

From text to intertext: Intertextuality as a paradigm for reading Matthew

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Abstract

In this article intertextuality is introduced as one important part of a theory of the semiotics of biblical texts. Intertextuality is an essential factor for the generation of the meanings of a text in the acts of the production and reception of a text. It opens the internal structure of a text with regard to its relations to other texts. The semiotic concept of intertextuality distinguishes three ways of intertextual readings: production-oriented intertextuality, reception-oriented intertextuality and experimental intertextuality. This wide but differentiated concept of intertextuality can serve as a theory and helpful method for investigations of the history of biblical texts as well as for reflected school lessons, sermons and poetics in today's times. An intertextual reading of the first chapter of Matthew provides a test case of this semiotic concept of intertextuality.

Dedicated to Dr Richard B Hays

1. INTRODUCTION

In my essay entitled "Intertextualität: Annäherungen an ein texttheoretisches Paradigma" (Alkier 2003a:1-26; cf Alkier 2001:55-88; 2004a:60-65; 2004b:108-128) I attempted to provide a short introduction with regard to the history of and the present discussions about intertextuality as a paradigm for a theory of texts. The areas most involved in this discussion are literary theory,

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text linguistics and semiotics. I tried to indicate that in the absence of a common conception of intertextuality, every scholar using this concept has to define how he or she understands “intertextuality”. Although there is no common conception, it is generally accepted that every text is related to other texts and that these relations are constitutive for the generation of the meanings of the text. Adherents of different positions think differently about these relations, and they give different answers to the question of how relations to other texts are constitutive for the meaning of a text. The most important issues are the following:

- On the one hand, there is an unlimited conception of intertextuality. Intertext becomes a synonym for culture, with the consequence that every text more or less has a relation to every other text. (Or, every text is more or less related to every other text.) On the other hand, there is a restricted conception of intertextuality. An intertext is one (or some) concrete texts. In accordance with this view a given text has some particular, describable relations to one or more texts.
- Intertextuality as a phenomenon of the *production* of the text *versus* intertextuality as a phenomenon of the *reception* of the text.

Without repeating the entire original paper in this forum, I want to briefly explain what is important for a theory of intertextuality in terms of reading biblical texts under the conditions of our present cultural knowledge. This will be followed by an intertextual reading of the first chapter of Matthew as a test case. The purpose is to provide some possibilities for an intertextual reading of Matthew.

2. A BRIEF THEORY OF INTERTEXTUALITY FOR BIBLICAL SCHOLARS

Intertextuality is an important aspect of textuality (Heinemann & Viehweger 1991:76f).² Intertextuality is an essential factor for generating the meanings of a text in the acts of the production *and* reception of a text. It opens the internal structure of a text with regard to its relations to other texts. Thus, an intertextual way of reading deconstructs all closed readings, for no single reading can actualize all possible intertextual relations. On the other hand, the search for *plausible* relations with other texts saves intertextual readings from being arbitrary exercises of little importance.

² The following aspects of textuality, namely cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationality, intertextuality are to be noted.

In my understanding of biblical studies, intertextuality is an important part of a theory of the semiotics of biblical texts. What does it mean? First and foremost, intertextual reading is *one* way, but not the only important way, of reading biblical texts. Intratextual and extratextual readings are also needed. This is, however, not a plea for a methodologically pluralistic point of view. My conception of biblical exegesis is based on a theory of semiotics. This allows us to formulate all exegetical procedures on the basis of a theory of texts, which in turn is based on a theory of signs, because signs are the universal formal elements of communication.

The theories of signs most relevant to biblical studies are those of Charles Sanders Peirce (after the name change from Ferdinand de Saussure to Peirce) and Umberto Eco. It is within this framework that I wish to outline my concept of intertextuality.

With reference to intertextuality, it is necessary to clarify the concept of text used in this instance. In a semiotic perspective, texts are complex signs that consist of signs and their relations to other signs (syntagmatics), their relations to that of which they are signs (semantics), and their relations to their users (pragmatics). One may enquire about these relations chiefly in terms of text-internal dynamics or mainly in terms of text-external dynamics, which however does not amount to a contradiction. Text-internal and text-external perspectives complement each other.

The first step of a semiotic reading is an intratextual analysis. It asks about the syntagmatics, semantics and pragmatics of a given text as a world in itself, a possible world, that which I call the text's *universe of discourse*, a concept found in the writings of Peirce.³ I refer to the external relations of a text as its encyclopaedic relations. Eco's (1984) concept of the encyclopedia is the framework of the cultural knowledge of which the text is a part. The encyclopaedia allows us to fill in the blank spaces of a given text, which is essential in any act of reading (cf Eco 1984:14).

