

GUSTAVUS ADOLPHUS COLLEGE

A CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AND THE
LORD'S PRAYER

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Though rhetoric is colored by the traditions and conventions of the society in which it is applied, it is also a universal phenomenon which is conditioned by basic workings of the human mind and heart and by the nature of all human society.”¹

The Sermon on the Mount is arguably one of the most intensively researched pieces of rhetoric. Matthew’s account of this sermon provides the audience with one of the Christian faith’s ethical cornerstones. It offers the audience principles of how to act in their daily lives, how to pray, and exposes them to Jesus’ version of the Golden Rule. In the contemporary age of the Christian faith, it is becoming more common to take issues such as Paul’s stance on women in the church (e.g. Corinthians 14:34), or homosexuality (e.g. Romans 1:26, Jude 1:7), and label them irrelevant to Christian belief because those examples must be read within their first century context. For example, Paul talks about the need for women to remain silent in church, yet many contemporary Christian communities argue that because Paul was speaking to the church of Corinth, it is not applicable to our contemporary lives. Generally, many Christians tend to argue that people must examine what was going on historically at the time the evangelist wrote these scriptures.

However, a large gap occurs within this contextual argument. That is, if Christians can examine scriptures that challenge their faith, and justify not following them because of context, the same rule must be applied for the rest of the scripture. This thesis argues that if a call for contextual understanding is going to be applied to some scripture, it should be applied to all. As Gunther Bornkamm says in *The New Testament: A Guide to Its Writings*, the task of biblical scholarship as it uses tools such as linguistic and historical criticism is to allow the biblical authors have their own say. “The scholar

¹ George Alexander Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 13.

must bring out the intention of the New Testament writings. To the best of [their] ability [they] must try to understand their original meaning.”² This thesis will examine what it looks like when The Sermon on the Mount, a popular Christian teaching is subjected to two forms of criticism and what those results say about the importance of context.

The base of the first form of criticism, redaction criticism, is theological. This criticism focuses on an editor or redactor of a text. It examines how they manage and utilize their sources to fit their unique theological emphases. The second form of criticism stems from the Communication Studies field and is a form of rhetorical criticism, pentadic criticism. This criticism focuses on the text. While it may be helpful to setup the scene (situation, audience etc....) when applying pentadic criticism, it is not mandatory as its primary focus is to see what results are shown through looking at the text alone and what the text illuminates about the rhetor’s intent. The goal of this thesis is to show that the use of pentadic criticism on a biblical text, particularly the Sermon on the Mount is significant because it illuminates a unique relationship between God and humans. This thesis will begin by talking about the gospel of Matthew in its historical context, assumptions that will be made about the texts composition, and what The Sermon on the Mount looks like through the lens of redaction criticism. Then, the thesis will discuss what rhetorical criticism is in general, and move into the more specific, pentadic criticism and its application to a sample portion of the Sermon on the Mount will follow.

I. Historical Background of Matthew

Before analysis occurs, it is important to establish a thorough understanding of how the gospel of Matthew functions at a basic level. This means how does the gospel of Matthew function historically and within the context of society? As we will discuss later,

² Gunther Bornkamm, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963), 3.

redaction criticism focuses on the intentions of the editors who compiled a text. Thus, to fully comprehend the methods used when a text was compiled, we must understand the circumstances under which it was put together. This project will discuss that Matthew's author writes to the communities of his time, which seems to inevitably impact how the text was put together. Therefore, if we do not understand the author's contemporary community, we cannot fully understand their methods of compilation. In addition, while pentadic analysis is textually based, in this situation it is important to have some understanding of historical context. Meaning, we cannot understand pentadic analysis and the significance in the phrase "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done," for example, if we do not understand what the kingdom meant at the time the text was transmitted.

The use of Matthew's gospel was predominant in the early church, and the reasons for its popularity are not hard to find. Graham Stanton furthers this notion when he writes: "The evangelist [Matthew] has been influenced strongly by the Old Testament and by contemporary Judaism, and his gospel has always been regarded as the most 'Jewish' of the four."³ Stanton narrows his comments to strictly the Sermon on the Mount writing:

Matthew's Sermon on the Mount is widely respected and often referred to, even by non-Christians. The evangelist's full and well-ordered account of the teaching of Jesus is appreciated.... But his often awkward way of using the Old Testament as a set of proof texts puzzles many modern readers, as does the severity of his anti-Jewish statements and his harsh comments on judgment.⁴

To understand Matthew's author, one must be clear on why the gospel of Matthew was written. The author of Mark had significant influence on the author of Matthew. Stanton writes, "One of his primary purposes is similar to Mark's: to set out

³ Graham Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 58.

⁴ Ibid.

fully his own understanding of the story and significance of Jesus.”⁵ Like Mark, Matthew’s author did not write a historical record but was addressing Jesus’ followers in his own day.

