Matthew 1

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Ancient Literary Context

The evangelists each provide distinctive openings to their Gospels. Matthew's uniquely incorporates a genealogy (Luke locates his at a later point in his Gospel, Luke 3:23–38), while sharing with Luke 1–2 interest in Jesus' origins and early life. Particularly noteworthy is the punctuation of his narrative with 'formula citations' (1:23; 2:6, 15, 18, 23), explaining how the events fulfill

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biblical prophecy. However, Matthew's opening chapters are equally rich in more subtle allusions to Hebrew Bible narratives and heroes.

Early readers are likely to have detected family resemblances with Jewish 'rewritten Bible' (compare, e.g. Josephus' *Antiquities* or Philo's *Life of Moses*), as well as biblical 'annunciation' stories (e.g. Gen 16:7–12; 17:15–16; 18:9–15; Judg 13:3–5). There are also striking parallels with the ancient motif of 'the announcement, persecution, and rescue of the "royal child"' (Luz 2007: 75). The emphasis then would be less on historicity concerning Jesus' early years, than on illuminating his person and work by recalling key figures and events of salvation history. Thus Christ is presented as another Moses, who leads his people from slavery to freedom (1:21), and as the faithful 'Son of God' who relives the experience of God's 'son' Israel (2:15; see Hos 11:1). The genealogy, of the linear, legitimating type (presenting direct paternal descent: Wilson 1975: 180–182), highlights Christ's royal ancestry and Jewish pedigree.

The Interpretations

The wide divergence between Matthew and Luke was noted by early opponents of Christianity (e.g. Porphyry: Wilken 2003: 146). However, it has often been obscured by the Christian penchant for harmonization (e.g. Tatian's *Diatessaron*; Augustine's *Agreement Among the Evangelists*). This is reflected in dramatic and liturgical reception. Thus, in the medieval Coventry Corpus Christi plays, the annunciations to Mary and Joseph are linked by an imaginary dialogue in which Joseph fears Mary's infidelity; Luke's Presentation in the Temple is slotted in between the Matthean visit of the Magi and the Slaughter of the Innocents (Block 1922). In the western Christian calendar, Luke's adoration of the shepherds on Christmas Day is followed by the appearance of the Magi 12 days later, on 6 January (Epiphany). Thus the difficulties are smoothed over by positing a longer time-frame (though not completely resolved: locating Luke's Presentation in the Temple on 2 February is hard to reconcile with Matthew's urgent Flight into Egypt following the Magi's visit).

Visual artists have sometimes been better at keeping the two Nativity narratives apart. Matthew's Adoration of the Magi is a favorite subject, from which the Lucan shepherds are regularly absent (e.g. Gentile da Fabriano, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1423; Uffizi, Florence), or present only as marginal figures (e.g. Domenico Ghirlandaio, *Adoration of the Magi*, 1485–1488; Ospedale degli Innocenti, Florence). For modern scholarship, the differences between the two Infancy Narratives is often appealed to in support of the Two-Source Theory (i.e. that Matthew and Luke independently drew upon Mark and the Sayings Source 'Q'). Q skeptics, by contrast, highlight their similarities: e.g. virginal

conception; birth in Bethlehem; association of the Holy Family with Nazareth. The textual differences reflect divergent theological concerns, Luke being a 'critic of Matthew' (Franklin 1994: 353–364).

The Title (1:1)

The incipit of Matthew's Gospel reworks Mark's 'beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ the Son of God' (Mark 1:1). Recalling the first book of Moses, his is the 'book of genesis (*biblos geneseos*) of Jesus Christ,' evoking Genesis 2:4 and 5:1. *Genesis* here is ambiguous. Scholars debate whether it introduces the genealogy (1:2–17: e.g. Nolland 1996), the 'birth narrative' (Matt 1–2), the Gospel's longer prologue (1:1–4:16: Krentz 1964), or the whole Gospel (e.g. Kingsbury 1976: 9–11; Luz 2007: 69). The lack of a main verb strengthens the latter view, and *liber generationis* has often served as an alternative title for the Gospel in Latin commentators (e.g. the ninth-century Benedictine Christian of Stavelot). For the Dominican theologian Thomas Aquinas, the parallels with Genesis 5:1 ('This is the book of the generation of Adam') is a reminder that 'as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive' (1 Cor 15:22).