On the level of the universe of discourse, the word structures and the ideological structures (cf Eco 1984:14) that the signs of the text produce to read apply. In this case the text must be read as an autonomous structure. In contrast, the encyclopaedia requires codified knowledge of a given culture. Such codified knowledge consists not only of an intertextual competence, but also includes, for example, political, geographical, and social knowledge (cf Alkier, in Zangenberg 2003). The autonomous structure of the universe of discourse of a given text is revealed by the use of an assigned encyclopaedia.

³ The most useful introduction to the semiotics of Peirce is J J Lizska (1996), *A general introduction to the semiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce*. Bloomington and Indianapolis. (IUP.) With regard to the concept of the universe of discourse, see Lizska (1996:91f).

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First one has to choose an encyclopaedia that is relevant to the aim of the interpretation. Should one be interested only in the *intentio operis* pertaining to the time and culture of the production of the text, the encyclopaedia that is applicable at the production level of the text, will be used. As a consequence, only the relations to other texts guaranteed by the signs of the text will be investigated. I refer to this way of reading as *production-oriented intertextuality*. Should one want to investigate the history of reception, only the intertextual relations given in the texts of concrete readers are analysed. In this case the encyclopaedias of those concrete readings one wishes to investigate are to be used. This way of reading can be termed as *reception-oriented intertextuality*. Should one be interested in useful or interesting readings for today, the text can be creatively related to any other text in the expectation that this intertextual relation may generate interesting and rewarding effects of meaning. This being the case, the encyclopaedic knowledge of one's own society must be applied. This way of reading is called *experimental intertextuality*.

At the level of the *universe of discourse*, that which the *biblos* of Matthew offers to read, applies. The world is similar to that which we read. The intertextual exercise at this level is to enquire about marked relations to other texts and to investigate the formal features of the marker and its function for generating the meaning of the text with no regard to the quoted text as a whole. At this level it does not matter whether the quoted text exists or does not exist. In this way of reading, intertextuality becomes a part of intratextual analysis.

With regard to Matthew 1, it should be noted that at the level of the universe of discourse the genealogy is not an intertextual phenomenon, however, the fulfilment quotation in Mt 1:22f is one. At the level of the universe of discourse, it does not matter that Matthew's genealogy is incomplete, nor that it differs from the genealogy of Luke. One will however enquire about the way in which Matthew marks the quotation in verse 22, and about the function the fulfilment quotation has for the book of Matthew. The identification of the prophet in verse 22 or the quotation in verse 23 is not possible at the level of the universe of discourse. The reader has to actualize his encyclopaedic knowledge in order for him or her to identify the prophet with Isaiah and Matthew 1:23 with Isaiah 7:14.

In terms of the encyclopaedia, it is important to identify the prophet with Isaiah. In terms of the universe of discourse, it is important that the book of Matthew does not mention Isaiah, but speaks only about "the prophet" and that through him God has spoken. In terms of the encyclopaedia, the reader has to decide which encyclopaedia is to be used for the investigation

pertaining to the production of the text.⁴ The reader has to look for other texts in the text of Matthew's book (for example the allusion of Psalm 130 in Mt 1:21b), and has to enquire about all the texts Matthew could have known when he wrote his book.

If an encyclopaedic investigation with regard to the history of reception is chosen, one enquires about the intertextual relations that readers of Matthew have actually made, regardless of whether or not one is of the opinion that such relations should have been made. In this case one could investigate readings of Matthew by the church fathers, as well as, for example, Derek Jarman's use of the readings in his brilliant film "The Garden".

If the reader is interested in the experimental generation of new meanings of Matthew insofar as it relates to his or her own time and culture, different encyclopaedias which are to be correlated with each other, could be used. Derek Jarman used his own cultural context characterised by problems related to the exploitation of man and nature and correlated it with a reading of Matthew 1. He constructed new intertextual relations to other texts in his film, and in so doing, generated new possibilities for reading both Matthew 1 and his own cultural context, thus presenting a critical perspective on the latter. At this experimental level, an intertextual reading correlates Matthew 1 with other texts, thereby generating new possibilities of reading. With this procedure, a new field of creative readings is added to exegetical work.