Jesus’ popularity with the people of his time may be attributed to the total impact of His ethic, as it was drastically different from that of his contemporaries. Author Greg Herrick points out four differences: “(1) Jesus focused on the critical and eliminating the non-essential;”⁶ meaning, he says not to worry about what to eat or wear because all these things will fade away. “(2) His demands were always radical in nature;”⁷ through examination of the Sermon on the Mount this is clear. Jesus is asking his immediate audience members to leave behind their known religion and follow him. “(3) His ethic was for a new community composed of ‘heroic’ individuals.”⁸ The heroic in this case are categorized as the poor in spirit, the meek, or essentially every group the Beatitudes mentions. “(4) He had incredible personal authority.”⁹ In the book of Matthew, this authority becomes known in the Sermon on the Mount. Hans Windisch, author of *The Meaning of The Sermon on the Mount*, furthers the prior quotation, claiming four great Christological prerogatives. He says Jesus:

1) is the authoritative interpreter of the Law; 2) a new legislator; 3) a prophet, though in the main only one who renews and makes more compelling the message of predecessors; and 4) the future judge of the world.

These elements of Jesus’ character give Him strong ethos during this sermon.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Greg Herrick, *A Summary of Understanding the Sermon on the Mount* (Biblical Studies Press, 1997), 3.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

In the first gospel, Matthew's author takes religious traditions and molds them to fit the needs and concerns of Christians in his own time. Christian communities are clearly at the forefront of his mind, as Matthew's is the only gospel that utilizes the word church. "In Matthew we encounter for the first and only time in the Gospels the word *ecclesia* ('church,' 'community')....Matthew's Gospel speaks of 'the church' in a universal sense".¹⁰ Meaning the church is not a local community like a Jewish synagogue. One of the most distinctive features, demonstrating that Matthew spoke to the communities of his time, is the ferocity of his anti-Jewish polemic. Perhaps the most plausible explanation for this is the fact that the early Christian communities had recently parted company with Judaism after a period of elongated hostility. Stanton claims:

Opposition, rejection, and persecution from some Jewish quarters is not just a matter of past experience: for the evangelist and his readers the threat is still felt strongly and keenly. Matthew is puzzled-indeed pained-by Israel's continued rejection of Jesus and of Christian messengers who have proclaimed Jesus as the fulfillment of Israel's hopes.... Matthew uses polemical denunciations to justify his own stance.¹¹

Situational context is vital in an analysis, and this sermon is a testament to that. For example, Matthew's version of the sermon potentially alters the overall message due its geographic location and wording choices. Simply the title, the Sermon on the Mount, shows an idea that has been crucial to understanding the Sermon on the Mount for centuries because of the symbolism that encompasses the idea of Jesus giving this sermon from a mountain. Scholars note the parallels between this speech and Moses' teachings in the Old Testament. Moses went up on a mountain to receive word from God which parallels Jesus, who went up on a mountain to preach to his audience about how to live.

¹⁰ Gunther Bornkamm, *The New Testament: A Guide to its Writings* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973), 32.

¹¹ Stanton, 75.

A similar argument says that the five discourses in the Matthean gospel parallel the first five books of the Old Testament, The Pentateuch.

The book of Matthew constitutes five lengthy discourses of Jesus. These discourses contain shorter collections of Jesus' sayings as well as narratives. Stanton claims that by giving such prominence to the five discourses, "the evangelist stresses the continuing importance of the teaching of Jesus for his own day....In other words, for Matthew's readers (or listeners) the teaching of Jesus lies at the heart of their missionary proclamation."¹² Some hypotheses claim that because of the evangelist's focus on Judaism, his five-part structure may be an attempt to parallel the Pentateuch, in an effort to make Jesus appear as the new Moses, who is here to lead a new exodus. Stanton points out that in Matthew, "Sayings of Jesus from various sources have been gathered together into discourses which have thematic unity and some internal structure. In all of them the sayings of Jesus have been reshaped by the evangelist and often bear his own distinctive stamp."¹³ The first part of Matthew, chapters 5-7, present Jesus as Messiah of Word (parables and narrative), the second half, chapters 8 and 9, presents Jesus as Messiah of Deed (performing miracles).

In Matthew's gospel, the Sermon on the Mount comes after the nativity story and Jesus' baptism by John the Baptist. It also follows the story of Jesus going into the wilderness for forty days and nights where Satan made attempts to tempt him. Chronologically, the sermon seems to fuel Jesus' teachings to multitudes and set the stage for the rest of his ministry. The author of Matthew is seen by many as a redactor who put the sermon together through traditional means whereas the sources were circulated orally

¹² Ibid, 59.

¹³ Ibid.

and later written down by early Christian communities. In addition, the gospel of Matthew was written down for a specific purpose: the community's catechetical needs. "According to this view, the Sermon on the Mount is not a discourse of Jesus' sayings that they 'remembered' but, rather, a compilation of Jesus' sayings that were preserved separately, first in an oral and later in a written tradition."¹⁴ Meaning, the Sermon on the Mount is not necessarily a sermon given by Jesus on one or two occasions; it is a representation of the author's sources according to their specific purposes, and the needs of the contemporary community.

II. Composition Assumptions

The hypothesis a reader follows in regards to how the gospel of Matthew was put together (sources utilized etc...) is imperative in understanding their interpretation of the text. The book *Scripture As Communication* furthers this notion.

