27:25)," 171-172, 175.
[393] Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative*, 172-174, 202.
[394] Setzer, "Sinai, Covenant, and Innocent Blood Traditions in Matthew's Blood Cry (Matt 27:25)," 171-172.

21:8), who in the Gospel are forgiven through the very act of shedding blood (Matt 20:28; 26:28).[395]

In fact, "blood" language is central to understanding the narrative. Many of the positions above observe the word's negative connotation and the plot exhibits characters who undervalue or distance themselves from Christ's blood. According to the ironist, though, there is a deeper reality that relates it to covenant formation and the dual effect this has for those who accept it on themselves and their children. As Heil clarifies, Jesus' righteous blood affords forgiveness of sins that opens the door to redemption, yet it equally concerns judgement for those who reject it (the socio-religious leaders) or fail to keep nomistic duties (false disciples).[396] This discussion shall be expanded upon in the following chapter by reflecting on how the text incorporates forgiveness through blood as a means of salvation, which elucidates the exegesis of Matt 27:25.[397]

Despite the ironic reading being a minority position in scholarship, some who are critical nonetheless nod in its direction. Turner, for instance, acknowledges the considerable irony present during the Passion, especially in the way Jesus is taunted and Pilate's handwashing, conceding "it is entirely plausible that Matthew intended for readers of his Gospel to ponder how even the rage of the crowd against Jesus spoke of the means of their redemption".[398] Hagner too frankly admits: "God continues to love the Jews and will yet remember his covenant loyalty to them… The blood of which the first-century Jews are guilty will yet be the source of their forgiveness… The blood of Christ means not condemnation but salvation."[399] Runesson, whose aforementioned remark we noted that λαός refers to Israel in passages "focused on its salvation rather than its condemnation", writes:

> Jerusalem is guilty together with the Pharisees for shedding the blood that leads to the temple's destruction, but unlike the Pharisees, the people of Jerusalem are also, unknowingly, instrumental in providing for the sacrificial replacement that will save the people once the temple is destroyed… they will also… have the option of sharing in the salvation that these developments will bring…[400]

[395] Cargal, "'His Blood be Upon Us and Upon Our Children': A Matthean Double Entendre?", 110-111.
[396] John Paul Heil, *The Death and Resurrection of Jesus: A Narrative-Critical Reading of Matthew 26-28* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 76-77; Heil, "The Blood of Jesus in Matthew," 124.
[397] Cargal, "'His Blood be Upon Us and Upon Our Children': A Matthean Double Entendre?", 111; Smith, "Matthew 27:25," 427.
[398] Turner, *Israel's Last Prophet*, 263.
[399] Hagner, *Matthew 14-28*, 827-828.
[400] Runesson, *Divine Wrath and Salvation in Matthew*, 296, 305-306.

Still, due to the preliminary and subtle literary nature of this interpretation, it has yet to convince many biblical theologians, who claim it whitewashes the *prima facie* menacing tone of the pericope.[401] Understanding Matt 27:25's cry for Jesus' blood as *solely* redemptive is disconsonant with his unjust death, ominous references in Matthew 23 and other OT texts, and the devastating outcome of war with Rome. These are reasonable criticisms and will be addressed over the course of chapter 6, particularly as they pertain to a more sophisticated double entendre (and not merely ironic) recognition of the verse's crossroads moment, depicting the option of covenantal acceptance (and redemption) or rejection (and judgement).[402] In the spilling of righteous blood, the Gospel understands a dual significance for God's people: blessings alongside curses, salvation alongside purgation, re-creation alongside destruction, as Sider Hamilton states: "As the covenant people take defilement upon themselves, the covenant is made again in the blood of Jesus. As the temple is destroyed, the temple cult is fulfilled in Jesus, in the blood poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."[403] Hence, a double entendre reading perceives that, on one level, Matthew intends the Jewish nation to accept responsibility for their role in Jesus' execution, but on another, he means for them to understand that forgiveness is attainable as a consequence of that very act.[404]

5.6. Concluding remarks.

This chapter has examined the main exegetical tendencies of Matt 27:25 in scholarly literature. Viewing the verse as condemning the entire Jewish people for Christ's execution, though exerting substantial historical influence, is simply untenable. A different approach that limits meaning and responsibility to a segment of Jews and/or their leadership coheres well with the Matthean community's sectarian struggles but fails to properly appreciate the narrative's use of language. The third perspective addresses many of the core difficulties successfully but its strict separation between the story world and the historical one is problematic.

[401] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3*, 592; Nolland, "The Gospel of Matthew and Anti-Semitism," 168.
[402] Sider Hamilton, "'His Blood Be Upon Us': Innocent blood and the Death of Jesus in Matthew," 84-85; 94-95.
[403] Sider Hamilton, "'His Blood Be Upon Us': Innocent blood and the Death of Jesus in Matthew," 100.
[404] Cargal, "'His Blood be Upon Us and Upon Our Children': A Matthean Double Entendre?", 109-110.

Instead, the model that is recommended by this thesis is one that reads Matt 27:25 and its surrounding narrative ironically. However, a straightforward ironic interpretation, which simply inverts meaning, underestimates the positive and negative scope of covenantal theology presented. Therefore, let us now explore how Matthew constructs the pericope using double entendre, especially by portraying a renewed Sinai covenant through Jesus as the Mosaic prophet.

Chapter 6: The Ratified Covenant of the Mosaic Prophet

6.1. Introduction.

The review above uncovered a number of shortcomings in the main interpretations of Matt 27:25. These are largely resolved when one reads the verse through double entendre, a form of irony reconciling apparent contradictions by proposing overlapping layers of meaning. On its surface, the congregation demanding Christ's execution seems to convict the Jewish nation of guilt; however, at a deeper level it signifies Israel associating themselves with his atoning death, which requires that those present accept responsibility for the innocent blood about to be shed. While this feature is commonly seen "as Matthew's reference to the destruction of the Jerusalem temple… explained retrospectively as punishment of the Jewish people (or of the Jews of Jerusalem)", such negativity is subverted by the fact that Jesus offers his blood "for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:28), and a meaning opposite to its plain sense is simultaneously conveyed as God's people participate in an essentially salvific act.[405]

Commentators who resist this interpretation frequently note that the moment at which the people's cry is expressed is filled with foreboding and provokes the plot's ultimate tragedy (the crucifixion), that alongside parallel condemnatory OT passages, makes any intentional salutary effect appear altogether implausible.[406] These are reasonable objections.

Therefore, this chapter will strengthen the double entendre exegesis by pulling together several threads of Matthew's story to demonstrate how it explains them in a satisfying manner. It begins by identifying that the protagonist's primary mission is to redeem Israel within the framework of covenant and law. Although the concept of "covenant" finds little explicit discussion in the Gospel (the word διαθήκη is a *hapax legomenon,* Matt 26:28), its influence is significant, in particular, during the Last Supper institution as part of a re-presented Sinai event. Just as Moses threw the victims' blood onto the assembly to ratify their relationship with God, so "all the people" call for Jesus' blood upon themselves and their children, uttering words that similarly incorporate them into his redemptive work.

[405] Setzer, "Sinai, Covenant, and Innocent Blood Traditions in Matthew's Blood Cry (Matt 27:25)," 169-170.
[406] William D. Davies and Dale C. Allison Jr., *The International Critical Commentary: The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 1* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 240-241.

Yet, becoming a member of the elect does not guarantee salvation, and scholars like Cargal and Heil who stress only this positive aspect of Matt 27:25 overlook the dual nature of these agreements. Matthew's soteriology, though in continuity with prior Jewish history, is not without changes reflecting his Christology, such as the replacement of temple sacrifices, the reinterpretation of Torah, and the extension of the chosen people. This may be considered a "soft" form of supersessionism, which "does not assert God terminated the covenant of Exodus-Sinai with the Jewish people" but rather "that Jesus came to fulfill the promise of the old covenant, first for those Jews *already* initiated into the covenant, who *then* accepted his messiahhood as the covenant's fulfillment", entailing a revision but not the termination of former Mosaic structures, including the place of Israel.[407] Nevertheless, as a covenantal system, blessing is conditional on obeying divine commandments and this uncertain human response increases the plot's drama and supports a two-fold understanding of the verse, with sacrificial blood potentially resulting in redemption or judgement.[408]

With this in mind, instead of being peripheral, "blood of the covenant" becomes a pivotal phrase qualifying "blood" language and the people's relation to it. Earlier in the narrative Jesus had himself supplied the lexical meaning that defines his blood, and it would be, as one writer remarks, confusing for "'his (my) blood' [to be used] in a different, competing and detracting sense. In order to work as a matter of literature, the crowd's oath has to be confirmatory… supportive of the evangelist's central message, not at odds with it".[409] What is this central message? It is encapsulated in Christ's raison d'être: *that he saves his people from their sins* (Matt 1:21).

6.2. "…for he will save his people from their sins."

Jesus' ancestry is rooted firmly within Israel's family tree as the "son of David" and "son of Abraham" (Matt 1:1), and with his advent Matthew recognises the culmination of a turbulent

[407] David Novak, "The Covenant in Rabbinic Thinking," in *Two Faiths, One Covenant? Jewish and Christian Identity in the Presence of the Other*, eds. Eugene B. Korn and John T. Pawlikowski (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005), 66.
[408] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 1*, 240, 306-307; Eugene Eung-Chun Park, "Covenantal Nomism and the Gospel of Matthew," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 77 (2015): 700.
[409] Simmonds, "Uses of Blood: Re-Reading Matt. 27:25," 168.

but purposeful history for God's elect (Matt 1:17).[410] After declaring his Messianic identity (Matt 1:1, 16), the author responds to a characteristically Jewish expectation that this individual will have a salvific vocation by the angel's exposition of the child's name: "Jesus… for he will save his people from their sins" (Matt 1:21), establishing the association between the protagonist and those he saves from the outset of the story.[411] This unique clause draws attention to the Hebrew etymology of Joshua/Yehoshua: "YHWH is salvation";[412] serving as a "programmatic verse" that directs the audience to a major theme to be explored throughout the Gospel.[413] As someone who fulfils the legislative and redemptive functions of a second Moses, Jesus has a fittingly identical name to the foundational prophet's immediate successor, which aptly evokes his role as deliverer, and Smith notes that its repetition reaches a climax in the environment of Matt 27:25 to recall what is secured by the cross.[414]

The narrative logic of Matt 1:21 raises several matters concerning Christ's vocation: (i) *the nature of the sins over which he will have victory*; (ii) *the reason why he himself must do this*; and (iii) *the means by which it will be achieved*. These issues are complex and can unfortunately only be briefly covered.

(i) Matthew's theology of sin is multifaceted and governed by one's relationship to the mission and teaching of God's Messiah (for example, Matt 12:31-32; 13:36-43; 18:5-6). One prominent perspective regards sin as failing to observe covenantal obligations.[415] In this schema, nomistic duties are promised to God in response to the gracious relationship He

[410] Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 74; Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 30.
[411] The contention that Jesus' "people" refers primarily to ethnic Israel (though not necessarily to the exclusion of Gentiles) is agreed to by many scholars, including: Joachim Gnilka, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, HTKNT (Freiburg: Herder, 1986-88), 1:19; Petri Luomanen, *Entering the Kingdom of Heaven: A Study on the Structure of Matthew's View of Salvation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998), 225-26; Boris Repschinski, "For He Will Save His People from Their Sins (Matthew 1:21): A Christology for Christian Jews," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 68:2 (2006): 255-56; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary,* ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 95.
[412] Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew,* 79; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 1,* 158, 209.
[413] Jackson, "Atonement in Matthew's Gospel," 24; Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg: Trinity International, 2001), 76; Blanton, "Saved by Obedience," 393, 396.
[414] Smith, "Matthew 27:25," 428; Andries G. van Aarde, "ΙΗΣΟΥΣ, the Davidic Messiah, as Political Saviour in Matthew's History," in *Salvation in the New Testament: Perspectives on Soteriology*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 17-18; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 1,* 209. Matt 27:15-26 uses Jesus' name four-six times (compared to only once in the corresponding verses Mark 15:6-15).
[415] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 1*, 210; Nathan Eubank, *Wages of Cross-Bearing and Debt of Sin: The Economy of Heaven in Matthew's Gospel* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013), 50-58; Blanton, "Saved by Obedience," 394, 401.

formed with Israel at Sinai.[416] Guilt that accrues from disobedience is expressed through the idiom of monetary "debt" (Matt 6:12; 18:23-35) from which sinners must be ransomed, as Ps 130:8 declares: καὶ αὐτὸς λυτρώσεται τὸν Ἰσραὴλ ἐκ πασῶν τῶν ἀνομιῶν αὐτοῦ (LXX); "He [the LORD] will redeem [ransom/liberate] Israel from all their sins [lit. unlawfulness]."[417] Blanton explains: "Disparate strands of early Jewish literature define 'sin' in legal terms: it entails the failure to adhere to the stipulations of the Torah. This definition persisted from the time of the Deuteronomic reforms in the late 600s BCE until the time of the composition of the Gospel of Matthew..."[418]

The law and one's commitment to it is no arbitrary matter but inherently moral – the "righteousness" enjoined by Christ (Matt 5:6, 10, 20, 48; 6:33; 13:36-43, 49; 19:21; 25:31-46) – for it allows the divine to dwell with Israel. Contrarily, moral impurity caused by sin separates the covenant nation from the sacred presence and leads to death.[419] This ruptured relationship understandably became a main priestly concern that the sacrificial economy attempted to restore because, according to Klawans, "moral defilements," unlike ritualistic ones (though their degree of interrelationship was a typical subject of sectarian debates), "threaten not only the status of the individuals in question but also the land and in turn the sanctuary itself", that God would depart the temple precincts and render its reparative work void.[420] Through his authoritative teaching (for example, in Matt 15:1-9; 23:15-25), Jesus appears to validate this definition of sin as moral defilement resulting from violating the Torah, which means redemption cannot be grasped "in isolation from the larger overarching story of God's covenant with Israel".[421]

[416] Andrew D.H. Mayes, "The Covenant on Sinai and the Covenant with David," *Hermathena* 110 (1970): 38.
[417] Eubank, *Wages of Cross-Bearing and Debt of Sin*, 56-58; Jeffrey S. Siker, *Sin in the New Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 51.
[418] Blanton, "Saved by Obedience," 403.
[419] Matthew Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death: The Gospels' Portrayal of Ritual Impurity within First-Century Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), 15.
[420] Jonathan Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple: Symbolism and Supersessionism in the Study of Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 71; Jonathan Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 137-138. See also Thiessen, *Jesus and the Forces of Death*, 10-15.
[421] Marius J. Nel, "The Conceptualisation of Sin in the Gospel of Matthew," *In die Skriflig* 51:3 (2017): 3; Klawans, *Impurity and Sin in Ancient Judaism*, 146-149, 156-161.

