

THE TERM “POOR IN SPIRIT” IN THE MATTHEAN BEATITUDES: ITS  
SOURCES AND POSITION WITHIN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents ii

Declaration iv

Acknowledgments v

Dedication vi

**Introduction 1**

### **Chapter 1: The meaning of the term “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3) within the literary context of the Gospel of Matthew and its beatitudes**

1.1 Introduction 11

1.2 The beatitudes in the Matthean Gospel 11

1.3 The meaning of the term “poor in spirit” within the literary context of the Gospel 15

1.3.1 Literary analysis of the “poor in spirit” and the “poor” 15

1.3.2 The term “poor in spirit” in Matthew 18

1.3.3 The literary meaning of the term “poor in spirit” 19

1.4 Conclusion 25

### **Chapter 2: The Jewish (and non-Jewish) traditions of Matthew**

2.1 Introduction 27

2.2 The beatitudes in Antiquity 27

2.3 The beatitudes in Jewish and early Christian literature 28

2.3.1 The beatitudes in the Old Testament 29

2.3.2 The beatitudes in the Dead Sea Scrolls 30

2.3.2.1 The beatitudes of 4Q525 31

2.4 Intertextual Analysis of Matthew 5:3 (poor in spirit) 32

2.4.1 The “poor” in the Old Testament 33

2.4.2 The “poor in spirit” in the Old Testament 34

2.4.3 The “poor in spirit” in the Dead Sea Scrolls 35

2.4.3.1 The “poor in spirit” in the War Scroll (1QM 14) 36

2.5 Conclusion 39

### **Chapter 3: Matthew's use of the Sayings Source Q**

3.1 Introduction 41

3.2 The study of Q 41

3.3 The beatitudes in Q 43

3.4 Conclusion 45

**Conclusion** 47

**Bibliography** 51

## **DECLARATION**

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this research paper is my own original work. It has not been previously submitted to any institution of higher learning for degree purposes.

Signature.....

Date.....

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this research paper to GOD ALMIGHTY, for blessing, keeping and bringing me thus far. To Him alone be all the glory, honor, power, might, dominion and majesty.

## INTRODUCTION

*As a musical masterpiece begins with an introit, so does the Sermon on the Mount (SM) open with an extraordinary sequence of statements commonly known as the Beatitudes (Hans Dieter Betz).<sup>1</sup>*

The set of beatitudes found in Matthew’s Gospel (Matt. 5:3–12) has often been described as a beautiful string that has surprised its readers due to its literary and rhythmic characteristics.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the theologically important position that it has held over the years cannot be overemphasized.<sup>3</sup> Scholars thus agree that it is probably one of the most “recognizable passages”<sup>4</sup> and “familiar periscopes”<sup>5</sup> in the entire New Testament Scripture, like the Lord’s Prayer.<sup>6</sup>

The term “beatitude” is commonly known to have emerged from the Latin word *beatitudo*, which is equivalent to the Greek *μακαρισμός* (makarism),<sup>7</sup> and these makarisms may be found throughout the New Testament.<sup>8</sup> The term beatitude, according to scholars, stands for a literary genre that stems from the adjective *μακάριος* (in Greek)<sup>9</sup> and *beatus* (in Latin),<sup>10</sup> meaning “blessed” or “happy”, and this is often found in “both pagan and Judeo–Christian literature.”<sup>11</sup> A few examples of beatitudes found in the Old Testament are: Ps. 1:1; 32:1–2; 40:4; 119:1–2;

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<sup>1</sup> Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress Press, 1995), 92.

<sup>2</sup> Timothy D. Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins: A Literary and Speech Act Analysis* (Peter Lang, 2011), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins: A Literary and Speech Act Analysis*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> K. C. Hanson, “How Honorable! How Shameful! A Cultural Analysis of Matthew’s Makarisms and Reproaches,” *Semeia* 68 (1994): 81–111 (81).

<sup>5</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins: A Literary and Speech Act Analysis*, 1.

<sup>6</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins: A Literary and Speech Act Analysis*, 1; Hanson, “How Honorable! How Shameful! A Cultural Analysis of Matthew’s Makarisms and Reproaches,” 81, etc.

<sup>7</sup> For more meanings and usages of the makarisms, see France, pp. 160–1; Hanson, pp. 87–9 (who also argues for a distinction between beatitudes and makarisms in his article, see p. 81).

<sup>8</sup> Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 92.

<sup>9</sup> Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 92.

<sup>10</sup> Craig A. Evans, *Matthew*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 100.

<sup>11</sup> R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 159; W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew in Three Volumes*, Vol. 1 [London: T & T Clark International, 2004], 431–34) provide a wide range of collections in this commentary.

128:1, and in the New Testament: Matt. 11:6; 13:16; 16:17; 24:46; Luke 1:45; 10:23; 11:27–28.<sup>12</sup>

## 1. RESEARCH QUESTION AND RELATED SUB-QUESTIONS

The beatitudes (*makarioi*) in our Gospels today have been a familiar concept in Biblical Studies. Guelich, as well as other scholars, has also shown (with many explicit examples) that there are a number of beatitudes in the Old Testament and some in the Wisdom Literature.<sup>13</sup> However, the set of beatitudes in Matthew’s Gospel (Matthew 5:3–12) beautifully opens the way for the maiden sermon of Jesus, which is commonly known as the “Sermon on the Mount” (Matthew 5–7).<sup>14</sup> There is also a similar set of beatitudes in Luke’s Gospel (Luke 6:20–26) which coincidentally begins the sermon of Jesus otherwise known as the “Sermon on the Plain” (Luke 6:17–49). But of all the beatitudes (nine) in Matthew’s Gospel, which have a parallel of four in Luke,<sup>15</sup> the first beatitude which addresses the poor is the aim of this research paper. Many scholars have assumed that Matthew added “in spirit” to the “poor” in Q.<sup>16</sup> My argument thus concerns: “how and why did Matthew redact Q?” In other words, what inspired him to do so, from which we now have the term “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3)? For that reason, I shall explore the process of this redaction and the purpose behind the deliberate attempt of Matthew in the choice of this formulation in three different ways. First, I will explore what the term “poor in spirit” means within the literary context of the Gospel of Matthew and its beatitudes. Secondly, I will examine Matthew’s Jewish background, which might have influenced his formulation and/or

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<sup>12</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 159.

<sup>13</sup> Robert A. Guelich, (“The Matthean Beatitudes: ‘Entrance-Requirements’ or Eschatological Blessings?” *Journal of Biblical Literature* (95) [1976]: 415–34, (416)) gives a list of these beatitudes not in the “Sermon” in his footnotes (7, 8, 9). E.g., NT: Matt. 11:6/Luke 7:23; Matt. 13:16/Luke 10:33; Matt. 16:17; 24:46/Luke 12:43; Luke 1:45; 11:27, 28; 12:37, 38, 43; 14:14, 15; 23:29; John 13:17; 20:29; Rom. 4:7, 8; 14:22; James 1:12; 1Pet. 3:14; 14:14; Rev. 1:3; 14:13; 16:15; 19:9; 20:6; 22:7, 14. OT: Ps. 2:12; 32:1–2; 33:12; 34:8; 4:4; 41:1–2; 65:4; 84:4–7, 12; 89:15–17; 94:12–13; 106:3; 112:1–3; 119:1–4; 127:5; 128:1–3; 137:8–9; 144:15; 146:5–7; Prov. 3:13–14; 8:32, 34; 20:7; 28:14. Others in Gen. 30:13; Deut. 33:29; Isa. 10:8; 30:18; 32:20; 56:2; 2Chr. 9:7; Job 5:17; Dan. 12:12. Finally, in the Wisdom Literature: Wis. 3:13; Sir. 14:1–2, 20; 25:8–9 (and/or 7–10); 26:21; 28:19; 31:8; 34:15; 48:11; 50:28.

<sup>14</sup> Andreij Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount* (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2014), 42.

<sup>15</sup> Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 434.

<sup>16</sup> Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, ed. Helmut Koester, Hermeneia (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 185; Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 442; Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 111–13.



from which he might have drawn such a formulation. Thirdly and lastly, I will explore how Matthew has engaged Q in the composition of his beatitudes.

## 2. THE OBJECTIVE OF THE THESIS

The aim of this thesis lies in my curiosity to know the very essence and purpose of why Matthew adopted this formulation (or expression) “poor in spirit” in the writing of his beatitudes. Previous scholarship has shown that there seems to be a controversy over the composition of the Matthean beatitudes in regard to the obvious redactional features<sup>17</sup> when compared with the similar set of beatitudes from the Sermon on the Plain (SP) known as the Lukan beatitudes (Luke 6:20–26), which are both assumed to have been copied from the same source (Sayings Source Q). Notable amongst these redactional features is the phrase “in spirit” that is attached to the “poor” in Matthew’s first beatitude (Matt. 5:3).<sup>18</sup> Investigation of this phrase is the main objective of this thesis.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Previous scholarship has also shown that the first beatitude of Matthew has been a central interest of New Testament scholarship.<sup>19</sup> Thus “it is now generally agreed that the phrase *πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι* originated in the Semitic milieu behind the Gospels and was not added to the Greek Matthew.”<sup>20</sup> Moreover, scholars suggest that a similar expression can be found in the Qumran documents at 1QM 14:7<sup>21</sup> and 1QH 6:3.<sup>22</sup> The meaning of the term “poor in spirit” has been investigated by many scholars and the research is ongoing.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 442.

<sup>18</sup> Andreij Kodjak, (*A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 47) suggests that the first beatitude is one of the most complex beatitudes which has caused considerable controversy due to its formulation and interpretation.

<sup>19</sup> Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 111.

<sup>20</sup> Neil J. McEleney, “The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 43 (1981): 1–13, (5).

<sup>21</sup> Florentino García Martínez and Eibert Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*, vol. 1. 1q1–4q273 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 134–37; Luz, *Matthew 1–7: A Commentary*, 191; McEleney, “The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain,” 5.

Furthermore, scholars over the years have always assumed that the term could either mean the economically,<sup>24</sup> socially<sup>25</sup> or even spiritually poor,<sup>26</sup> but I am going to investigate if Matthew has deliberately used the term with a particular purpose in mind and find out what would have prompted his choice to use the term. On the other hand, Matthew could have also copied the term from the Sayings Source Q and added the phrase “in spirit”<sup>27</sup> or perhaps he got the construct from his foreknowledge of the DSS<sup>28</sup> (which may not necessarily mean the same in terms of the context), to convey this expression in his beatitude.

Some have suggested that “Matthew has the habit of tacking on qualifying phrases e.g., Matthew 5:6a, 32; 6:13b; 13:12b; 19:9.”<sup>29</sup> In his discussion about Matthew’s redaction of his beatitudes, John Meifr<sup>30</sup> similarly refers to Matthew as a “mesher,” citing an example of how he meshes “into a single unit the traditions that Luke often keeps apart.”<sup>31</sup> This may reflect Matthew’s creative style of writing.

The current research on the existence and validity of Q<sup>32</sup> is another major issue in asserting the original source from which Matthew, as well as Luke, who has a similar set of beatitudes, could have drawn their formulations. Yet, previous scholarship has shown that Matthew and Luke depend heavily on Mark in the writing of their Gospels, but it is clear that there are also some

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<sup>22</sup> García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*, 152–53; Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 191–92.

<sup>23</sup> McElaney, “The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain,” 5.

<sup>24</sup> Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 111.

<sup>25</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 190.

<sup>26</sup> Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 111.

<sup>27</sup> W. D. Davies, and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew in Three Volumes*, Vol. 1 (London: T & T Clark International, 2004), 442.

<sup>28</sup> McElaney, “The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain,” 8.

<sup>29</sup> Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 442.

<sup>30</sup> John P. Meifr, “Matthew 5: 3–12,” *Interpretation* 44 (1990): 281–85.

<sup>31</sup> Meifr, (“Matthew 5: 3–12,” 283) in his reference to Matthew as a mesher, cites Luke’s writing of both a Gospel and an Acts of the Apostles, which he thinks Matthew also wrote (i.e., an Acts too), but Matthew meshes right inside his Gospel (e.g., Luke omits the word Church in his Gospel but keeps and uses it in his Acts of the Apostles, whereas Matthew inserted it right into the heart of his Gospel story – Matt. 16:18; 18:17).