Because two biblical texts are being analyzed, a huge gap would be missing if their composition was not discussed. That is, what assumptions are being made about the texts? What is the relationship (if any) between them? This is also known as *the Synoptic problem*, or "the question of the relationship of each of the Synoptic Gospels to the others, including their agreements and differences...."¹⁵

The debate regarding sources is active, and one's decision about which hypothesis they support may have an impact on how they view the text. What seems to be the widely held view of redaction critics and will be the assumption of this paper regarding the Sermon on the Mount argues that the author of Matthew drew on several specific sources while writing the gospel. This theory is the two-source hypothesis.

¹⁴ W.S. Kissenger, "The Sermon on the Mount," in *New Testament: History of Interpretation*, ed. John Hayes (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2004), 173.

¹⁵ Millar Burrows, *Jesus in the First Three Gospels* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1977), 21.

A basic premise to understand the two-source hypothesis is first comprehending Marcan priority. In the 18th century Enlightenment, individuals such as H.S. Reimus began to ask, “What can the historian say about the life of Jesus of Nazareth?”¹⁶ After his death, a theologian, Lessing, published a book about the origin of Matthew and its relationship to Mark and Luke, with its basis coming from Reimus’ research. Lessing’s work was “...driven by the assumption that the earliest gospel or source would have greatest *historical* value in reconstruction of the teaching and intention of Jesus. And so began intensive historical study of the gospels and their sources...”¹⁷ For years scholars searched for some hypothesis which would account for both similarities and differences between Matthew, Mark and Luke. In 1835, Karl Lachmann embellished earlier proposals, and his conclusion won wide acceptance. The name of his view is the Marcan priority, and argues that the gospel of Mark must have been the first gospel written. Therefore, the gospel of Mark comes with high regards, and was known as a reliable historical source.

If Mark was the first gospel written, it is likely that Matthew and even Luke’s authors got much of their information from the gospel of Mark. However, a problem still exists. What is to be said for the verses that are found in both Matthew and Luke and not in Mark? Approximately 230 verses are found in both Matthew and Luke that are not found in Mark. This suggests mutual dependence on a third source. This hypothetical source is the next aspect of the two source theory, and is a document scholars label Q. With derivation from the German word *Quelle*, meaning “source,” this document is said to contain sayings of Jesus. Because this argument accepts Marcan priority, these verses

¹⁶ Stanton, 15.

¹⁷ Ibid, 19.

suggest the use of another source. Q essentially represents a document that the authors of Matthew and Luke had access to and found to be credible source for their gospels. The Anchor Bible Dictionary points out, “A basic presupposition of much contemporary Q study is that the group of Christians who preserved the Q material did so because they believed that this material was still valid and relevant for their own day.”¹⁸ Kari Syreeni, author of *The Making of the Sermon on the Mount* agrees:

Few words are needed in defense of the general plausibility of Q in explaining resemblance between the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain. That some sort of literary relationship must exist between two discourses, is beyond reasonable doubt, and even if one manages to interpret Luke’s sermon as an abridgement of Matthew’s comprehensive discourse, more difficulties will emerge when it comes to Luke’s alleged transpositions.¹⁹

Because no archeological evidence has been found supporting such a document, it remains a hypothesis, and may seem to be the most plausible explanation. It is important to note that Graham Stanton, author of *The Gospels and Jesus* reminds us:

Alternative hypotheses are much less plausible, but there are two main reasons why the two-document hypothesis does not amount to mathematical proof of the synoptic problem. The phenomena of the ‘minor agreements’ and the considerable variations in the extent of verbal agreement in so-called Q passages remind us that certainty eludes us. Marcan priority and Q are working hypotheses and on this basis impressive results have been achieved in modern study of the gospels.²⁰

With the establishment of the two-source theory, it is also important to add the final possible piece of the puzzle. That is, how do readers of the gospels account for text that is found only in Matthew or only in Luke, and nowhere else in the gospels? The most plausible explanation for this phenomenon is to label those statements as M for the verse

¹⁸ C.M. Tuckett, “Q Source,” in *The Anchor Bible Dictionary*, ed. David Noel Freedman (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 569.

¹⁹ Kari Syreeni, *The Making of the Sermon on the Mount: A Procedural Analysis of Matthew’s Redactional Activity* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1987), 132.

²⁰ Stanton, 26.

solely in Matthew and L for the statements individual to Luke. It is unknown where the scriptures came from, be it other texts, or whether the author is taking liberty and embellishing. Regardless because they are unique to one gospel, they are labeled as M and L.

The remaining sections of this thesis assume that the two-source hypothesis is the most plausible because it provides an explanation for the literary relationship between the gospels. Since the general compositional assumptions are made, it is important to go a step further. That is, what do redaction critics have to say about the Sermon on the Mount, and why is it that redaction critics do not go far enough in their analysis?

III. Redaction Criticism

Perhaps the most common theological approach for critically examining the New Testament comes in the form of redaction criticism. “Redaction criticism is a method of biblical study which examines the intentions of the editors or redactors who compiled the biblical texts out of earlier source materials.”²¹ Other definitions label redaction criticism as a way to seek understanding of each evangelist (in the gospels), “and the *Sitz im Leben* (setting in life) out of which they wrote.”²²

Gunther Bornkamm, a well known New Testament scholar and redaction critic, focuses parts of his study on the gospel of Matthew. It is important to understand how a redaction critic understands the gospel of Matthew, and more specifically the Sermon on the Mount, so one can efficiently analyze the strengths and weaknesses of redaction criticism.