(ii) However, the *corpus mixtum* world neither assures impeccability nor salvific certitude even for Christ's followers (Matt 5:17-20; 7:21-23; 13:24-30; 19:16-21).[422] Susceptibility to wrongdoing is a persistent OT theme, of which the narrative's prologue reminds readers by recording tarnished heroes among Israel's pantheon, like Judah (mentioned alongside Tamar, Matt 1:3) and David (mentioned alongside "the wife of Uriah", Matt 1:6), moreover the nation through its exilic experience (Matt 1:11-12), attesting that "God's purpose for the Davidic line was achieved despite human sin and failure".[423] Since this Gospel reflects a time when the purificatory and atoning temple services had ceased in the aftermath of war with Rome – explained theologically as divine evacuation due to the sins of those Jews in power in Judea and Galilee (especially the Pharisees and scribes, Matt 23:1-24:2) – a dilemma emerged as "[t]he faithful searched for new understandings of how the covenant and atonement for sins would continue".[424] For Matthew, the forgiveness ordinarily effected via the Jerusalem cult was transferred to a different medium: the crucifixion (Matt 20:28, indicated by the subsequent tearing of the curtain and resurrection of the saints, Matt 27:50-53).[425] By portraying Christ as the sacrificial locus who is "greater than the temple" (Matt 12:6) and the operative connection point between heaven and earth, the evangelist proposes "the transformation of Israel's cultic centre from the temple to Jesus, *while maintaining the ongoing importance of national Israel's covenantal status*", with judgement focused squarely on failed authority structures.[426] Runesson outlines this response to the problem of sin:

> …the Matthean Messiah is involved in two undertakings, both aimed at "saving his people from their sins" (1:21). In the first part of the story he teaches the people the Mosaic Law (chs. 5-7)… and in the second part he offers his life as a sacrifice within a theo-ritual framework where that death opens up an alternate means of atonement, apart from the temple cult. Thus, at the end of the First Gospel, the Jewish people are still able to observe Torah and atone for their sins, despite the destruction of the temple.[427]

[422] Daniel M. Gurtner, "Introduction," in *This World and the World to Come: Soteriology in Early Judaism*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 5; Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution,* 5-6, 150-154.
[423] Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 19; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 1,* 170, 174-175.
[424] Culpepper, *Matthew*, 548. For instance, see 'Avot R. Nat. 4:5.
[425] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 1*, 138; Siker, *Sin in the New Testament*, 53-54.
[426] Cohen, "Matthew and the Temple," 98 (emphasis in original); Sider Hamilton, "'His Blood Be Upon Us': Innocent blood and the Death of Jesus in Matthew," 84-85. One way the narrative corresponds the temple with Jesus is through the accusation that he would "destroy" and rebuild it "in three days" (Matt 26:61; 27:40), phrases used to portend his own death and resurrection (Matt 2:13; 12:14, 40; 27:20, 63).
[427] Runesson, "Who Killed Jesus and Why?", 184.

Through his narrative, therefore, Matthew reaffirms the underlying rationale of the Jewish purity system by revealing how the ritualistic and symbolic significance of the temple, especially as an important means of forgiveness, continues and finds complete expression in Christ's death (Matt 15:17-18).[428] Yet, as with previous OT parallels, such as Noah following the Flood, Moses after the Exodus and even Jeremiah's prediction (Jer 31:31-34), in addition to contemporary texts from Qumran (like the *Damascus Document* and *Rule of the Blessings*) or *Jubilees*, a changed sacrificial mode to cleanse moral impurity and a restatement of commandments necessitated covenant renewal.[429]

(iii) As a new Moses, Jesus reinterprets the Torah and sacrificial system for the chosen people within a covenantal context. This is ultimately *how* he fulfils the remit of Matt 1:21, as disclosed during the Last Supper Passover where his "blood of the covenant… is poured out (ἐκχυννόμενον) for many (περὶ πολλῶν) for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt 26:28), a description of the cup found just in Matthew and serving as a "partial exegesis of 1.21" by foreshadowing his atoning death.[430] Another passage that semantically and thematically bridges these two verses is Matt 20:28, identifying how the protagonist's sacrifice restores the relationship between God and humanity by giving "his life as a ransom (λύτρον) for many (ἀντὶ πολλῶν)".[431] The expiatory language of an offering "for many" (ἀντὶ πολλῶν) links Matt 20:28 with Matt 26:28 (περὶ πολλῶν), and Schnackenburg comments that "the same meaning attaches to the logion of 'ransom' for many" as "at the Eucharist of the chalice".[432]

Throughout the OT (LXX), these Greek terms have sacrificial and redemptive undertones.[433] Λύτρόω frequently means delivering to liberty by paying a "ransom-price", for example, in the manumission of slaves (Lev 19:20; 25:26; 51), relating to the monetary metaphor of sin as incurring debt.[434] It is also used to describe the payment of "blood money" to save someone's life (Exod 21:30; 30:12) or the buying back of the firstborn from devoted liturgical

[428] Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 103-110. See also Anders Runesson, "Jesus Against the Forces of Death: Reading Matthew Thiessen's Reading of the Gospels' Reading of Jesus' War Against Ritual Impurity," *Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus* 20 (2022): 41-42.
[429] Jonathan Klawans, *Heresy, Forgery, Novelty: Condemning, Denying, and Asserting Innovation in Ancient Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 99-104; Jonathan Klawans, "Heresy, Forgery, Novelty: Condemning and Denying Innovation in Josephus," *Jewish Studies, An Internet Journal* 19 (2020): 3-4.
[430] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3*, 474.
[431] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 1,* 210; Hagner, *Matthew 14-28,* 771.
[432] Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 196.
[433] Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 404.
[434] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3,* 95.

service owed to God after the final Egyptian plague (Num 3:12, 46, 48, 49, 51; 18:15-16). Some passages conversely speak of lives that cannot be redeemed (Lev 27:29; Num 35:31-32).[435] Ἐκχύννομαι and cognates are especially connected with drink and blood offerings as "a sacrificial word which connotes a violent death".[436] Hagner writes: "The language 'poured out' is itself an allusion to sacrifices of atonement in the temple ritual, that is, sacrifices for forgiveness of sins."[437] The terminology specifically relates to "pouring out" the victim's blood to atone and make peace with God, usually on the altar or its base as, notably, Moses "poured [this blood] into basins" (ἐνέχεεν εἰς κρατῆρας, Exod 24:6 LXX) during the Sinai covenant prior to throwing it on the altar and people.[438]

These actions of "ransoming" and "pouring out" clarify the Matthean notion of sin as spiritual debt from which someone must be liberated and where Christ is revealed as that oblation which accomplishes this.[439] He replaces the temple by offering himself sacrificially to purify the people and land, restoring the divine presence: "I am with you always, to the close of the age" (Matt 28:20).[440] Matt 20:28 and Matt 26:28 are accordingly key verses in detailing Jesus' Messianic character and mission, where redemption occurs within the Jewish paradigm of integration into God's elect through covenant and law.

6.3. Covenant and law as the framework of salvation.

The Gospel professes that Jesus "saves his people from their sins by dying for them and so permits a new relationship with God".[441] Envisaging a renewed sacrificial and redemptive nexus was not an aberration but instead a project Matthew shared with rival Jewish communities in the immediate post-Second Temple period, which required adapting to

[435] Curtis Mitch and Edward Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 260; Jerry D. Breen, "The Ransom Saying (20:28): A Fresh Perspective," *The Journal of Inductive Biblical Studies* 4:1 (2017): 41.
[436] Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 363; Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, 528; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3,* 474.
[437] Hagner, *Matthew 14-28,* 773.
[438] Charles S. Allison, "The Significance of Blood Sacrifice in the Old Testament," *African Research Review* 10:1 (2016): 48-50. See also Naphtali S. Meshel, "The Form and Function of a Biblical Blood Ritual," *Vetus Testamentum* 63 (2013): 276-289.
[439] Breen, "The Ransom Saying (20:28)," 43.
[440] Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 53-56.
[441] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3,* 474; E.P. Sanders, "Covenantal Nomism Revisited," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 16 (2009): 29; Jan Joosten, "Covenant," in *The Oxford Handbook of Biblical Law*, ed. Pamela Barmash (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 8-10.

changed conditions of worship while holding to a degree of religious continuity.[442] His soteriology is thus predicated on the enduring law and bilateral familial bond Moses had instituted between God and Israel, though now mediated through Christ as the innovative channel by which one enters and remains in the covenant.[443]

Sanders believed "covenantal nomism" served as a unifying baseline for the strands of Judaism during the time of Christ, notwithstanding that sects held various ways of attaining and maintaining salvation.[444] Gathercole characterises it this way: "Jewish religion is *covenantal*, inasmuch as everything begins with the covenant which God has made with his people, in his unconditional election of them; *nomism* refers to the corresponding obligation on the part of that chosen people to obey the Law..."[445]

The thesis has not gone without criticism. Neusner, for example, while acknowledging that covenantal nomism is a "valid", "wholly sound" and "self-evident proposition", argues it is nonetheless systematically trivial because the absence of normative Judaism undermines its analytical value.[446] Others, like Cohen, accept it but admit greater complexity in contemporary views, which is commonly reflective of how scholarship has advanced beyond Sanders's original theory.[447] In their work, Carson, O'Brien and Seifrid conclude that obedience to the Torah for salvation is pervasive in Second Temple literature but advise against reductively neglecting the distinction between those who understand initial salvation by way of election (such as in *1 Esdras*, *Jubilees*, *1 Enoch*, *Sirach*, and *Wisdom of Solomon*) or merit (such as in *2 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, *Testament of Abraham*, and *2 Baruch*).[448] A form of

[442] Klawans, "Heresy, Forgery, Novelty: Condemning and Denying Innovation in Josephus," 15; Runesson, "Who Killed Jesus and Why?", 184.
[443] Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 1,* 307; George W.E. Nickelsburg, "Salvation Among the Jews: Some Comments and Observations," in *This World and the World to Come: Soteriology in Early Judaism*, ed. Daniel M. Gurtner (London: T&T Clark, 2011), 314.
[444] Sanders, "Covenantal Nomism Revisited," 24-26.
[445] Simon J. Gathercole, "Early Judaism and Covenantal Nomism: A Review Article," *EQ* 76:2 (2004): 153.
[446] Jacob Neusner, "Comparing Judaisms," *History of Religion* 18:2 (1978): 177; Jacob Neusner, *Judaic Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: A Systematic Reply to Professor E.P. Sanders* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1993), 9.
[447] Cohen, "Common Judaism in Greek and Latin Authors," 69-87.
[448] Donald A. Carson, Peter T. O'Brien and Mark A. Seifrid, *Justification and Variegated Nomism, Volume 1: The Complexities of Second Temple Judaism* (Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001), 543; Timo Eskola, "Paul, Predestination and 'Covenantal Nomism' – Re-Assessing Paul and Palestinian Judaism," *Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period* 28:4 (1997): 395; Gathercole, "Early Judaism and Covenantal Nomism," 155-156.

"variegated nomism" emphasising covenantal theology was apparently the normative "air breathed" by the Jews of Jesus' age.[449]

Is it an outlook advocated by the First Gospel? The narrative's relative paucity of covenantal language should not *a priori* suggest that associated ideas were largely ignored; in fact, it is fallacious to equate the importance of a concept with corresponding lexical frequency, with Williamson noting that the "significance of covenant in the New Testament should not restrict itself to texts that explicitly employ the term… the concept of covenant is much more pervasive".[450] Sanders himself suggests "the covenant was presupposed" by texts as a basic, foundational component of Israel's history and identity, which chiefly explains why the topic was rarely explicitly discussed.[451] Certainly, for Matthew, Christ's sacrificial death alters the old covenantal nomistic arrangement; however, the Sinai compact and Torah remain the basis of what is fulfilled, with covenant and law being fundamental elements in his view of salvation.

It also colours the entire story, as can be seen in multiple ways, such as Jesus calling an elect, propounding halakhah, the prominence of the Last Supper, and, according to Guhrt, how the "kingdom of Heaven/God" subsumes related theology.[452] Illustrative figures like Abraham (Matt 1:1-2, 17; 3:9; 8:11; 22:32), David (Matt 1:1, 6, 17, 20; 9:27; 12:3, 23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; 22:41-45), and Moses (Matt 8:4; 17:3-4; 19:7-8; 22:24; 23:2) all participated in covenantal events. Furthermore, the formation of a chosen people is a theme returned to throughout the plot: some are especially selected (Matt 2:6; 10:1; 22:14, as opposed to the Gentiles, Matt 10:5-6; 15:24) and receive divine protection (Matt 24:22, 24, 31) as the regathering of the twelve tribes (Matt 3:12; 12:30; 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50; 19:28; 23:37; 24:31; 25:31-46). The Gospel questions a strict election that does not also require a meritorious response (Matt 5:19-20; 7:21-23; 8:19-23; 25:1-13) and the reformed compact of which Matt 27:25 is a part is insufficient without baptism (personal adherence, akin to circumcision) and obeying commandments (nomistic duties), two aspects emphasised in

[449] N.T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992), 262; Park, "Covenantal Nomism and the Gospel of Matthew," 669.
[450] Paul R. Williamson, *Sealed with an Oath: Covenant in God's Unfolding Purpose* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2007), 33.
[451] E.P. Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism: A Comparison of Patterns of Religion* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1977), 420-421.
[452] Joachim Guhrt, "Covenant," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology and Exegesis*, ed. Moises Silva (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 369.

Christ's parting words (Matt 28:19-20) as a final message to readers. Park summarises the case succinctly:

> He [Matthew] takes it for granted that his community of followers of Jesus is primarily Jewish and as such it is a community of chosen people of God… He has altered the scope of the ἐκλεκτοί in such a way that parts of people of the historic Israel, especially its religious leaders, are now excluded and some gentiles are included. He suggests that even the ἐκλεκτοί are not guaranteed salvation. This seems to be a significant modification of conventional soteriology of covenantal nomism but not necessarily a rejection of it.[453]

Overall, covenant and law endure as means of redemption for the evangelist, albeit now conformed to his Messiah, blending tradition with innovation.[454] Under this model, election gains admittance to the kingdom (covenant community) yet judgement is dependent on the right response (righteousness) of obeying the law: "he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt 7:21; 3:8-9; 8:10-12).[455] By reconstituting the covenant and definitive interpretation of Torah, Jesus accomplishes his mission to "save his people from their sins", a realisation that unfolds in stages throughout the narrative, particularly during the Passion, and the crucial role played by Matt 27:25 within it demands taking a closer look at how the Last Supper recapitulates Moses' sacrifice on Sinai.