Matthew's initial identification of his Gospel's protagonist neglects Jesus' divine sonship, despite Matthew's preference for the title 'Son of God' elsewhere (2:15; 3:17; 4:3, 6; 8:29; 14:33; 16:16; 17:5; 26:63; 27:40, 54; 28:19). Rather, Jesus is introduced as 'Son of David' and 'Son of Abraham' (out of chronological sequence, pointing to David's higher rank as king, according to the fifth-century *Opus Imperfectum*). This emphasis on Christ's human descent is appropriate for an evangelist symbolized by the living creature with the human face (so Jerome; see Ezek 1:5, 10; Rev 4:7).

'Son of David' emphasizes Christ's royal messianic status (e.g. 2 Sam 7:14; *Pss. Sol.* 17:21; *b. Sanh.* 97a–98a), and will recur in relation to Jesus' healing ministry (9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30, 31; see Duling 1975; Heil 1993; Willitts 2007). The meaning of 'Son of Abraham' is more ambiguous. This title could emphasize Jesus' Jewish pedigree. However, many (e.g. Chromatius of Aquileia; Theophylact; Juan de Valdés) have found a reference to Abraham the 'father of many nations' (Gen 17:4–5; 22:18; Rom 4:18; Gal 3:8), prefiguring the 'Great Commission' (28:19).

Alternatively, according to the twelfth-century Benedictine exegete Rupert of Deutz, the two titles point to Christ's dual role as king (David) and priest (Abraham, recalling his sacrifice of Isaac in Gen 22; Rupert of Deutz 1979: 7). Aquinas concurs, adding that Abraham was prophet (Gen 20:7) as well as priest, while David was both prophet (Acts 2:30) and king. The Isaac connection is reflected in the 1960 lithograph series *Matthäus Evangelium* by the

German Expressionist Otto Dix, which begins with a depiction of the Akedah. Others seek a common thread linking the two names. For Jerome, David and Abraham are singled out because, alone among Christ's ancestors, promises about the Messiah were made to them (see Gen 22:18; Ps 132:11).

The Genealogy (1:2–17)

Matthew's genealogy has long impressed readers for its structural precision. It presents three sets of fourteen generations (though the last set falls short of fourteen, a point noted by Jerome, Augustine and Theophylact, as well as opponents of Christianity like Porphyry), organizing salvation history around moments of promise, disaster, and fulfillment. Each set marks a change of state for God's people. According to the *Opus imperfectum*: 'From Abraham until David they were under judges; from David to the exile they were under kings; from the exile to Christ they were under priests' (Kellerman and Oden 2010: 23).

In Christian art, the Tree of Jesse brings together Matthew's schematized royal ancestry with his emphasis upon prophetic fulfillment (Watson 1934; Taylor 1980–1981; Sawyer 1996: 74–84). Its roots lie in Tertullian's connection between Matthew's genealogy (which he regards as presenting Jesus' descent through the Virgin Mary: *De carne Christi* 20–22) and Isaiah's prophecy of the messianic branch of Jesse (Isa 11:1–2). In the Latin, Isaiah 11 reads: 'And a rod [*virga*] will emerge from the root of Jesse, and a flower [*flos*] will ascend from his root.' The resemblance of *virga* to *Virgo* led to Mary being identified with the 'rod' of Jesse, while the 'root' was David, and Christ was the 'flower.' Most Jesse Trees locate Jesse at the root of the tree, surmounted by his son David and other royal descendants, with the Virgin and her Son at the top. In the twelfth-century Jesse window at Chartres, the royal ancestors are flanked by prophets (Johnson 1961). The Jesse window in the Abbey of Saint-Denis makes the connection with Matthew explicit by including the evangelist to the left of Jesse (Watson 1934: 112–113). The popularity of the Tree of Jesse in French stained glass particularly reflects the ideology of the French monarchy, who regarded Israel's kings as their spiritual ancestors (Sawyer 1996: 79). Increasing emphasis on patrilineage sometimes leads to the figure of Mary disappearing (though this is countered by visual focus on the 'Holy Kinship,' which prioritizes the female roles of Mary's mother, Saint Anne, and her three daughters: Sheingorn 1990).

In the western liturgical tradition, Matthew's genealogy was sung at the end of Matins on Christmas Eve – with increasingly complexity of musical tone to express its solemn character – matched at the close of the Christmas season by the chanting of Luke's genealogy on the Feast of the Epiphany

(Noble 2001). This is paralleled in the Byzantine tradition on the Sunday before Christmas, the Sunday of the Holy Ancestors, where Matthew's genealogy is the Gospel lection.

