The Baylor-Mohr Siebeck Studies in Early Christianity series undertook this translation of a monumental synthetic study of ecclesiology in the Gospel of Matthew by notable German scholar Matthias Konradt. The study begins by recognizing that centuries of biblical interpretation have begotten anti-Semitic or anti-Judaic sentiments among Christian communities; most notably, the text of Matthew has been used and abused because of its popular connotation as the most and least “Jewish” of the Gospels. Due to the complex history of Matthew’s reception concerning Jewish-Christian relations, scholars often search the text for clues as to the nascent activity of the “parting of the ways” between Judaism and Christianity. Within this larger conversation, Konradt’s meticulous ecclesiological study of Matthew is founded in the core “paradox” of the two missions—Jesus’s sending of the twelve to the “lost sheep of Israel” in 10:6 and his famous sending to “make disciples of all nations” in 28:19. Konradt mainly builds his arguments against the common model that attempts to reconcile these two seemingly contradictory verses, namely, “a response to the collective rejection that Jesus experienced in Israel” (2). This commonly guised supersessionist approach to Matthew views the Jewish people in a monolithic fashion and places blame upon all (or almost all of) Israel for the death of Jesus. The consequences of such an approach include Israel losing its role in salvation history, as well as becoming the object of God’s eschatological judgment. In his introduction, Konradt sets out to dismantle this so-called replacement thesis and its supersessionist tendencies by examining the multifaceted intersections between Israel, the ministry of Jesus, the gentiles/nations, and the “church.” Whereas earlier scholarship (e.g., Ulrich Luz) have been quick to assume that any resistance to Jesus and his ministry must represent Israel’s full rejection of Jesus, Konradt is cautious so as to acknowledge the nuance of Matthean statements against Jewish figures, as well as Matthean depictions of non-Jews/gentiles. As Konradt concisely summarises his goal for the project:

That task is, namely, to comprehensively analyze Israel’s significance and position in Matthean theology and thereby bring to light the theological conception that lies behind the development from the Israel-oriented, pre-Easter ministry of Jesus and his disciples to the universality of salvation that appears in 28.18–20. (p. 14)
Overall, Konradt has presented a well-researched and formidable study that challenges often-unquestioned theological biases that infiltrate Matthean studies. Each chapter of *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew* centres on a specific ecclesiological question (e.g., the focus of Israel in the ministry of Jesus; Israel and the gentiles; Israel and the church) in order to construct a hermeneutic of Matthew that does not fall into supersessionist assumptions.

In chapter 2, Konradt focuses on the intersection between the Matthean Jesus and the concept of “Israel,” especially through the image of Jesus as (in his terms) the Davidic-Messianic shepherd of Israel. In his reading of the “son of David” Jesus in Matthew, Konradt finds a reversal of the situation of Psalm 2:7—“rather than Jesus the Son of David being adopted as the Son of God, Jesus the Son of God is adopted as the Son of David [by joining Joseph’s family]” (29). In his introductory critiques of the common, supersessionist approach previously described, he notes that the Davidic shepherd Jesus is contrasted with the poor shepherds of Israel, namely, the contemporary Jewish leaders who do not show healing and compassion. In this chapter, Konradt also notes that even though the Matthean Jesus focuses his ministry primarily on Israel, three instances stand out as examples of pre-Easter concern for gentiles (8:5–13, 28–34; 15:21–28). These instances, in his reading, explicitly recognise that Jesus’s intervention occurs before the *kairos*, or appointed time, of gentile inclusion within the boundaries of this ministry. Even in this first chapter, Konradt lays the foundations for key findings from this study, such as the Matthean polemic against Jewish leadership rather than the *ochlos*/crowd, as well as the temporal differentiation and expansion into post-Easter gentile ministry.

Chapter 3 deals with reactions to Jesus and his ministry within Israel, especially concerning the question of negation or supersession between the universalising gentile mission of 28:19 and the mission to the “lost sheep” of 10:6. In these pre-Easter reactions to Jesus, Konradt notes that the *ochlos*/crowd are generally positive figures who recognise Jesus’s mission and identity, whereas the authorities (e.g., Pharisees, Sanhedrin, Herod the Great) are often portrayed as the opposition, as those who fail to follow the socio-ethical commandments of Torah and who often question Jesus’s authority. The most important finding from this chapter is the importance of *authority* within the Matthean polemic, as Konradt elucidates: Jewish authorities are often those who question Jesus specifically due to his authority to forgive sins, heal, and interpret Torah.
The Matthean Jesus is seen as a potential threat to other authoritative figures, such that these figures often engage in verbal duels in order to express their authority (12:1–14; 15:1–9; 19:1–12). As the audience approaches the passion narrative, the Matthean opponents seduce the generally-positive crowd (27:19–20) and encourage the death of Jesus. However, in his consistent denial of generalisations concerning Israel, Konradt notes that the Matthean judgment against Jerusalem does not correspond to the eschatological judgment of Israel, but rather focuses on these seductive and falsely authoritative leaders.