I wish to now deal with the three different ways of intertextual reading, focusing on their respective procedures and aims. Each of these ways has its own rightful place which can be determined on the basis of a conception of intertextuality as a part of a semiotic theory of exegesis. Intertextuality should not simply be used as a new name for the old questions of influence and traditions. The hermeneutical thesis of the "inter-" is that the meaning of a text is not guaranteed by one instance only – such as the intention of the real author or the *intentio operis* in an intratextual, restricted sense. The meaning of a text is the result of the correlation of the text with a reader in the act of reading and in such act other texts are always involved. Some intertextual relations are motivated by the intratextual structure of the text itself. This structure could be called the intertextual disposition of the text. Others are motivated by real readings in the history of reception, while others are associations made by actual readers in their particular ways of reading. Every intertextual way of reading has its own place and value, which needs to be differentiated from the next reading while also taking note of the aim of the

⁴ In terms of investigating production-oriented intertextuality, the most helpful approach is that of Richard Hays (1989), who lists seven criteria for determining the presence of allusions in his book *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press). Hays (2002) again presented and discussed the seven criteria in "Who has believed our message?: Paul's reading of Isaiah", in Court, John M (ed), *New Testament writers and the Old Testament*, 46-70. (London: SPCK).

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intertextual reading. What they all have in common is the hermeneutic thesis that the meaning of a given text does not lie only in itself, but is a product of its reading in relation to other texts.

Because of this fundamental hermeneutical decision, the “inter-” in intertextuality concerns itself with the generation of meaning that is the result of reading two or more texts in conjunction, and not with the one directional way that is the influence of an author. An intertextual reading of Matthew 1:23, for example, enquire about the effects of meaning generated in respect of both the book of Matthew and the book of Isaiah. What effects of meaning result in respect of the reading of Isaiah, when the perspective of the book of Matthew is chosen? The point of an intertextual reading could never be to dogmatically prove that Jesus was actually born of a virgin, nor to claim that the young woman of Isaiah 7:14 must indeed mean an actual virgin, a virgin in a virgin in the true sense of the word in order for Matthew’s reading of Isaiah to be the only true reading of Isaiah. That would limit both texts in a totalising way of reading.

The hermeneutical aim of the conception of intertextuality as part of a semiotics of New Testament studies is to open a text with methodologically directed ways of reading not founded in the subjectivity of any real reader, but rather in the objectivity of textuality. This objectivity of textuality makes demands on the creativity of readers, and the given sign-structure of concrete texts directs their readings. Because a text is a text, it has various relations to other texts and no one concrete reading can actualise all possibilities of these relations at any one time. That is, no reading has a monopoly on the one true meaning of a text; a given text is always richer than any one of its readings!

3. INTERTEXTUAL PERSPECTIVES ON MATTHEW 1

3.1 Theology of names – the intratextual structure of the book of Matthew

I will now briefly deal with how I read the syntagmatic structure of the macrotext of Matthew’s *biblos*, wherein Matthew 1 as a microtext has a particular function with regard to the whole text.

In my reading Matthew 1:1 is the headline for the macrotext. The word βίβλος is Matthew’s term for his literary enterprise and connotes that he will not only relate some episodes of the life of Jesus but a full story with a beginning, middle, and an end. βίβλος connotes that the reader of this book will be informed of the whole story of Jesus Christ.⁵

⁵ As a reader of Mark, Matthew thus implies that his (Mark’s) version of the story of Jesus Christ is incomplete.

The following genitive construction indicates the content of this *biblos* and denotes what the formal name βίβλος connotes: γένεσις means the whole story of Jesus Christ starting with its very beginning. Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ denotes the subject of the *genesis* of that which is being told, and at the same time it mentions why the story of Jesus is worthy of being told: Jesus is the Christ. In light of a Jewish encyclopaedia, the following genitive, υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ, indicates that Jesus is the Christ. While this is a necessary argument, it is not a sufficient one and the story that follows has to demonstrate that it is plausible for this son of David to be the Messiah. The final genitive, υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ, denotes the starting point of the story of Jesus Christ. This starting point connotes that the story of Jesus is the sequel to the story of the Jews, the elected people of God. Matthew constructs his story as the continuation of the history of God with his elected people, and opens the universe of discourse of the story of his *biblos* with that perspective.

Verse 2 starts with the beginning of this history, and therefore Abraham has to be the first word of the story. Matthew thus changes the syntagmatic order of the names *Jesus – David – Abraham* to *Abraham – David – Jesus*. Because Abraham, David, and Jesus are the names that connote the very importance of the story, he has to use them as the cornerstones of the structure of the genealogy that follows. And because he wants to show that this story is not a mere human story, but the story of God and his people, he has to mention that this story has a plan, a plan whose author is God himself. For this reason he gives the genealogy the structure of 3 times 14 which he explicitly refers to in verse 17 (cf Alkier 2004:108-128). The story that follows, does not narrate the birth of Jesus, but rather his creation. Matthew uses the imperfect in 1:18 in contrast to the aorist found in the genealogy, and this change of tense indicates that the interest of the story of the *genesis* of Jesus in Matthew:18ff does not lie in the historical point of the Virgin Birth, but in the durative aspect that Jesus is from the very beginning of the story the God who is with us.