Problems in the Genealogy

Yet the Matthean genealogy has also provoked bewilderment for its contradictions with the Lucan version, which traces Joseph's ancestry via David and Abraham back to Adam (Luke 3:23–38). Not only do the two family trees disagree significantly over the number of ancestors between Abraham and Joseph (40 in Matthew, 56 in Luke), there are also substantial discrepancies over their names (e.g. in Matthew the line passes through David's son Solomon, in Luke through Nathan; in Matthew, Joseph's father is Jacob, whilst in Luke he is Heli: 1:6, 16; Luke 3:23, 31).

The artificiality of Matthew's reckoning is variously explained. Jerome notes that Matthew passes over several generations between Joram and Uzziah, omitting ancestors related to Ahab and Jezebel (2 Kgs 8:18; 9:27; 10:30; 15:12). Augustine finds a non-literal explanation for the fact that, by his reckoning, there are only 40 generations in the 3 cycles between Abraham and Joseph, not 42. This symbolizes 'that painful period when we shall be under the discipline of Christ and fight the devil' (*Agreement Among the Evangelists* 2.4.9: Augustine 2014: 173), foreshadowed by the 40-day fasts of Moses and Elijah, Christ's fast in the wilderness, and the risen Lord's 40 days of appearances.

Reconciling the Genealogies

Interpreters have dealt with the contradictions with Luke's genealogy in different ways (Brown 1993: 57–95; Miller 2009). Harmonizations such as Tatian's *Diatessaron* sidestep the difficulties by omitting the genealogies entirely (*ANF* 9:43–47). One intriguing text-critical solution, represented by the fifth-century Codex Bezae (D), 'corrects' Luke's text with names drawn from Matthew's version (Ammassari 1996: 404–407).

However, the commonest explanation is that of levirate marriage, whereby the brother of a Jewish male who died without an heir was obliged to marry his widow so as to continue his lineage (Deut 25:5–10). Julius Africanus (*Letter to Aristides* in Eusebius, *H.E.* 1.7) presents Matthew as preserving the natural and Luke the legal blood-line. Africanus claims that Luke's Heli and Matthew's Jacob were half-brothers, having the same mother (Estha) but different fathers. Heli died without a child; Jacob therefore fathered Joseph in his brother's stead. Moreover, the fact that they had different fathers, Matthan according to Matthew, Melchi according to Luke (Africanus overlooks Matthat and Levi,

Luke 3:24), explains why the two genealogies trace Davidic descent through two different sons of David, Solomon, and Nathan respectively.

Africanus's solution does not solve all the problems (e.g. the presence in both genealogies of Shealtiel and Zerubbabel: see Miller 2009: 18–19). Nonetheless, the levirate explanation is followed by Eusebius, Fortunatianus of Aquileia, Jerome, and the later Augustine (*Revisions* II,16). Augustine originally held that Joseph was adopted into a different family after his father's death, with Matthew preserving the blood-line (*Agreement Among the Evangelists* 2.3.5). The levirate theory is also dominant in medieval Latin commentators (e.g. Aquinas), and a variant, whereby Matthew preserves the legal descent through Jacob, and Luke the natural through Eli, is followed by some modern commentators (see Brown 1993: 503).

A second solution attributes the divergent genealogies to the families of Joseph and Mary respectively. For Ephrem the Syrian, Matthew preserves Mary's lineage, and Luke that of Joseph (Ephrem the Syrian 1993: 55). This explanation is reversed, e.g. by the Lutheran pietist scholar Johann Albrecht Bengel (1687–1752), following a suggestion made c. 1490 by Annius of Viterbo: Matthew's genealogy contains Joseph's line, and Luke's Mary's, Joseph being figuratively the 'son of' Heli through his wife.

Other explanations are focused less on historical reconciliation than on Christology. For Origen (*Homilies on Luke* 28.3), they signify Christ's royal and prophetic roles, David's son Nathan (2 Sam 5:14; 1 Chron 3:5; 14:4) apparently being identified as Nathan the prophet (2 Sam 7:2). According to Hilary, Matthew's genealogy presents Christ as king, Luke's as priest, linking Nathan with the tribe of Levi (cf. Zech 12:12–13). As Eusebius noted, however (*Quaest. ad Stephanum* 4.1), both genealogies are Davidic. Modern critical scholarship also tends to emphasize the evangelists' theological concerns, Matthew's genealogy highlighting Jesus' messianic credentials for a primarily Jewish audience.

The Additions

The genealogy's monotonous rhythm (x was the father of y) is broken at several points (e.g. 'and his brothers,' vv. 2, 11; 'and Zerah,' v. 3; 'the king,' v. 6; 'at the time of the deportation to Babylon,' v. 11; 'the husband of Mary,' v. 16). The precise function of these additions is unclear, although the motifs of exile, forced displacement, and flight connect many of these named characters (see Myles 2013).