<sup>32</sup> Mark Allan Powell (*Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey* [Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2015] 96-97) notes that we can only speculate as to the exact nature or origins of Q. It seems likely that one of Jesus’ disciples — possibly, but not necessarily, one of the Twelve — wrote down some favorite sayings of the Lord and that early Christians made copies of this “book of sayings” to pass around. Most scholars think that Q was a written document and that the church did not preserve copies of it because such copies became unnecessary after both Matthew and Luke had included most or all of the Q material in their respective Gospels.

materials in possession of either Matthew or Luke or both which are not found in Mark; an example is the presence of the beatitudes, which cannot be found anywhere in Mark's Gospel.<sup>33</sup>

This sums up the conviction of Guelich that "most, if not all, of these beatitudes have generally been relegated in contemporary scholarship to the Q material."<sup>34</sup> However, some scholars have a different view that the beatitudes stemming from the Sermon on the Mount/Plain, though from the same tradition, are not the same or alike.<sup>35</sup> Guelich buttresses this exception from Wrege's dissertation as follows:

*When speaking of "Q" as a "common tradition" one is not to think that Matthew and Luke had identical literary documents. Each evangelist received the tradition respectively whether written or oral, after it had undergone various modifications. Consequently, some for sake of clarity prefer the labels Q, with Q<sup>m</sup> and Q<sup>l</sup> referring to the modified form of the tradition found by the respective evangelist.<sup>36</sup>*

This now suggests that, having copied from the Q material, each of the evangelists probably edited his version of Q. For example, the presence of "now" inserted twice in Luke's beatitudes (Luke 6:21)<sup>37</sup> and the phrases that were added in Matthew's beatitudes (Matthew 5:3, 6).<sup>38</sup> But the phrase which forms the object of this research is "poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3).

So I would like to argue that Matthew's aim in the formulation of this term goes beyond the speculations on meaning that some have put forward, as we shall see later in this work. First, I see the term "poor in spirit" (Matthew 5:3) as a means of differentiating his beatitude from the "poor" in the Q beatitudes (Q6:20).<sup>39</sup> Secondly, Matthew employs it as a unique term to open his beatitudes. Thirdly, it is an umbrella term for grouping his beatitudes, especially the first three beatitudes,<sup>40</sup> and the eight beatitudes as a whole.<sup>41</sup> Ambrose's statement, "For it is the first in

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<sup>33</sup> Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*, 98.

<sup>34</sup> Guelich, "The Matthean Beatitudes: 'Entrance-Requirements' or Eschatological Blessings?" 419.

<sup>35</sup> Gary T. Meadors, "The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke," *Grace Theological Journal* 6 (1985): 305–14, (306).

<sup>36</sup> Guelich, "The Matthean Beatitudes: 'Entrance-Requirements' or Eschatological Blessings?" 419, n. 30.

<sup>37</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 185.

<sup>38</sup> Davies and Allison, *The Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 442.

<sup>39</sup> Guelich, "The Matthean Beatitudes: 'Entrance-Requirements' or Eschatological Blessings?" 433.

<sup>40</sup> McElaney, "The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain," 5.

<sup>41</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 43, 69.

order and as it were the parent and generation of the virtues,” is relevant here.<sup>42</sup> This means that “the beatitude ‘poor in spirit’ takes (both the first place and also brings forth) all the other beatitudes.”<sup>43</sup> I would like to build my arguments on these hypotheses.

#### 4. THESIS OUTLINE

I will like to give an outline of how this research work will be carried out based on the research questions which are raised above and which will be answered extensively in this thesis.

I hope to do this by addressing each sub-question of the research in respective chapters. The first chapter investigates the meaning of the term “poor in spirit” (Matthew 5:3) within the literary context of the Gospel of Matthew and its beatitudes. This chapter will take on a synchronic analysis of the data in order to show how the term “poor in spirit” is related to other texts within the Gospel of Matthew. In other words, we shall be examining the beatitudes in Matthew’s Gospel; the meaning of the term “poor in spirit” within the literary context of the Gospel (i.e., the literary analysis of the “poor in spirit” and the “poor”; the place of the “poor in spirit” within the Matthean beatitudes; and finally, the literary meaning(s) of the term “poor in spirit”).

The second chapter will focus on Matthew’s Jewish (and non-Jewish) traditions. However, the main focus will be on the Jewish sources that Matthew may have used in the writing of his beatitudes, and most importantly the sources of his first beatitude on the “poor in spirit.” Thus, we shall briefly examine the beatitudes in Antiquity; the Jewish and early Christian literature (especially the Old Testament and the Qumran documents); the intertextual analysis of Matt. 5:3 through the use of the Old Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The third chapter explores Matthew’s engagement with Q. This involves a study of the Sayings Source Q and the beatitudes found in Q, which may be connected to Matthew’s formulation of the term “poor in spirit.” At the end of this research we shall see in the conclusion how we have tried to provide solutions to the set of problems raised by this thesis.

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<sup>42</sup> Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 111.

<sup>43</sup> Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 111.

## 5. BACKGROUND TO THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Previous scholarship has claimed that the author of Matthew's Gospel is anonymous.<sup>44</sup> But some scholars have associated it with Matthew the tax collector who became one of the twelve apostles of Jesus Christ.<sup>45</sup> This assumption can be traced back to Matthew's knowledge, writing skills and literary style, and his constant use of the Hebrew (or Old Testament) Scriptures.<sup>46</sup> Many scholars are convinced beyond any doubt that the author was a member of the Jewish community.<sup>47</sup> The date and place of writing of this Gospel are also uncertain, scholars speculating between 70CE–100CE and suggesting Antioch as a probable location.<sup>48</sup>

In describing Matthew's meticulousness in his book, Powell asserts that "One thing is certain: Matthew is not a sloppy writer. He has a clear plan for his Gospel, and he is attentive to details."<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, Powell suggests that "one does not need to read very far into the Gospel of Matthew to see that the author of our first Gospel does play number games."<sup>50</sup> For instance, "when he relates the genealogy of Jesus he arranges the names so that they fall into three sets of four generations: there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the exile, and fourteen from the exile to Jesus. (Three fourteens!) Many modern readers might respond, 'So what?' But Matthew thinks that Jesus is the Messiah, and the Messiah is the son of David, and the name 'David' can be written with Hebrew letters (*dwd*) that also served as numerals, and those numerals are 4, 6, 4, and  $4 + 6 + 4 = 14!$ "<sup>51</sup>

Another interesting example could be taken from the composition of the Matthean beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–10), which has many beautiful features like the subdivision into two stanzas or

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<sup>44</sup> Warren Carter and Amy-Jill Levine, *The New Testament: Methods and Meanings* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013), 18.

<sup>45</sup> Yiu Sing Lúcas Chan, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes: Biblical Studies and Ethics for Real Life* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012), 62; Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 59.

<sup>46</sup> Chan, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes: Biblical Studies and Ethics for Real Life*, 62.

<sup>47</sup> Chan, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes: Biblical Studies and Ethics for Real Life*, 62; Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 59–60.

<sup>48</sup> Carter and Levine, *The New Testament: Methods and Meanings*, 18; Chan, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes: Biblical Studies and Ethics for Real Life*, 62.

<sup>49</sup> Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*, 104.

<sup>50</sup> Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*, 103.

<sup>51</sup> Powell, *Introducing the New Testament*, 103; this fact is nonetheless argued in the contrary by Carter and Levine (*The New Testament: Methods and Meanings*, 24), probably for personal reasons.

groups with four lines each.<sup>52</sup> Thus both groups (Matt. 5:3–6) and (Matt. 5:7–10) contain exactly thirty–six words in Greek,<sup>53</sup> and Howell technically presents the word count as found in this set of the Matthean beatitudes in two strophes as follows:<sup>54</sup>

*Strophe I*

*5:3 = 12 words*

*5:4 = 6 words*

*5:5 = 8 words*

*5:6 = 10 words*

*Total = 36 words*

*Strophe II*

*5:7 = 6 words*

*5:8 = 10 words*

*5:9 = 8 words*

*5:10 = 12 words*

*Total = 36 words<sup>55</sup>*

The fundamental purpose of the Gospel of Matthew therefore is to portray Jesus as both “the continuity with and the fulfillment of Israel’s Scripture.”<sup>56</sup> Thus it was written as a Jewish text for a Jewish people (or community). Hence it is described as “the most Jewish gospel”<sup>57</sup> and commonly known as the Gospel for the Jews. Some scholars point out that the Gospel of

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<sup>52</sup> Mark Allan Powell, “Matthew’s Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” *The Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 58 (1996): 460–79, (462).

<sup>53</sup> Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*, 104.

<sup>54</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 221.

<sup>55</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 221.

<sup>56</sup> Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2016), 105-9; Carter and Levine, *The New Testament: Methods and Meanings*, 22.

<sup>57</sup> Chan, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes: Biblical Studies and Ethics for Real Life*, 62.

Matthew has many references to the Old Testament,<sup>58</sup> and also links Jesus explicitly to many Old Testament texts.<sup>59</sup> In other words, Matthew's Gospel anchors the life of Jesus in the Scripture of Israel (the Old Testament).<sup>60</sup> This is confirmed by his formula "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet."

In his description of Matthew's Gospel, Powell asserts that "Matthew remains one of the most studied and most influential books of the New Testament. [...] Furthermore, it probably had more influence on the development of Christian theology than the other Synoptic Gospels, and for this reasons it continues to be a primary text for ecumenical and doctrinal discussions."<sup>61</sup>

Considering the source(s) used by Matthew in writing his Gospel, most scholars accept the two/four-source hypothesis:<sup>62</sup> that is, materials from Mark, the Sayings Source Q, and/or other materials 'special' to Matthew. Of these three, the middle source (Sayings Source Q), which Matthew shares with Luke, is very important here for the composition of the beatitudes.

Finally, the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5–7) is the first of five discourses delivered by Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, and is mostly regarded as "one of the five great teachings that Jesus delivers to his disciples to prepare (and equip) them for the ministry."<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, "the Sermon on the Mount is the most important of the five discourses, the quintessential sermon that has captured the imagination of believers. It is not by chance, then, that this is the first of Jesus' five great discourses and that it occurs at the beginning of his ministry."<sup>64</sup>

In sum, I agree with scholars who argue that the place of the beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew is conspicuous and especially important in the sophisticated art of writing which Matthew himself is known for. In sum: the Gospel of Matthew was placed as the first<sup>65</sup> of the Synoptic

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<sup>58</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 186.

<sup>59</sup> Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 105–9.

<sup>60</sup> Carter and Levine, *The New Testament: Methods and Meanings*, 30.

<sup>61</sup> Mark Allan Powell, *Methods for Matthew*, *Methods in Biblical Interpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1.

<sup>62</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 18–22; Powell, *Introducing the New Testament*, 108–9; Carter and Levine, *The New Testament: Methods and Meanings*, 21, etc.

<sup>63</sup> Frank J. Matera, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Perfect Measure of the Christian Life* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 2013), 16–7.

<sup>64</sup> Matera, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Perfect Measure of the Christian Life*, 17; (cf. Hanson, 81, 100).

<sup>65</sup> Hays, (*Echoes of Scripture in the Gospels*, 106) argues that Matthew's way of writing his Gospel was well harmonized, lucid, and easily accessible. He believes that this may be the reason why the Gospel of Matthew was placed first in the New Testament canon.

Gospels; the Sermon on the Mount as the first of the five discourses in Matthew's Gospel; the set of the Matthean beatitudes as the first structural passage of the Sermon on the Mount; and of course the "poor in spirit" is also the first of the Matthean beatitudes. My analysis, therefore, shows a synchronized perspective on Matthew's writing, which scholars have also observed and referred to as one of the "many different literary techniques to construct his gospel."<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Chan (*The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes*, 62) mentions prominent scholars like Ulrich Luz, William Davies, and Dale Allison here.



## CHAPTER 1

### THE MEANING OF THE TERM “POOR IN SPIRIT” WITHIN THE LITERARY CONTEXT OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW AND ITS BEATITUDES

#### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

This first chapter will examine the meaning of the term “poor in spirit” within the literary context of the Gospel of Matthew and its beatitudes, because it is necessary to actually know the various meanings that have been adduced by both earlier and recent scholars for this term. We shall therefore begin by examining the beatitudes in Matthew’s Gospel, the meaning of the term “poor in spirit” within the literary context of the Gospel in a very broad way, and how it has been viewed amongst scholars.

#### 1.2 THE BEATITUDES IN THE MATTHEAN GOSPEL

*Οἱ Μακάριοι (Ματ. 5:3–12)<sup>67</sup>*

3. *Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.*
4. *Μακάριοι οἱ πενθοῦντες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ παρακληθήσονται.*
5. *Μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς, ὅτι αὐτοὶ κληρονομήσουσιν τὴν γῆν.*
6. *Μακάριοι οἱ πεινῶντες καὶ διψῶντες τὴν δικαιοσύνην, ὅτι αὐτοὶ χορτασθήσονται.*
7. *Μακάριοι οἱ ἐλεήμονες, ὅτι αὐτοὶ ἐλεηθήσονται.*
8. *Μακάριοι οἱ καθαρὸι τῇ καρδίᾳ, ὅτι αὐτοὶ τὸν Θεὸν ὄψονται.*
9. *Μακάριοι οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί, ὅτι αὐτοὶ υἱοὶ Θεοῦ κληθήσονται.*
10. *Μακάριοι οἱ δεδιωγμένοι ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης, ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.*

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<sup>67</sup> Nestle-Aland 28th Edition. Eberhard Nestle et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece* = 28th ed. (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 2012).

11. Μακάριοι ἐστε ὅταν ὀνειδίσωσιν ὑμᾶς καὶ διώξωσιν καὶ εἴπωσιν πᾶν πονηρὸν καθ' ὑμῶν ψευδόμενοι ἕνεκεν ἐμοῦ.

12. Χαίρετε καὶ ἀγαλλιᾶσθε, ὅτι ὁ μισθὸς ὑμῶν πολὺς ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς; οὕτως γὰρ ἐδίωξαν τοὺς προφήτας τοὺς πρὸ ὑμῶν.

The beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12)<sup>68</sup>

3. *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
4. *Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*
5. *Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.*
6. *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.*
7. *Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*
8. *Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*
9. *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.*
10. *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
11. *Blessed are you when men revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.*
12. *Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

One prominent scholar<sup>69</sup> who has “critically, formally and structurally analyzed the entire text”<sup>70</sup> of the Matthean beatitudes is Andreij Kodjak.<sup>71</sup> According to Kodjak,

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<sup>68</sup> This translation is from the Revised Standard Version (RSV), which is the closest and most parallel to the text of the Nestle-Aland 28th Edition. Thus all the Biblical passages quoted will be in the Revised Standard Version (RSV), unless otherwise stated.

<sup>69</sup> Several scholars have written about the Matthean beatitudes but space and time do not permit me to give all their views in this thesis. Notably amongst them are: McEleney, Guelich, Flusser, Mattison, Matera, Meadors, Tuckett, Gundry, Luz, Meier, Hagner, Lambrecht, Hanson, Chan, Michaelis, Schweizer, Windisch, etc.

<sup>70</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 43.

<sup>71</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 42–3.

*Perhaps the main problem with a cursory reading of the Beatitudes is that the reader does not ask a simple question: Why are all the Beatitudes so unpleasant, so painful, and even threatening to physical survival? Perhaps such a fundamental question does not arise simply because only a few seriously intend to apply the Beatitudes to their personal lives or perhaps because a convenient answer is always ready, namely, that such is the will of God. But no matter how naïve such a question may appear, we must confront it.<sup>72</sup>*

Going by the content of the text of Matthew's beatitudes, Kodjak observes that there is the likelihood for someone to be shocked if he reads or hears the entire text of the Matthean beatitudes for the first time.<sup>73</sup> This is because "the normal hierarchy of human values is inverted straightforwardly without any apology."<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, Kodjak is of the opinion that "those qualities that are generally considered as failures or shortcomings are treated as blessings (and/or virtues), and those who possessed them are proclaimed (or pronounced) as the blessed."<sup>75</sup> For instance, when one hears that those who are "poor in spirit" (5:3) or those who are "mourning" (5:4) are blessed, it makes both readers and listeners "experience a certain ideological and cultural shock,"<sup>76</sup> since those who witness such people would probably experience the opposite of what is pronounced (as blessed).<sup>77</sup>

I therefore strongly agree with this critical view of Kodjak, because the text cannot be quoted or interpreted literally out of context by any author. It is to do injustice to the text in its own world. This critical argument is repeated in a more general sense by Moyise, who says that "Jewish scholars have always protested that many of the cited texts have been taken out of context. For example, the famous prophecy of the birth of a child in Isa. 7:14, when read in its context, is clearly talking about a contemporary of the prophet."<sup>78</sup> So, taking a text literally will be inappropriate, unless its contextual meaning and interpretation are examined.

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<sup>72</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 43.

<sup>73</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 42.

<sup>74</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 42.

<sup>75</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 42.

<sup>76</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 42.

<sup>77</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 42.

<sup>78</sup> Steve Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New: An Introduction*, Continuum Biblical Studies (London: Continuum, 2001), 2.

Mark Powell in explaining the Matthean beatitudes (Matt. 5:3–10) classifies them into two stanzas: reversals (3–6) and rewards of the kingdom (7–10).<sup>79</sup> Powell refers to these features (mentioned by Kodjak), especially for the first four beatitudes, as “reversal of circumstances for those who are unfortunate.”<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, Powell in his remarks states:

*Contrary to popular homiletical treatments, being poor in spirit, mourning, being meek, and hungering and thirsting for righteousness or justice are not presented here as characteristics that people should exhibit if they want to earn God's favor. Rather, these are undesirable conditions that characterize no one when God's will is done.*<sup>81</sup>

Thus Powell, in support of Kodjak, describes any reading (either by scholars or commentators) of the Matthean beatitudes as “a catalogue of virtues as being pervasive in nature.”<sup>82</sup> I therefore strongly accept these similar views of Kodjak and Powell as a valid, logical and substantial argument for contemporary scholarship. This is why it is expedient to investigate the actual source(s) and purpose (or context) of Matthew's use of the term “poor in spirit” in his beatitudes.

On the main structure of the Matthean beatitudes, it must be mentioned that “almost all the scholars and interpreters<sup>83</sup> recognize Matt. 5:3–10 as a structural unit that must be considered different from Matt. 5:11–12.”<sup>84</sup> Powell argues that “the eight beatitudes (Matt. 5:3–10) are all addressed in the third person and are held together by the same apodosis found in the first and last of the series. On the other hand, the last two verses (11–12) are addressed in the second person and are distinguished (or strikingly different) from the preceding verses by length, meter,

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<sup>79</sup> Powell, “Matthew's Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” 462.

<sup>80</sup> Powell, “Matthew's Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” 469.

<sup>81</sup> Powell, “Matthew's Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” 469.

<sup>82</sup> Powell, “Matthew's Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” 469.

<sup>83</sup> Davies and Allison (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 429–31) argue that 5:11–12 should not be regarded as different from the preceding verses for two reasons: (i) because v. 11 begins with the same “blessed” as all the others and would not be appropriate to begin/introduce a new section; they back up this claim with Daube's argument (see below); (ii) they claim that there are nine beatitudes, not eight as most scholars claim or ten as Betz (*Essays*, 24) claims. Thus using the nine beatitudes, they build another argument for a tripartite outline (5:3–5; 6–8; 9–12). David Daube, (*The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* [London: Athlone, 1956], 196–201) claims that there is good precedent for making the last verse of a series longer than the preceding ones and also for the abrupt switch from the third to the second person.

<sup>84</sup> Powell, “Matthew's Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” 461.

and use of the imperative mood.”<sup>85</sup> This argument on the second or third person, however, is still under discussion by scholars.<sup>86</sup>

### 1.3 THE MEANING OF THE TERM “POOR IN SPIRIT” WITHIN THE LITERARY CONTEXT OF THE GOSPEL

The term “poor in spirit,” which is not found elsewhere in the New Testament and in the entire Christian Bible,<sup>87</sup> is here located in the first part of the first beatitude of Matthew’s Gospel:

*Blessed are the poor in spirit,*

*For theirs is the kingdom of heaven, (Matt. 5:3).*

*Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι,*

*Ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν, (Matt. 5:3).<sup>88</sup>*

#### 1.3.1. LITERARY ANALYSIS OF THE “POOR IN SPIRIT” AND THE “POOR”<sup>89</sup>

Scholars in recent times agree that apart from Matthew 5:3, where we have the “poor in spirit” (*πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι*) in the Gospel of Matthew, there are only four other places where the term poor, *πτωχοὶ* (without the phrase “in spirit” *τῷ πνεύματι*), is found in the entire Gospel of Matthew. These are: Matt. 11:5; 19:21; 26:9; and 26:11.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> Powell, “Matthew’s Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” 461–62.

<sup>86</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 185; Powell, “Matthew’s Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” 461–62, 477; McEleney, “The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain,” 9–10; Guelich, “The Matthean Beatitudes: ‘Entrance-Requirements’ or Eschatological Blessings?” 431–32; Gary T. Meadors, “The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke,” *Grace Theological Journal* 6 (1985): 305–14, (309).

<sup>87</sup> Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 111–2.

<sup>88</sup> Nestle-Aland 28th Edition. Eberhard Nestle et al., *Novum Testamentum Graece* = 28th ed. (Stuttgart: German Bible Society, 2012).

<sup>89</sup> The poor without the phrase “in spirit” also appears in the Matthean Gospel (e.g., Matthew 11:5). However, the term “poor” which is found in the first Lukan beatitude (and also parallel with the “poor in spirit”) is currently in debate among scholars. It will be considered for discussion briefly here and in the next chapter.

<sup>90</sup> William Fiddian Moulton, Alfred Sherington Geden, and I. Howard Marshall, *Concordance to the Greek New Testament* (New York: T&T Clark, 2002), 957; John R. Kohlenberger III, Edward W. Goodrick, and James. A Swanson, *The Exhaustive Concordance to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 869–70.

Collin Brown agrees with many scholars that the Greek term *πτωχός* appears over 100 times in the Old Testament LXX, but only 34 times in the New Testament, of which the Gospels take the lion's share – 24 times (i.e., Matthew - 5; Mark - 5; Luke - 10; John - 4); and others just 10 times, (i.e., Rom - 1; 2Cor - 1; Gal - 2; James - 4; Rev - 2).<sup>91</sup>

Brown observes that the expression “poor in spirit” employed by Matthew in his first beatitude (Matt. 5:3) reflects the Old Testament and Jewish background of those afflicted, who yet hope and depend solely on God (Ps. 37[36]:14; Isa. 61:1; 1QM 14:7).<sup>92</sup> However, he suggests that Luke's theme of poverty (especially in his beatitudes) may be a direct attack on the rich of his time, if we consider his beatitudes/woes structural formula.<sup>93</sup>

According to Bauer and Danker, the term poor could be used in the following ways:<sup>94</sup>

1. *Pertains to being economically disadvantaged, originally 'begging' [...] In other words, it is dependent on others for support, but also simply poor.*
2. *Pertains to being thrust on divine resources, poor.*
3. *Lacking in spiritual worth.*
4. *Pertaining to being extremely inferior in quality.*

Thus the beatitude on the “poor in spirit” (*πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι*) is literarily different from the very similar beatitude which is assumed to be written from the same Sayings Source Q, known as the Lukan beatitudes, which has only the “poor” (*πτωχοὶ*) in Luke 6:20, without adding the phrase “in spirit” (*τῷ πνεύματι*) to it. Many scholars have postulated different reasons why Matthew added the phrase “in spirit,”<sup>95</sup> or perhaps Matthew was right and it was Luke who deliberately removed the phrase when writing his beatitudes.<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, vol. 2 (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1976), 824.

<sup>92</sup> Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 824.

<sup>93</sup> Colin Brown, *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 825.

<sup>94</sup> Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and William F. Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 896.

<sup>95</sup> Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 442.

<sup>96</sup> David Flusser, “Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit...” *Israel Exploration Journal* 10 (1960): 1–13, (11); Guelich, “The Matthean Beatitudes: ‘Entrance-Requirements’ or Eschatological Blessings?” 431–2.

Meador,<sup>97</sup> for instance, in his view on the “poor” in the beatitudes of Matthew and Luke makes his argument as follows:

*Do the “poor” in Luke’s account of the beatitudes refer to the economically impoverished whereas the “poor in spirit” in Matthew’s account refer to the pious? It has become quite common to answer such a question in the affirmative and thus to see a dichotomy between the two accounts. Indeed, redactional studies have correctly observed that the Luke’s gospel contains more unique material concerning the poor and the oppressed than the other gospels.*<sup>98</sup>

Meadors in this article therefore suggests that “the ‘poor’ in both accounts of the beatitudes primarily refer to the pious, even though the fact cannot be denied that they may have also been economically oppressed.”<sup>99</sup> He believes that “both Matthew and Luke are faithful to the *ipsissima vox* (same voice) of Jesus, which means that the essential meaning is maintained even though the very words may have been altered by the gospel writers to emphasize a particular aspect but the beatitude of the poor (Matt. 5:3; Luke 6:20) is still generally considered to have its source in the same logion of Jesus (i.e., Sayings Source Q).”<sup>100</sup> Thus the meaning, according to Meadors, is still the same even if its use in individual contexts portrays different views.<sup>101</sup>

Meadors later makes his point clear by describing the use of the term “poor” in both Judaism and early Christianity (esp. Matt. 5:3 and Luke 6:20). Meador asserts that “the *πτωχοὶ* (*ptōchoi*) are the עניים (*‘ānāwîm*).”<sup>102</sup> That is, it is a term (*‘ānāwîm*) used in Judaism “to refer to the class of pious Jews.”<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, the term “poor” in the early Christianity was employed for the disciples of Jesus to mean “a class of followers.”<sup>104</sup> In other words, it is a designation for a group and not a social state of being, because “if it were merely a social state of being, then all of those who are in such a state (of poverty) would ‘own’ the kingdom.”<sup>105</sup> This would then refer to what is

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<sup>97</sup> Meadors, “The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke,” 305.

<sup>98</sup> Meadors, “The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke,” 305.

<sup>99</sup> Meadors, “The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke,” 305.

<sup>100</sup> Meadors, “The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke,” 306.

<sup>101</sup> Meadors, “The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke,” 306.

<sup>102</sup> Meadors, “The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke,” 310.

<sup>103</sup> Meadors, “The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke,” 310, n. 20.

<sup>104</sup> Meadors, “The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke,” 310.

<sup>105</sup> Meadors, “The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke,” 310.

commonly called “soteriological universalism.”<sup>106</sup> Therefore, I agree with Meadors that not all those who are poor will possess the kingdom, except those (poor) who are Jesus’ followers (the pious), since it is because of the kingdom that they deprive themselves of material possessions.