6.4. The Last Supper as re-presented Sinai.

It is generally understood that Matt 26:17-30 contains a "deliberate double drama" that recalls the first Passover, with the breaking of bread (v. 26) occurring as part of a Paschal meal (vv. 17-19) celebrated by Jesus, the Mosaic prophet. Less attention is paid to how his words over the cup harken back to Mount Sinai in Exodus 19-24.[456] That a reworking of the OT type was meaningful to the author can be seen in his adaptation of Mark to clarify these scriptural elements of covenant and law mostly absent from his predecessor.[457]

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[453] Park, "Covenantal Nomism and the Gospel of Matthew," 680.
[454] Eskola, "Paul, Predestination and 'Covenantal Nomism'," 395.
[455] Sanders, *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*, 236; Sanders, "Covenantal Nomism Revisited," 23-24. See also Park, "Covenantal Nomism and the Gospel of Matthew," 668, 674.
[456] Jipp, *The Messianic Theology of the New Testament*, 19; N.T. Wright, *Christian Origins and the Question of God Volume 2: Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), 554; Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 222.
[457] David C. Sim, "Matthew's Use of Mark: Did Matthew Intend to Supplement or to Replace His Primary Source?" *New Testament Studies* 57 (2011): 186; Levi S. Baker, "New Covenant Documents for a New Covenant

In this regard, the episode at Sinai is quintessential and paradigmatic, "and in view of subsequent covenant renewals… it is *the* covenant in terms of focus in the 2T [Second Temple] period and the NT", as well as being instituted by Moses, the Jewish lawgiver *par excellence*.[458] For instance, *Jubilees* envisions its stipulations are inscribed on heavenly tablets before even Adam's creation, intimating that in place of successive covenants there was simply "one… that was continuously renewed by the patriarchs until the days of Moses".[459] Additionally, Deuteronomic and prophetic rhetoric often appeal to traditions associated with this event.[460]

It is unsurprising that these chapters in Exodus should exert an influence on the Gospel, evident through, for example, the historical preamble recounting God's work in rescuing His people (Matthew 1-2; see Exod 19:3-8; 20:1-2); the presentation of Jesus as a second Moses (see chapter 4); the necessity of obeying the commandments (Matt 5:17-19; 15:3; 19:17-19; 22:36-40; 28:20; see Exodus 20-23) that are preached from a mountain (Matt 5-8; see Exodus 19-24); pronouncement of blessings and curses (Matt 5:3-12; 23:1-39; see Exod 23:23-33); and the sharing of a covenant meal (Exod 24:9-11; Matt 26:17-30).[461]

However, the clearest allusion is Christ's definition of the Passover cup as "my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (οῦτο γάρ ἐστιν *τὸ αἷμά μου τῆς διαθήκης*, Matt 26:28). This phraseology mirrors Sinai: "Behold the blood of the covenant" (ἰδοὺ *τὸ αἷμα τῆς διαθήκης*, Exod 20:8 LXX), which alongside symbolic language of "pouring" and "forgiveness", results in a sense "much more sacrificial in tone than the words over the bread".[462] By raising the blood motif, the quotation further connects Jesus' actions with Matt 23:34 and amplifies the priestly and prophetic role he shares with Abel and Zechariah, themselves violently killed as sacrificial victims (Gen 4:8; 2 Chron 24:20-21).

Community: Covenant as an Impetus for New Scripture in the First Century," Ph.D. Thesis (Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary), 231.

[458] Baker, "New Covenant Documents for a New Covenant Community," 59; Theophilos, *Jesus as New Moses in Matthew 8-9*, 26-27, 32-35.

[459] Klawans, *Heresy, Forgery, Novelty*, 101. See Jub 3:10, 31; 5:13; 6:17.

[460] See, for example, Deut 11:26-32; Isa 5:8-24; and Jer 23:1-6. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew,* 78-80, 326-330; Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 1,* 432-434, 439-441.

[461] The elements of Ancient Near Eastern covenants have been studied in some depth, with particular attention given to Sinai by George E. Mendenhall, "Covenant Forms in Israelite Tradition," *Biblical Archaeologist* 17 (1954): 58-60, 62-67.

[462] Meier, *Matthew*, 318.

The conjectured correlation between these two passages is further supported by evaluating them against Hays's seven criteria for identifying an OT quotation, allusion and echo in later texts.[463] Although these standards have not gone unchallenged, they remain a helpful benchmark.[464] Evidently, the criterion of *availability* is not at issue, as Matthew freely quotes from Exodus (for example, Matt 15:4/Exod 20:12; 21:17; Matt 22:31-32/Exod 3:6, 15). It fulfills the *volume* criterion too, with explicit and precise verbal repetition of Exod 20:8 (the sole OT instance of the phrase "blood of the covenant" apart from Zech 9:11, where it appears outside of a covenantal and sacrificial context), and there is a clear *recurrence* of details from the Sinai account in the Gospel, as noted above.[465] The themes raised, especially sacrifices in forming an elect and the provision of Torah, *cohere* with both the Last Supper and the overall narrative. These factors, along with Jesus' Mosaic portrayal and the centrality of covenant and law in the author's soteriology, make the allusion highly *plausible*, as Allison asks: "Does this fact [of quoting Exod 24:8] not invite us to imagine a typological correspondence? Through blood Moses was the mediator of the old covenant. Through blood Jesus is the mediator of the new covenant."[466] Seeing an intentional parallel is favourably held in the *history of interpretation*, most noticeably in Heb 9:13-22, that interprets Exod 24:8 in relation to Jesus' expiation in covenantal terms and re-phrases Moses' words to match Matthew's account: "*This* is the blood of the covenant…" (Heb 9:20), with most commentators not disputing such an association.[467]

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[463] These criteria are: (i) availability (whether the source was accessible to the author); (ii) volume (the degree of explicit syntactical correspondence); (iii) recurrence (the frequency with which the passage is repeated); (iv) thematic coherence (if the theme of the source fits the secondary text); (v) historical plausibility (whether an intentional parallel coheres with the character of the known authorial context); (vi) history of interpretation (the extent to which others have interpreted a parallel in like manner); and (vii) satisfaction (the overall sense it makes). Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 29-32.

[464] Mark Allan Powell and Gregory K. Beale mostly agree with Hays, and many alternative criteria essentially depend on the outline he established. Stanley E. Porter, on the other hand, has been vigorous in identifying problems with them. See David Allen, "The Use of Criteria: The State of the Question," in *Methodology in the Use of the Old Testament in the New: Context and Criteria*, eds. David Allen and Steve Smith (London: T&T Clark, 2019), 130-136; Stanley E. Porter, "The Use of the Old Testament in the New Testament: A Brief Comment on Method and Terminology," in *Early Christian Interpretation of the Scriptures of Israel: Investigations and Proposals*, eds. Craig A. Evans and James A. Sanders (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 82-85; Beale, *Handbook on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 23-26, 34; Beetham, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letter of Paul to the Colossians*, 18-19.

[465] Victor P. Hamilton, *Exodus: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 131; Jackson, "Atonement in Matthew's Gospel," 143.

[466] Allison, *The New Moses*, 160, 258; see also Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3*, 473.

[467] Jackson lists several scholars who hold this view, including: R. Alan Cole, R.T. France, Robert H. Gundry, Morna D. Hooker, Ulrich Luz, Steven L. McKenzie, Douglas Moo, John Nolland, Donald Senior, Vincent Taylor, David L.

A supplementary resemblance occurs with the blood imagery commonly absent from other OT covenant traditions but present at Sinai. Jer 31:31-34 is often referenced here due to the language of a "new covenant" and forgiveness of iniquity, and while it should not be discounted, this prophetic text does not explain the basis of the absolution promised so the connection with Exodus 24:8 implies a sacrifice would be necessary.[468] In fact, the Matthean qualification of the covenantal blood "for the forgiveness of sins" may further allude to Exod 24:8 since in Jewish tradition this offering became explicitly expiatory, and blood aspersion of the victim was an important part of the process of ritual purification in Ancient Israel.[469] Targums Onkelos and Pseudo-Jonathan, for instance, interpret the blood Moses cast on the altar as generating the people's atonement, as does Heb 9:22: "Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins."[470]

Matthew's Last Supper solidifies his presentation of the protagonist's Mosaic function where "[t]he Old Covenant of Sinai is definitively fulfilled in Jesus' blood".[471] In doing so, he reveals that "Jesus has to be accepted, therefore, by Jews and proselytes within the Mosaic covenant, as its restorer, not outside it".[472] The Jewish reader encounters the very words spoken by the second Moses who, throughout the narrative, has taught law, reconfigured Israel's tribal organisation, demonstrated miraculous authority, and now offers a sacrifice (himself) that proleptically saves his people from their sins. With the disciples' reception of the covenantal blood, the re-presented Sinai event is almost complete, lacking one final element: the consent of God's people, Israel.[473]

Turner, and N.T. Wright. Jackson, "Atonement in Matthew's Gospel," 141. To this list could be added Dale Allison, W.D. Davies, Daniel Harrington, and Donald Hagner.

[468] Jackson, "Atonement in Matthew's Gospel," 141-142.

[469] Simmonds, "Uses of Blood: Re-Reading Matt. 27:25," 178. See also Hamilton, *Exodus*, 130; Klawans, *Purity, Sacrifice, and the Temple*, 62-63.

[470] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul*, 29-31; Hamilton, *Exodus*, 131.

[471] Schnackenburg, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 268; Park, "Covenantal Nomism and the Gospel of Matthew," 673. See also Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew, Volume 3,* 464-465; Mitch and Sri, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 337.

[472] Runesson, "Aspects of Matthean Universalism," 130.

[473] Thompson writes: "In eating bread and drinking wine with his followers at this Passover meal [Matt 26:17-30], Jesus creates a bond with them that completes God's covenant with Israel at Sinai." Thompson, *Matthew's Story*, 132.

6.5. Matt 27:25 and the ratification of Jesus' covenant.

The correspondence between sacrificial "blood" language in Matt 26:28 and Moses' on Sinai is part of the Gospel's conviction that Christ's death effects a cohesive renewal of covenant and law for Israel. Having established this context, it would be scarcely consistent if the plot proceeded to represent "all the people" marshalling his blood as a vehicle to reject the divine proposal. Instead, the phraseology of Matt 27:25 returns the audience to the Exodus scene, where the cry alludes to covenant ratification through participation in the victim's blood (Exod 24:8) and explains why the plot's antagonists (Judas, the chief priests and elders, Matt 27:3-10; Pilate, Matt 27:24) discharge themselves from any responsibility for it. Awareness of this reference is essential to appreciate what Matthew communicates through the verse and undercuts the anti-Judaism past commentators have identified with it. As Heil states:

> But by invoking "his blood" (*haima autou*) upon themselves and their future generations (27:25), the covenant people of Israel are also, ironically and unwittingly, invoking "my blood (*haima mou*) of the covenant to be shed for many for the forgiveness of sins" (26:28)… The Jewish people's acceptance of the full responsibility for the price/value of Jesus' blood ironically places them and all their future generations within the embrace of the forgiveness that the atoning blood of Jesus offers to all.[474]

As with the Last Supper, Hays's criteria apply with some precision in assessing Matt 27:25. The verse replicates Exod 24:3, 7-8 in the LXX and satisfies the *volume* and *recurrence* criteria. During his confirmation of God's covenant, Moses relates ordinances (Exod 24:3, 7) and performs the ritual sacrifice (Exod 24:5-6, 8) before πᾶς ὁ λαὸς (v. 3; cf. vv. 7-8: τοῦ λαοῦ), who are expressly described as "Israel" (the "elders", "sons" and "twelve tribes" of Israel, vv. 1, 4, 5). By ceasing to refer to those assembled before Pilate as the "crowd" (Matt 27:15, 20, 24) but "all the people" (Matt 27:25), the author effectively introduces a new character that alludes to the Sinai congregation, which is called by this phrase throughout Exodus (twenty times in Exodus 18-34, the most common OT usage), principally in situations of covenantal renewal (for example, Exod 19:8, 11, 16; 20:18; 32:3; 33:8, 10; 34:10).[475]

Likewise, the passage narrates the response to Pilate's handwashing: "And all the people answered" (καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς πᾶς ὁ λαὸς εἶπεν) that echoes the universal acceptance of Israel following Moses' proclamation of the commandments: "all the people answered with one

[474] Heil, "The Blood of Jesus in Matthew," 124.
[475] Setzer, "Sinai, Covenant, and Innocent Blood Traditions in Matthew's Blood Cry (Matt 27:25)," 175.

voice" (ἀπεκρίθη δὲ πᾶς ὁ λαὸς φωνῇ μιᾷ λέγοντες, Exod 24:3), priming readers to regard their utterance in Matt 27:25 as favourable; it also resonates with the affirmation of Sinai covenant curses in Deut 27:15-26, where all the people respond: "Amen" (καὶ ἐροῦσι πᾶς ὁ λαός, γένοιτο). Indeed, collective participation is a literary feature of Ancient Near Eastern covenant and treaty stories.[476] Nor were such agreements invalidated by the deficient level of understanding motivating the community's acceptance. Carmichael notes that in the Bible "people are bound by their words of promise no matter how intended", for instance, Isaac's bungled blessing of Jacob rather than of Esau (Genesis 27), Jacob's marriage to Leah in place of Rachel (Gen 29:22-27), and the Israelite's compact with the Gibeonites, who they mistake for non-Canaanites (Josh 9:3-27; 2 Sam 3:7; 21:1-4).[477] While personal judgement might be conditional on one's obedience to covenant stipulations, its formation was a corporate rather than individual decision.

Furthermore, the scene's illustration of a covenant moment lends *coherence* to the righteous blood theme and clarifies why those present demand it on "us *and our children*". This expression does not signal a curse as some critics argue but the inclusion of Matthew's Jewish contemporaries into the Christocentric system of atonement whose ratified sacrifice is accepted on their behalf, an experience repeated throughout the OT, most famously with Abraham (Gen 17:1-14). Berg writes: "In this they [the people] claim the ownership over the blood of Jesus and unintentionally subject themselves and their future generations to the saving effect of the innocent blood of Jesus."[478]

The Gospel's message accordingly reassures its Jewish readers that, despite the temple's destruction and their apparent destitution, God has not abandoned Israel but provides a continued means of redemption through Christ's covenant by tying it with that of Moses, as Culpepper asserts: "[W]hen 'all the people' accept responsibility for shedding Jesus' innocent blood, they also participate, ironically, in shedding 'the blood of the covenant', which takes the place of the daily sacrifices in the temple."[479] And like Sinai, their response subjects them and their descendants to blessings and curses, a normative aspect of ancient covenants, even

[476] Simmonds, "Uses of Blood: Re-Reading Matt. 27:25," 175.
[477] Calum M. Carmichael, *Law and Narrative in the Bible* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985), 152.
[478] Berg, *Irony in the Matthean Passion Narrative*, 203.
[479] Culpepper, *Matthew*, 549.

when only a subset of the population was attendant.[480] This thinking finds currency in both the OT (for instance, in Gen 17:1-22; 2 Sam 7:8-16; and famously, Deut 29:14-15: "Nor is it with you only that I make this sworn covenant, but with him who is not here with us this day as well as with him who stands here with us this day before the LORD our God") and the NT (in Acts 2:39, where the "forgiveness of sins" on entering the covenant through baptism represents a "promise is to you and to your children and to all that are far off"), with the Gentile extension fulfilling prophetic promises in Isaiah.