Some are given a typological interpretation. The reference to Judah's brothers is taken by the *Opus imperfectum* to prefigure the 12 apostles. Others are read in a fuller allegorical sense. According to Genesis 38:27–30, Zerah had a scarlet thread tied to his hand by the midwife, because he put out his hand first,

but then withdrew it so that his brother Perez was born first. Thus, according to Theophylact, Zerah symbolizes the 'life in Christ' which appeared before the Law (i.e. with Abraham), and then withdrew only to re-emerge in the Christian dispensation, 'marked with the scarlet threat, that is, sealed with the blood of Christ' (Theophylact 1992: 15).

Most notable among the additions are the mothers. Surprisingly, as John Chrysostom observes, the great matriarchs of Israel's past (e.g. Sarah, Rebekah) are displaced by more marginal figures: Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, 'the wife of Uriah.' One popular explanation, found in Jerome, is that the women are sinners:

> In the Savior's genealogy it is remarkable that there is no mention of holy women, but only those whom Scripture reprehends, so that [we can understand that] he who had come for the sake of sinners, since he was born from sinful women, blots out the sins of everyone. (Jerome 2008: 59)

Jerome treats as sinners Tamar, Ruth, and Bathsheba, though overlooks Rahab (who was praised by the rabbis, and by early Christians: Str-B 1.20–23; Heb 11:31; Jas 2:25; *1 Clem*. 12.1). Modern commentators often view their sins as sexual, though this is difficult to sustain exegetically in the case of Ruth (Harrington 1991: 32). For Aquinas, by contrast, Ruth's sin was idolatry, given her Gentile origins.

Other interpretations incorporate the sinfulness of Christ's male ancestors. The sixth-century Severus of Antioch points to the 'shocking carnal relations' of Judah and David as revealing Christ's true humanity, and that he came to heal our sinful nature (Severus, *Cathedral Sermons*, *Homily* 94; in Simonetti 2001: 6). In more contemporary language, the twentieth-century Dominican theologian Herbert McCabe puts it thus, contrasting the Gospel message with Irish and British middle-class standards:

> The moral is too obvious to labour: Jesus did not belong to the nice clean world of Angela Macnamara or Mary Whitehouse, or to the honest, reasonable, sincere world of the *Observer* or the *Irish Times*, he belonged to a family of murderers, cheats, cowards, adulterers and liars – he belonged to *us* and came to help *us*, no wonder he came to a bad end, and gave *us* some hope. (McCabe 1991: 249)

Alternatively, the women are considered Gentiles (e.g. Luther, *Lectures on Genesis* on Gen 38:6–7). Rahab was a Cananite (Josh 2), and Ruth a Moabite (Ruth 1:4), although Scripture is ambiguous about the ethnicity of Tamar (Gen 38:6; according to *Jub* 41:1 she was an Aramean) and Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:2–3; 'the wife of Uriah' may be intended to evoke her husband's Hittite ancestry).

This Gentile interpretation allows the women to be viewed as types of the church (e.g. *Glossa ordinaria*). For the *Opus imperfectum*, the fact that Rahab

the harlot received the spies of Joshua (Jesus in Greek) makes her an appropriate representative of the 'whoring' nations that accept the apostles, the 'spies' of Jesus Christ (Kellerman and Oden 2010: 9). Similarly, Theophylact of Ochrid finds the Gentile church's story prefigured in that of Ruth, taken as bride by the seed of Abraham.

Ephrem the Syrian makes a somewhat different salvation-historical point, at least with respect to Tamar and Ruth. Both acted as they did because they were farsighted enough to anticipate the coming of the Messiah from their descendants:

> Since the King was hidden in Judah, Tamar stole Him from his loins;
> Today shone forth the splendor of the beauty whose hidden form she loved.
> Ruth lay down with Boaz because she saw hidden in him the medicine of life;
> Today her vow is fulfilled since from her seed arose the Giver of all life.
> (*Hymns on the Nativity* 1:12–13; Ephrem the Syrian 1989: 65)

Further figurative interpretations focus on the mothers' names. Some of these are clearly etymological in origin. Bathsheba means 'daughter of the mighty one' (*Opus imperfectum*), appropriate for a mother who is a type of the church, married to Christ the new David and therefore the daughter of God Almighty. Christian of Stavelot notes that Tamar means 'palm tree' (*palma*): 'on account of the saints who have been born from her offspring, about whom it is written: "the just man will flourish like a palm tree"' (Christian of Stavelot 2008: 224).