²¹ *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Redaction Criticism.”

²² *Ibid.*

At a basic level, Bornkamm labels the Sermon on the Mount as a “proclamation through the mouth of Jesus of the conditions of entrance [into the Kingdom of Heaven] ordained by God.”²³ In addition, Bornkamm views the beatitudes as a list of requirements for humans. Essentially God is giving people the control. They can alter their way of life in an effort to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. In his writings Bornkamm identifies what he sees as the motive of Matthew’s author:

To break through a law which has been perverted into formal legal statements under cover of which the disobedient heart fondly imagines that all is well, and at the same time to urge the original radical will of God with its call to ‘perfection’.²⁴

In other words, Bornkamm sees Matthew’s author writing to appeal to the contemporary audience, yet the writing is timeless enough that it is applicable even to today.

Hans Dietzer Betz wrote an extensive work on the Sermon on the Mount, wherein he labels his various methods of interpretation, one of which is redaction criticism. In his introduction Betz writes on the sermon as a whole:

Life is a mess, to be sure, but God has provided a way through and out of the mess; all that the disciple needs is to join the small band of those who are traveling on the right road. This road is rough, not only because of the obstacles it presents but also because of the failures of those traveling on it. But God is merciful and forgives those who sincerely ask him.²⁵

Betz sees the sermon as a work that is both realistic in regards to the difficulties of life, but also optimistic in that with difficulties comes help from God. “Life is good, despite all appearances but human beings must choose, and do choose, which of the two ways of life they consider good.”²⁶ The Lord’s Prayer is a piece of the Sermon on the Mount that

²³ Bornkamm, *The New Testament: A Guide to its Writings*, 16.

²⁴ Ibid, 25.

²⁵ Hans Deitzer Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 61.

²⁶ Ibid.

will be specifically discussed later, and when it comes to its function and purpose within the sermon Betz claims that “the Lord’s Prayer was a part of his [the author’s] criticism of the Jewish cult, especially regarding prayer. In composing this prayer ‘Jesus is here expressing his approval of the tradition of private prayer, which he considers favorable to the prayer of the synagogue.’”²⁷

Another author who practices redaction criticism on Matthew is Bart D. Ehrman. In the Sermon on the Mount, he claims that Matthew is not simply giving a detailed list of what Jesus’ followers must do to enter the kingdom. “On the contrary, his point seems to be that overly scrupulous attention to the detail of the Law is not what really matters to God.”²⁸ That is, even scribes and Pharisees can adhere to laws once they are narrowly enough prescribed (e.g. not murdering, committing adultery etc...). God wants more than this kind of strict obedience to the letter of the Law. For Jesus in Matthew the true interpretation of the Law “does not require nuanced descriptions of how to precisely follow each of its commandments; it involves loving others as much as one’s self.”²⁹ Thus, in Matthew the core of the Law is to love: this includes both God and others. “This is the real intent of the Law, and the followers of Jesus must adhere to it in order to enter into the kingdom of heaven.”³⁰ Because the gospel of Matthew has a heavy focus on Judaism and the Jewish Law, the redactor shows us the Sermon on the Mount as a revelation of the purpose of the Law. In *Redaction Criticism: On the Nature and Exposition of the Gospels*, author Werner H. Kelber discusses new gospel theologies that are emerging due to redaction criticism, and the theological consequences to this

²⁷ Ibid, 375.

²⁸ Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 95.

²⁹ Ibid, 96.

³⁰ Ibid.

phenomenon. He argues, “Redaction criticism has revolutionized the study of the gospels.”³¹ Kelber discusses the idea that in its beginning stages, redaction criticism tended to differentiate between tradition and redaction. Moreover, “a gospel’s theological viewpoint was elicited by observing the redactional process of traditional material.”³² In other words, according to traditional redaction criticism, each gospel represents an intricately designed religious universe that contains “plot and character development, retrospective and prospective devices, linear and concentric patternings, and a continuous line of thematic cross-references and narrative interlockings.”³³ To interpret each gospel one must analyze the complexities of the narrative construction, and be able to comprehend individual parts of the gospel in connection with the total architecture. Kelber says, “The mental and psychological adjustments demanded by redaction criticism are considerable, but the newly cultivated sensitivity to the religious, literary autonomy of the gospels accords them the kind of respect long overdue in scholarship....”³⁴ Before redaction criticism came into the picture, the tendency was to lump the four gospels together and view them as one work, yet as Kelber argues, “Only the most superficial reading of the New Testament can see fit to reduce the many voices to monologue.... To extrapolate one single confession...or theology and declare it exclusively representative of the New Testament is to violate its very spirit.”³⁵ Redaction criticism focuses on the theological contributions of the editors, rather than merely cutting and pasting, and assumes the redactor plays a critical role in shaping the narrative.