Chapter 4 continues the previous discussion by examining the consequences of these negative reactions to Jesus and his ministry. Konradt opens by explicitly stating that “a differentiation between the crowds and the authorities has repeatedly emerged, as well as a contrast between Jerusalem and the crowds from all over Israel (4:25) that gathered around Jesus in Galilee” (167). Most importantly, Konradt continues to avoid a portrayal of Matthew that simply places Israel against Jesus in a potentially uncritical and anachronistic fashion; rather, these aforementioned dichotomies reveal that the Matthean polemic concerns differences of authority and geography. In order to further this central point in his discussion of three parables (21:28–32, 33–46; 22:1–14), Konradt recognises that “Matt 21.43 does not represent the replacement of the old people of God with a new one” (184). Instead, it is the leadership that are condemned, lose the kingdom of God, and are replaced by new leaders who will bear proper fruit. In this chapter, Konradt also breaks down the generalisations surrounding Jesus’s woes over Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum in 11:16–24. In his interpretation, these three Galilean cities are denounced not simply because they are part of the conception of “Israel,” but because they have seen Jesus’s authority through miracles and failed to become witnesses. Matthean witnesses must understand Jesus through his authoritative deeds and act accordingly, unlike the opposition to Jesus’s authority shown primarily through the Pharisees.

Chapter 5 shifts into a discussion of Israel in relation to the gentiles. Throughout this study, Konradt is intent on emphasising the dual titles of “son of David” and “son of Abraham” in 1:1 as evidence of the eventual Matthean gentile mission. Rather than placing Jesus’s ministry and his disciples’ later work in opposition to Judaism or Israel, Konradt attempts to show that the gentile inclusion is the proper expansion of Jesus’s Jewish mission. Along with the three gentile healings mentioned earlier, Konradt
also notes the universal nature of Jesus’s kingship (and thereby, his authority) by the arrival of the Magi in 2:1. The famous “Great Commission” of Matt 28 reveals that the kairos, or proper time, for the gentile mission arrives with the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus’s identity as the “Son of God” is made clear in the post-Easter extension of salvation and expansion of ministry:

In short, just as the emphasis on Israel’s special position in the history of election is linked with Jesus’s Davidic messiahship, so too has Matthew linked the christologoumenon of divine sonship—centrally oriented around the salvific death and exaltation of the Son of God—with the universality of salvation (310).

This chapter benefits Matthean scholarship through its emphasis on the expansion of salvation history in order to include gentiles, justified from within prophetic tradition (e.g., Isa 56:1–8) so as to incorporate gentiles as gentiles into the universal ecclesia.

Chapter 6 similarly combats previous scholarly approaches that place “Church” and “Israel” as mutually exclusive categories. As evidence for this argument, Konradt turns to the terminology used for these institutions, noting that laos signifies Israel as a “people” and that the ecclesia did not use this phrase, since it rather viewed itself as an “assembly” organised by God (335). In discussing Israel’s position in relation to the church, he again emphasises that expansion might be a more fruitful model than succession or substitution, although Matthew holds a nearly paradoxical tension between Israel’s special location in election history and their soteriological equality to other nations.

Finally, Konradt concludes his analysis of Matthew in chapter 7 with some preliminary thoughts on the Matthean community. He openly supports the major consensus, namely, that the Matthean community interacted with Judaism and that this interaction is relevant for our construction of their circumstances as a post-Temple Christian group. The most pressing issues for this group include Christology, interpretation of Torah, and the role of Jesus as an authority. Konradt considers the commitment of group members (or lack thereof) as well as the role of Matthew’s Gospel as a missionary tool or didactic tool for reifying communal values. As has been evident throughout his study, Konradt adamantly combats scholarly oversimplification of Second Temple Judaism and avoids making any conclusive statements concerning the Matthean population.
In conclusion, *Israel, Church, and the Gentiles in the Gospel of Matthew* is a meticulously researched and provocative challenge to latent anti-Semitism and supersessionist theology within Matthean studies. Konradt uses this book to reinterpret Matthew not as anti-Judaic in a generalised sense, but rather as anti-Pharisaic. The emphasis on the threat of other types of Jewish leadership reveals that the Matthean community saw itself as conflicting with other forms of Jewish authority that disagree over Christ’s role and Torah interpretation. The gentile inclusion as presented in 28:19, in Konradt’s interpretation, does not conflict with or contradict the mission to the “lost sheep of Israel” in 10:6, but rather extends salvation in a fashion that fits within Isaian soteriology. The death and resurrection of Jesus is the catalyst for the appointed time of gentile inclusion. In this reading, Israel’s privilege as the elect people of God is not salvation itself, nor does Israel monopolise salvation; rather, Israel has the role of salvific ministry as a “vehicle of salvation” for the nations. Konradt constructs Jesus as the Davidic shepherd who challenges the authority of contemporary Jewish leaders, such that we readers cannot simply generalise the Matthean characters of Israel, Jerusalem, or the crowds. Konradt’s study should encourage future scholarship to engage the roles of authority and sociopolitical power in Matthew’s Gospel.

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