Modern interpreters often posit a third possibility, that the women are linked by some irregularity in their unions, irrespective of personal culpability (Brown 1993: 73–74). According to Johann Bengel, 'Matthew mentions in this list such *women* as were connected with the race of Abraham … by any peculiar circumstance' (Bengel 1971: 51). This strengthens the link between these four women and Mary, found to be pregnant before completion of the marriage.

Fourteen Generations (1:17)

The number 14 also provokes interest. The *Opus imperfectum* explains it as the sum of ten and four. In Greek, the letter for ten is iota, the first letter of the name Jesus. Four points to the fact that Christ is prefigured in his genealogy three times (as judge, as king, and as priest, each role associated with one set of 14 generations), with the fourth marking his coming in the flesh. Alternatively, for Thomas Aquinas, 4 represents the fourfold Gospel, and 10 the Decalogue, i.e. the Old Testament; thus 14 indicates 'that through the New and the Old Testament we come to Christ in the faith of the Trinity.'

Another solution builds on the Judeo-Christian tradition of dividing history into periods (cf. Dan 9:24–27; *1 En*. 91:11–17; 93:1–10), linked to the six days of creation followed by a Sabbath rest (Gen 1). For Augustine, Matthew's genealogy presents the middle three of seven ages of history from Adam to the End (following the periods from Adam to Noah, and from Noah to Abraham). Christians now find themselves in the sixth age of indeterminate length (Acts 1:7; Augustine, *Civ. Dei* 22.33.5; see Viviano 2009). Alternatively, the triads of 14 are recalculated as 6 sets of 7 (e.g. Clement of Alexandria, *Strom*. 1.21.147; Origen, *Hom. in Num*. 27.3), with all 6 epochs present in the historical period between Abraham and the Messiah.

Modern scholarship finds a solution in *gematria* (the practice of adding together the numerical value of a word's constitutive letters), noting that in Hebrew 14 is the number of David's name (e.g. Davies and Allison 1988: 163–164). The objection that Matthew's Greek audiences would hardly grasp the Hebrew allusion is somewhat ameliorated by a similar gematrial technique at Revelation 13:18 (where the Hebrew calculation of the name Nero Caesar explains both the number of the beast 666 and its variant 616).

The Annunciation to Joseph (1:18–25)

Whereas Luke recounts the more famous annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:26–38), Matthew focuses on Joseph. It is to the sleeping Joseph that the divine announcement is delivered, by an unnamed 'angel of the Lord' (1:20), identified as the Angel Gabriel (Luke 1:26) in the sixth- or seventh-century *History of Joseph the Carpenter*. Joseph is the key player in the events surrounding Jesus' birth in Matthew 1–2, as he names the child, takes the child and his mother to safety in Egypt, and brings them up again following Herod's death.

Following the genealogy, the story introduces a problem. The revelation that Mary is pregnant 'by the Holy Spirit' undercuts Jesus' Davidic ancestry, for the reader discovers that Joseph is not Jesus' natural father (though see the views of the Carpocratians and Cerinthus: Irenaeus, *Adv. Haer*. 1.25.1; 1 2.6.1). One solution is that Mary is also from the tribe of Judah and the family of David (e.g. Jerome; Theophylact). In support, Jerome points to the Jewish law (Num 36:8–9) that a man choose his wife from within his own tribe and lineage.

Alternatively, this annunciation story resolves the dilemma (addressing the 'parentage' of Jesus: see Cantwell 1982). Modern commentators regularly interpret Joseph's 'naming' of Jesus as legal adoption, thus bringing Jesus into the Davidic line (Davies and Allison 1988: 219). Such a reading underlies John Paul

II's 1989 Apostolic Exhortation on St. Joseph, *Redemptoris Custos*: 'In conferring the name, Joseph declares his own legal fatherhood over Jesus, and in speaking the name he proclaims the child's mission of Savior' (John Paul II, *Redemptoris Custos* 12 in Stramare 1997: 28). However, the evidence that Jews, as opposed to Romans, allowed inheritance on the basis of adoption is disputed (see e.g. Levin 2006; Bockmuehl 2011: 478–479).

Matthew's description of Joseph remains skeletal. The only clue to his character is Matthew's statement that he was 'just' or 'righteous.' We learn nothing of his age, his place of origin (though one might surmise from Matthew's narrative than he is a native of Bethlehem), or his ongoing role in the life of Jesus. Even supplementing Matthew by Luke adds little to the picture.