³¹Werner Kelber, *Redaction Criticism: On the Nature and Exposition of the Gospels* (Rice University, Perspectives in Religious Studies, 1979), 1

³² Ibid, 14.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Kelber, 15

With the extensive analysis that redaction criticism provides, it does not go as far as it could. Meaning, while it is important to have an understanding of how the text functions as a whole, there must also be an understanding of why this text is, in fact, so timeless. Most critical redaction studies in the New Testament have been done on the four gospels because as a whole, redaction criticism looks at how the authors utilize their sources, combined with their unique theological contribution to their sources. Yet, redaction criticism in its entirety does have limitations which must be kept in mind. That is, its concern is not with the total theology of the gospel authors; rather, it searches for the unique theological contribution a gospel made, and seeks to identify the author's ultimate purpose. A large limitation of redaction criticism is that it has determined in advance what it will discover. Thus, its application to a document is not a question of whether the editor will be found guilty; rather it is a matter of when. This idea is dangerous because it causes redaction critics to wrongly assume that many or most changes the editor makes are significant rather than viewing them as stylistic or even accidental. It must be remembered that editorial changes may not always be theological. Moreover, redaction criticism tends to focus on what an author has modified in a text rather than what they left in. This propensity could lead to a large misinterpretation of the text.

Pentadic criticism, on the other hand, makes few presuppositions as to the results that will be found. Because outside sources are not necessary for applying pentadic criticism, the results cannot be known until the analysis is applied. Because a textual analysis of the Sermon on the Mount would be much outside of the means of this thesis,

application of pentadic criticism will be given to a sample of text from The Sermon on the Mount: The Lord's Prayer.

IV. Pentadic Criticism Explained

Before the definition and examination of pentadic criticism occurs, it is important to understand the umbrella under which pentadic criticism functions. The first step of this analysis is to define what Lloyd Bitzer refers to as the rhetorical situation. Bitzer argues that discourse comes into existence because the situation invites the discourse. It prescribes a fitting response. In addition, rhetoric requires exigence, meaning a situation under which an individual needs to make some response. Therefore, a rhetorical situation is:

A complex of persons, events, objects and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence.³⁶

In other words, rhetorical situations attempt to identify the means of persuasion so that a rhetor can ensure the exigency is addressed. Every situation has exigence and the Sermon on the Mount is no exception.

As identified earlier, Matthew's author's contemporaries had recently parted ways with Judaism after a prolonged period of hostility. Therefore, the exigence called for Jesus to explain to his followers that they could still follow him, and that he could be seen as the revelation of the law, not one who came to abolish it.

It is important to remember from earlier sections that scripture in early Christian times was orally recorded. Therefore, it can be assumed that the writers of the books of the New Testament had a message to convey and sought to persuade an audience to

³⁶ Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric*, 1 (January, 1968), 3.

believe that message. For this reason, their messages are rhetorical and the study of their methods easily fits into the discipline of rhetoric.

In regards to the author of Matthew, this study will not view Jesus as the author of the Sermon on the Mount. Rather, the author of Matthew had access to Jesus' teachings, and interpreted Jesus' words in a way that made sense. This communicative model fits in *Scripture as Communication*, Jeannine K. Brown's definition. She claims, "Scripture's meaning can be understood as the communicative act of the author that has been inscribed in the text and addressed to the intended audience for purposes of engagement."³⁷ Pentadic criticism is a form of rhetorical analysis that illuminates the importance of a text in an effort to unveil the rhetor's motive, rather than examining the methods under which a text was compiled a technique used in redaction criticism.

The root of pentadic criticism comes from the late scholar Kenneth Burke. In his works, he shows a mastery of concepts from the disciplines of literature, philosophy, linguistics, economics, and sociology. "As 'a specialist in symbol-systems and symbolic action,' Burke focuses on language and its nature, functions, and consequences in his explorations of all these disciplines."³⁸ Born in May 1897, Burke was raised in Pennsylvania, and grew to be a professional writer. "His attention was focused on working out the nature and function of language through his writing."³⁹ In 1945, Burke published the first of three works on human motive, using a threefold division of language into grammar, rhetoric, and motive. "*A Grammar of Motives* deals with the intrinsic nature of a work, focusing on dramatism as the key metaphor and the pentad as

³⁷Janine K. Brown. *Scripture as Communication: Introducing Biblical Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 14.

³⁸ Karen A. Foss, Sonja K Foss, and Robert Trapp. *Contemporary Perspectives on Rhetoric* (Prospective Heights: Waveland Press, 2002), 188.

³⁹ Ibid.

the method for discovering motivation.”⁴⁰ The other two works were *A Rhetoric of Motives*, and *A Symbolic of Motives*. This paper will focus on Burke’s theories in *A Grammar of Motives*.

Kenneth Burke viewed rhetoric as persuasion, or how human agents use symbols to form attitudes or induce action. “Whatever form rhetoric takes, he sees it as ‘*rooted in essential function of language itself...the use of language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols.*’”⁴¹ Therefore, wherever rhetoric exists, so does persuasion. For Burke, rhetoric is epistemic, or has the ability to create meaning. Thus, when naming an action or object occurs, meaning is created and symbols are attached. While Burke’s definition of rhetoric holds its center in persuasion and appears to be similar to traditional definitions of rhetoric, he introduces other rhetorical characteristics that make his definition more individual.