Flusser, however, has an opinion contrary to Meador’s view. Flusser asserts that “Matthew has faithfully preserved the original logion and Luke has abbreviated it without altering its meaning.”<sup>107</sup> Moreover, the term “poor” is quite different from the “poor in spirit”, as Luke’s version emphasizes the social note of Jesus’ message, whereas Matthew stresses the spiritual side of it.<sup>108</sup> I politely disagree with Flusser’s opinion in the same way that I have gladly agreed with Meadors’s view above. I don’t believe that Matthew has preserved the original logion, since previous scholarship assumes that both Matthew and Luke copied from the same Sayings Source Q. We cannot conclude outright, therefore, that either evangelist has the original logion, even though Luke’s version might emphasize the social note of Jesus’ message which Meadors also supports.<sup>109</sup> However, since Luke’s text is very close to Q, I would like to argue in support of Luke being more original, as most scholars also opine, also going by the Q text (or Q beatitudes), which we shall see in chapter three under the beatitudes in Q.

### 1.3.2 THE TERM “POOR IN SPIRIT” IN MATTHEW

The expression “poor in spirit” as earlier mentioned is found only once in the entire New Testament, and is even unique in the Greek language and other early Christian sources.<sup>110</sup> This special appearance suggests a deeper reason why the evangelist could have employed it in his beatitudes. Scholars have viewed the Matthean beatitudes as “one of the most beautiful literary pieces”<sup>111</sup> and “a highly structured passage”<sup>112</sup> that serves to open the Sermon on the Mount. Consequently, the evangelist here uses the term “poor in spirit” to open his set of beatitudes in a unique way. Betz points out some features of the term “poor in spirit” by saying:

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<sup>106</sup> Meadors, “The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke,” 310.

<sup>107</sup> Flusser, “Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit...,” 11. (cf. Meadors, “The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke,” 306).

<sup>108</sup> Flusser, “Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit...,” 11.

<sup>109</sup> Meadors, “The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke,” 310.

<sup>110</sup> Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 111–2; Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 131.

<sup>111</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 117.

<sup>112</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 42.



*The first beatitude, regarding poverty [...], has been the center of interest since New Testament times. Indeed, the response to it by readers even to this day has been overwhelming, and so is the literature dealing with it. As Ambrose says, this beatitude is not only the first in order, but also the one that in some way generates all other virtues.*<sup>113</sup>

Betz thus observes this uniqueness in Matthew's style of writing his beatitudes, and especially this first beatitude, "as though containing new insights that have kept minds and pens busy ever since the first pronouncement."<sup>114</sup> Powell and many other scholars have often noticed this about Matthew's style of writing.<sup>115</sup> Hence the term "poor in spirit" is a literary device for Matthew in the writing of his beatitudes, which in my opinion could be the reason why it is unique.

### 1.3.3 THE LITERARY MEANING OF THE TERM "POOR IN SPIRIT"

Scholars have given different meanings to this term in their bid to explain and/or interpret what Matthew could actually mean by using the term in his first beatitude. The question goes thus:

*Who are the poor in spirit (Matt. 5:3)?*<sup>116</sup>

Powell accepts the popular notion of some commentators that this phrase refers to people who are "humble,"<sup>117</sup> and buttresses this view (with the support of Luz) by saying that "this is the way most of the early church fathers have always understood the term to be."<sup>118</sup> However, Kodjak bluntly disagrees with this widely accepted view of "humility," arguing that "such an interpretation does not address itself to the fundamental question; why didn't the Speaker refer directly to humility if this is what He meant?"<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>113</sup> Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 111.

<sup>114</sup> Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 111.

<sup>115</sup> Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*, 104.

<sup>116</sup> Powell, "Matthew's Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom," 463.

<sup>117</sup> Powell, ("Matthew's Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom," 463) mentions the commentators (among others) who accept the term as "humble," as follows: Dupont, Legasse, Soiron, and Strecker.

<sup>118</sup> Powell, "Matthew's Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom," 463, n. 11; Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 192.

<sup>119</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 47.

This debate makes it interesting, as most (scholars and commentators)<sup>120</sup> who accept the meaning of humility for the “poor in spirit” likely take this position on account of the “meek” in Matthew’s third beatitude: “Blessed are the meek” (*Μακάριοι οἱ πραεῖς*), Matt. 5:5.<sup>121</sup> This notion is widely assumed by scholars to have been taken from the equivalent term in Hebrew (*ʾānāwîm*), and both are often used interchangeably.<sup>122</sup> However, McEleney observes that though the Hebrew term may really look alike, the Greek terms actually appear to be different (*πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι* and *πραεῖς*),<sup>123</sup> Greek being the language that Matthew used in the writing of his Gospel.<sup>124</sup> Therefore, I will agree with both McEleney and Kodjak’s view and argue that the term “poor in spirit,” does not actually imply humility on the basis of the Greek terms, but may seem to be widely used and/or adopted as a literary term.

Nevertheless, some scholars still strongly support this meaning given by Powell and others, regarding the term as meaning humility (or spiritually poor).<sup>125</sup> This contrasts with other diverse opinions which I do not subscribe to, but I will give my own view (meaning) at the end of this chapter. McEleney mentions some literary meanings given by other scholars in his article as follows:

*The meaning of this phrase, however, has been under discussion. Ernest Best has tentatively proposed that the “poor in spirit” designates the “fainthearted,” those who lack courage as they survey the demands of the kingdom of God as set forth in the Sermon. He who feels equal to the task will not receive the kingdom, only he who knows his own inadequacy. Best relies upon the context of IQM 14:7 to support this interpretation. But Simon Legasse has the better of Best in arguing from the same context that another moral sense is required in the War Scroll. Internal religious perfection, not courage, is in question there.*<sup>126</sup>

<sup>120</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 192; Powell, “Matthew’s Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” 463; Others mentioned by Powell are Dupont, Legasse, Soiron, and Strecker.

<sup>121</sup> James D. G. Dunn, and J. W. Rogerson, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1014.

<sup>122</sup> McEleney, “The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain,” 2; Guelich, “The Matthean Beatitudes: ‘Entrance-Requirements’ or Eschatological Blessings?” 423.

<sup>123</sup> McEleney, “The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain,” 2.

<sup>124</sup> Guelich, “The Matthean Beatitudes: ‘Entrance-Requirements’ or Eschatological Blessings?” 423.

<sup>125</sup> Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 444

<sup>126</sup> McEleney, “The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain,” 5–6.

McEleney therefore suggests that in regard to the War Scroll (1QM 14:7), Matthew could be using the term “poor in spirit” to mean an internal dependence on God in the face of external battles.<sup>127</sup> Mattison, however, in his reference to John Chrysostom’s Homilies on the Gospel to St. Matthew, emphasizes that the “poor in spirit” to him are those “who are humble and contrite of mind.”<sup>128</sup>

Chan similarly proposes a few expressions as McEleney does, citing some scholars in his book on what the term “poor in spirit” could mean and his own opinion on the term as well. He observes thus:

*The early Church community was aware of (or actually facing) the reality that those who suffer material poverty are at the same time experiencing religious poverty. Still, Matthew’s redaction tends to shift the emphasis from material to spiritual poverty for certain reasons. Nonetheless, I think Betz is right that it would be a mistake to conclude that Matthew simply spiritualizes or softens Jesus’s radical teaching; rather, the redaction could tend to forestall any misunderstanding of the meaning of “poor.” [...] Luz further understands the phrase as implying lowliness with reference to one’s spirit. Talbert likewise claims that it is used to contrast those who have a “haughty heart” (Proverbs 16:18–19).<sup>129</sup>*

So, in the end, Chan believes that “the phrase ‘poor in spirit’ essentially carries but a positive meaning.”<sup>130</sup> Also as an ethicist, he finds Betz’s view (see above) more convincing and inspiring. In other words, the phrase to him refers to “an attitude more than a condition, which specifically points to humility (as some have earlier proposed) and this for him is highly and generally praised in Jewish circles.”<sup>131</sup>

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<sup>127</sup> McEleney, “The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain,” 6.

<sup>128</sup> William C. Mattison, III, *The Sermon on the Mount and Moral Theology: A Virtue Perspective* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 27.

<sup>129</sup> Chan, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes*, 66.

<sup>130</sup> Chan, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes*, 66.

<sup>131</sup> Chan, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes*, 66.

According to the ideology of the Sect,<sup>132</sup> Flusser further opines that, “the ‘poor in spirit’ are not all the paupers, but only the poor who are endowed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and this to him could approximately be the meaning in the mouth of Jesus.”<sup>133</sup> This therefore means that the “poor in spirit” here for Flusser are those who are enriched by the Holy Spirit, and this in my view may be similar to the baptism Jesus underwent wherein he also received (or was endowed with) the Holy Spirit, and thence is called the anointed or the Christ.<sup>134</sup> France, in his own intelligent but different opinion from other scholars, takes the term “poverty of spirit” to mean “the relationship of a person with God, and not as weakness of character or mean-spiritedness.”<sup>135</sup>

Howell’s main view on the term “poor in spirit” was not actually given, as he seems to follow the literary meanings given by so many scholars in his book. However, he asked some salient but not really uncommon questions in this regard. “Was this expression an economical reference, a description of the people of God, or simply a spiritual metaphor?”<sup>136</sup> He answered these questions by agreeing with Kodjak that all the beatitudes, especially the first (poor in spirit) could be seen in the light (or setting) of poverty, that is, “the lack of security in either, the material and mental or that of the spiritual.”<sup>137</sup> This to me is not well taken neither is it convincing, as he (Howell) fails to explain what he means by this statement.

Nolland in the interpretation of the term “poor in spirit” in his commentary has given the following “range of meaning for an understanding of the term”<sup>138</sup> as offered in scholarship:

- a. *To poverty (primarily economic) in a general sense;*
- b. *To poverty (primarily economic) voluntarily chosen as an expression of piety or;*

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<sup>132</sup> This is a sect in the Qumran community, which will be discussed fully in the next chapter.

<sup>133</sup> Flusser, “Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit...,” 6, n.14.

<sup>134</sup> Matthew 3:16.

<sup>135</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 165.

<sup>136</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 131.

<sup>137</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 131.

<sup>138</sup> John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 199, n. 25.

- c. *To hardship (of which economic poverty is likely to be a component but not the defining feature) experience as a patient bearing of the judgment of God ('exile') in expectation of a future restoration ('return from exile'); or*
- d. *A statement of mind arising from deprivation and hardship (feeling poor); or*
- e. *An attitude of inner detachment from possessions, deemed to be in some sense equivalent to not having them; or*
- f. *A state of depression;*
- g. *A state of personal inadequacy;*
- h. *A state of faintheartedness; or*
- i. *A moral quality of humility; or*
- j. *As a knowledge of one's own personal inadequacy (before God); or*
- k. *As an insight into and acceptance of the general human condition as a humble one.*<sup>139</sup>

Now, speaking about the phrase “in spirit” that is attached to the poor, Nolland suggests that it could either refer to God’s (Holy) Spirit or the human spirit, but he assumes that the former seems quite unlikely and the context likely supports the latter, which could either be “inner spirit,” “human attitude or state of mind” or “an awareness of a state of being”.<sup>140</sup> Moreover, Dunn and Rogerson assert that “Matthew’s phrase ‘poor in spirit,’ does not weaken the blessing of the poor found in Luke 6:20, but enlarges the category to include all those faithful to God, as in the Qumran War Scroll, where the poor in spirit are contrasted with the hard of heart (1QM 14:7).”<sup>141</sup>

Nonetheless, there are a number of misconceptions by some scholars as regards the term “poor in spirit” which must be noted here. For instance, there is “the assumption that God does not want anyone to be poor in spirit and that when God’s will is accomplished no one will be poor in spirit any longer.”<sup>142</sup> Another, similar instance is that “the coming of the kingdom of heaven will

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<sup>139</sup> Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 198–9.

<sup>140</sup> Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 199. (See Luz’s explicit explanation on this view, pp.190–1).

<sup>141</sup> James and Rogerson, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1014.

<sup>142</sup> Powell, “Matthew’s Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” 465.

eliminate the evils that cause poverty in the present.”<sup>143</sup> These assumptions amongst others do not go well with what I consider to be the actual meaning of the term, as they seem to be stated out of context by these scholars.

However, both George Hunsinger and Frank Matera propose similar views on this term which are quite different from other earlier scholars. Hunsinger,<sup>144</sup> for example, believes that the term “poor in spirit,” as well as the other beatitudes,<sup>145</sup> was pronounced by Jesus directly to refer to himself.<sup>146</sup> Thus he states: “It is first and finally Jesus who defines what it means to be ‘poor in spirit.’ It is he himself who discloses and embodies not simply poverty but extreme poverty.”<sup>147</sup>

Similarly, Matera sees the first beatitude as well as the others (Matt. 5:3–10) as describing “the one who proclaims the Sermon (Jesus himself).”<sup>148</sup> Furthermore, Matera suggests that “even though Jesus pronounces eight beatitudes, he does not address eight categories (or groups) of people but essentially one and same set of people in this regard.”<sup>149</sup> This latter view, therefore, gives the first beatitude another point<sup>150</sup> for consideration here, as earlier mentioned in the introduction.<sup>151</sup>

This point could be described as another reason why most scholars refer to Matthew 5:3 and 10 as forming an *inclusio* (envelope), because their apodoses<sup>152</sup> (for theirs is the kingdom of heaven), bracket the other beatitudes (5:4–9), making it a single (or whole) unit, which could therefore mean that the one and same person is being characterized in this set of beatitudes. This argument is further confirmed in my opinion by Kodjak, who uses both the protases and the apodoses of the two beatitudes to express them in terms of external and internal indicators:

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<sup>143</sup> Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 444, n. 21.

