

MATTHEW'S INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY:

A NARRATOLOGICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENTIFIC READING

By

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It does not, therefore, depend on man's desire of effort, but on God's mercy (Rom 9:16)

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Summary

**MATTHEW’S INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY:
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The nature of Matthew’s community has been investigated by a number of scholars in the past and present. Currently, the debate centers on whether the Matthean community was a society with egalitarian structure consisting of equals. This study has also focused on the social structure of the Matthean community. The basic question is whether (or not) the Matthean community was an egalitarian group in an ancient advanced agrarian society in the first century Mediterranean world. If so (or if not so) does the Matthean community lack a hierarchical structure?

This study suggests that the Matthean community was not an egalitarian structured society. The term “egalitarian” would not be applicable to the Matthean community, because the term “egalitarian” is a modern Western political and philosophical concept, which has its origin in the French revolutionary movement. The Matthean community was rather a socially stratified group in an ancient advanced agrarian society in the first century in the Mediterranean world. Consequently, the Matthean community was not a society with an egalitarian structure; rather, it was an inclusively structured society.

This study has utilized two methodologies. Firstly, the investigation uses narrative criticism to analyse Matthew’s intention of his inclusive structured community depicted through Jesus’ inclusive ministry. This methodology considers the narrator’s point of view concerning Jesus’ ministry as he journeyed from Galilee to Jerusalem. Secondly, this research uses social scientific criticism to explore the Matthean text in order to consider Jesus’ ministry. This approach on Jesus ministry was reflected in the context of Matthew’s inclusive structure community.

The Matthean community was socially mixed, consisting of Israelites and Gentiles. It was written in the years between 80 to 90 CE. The city of Antioch was the most likely setting for Matthew's inclusive community, however hierarchically structured.

A narrative point of view reading of Matthew's story shows that Jesus was the protagonist involved in an inclusive ministry in accordance to God's plan for the salvation of all people. The Israelite leaders are antagonistic to Jesus' ministry, and they exclude social and religious outcasts. The disciples of Jesus help Jesus with his inclusive ministry, while the crowds help the Israelite leaders. However, there are times when the disciples do not understand Jesus' inclusive ministry. The audience of Jesus' inclusive ministry was the crowd. This inclusive ministry shifts from Galilee to Jerusalem and his ministry comes into conflict with the ideology of the Israelite leaders. Jesus' focus was inclusive but the Israelite leaders were exclusive. Matthew's depiction of Jesus' inclusive mission completed with his death on the cross.

A social scientific approach reveals that Matthew's interpretation of Jesus' inclusive ministry is directed to social and religious outcasts. His ministry includes sick people, sinners and tax collectors who are from the lower classes within a hierarchically structured society. Jesus' ministry was reflected in the context of Matthew's inclusive community.

This study shows that the Matthean community was not a society with an egalitarian structure; rather, it was an inclusively structured society within a hierarchical context.

Keywords

- Matthean community
- Inclusivity
- Exclusivity
- Conflict
- Narrative point of view
- Social scientific criticism
- Egalitarian

- Hierarchical
- Stratification
- Mixed status

Opsomming

MATTEUS SE INKLUSIEWE GEMEENSKAP:

‘N NARRATOLOGIESE EN SOSIAAL-WETENSKAPLIKE LESING

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Die aard en samestelling van Matteus se gemeenskap is in die verlede en word steeds in die hede deur ‘n aantal navorsers ondersoek. Tans wentel die debat rondom die vraag of Matteus se gemeenskap ‘n gemeenskap van gelykes was. Hierdie studie fokus ook op die sosiale struktuur van Matteus se gemeenskap. Die basiese vraag is of dit moontlik is om Matteus se gemeenskap voor te stel as ‘n groep van gelykes terwyl dit deel gevorm het van die gevorderde agrariese samelewing in die eerste-eeuse Mediterreense wêreld. Het Matteus se gemeenskap dan geen hiërargiese struktuur gehad nie?

Navorsing dui sterk daarop dat Matteus se gemeenskap nie ‘n samelewing met ‘n gelyke struktuur was nie. Die begrip “gelykheid” sou nie op Matteus se gemeenskap van toepassing kon wees nie, omdat die begrip “gelykheid” ‘n moderne Westerse politieke en filosofiese begrip is wat teruggevoer kan word na die Franse Revolusie. Dit blyk dat Matteus se gemeenskap ‘n sosiaal gestratifiseerde groep in ‘n gevorderde agrariese samelewing in die eerste eeuse Mediterreense wêreld was. Hoewel ‘n mens nie kan sê dat Matteus se gemeenskap ‘n gemeenskap met ‘n gelyke struktuur was nie, was dit wel ‘n gemeenskap met ‘n inklusiewe struktuur.

Die studie het gebruik gemaak van twee metodologieë. Eerstens is die narratiewe kritiek gebruik om Jesus se inklusiewe gemeenskap te bestudeer. Met behulp van hierdie

metodologie word daar na die verteller se perspektief aangaande Jesus se inklusiewe bediening tydens sy reis van Galilea na Jerusalem gekyk. Tweedens is daar in hierdie navorsing gebruik gemaak van die sosiaal-wetenskaplike kritiek om Jesus se inklusiewe bediening in Matteus beter te begryp.

Matteus se gemeenskap was sosiaal gemeng en het uit Israeliete en heidene bestaan. Die gemeenskap het 'n hiërargies-gestruktureerde samelewing gevorm. Dit blyk dat die stad Antiochië in die jare 80 en 90 na Christus die mees waarskynlike milieu vir Matteus se inklusief gestruktureerde gemeenskap was.

Volgens die narratiewe perspektief op Matteus se vertelling is Jesus die protagonis wat sy inklusiewe bediening uitvoer in lyn met God se plan vir die redding van alle mense. Die Israelitiese leiers is antagonisties ingestel teenoor Jesus se bediening en hulle sluit sosiale en religieuse uitgeworpenes uit. Jesus se dissipels staan hom in sy inklusiewe bediening by, maar die skare help die Israelitiese leiers. Soms kan die dissipels egter nie Jesus se inklusiewe bediening verstaan nie. Die teken van Jesus se inklusiewe bediening is die skare. Jesus se inklusiewe bediening verskuif van Galilea na Jeruslam en sy diens lok weerstand by die Israelitiese leiers uit. Jesus se fokus is inklusief, maar hulle s'n is eksklusief. Jesus se inklusiewe missie word voltooi deur sy dood aan die kruis.

Die sosiaal-wetenskaplike benadering toon dat Jesus se inklusiewe bediening bedoel is om sosiale en religieuse uitgeworpenes in te sluit. Sy bediening sluit die siekes, die sondaars en die belastinggaarders uit die laer klasse binne 'n hiërargies-gestruktureerde samelewing in.

Hierdie studie toon dat Matteus se gemeenskap nie 'n samelewing met 'n gelyke struktuur was nie, maar 'n inklusief-gestruktureerde gemeenskap binne 'n hiërargiese konteks.

Sleutelwoorde

- Matteus se gemeenskap
- Inklusiwiteit

- Eksklusiwisme
- Konflik
- Narratiewe kritiek
- Sosiaal-wetenskaplike kritiek
- Gelykheid
- Hiërargies
- Stratifikasie
- Gemengde status