Burke’s scope of rhetoric is more wide-reaching than other traditional views. While rhetoric includes spoken and written discourse, for Burke “it also includes less traditional forms of discourse such as sales promotion, courtship, education, witchcraft, and works of art such as literature and painting.”⁴² While Burke does use the term *language* in his definition of rhetoric, he sees rhetoric as including nonverbal elements or “nonsymbolic conditions that ‘can themselves be viewed as a kind of symbolism having persuasive effects.’”⁴³ For example, food, eaten and digested is not considered rhetorical, but rhetoric exists in the meaning of food...“the meaning being persuasive enough for the

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Foss, Foss, and Trapp, 191.

⁴² Ibid, 194.

⁴³ Ibid.

idea of food to be used, like the ideas of religion, as a rhetorical device.”⁴⁴ The best way to summarize the wide range of Burke’s definition of rhetoric is in his own words: “Wherever there is persuasion, there is rhetoric. And wherever there is meaning there is persuasion.”⁴⁵

For Burke, rhetoric functions in a number of ways that tend to differ from other traditional definitions of rhetoric. One function that is particularly significant is how rhetoric “functions to name or define situations for individuals. A speech or a poem for example, is ‘*a strategy for encompassing a situation*,’ an answer to the question ‘posed by the situation.’”⁴⁶ However, rhetoric not only provides a name for a situation, it also functions as a strategy for dealing with the situation, or solving its inherent problems. In other words, rhetoric gives an orientation to a situation in some way, and provides assistance in adjusting to that situation.

Rhetorical form is another way in which Burke’s definition of rhetoric differs from other traditional views. For Burke, form and content cannot become separate. Therefore “a rhetor can’t possibly make a statement without its falling into some sort of pattern....For Burke, how an idea is developed through form is linked inextricably to the effects of rhetoric on an audience.”⁴⁷ In addition, Burke believes that an effect can develop in an audience through the development of an idea in a way that creates and satisfies expectations. Expectation is significant in the process of achieving the effects the audience desires because life’s structure comes from expectations. Burke says, “life itself has form only in so far as you can get a sense of expectancy, and life becomes unreal, and

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 195.

puzzling, and disarrayed when we do not have any way of expecting the next event.”⁴⁸ In addition to his emphasis on expectations, Burke defines form as “an arousing and fulfillment of desires.... Form is ‘correct’ in Burke’s view, when it gratifies the needs which it creates.”⁴⁹

Burke’s unconventional definition of rhetoric is important to understand because it helps to explain his concept of Dramatism. Dramatism is the label Burke gives to the “analysis of human motivation through terms derived from studying drama.”⁵⁰ Two primary suppositions underlie dramatism. First, language constitutes action, not motion. “Motion corresponds to the biological or animal aspect of the human being, which is concerned with bodily processes such as growth, digestion, respiration, and the requirements for the maintenance of these processes- food, shelter, and rest for example.”⁵¹ Because this level does not involve the use of symbols, its category becomes non-symbolic.

Action on the other hand, corresponds to the neurological aspect of the human being. Burke defines this as “the ability of an organism to acquire language or a symbol system.”⁵² This constitutes the realm of action, or the symbolic. Our non-animal instincts originate in symbolicity, and symbolicity thus becomes our means of motivation. Examples of this would include when humans attempt to reach goals in arenas such as education, religion, politics, or finance.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Sonja K. Foss, *Rhetorical Criticism: Exploration and Practice* (Prospective Heights: Waveland Press, 2000), 390.

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ibid.

“Burke elaborates on this notion of action at the heart of dramatism by establishing three conditions for action. One is that action must involve freedom or choice.”⁵³ If we as humans are unable to make a choice, we are not acting, rather we are being moved, like a ball hit with a bat- we are behaving mechanically. While we can never be completely free because of our animal instincts, choice is in some way implicit in the idea of action. “A second condition necessary for action is purpose. Either consciously or unconsciously we must select or will a choice-we must choose one option over others.”⁵⁴ A third requirement for action is motion. “While motion can exist without action (as when an object falls, through the source of gravity, to the ground), action cannot exist without motion. The grounding of symbolic activity is in the realm of the nonsymbolic.”⁵⁵

Burke’s distinction between action and motion is primarily theoretical because once organisms acquire a symbol system, they are virtually unable to do anything purely in the realm of motion. According to Burke, after establishing a symbolic system, everything we do is through the lens of that system.

To cook a meal, for example, may be considered motion because it satisfies the biological need for food. Yet, creating a meal is impossible without our symbolic conceptions of eating....The simple act of eating to sustain ourselves is transformed into symbolically laden messages about ourselves, our friends, and food. Preparing a meal, which has a biological basis, becomes an action.⁵⁶

The second assumption of dramatism says that humans develop and present messages much like a play is presented. We use rhetoric as a tool to present views of our situation much like a play creates a certain world or situation inhabited by characters in

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 384.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

the play. Rhetoric helps humans analyze, describe and perceive a situation. “How we respond to a situation indicates how we are perceiving it, the choices we see available to us, and the action that we are likely to take in that situation.”⁵⁷ The chosen language then provides insight as to how one is reacting, and their motives. “Once you know how rhetors have described situations, you are able to discover their motives for action in the situations-how they justify, explain, and account for their actions.”⁵⁸

According to this Burkean train of thought, as rhetors describe their situation, they do so using the five elements of drama- *act*, *agent*, *agency*, *scene*, and *purpose*. These five terms constitute what Burke labels the pentad, and the use of these principles are helpful for fully describing any act. “You must have some word that names the *act* (names what took place, in thought or deed), and another that names the *scene* (the background of the act, the situation in which it occurred); also you must indicate what person or kind of person (*agent*) performed the act, what means of instrument he used, (*agency*), and the purpose.”⁵⁹

In congruence with the Burkean pentad, humans act despite being unaware of what their motive is. Therefore, the role of the pentadic critic is to attempt to identify the rhetor’s motive. Through its application to the Lord’s Prayer, pentadic criticism unveils a potential motive of the gospel writer that may not be seen as clearly through other forms of criticism.