<sup>144</sup> George Hunsinger, *The Beatitudes* (New York: Paulist Press, 2015), 24–30.

<sup>145</sup> Hunsinger, *The Beatitudes*, 24–92.

<sup>146</sup> Hunsinger, *The Beatitudes*, 24.

<sup>147</sup> Hunsinger, *The Beatitudes*, 24.

<sup>148</sup> Matera, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Perfect Measure of the Christian Life*, 33, 41.

<sup>149</sup> Matera, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Perfect Measure of the Christian Life*, 33, 41.

<sup>150</sup> The point in this perspective is the viewing of the eight beatitudes as one whole unit and to mean the same (that is, the one who is poor in spirit is the one who mourns, the meek, the hungry and thirsty, etc.). This point is supported by some scholars to be the actual meaning and purpose of Jesus for the Matthean beatitudes. Kodjak, 43, 69; Matera, 41, Betz, 111; Hanson, 100. (See more on this in the conclusion).

<sup>151</sup> Matera, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Perfect Measure of the Christian Life*, 33, 41.

<sup>152</sup> Powell, “Matthew’s Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” 462.

*The order of these two conditions is the same in both beatitudes: at the beginning is the external ('poor,' 'persecuted'), then the internal ('in spirit,' 'for righteousness'), followed by the same right part: 'for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'*<sup>153</sup>

This assertion by Kodjak seems to suggest that the string of beatitudes given by Matthew in his Gospel is a confirmation of the view proposed by Betz earlier on that the first beatitude “poor in spirit” is the head reference for the other beatitudes, which in a way also produces them.

#### 1.4 CONCLUSION

Having considered several opinions of scholars on the literary meaning of the term “poor in spirit”, it is obvious that this attempt to find the literary meaning cannot be exhaustive, and that it is certain that research on it is in progress. However, Kodjak disagrees with scholars’ opinions on whichever meaning they have offered and simply argues that the actual meaning of the term cannot be determined and/or known in literary terms, but should be considered within its scope or the pericope (the Sermon on the Mount) from which it is generated, and without this any opinion is tantamount to mere speculation.<sup>154</sup> He states therefore as follows:

*The phrase “poor in spirit” unites two realms of human experience: the external “poor” and the internal “in spirit.” This unity is characteristic of the entire Sermon on the Mount and symptomatically occurs at the very beginning in the first beatitude. The two parts of the expression “poor in spirit” conflict with and complement each other. There is an obvious tension between them. The word “poor” brings to mind a person deprived of the bare necessities and therefore of any security, while the phrase “in spirit” transfers this image inward and therefore seems to deny its external expression. On the other hand, while considering the concept of “the poor in spirit” as an internal state, one cannot*

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<sup>153</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 48.

<sup>154</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 47–8.

*exclude the poverty connoted by the word “poor.” To regard it as a metaphor would not suffice, since what it stands for would remain unknown.*<sup>155</sup>

From the above assertion, Kodjak therefore argues that the two basic components mentioned here, “poor” and “in spirit,” cannot be separated from each other due to the “phraseological unification”<sup>156</sup> and suggests therefore that “the external and the internal aspects of this phrase are inseparable and must be perceived simultaneously.”<sup>157</sup> Hence, they must be seen and taken as one and the same.

However, I would like to disagree very politely with Kodjak, in whose opinion the view of the term “poor in spirit” as a metaphor would not be enough “since what it stands for would remain unknown.”<sup>158</sup> But can there be anything that would ever remain unknown? And if there is, that in my view would make the essence and labour of research fruitless and without effect, because it is believed that there is always a solution to every problem in life.

I will therefore conclude here by saying that the literary interpretations of the phrase given by scholars over the years (and even centuries ago) are debatable and not sufficient to determine the actual meaning of the phrase. There is need for us to properly consider the Jewish background of Matthew that might have prompted this formulation and lead Matthew into making such a usage of the phrase to open his beatitudes. Meanwhile, I nevertheless agree with the view of both Hunsinger and Matera who accept the term as portraying the one who proclaims it, and probably as a reference point for the other beatitudes as proposed by Betz.

In any case, the literary meaning of the term “poor in spirit” in my opinion, therefore, is that a technical term has been used to explain a spiritual state through reference to a physical state. This is because life does not consist of only what is seen but also what is unseen, just as what is unseen controls the seen. For instance, someone who actually has “everything” but regards himself as having nothing. Jesus during his lifetime was powerful but never abused the power, neither was he power-drunk (not even at his arrest in Matt. 26:48–54). He was rich but decided to deny himself and lived as a pauper from birth to death (while leaving his glory in heaven).

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<sup>155</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 47.

<sup>156</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 47.

<sup>157</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 47–8.

<sup>158</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 47.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE JEWISH (AND NON-JEWISH) TRADITIONS OF MATTHEW

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this second chapter is to investigate mainly the Jewish sources that Matthew may have used in the writing of his beatitudes and more importantly the origin of the use in his first beatitude on the “poor in spirit.” Since the beatitudes in the Gospel of Matthew are assumed “to have been written (and/or addressed) to a ‘community network’ with a very important understanding of Matthew’s intention.”<sup>159</sup> This will therefore help us to understand the Jewish sources used by Matthew in writing his beatitudes, and of course the first beatitude in particular.<sup>160</sup> Thus, we shall examine the beatitudes in antiquity; the Jewish and early Christian literature; the intertextual analysis of Matt. 5:3 through the use of “the Old Testament and the Dead Sea Scrolls.”<sup>161</sup>

#### 2.2 THE BEATITUDES IN ANTIQUITY

Previous scholarship has shown that we can hardly find a complete set of the beatitudes today as they used to be in ancient times.<sup>162</sup> That notwithstanding, the available ones are seen as the oldest beatitudes that are accessible for our contemporary use.<sup>163</sup> These are found in “the Greco-Roman literature, and also in Jewish and early Christian writings.”<sup>164</sup> For the former, (i.e., the Greeks), it is believed that “it was the gods who were truly blessed (e.g., Homer, *Odyssey*).”<sup>165</sup> Luz, in his reference to this Greco-Roman literature, makes a summary of Betz’s exposition of it in his footnote as follows:

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<sup>159</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 21.

<sup>160</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 21.

<sup>161</sup> W. F. Albright, and Christopher Stephen Mann, *Matthew*, The Anchor Bible, Vol. 26 (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1971), LIV–LXXIII.

<sup>162</sup> Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 97.

<sup>163</sup> Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 97.

<sup>164</sup> Evans, *Matthew*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary, 100.

<sup>165</sup> Evans, *Matthew*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary, 100.

*Betz, (Sermon, 93, 97–99) calls attention to several early beatitudes in Egypt and Greece in which initiates are pronounced blessed, and he concludes that the original Sitz im Leben of the genre was ritual. If this general statement should be true (which I doubt in view of the few sources), it is unimportant for the Matthean Beatitudes, since a ritual origin of the genre was hardly known in Matthew’s milieu [...].*<sup>166</sup>

I agree with Luz’s assertion that the beatitudes found in Greco-Roman literature may not relate in any way to the beatitudes in the Gospels (especially the Matthean beatitudes),<sup>167</sup> and this suggests that we should be more interested in the Jewish and early Christian literature used by Matthew.

### 2.3 THE BEATITUDES IN JEWISH AND EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

The beatitudes that we have today in the New Testament (and especially in the Gospels) have “their very close background in the Old Testament and Judaism.”<sup>168</sup> According to Luz’s statement, “the beatitudes in the Bible and in Judaism are the only beatitudes that could be familiar to the hearers of Jesus and the readers of the Gospel of Matthew.”<sup>169</sup> However, this may not be absolutely true as some of the people of Jesus’ days could also have had some knowledge of the Greco-Roman beatitudes of those times. But Evans assumes that even though it may be very unlikely to find such structures of the beatitudes in Matthew and Luke’s Gospels, there are many other beatitudes throughout the Old Testament, and in the Old Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 187, n. 21.

<sup>167</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 187.

<sup>168</sup> Guelich, “The Matthean Beatitudes: ‘Entrance-Requirements’ or Eschatological Blessings?” 416.

<sup>169</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 187.

<sup>170</sup> Evans, *Matthew*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary, 100.

### 2.3.1 THE BEATITUDES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Guelich agrees with Evans's point that "most of the beatitudes in the Old Testament are truly found in the Psalms, Proverbs, and some even in the Wisdom literature of the intertestamental period."<sup>171</sup> Thus, according to Guelich, "a beatitude is essentially a declarative sentence, but the nature of the declaration is such that it readily takes on a hortative and parenetic tone."<sup>172</sup> Scholars accept that there are two key words that are used in the Old Testament for the beatitudes or blessings, and they are "bārûk" and "ašrê."<sup>173</sup>

On the meaning of these terms and the difference between them, Davies and Allison opine that the Hebrew term "bārûk" is "primarily applied to God, and could be more sacred and solemn."<sup>174</sup> Howell and these astute scholars (Davies and Allison) agree that "the LXX translated this term with the Greek term (*eulogēō*),"<sup>175</sup> and "its central idea is that of the favorable disposition of God upon the recipients of God's blessings."<sup>176</sup> According to Howell, "this term (*bārûk*) also conveys some ideas of praise and blessing that are spoken by both God and humanity in patriarchal, covenant, and priestly contexts."<sup>177</sup> In sum, Howell proposes that "central to *bārûk* was the covenant fidelity experienced in blessing."<sup>178</sup>

On the other hand, Davies and Allison argue that the second term "ašrê" does not often apply to God, but is rather used for human agents and purposes.<sup>179</sup> Evans proposes in his view that the Hebrew term "ašrê" could be linked with a name of a patriarch in the Hebrew Scripture, namely: Asher (Gen. 30:13).<sup>180</sup> Howell's view, however, on this Hebrew term "ašrê" from the LXX translation is "the state of total well-being and great happiness exemplified throughout the Old

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<sup>171</sup> Guelich, ("The Matthean Beatitudes: 'Entrance-Requirements' or Eschatological Blessings?" 416) gives a long list of these beatitudes in his article, which comprises Evans's Old Testament examples (n.121), and which can be found in the introduction of this thesis (p.2, n.13).

<sup>172</sup> Guelich, "The Matthean Beatitudes: 'Entrance-Requirements' or Eschatological Blessings?" 416.

<sup>173</sup> Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 431–2; Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 121–2; Evans, *Matthew*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary, 100.

<sup>174</sup> Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 431–2.

<sup>175</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 121; Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 432.

<sup>176</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 121.

<sup>177</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 121.

<sup>178</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 121.

<sup>179</sup> Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 431.

<sup>180</sup> Evans, *Matthew*, New Cambridge Bible Commentary, 100.

Testament, (e.g. the blessing upon the life that is lived out by wisdom, such as found in Ps. 1; Prov. 3:13, etc.).”<sup>181</sup> Of these different opinions, I will agree with Howell’s take on the LXX translation of “*ašrē*” which promises a state of total well-being and great happiness, and probably that of Evans, whose “*ašrē*” has to do with the name Asher, which etymologically connotes ‘blessing’ from the context of the text in Gen. 30:13. In the Wisdom literature, however, scholars assume that Ben Sira lists the idea of ten different “blessed” states (or characteristics) of someone that is living according to wisdom (Sir. 25:7–10).<sup>182</sup>

It is also believed in scholarship that the deliberate use of the beatitudes (makarisms) suggests the intention of a positive action such as “commendation, congratulation or being in a good situation,”<sup>183</sup> the experience of which often brings great happiness.<sup>184</sup> On the other hand, Jewish literature during the intertestamental period “reflected a distinct change from teaching that happiness was for the present to happiness for the life to come.”<sup>185</sup> The beatitudes within Jewish thought, therefore, are believed to involve “the concept of total well-being,”<sup>186</sup> which makes “its Jewish use and understanding to be of an indisputable evidence for Matthew’s dependence.”<sup>187</sup>

### 2.3.2 THE BEATITUDES IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Another instance of Jewish literature are the Dead Sea scrolls (also known as the Qumran texts), which use the beatitudes (or blessings) found in “the wisdom and eschatological (apocalyptic) texts.”<sup>188</sup> The closest of these Qumran texts to the beatitudes is 4Q525,<sup>189</sup> which will be discussed briefly in the next section.

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<sup>181</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 122.

<sup>182</sup> Guelich, “The Matthean Beatitudes: ‘Entrance-Requirements’ or Eschatological Blessings?” 416, n. 9.

<sup>183</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 160.

<sup>184</sup> Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 97; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, vol. 33A of World Biblical Commentary, ed. David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Baker (Texas: Word, 1993), 91.

<sup>185</sup> D. E. Garland, *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary*, (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys Publishing Inc., 2001), 54 in Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 122.