Another possible implicit connection is the mode of reception of the victim's blood. To seal the Sinai covenant, Moses, having defined the blood, "threw it upon the people" (Exod 24:8). By this point in the narrative, readers have witnessed Jesus give meaning to his sacrificial blood, offering it to his disciples as Israel's tribal leaders. Acceptance by the people would have been anticipated: "His blood be *on* us…" (Τὸ αἷμα αὐτοῦ ἐφ' ἡμᾶς) in the form of transference, the significance of which is noted in Hebrews: its "sprinkling" (ῥαντίζουσα) purified defiled persons and ratified Moses' covenant because "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Heb 9:13, 22). This interpretation is reinforced by recalling the Servant who, in one rendering of Isa 52:15, will "sprinkle" many nations, which Allison believes is an allusion to Exod 24:8 and recapitulated in Christ's death.[481]

Chapter 4 explored how Matthew positions his audience to be alert to irony during the Passion and this increases the plausibility that blood language has paradoxically positive and negative conditions. The parallel between Deuteronomy 21 and Matt 27:15-26 invites a double entendre reading: though culpable of spilling innocent blood, the people's prayer represents a contrary appeal: "Forgive, O LORD, thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and set not the guilt of innocent blood in the midst of thy people Israel; but let the guilt of blood be forgiven them" (Deut 21:8). A juxtaposition occurs between those incorporated into Jesus' covenant by accepting his blood and obeying the law, ultimately receiving blessing and redemption, and those who deny and violate it, being cursed and condemned. In part, this accounts for the foreboding tone of the pericope. It is particularly true for the evangelist's

[480] See Joseph Plescia, *The Oath and Perjury in Ancient Greece* (Tallahassee: Florida State University Press, 1970), 62, 67; Coleman Phillipson, *The International Law and Customs of Ancient Greece and Rome*, *Volume 1* (New York: Arno, 1979), 386, 388; Michael Wise, Martin Abegg Jr. and Edward Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (New York: Harper, 1996), 123, 125.
[481] Allison, *The New Moses*, 69-70.

historical rivals: the Pharisees and scribes, who continue their ancestors' immorality in persecuting the righteous in his Christ-centred community (Matt 23:29-35); the priests and elders, having reject association with the sacrificial blood and whose fate collapses with the old cultic system (Matt 27:4, 6-7); false disciples like Judas, driven to separation from the elect rather than repentance (Matt 27:4-5); and Pilate, a Gentile, who is *ipso facto* apart from the covenant and washes his hands to demonstrate he has "nothing to do with that righteous man" (Matt 27:19, 24). In a masterstroke of ironic storytelling, Matthew has illustrated how his antagonists pursue Jesus' death in an effort to protect their own religious and political power but in so doing precipitate the termination of the temple's sacrificial economy and help inaugurate an alternative system of atonement, what they meant for evil God meant for good "to bring it about that many people should be kept alive" (Gen 50:20).

On the other hand, as characters who entered the divine covenant at the Last Supper, the disciples are forgiven in spite of their betrayal and commissioned to carry out Christ's mission. This fact underlies a response to Konradt's astute question: *Why has the mission to restore Israel begun prior to the resurrection while the Gentile conversion happens only after Easter?*[482] With the acceptance by "all the people" at Matt 27:25, the Jewish covenant has been recapitulated that restores the "lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 10:6; 15:24). The elect can now begin to implement the evangelical vision in Isaiah, as Donaldson remarks: "analysis of the Great Commission suggests that you go and make disciples of 'all the nations', means that you, as the Jewish followers of Christ, as Israel, are to go out and baptise…"[483]

However, unlike the antagonists who repudiate the covenant or the disciples who are redeemed by it, the character of the people is left ambiguous.[484] Matt 27:25 is presented as a moment of choice for readers, and the narrative closes as its prologue began with Israel called back to relationship after exile, responding to an anxiety over the kingdom's restoration felt by many first century Jews (see Acts 1:6).[485] Hays asks: "If the people of Israel were originally brought into membership in the Mosaic covenant by having blood dashed upon them, and if Jesus has already (in private with twelve disciples who symbolise a restored

[482] Konradt, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew*, 3.
[483] Terence Donaldson, "'Nations,' 'Non-Jewish Nations,' or 'Non-Jewish Individuals': Matthew 28:19 Revisited," in *Matthew Within Judaism: Israel and the Nations in the First Gospel*, eds. Anders Runesson and Daniel M. Gurtner (Atlanta: SBL, 2020), 181-188.
[484] Heil, "The Blood of Jesus in Matthew," 118-119.
[485] Theophilos, *Jesus as New Moses in Matthew 8-9*, 48-49.

Israel) declared that the new (or renewed) covenant is sealed by participation in his own blood… what then can it mean for the people... to say, 'his blood be upon us'?"[486] For this to mean continued exile would be counterproductive to Christ's salvific purpose. As with Sinai, though many may disobey and be judged for it, the restored covenant remains corporately binding with Israel.

6.6. Concluding remarks.

Unlike a straightforward ironic account, double entendre unites and provides a plausible reading to the ostensibly diametrically opposite senses of Matt 27:25.[487] The verse is situated within the re-presented Sinai event Christ inaugurates at the Last Supper, through the channels of covenant and law underpinning Matthean soteriology, and supported by narrative connections with Matt 1:21; 26:28; Exodus 19-24; and Jesus' portrayal as the Mosaic prophet. The people's cry accepting responsibility for the Messiah's sacrificial blood and the involvement of their children intimate the ratification of this reformed compact, bringing them into the elect as Israel. Nevertheless, the author is historically aware that every Jew will not respond positively, and the covenant's concomitant blessings of atonement and curses of disobedience are a challenge to readers of his Gospel, recalling the words of Origen: "For among those who said, 'His blood be upon us and upon our children,' the blood of Christ is for condemnation. For Jesus had been appointed 'for the ruin and the resurrection of many'. Therefore, for those refuting his sign, his blood effects punishment; for those who believe, salvation."[488] Thus, Matthew leaves his community with the knowledge that Christ's covenant was on their behalf as Israelites but that they also have to "be perfect" like their Heavenly Father.

[486] Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels,* 135.
[487] Simmonds, "Uses of Blood: Re-Reading Matt. 27:25," 169.
[488] Origen, *Homilies on Joshua* 3:5, 49-50.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1. Thesis summary and conclusion.

This thesis has examined Matt 27:25, a verse which has featured in much of the anti-Semitic discourse over the past two millennia and contributed to aggravating Jewish-Christian relations. In particular, it has addressed the exegetical issues associated with harmonising an anti-Judaic reading that condemns Israel with Matthew's own Jewish concerns, especially for his people's salvation. The main interpretive models analysed, while accounting for certain aspects of the text, generally raise further narrative problems, such as underplaying linguistic cues, irony and important themes, or alternatively being incompatible with the Gospel's background. This has encouraged scholars to revisit the biblical passage.

The national blood guilt and curse perspectives, where Israel is wholly blamed for Christ's crucifixion, have long been considered the oldest and most influential in the Church. Although the latter may be true, reception history has demonstrated that they did not emerge until the late fourth and early fifth centuries, especially in the writings of Jerome and Chrysostom. Coupling this fact with the Jewish character of Matthew's Gospel and contemporary sectarian rivalry, severely undermines these views. However, an approach that understands "all the people" to be limited in some respect to a collection of Jews and/or Jewish authorities, is equally difficult to square with the universal language, imagery and irony used in the narrative. A third reading that borrows aspects of both the aforementioned but restricts culpability to characters solely within the story is promising but incomplete.

In their place, we have argued for a nuanced version of the ironic interpretation developed by commentators like Cargal, Heil and Berg. Specifically, a double entendre exegesis of Matt 27:25 contends that the verse depicts a moment of covenantal ratification, justified narratively by the author's depiction of the protagonist as a Mosaic prophet, the role of antagonists, and the protection of the character of the "people", in addition to the function of irony and theme of innocent blood during the Passion. These elements come together and inform our reading when realising the centrality of covenant and law in Matthew's soteriology, the structure through which Jesus fulfills his mission to save his people from their sins (Matt 1:21). By defining the Last Supper "blood of the covenant… for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt

26:28), the text alludes to Moses at Sinai, a significant event in Israel's redemption that is similarly sealed by "all the people" accepting the victims' sacrificial blood.

Therefore, what occurs at Matt 27:25 is essentially salvific, continuing and completing Israel's covenantal history with God. Although we cannot confidently assert the degree to which Matthew believed Gentiles must adopt Jewish religio-cultural practices, especially circumcision and dietary laws (there is no overt rejection of them and their continuing validity appears to be underscored, for example, in Matt 5:17-19), his "soft" or minimal supersessionism reveals that Jesus brings something new to the covenant between God and Israel.[489] Christ inaugurates is a greater "covenantal reality" than the Mosaic-Sinai covenant, just like prior covenants extended but did not displace those before them, though associated with the finality of the "new covenant" (Jer 31:31-34).[490] This being the case, in the evangelist's eyes, for a Jew to reject Jesus' covenant in favour of Sinai imperils his salvation in much the same way as preferring Abraham over Moses. Sullivan summarises this effectively: "the Jewish people… are voicing a similar acceptance of the covenant in the blood of Jesus. By that prophetic insight so frequent in the gospels the voice of the people is, albeit unwittingly, proclaiming the commitment of the whole people: the people are thereby numbering themselves as a people among those signed into the redeeming covenant of Jesus' death."[491] As with Sinai, for those who obey the law and remain faithful, there is redemption. However, the fearful tone surrounding this verse reflects the Matthean community's perception that many Jews do not and for them there is judgement. This applies historically too in the destruction of Jerusalem and temple – an indictment of the failed religious leadership – and so, for the author, a new sacrificial covenant as a means of atonement is required.[492]

We can now return to the questions posed in the introduction (see page 13) and sketch a brief response. *(i, iv)* The lexical shift from "the crowd" in Matt 27:15-24 to "all the people" is narratively necessary to alert readers that a different character (namely, Israel) enters the scene and pronounces the dramatic words in v. 25; it further alludes to and reprises Exodus

[489] David Novak, "Supersessionism Hard and Soft," *First Things* 290 (2019): 3-4; see also Culpepper, *Matthew*, 10-11, 26.
[490] Novak, "Supersessionism Hard and Soft," 8.
[491] Sullivan, "New Insights into Matthew 27:24-25," 455-456.
[492] Sider Hamilton, "'His Blood Be Upon Us': Innocent blood and the Death of Jesus in Matthew," 100.

24:6-8, where the Sinai covenant is sealed in blood. *(ii)* Consequently, "all the people" are not condemned but rather the act fulfills Christ's mandate to save his people. Yet, this leaves space for individuals within Israel to reject or disobey the covenant. *(iii)* Positive (Matt 26:28) and negative (Matt 23:29-36) imagery is encapsulated in the people's cry as spilling innocent blood results in both blessings and curses. Finally, *(v)* the Jewish character of the First Gospel is preserved through a double entendre reading because it brings to the surface the underlying soteriology of covenant and law and the place of Israel as God's elect.

7.2. Future research directions.

Building on the work of Catherine Sider Hamilton and InHee Berg, and given the explanatory power of this method and the conclusions of this thesis, further study is warranted in the correspondence of irony, bloodshed, redemption and judgement in passages within the OT and NT canons, for instance, in the sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22 or Jephthah's rash vow in Judges 11.

Another area that could be researched in greater depth is the extent to which the elements present in our Matthean pericope: Jesus' Mosaic portrayal, righteous blood imagery, irony, covenant renewal, and the reformation of the elect, are found conjointly throughout the Gospel. Reflection on these narrative aspects, in conversation with growing historical and archaeological insights, may help in uncovering more of the Jewish quality of Matthew's good news.

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Appendix I: Occurrences of Matt 27:25 in Christian writers to AD 500

Author and Work	Approximate Date	Context of Reference	Text
Tertullian, *Against the Jews* 8:17-18, trans. Geoffrey D. Dunn (London and New York: Routledge, 2004), 58.	198-206	Predictions in Daniel regarding the time of Christ's advent and the end of temple sacrifices.	Therefore, when these particular times also were complete and the Jews conquered, afterwards libations and sacrifices ceased there and they were not able to be celebrated after that. For even anointing was eliminated there, just as it was prophesied in the psalms, 'They have destroyed my hands and feet'. And the suffering of the Christ was accomplished within the time of the seventy weeks under Tiberius Caesar, when Rubellius Geminus and Fufius Geminus were consuls, in the month of March at the time of Passover, on the 25th of March, on the first day of unleavened bread on which they slew the lamb at evening, just as Moses had instructed. And so the entire synagogue of the children of Israel killed him, saying to Pilate, when he wanted to release him, 'His blood be upon us and upon our children,' and "If you release him you are not a friend of Caesar,' in order that everything might be fulfilled that had been written about him.
Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* 2:15, ed. Ernest Evans (Oxford: Clarendon, 1972), 129.	207-208	The remedial nature of God's punishment, where apparent severity is intended to move the hearts of the hardened to repentance.	Even if he visited the fathers' sins upon the children, it was Israel's hardness which demanded remedies of that sort, to cause them to obey the divine law at least through consideration for their posterity: for surely any man will be more concerned for his children's safety than for his own. Moreover, if the fathers' blessing was also to be passed on to their seed, without any previous merit of theirs, why should not the fathers' guilt also overflow upon their sons? As with God's favour, so with his displeasure: to the end that both the favour and the displeasure should have course through their whole posterity, yet without prejudice to that decree which was afterwards to be made, that men should cease to say that the fathers had eaten the sour grapes and the children's teeth been set on edge – which means that the father would not take upon him the son's sin, nor the son his father's sin, but that everyone would bear the guilt of his own sin: and thus, after Israel's hardness, the hardness of the law might also be subdued, and justice no longer judge the nation but individuals. And yet, if you were to accept the gospel in its true form, you would learn to whom applies this judgement of God who turns the fathers' sins back upon their children, namely to those who were, at a tune then future, going of their own will to call down this judgement upon themselves, *His blood be on our heads and on our children's.* So then God's foresight

			in its fullness passed censure upon this which he heard long before it was spoken.
Hippolytus, *On Genesis* 49:5, trans. S.D.F. Salmond (*ANF* 5), 408-409.	Before 235	The violence against the "houghed bull" by Simeon and Levi is typologically interpreted as the conspiracy of the Jewish religious leaders against Jesus.	This he says regarding the conspiracy into which they were to enter against the Lord. And that he means this conspiracy, is evident to us. For the blessed David sings, "Rulers have taken counsel together against the Lord," and so forth. And of this conspiracy the Spirit prophesied, saying, "Let not my soul contend," desiring to draw them off, if possible, so that that future crime might not happen through them. "They slew men, and houghed the bull"; by the "strong bull" he means Christ. And "they houghed," since, when He was suspended on the tree, they pierced through His sinews. Again, "in their anger they houghed a bull." And mark the nicety of the expression: for "they slew men, and houghed a bull." For they killed the saints, and they remain dead, awaiting the time of the resurrection. But as a young bull, so to speak, when houghed, sinks down to the ground, such was Christ in submitting voluntarily to the death of the flesh; but He was not overcome of death. But though as man He became one of the dead, He remained alive in the nature of divinity. For Christ is the bull, - an animal, above all, strong and neat and devoted to sacred use. And the Son is Lord of all power, who did no sin, but rather offered Himself for us, a savour of a sweet smell to His God and Father. Therefore, let those hear who houghed this august bull: "Cursed be their anger, for it was stubborn; and their wrath, for it was hardened." But this people of the Jews dared to boast of houghing the bull: "Our hands shed this." For this is nothing different, I think, from the word of folly: "His blood" (be upon us), and so forth. Moses recalls the curse against Levi, or, rather converts it into a blessing, on account of the subsequent zeal of the tribe, and of Phinehas in particular, in behalf of God. But that against Simeon he did not recall. Wherefore it also was fulfilled in deed. For Simeon did not obtain an inheritance like the other tribes, for he dwelt in the midst of Judah. Yet his tribe was preserved, although it was small in number.
Origen, *Homilies on Joshua* 3 and 26, trans. Barbara J. Bruce (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 49-50, 219.	c. 240	The red chord on Rahab's house is interpreted typologically as the blood of Christ, whose blood condemns those outside the house but	But let us consider the transactions the wise prostitute had with the spies. Having no land, she gives them mystic and heavenly counsel. "Go through the mountains," she says. Do not proceed through the valleys, shun low and dispirited things, proclaim those things that are lofty and sublime. She herself puts the scarlet-coloured sign in her house, through which she is bound to be saved from the destruction of the city. No other sign would have