To fully understand pentadic criticism and how it is applied, we must look at Kenneth Burke’s definition of humanity, and how that applies to the human motive. Burke’s definition of humanity reads:

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

Man is the symbol-using(symbol-making, symbol-misusing) animal,
inventor of the negative (or moralized by the negative)
separated from his natural condition by instruments of his own making
goaded by the spirit of hierarchy (or moved by the sense of order)
and rotten with perfection.⁶⁰

In Burke's perspective, humans beings are divided by nature, and designed for striving and struggle; hierarchy is a result of this. Moreover, "man is an *actor*, a maker, a mover....a being who lives by language; who moves and is moved by words....Man is a being who lives by purpose or meaning, value and desire...who yearns for perfection."⁶¹ In short, people move through the movements of their drama. They are moved through speech and the persuasive power of language. The drama that each person lives is shown through in pentadic form, which will be shown through the Lord's Prayer.

V. Pentadic Criticism Applied

As it was said earlier, Burke argues that whenever a person describes a situation they provide answers to five questions: "What was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose)."⁶² Pentadic analysis says that as someone describes the situation around them, they order the five elements of Burke's pentad to reflect their individual view of a situation. In the end, the pentad draws two conclusions. First, the pentad serves as a tool for content analysis. "The five terms provide a method of determining how a speaker views the world."⁶³ In other words, the way in which individuals interpret the content of certain rhetoric is a representation of their world views. Second, pentadic analysis shows how one describes a situation is a revelation of what they see as the appropriate response to various human

⁶⁰ Barry Brummett, *Landmark essays-Kenneth Burke* (Davis: Hermagores Press, 1993), 200.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Foss, 392.

⁶³ Ibid, 393.

situations. This section will apply pentadic criticism to the Lord's Prayer found in the Sermon on the Mount and examine how pentadic criticism illuminates in this biblical text.

“Our Father in heaven hallowed be your name. (6:9)”

The first task is to identify the five elements of the pentad. First is the *act*, what was done or what should be done? In this phrase, keeping the Father's name hallowed is what did and should happen. Keeping a name hallowed refers to keeping a name holy, sacred, or revered. Alongside the background of the Old Testament, keeping God's name “hallowed” is something that humans have been warned about before. “You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord your God, for the Lord will not acquit anyone who misuses his name (Exodus 20:7)”. “Hallowed be your name” as a phrase could be a way of telling people to know what they are talking about when they are referring to God, and that by not keeping the Father's name hallowed, we are trivializing it, bringing it down to our level, perhaps trying to make God a tool for our purposes rather than allowing God to use us.

The *scene* in this phrase is heaven, where the Father resides. In both the Old and New Testament, the word “heaven” is used to describe both a physical part of the universe and the place God (the Father) dwells. “Since heaven is the abode of God, heaven is also the source and locus of salvation.”⁶⁴ Therefore, acknowledging that our Father is in heaven and gives us salvation is a way of keeping his name hallowed because we acknowledge that we only have salvation through Him. This scene also represents the idea that a boundary between humanity and God as only God resides in heaven. The way for humans to partially overcome that boundary is through salvation.

⁶⁴ *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Heaven.”

“Our Father” in heaven, is the *agent* in this phrase. It is only through the Father’s empowerment that humans can hallow his name and obtain salvation. In this case salvation serves as the *agency*, meaning that it is only through salvation that the act, hallowing the Father’s name is done. The only way that the Father’s name can be hallowed is because of the Father. Our Father enables us to have salvation, and exist in the first place. “The God addressed as ‘your Father’ is the God of creation. He created those who turn to him in prayer. As the creator he cares for his creatures from the beginning to end.”⁶⁵ The *purpose* could also be seen in this same way. Meaning, the purpose of keeping our Father’s name hallowed is to gain salvation.

“Your Kingdom come ... (6:10)”

While the *act* in this phrase is the Kingdom coming, we cannot examine the Kingdom coming until it is understood what the Kingdom is. Many hypotheses exist about the “kingdom” in regards to its placement in the New Testament and what it refers to. Scholars have continued to develop and expand many theories over time.