<sup>186</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 122.

<sup>187</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 122.

<sup>188</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 121.

<sup>189</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 121.

### 2.3.2.1 THE BEATITUDES OF 4Q525

Scholars agree that there is a remarkable similarity between this text (beatitudes) of 4Q525 and Matthew's beatitudes (Matt. 5:3–10),<sup>190</sup> making it the closest of the Qumran texts to the Matthean beatitudes.<sup>191</sup> Howell opines that scholars (like Puech)<sup>192</sup> who have studied this Qumran text (4Q525) have “pointed to its origin in sapiential (wisdom) works which is similar to both Proverbs and Ben Sira 14:20–27.”<sup>193</sup> Below is an extract of the makarisms of 4Q525 according to García Martínez and Tigchelaar:

4Q525 (4Q beatitudes). Frags. 2–3, Col. 2:1–7<sup>194</sup>

1 בלב טהור ולוא רגל על לשונו \ אשרי תומכי חוקיה ולוא יתמוכו 2 בדרכי עולה \ אש[רי]  
הגלים בה ולוא יביעו בדרכי אולת \ אשרי דורשיה 3 בבור כפים ולוא ישחרנה ב[לב] מרמה  
\ אשרי אדם השיג חוכמה \ ויתהלך 4 בתורת עליון ויכן לדרכיה לבו \ ויתאפק ביסוריה  
ובנגועיה ירצה תמ[י]ד 5 ולוא יטושנה בעוני מצר[יו] ובעת צוקה לוא יעזבנה ולוא ישכחנה  
[בימי] פחד 6 ובענות נפשו לוא יגעל[נה] \ כי בה יהגה תמיד ובצרתו ישוחח [בה ובכו] ל 7  
היותו בה [ישכיל וישיתה] לנגד עיניו לבלתי לכת בדרכי[...]

4Q525 (4Q beatitudes). Frags. 2–3, Col. 2:1–7.

(1) with a pure heart, and does not slander with his tongue. Blank Blessed are those who adhere to her laws, and do not adhere (2) to perverted paths. Blank Bles[sed] are those who rejoice in her, and do not burst out in paths of folly. Blank Blessed are those who search for her (3) with pure hands, and do not pursue her with a treacherous [heart.] Blank Blessed is the man who attains Wisdom, Blank and walks (4) in the law of the Most High, and directs his heart to her ways, Blank and is constrained by her discipline and alwa[ys] takes pleasure in her punishments; (5)

<sup>190</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 65.

<sup>191</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 121.

<sup>192</sup> E. Puech, *The Collection of Beatitudes in Hebrew and in Greek (4Q525 1-4 and MT 5, 3-12)* (Israel: Franciscan Printing Press, 1993), 353; in Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 65.

<sup>193</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 65.

<sup>194</sup> Florentino García Martínez, and Eibert Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*, vol. 2, 4q274-11q31 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 1052–54.

*and does not forsake her in the hardship of [his] wrong[s,] and in the time of anguish does not abandon her, and does not forget her [in the days of] terror, (6) and in the distress of his soul does not loathe [her]. For he always thinks of her, and in his distress he meditates [on her, and in al]l (7) his life [he thinks] of her, [and places her] in front of his eyes in order not to walk on paths [...]*<sup>195</sup>

Howell suggests that despite the seeming similarity between these two beatitudes (i.e., Matthew and 4Q525), “they do not have any direct link to each other.”<sup>196</sup> This, in my opinion, may be due to the “fragmentary text of 4Q525 that begins with a set of beatitudes which outlines the character of God’s faithful people,”<sup>197</sup> just as it is stated in Psalm 1. Moreover, the text in the Dead Sea Scrolls only “demonstrates here that there exist(s) (a beatitude genre) within the Second Temple Judaism that the Gospels of Matthew and Luke have employed.”<sup>198</sup>

#### 2.4 INTERTEXTUAL ANALYSIS OF MATTHEW 5:3 (POOR IN SPIRIT)

In order to understand how the term “poor in spirit” has been interpreted in previous scholarship, it is expedient to have a very close look at the Jewish literature used by Matthew.<sup>199</sup> Scholars emphasize that Matthew employs both the Old Testament texts and the Qumran documents from his Jewish background.<sup>200</sup> However, some scholars have “equated the notions of poverty and piety throughout biblical tradition, but the question remains: where has this concept originated from?”<sup>201</sup> But there are “many references that one might find to the plight of the impoverished among the faithful when looking into the Old Testament, since those who are without have nothing more than hope in God.”<sup>202</sup> Dunn and Rogerson express their views on the “poor” as follows:

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<sup>195</sup> García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*, 1053–55.

<sup>196</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 66.

<sup>197</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 160, n. 9.

<sup>198</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 66.

<sup>199</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 132.

<sup>200</sup> Albright and Mann, *Matthew*, LX–I.

<sup>201</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 132.

<sup>202</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 132.

*Poor in the Bible and Second Temple literature refers not only to those lacking wealth but also to the powerless, oppressed, and needy members of society. These poor, meek and powerless people are under special care of God, like the poor, widows, and orphans (Isa. 10:2), to whom God gives victory over the powerful (Isa. 16:6). The poor may be Israel oppressed by a foreign empire (Pss. Sol. 5:2; 10:6) or a community within Israel oppressed by the authorities (1QpHab.12:3; 4Q171 [Ps] 2:9-11, the congregation of the poor). This outlook opposes the standard wisdom position that the rich are blessed and the poor wretched, as found in Prov. 10:15, 'The wealth of the rich is their fortress; the poverty of the poor is their ruin,' and in a Qumran wisdom text, 'What is more insignificant than a poor man?' (4Q 417 2.1.10).<sup>203</sup>*

#### 2.4.1 THE "POOR" IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

It has been suggested by scholars that passages from the Old Testament, especially Isaiah and the Psalms, were deliberate references and a sure background for the composition of Matthew's beatitudes.<sup>204</sup> These references have greatly influenced Matthew's composition both in the content and in the wording. For example: Ps. 14:6; 34:6; 35:10; 37:14; Isa. 11:4; 57:15; 61:1; 66:2.<sup>205</sup>

The poor, in the Old Testament as earlier stated, simply refer to "those who are powerless and who are exploited for their vulnerability,"<sup>206</sup> but in general they could be regarded as "those who had desperately turned to God with hope."<sup>207</sup> Thus the poor throughout the Old Testament were portrayed as the object of God's special care<sup>208</sup> and concern.<sup>209</sup> Sometimes the term "poor" was used as "a title of honor for those living righteously in Judaism, but some scholars debate its use

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<sup>203</sup> James and Rogerson, *Eerdmans Commentary on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 1014.

<sup>204</sup> Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 200; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 163; Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 133.

<sup>205</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 133–4.

<sup>206</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 134.

<sup>207</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 134.

<sup>208</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 134.

<sup>209</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, 91.

as a title for piety.”<sup>210</sup> However, further study of Jewish literature has confirmed that the poor motif later developed into a religious designation in the first century.<sup>211</sup>

Regarding the term “poor,” Chan looks at the Greek term *πένης*, which means “beggar,” and explains how interpreters employ several Hebrew equivalents, such as *ani* (“poor”/ “afflicted”), *dal* (“weak”), and *ebyon* (“needy”).<sup>212</sup> This means that the term “poor” does not only refer to “those who are just poor in regards to possessions but particularly those who are socially and economically needy and even dependent, such as those who are forced to beg.”<sup>213</sup> They are thus referred to as “those who are in special need of God’s help.”<sup>214</sup> Therefore, I see the poor from this perspective as those who are vulnerable (i.e., weak and helpless), who cannot live independently by themselves but need to rely on others for assistance to survive or live generally.

#### 2.4.2 THE “POOR IN SPIRIT” IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Most scholars agree that the first beatitude of Matthew, “Blessed are the poor in spirit” (Matt. 5:3), which opens the Sermon on the Mount, alludes to Isaiah 61:1.<sup>215</sup>

*The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is upon me,  
for the LORD has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.  
He has sent me to comfort the brokenhearted  
and to proclaim that captives will be released  
and prisoners will be freed.*<sup>216</sup>

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<sup>210</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 134.

<sup>211</sup> Meadors, “The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke,” 308

<sup>212</sup> Chan, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes*, 66.

<sup>213</sup> Chan, *The Ten Commandments and the Beatitudes*, 66.

<sup>214</sup> Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 443.

<sup>215</sup> Evans, *Matthew*, 103; Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 443; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 165; McEleney, “The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain,” 6; Matera, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Perfect Measure of the Christian Life*, 34.

<sup>216</sup> Isaiah 61:1 (From the New Living Translation – NLT), which has very close parallels to the key words in the text, i.e., the poor and good news.



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|--|---|
| Matthew 5:3 Greek Text (Nestle Aland 28)                                       | Isaiah 61:1 (LXX)   |
| <i>Μακάριοι οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι, Ὅτι αὐτῶν ἐστὶν ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν.</i> | <i>Πνεῦμα Κυρίου ἐπ’ ἐμέ, οὗ εἵνεκεν ἔχρισέν με·<br/>εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς ἀπέσταλκέν με,<br/>ιάσασθαι τοὺς συντετριμμένους τὴν καρδίαν,<br/>κηρῦξαι αἰχμαλώτοις ἄφεσιν καὶ τυφλοῖς<br/>ἀνάβλεψιν,</i> |

Some scholars hold that the background of the first beatitude (Matt. 5:3) is very close to that of the above prophecy made by Isaiah, to bring good news to the poor<sup>217</sup> (who were at that time captives and broken-hearted in the exile). In other words, those who are poor according to the LXX are brought hope, good news or are evangelized (*εὐαγγελίσασθαι πτωχοῖς*). This is also confirmed by McEleney, who states that the poor are “evangelized, not enriched”<sup>218</sup> (cf. Matt. 11:5, Luke 4:16–21), and that this evangelization “Jesus fulfills through his ministry.”<sup>219</sup>

Though the term “poor in spirit” is not also found anywhere in the Old Testament, the LXX of Ps. 34:18 is assumed by scholars “to be close (though not exactly) to the term: *οἱ ταπεινοὶ τῷ πνεύματι* (the humbled/lowly/humble in spirit).”<sup>220</sup> Nolland further suggests that “the clearest parallel comes from the Qumran documents,”<sup>221</sup> and this will be discussed extensively in the next section.

#### 2.4.3 THE “POOR IN SPIRIT” IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

Moyise proposes that the New Testament authors shared in the writings (and/or made use) of the Dead Sea Scrolls,<sup>222</sup> which Matthew could possibly have also done. Thus looking at the “poor in

<sup>217</sup> Matera, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Perfect Measure of the Christian Life*, 34; Nolland, (*The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 193–210) here refers to the Matthean Beatitudes in their entirety (Matt. 5:3–10) as Good News to the Poor in Spirit.

<sup>218</sup> McEleney, “The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain,” 6.

<sup>219</sup> Matera, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Perfect Measure of the Christian Life*, 34.

<sup>220</sup> Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 199–200.

<sup>221</sup> Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 200.

<sup>222</sup> Moyise, *The Old Testament in the New: An Introduction*, 137.

spirit” in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Davies and Allison suggest that “the term ‘poor in spirit’ has a Hebrew equivalent in the Dead Sea Scrolls. This is (‘*nwy rwh*’) in 1QM 14:7.”<sup>223</sup>

#### 2.4.3.1 THE “POOR IN SPIRIT” IN THE WAR SCROLL (1QM 14)

*Col. 14 (+ frag. 10; = 4Q491 8–10). Lines 1–7.*<sup>224</sup>

כאש עברתו באלילי מצרים 2 ואחר העלותם מעל החללים לבוא המחנה ירננו כולם את  
תהלת המשוב ובבוקר יכבסו בגדיהם ורחצו 3 מדם פגרי האשמה ושבו אל מקום עומדם  
אשר סדרו שם המערכה לפני נפול חללי האויב וברכו שם 4 כולם את אל ישראל ורוממו  
שמו ביחד שמחה וענו ואמרו ברוך אל ישראל השומר חסד לבריתו ותעודות 5 ישועה לעם  
פדותו ויקרא כושלים ל[גבורו]ת פלא וקהל גויים אסף לכלה אין שארית ולהריס במשפט 6  
לב נמס ולפתוח פה לנאלמים לרנן בגבור[ות אל וידיים]רפות ללמד מלחמה ונותן לנמוגי  
ברכים חזוק מעמד 7 ואמוץ מתנים לשכם מכים ובעניי רוח[...]. סם לבב קושי ובתמימי דרך  
יתמו כול גויי רשעה

*Col. 14 (+ frag. 10; = 4Q491 8–10). Lines 1–7.*

*1 like the fire of his wrath against the idols of Egypt. Blank 2 And when they have departed from the slain in order to enter the camp, they shall all sing the hymn of return. In the morning they shall wash their clothes and cleanse themselves 3 of the blood of the guilty corpses. They shall go back to the site of their positions, where they arranged the battle line before the slain of the enemy fell. And there they shall all bless 4 the God of Israel and exalt his name in joyful chorus. They shall begin to speak and say: Blessed be the God of Israel, the one who keeps mercy for his covenant and pledges of 5 deliverance for the people he has redeemed. He has called those who are tottering to wondrous [exploits], and has*

<sup>223</sup> Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 444.