		saves those within.	been accepted, except the scarlet-coloured one that carried the sign of blood. For she knew there was no salvation for anyone except in the blood of Christ. Also, this commandment is given to the person who was once a prostitute: "All," it says, "who will be found in your house will be saved. But concerning those who go out from the house, we ourselves are free of them by your oath." Therefore, if anyone wants to be saved, let him come into the house of this one who was once a prostitute. Even if anyone from that people wants to be saved, let him come in order to be able to attain salvation. Let him come to this house in which the blood of Christ is the sign of redemption. For among those who said, "His blood be upon us and upon our children," the blood of Christ is for condemnation. For Jesus had been appointed "for the ruin and the resurrection of many." Therefore, for those refuting his sign, his blood effects punishment; for those who believe, salvation.
		The story of Aaron interceding for plague-infected Israel in Numbers 16, able to save those who accept him, is typologically interpreted as those who accept or reject Christ as high priest.	But to prove these things I wish to make mention also of a certain story, so that, if only the Lord deigns to grant, we may be able to discover the spiritual explanation of it. Once the people fell down in the desert and died. Aaron the chief priest came and "stood in the midst of those who died and of those who lived," so that the devastation of death might not advance even further among the rest. And then came the true high priest, my Lord, and he came into the midst between those dying and the living. That is, he came between those Jews who accepted his presence and those who not only did not accept but killed themselves more completely than him, saying, "The blood of that one be upon us and upon our sons!" Whence also "all the righteous blood that has been poured forth upon the earth from the blood of the righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah whom they killed between the sanctuary and the altar will be required from that generation" that said, "His blood be upon us and upon our sons."
Origen, *Commentary on Matthew* 14:19, trans. John Patrick (*ANF* 9), 1007-1008 (Greek original).	c. 246-248	An analogy of divorce between husband and wife is applied to the separation of God from the Jewish people when the latter preferred	Now, He who is the Christ may have taken the synagogue to wife and cohabited with her, but it may be that afterwards she found not favour in His sight; and the reason of her not having found favour in His sight was, that there was found in her an unseemly thing; for what was more unseemly than the circumstance that, when it was proposed to them to release one at the feast, they asked for the release of Barabbas the robber, and the condemnation of Jesus? And what was more unseemly than the fact,

		Barabbas over Jesus.	that they all said in His case, “Crucify Him, crucify Him,” and “Away with such a fellow from the earth”? And can this be freed from the charge of unseemliness, “His blood be upon us, and upon our children”? Wherefore, when He was avenged, Jerusalem was compassed with armies, and its desolation was near, and their house was taken away from it, and “the daughter of Zion was left as a booth in a vineyard, and as a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, and as a besieged city.”
Origen, *Commentary on Matthew,* ed. Erich Klostermann and Ernst Benz (Leipzig: Teubner, 1933), *§124* (Latin recension – my translation).	c. 246-248	Commentary on the scene of Jesus presented by Pilate before the crowd in Matthew 27.	…accepit enim aquam in conspectu omnium, et lavans manus suas dixit: innocens ego sum a sanguine iusti huius; vos videritis. et quidem se lavit, illi autem non solum se mundare noluerunt a sanguine Christi, sed etiam super se susceperunt dicentes: sanguis eius super nos. et super filios nostros. propter hoc rei facti sunt non solum in sanguine prophetarum, sed inplentes mensuram patrum suorum facti sunt rei etiam in sanguine Christi, ut audiant deum sibi dicentem: »cum expanderitis manus vestras ad me, avertam oculos meos a vobis manus enim vestrae sanguine plenae sunt«. propterea sanguis non solum super eos factus est, qui tunc fuerimt, verum etiam super omnes generationes ludaeorum post sequentes usque ad consummationem. propterea usque nunc domus eorum derelicta est eis deserta. Pilate received in the presence of water and washed his hands, he said: “I am innocent of this man; you are responsible.” And, indeed, as he washed himself to him [Christ] they would not be made clean of the blood of Christ but also took it upon themselves, saying: “His blood be on us and on our children.” Because of this they are as a matter of fact not only guilty of the blood of the prophets, but, completing the measure of their fathers, they are guilty also of the blood of Christ, and listen to God saying to them: “When you lift your hands towards me, I will hide my eyes from you: for your hands are full of blood.” For this reason, not only is the blood [of Christ] blamed upon their leaders, who were alive then, but also on all the generations of Jews, even to the consummation of the world. For this reason, their house is now derelict and deserted by them.
Didascalia Apostolorum 21, trans. Alistair Stewart-Sykes (Belgium: Brepols, 2009), 221.	Before 250	Summary of the Passion narrative.	Yet Pilate the judge, who was a pagan and of an alien race, did not consent to their evil deeds but took water and washed his hands and said: “I am innocent of this man’s blood.” But the people answered and said: “His blood be on us and on our children.” And

			Herod commanded that he be crucified. And on the Friday the Lord suffered on our behalf.
Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* 7:1, trans. Mary Francis (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1964), 473-474.	c. 303-311	The final judgement at Christ's Second Coming.	Now I will come to that which is left, so that an end can be made to this work. The task facing us now is the discussion of the judgement of God, because it will be determined, then, when our Lord returns to the earth, how He will render to each one according to his merits, either reward or punishment. And so, as in the fourth book we spoke about His first coming, we will in this one refer to His second coming which the Jews also confess and hope for, but in vain, since it is necessary that He come to console those whom He had come at first to call together. Those who impiously violated Him in His lowly condition will perceive a Victor in power; and all those things which they read and do not understand they will suffer, God making recompense; for, truly, those defiled by all sins and stained with the sacred blood of Him upon whom they laid wicked hands are destined for eternal punishments. But there will be for us a section separated away from the Jews, in which we will convict them of error and crime.
Lactantius, *Epitome of the Divine Institutes* 48, trans. William Fletcher (*ANF* 7), 549.	c. 303-311	The final judgement at Christ's Second Coming.	Since, therefore, He sits at the right hand of God, about to tread down His enemies, who tortured Him, when He shall come to judge the world, it is evident that no hope remains to the Jews, unless, turning themselves to repentance, and being cleansed from the blood with which they polluted themselves, they shall begin to hope in Him whom they denied. Therefore, Esdras thus speaks: "This Passover is our Saviour and our refuge. Consider and let it come into your heart, that we have to abase Him in a figure: and after these things we have hoped in Him."
Eusebius, *Prophetic Extracts* 1:15, trans. Thomas Gaisford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1842), 51.	c. 300-313	How Jesus is the prophet spoken of by Moses.	All the things which are narrated as physically done by Moses, our Lord and Saviour completed by the spiritual law. So he came, and now openly, to the Samaritans and the Jews, which the prophet Moses also predicted, about whom God bore testimony, saying, "He who does not hear his words, which he speaks in my name, I will avenge it on him." Avenged, therefore, is the blood of all from Abel to Zechariah, killed between the temple and the altar; avenged is the suffering of the Saviour, above all on those who dared to yell at him, "Crucify, crucify him! Away with him from the earth! His blood be upon us and upon our children." Which also came about immediately, when God vindicated the blood of Christ upon them and their children. For the punishment has so followed them, that from then until the present time the whole race [of the Jews] has hardly been able to hold up its head, having filled up and more the

			prophecy of Amos, saying, “For the wrath of God has come upon them to the uttermost.”
Eusebius, *Demonstratio Evangelica* 8-10, trans. William J. Ferrar (London: SPCK, 1920), 140-231.	Before 311	The coming and rejection of Jesus leads to judgement for the Jewish people and those who continue to reject Christ.	And when those kings are shaken, the souls of the Jews, called “valleys,” because of the contrast of their wretchedness with their former exaltation, bewailing the passing of the aforesaid glory, will melt like wax before the fire, and be as water rushing down a chasm, through the multitude of those that fall from bad to worse. And all this it says will come to pass because of the sin of the house of Jacob, and the transgression of the house of Israel. And it goes on to describe this sin and transgression, “They that defile judgement and pervert all that is right, who build Sion with blood and Jerusalem with unrighteousness." With blood! Yes, this was the cause of their final misery, for that they pronounced the impious curse upon themselves, saying, "His blood be on us and on our children.” Therefore, it says this, “Zion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall be as a storehouse of fruit,” a prophecy which was only actually fulfilled after the impious treatment of our Saviour. For from that time to this utter desolation has possessed the land; their once famous Mount Sion, instead of being, as once it was, the centre of study and education based on the divine prophecies, which the children of the Hebrews of old, their godly prophets, priests and national teachers loved to interpret, is a Roman farm like the rest of the country, yea, with my own eyes I have seen the bulls ploughing there, and the sacred site sown with seed. And Jerusalem itself is become but a storehouse of its fruit of old days now destroyed, or better, as the Hebrew has it, a stone-quarry… Gentiles know and receive the prophet that was foretold, and sent by His Father, as being Lawgiver to all men of the religion of the God of the Universe, through His saving Gospel teaching, that other prediction being fulfilled at the same time which says, “Set, Lord, a Lawgiver over them, let the Gentiles know themselves to be men,” while the Jewish nation, not receiving Him that was foretold, has paid the fit penalty according to the divine prediction which said, “And the man who will not hear all things whatsoever the prophet shall speak in My Name, I will exact vengeance on him.” Surely He has avenged on that people all the blood poured out on the earth, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, yea, even to crown all to the Christ Himself, Whose blood they called down not only on

			themselves but on their children, and even now they pay the penalty of their presumptuous sin… The dogs that surrounded Him and the council of the wicked were the rulers of the Jews, the Scribes and High Priests, and the Pharisees, who spurred on the whole multitude to demand His blood against themselves and against their own children. Isaiah clearly calls them dogs, when he says: "Ye are all foolish dogs, unable to bark." For when it was their duty, even if they could not acquire the character of shepherds, to protect like good sheepdogs their Master's spiritual flock and the sheep of the house of Israel, and to warn by barking, and to fawn upon their Master and recognize Him, and to guard the flock entrusted to them with all vigilance, and to bark if necessary at enemies outside the fold, they preferred like senseless dogs, yes, like mad dogs, to drive the sheep wild by barking, so that the words aptly describe them, which say: "Many dogs have surrounded me, the council of the wicked have hemmed me in." And all who even now conduct themselves like them in reviling and barking at the Christ of God in the same way may be reckoned their kin; yea, they who like those impious soldiers crucify the Son of God, and put Him to shame, have a character very like theirs.
Eusebius, *Encomium of the Martyrs*, trans. Benjamin H. Cowper, in William Wright, "The Encomium of the Martyrs," *Journal of Sacred Literature* 5 (1864), §2.	Before 313	In praise of the saints and martyrs.	So, then, let the new soldiers of his faith, equipped with the glory of his truth, pass in remembrance and in word before our eyes, and before the Lord of victory, and the giver of crowns, the Lord Christ, Peter being second in command after our Lord Jesus, in the heavenly host of the glorious ranks, powerful in heaven and also upon earth, closing and opening without envy, in righteousness, the way of the gate of heaven, and not like the Pharisees, the partakers of his blood and of his race. Let us cleave to them, and to every one of the apostles, since it is proclaimed in heaven and by observation that their minister shall receive a crown of righteousness.
Eusebius, *Commentary on Isaiah* 23 and 362, trans. Jonathan J. Armstrong (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2013), 64, 504.	c. 325	Commenting on Isaiah's predictions of the rejection of the Messiah and the grave consequences for those responsible.	That which had been predicted of all the prophet's predictions happened: the people were handed over to the mockers of the Lord and their young rulers. And the Word explains anew that the reason why he accuses them of all these things is not their idolatry but because they have given evil counsel against themselves, saying: "Let us bind the just, for he is a nuisance to us," and also because their tongues are joined with lawlessness, being disobedient toward the things of the Lord. But Symmachus has instead: Their tongues and their practices provoked the Lord;

			and Aquila: Their tongue and practices provoked the Lord to anger. You see the reason why the previously mentioned things were taken away. For their own tongues provoked the Lord, at which point in time they vented their wicked voices, saying: "Away with him, away with him," "His blood be on us and on our children!" For then truly Their tongue and practices were against the Lord and provoked him. For this reason, he next makes the deeper meaning quite clear when he goes on to say: They have proclaimed their lawlessness sin like that of Sodom; and they have made it plain… And this indeed was the reason for the removal of the gifts of God that shone in the old days. Therefore, he teaches that the reason the people have fallen away and been jettisoned so far from God is nothing other than their sins. He recounts their situation when he says next: Your hands have been defiled with blood and your fingers with sins, and your lips have spoken lawlessness. One can see clearly that he does not find fault with them for idolatry or some other lawless practice but rather for the murder of their hands and the lawlessness of their mouths, by which he alludes to their uprising against the Saviour and their scheme against righteous people. And he spoke about these righteous people when he said in the verse above: "Observe how the righteous person is being taken away, and no one takes notices; righteous people are being taken away, and no one takes it to heart. For the righteous person has been taken away from the presence of lawlessness. His burial will be in peace; he has been taken away from their midst." They themselves may not have been the murderers of the Saviour, but they demanded that "his blood be on them and on their children." And they proclaimed with godless cries that they indeed had hands that had been defiled with blood, and lips that had spoken lawlessness and a tongue that had plotted unrighteousness.
Eusebius, *On the Celebration of the Pasch*, trans. Andrew Eastbourne, in Angelo Mai, *Novae Patrum Bibliotheca* 4, 1847, §10.	c. 325-337	Jesus' Passover meal and the conspiratorial trial against him.	But he himself, before he suffered, ate the Pascha and celebrated the festival with his disciples, not with the Jews. But when had celebrated the festival at evening, the chief priests came upon him with the traitor and laid their hands on him; for they were not eating the Pascha [that] evening, otherwise they would not have busied themselves with him. And then, having seized him, they led him off to the house of Caiaphas, where, after spending the night, they gathered together and

			conducted the preliminary inquiry. Then, after that, they arose and led him, in company with the crowd, to Pilate; and at that point, the Scripture says that they did not enter the praetorium, so that they would not become defiled (so they thought) by coming in under a pagan roof, and would eat the Pascha at evening with their purity intact - those most foul ones -who strained out a gnat but swallowed a camel; those who had become defiled already in soul and body by their bloodthirstiness against the Saviour feared to come in under [Pilate's] roof! They, on the one hand, on that very day of the passion, ate the Pascha that was injurious to their own souls, and asked for the Saviour's blood - not on their own behalf, but to their own detriment; our Saviour, on the other hand, not then, but the day before, reclined at table with his disciples and conducted the festival that was desirable to himself.
Eusebius, *Commentary on the Psalms* 17, 21 and 58, trans. Roger Pearse (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1857), 183-184, 208-209.	After 335	David needing rescuing from his own people as Jesus did, and the plot against him.	On Ps 17:44-46: In the character of a prophet, David, looking to the future, sets forth two groups: from one he prays to be delivered, but that he might be admitted to the honour of joined to the other. Indeed, he clearly declares those with whom he seeks to be joined, the Gentiles, in these words: You will make me head of the Gentiles, and clearly the other class from whom he prays to be rescued, is none other than the circumcised race. From this chosen people he demands to be removed, from their contradictions. Notice how he does not attack the superstition of idols, nor the other evils and unjust deeds, but the contradictions. Meanwhile consider with what prophetic instinct the objections are brought forward, which were made against the Saviour, which the entire people before brought out at the time when Christ was suffering, when meet with Pilate [who said], "Who do you wish that I should release to you, Barabbas or Jesus called Christ?" they asked for Barabbas to be released, but Jesus to be put away, and angrily shouted and yelled, displaying his contradiction of them, when Pilate was also saying, "I am innocent of his blood. You can see this!" responding the people said, "His blood be upon us and our children." Which therefore, in the same divine Spirit, David foreseeing, he asked to be rescued from the people with contradictions, lest his soul after death be numbered with those against God in this impiety. On Ps 21:12-14: You will not depart from the truth, if you say the bulls of Bashan means the leaders of