In connecting the genealogy with the aorist and 1:18 with the imperfect, Matthew connects the human and the divine aspect of his story. Joseph must name the infant, but the name he is to give as an act of adoption, is given to him by the angel of God, thus by God self. This God-given name is the metonymy for what Jesus is, and this name of Jesus will be interpreted with the name Immanuel in the fulfilment quotation. The γάρ in Matthew 1:21b indicates that the following sentence is the explanation for the name Ἰησοῦς: He will save his people (λαός) from their sins, and this is possible because Jesus is the Immanuel: the *with-us-God*.

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This theology of names gives the macrotext its widest structure. The book of Matthew narrates *how* God is with us in the Immanuel Jesus and the story transforms Ἐμμανουήλ – *God with us* – into “*I am with you all days until the end of this αἰῶν*” at the very end of his book (Mt 28:20b; cf 17:17; 18:20; 26:29) (cf Preuß 1968:139-173). Understanding this transformation means to have an adequate way of reading Matthew and of understanding the dynamic object that gives this book its dynamic transforming power.

The translation of Ἐμμανουήλ (God with us) given by the narrator of the story in Mt 1:23c is transformed into “*I will be with you*” at the very end of the book. The first transformation is that from *God* to *I*. *I* denotes the resurrected Jesus Christ which does not mean that Jesus Christ is identified with God, but it does mean that he has the same relation to the *you* that God has to the *us*. That Jesus is not identified with God shows the temporal limitation of this relation until the end of this αἰῶν.

At the beginning of the story, *us* means the elected Jewish people and at the end of the story it is transformed into the *you*. *You* means *everybody who believes in the story that Matthew narrates in his book*. The relation of Jesus and his followers is a token of the relation of God and his elected Jewish people. The story of the book of Matthew narrates the broadening of the previously exclusive relation. This is indicated by Ἐμμανουήλ broadening into the more open structure of *I am with you*.

Notwithstanding the anti-Jewish polemic in Matthew, it is not possible to read his book without the implication that the Immanuel-relation means actually the end of the Jewish people because Christians became the true Israel. However, it makes more sense to read Matthew with the thesis that the Immanuel-relation is still valid for the Jewish people, but it is no longer an exclusive relation. To believe in the Immanuel, Jesus Christ has to become a member of the people of God.

3.2. The intertextual drive of Matthew 1 within the limits of the universe of discourse of the *biblos* of Matthew

Having outlined the macrostructure of the book of Matthew, I want to now indicate how an intertextual reading can give impetus to this interpretation. For this purpose I wish to stay within the universe of discourse of the *biblos* for a while and at this stage of my analysis shall therefore ignore my own encyclopaedic intertextual knowledge. But in the world of the text itself Matthew marks a quotation in 1:22f. I want to analyse the way in which he marks it and wish to underline J Helbig's (1996) point that it is important for an intertextual reading to analyse the way a text marks such relations, not only the intertextual relations themselves.

Verse 18a is the headline of the episode narrated in verse 18b to verse 21. Verse 22 connects this episode with the quotation given in verse 23a and b. Strictly speaking, the marker of the quotation is τὸ ῥηθὲν ὑπὸ κυρίου διὰ τοῦ προφήτου λέγοντος.

It is only in this instance as well as in Matthew 2:15 that Matthew mentions the *kyrios* in the quotation marker: It emphasises that the author of the quotation which follows is God himself. The prophet is only the medium God uses for his speech. The prophet is not identified with Isaiah and the point therefore is that God is the author of the ensuing quotation.

The first part of verse 22 connotes that the promise of the quotation was not fulfilled until those things narrated in 18b-21 had happened. The consequence is that Jesus alone and nobody else, be that any one before or after him, is the Immanuel. The first part of verse 22 denotes that the things which are narrated happened because of the fulfilment of the promise quoted in verse 23, implying that the word of God is the *causa* of his history. Verse 22 as the quotation marker of verse 23 implies a Theo-logy of the word of God: Things happened because God had spoken through the prophet. The history which the book of Matthew narrates is not only an interesting story by a human author; it is the story of the fulfilment of the word of God. In this way God himself is the real author of this story and Matthew becomes the medium through whom the story is told in the same way the prophet was the medium for the speech of God in verse 22. The quotation marker connotes not only Matthew's hermeneutics of reading Scripture, but also the hermeneutics of reading the story Matthew's book narrates. In the universe of discourse of the book of Matthew, the author of the story is God himself and Matthew is only the human narrator through whom this story of God is told.