<sup>224</sup> Florentino García Martínez, and Eibert Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*, vol. 1, 1q1-4q273 (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 134–36.

*gathered the assembly of peoples for destruction with no remnant, in order to raise up in justice 6 the melting heart, and to open the mouth of the dumb to sing [God's] marvels], and to train feeble [hands] in warfare. Those with knocking knees he gives strength to stand upright, 7 and vigor of loins to broken backs. By the poor in spirit [...] a hard heart. By the perfect ones of the path all the wicked peoples shall be destroyed.*<sup>225</sup>

According to Keck, the usage of the above text in the War Scroll suggests that 1QM 14:7 is “part of the hymn for celebrating victory and thus praising God for teaching warfare to the weak and for giving strength to the tottering.”<sup>226</sup> I agree with Keck’s explanation that the text of the War Scroll is a kind of song or hymn praising God who gives victory, which probably was often recited before and/or after going to the battle field. Similarly, McEleney, and I myself, like Keck, see the hymn as depicting an internal dependence on God alone who promises victories in a time of battles or warfare.<sup>227</sup>

I can deduce from the text of the War Scroll above (1QM 14:1–7), which the authors above (García Martínez and Tigchelaar) have given here, that the following expressions seem to form parallels with the set of beatitudes in Matthew’s Gospel:

- Those who are tottering (line 5)
- The melting heart (line 6)
- The mouth of the numb (line 6)
- Feeble hands (line 6)
- Those with knocking knees (line 6)
- The broken backs (line 7)
- The poor in spirit (line 7).

A close look at the above expressions reveals that they all have to do with people who are unstable, anxious, weak, helpless and probably fearful, which in a way is similar to the set of Matthean beatitudes, which for Powell refer to “those who are unfortunate”,<sup>228</sup> and in the same

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<sup>225</sup> García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*, 135–37

<sup>226</sup> Keck, “The Poor among the Saints in Jewish Christianity and Qumran,” 71.

<sup>227</sup> McEleney, “The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain,” 6.

<sup>228</sup> Powell, “Matthew's Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” 469.

vein Kodjak refers to the experiences described in the beatitudes as “unpleasant, painful and even a threat to physical survival.”<sup>229</sup>

Furthermore, I want to emphasize that the term “poor in spirit” which was employed by Matthew comes at the end or takes the last place of the (seven) expressions mentioned above from the War Scroll (1QM 14:1–7), thus serving as a close in that sequence, whereas Matthew in his usual style and creativity reverses the case in his own beatitudes, so that the expression “poor in spirit” opens and begins not only his set of beatitudes but the entire Sermon on the Mount.

Therefore, the expression “poor in spirit” from the War Scroll (1QM 14:7) seems to have been adopted by Matthew for his first beatitude, considering its literary closeness and similarity. It is possible, in my own opinion, that Matthew employed the expression in view of the above analysis as a special or unique construct to open his set of beatitudes.

According to Howell, “the Dead Sea community spoke of itself as a people that are submitted to the will of God and not as the poor in economic conditions like the rest of Israel.”<sup>230</sup> Thus, the “poor in spirit” from the Qumran texts as discussed above pertains to “humility of the heart and spirit in regards to an eschatological hope.”<sup>231</sup> Nolland, in his view of the Qumran texts, describes the “poor in spirit” thus:

*The “poor in spirit” will be those who sense the burden of their present (impoverished) state, and see it in terms of the absence of God; who patiently bear the state, but long for God to act on their behalf and decisively claim them again as his people.*<sup>232</sup>

Flusser shares a similar opinion with Howell and Nolland in using the allusion to the Thanksgiving Scroll (Col. 23:15–16) for a deeper understanding of this logion in Matthew 5:3 (*οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι*).<sup>233</sup> Flusser also argues here that there is an historical connection between Jesus’ word and the ideology of the Dead Sea Sect:

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<sup>229</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 43.

<sup>230</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 133.

<sup>231</sup> Howell, *The Matthean Beatitudes in Their Jewish Origins*, 133.

<sup>232</sup> Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 200–1.

<sup>233</sup> Flusser, “Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit...,” 2–4.

*This connection between the words of Jesus and the ideology of the Sect must have been clear to the hearers of Jesus' words. It is therefore probable that in his opening words, Jesus deliberately alluded to the doctrine of the Sect with the intention to stress the point of contact between his message of love and the radical social claims of the Sect, the promise of eschatological salvation of the poor, the afflicted, and of them that suffer persecution and despair.*<sup>234</sup>

Hence, Matthew's Jesus calls "the blessed 'poor in spirit,' by which title the community of paupers of Qumran designated itself,"<sup>235</sup> as earlier stated. Significantly, and "according to the ideology of the Sect, the 'poor in spirit' are not all the paupers, but only the 'poor' who are endowed with the Holy Spirit," and I quite agree with Flusser's opinion that "that could be the meaning of the term in Jesus' mouth, from the sectarian point of view."<sup>236</sup> This assertion to me therefore queries the authenticity of Q (which query we shall examine in the next chapter).

## 2.5 CONCLUSION

This chapter has tried to investigate the formulation of the term "poor in spirit" from the Jewish perspectives that Matthew probably used in the composition of his beatitudes and the first beatitude in particular. However, the references in the Old Testament as argued by scholars are not convincing enough, as there is no similar term to the actual expression or term in the Old Testament passages.

Although Moyise argues that, "old texts appear to be given new meaning by being used in new contexts,"<sup>237</sup> I think this is not the case here for Matthew, because Matthew's "the poor in spirit" sounds more like an echo of than an allusion to the term "the poor" in Isaiah 61:1 (and in other Old Testament passages), as earlier argued by most scholars that also mentioned "poor" in any form.

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<sup>234</sup> Flusser, "Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit...", 9.

<sup>235</sup> Flusser, "Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit...", 9.

<sup>236</sup> Flusser, "Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit...", 6, n. 14.

<sup>237</sup> Steve Moyise, "Intertextuality and Biblical Studies: A Review," *Verbum et Ecclesia JRG* 23 (2002): 418–31 (418).

I would like to close this chapter by arguing that the term employed in the Old Testament for the “the poor” is not convincingly similar enough going by the context of the text as well (except for the parallel Hebrew term *ʿānāwîm* of the Qumran Scrolls (1QM 14:7) which may be similar to that of Isaiah 61:1 but not the same). As both texts show in the table above, Isaiah projects the text as “evangelizing” for the “poor,” while Matthew projects his text as “blessings” for the “poor in spirit.”

Therefore, I would like to argue in support of McEleney’s view, but only with the concession that “the first beatitude ‘poor in spirit’ was originally cast with construct phrase that is taken as the parallel expression of the Hebrew (*ʿnwy rwḥ*) in 1QM 14:7.”<sup>238</sup> Nolland also follows this same view to argue that there is little or no doubt that “the Qumran usage provides the best starting point for us to understand the perspective of Matthew’s use for the term.”<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>238</sup> McEleney, “The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain,” 8.

<sup>239</sup> Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, 200.

## CHAPTER 3

### MATTHEW'S USE OF THE SAYINGS SOURCE Q

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This last chapter before the conclusion will examine how Matthew engages Q in the formulation of his beatitudes. Some scholars, however, assume that Matthew's beatitudes are primarily derived from (or composed of) Q, while some others argue that Luke (who also uses Q for his beatitudes and employs the second person pronoun) is more original.<sup>240</sup> So the argument goes that either of them has the original version of Q in writing the beatitudes.<sup>241</sup> But it can also be argued that neither of them has the original of Q due to the redaction process in which both evangelists were involved. This chapter, therefore, will make an investigation on this current debate (and the arguments), by examining the Sayings Source Q and the beatitudes in Q.

#### 3.2 THE STUDY OF Q

The Gospels of Matthew and Luke are assumed by some scholars to have been written independently,<sup>242</sup> each using Mark and a second hypothetical document called Q as a source.<sup>243</sup> The Q<sup>244</sup> source is thus a hypothetical written collection of primarily Jesus' sayings (*logia*).<sup>245</sup> Q is comprised of the common material found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke but not in the Gospel of Mark (e.g. the beatitudes).<sup>246</sup> According to this hypothesis, this material could have been drawn from the early church's oral tradition, as Powell says: "Perhaps it was simply a memorized collection of sayings, a summary of the teaching of Jesus that Christians or Christian

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<sup>240</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 185.

<sup>241</sup> Meadors, "The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke," 309.

<sup>242</sup> C. M. Tuckett, and M. D. Goulder, "The Beatitudes: A Source-Critical Study," *Novum Testamentum* 25 (1983): 193–216, (193); Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*, 95.

<sup>243</sup> David Catchpole, *The Quest for Q* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015), 1.

<sup>244</sup> The Q source (also called Q document, Q Gospel, or Q from German: *Quelle*, meaning "source").

<sup>245</sup> Meadors, "The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke," 306.

<sup>246</sup> Tuckett and Goulder, "The Beatitudes: A Source-Critical Study," 193.

leaders learned by heart.”<sup>247</sup> Powell gives an illustration of how scholars view it in the early church:

*There was a period in early church history (ca. 70–85) when Christians had two writings about Jesus: the Gospel of Mark and what we now call the Q source. Churches made copies of these two works and passed them around. It wasn’t long, however, before people began to think, “Why not combine them?” And Matthew and Luke did exactly that, each in his own way. Each of them appears to have done this independently [...].*<sup>248</sup>

Thus Powell agrees that since most scholars think Q was a written document which both Matthew and Luke have in common (but not Mark), “it was then thought unnecessary to preserve copies by the church.”<sup>249</sup> However, failure to keep this document has also brought about the debate among scholars on the existence of Q.<sup>250</sup> Tuckett thus suggests that just as Matthew became favorite and commonly used, the interest in the use of Mark (that was assumed to have been written first) was minimized and limited by scholars; and this was the case with Q (before it was no longer in circulation), after it was available in both Matthew and Luke.<sup>251</sup> In other words, “the appearance of Matthew and Luke’s gospels might have led to the redundancy of Q material which could have caused its lack of prominence in primitive Christianity.”<sup>252</sup>

One of the most important features of the Sayings Source Q in previous scholarship is the “standard solution”<sup>253</sup> it has offered for the Synoptic Problem, i.e. “the problem of the relationship between the three synoptic gospels, which is known as the Two Source Theory (2ST).”<sup>254</sup> In other words, besides Mark, Q is another source which Matthew and Luke are made up of (hence it is called the Two Source Theory).<sup>255</sup> Although since the ancient copy of Q seems not to exist anymore, “scholars have made attempts to reconstruct it on the basis of the available

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<sup>247</sup> Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*, 98.

<sup>248</sup> Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*, 95.

<sup>249</sup> Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*, 98.

<sup>250</sup> Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q*, 1–40; Catchpole, *The quest for Q*, 1–59.

<sup>251</sup> Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q*, 3.

<sup>252</sup> Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q*, 3.

<sup>253</sup> Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q*, 1.

<sup>254</sup> Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q*, 1.

<sup>255</sup> Carter and Levine, *The New Testament: Methods and Meanings*, 21.



and common material found in Matthew and Luke.”<sup>256</sup> One of the pieces of this common material that is absent in Mark but found in the other two Gospels (Matthew and Luke) is the beatitudes, which are now generally acknowledged to derive from Q.<sup>257</sup>

### 3.3 THE BEATITUDES IN Q

According to Luz, “the first, second, and fourth beatitudes in Matthew’s Gospel are based on a Q text (Q 6:20b–21),”<sup>258</sup> which is assumed to be closer to the text of Luke, with the exception of the “now” that was added twice in Q 6:21.<sup>259</sup> However, the claim of identity with only the Lukan text is still seriously debated in both previous and recent scholarship. Catchpole, for instance, makes the following assertion:

*Arguments have already been adduced in support of the view that the beatitudes in Q consisted only of those preserved by Luke 6:20b–23, and that those which confer blessedness on the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, and the peacemakers are unlikely to have been known to Luke.*<sup>260</sup>

Catchpole thus regards some of these Matthean beatitudes as not only resulting from the creativity of Matthew in establishing his beatitudes but also an expression of the favorite ideas of Matthew perhaps inserted after a short while “in the Q sequence.”<sup>261</sup> In sum, Catchpole argues that Matthew’s beatitudes are both modified<sup>262</sup> and spiritualized,<sup>263</sup> but only Luke (6:20b–23) has “the complete range of Q beatitudes.”<sup>264</sup>

In the first beatitude, for instance, Tuckett agrees with prominent scholars<sup>265</sup> that the object of the beatitude in Q is the “poor” and not the “poor in spirit” in Matthew’s beatitude, which is

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<sup>256</sup> Carter and Levine, *The New Testament: Methods and Meanings*, 21–2.

<sup>257</sup> Powell, *Introducing the New Testament: A Historical, Literary, and Theological Survey*, 98.

<sup>258</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 185.

<sup>259</sup> Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 185.

<sup>260</sup> Catchpole, *The Quest for Q*, 81.