			the Jewish people; or the leaders of the priests, the scribes, and the elders… They opened against him their mouths, just like a lion raging and roaring, saying, Away with him, away with him, crucify him. His blood be upon us and our descendants. On Ps 58:13: Because in the time of our Saviour, the Jews could not put to death, but it was by the hand of the Romans, when Pilate gave judgement, after the soldiers surrounded and arrested him, and nothing was done by the Jews. By law they could not put to death, but only prosecute. For the leaders of the Jews went into council and conspired to kill him. And false witnesses and sycophants, eager for their pay, stood in the sight of the Saviour. And the whole people with their voices and lips demanded his blood upon them and their children. Remember that by law therefore they could not put to death, what Pilate decreed, his soldiers carried out; but the conspiracy of the leaders of the priests, the testimony of the sycophants, and the voice against him of the multitude.
Asterius the Sophist, *Commentary on the Psalms* 11, ed. Marcel Richard (Oslo: Brogger, 1956), 21:14.	Before 341	Accusations of Jesus against those who executed him.	Then he said to Thomas: Put your hand in my side, not to pierce my side with a spear as the soldier, but (so that) you may receive the blood and water from my side in your mind, and learn why the blood and water came out, the two witnesses of the Lord-killers: the blood in order to convict the Jews who said; "His blood be on us and on our children"; the water, in order to accuse Pilate, who taking water and washing his hands, as innocent an innocent and righteous [man] scourged and crucified.
Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures* 13, trans. Edward Hamilton Gifford (*NPNF* 2/7), 263-264.	c. 348-350	The significance of the signs of water and blood.	The beginning of signs under Moses was blood and water; and the last of all Jesus' signs was the same. First, Moses changed the river into blood; and Jesus at the last gave forth from His side water with blood. This was perhaps on account of the two speeches, his who judged Him, and theirs who cried out against Him; or because of the believers and the unbelievers. For Pilate said, I am innocent and washed his hands in water; they who cried out against Him said, His blood be upon us: there came therefore these two out of His side; the water, perhaps, for him who judged Him; but for them that shouted against Him the blood. And again it is to be understood in another way; the blood for the Jews, and the water for the Christians: for upon them as plotters came the condemnation from the blood; but to thee who now believes, the salvation which is by water. For nothing has been done without a meaning.

Gospel of Nicodemus, trans. Montague R. James (Oxford: Clarendon, 1924).	c. 350	Re-telling of the trial and burial of Jesus.	And Pilate left Jesus in the judgement hall and went forth to the Jews and said unto them: I find no fault in him. The Jews say unto him: This man said: I am able to destroy this temple and in three days to build it up. Pilate saith: What temple? The Jews say: That which Solomon built in forty and six years but which this man saith he will destroy and build it in three days. Pilate saith unto them: I am guiltless of the blood of this just man: see ye to it. The Jews say: His blood be upon us and on our children… And when Pilate heard these words he was afraid. And Pilate silenced the multitude, because they cried still, and said unto them: So, then, this is he whom Herod sought? The Jews say: Yea, this is he. And Pilate took water and washed his hands before the sun, saying: I am innocent of the blood of this just man: see ye to it. Again the Jews cried out: His blood be upon us and upon our children… But the Jews took hold on Joseph and commanded him to be put in safeguard until the first day of the week: and they said unto him: Know thou that the time alloweth us not to do anything against thee, because the sabbath dawneth: but knew that thou shalt not obtain burial, but we will give thy flesh unto the fowls of the heaven. Joseph saith unto them: This is the word of Goliath the boastful which reproached the living God and the holy David. For God said by the prophet: Vengeance is mine, and I will recompense, saith the Lord. And now, lo, one that was uncircumcised, but circumcised in heart, took water and washed his hands before the sun, saying: I am Innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. And ye answered Pilate and said: His blood be upon us and upon our children. And now I fear lest the wrath of the Lord come upon you and upon your children, as ye have said.
Hilary, *Commentary on Matthew* 33, trans. Daniel H. Williams (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 287.	c. 350	Contrast is made between Pilate (and pagans) who are made innocent through water while the Jews who call for Jesus' blood are guilty.	While Pilate was sitting on the tribunal, his wife sent him a message saying, "There is nothing between you and this just man." An image of the pagans is in this woman, who, already believing, summoned her husband and an unbelieving people to faith in Christ. Because she herself had suffered much for Christ, she invited her husband to the same glory of a future hope. And so Pilate washed his hands and bore witness to the Jews that he was innocent of the Lord's blood. While the Jews have accepted upon themselves and their children the crime of shedding the Lord's blood, the pagans, by washing themselves, are daily passing over to a confession of faith.

Hilary, *Tractatus super psalmos* 2, in *S. Hilarii Pictauiensis Opera* (CSEL 22), ed. Anton Zingerle (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1891), 45.	c. 360-367	Judgement upon those who mocked Jesus.	On Psalm 2: Therefore they are mocked and ridiculed [by God], those who concocted false testimony, who were the merchants of betrayal, who on themselves and their children accepted his blood, who yelled "Crucify!", who said, "If you are the son of God, come down from the cross," who sealed the tomb, who purchased silence from the soldiers about the resurrection and a rumour that the body had been stolen: they have wasted so much the work of their impiety.
Hilary, *Tractatus mysteriorum* 1:7, in *S. Hilarii Pictauiensis Opera* (CSEL 65), ed. Alfred Feder (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1916), 9-10.	c. 364-367	The persecution of the Christ, the apostles and Church by the Jews is prefigured in Cain's murder of Abel.	The blood of Abel thus is claimed by those who, as had been prefigured in Cain, have persecuted the just and are accursed by the earth who, opening her mouth, has received the blood of his brother. In the body of Christ, in fact in which are the apostles and the church, it is the blood of all the just that their race [the Jews] and their entire posterity has taken upon their own heads, crying "His blood be upon us and on our sons."
Gregory of Nyssa, *In luciferam sanctam Domini resurrectionem: Sermon 5 – On Christ's Resurrection*, ed. Ernestus Gebhardt (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 317 (likely apocryphal).	c. 350-400	Attacks upon Jesus by evil men.	When was he not honoured? When the dogs barked, and the Lord bore it patiently; when the wolves ravaged; and the sheep stood still; when he was begged for life by a thief, and the Life of the World was drawn down to death; when they shouted with coarse and destructive voice, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him! His blood be upon us and our children!" Hewers of the Lord, killers of the prophets, enemies of God; haters of God, unjust in law, enemies of grace, strangers to the faith of their fathers, patrons of the devil, a family of serpents, tale-bearers, babblers, minds stuck in darkness, the leaven of the Pharisees, the assembly of demons.
Basil of Caesarea, *Sermon 9: Of Prayer*, in *Sermones de moribus a Symeone Metaphrasta collecti*, trans. Roger Pearse, PG 32 (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1857), 1116-1381.	c. 360-379	Accusing Jews of continuing to have Jesus' blood on their hands.	Of the same sort are Jewish prayers; even when they extend their hands [in prayer], they recall to mind the wicked crime against God, the Father of the only-begotten Son, and by their every extension they reveal the hands of Christ filled with blood. To be sure as they persevere in their blindness, they are heirs to the paternal murder. "For his blood", they said, "be upon us and upon our children."
Basil of Caesarea, *Commentary on the Prophet Isaiah* 1, trans. Nikolai A. Lipatov (Cambridge: Cicero, 2001), 50-51.	c. 362-363	Accusing Jews of continuing to have Jesus' blood on their hands.	This is the reason why the eyes of God are turned away when they would stretch out their hands, since the very "symbols" of supplication provide an occasion for provocation. If a man having killed someone's beloved son, and with his hands still stained with the blood from the murder, were to stretch them forth to the grieving father, asking for the right hand of friendship and begging to receive forgiveness; would the blood of the child conspicuous on the hand of the child-murderer not

			rouse the wronged father still more to anger? Such are now the prayers of the Jews, when they stretch out their hands, and remind God the Father of the sin against the Only begotten Son, and each time they stretch them out, they show that their hands are full of Christ's blood. For those who persist in hard-heartedness are heirs of their ancestral blood-guilt. For they say: "His blood [be] on us, and on our children!"
Didymus, *Fragments on the Psalms* 54, ed. Ekkehard Mühlenberg, *Psalmenkommentare aus der Katenenüberlieferung*, *Volume 2* (Berlin: Patristische Texte und Studien 16, 1977), 16.	c. 350-398	Associates the "men of blood" from the psalm with those who persecute Christ and the Church.	He [the psalmist] desires that those men should be humiliated by God, "who is before time", who do not respect Him, and those above all who defile the "testament of God". He calls "Men of blood" those who said, "His blood be upon us, and on our children" and upon whom "let there come all the righteous blood that has been shed upon the earth". They are also called "cunning" men, who by their cunning always attacked the Saviour and the righteous. These, therefore, he desires should not live out half their days. For when, after rejecting the day which was made to bring forth the true light, they set up for themselves another day of illumination through false teachings, it is not fit that they should complete their days. He prays therefore that they should not finish half their days, that illuminated by the sun of justice, they may come to the day of the Lord.
Didymus, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. Thomas Harry Dallianis (Massachusetts: HCHC, 2003), §48.	Before 381	On the judgement and salvation of Israel.	You might be willing to apply this passage in regard to the Jews who crucified the Lord the Saviour and therefore grieved the Holy Spirit. In reference to this passage, we can understand it this way: They were handed over to the Romans is when the wrath of God came upon them in the end. Throughout the entire world in every country they wander as exiles away from their homeland in foreign lands no longer possessing their ancient city nor their own country. They received in due course precisely what they had done to their prophets and their Saviour. Because they were so insanely mad, they were bloodthirsty and seized the prophets who had been sent to them and stoned them. They did not stop there. They reached the heights of their unbelief by betraying the Lord their Saviour, who came down to be with them on this earth and then had Him crucified. This is why they were expelled from the city which had been stained by the blood of the prophets and Christ… Yet, the One they fought so hard against is kind and compassionate, he freely grants them the opportunity to change their mind about Him, if they want to change for the better. Therefore, it is said, Then His people remembered the days of

			old. He remembered in the future when it was the right time to disclose to them, then allowed the full number of the Gentiles to enter, then all Israel (that is those who had made themselves worthy to be in this) will be saved. Without giving any real thought about what they were doing, they killed the One who been sent on their behalf saying: “His blood shall be on us and on our children!” (Matt 27.25)
Ambrosiaster, *Questions on the Old and New Testaments*, trans. John Litteral (South Carolina: CreateSpace, 2018), 98.	c. 366-384	Commentary on John 8 when Jesus accuses his Jewish interlocutors of having the devil as their father.	The devil, envious of the man whom God had created in his image, put the height of his wickedness by giving the example of error and falsehood. Cain follows this path of lying when God asks him, "Where is your brother Abel?” (Gen. 4:9) Full of his father's mischief, he does not hesitate to immediately make this lying answer: "I do not know.” He pretends to not know where he is of whom he had just taken the life of; cruelty blinded him to make him answer to God as to a man to whom he hoped to hide his crime. Now the Jews became his imitators, and put to death the Lord himself; they preferred to have Cain's fratricide father as God, thus rendering themselves guilty of all the blood that had been shed. In putting to death the source of life, they became the perpetrators of the crime in all its extent, and made the responsibility fall upon their children, when they shouted, "May his blood be upon us and our children.” (Matt. 27:25) To persuade Pilate that they did not ask him for anything wrong, they consented that this action, if it was unfair, would fall upon their children; With this burning desire to satisfy their fury, they do not even think of sparing their children.
Apostolic Constitutions 5:3.19, trans. James Donaldson (*ANF* 7), 986.	c. 375-380	Fasting and prayer guidelines, especially for Israel to convert.	Wherefore we exhort you to fast on those days, as we also fasted till the evening, when He was taken away from us; but on the rest of the days, before the day of the preparation, let everyone eat at the ninth hour, or at the evening, or as everyone is able. But from the even of the fifth day till cock-crowing break your fast when it is daybreak of the first day of the week, which is the Lord’s day. From the even till cock-crowing keep awake, and assemble together in the church, watch and pray, and entreat God; reading, when you sit up all night, the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms, until cock-crowing, and baptising your catechumens, and reading the Gospel with fear and trembling, and speaking to the people such things as tend to their salvation: put an end to your sorrow, and beseech God that Israel may be converted, and that He will allow them place of repentance, and the remission of their impiety; for the judge, who was a stranger, “washed his hands, and said, I am innocent

			of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. But Israel cried out, His blood be on us, and on our children."
John Chrysostom, *Discourses Against Judaising Christians* 1:5 and 6:1, trans. Paul W. Harkins (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1979), 18-19, 149.	c. 386-387	Warnings against associating, especially religiously, with Jewish people. In praise of the martyrs.	Consider, then, with whom they are sharing their fasts. It is with those who shouted: "Crucify him, Crucify him," with those who said: "His blood be upon us and upon our children." If some men had been caught in rebellion against their ruler and were condemned, would you have dared to go up to them and to speak with them? I think not. Is it not foolish, then, to show such readiness to flee from those who have sinned against a man, but to enter into fellowship with those who have committed outrages against God himself? Is it not strange that those who worship the Crucified keep common festival with those who crucified him? Is it not a sign of folly and the worst madness? Therefore, they [the martyrs] will find this topic more desirable than any panegyric of mine which, as I said before, will bring no increase to their personal glory. But it could be that they will derive great pleasure from my conflict with the Jews; they might well listen most intently to a discourse given for God's glory. For the martyrs have a special hatred for the Jews since the Jews crucified him for whom they have a special love. The Jews said: "His blood be on us and on our children"; the martyrs poured out their own blood for him whom the Jews had slain. So the martyrs would be glad to hear this discourse.
John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Gospel of Matthew* 86 and 87, trans. George Prevost (*NPNF* 1/10), 513-516.	c. 386-388	Commentary on Matthew 27 and the scene before Pilate.	What then did they? When they saw the judge washing his hands, and saying, "I am innocent," they cried out "His blood be on us, and on our children." Then at length when they had given sentence against themselves, he yielded that all should be done. See here too their great madness. For passion and wicked desire are like this. They suffer not men to see anything of what is right. For be it that ye curse yourselves; why do you draw down the curse upon your children also? Nevertheless, the lover of man, though they acted with so much madness, both against themselves, and against their children, so far from confirming their sentence upon their children, confirmed it not even on them, but from the one and from the other received those that repented, and counts them worthy of good things beyond number. For indeed even Paul was of them, and the thousands that believed in Jerusalem; for, "thou seest it is said, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe." And if some continued *in their sin*, to themselves let them impute their punishment.