Joseph in Reception History

But subsequent reception has exploited these significant gaps to maximum effect, with a particular explosion of devotion to this shadowy figure in the second Christian millennium (see e.g. Filas 1962; Lienhard 1999; Chorpenning 2011; Jacobs 2016). In the earlier period, he is overshadowed by the Virgin Mary and her Son. Many early interpreters emphasize Joseph's primary role as protector of Mary's virginity. In the *Protevangelium of James* (late second century), Joseph is an elderly widower with sons from a previous marriage (one explanation of 'the brothers' of Jesus at 13:55 and parallels). He is selected as spouse for the 12-year-old Mary by the high priest, when a dove emerges from his rod and flies onto his head (*Prot. Jas*. 9). This scene, expanded in the thirteenth-century *Golden Legend* to include the budding of Joseph's rod (Jacobus de Voragine 1993: II/153), is a popular subject in Christian art (e.g. Giotto, *The Marriage of the Virgin,* 1304–1306, Scrovegni Chapel, Padua). Joseph's great age, and therefore the lack of sexual relations in the marriage, becomes more explicit in later texts. According to the *Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* (possibly early seventh century), even Joseph's grandsons are older than Mary (*Pseudo-Matthew* 8). In the *History of Joseph the Carpenter*, Joseph is 91 when Mary is betrothed to him, and dies at the age of 111 (*History of Joseph the Carpenter* 10; 14). Echoes of this remain in the fifteenth-century *Cherry Tree Carol*: 'Joseph was an old man, and an old man was he, He married sweet Mary, the Queen of Galilee.'

Joseph's advanced age is often combined with hints of incompetence. In the *Infancy Gospel of Thomas*, his shortcomings as a carpenter (he cuts one beam shorter than the other in making a bed for a rich client) are overcome by the miracles of his foster-son Jesus (*Inf. Gos. Thos*. 13). The image of Joseph the aged cuckold, rather than Joseph the Just, recurs regularly in the western

dramatic tradition. In the Coventry Corpus Christi cycle, Joseph laments his fate on returning home to find his betrothed with child:

> Alas Alas my name is shent
> ałł men may me now dyspyse
> *and* seyn olde cokwold þ*i* bow is bent.
> (Block 1922: 110)

A more positive reception of Joseph can be found in the second millennium, especially in the West. Joseph the bumbling great-grandfather gives way to Joseph the super-hero, the protector of and provider for the Holy Family (the salvific role implied by the Flight into Egypt, 2:13–15). Joseph's role as 'nourisher' of Christ (*nutritius*) is emphasized in the twelfth-century treatise *Jesus at the Age of Twelve* by the English Cistercian Aelred of Rievaulx (Aelred of Rievaulx 1987: 116), and becomes enshrined in late medieval Latin liturgy, which commemorates Joseph as *nutritor Domini*, 'the Lord's guardian,' 'foster-father,' or 'provider' (see e.g. Schwartz 1975: 58–63). This role requires a more youthful, often handsome Joseph, reflected in Renaissance and early modern art: e.g. Raphael, *Marriage of the Virgin* (1504; Pinacoteca di Brera, Milan); Philippe de Champaigne, *The Dream of St. Joseph* (1642–1643; National Gallery, London). His main western feast is celebrated on 19 March (on liturgical commemoration, see e.g. Bertrand 1954; Burkey 1971; Wilson 2001: 7–9). A second feast of St. Joseph the Worker on 1 May was introduced by Pope Pius XII in 1955, apparently as a Catholic alternative to the Socialist International Workers' Day. More recently, St. Joseph's name was added to that of Mary his spouse in the Roman rite of the Mass: to Eucharistic Prayer I (the Roman Canon) by Pope John XXIII in 1962, and subsequently to Prayers II, III, and IV by Pope Francis in 2013.

For Bernard of Clairvaux (1090–1153), devotion to Joseph parallels his intense Mariology. As the protector of the Lord's human body and spouse of the Virgin, Joseph is also the church's protector and spouse:

> I tell you, he was the wise and faithful servant whom his Lord set to be the comfort of his mother and the bread-winner for his body. He was God's only and most faithful coadjutor in his great plan on earth. (*Homiliae ad laudibus Viriginis Mariae* 2:16: Saïd and Perigo 1979: 29)

Alternatively, Joseph's role as protector demands that he be a figure of intelligence. He is sometimes portrayed in typical philosopher pose, head in hand, or engaged in intellectual pursuits, as in Joos van Cleve's *The Holy Family* (1540–1541; National Gallery, London) or Gerrit van Honthorst's *St. Joseph Reading by Candlelight* (c. 1615; Convent of S. Francesco a Ripa Grande, Rome).