Let us now look at the quotation itself. Verse 23a does not pose a problem, because it promises what the story fulfils in 18b-20. But there is a problem as far as verse 23b is concerned: "They shall call his name Immanuel." The story however narrates that the angel told Joseph to give him the name of Jesus, which Joseph duly does in verse 25b. The solution to this problem lies in the commentary of the narrator in verse 23c: he translates the meaning of the name Immanuel: "with-us-God". The name of Jesus is explained by the angel in 21c. His name is Jesus, "for (γάρ) he will save his people from their sins." Knowing what the name Ἰησοῦς really means, is not necessary in order to understand the text of Matthew. At the level of the universe of discourse of the book of Matthew the reader knows everything Matthew wanted him to know. Joseph has to give him the name of Jesus because he will save his people.

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But who – God or Jesus – is the saviour? Both readings are possible. The first reading would be that Jesus is the saviour, and that is the meaning of his name which is stated in the text. The other reading would be that God is the saviour, and so the meaning of the name of Jesus is “God saves”. In terms of the first reading one would ask: On which ground can Jesus be the saviour? The answer is: Because he is Immanuel. Immanuel then is not another name for Jesus, but in the universe of discourse of Matthew’s book, the meaning of Immanuel is the final interpretant of the name of Jesus. In the second reading the meaning of Jesus is congruent with the meaning of Immanuel: *God is with us* means *God saves*.

3.3 Reading Matthew 1 with an intertextual competence with respect to the encyclopaedia of the production of the text

At this stage of an intertextual reading we are very close to what in a historical-critical paradigm can be called *Literarkritik*, form criticism, redaction criticism, and tradition history. The hermeneutics are similar but not identical, nor is it a question of old procedures being repackaged under a new, different terminology. We must investigate what scriptures, forms, and traditions Matthew used and how he worked with them. But unlike *Literarkritik*, particularly redaction criticism, we should not deal with sources that are pure hypotheses such as Q. We should only work with texts that we know actually exist. The following important questions should be included in this part of the analysis:

- Which marked quotations or allusions does Matthew use? How does he deal with them in a literary sense? Is there a connected theology of marked quotations and allusions in Matthew?
- Which unmarked quotations or allusions does Matthew use? How does he deal with them in a literary sense? Is there a connected theology of unmarked quotes and allusions in Matthew?
- Is there a difference between marked and unmarked quotations and allusions in Matthew?
- What happens if Matthew is read from the perspective of the macrotext of one of his quotations, for example, Isaiah?
- What happens with the macrotext of a quotation or allusion when read from a Matthean perspective?

- What happens when we relate texts with other texts which Matthew may have known but did not explicitly use in his book: for example, Philo or Enoch, Job or Sirach, the Qumran writings, the *Aeneid* of Virgil or the *Res Gestae* of Augustus?

Dealing with all these questions would require many monographs, yet in this instance I am only dealing with Matthew 1. But looking at this list of questions (which is incomplete) I am convinced that Kristeva's concept of intertextuality would be useful for it reminds us that the meaning of a text is not static. This insight offers creative methodological benefits. New procedures of reading are thus obtained and we can discriminate better between different ways of reading.

I will now discuss an intertextual reading of the names of the genealogy in Matthew 1. As we have already established there is at the level of the universe of discourse a theological play on words with the names: Ἰησοῦς means *he himself* or *God is the saviour*, its interpretant is *Immanuel*, and the main transformation is from *Immanuel* to *I am with you*. Hence, would the position be with regard to the names in the genealogy in an intertextual reading with the use of the intertextual competence of the encyclopaedia of the production of the text?

I have already referred to the structure and function of the genealogy in the limits of the universe of discourse of Matthew's book. Using the encyclopaedic intertextual competence with regard to the production of the text, it can be said that every name in the genealogy is a metonymy for a story told in the Scriptures of Israel. What we are dealing with in this intertextual perspective is an intertextual disposition⁶ towards a collection of stories told in the Scriptures which are used by Matthew. For example, the name of Abraham in this instance is used as a metonymy for all the stories about him. In terms of our intertextual perspective all of these stories need to be read and need to be put into relation with Matthew's book. This (reading) needs to be undertaken from both directions: we should read Matthew in the light of those stories about Abraham and we should reread those stories in the light of Matthew's book. I shall restrict myself to a few remarks on this subject:

- The names in the genealogy mostly come from the following scriptures: Genesis, Joshua, Samuel, Kings, Ruth, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles and most of the prophets, such as Isaiah and Jeremiah. However, as

⁶ Cf S Alkier (2004b:119): "Für die intertextuelle Arbeit am Neuen Testament schlage ich vor, als intertextuelle Dispositionen alles zu werten, was in einem gegebenen Text Fragen aufwirft, die mit Hilfe anderer Texte beantwortet werden können."