			For the things that were done go beyond all language. For as though they were afraid lest they should seem to fall short at all in the crime, having killed the prophets with their own hands, but this man with the sentence of a judge, so they do in every deed; and make it the work of their own hands, and condemn and sentence both among themselves and before Pilate, saying, "His blood be on us and on our children," and insult Him, and do despite unto Him themselves, binding Him, leading Him away, and render themselves authors of the spiteful acts done by the soldiers, and nail Him to the cross, and revile Him, and spit at Him, and deride Him. For Pilate contributed nothing in this matter, but they themselves did everything, becoming accusers, and judges, and executioners, and all.
John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles* 4, trans. J. Walker, J. Sheppard and H. Browne (*NPNF* 1/11), 59.	c. 386-403	Relating the story in Acts 5 of Peter and John brought before the Jewish council after their arrest.	Observe here, the writer has no intention of flattering them. For he does not say that they pronounced any opinion: but what? "Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded." And well they might be; for they supposed the matter was now coming to an issue against them, on account of the outrage committed against Christ. Conscience also agitated their souls, the very blood being yet upon their hands, and everything alarmed them.
John Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Start of Acts* 1-4, trans. Roger Pearse, PG 51 (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1862), 110-111.	c. 388	Commentary on the story in Acts 5 of Peter and John brought before the Jewish council after their arrest.	They say, "Are you trying to lay on us the blame for this man's blood?" Well if he was just a man, why are you worried about his blood? You killed many of the prophets, and cut the throats of many of the just, O Jews, nor did you shrink from the blood of any of them. So why do you shrink now? Truly the crucified frightened them, and they could not hide their fear… Indeed, until they crucified him, they shouted saying, "His blood be on us and on our children"; so they despised his blood. But after his passion, when they saw the brightness of his power, they were afraid, and worried, they said, "Are you trying to blame us for this man's blood?" But if he was a deceiver, and an enemy of God, as you say, O wicked Jews, why are you afraid of his blood?
John Chrysostom, *Homily Delivered in the Church of Saint Anastasia*, trans. Roger Pearse, PG 63 (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1862), 493-500.	c. 398-400	Discussion of how persecution and troubles confirm the gospel, using Acts 5 as a particular example.	The Jews, who, brought up in the blood of the prophets, were a furious people and drawn to madness, who had destroyed the altars, who had killed the prophets, who were trained in massacres, who were fiercer than wild beasts, who were still shedding the Lord's blood, who had crucified him… [T]hey were uncertain in what way to act with them, and said, "What shall we do with these men?" Do you see how great a matter is virtue? In what way, temptations are the confirmation of the

			gospel? They said to them, "Did we not firmly command you not to speak in this name? Do you wish to bring upon us the blood of this man?" But if He is just a man, why do you worry? But if He is God, why don't you worship Him? Can it be that you were recently shouting, "His blood be upon us and our children?" (Matt. 27:25) For what reason do you fear blood? Because you recently lost your mind? Didn't you tie him up? Didn't you flog him? Didn't you crucify him.
Ambrose, *Letters* 51 and 75, trans. Mary Melchior Beyenka (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1954), 275, 426.	After 386	Letter to Irenaeus, on the influence of the devil in people. Letter to Horontianus, on final salvation.	The partridge, which derives its name from perdition, is called Satan; in Latin, the Devil. He spoke first in Eve, he spoke in Cain, he spoke in Pharaoh, in Dathan, Abiron, and Core. He spoke in the Jews when they asked that gods be made for them while Moses was receiving the Law. He spoke again when they said of the Saviour: "Let him be crucified, let him be crucified"; and "His blood be on us and on our children." He spoke when they wanted Him to be made king so that they might not walk with the Lord God their king. He spoke in every vain and wicked man. Although the heavenly creatures, who imitate Him, may groan because they are subject to the vanity of this world, they console themselves in the thought that they will be set free from the slavery of corruption into the liberty of glory, at the coming of the adoption of the sons of God, the redemption of all: "When the fullness of the Gentiles comes, then will all Israel be saved." Will He not forgive those people, He who forgave His persecutor who had said: "Crucify him! Crucify him!" and "His blood be on us and on our children"? But, because even the heavenly creation is subject to vanity, in hope the devotion to truth and the redemption of all will allow even their treachery and intoxication to arrive at pardon, since creation was brought low by the vanity of this world.
Gregory of Elvira, *Origen's Tractates on the Books of Holy Scripture* 3 and 9, in Jean Danielou, *From Shadows to Reality: Studies in the Biblical Typology of the Fathers* (London: Burns & Oates, 1960) (my translation).	Before 392	Commentaries on the Christ's Passion.	tract.3: Denique sic et in passione domini idem populus ut collum matris grauaret clamauit: sanguis eius super nos et super filios nostros. Finally, so in the Lord's Passion these same people, a burden to their mother's neck, cried and said: His blood be upon us and upon our children! tract.9: …quibus eum confixerunt, amara azima ab ipsis semper edenda, amara uerba, quibus clammabant: sanguis eius super nos et super filios nostros, amarus iudas scariotes, quem mercede

			conduxerunt, amarae spinae, quibus caput eius ad deludendum coronarunt, amarae manus, quibus domini sanguinem effuderunt. …it is bitter food for you in future; it is bitter words with which you clamoured: His blood be upon us and upon our children; in bitterness, Judas Iscariot, whom you hired, to kill; bitterness, by which you mocked, crowned, and death on your hands which poured out the blood of the Lord.
Augustine, *Expositions on the Book of Psalms* 17, 59 and 64, trans. J.E. Tweed (*NPNF* 1/8), 111-112, 479-480, 534.	c. 392-418	Commentary on various psalms.	"Deliver My soul from the ungodly." Deliver My soul, by restoring Me after the death, which the ungodly have inflicted on Me. "Thy weapon: from the enemies of Thine hand." For My soul is Thy weapon, which Thy hand, that is, Thy eternal Power, hath taken to subdue thereby the kingdoms of iniquity, and divide the righteous from the ungodly. This weapon then "deliver from the enemies of Thine hand," that is, of Thy Power, that is, from Mine enemies. "Destroy them, O Lord, from off the earth, scatter them in their life." O Lord, destroy them from off the earth, which they inhabit, scatter them throughout the world in this life, which only they think their life, who despair of life eternal. "And by Thy hidden things their belly hath been filled." Now not only this visible punishment shall overtake them, but also their memory hath been filled with sins, which as darkness are hidden from the light of Thy truth, that they should forget God. "They have been filled with swine's flesh." They have been filled with uncleanness, treading under foot the pearls of God's words. "And they have left the rest to their babes:" crying out, "This sin be upon us and upon our children." "Deliver me from men working iniquity, and from men of bloods, save Thou me." They indeed were men of bloods, who slew the Just One, in whom no guilt they found: they were men of bloods, because when the foreigner washed his hands, and would have let go Christ, they cried, "Crucify, Crucify:" they were men of bloods, on whom when there was being charged the crime of the blood of Christ, they made answer, giving it to their posterity to drink, "His blood be upon us and upon our sons." But neither against His Body did men of bloods cease to rise up; for even after the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ, the Church suffered persecutions, and she indeed first that grew out of the Jewish people, of which also our Apostles were.

			Let us see in what manner “they have confirmed to themselves malignant discourse.” “Your King shall I crucify?” They said, “We have no king but Cæsar alone.” He was offering for King the Son of God: to a man they betook themselves: worthy were they to have the one, and not have the Other. “I find not anything in this Man,” saith the judge, “wherefore He is worthy of death.” And they that “confirmed malignant discourse,” said, “His blood be upon us and upon our sons.” “They confirmed malignant discourse,” not to the Lord, but to “themselves.” For how not to themselves when they say, “Upon us and upon our sons”? That which therefore they confirmed, to themselves they confirmed: because the same voice is elsewhere, “They dug before my face a ditch, and fell into it.” Death killed not the Lord, but He death: but them iniquity killed, because they would not kill iniquity.… The Psalm then continueth: “His delight was in cursing, and it shall happen to him." Although Judas loved cursing, both in stealing from the money bag, and selling and betraying the Lord: nevertheless, that people more openly loved cursing, when they said, “His blood be on us, and on our children." “He loved not blessing, therefore it shall be far from him.” Such was Judas indeed, since he loved not Christ, in whom is everlasting blessing; but the Jewish people still more decidedly refused blessing, unto whom he who had been enlightened by the Lord said, “Will ye also be His disciples?”
Augustine, *The Harmony of the Gospels* 3, trans. Stewart D.F. Salmond (*NPNF* 1/6), 433-434.	400	Part of a harmonisation of the Passion narrative.	Pilate saith unto them, what shall I do then with Jesus who is called Christ? They all say, let him be crucified. The governor said to them, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person; see ye to it. Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children. Then released he Barabbas unto them; and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him to them to be crucified. These are the things which Matthew has reported to have been done to the Lord by Pilate.
Augustine, *Letters of Petilian, the Donatist* 2, trans. J.R. King (*NPNF* 1/4), 1141-1142.	400	Accusation towards the Donatists of urging the punishment of some Christians.	Nor indeed is your mode of urging on kings different from that by which the subtle persuasion of women has often urged kings on to guilt. For the wife of Herod earned and obtained the boon by means of her daughter, that the head of John should be brought to table in a charger. Similarly the Jews

			forced on Pontius Pilate that he should crucify the Lord Jesus, whose blood Pilate prayed might remain in vengeance upon them and on their children. So therefore you also overwhelm yourselves with our blood by your sin.
Augustine, *Sermons* 229F and 234, in *The Works of Saint Augustine: A Translation for the 21st Century, Part III – Sermons, Volume 7*, trans. Edmund Hill (New Rochelle: New York City Press, 1993), 285, 38.	After 418	Discussion of the gift of faith to some but not all and the resurrection appearances of Jesus. How the faith of Christians is distinguished by belief in the resurrection of Jesus.	That the Lord Jesus, though, declined to appear to the Jews is because he did not judge them worthy to see the Lord Christ after the resurrection; he showed himself to his own people, not to strangers. And while his own people were preaching, strangers came to believe; and those who had been strangers became his own. I mean, many of those, as you can read in the Acts of the Apostles; many of those who crucified the Lord, who defiled themselves by shedding his blood; many of those who said, *His blood be upon us and upon our children*… later on came to believe the apostles bringing them the good news of the resurrection. His blood was indeed upon them, but it was to wash them, not to destroy them; well, upon some to destroy them, upon others to cleanse them; upon those to be destroyed, in justice; upon those to be cleansed, in mercy. Here you are, I've said that this faith, by which we believe that Christ Jesus has risen from the dead, is what distinguishes us from the pagans. Ask a pagan whether Christ was crucified, and he exclaims, "Oh, sure"; whether he has risen again: he denies it. Ask a Jew whether Christ was crucified, he confesses the crime of his ancestors; he confesses the crime in which he also has a share. You see, he drinks what his ancestors poured out for him: His blood be upon us and upon our children… But ask him whether he rose again from the dead – he will deny it, will ridicule the idea, make accusations.
The Passing of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Second Latin Form, trans. Alexander Walker (*ANF* 8), 12.	c. 400	A leader of the Jews implores Peter for salvation when miracles are witnessed at Mary's death.	To this he replied: Do we not believe? But what shall we do? The enemy of the human race has blinded our hearts, and confusion has covered our face, lest we should confess the great things of God, especially when we ourselves uttered maledictions against Christ, shouting: His blood be upon us, and upon our children. Then Peter said: Behold, this malediction will hurt him who has remained unfaithful to Him; but to those who turn themselves to God mercy is not denied. And he said: I believe all that thou sayest to me; only I implore, have mercy upon me, lest I die.
Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew* 4, trans. Thomas P. Sheck (Washington: Catholic	398	Verse by verse commentary on Matthew's Passion.	This imprecation upon the Jews continues until the present day. The Lord's blood will not be removed from them. This is why it says through Isaiah: "If you wash your hands before me, I will not listen; for your hands are full of blood." The Jews have left the best

University of America Press, 2008), 313.			heritage to their children, saying: “His blood be upon us and upon our children.”
Jerome, *Commentary on Daniel* 9, trans. Gleason L. Archer (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 1958), 547.	c. 407	Discussion of the end of temple sacrifices and Daniel’s “weeks”.	And then, after our Lord's passion, the sacrifice and offering ceased in the middle of the week. For whatever took place in the temple after that date was not a valid sacrifice to God but a mere worship of the devil, while they all cried out together, "His blood be upon us and upon our children"; and again, "We have no king but Caesar."
Jerome, “Letter 12,” in *Saint Jerome Letters Volume 7: 121-130*, trans. Jerome Labourt (Paris: The Beautiful Letters, 1961), 165.	414	To Dardanus, on the status of the promised land for believers.	Why has the so clement God, who has never forgotten you, now after such a long space of time, not been moved by your misfortunes to free you from your captivity – or, to speak more exactly, to send to you the Antichrist you are waiting for? For what enormous crime, I say, and for what execrable crime does he turn his eyes away from you? Don’t you know? Remember the cry of your fathers: “His blood be on us and on our children”; and “Come, let us kill him and the inheritance will belong to us”; and again: “We have no king but Caesar. “You got what you chose: until the end of the world you will serve Caesar, “until all the Gentiles be come, then Israel as a whole will be saved “, so that the which formerly was first will be last.
Jerome, *Commentary on Jeremiah* 6, 17 and 18, trans. Michael Graves (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 46, 104, 116.	After 415	Commentary on various chapters in Jeremiah.	We see that everything the Lord threatened against this people has been fulfilled. For daily they are devastated by their blasphemies; there is nothing of strength in them, but everyone among them is weak. Sons follow the blasphemies of their fathers, and every day they receive this curse: “His blood be on us and on our children!” And not only they but also their “neighbours and friends” - all who follow the law and the prophets according to the letter that kills and not according to the Spirit that gives life - all of them perish equally, because all have sinned equally. But the indelible sin of Judah, which, as I might say, has no reason to be abolished, is written with an iron pen with an adamant point, which in Hebrew is called… and it lasts because it is inscribed, for eternity. For they themselves said, “His blood be upon us and upon our children”. Which is why it is written or inscribed on the horns of the altars, or their altars, so that the sacrilegious work should be held in memory forever. It was as a type of the Saviour that Jeremiah endured all of this at the hands of the Jewish people, who later were destroyed when the Babylonians came. But it was fulfilled more fully and more perfectly in Christ, when the city was overthrown and the people were

			massacred by the Roman sword, not because of idolatry (which was not a problem at that time), but because they killed the Son of God, when all the people cried out together: "Away, away with such a one! We have no king but Caesar!" And the curse of eternal damnation against them was fulfilled: "His blood be on us and on our children!" For they had dug a pit for Christ and said, "Let us remove him from the land of the living!"
Cyril of Alexandria, *Festal Letters* 10, trans. Philip R. Amidon (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2002), 193.	After 412	Commentary on the Jewish people and their hard-heartedness.	But why extend my discourse about matters so plain to view? For everyone knows the audacious deeds of the irreligious Jews. The wretches handed over for crucifixion the Master of all, inscribing the charge of impiety upon their own heads, and upon the whole race. For in their madness they dared to say, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." Not only that, but, looking at him nailed to the precious cross, they had the supreme insolence to deride him, and were persuaded by their own father, I mean Satan, to say, "If you are God's Son, come down now from the cross, and we will believe you."
Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Psalms* 3, trans. Roger Pearse, PG 69 (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1863) (likely apocryphal).	After 412	Interpreting God's judgement upon sinful humans and demons.	The expression "You have shattered the teeth" is said as if of wild beasts, for those who rejoice in sin are commonly bloodthirsty and grind their teeth at the good reputation of the saints. It is a custom of the inspired scripture to compare with beasts men who plan to abuse others. And so it is said, "You have shattered the teeth" about all those whom you have ground down with power; taking a metaphor from the beasts who carry things away in their teeth, they are really contemptible and stupid. But also the Saviour said to his Father, "You have struck Herod the infant-killer, who was angry with me without cause; you will also strike the Jews, handing them over to the Romans, and you will shatter their teeth, because they said, "We have no king" and "His blood be upon us". The demons also have been struck by the Lord, because without being harmed by us, they lie in wait for us out of malice.
Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch Volumes 1 and 2*, trans. Nicholas P. Lunn (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2019).	Before 428	Reflections upon passages in Genesis and Deuteronomy.	The same thing happened to the Israelites, to whom it was spoken by the voice of the prophet, "When you stretch out your hands to me, I will turn my eyes away from you; and if you multiply your prayers, I will not hear you. For your hands are full of blood." For they killed the Lord of all, and in their extreme impiety dared to say, "His blood be upon us and our children." The blood of Abel cried out only against his single killer. But the precious blood of Christ cried out so greatly against the cruelty and inhumanity of the Jews, for he freed the world from sin, for he was poured out for it.