Joseph's Dilemma (1:19)

Matthew's description of Joseph as 'just' or 'righteous' creates tension with his decision to release Mary quietly (Bulbeck 1948; Sottocornola 1957; Sicari 1971). Is he righteous according to the Mosaic Law (so Brown 1993: 127–128)? If so, as Theophylact notes, Joseph's actions undercut his righteousness, for Moses decreed that adultery should be punished by stoning (Deut 22:21–24). Or did he presume an alternative explanation for Mary's surprising pregnancy, in which case his 'justice' relates to his compassion for his betrothed? The English poet W.H. Auden relocates this dilemma to a modern setting in his 'The Temptation of St. Joseph,' part of his 1942 Christmas Oratorio *For the Time Being* (Auden 1991: 362–368).

For Justin Martyr (followed by Ambrose, Augustine, and Peter Chrysologus), Joseph assumes Mary to be pregnant through 'fornication' (Justin, *Trypho* 78). Thus the angelic appearance reveals to him the true cause of Mary's conception. His desire to divorce Mary 'informally' is a reflection of his goodness, which mitigates his strict observance of the Mosaic Law. A similar characterization of Joseph is given by the Anglican scholar Henry Hammond: it indicates that Joseph is a 'merciful pious man' (Hammond 1845: 3). According to Pseudo-Bonaventure's *Meditations on the Life of Christ*, this misapprehension about Mary's pregnancy provoked in Joseph considerable anguish, though he 'virtuously restrained himself from accusing her, patiently disregarding the injury and not seeking revenge; but overcome by pity he wished to leave her secretly' (*Meditations* 6; Ragusa and Green 1961: 27–29).

In the late medieval Chester Mystery Plays, performed in the days after Pentecost, Joseph's advanced age is used to explain Mary's presumed infidelity:

> Three months she hath been from me
> And now she has gotten, as I see,
> A great belly for her fee
> Since she went away.
> And mine it is not, I make so bold
> For I am both old and cold;
> This thirsty winter though I would
> I have played no such play.
>
> (Hussey 1975: 43–44)

A second explanation emphasizes Joseph's suspension of judgment. In the *Protevangelium of James*, Joseph is unsure whether Mary has committed adultery or the child she is carrying is 'from the angels' (*Prot. Jas.* 14; Elliott 1993: 62).

The *Opus imperfectum* imagines Joseph's internal wrestling which exemplifies his character as a 'just man':

> What therefore am I to do? I will send her away secretly because in an uncertain matter it is better that an adulteress should escape than an innocent woman die. (Kellerman and Oden 2010: 15)

Alternatively, Joseph had some knowledge of Mary's special status prior to the annunciation (Sicari 1971; e.g. *Glossa ordinaria*). Matthew's statement at 1:18 that Mary 'was found' to be with child by the Holy Spirit is understood to mean that Joseph so 'found' her, and therefore knew the charge of adultery to be false (Theophylact; also e.g. Eusebius, *Quaest. ad Stephanum* 1.6; a modern example is Cantwell 1982). The angel's message then assuages Joseph's 'fear' to touch the woman who has been made holy by God (Luz 2007: 94).

Joseph's Dream

Revelation by dream is well-attested in the Jewish tradition, although more regularly linked to miraculous births in Egyptian, Greek, and Roman mythology (Mussies 1990; a notable exception is the father of Moses: Josephus, *Ant*. 2.210–18). In Matthew, the Gentile Magi and Pilate's wife share this privilege with the Jewish Joseph (2:12; 27:19).

Modern commentators often draw parallels between the dreaming Joseph and his Old Testament namesake, a connection already made by Bernard of Clairvaux, who cites their chastity, their journey to Egypt, and their dreams (Saïd and Perigo 1979: 28–29; see also Haimo of Auxerre, *Hom*. 12; Lapide). However, this connection is rarely made by patristic commentators, for whom a Joseph–Christ typology dominates (e.g. Justin, *Trypho* 36; Tertullian, *Adv. Marc*. 3:18; Ambrose, *De Patriarcha Joseph* 14; see Argyle 1956). Both Joseph and Jesus suffer rejection by those called their 'brothers,' and are handed over at the instigation of Judah/Judas (Gen 37:18–20, 26; Matt 12:49; 26:47–56); both go down into Egypt (Gen 37:28; Matt 2:13–15). If there is an Old Testament prefigurement of the New Testament Joseph, it is found in Jacob's dream at Bethel (Gen 28:10–19; see Origen, *Adnotationes in Genesim* 37.10; Rabanus Maurus).