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far as the production of Matthew's book is concerned, those stories about Abraham, Jacob, David and others told in the noncanonical texts also need to be considered. All of these stories have a narrative theology that shows how God acts in his history with his elected people. They are indicative of the plausibility of God once again acting in the history of Jesus for he is a loyal God who wants Shalom for his people.

- The history that the genealogy remembers is not only a history of triumph and faith, but also a history of catastrophe and sin. In the light of this background it is plausible that the explanation of the name of Jesus is: *he will save his people from their sins*. The genealogy narrates the sins of this people.
- The history that the genealogy narrates cannot be predicted from a human perspective and is full of surprises. For example, that is precisely what the stories of the women in the genealogy connote. Or consider Jacob: he is not the first-born son, but he obtains the rights of the first-born son and therefore he becomes part of the genealogy of the Messiah.

The genealogy as a whole leads readers with the proper intertextual competence to expect Matthew's story to be a story full of complications, sin, and surprise and in which God is the most important actor. One does indeed not have to wait for long for such a surprise to occur, because the genealogy itself provides one. For thirty-nine times the aorist active of $\gamma\epsilon\nu\nu\acute{\alpha}\omega$ is used – 39 times – how very predictable! But then it changes into the passive: "*Mary, of whom Jesus was born who is called Christ*" (Mt 1:16b). In this surprising change we have an indication of God as actor, the *passivum divinum*. And the story that follows enacts this surprising *passivum divinum*.

A reading based on the intertextual competence of the production of Matthew's book can make another point. It is possible to connect the genealogy with the quotation in 1:23. The context of the quotation in Isaiah 7 is a conflict between the prophet and God on the one side and King Ahaz on the other. This king, King Ahaz features in the genealogy in verse 9. We have already established it is possible to read Matthew 1 without the encyclopaedic intertextual competence of the production of the text, and that it makes a good sense within the limits of the universe of discourse of the *biblos*. In the theoretical debate regarding the concept of intertextuality, as well as in the discussion on the use of the Old Testament in the New Testament in a

historical critical paradigm, the issue of whether or not a quotation indicates its original context, is often debated. My answer is that it would differ from text to text, but what is necessary is to always indicate what happens when the New Testament text is read in the light of the original context of the quotation.

But which text of Isaiah should be used? Neither the Hebrew version, not any of the known LXX versions of 7:14 has the exact content of what Matthew quoted in 1:23. Only Greek texts contain “virgin”, and therefore we can state with certainty that Matthew used a version of the LXX. The LXX has: ἰδοὺ ἡ παρθένοσ ἐν γαστρὶ ἕξει καὶ τέξεται υἱόν, καὶ καλέσεις τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ Ἐμμανουηλ.

Instead of καλέσεις Matthew uses καλέσουσιν, because he needs the plural for connecting the name of Jesus with Immanuel as its interpretant. And the gloss on the quotation that translates the Hebrew name Immanuel shows that Matthew was familiar with a Hebrew text of Isaiah (cf Oberweis 1989:137). We do not exactly know which versions of Isaiah Matthew knew, but we do know that he used more than one version and that he reworked the quotations. The real author of the *biblos* was a scribe with his own hermeneutics and techniques of reading the Holy Scriptures of the Jews. For example, the introduction of the fulfilment quotation is his own creation. Having gained this insight, how shall we proceed? In my opinion, both the Hebrew and the Greek versions of Isaiah should be used in our intertextual enterprise.

Before we can start the reading of the Hebrew text, we need to make yet another limitation. It is not possible to use the whole text of Isaiah in this instance, and therefore a part of this text must be chosen. I will use Isaiah 6-8, as I am of the opinion that it would be sufficient to demonstrate what I want to show now.

This section starts with Isaiah’s call and his commission of hardening quoted in Matthew 13:14f. Chapter 7 deals with the account of the conflict between Damascus and Israel on the one side and Judah on the other as the immediate context of our quotation. In chapter 8 we read about the birth of a son of Isaiah, but he is not Immanuel. Immanuel is again mentioned in 8:8 and its translation is given in 8:10. These are the only occasions where Immanuel is mentioned in the entire book of Isaiah.

But who and what is “Immanuel” in this instance? First we have to take cognisance of the fact that Immanuel is not identified in the book of Isaiah. Rabbinic exegesis and many contemporary Old Testament scholars identify him with Hezekiah, the son of Ahaz, but this is mere speculation. The fact is that in 7:14 Immanuel is not identified as a son of Ahaz, nor is the mother of Immanuel identified as a wife of Ahaz. She is only known as a young woman

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and apart from this, nothing else is said about her. In 8:8 Immanuel is the addressee of Isaiah's prophecy of disaster about Judah, and Judah is said to be the land of Immanuel, but again nothing is revealed about the identity of Immanuel. In the context of a prophecy of disaster about Judah, the addressee Immanuel appears to be ironic, but in 8:9f the meaning of Immanuel is used as an argument for the failure of Judah's enemies. How then should Immanuel be interpreted in 7:14?