<sup>261</sup> Catchpole, *The Quest for Q*, 81.

<sup>262</sup> Catchpole, *The Quest for Q*, 84.

<sup>263</sup> Catchpole, *The Quest for Q*, 87.

<sup>264</sup> Catchpole, *The Quest for Q*, 83.

<sup>265</sup> Catchpole, *The Quest for Q*, 84; Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 227; Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 442.

likely due to “Matthew’s redactional change, thus spiritualizing and at the same time modifying the beatitude like he does in the place of hungry (5:6), making it hunger and thirst for righteousness.”<sup>266</sup>

However, Guelich<sup>267</sup> and Meadors<sup>268</sup> differ in opinion with both Catchpole and Tuckett on the argument raised above, arguing that both Matthew and Luke had drawn their beatitudes from the Q source; and that the two evangelists might have modified their beatitudes to suit their respective purposes. I quite agree with this idea of both Guelich and Meadors, as it is widely accepted by both earlier and recent scholarship.

Furthermore, previous scholarship also agrees that there is a link between the wording of the beatitudes and Isaiah 61 (as mentioned in the previous chapter). For instance, “the blessing on the ‘poor’ in the first beatitude in reflecting Isa. 61:1; and Matthew’s second beatitude on those who mourn echoing the wording of Isa. 61:2.”<sup>269</sup> Nevertheless, there is still a dispute on this as to “the present level of Q or whether it is the Matthean Redaction (MattR) that has enhanced the allusions to that of Isaiah 61.”<sup>270</sup>

I want to support Tuckett here in his view that the Matthean redaction might have truly influenced what is perceived by Tuckett and other scholars (like Evans) to be an “echo” and not really an “allusion” to Isaiah 61. Evans asserts that “the ‘poor in spirit’ of Matt. 5:3 echoes Isaiah 61:1; ‘mourn and comforted’ in Matt. 5:4 echo Isaiah 61:2; [...]”<sup>271</sup> However, Tuckett still argues that “Isaiah 61 seems to have a reference which is part of the characteristic of Q, but not of Matthew or Luke, which forms a distinctive theological motif that links the parts of the ‘Q’ material.”<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>266</sup> Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q*, 223.

<sup>267</sup> Guelich, “The Matthean Beatitudes: ‘Entrance-Requirements’ or Eschatological Blessings?” 419–24.

<sup>268</sup> Meadors, “The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke,” 306.

<sup>269</sup> Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q*, 223; Tuckett and Goulder, “The Beatitudes: A Source-Critical Study,” 205.

<sup>270</sup> Tuckett, *Q and the History of Early Christianity: Studies on Q*, 223.

<sup>271</sup> Evans, *Matthew*, 103.

<sup>272</sup> Tuckett and Goulder, “The Beatitudes: A Source-Critical Study,” 206.

### 3.4 CONCLUSION

I would like to summarize the different opinions given here by scholars as regards the Matthean beatitudes originating from Q. It is not very certain from my research that Matthew has actually copied from Q as regards his first beatitudes. Though there are some elements of connection or features that look like those of the Q beatitudes (like Matthew's second *πενθοῦντες* and fourth *πεινῶντες* beatitudes),<sup>273</sup> I am not very convinced as to whether these are actually what they are thought to be. Definitely the first beatitude of Matthew (*πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι*) is not from Q, which has just *πτωχοὶ*.<sup>274</sup> Matthew's beatitude has thus taken neither a redactional form nor a spiritualized form as earlier argued by scholars.

Therefore, what I think about this first beatitude and Q is that they are similar in terms of their background in reference to the "poor" and this I would rather refer to as "a template" used by Matthew, who perhaps had the idea from what the Q beatitudes look like, and modifies his by adding "in spirit" as widely suggested by scholars, but I think perhaps he might have in this phrase by his foreknowledge of the Qumran documents (e.g., 1QM 14:7). As McEleney also suggests in my introduction, and I want to stress it here again, "One can concede that the first beatitude was originally cast with a construct phrase, as the parallel expression of 1QM 14:7 shows."<sup>275</sup>

However, some scholars like Flusser,<sup>276</sup> who see Matthew as being more original (which he is but only in the Hebrew construct phrase, which is especially found in the Qumran documents), have no reference to Q in this respect. So I would like to take it as only a template for writing his beatitudes, as McEleney<sup>277</sup> also opines, and thus makes no substantive reference in his article to Q. Catchpole agrees with this point by quoting the reply made to Tuckett<sup>278</sup> by Goulder who "argues that Matthew is glossing, not Q but Isaiah 61, 'to make sure that all this is taken on the proper spiritual level'."<sup>279</sup> So, following Catchpole, I am not convinced that Q was employed

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<sup>273</sup> Catchpole, *The Quest for Q*, 86.

<sup>274</sup> Catchpole, *The Quest for Q*, 86.

<sup>275</sup> McEleney, "The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain," 8.

<sup>276</sup> Flusser, "Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit..." 11.

<sup>277</sup> McEleney, "The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain," 1–13.

<sup>278</sup> Tuckett and Goulder, "The Beatitudes: A Source-Critical Study," 209.

<sup>279</sup> Catchpole, *The Quest for Q*, 17–8.

primarily by Matthew as scholars suggest, but he probably used the Hebrew expression of the term, especially from the War Scroll (1QM 14:7) in the Qumran documents.

## CONCLUSION

In this conclusion, I would like to give a summary of what this thesis has been able to carry out. The formulation and usage of the term “poor in spirit” may have possibly been taken from the Qumran community, especially the War Scroll (1QM 14:7), which we discussed in the second chapter of this thesis. Our research showed that the literary meaning of the term as postulated by many scholars in chapter one was not sufficient in this case, except for the arguments of both Matera and Hunsinger (with whom I agree), as they opine that the actual meaning could refer to the speaker or “proclaimer”<sup>280</sup> of the Sermon on the Mount, who is “Jesus Christ himself.”<sup>281</sup>

Who is the “poor in spirit”? The term “poor in spirit” from my point of view is a reference to a person, not just a phrase or an expression as most exegetes describe it.<sup>282</sup> The term as earlier mentioned is employed only by Matthew in the New Testament and in the entire Christian Bible. The person meant by Matthew in his beatitudes is one who possesses all the attributes mentioned in the Matthean beatitudes. He is the mourner, the meek, the hungry and thirsty, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemaker, and the persecuted. All these characteristics were exemplified by Jesus during his lifetime, and revealed throughout the Gospels, and emphatically given as a description of a perfect disciple.<sup>283</sup>

Some scholars seem to support this opinion by seeing the *inclusio* pattern or formula (i.e., Matt. 5:3 and Matt. 5:10) as a bracket that unifies the beatitudes of Matthew as a whole with the apodoses (for theirs is the kingdom of heaven), to envelop the remaining beatitudes (5:4–9).<sup>284</sup> This forms a whole unit which could be taken as an entity that refers to Jesus Christ, in accordance with Kodjaks’ assertion discussed in the first chapter.

Therefore, I would like to support these two scholars’ opinion (i.e., Matera and Hunsinger), and accept the term as a reference to Jesus Christ who portrayed himself as a model<sup>285</sup> for the present disciples and the would-be disciples. Scholars in both earlier and recent scholarship believe that

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<sup>280</sup> Matera, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Perfect Measure of the Christian Life*, 33.

<sup>281</sup> Hunsinger, *The Beatitudes*, 24.

<sup>282</sup> Luz (*Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 189) suggests that the term might have functioned as a title (in Jesus’ original series of three). But this is not convincing to me in this context here.

<sup>283</sup> Matera, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Perfect Measure of the Christian Life*, 41.

<sup>284</sup> Powell, “Matthew’s Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” 462.

<sup>285</sup> Matera, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Perfect Measure of the Christian Life*, 41.

the Matthean beatitudes anchor the Sermon on the Mount from the beginning to the end.<sup>286</sup> In other words, “the beatitudes set the program for the rest of the Sermon and arguably the entire life of discipleship.”<sup>287</sup> The Matthean beatitudes are also considered by these scholars to be a kind of manifesto which was given at the start of Jesus’ ministry, and which was later carried out by him (Jesus Christ).<sup>288</sup>

With regard to the Jewish sources that Matthew might have used in wording his formulation as earlier discussed in the main introduction and in the second chapter, there is no reference to the “poor in spirit” throughout the Old Testament; and the Qumran Scrolls show that it is a name used for a community of paupers who are endowed with the Holy Spirit.<sup>289</sup> This I think may be similar to Matthew’s use of the term, because Jesus is the one endowed with the Holy Spirit (at baptism), and thus called the anointed one, or the Messiah, or the Christ.

However, it is assumed that both Matthew and Luke have copied from the Sayings Source Q. I dare to say that Luke actually copied from Q and made his own (slight) additions which are not found in Q (like “now,” the “last/longest of the beatitudes” and the “woes”). But in the case of Matthew, I think he has only copied from Q in the sense of using it as a template for his beatitudes, based on his redactional features which most scholars believe he has added, coupled with his style and concept of spiritualization.<sup>290</sup>

As earlier observed, some scholars seem to have some misconceptions about this term, such as “the assumption that God does not want anyone to be poor in spirit and that when God’s will is accomplished no one will be poor in spirit any longer.”<sup>291</sup> Another scholar says “that the coming of the kingdom of heaven will eliminate the evils that cause poverty in the present.”<sup>292</sup> In my view, these are assumptions which disregard the context of what the term actually means in the setting of Matthew’s Gospel.

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<sup>286</sup> Mattison, *The Sermon on the Mount and Moral Theology: A Virtue Perspective*, 58; Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 110.

<sup>287</sup> Mattison, *The Sermon on the Mount and Moral Theology: A Virtue Perspective*, 58.

<sup>288</sup> Matera, *The Sermon on the Mount: The Perfect Measure of the Christian Life*, 41.

<sup>289</sup> Flusser, “Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit...,” 6, 9.

<sup>290</sup> France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 165, n. 22; Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 444; Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary*, 193.

<sup>291</sup> Powell, “Matthew’s Beatitudes: Reversals and Rewards of the Kingdom,” 465.

<sup>292</sup> Davies and Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, 444, n. 21.

The agreement of Betz with Ambrose's statement concerning the first beatitude (in my first chapter) is strongly supported here. Thus I consider the expression of Ambrose to be a validation of what my argument has been since the beginning of this thesis. In other words, the term "poor in spirit" may be taken to mean that the first beatitude governs and produces all the other beatitudes in a way which is not found in any other beatitudes, not even the most parallel Lukan beatitudes (Luke 6:20–26).

I would like to submit as I close this conclusion that Matthew has taken the formulation from Qumran but not necessarily the meaning (or its context), and used it as a metaphor to depict Jesus who was regarded as the poor, but yet baptized with the Holy Spirit to be the anointed of God. So herein I follow scholars like David Turner<sup>293</sup> and John Meifr<sup>294</sup>, who in their concluding remarks summarize the Matthean beatitudes as follows: "the beatitudes are the autobiography of Jesus, a perfect self-portrait by the Master."<sup>295</sup> Hunsinger asserts in both his introduction and conclusion that the Matthean beatitudes are thus best understood as "the self-interpretation of Jesus."<sup>296</sup>

This, therefore, in my opinion should bring an end to the current debate amongst scholars over the comparison of first beatitude of the Matthean and Lukan texts on the poor,<sup>297</sup> and my conclusion is that the term "poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3) of Matthew's beatitude must be seen differently from the "poor" (Luke 6:20) of the Lukan beatitude (which stems almost directly from the Q beatitudes, Q6:20).<sup>298</sup> This is because they stand apart, as Luke's "poor" is taken in literary terms to mean the socially and economically oppressed, whose hope and dependence is solely on God, whereas Matthew's "poor in spirit" is more of a metaphoric figure that anchors the virtues mentioned in the other beatitudes. Secondly, as a unique term which Matthew in his creative manner and literary style has taken from the Dead Sea Scrolls to open his beatitudes, the term cannot be found elsewhere in the Christian Bible (i.e., in both the Old and New

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<sup>293</sup> David L. Turner, "Whom Does God Approve? The Context, Structure, Purpose, and Exegesis of Matthew's Beatitudes," *Criswell Theological Review* 6 (1992): 29–42.

<sup>294</sup> Meifr, "Matthew 5: 3–12," 281–85.

<sup>295</sup> Turner, "Whom Does God Approve? The Context, Structure, Purpose, and Exegesis of Matthew's Beatitudes," 42; Meifr, "Matthew 5: 3–12," 285.

<sup>296</sup> Hunsinger, *The Beatitudes*, 18, 93.

<sup>297</sup> Meadors, "The Poor in the Beatitudes of Matthew and Luke," 305–14.

<sup>298</sup> Guelich, "The Matthean Beatitudes: 'Entrance-Requirements' or Eschatological Blessings?" 433.

Testaments). Thirdly, it is an umbrella term for grouping his beatitudes, as suggested earlier by scholars, most especially McEleney<sup>299</sup> and Kodjak.<sup>300</sup>

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<sup>299</sup> McEleney, "The Beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount/Plain," 5.

<sup>300</sup> Kodjak, *A Structural Analysis of the Sermon on the Mount*, 43, 69.



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