			You understand that some were freed by their own covenant from the accusation of shedding blood through the [sacrifice of a] calf, which represents Emmanuel. For it is right, I think, that they, when they justify themselves, speak thus: "Our hands have not shed this blood." Of course, you will discover that the people of the Jews never said this, but in fact instead, after sacrificing the calf, they dared to say further, "Our hands have shed this blood." This is the same as what they ignorantly said concerning Christ, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." For the baptised are cleansed through his death: for this, I think, is because the hands may be cleansed by him. Obviously by confessing that they are partakers in the impiety of the Jews, they obtain remission. For the Jews, maddened against Christ, brought condemnation on their own heads, saying, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." But they were hoping for grace from him, and they sought the cleansing of holy baptism, by which they understood that he would honour them, did not say so much, saying, "Our hands did not shed this blood." In Christ, therefore, there is purification.
Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on Isaiah Volumes 1 and 3*, trans. Robert C. Hill (Brookline: Holy Cross Press, 2008), 48-50, 19-22.	Before 428	Commentaries on Isaiah 1:21 and 40:29-31.	They brought upon their own head the precious blood of Christ, remember, in saying to Pilate, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." They also did away with holy prophets… Grief of a godly kind, you see, brings about repentance that leads to salvation which requires no repenting, or brings grief to those who crucified Jesus, and even perhaps rejoiced in it (the leaders of the Jews were so disposed, remember, and all who were so presumptuous as to say, "His blood be upon us and upon our children"), causing them to be involved in the misfortunes and evils of war.
Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Twelve Prophets*, trans. Robert C. Hill (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2012), 51, 124, 216.	Before 428	Commentaries on Zephaniah 3 and Zechariah 3 and 11.	Though in fact the synagogue of the Jews had raged against Christ the Saviour of all, and had turned murderer of the Lord, and of it he requires an account, yet not all perished; the remnant was preserved and the survivors saved, a great number of them coming to faith. These were the gentle, not venting on Christ their rage like a bull, like of course those who at that time brought him before Pilate, crying out in the words, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him," and adding to this the cry, "If you do not kill him, you are no friend of Caesar's." In fact, what could be more cruel than such people, and more fierce than their anger? They brought innocent

			blood upon their own heads in saying without a thought, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." So, the people who had no share in their savagery were gentle, therefore, and likewise lowly in their subjection to Christ… God was still tolerant, however; the victims were servants and fellow slaves of those who committed the murders. Since in their unrestrained assaults they went to extremes, and contemplated such an unholy outrage as audaciously to do violence to the Son himself, and fell into the pit by crucifixion, he no longer forgave their unbridled sin. He sought out the offenders and submitted them to punishment, decreeing the destruction of the whole of Judea on one day when they paraded him before Pilate and cried, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." Even if the effects of divine wrath did not immediately befall them, even if the penalty was not sought without delay, nevertheless the just sentence from God took effect on them, destruction gripping the land of the Jews, as I said. Now, the Jews, miserable though they were and needing to voice their criticism of the hired shepherds, did not do so; rather, the good shepherd, who laid down his own life as a ransom for all, they abused in countless ways, stoned, reproached, and in the end opened their mouth wide against him, crying out along with their leaders in demanding from Pilate, "Away with him, away with him, crucify him," and actually bringing down his righteous blood on their own heads in the words, "His blood be upon us and upon our children."
Maximinus the Arian, *Against the Jews* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2010) (my translation).	c. 427	Discussion of Christ's blood with respect to the gospel and salvation.	De quo iam tunc in lege fuerat scriptum quod in sancto Evangelio completum esse dignoscitur, quando clamabatis dicentes: sanguis eius super nos et super filios nostros. Sed nobis haec salubriter competit dicere: sanguis eius super nos et super filios nostros, vobis ad condemnationem, nobis vero ad salutem… Which has already been written in the law when the holy Gospel was fulfilled and recognised, when you [the Jewish people] were shouting, saying: "His blood be on us and on our children." But for us it is salvific to say: "His blood be on us and on our children;" for you condemnation but for us salvation…
Peter Chrysologus, Sermons 72A and 76, in *Selected Sermons,*	c. 430-450	Sermons on Christ's Passion	The Lord kept warning his disciples of these things time and time again, placing them before their eyes, and, as it were, setting up the arena for his Passion

trans. William B. Palardy (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 3, 24.		and Resurrection.	and leading them into it. He was signifying that there would be as many kinds of abuse as there would be kinds of wild beasts; that there would be as many spectators as persecutors, who, in seeking not a victory from the conflict, but only an assent to the death of the Victor, would shout: "Crucify, crucify." They would go so far as to lift up their savage eyes and their lethal voices to heaven, or rather against heaven, until in their cruel feeding frenzy by contending with holy blood they would smear themselves and their posterity and wallow in that blood, as they yell: "His blood be upon us and upon our children." Among the Jews: but not among the Christians? Jew, what you were trying to conceal in Judea with gold, has shone and radiated throughout the whole world by faith. The disciples received Christ, they did not steal him; you have procured unbelief, but you have not stolen the truth. O Jew, Christ has risen, and you have lost your money. "His blood be on us and on our children." O Jew, Christ is alive, but you have killed yourself and your descendants.
Theodoret, *Commentary on the Psalms*, trans. Robert C. Hill (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 2000), 338-340.	Before 436	Commentary on Psalm 59: 7, 10.	Then he teaches more clearly the cause of the punishment. Lo, with their own mouth they will speak out, and a sword on their lips, saying, Who has heard? (v. 7). With their tongue they cause slaughter, he is saying, giving forth their words like some dagger and sword, and events bear out their words. They crucified their Lord with their tongue, crying aloud, "Away, away with him, crucify him! His blood be on us and on our children!" They put their words into action with the aid of Pilate's troops, and nailed the Saviour to the gibbet. This also concurs with what was said before: above he had said, Lo, with their own mouth they will speak out, and a sword on their lips, and here in turn he accuses them of a sin of the mouth, a word of the lips, teaching us in every case that they will pay a penalty for that statement which they uttered in concert, undermining Pilate's just verdict. While he intended, in fact, to release him as an innocent man, they cried aloud, "Away, away with him! Crucify him! His blood be on us and on our children." Symmachus, on the other hand, rendered this more clearly: instead of, Scatter them in your power, he said, "Drive them out in your power and destroy them, O Lord, our protector, in the sin of their mouths, the word of their lips."

Theodoret, *Commentary on Isaiah*, trans. August Möhle (Berlin: Mitteilungen Des Septuaginta-Unternehmens Der Koöniglichen Gesellschaft Der Wissenschaften Zu Göttingen, 1932).	c. 441-448	Commentary on Isaiah 1, 4-5.	They [Jews] are not accused of worshipping idols, nor of committing adultery, nor of giving into greed, but of staining themselves with a murder: more difficult to support than any impiety or every iniquity was their act of folly against the Lord. In fact, to them belongs the saying, “His blood be upon us and our children”. This blood has deprived them of the blessings of others, it has made them the accursed of the world. All the same in His goodness He has given them a glimpse of the way of salvation, saying: “Wash and be clean.” Again he [Isaiah] refers to blood and purification. By “blood” he means that which they brought on themselves and their children by crying, “His blood be on us and our children.” By “purification” he predicts that which produces the bath of regeneration. However, this done, he says, “by a spirit of judgement and a spirit of fire.” because as gold is purified by being dipped in fire, those who receive baptism lay down the poison of their sins. Then he explains clearly the harvest and the thorns: And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress. This passage allows us to recognise clearly that it is because they exercised their madness against the saviour that they were stripped of the divine grace. It is by the “cries” that this madness is visible. But the narrative of the holy gospels teaches precisely that they shouted as loudly as possible in turn with cries of “Put him to death! To death!” crucify him!” and “His blood be upon us and our children!”
Leo the Great, Sermons 35, 53 and 62, in *Sermons*, trans. Jane Patricia Freeland and Agnes Josephine Conway (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1996), 152, 231, 271.	After 440	Exhortations to Jews to repent and discussion of Christ’s forgiveness.	Come to your senses, Jew, come to your senses at last. Abandon your infidelity and convert to the Redeemer who redeemed you as well. Do not fear the enormity of your crime, for "he calls not the virtuous but sinners,” nor will he who prayed for you when he was crucified reject you because of your [past] godlessness. Cancel the harsh sentence of your cruel ancestors. Do not allow yourselves to be bound by the curse of those who shouted concerning Christ, “His blood be upon us and upon our children,” and in so doing poured over onto you the guilt for their crime. Heaven and earth passed sentence against you, Jews, as the sun withdrew its service of giving daylight, and the laws of nature denied you their function. When the service of creation departs from its laws, it is your

			blindness and your confusion that have been signified. When you said, “His blood be upon us and upon our children,” you received what was coming to you. That which the faithless part of your race has lost, the believing “fullness of the nations” would attain. So great was the movement of his love for his murderers, that from the cross he prayed the Father not to avenge him, but to pardon them, saying, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Such was the power of his prayer that the preaching of Peter the apostle turned to repentance the hearts of many from among those who said: “His blood be upon us and upon our children.” In a single day “almost three thousand Jews “were baptised,” and all were made “one in heart and soul,” prepared now to die for him, the one for whom they had demanded crucifixion.
Pseudo-Athanasius, *Expositions on the Psalms*, trans. Roger Pearse, PG 27 (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1857).	c. 440-500	Commentary on Psalm 89.	You have not passed over, he says, our iniquities, since we have called them down ourselves on our own heads, because we said, “His blood be upon us and upon our children,” “May our age be in the light of your face.” It is as if to say, “Our life and its works seem evil in your sight. There is nothing that you do not know about the acts in us, from the beginning to the end.”
Quodvultdeus, *Book of the Promises and Predictions of God* 1, ed. René Braun (Paris: Cerf, 1964).	c. 445-451	Discussion of Joseph as a type of Jesus.	Here’s what our Joseph, Jesus Christ, likewise said through the medium of Peter to his persecutors, “You have denied the Holy and Righteous One, and you have killed the prince of eternal life.” Joseph’s brothers repented of what they had done. To them also it is said, “Repent.” Joseph’s brothers say, “We are in sin, because of what we did to our brother,” and Reuben replied, “Did I not tell you not to harm the child? But you didn’t listen to me. And here you are, being asked for an account of his blood.” Likewise, the Jews who had said to Pilate, “His blood be upon us and upon our children,” say to the apostles, “What should we do? Brothers, tell us.”
Procopius of Gaza, *Commentary on Isaiah the Prophet*, trans. Roger Pearse, PG 87 (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1863).	After 490	Commentary on Isaiah.	And it [Jerusalem] is called a prostitute, on account of the fornications of the inhabitants; whom likewise he calls murderers. For finally after shedding the blood of Christ, they are bold enough to say, “His blood be upon us.” But, indeed, they had not even spared the prophets themselves previously. The law itself shows the weakness of man, not justifying them but condemning them, whom Christ has justified by grace. For He is the one who, although he does not hunger, grants spiritual power

			to those who hunger after justice. And he makes the destitute, drowned in feeling grief, understand the vindication of the sinners. For he is used to the grief that leads to salvation, which is according to God, so that penitence may be done in a way requiring least penitence; in fact he even understands the grief, which those who shouted "His blood be upon us and our children" felt at the capture of the city [Jerusalem]. By whom, so to speak from little beginnings of wickedness, they [Jews] went on to the murder of Christ the Saviour, which especially in this place it is reasonable to include. For although from the blood of the Saviour their hands were unpolluted, they were not at all free from blame; those who demanded that blame for his blood be placed upon themselves and their children; those who attacked him with abuse, and stirred up the people against him, those who said he was mad, those who said he was a Samaritan, those who said he was born from adultery, those who said he drove out demons by the name of Beelzebub; they never ceased to accuse.
Procopius of Gaza, *Commentary on the Octateuch*, trans. Roger Pearse, PG 87 (Paris: J.P. Migne, 1860).	After 490	Commentaries on the Octateuch.	The rest [of the Jews], so that they are not completely destroyed, have been marked with a sign. The remnant of them are preserved to testify to the truth of scripture. They have gone out also, like Cain, from the sight of God. And the divine power speaks thus to us, saying, "When you multiply your prayers, I will not hear you, for your hands are full of blood." For they killed the Lord and author of life. In addition, they shouted, "His blood be upon us and upon our children." But this sacred blood, shed for us, cries out against the Jews, and according to the eloquence of Paul, better than the blood of Abel. For we can say about them, that they did not make themselves companions in this most awful but necessary murder, as it is read in Deuteronomy, "Our hands are not covered with this blood, nor did our eyes see it." God orders that those who have not committed murder must say these words, washing their hands in the valley above a slaughtered cow: i.e. those who are near the town within whose boundaries the murder was committed and near where the body was found. The others suppose that this cow is a type of Christ. To this statement the Jews emit a contrary statement, clamouring, "His blood be upon us and upon our children."

			And as God illustrated the dignity of the laws of this prophet, he says, “Whoever will not hear what was said in my name by the prophet, I shall lay a penalty on him,” in the same way a penalty was taken from this people on account of the blood which was shed from Abel to Zachariah, and last of all, of Christ himself, whose blood they had blamed on their heads and those of their children, and still they receive the penalty of that impiety. Indeed far away they recede from the impiety of the Jews, in that city in which He was wounded and tortured, found far away by a strong order, they submit however first in a rustic church, and at that instant wash their hands in Christ himself, stained with his blood. And they certainly receive remission of sins, hiding themselves no part of the impiety of the Jews who said, “His blood be upon us and upon our children”. Thereafter, purged by baptism, they say, “Our hands have not shed his blood.” And although they were from the Jews, they have renounced however all community with them.