What is most important is to regard Immanuel in this instance as a prophesied sign given by God himself. Isaiah 7 narrates the first action of Isaiah after his call and his commission of hardening. The King of Damascus and the King of Israel were about to wage war against Judah to force the King of Judah to be part of their alliance against Assyria (v 1). The King and his people reacted with great fear (v 2). God reacted to this fear by sending Isaiah to the king of Judah with instructions on how to act in the circumstances and with a prophecy of disaster for Israel and Damascus. This part ends with verse 9: If you do not believe, you will not remain. Were he to believe, Ahaz could have been content with the situation, but his reaction is not stated. What this gap indicates in a rather sophisticated way, is that Ahaz did not understand what was being conveyed to him. His is the first example of hardening after Isaiah's commission of hardening. Instead of relating the reaction of Ahaz, what follows in the narration is a speech of God, directly addressing Ahaz in the same manner in which God had spoken to the judges, for example Gideon. God asked Ahaz to choose a sign for the validation of the prophecy. But unlike to Gideon, Ahaz did not follow God's instruction; rather, he rejected it with pious words. Again he did not understand and did not believe. A careful reading will already make it clear at this point of the narration that Judah would not remain, and with the ironic use of Immanuel this is exactly what 8:5-8 conveys. Despite God's being with Judah, Judah will be destroyed because of disbelief in God; however, despite its destruction, God is still with Judah (see 8:10) and will save it from total dissolution.

Let us now return to chapter 7: God's reaction to the disobedience of Ahaz is not narrated, but Isaiah rebuked Ahaz and said that God had done what Ahaz should have done. God would give a sign and this sign was the birth of Immanuel. He would eat butter and honey until he had grown up and then Damascus and Israel would be destroyed. According to my reading of Isaiah, 7:18-8:4 has the same substance: the prophesying of the destruction of Israel and Damascus. Hence, it is a sign of salvation for Judah and a sign of disaster for Israel and Damascus. Everything could turn out well for Judah, but in 8:5 Isaiah delivers the prophecy of disaster for Judah, which the reader could expect in view of the commission of hardening in chapter 6, the non-

understanding of Ahaz after 7:10, and his disobedience in 7:12. The time of salvation in the youth of Immanuel is a gift of God. Neither Israel nor Judah believes in God, therefore neither will remain. But God will remain; he is still with them.

The sign of Immanuel within the limits of the universe of the book of Isaiah, as employed by Matthew, is not a messianic prophecy. It is a sign in the same way the names of the sons of Isaiah are signs. An intertextual reading of Matthew in relation to Isaiah does not explain everything, but it opens the universe of discourse of the *biblos* of Matthew for other effects of meaning that do not lie in a closed structure. Reading Matthew 1 in relation to Isaiah 6-8 provides us with some effects of meaning that is worth noticing: Ahaz is a member of Jesus' genealogy; he is one of his forefathers. Given Ahaz's story, we see that Jesus did not become the Messiah because his family is without sin. Rather the contrary. David (with reference to his liaison with Bathsheba) and most of his descendants did not do what God had wanted them to do. The people of Jesus and many members of his genealogy are sinners, hardened by their sins, as Matthew 13:14f points out, using the words of Isaiah 6:9f. The result of this hardening would be death and destruction as Isaiah had prophesied. The hardening can only be cancelled out if the reason for it can come to an end: he has to "save his people from their sins" and that is the meaning of the God-given name of Jesus.

But who is *he* and what is the meaning of the name of Jesus in the context of the intertextual relation to Isaiah? Reading Matthew 1 in the light of Isaiah, "he" who saves his people is not Jesus, but God himself. With the intertextual relation to Isaiah the theocentric perspectives of the prophets are inscribed into the book of Matthew. As with the name of Immanuel, the name of Jesus becomes a sign for God's activity. However, in contrast to Isaiah's use of Immanuel, Matthew uses Jesus' birth and life for a narrative theology. The book of Matthew narrates how God saves his people from their sins in the words and deeds of Jesus.

Through his words and deeds Jesus tells of and declares the will of God: he counteracts against the hardening that has been lying upon his people since Isaiah's time. The hardening came from God and only God can remove it. The name of Jesus becomes a sign for what God does for his people through Jesus: in the words and deeds of Jesus, God is with his people. We are again dealing with the theology of names and I want to investigate it in the light of some further intertextual relations.