Alternatively, Joseph the dreamer functions as exemplar. The Carmelite Jerónimo Gracían de la Madre de Dios, in his 1597 *Summary of the Excellencies of St. Joseph, Husband of the Virgin Mary*, interprets Joseph's sleep as the sleep of contemplation: his habitual state, 'contemplation in action' as advocated by Gracían's associate Teresa of Avila (Chorpenning 2011: 121).

A Virgin Shall Conceive (1:22–23)

The angelic message is accompanied by the first of Matthew's formula citations, from Isaiah 7:14. It is quoted in the LXX version, which translates the Hebrew *almah* (young woman) as *parthenos* (virgin). The original purpose of the formula citations was probably to teach early Christian audiences about the continuity between Christ and the Hebrew Scriptures (so Brown 1993: 97–99). Nonetheless, they soon come to be used apologetically, both in Christian debates with Jews (Justin, *Trypho* 84; for the charge that Mary conceived Jesus by a Roman soldier, Panthera, see Origen, *Cels*. 1.32) and in defending Christianity against charges of borrowing from pagan myths. For Justin, Isaiah 7:14 signifies that 'a virgin should conceive without intercourse', thus ruling out parallels being draw with pagan parallels such as those associated with Jupiter who 'went in to women through lust'" (Justin, *1 Apol*. 33; *ANF* 1:174).

The title Emmanuel does not occur again in Matthew's narrative. However, it forms the first part of an *inclusio* bracketing the whole Gospel, completed by Jesus' final words 'I am with you always …' (28:20), a connection already known to Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas, believing that Matthew wrote in Hebrew, presumes that the translation 'God-with-us' was provided by the Greek translator.

Until She Bore a Son (1:25)

For the fourth-century Christian author Helvidius, 1:25 is evidence that Joseph and Mary had sexual relations after Christ's birth, a view vehemently opposed by Jerome, keen to promote the virtues of virginity above marriage (Jerome, *Against Helvidius*). Jerome's critique is two-pronged. First, he points out the ambiguity of the verb 'know,' which could refer to intellectual knowledge. This interpretation is followed by the *Opus imperfectum*, which rejects the view that Joseph would have dared take possession of the one he now knew to be God's temple. Second, Jerome refutes the argument that 'until' (Greek *heōs*) implies a change after the event (support can be found from Matthew's Gospel itself: 5:25; 16:28; 28:20; but cf. 2:9, 13; 5:26). Remigius, ninth-century monk of Auxerre, comes to the same position by a different route: he interprets Mary and Joseph's 'coming together' in verse 18 as a reference to their nuptial rites (Remigius in Aquinas 1995: 44).

Jerome's view of Mary's perpetual virginity is widely accepted by the Fathers. Chromatius of Aquileia (d. c. 407) notes a parallel with her namesake, Moses' sister Miriam who 'remained a virgin unsullied by man' after beholding the Lord's glory (Chromatius, *Tractate on Matthew* 3.1: Simonetti 2001: 19; also e.g. Chrysostom; Ambrose, *Concerning Virgins* 2.2; Augustine, *Sermon* 186; see Beattie 2007). This view is remarkably resilient until the modern period, being

accepted by Luther, Calvin (who called Helvidius 'ignorant'), and Zwingli (despite its lack of direct attestation in scripture: MacCulloch 2004: 191–217; Williams 2007b: 317), Thomas Cranmer and Hugh Latimer (Williams 2007a: 250–251), and John Wesley (e.g. his 1749 *Letter to a Roman Catholic* 7).

Jerome also promotes belief in Joseph's virginity to parallel Mary's perpetual virginity:

> You can say that Mary did not remain a virgin; as for me, I claim more emphatically that Joseph himself was also a virgin through Mary (*per Mariam*), so that a virgin son might be born of a virgin wedlock. For if fornication ill befits a holy man, and it is not written down that he had a second wife, but was the guardian rather than the husband of Mary whom he supposedly possessed as his own, the conclusion follows that he, who was deemed worthy to be called the father of the Lord, remains a virgin with Mary. (Jerome, *Against Helvidius* 19; Jerome 1965: 38–39)

This motif will re-emerge in later Catholic devotion to Joseph, as in the writings of Jean Gerson, chancellor of the University of Paris in the late fourteenth century. Gerson presents Joseph as young and celibate, the ideal model for priests (McGuire 2011).