"He will save his people from their sins" can be intertextually related to Psalm 130 (LXX 129:8: καὶ αὐτὸς λυτρώσεται τὸν Ἰσραὴλ ἐκ πασῶν τῶν ἀνομιῶν αὐτοῦ).

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God himself is the saviour, but what can be said with regard to the encyclopaedic intertextual competence regarding the meaning of the name of Jesus?⁷ Many scholars have argued that the meaning of Jesus is “salvation” (in German, “Heil”). But we get a far more coherent reading of Matthew 1 when brought into relation with Isaiah’s Immanuel and Psalm 130. The name of Jesus then means “God saves” and that becomes clear through the allusion to Psalm 130. Immanuel, then, is congruent with Jesus, not on the level of the signifier, but on the level of the signified. God now saves because he is with us through Jesus: Jesus is the “God with us”. As this God-with-us he has the competence to tell us what we have to do, to live a life in accordance with the will of God. If we believe in the story told in the *biblos* of Matthew, we will remain, we will be saved.

What does Matthew do when he overwrites the Hebrew version of Isaiah 7:14 with a Greek version of this text? The most important thing is that he depicts the young woman of the Hebrew text (in all likelihood a virgin, as she is not married) precisely as a virgin, thereby emphasising the divine nature of the sign. Furthermore, he thereby indicates that Jesus, despite being from the house of David, is different from all the members of his genealogy. And it should be mentioned that in a reading of Matthew 2, some features of Isaiah 6-8 (especially the LXX version) demonstrate the coherence of Matthew’s composition.

But what did Matthew do with the book of Isaiah? As a reader of Isaiah, he does what every reader does in the act of reading: he namely determines the text by his readings. Isaiah does not narrate the fulfilment of the prophecy, he does not tell us anything about the birth of Immanuel, and it is because of this blank space in the book of Isaiah that Matthew can use the prophecy for his own *biblos*. He determines the identity of the underdetermined Immanuel and with this change he transforms the prophecy of a sign into a messianic prophecy. With this identification and transformation every messianic

⁷ According to Oberweis “Die LXX verwenden ησος immer dort, wo die Hebraica JHWSY oder JSWY hat. Wortgeschichtlich gesehen, ist JSWY eine seit der Exilszeit fast ausschließlich gebrauchte Kurzform des ursprünglichen JHWSY. Nach Ansicht moderner Philologen tangiert die Kürzung auch den Sinngehalt des Namens, als dessen Bestandteile sich der Gottesname JHWH und die Wurzel JSY (helfen, retten) isolieren lassen. Daraus resultiert die Grundbedeutung ‘JHWH hilft/JHWH ist Rettung’ Allgemein wird davon ausgegangen, dass nach der Kontraktion in JSWY der integrierte Gottesname kaum noch wahrnehmbar gewesen sei.” (137). [“The LXX always uses ησος where the Hebrew has YHWSY or YSWY. Etymologically seen, YSWY is a shortened form of the original YHWSY, used almost exclusively since the time of the Exile. According to modern philologists the abbreviation also concerns the meaning of the name, of which the component parts can be isolated as the name of God YHWH and the root YSY (to help, to save). The fundamental meaning, ‘YHWH helps/YHWH is salvation’ is the result thereof. In general it was assumed that after the contraction to YSWY the integrated name of God was hardly perceptible” (translation by L Andrew Huizenga).

prophecy in Isaiah becomes related to the Jesus Christ of Matthew's *biblos*. But this is merely the tip of the iceberg: with this identification Matthew overwrites the book of Isaiah with his own *biblos*. Isaiah becomes the prophet of Jesus Christ and at the same time the background for reading Matthew.

4. CONCLUSION

Although my intertextual reading of Matthew 1 can have no real end, for no intertextual reading can have a real end, I will conclude at this stage. Kristeva quite correctly points out that the intertextual relations of a given text are endless. Were we to continue, we could, for example, ask what happened in terms of the history of reception when Isaiah and Matthew became parts of one book, the Christian Bible. An intertextual reading of the canon can never be used as an argument for fundamentalists that only one true reading of the Bible, namely their own, is possible. An intertextual reading never comes to an end, and it therefore deconstructs every closed way of reading. Intertextual reading of biblical texts shows that the texts are richer than any singular reading thereof. An intertextual reading can never come to an end, but it can motivate further readings and is interested in the intertextual relations that other readers see or make. The question is, does it make sense? But in ethical terms not every sense is a good one. If I had to write a sequel to this essay, it would be an ethics of reading, and I would transform my question in the following way: Does it make *good* sense (cf Alkier 2003b:21-41; 2003c:48-59)?

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