A prominent scholar who studied the idea of the kingdom was Albrecht Ritschl. “Ritschl recognized the centrality of the ‘kingdom of God’ in Jesus’ teaching and wished to give this concept a central place in his own theological system.”⁶⁶ Yet, his famous discussion of the kingdom has taken on a new relevance today among scholars who see Jesus not as an apocalyptic prophet but as a teacher of ethical wisdom. Because of this, it is important that the “re-emergence of a loosely ‘Ritschlean’ understanding of the ‘kingdom of god...’⁶⁷” not be forgotten in current debate. Ritschl claims “The kingdom of God which thus presents the spiritual and ethical task of mankind as it is gathered in

⁶⁵ Betz, 368.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

the Christian community is *supernatural*, insofar as in it the ethical forms of society are surpassed.”⁶⁸ In short, Ritschl sees the kingdom of God as representative of the tasks of humanity within the Christian circle, and that it is a supernatural entity. Therefore, in the kingdom, entities such as marriage, family, and vocation are non-existent.

The kingdom of God is the divinely ordained highest good of the community founded through God’s revelation in Christ. By defining the kingdom of God in the way he did, “Ritschl succeeded in connecting Christian theology with the ethical concern which thinkers since Kant has seen as the core of religion.”⁶⁹

Insofar as Ritschl’s theology appears to be based on a “historically defensible reconstruction of Jesus’ intentions it was open to historical objections.”⁷⁰ The duty of making these objections fell to Ritschl’s son-in-law, Johannes Weiss. Weiss begins his work by recognizing that theologians of his time had rightly begun to center their theology on the idea of the kingdom of God. “He argues that for Jesus himself that kingdom was something still to be realized, although there was a sense in which the power of Satan was already being destroyed through his work as healer and exorcist.”⁷¹ Weiss argues that Jesus did not think of himself as the ‘founder’ of God’s kingdom, rather Jesus is seen as one who prepares the way for the kingdom. “Jesus cannot *bring about* the kingdom, the inauguration of which is entirely in God’s hands.... Jesus thought of that kingdom as yet to be realized.”⁷² According to Weiss’ suppositions, Jesus originally believed that he would see the kingdom established during his lifetime, but during the end of his ministry, realized that the end had been postponed. Jesus’ death was “something transitory, for it would be followed by his exaltation by God and return in

⁶⁸ Ibid, 157.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 172.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid, 173.

⁷² Ibid, 175.

glory. It is only...in God's good time, the promised kingdom would be established, after the transformation of the present order of the world and the judgment of humans.”⁷³

Another theory about the kingdom of God comes from Albert Schweitzer (1875-1965). Schweitzer's view says,

Jesus may have entertained at first a purely ethical view, looking for the realisation of the Kingdom of God through the spread and perfection of the moral-religious society which he was undertaking to establish. When...the opposition of the world put the organic completion of the Kingdom in doubt, the eschatological conception forced itself upon him.⁷⁴

In other words, a complete revolution took place in Jesus' thoughts. What began as an ethical view of the kingdom ended as an eschatological view. Schweitzer develops his eschatological view through claiming that Jesus' ethical teaching consisted of a proclamation that “repentance which was required of those who would be part of God's future Kingdom.”⁷⁵ For Schweitzer, the kingdom of God preached by Jesus would only come in the future and at God's command; humans could do nothing to hasten or delay its coming. Jesus' ethical teaching is therefore an ‘interim-ethics’, conditioned by the expectation of an imminent divine intervention, bring human history to an end.”⁷⁶

While other interpretations of what the kingdom may mean do exist, those of Weiss and Schweitzer are among the more well known. Bart D. Ehrman, a more contemporary scholar, discusses a probable interpretation of the meaning of “kingdom of heaven” in Matthew. That is, the kingdom of heaven does not refer to a place people go to when they die. “Rather, it refers to God's presence on earth, a kingdom that he will bring at the end

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 188.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 192.

of this age by overthrowing the forces of evil.”⁷⁷ When God does this, the oppressed and weak will be exalted, and the high and mighty will be belittled.

“There are 54 references to ‘kingdom’ in the Gospel of Matthew...and they are all spoken by, or related to Jesus.”⁷⁸ The Anchor Bible Dictionary says:

In summary, the Kingdom of Heaven in Matthew is the message of Jesus, but also the message about Jesus. It is anticipated in the present which flows from the past, and it grows mysteriously; it is anticipated in the Matthean community, which shows hints of emerging institutionalism, but the Church is not yet the Kingdom. It is therefore temporal and primarily eschatological and Christological.⁷⁹

In other words, the Kingdom is something to anticipate and presents us with our pentadic *scene*. That is, when the kingdom comes, the scene will be heaven on earth. The *agent*, then, for bringing heaven to earth is our Father, and the kingdom will only be seen by those who have salvation, or the *agency*. Therefore, the Kingdom coming is only through the Father and is a divine gift to pray for, not something that humans can control.

“Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. (6:10)”

The Father’s will being done is the *act* in the part of the Lord’s Prayer, and on earth is the *scene*. “Rather than mythological pictures attempting to portray the meaning of the ‘Kingdom of God,’ the prayer expresses the content of an expression as doing God’s will. Just as God’s will is already done in heaven.”⁸⁰ In other words, the Father is the *agent* because he must tell us what his will is. Moreover, the only way that he will tell us is through the *agency* of salvation as this is the only way to cross the boundary between God and humanity. Humans can access God through salvation. Then, the

⁷⁷ Ehrman, 93.

⁷⁸ *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, s.v. “Kingdom of Heaven.”

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *New Interpreters Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), s.v. Matthew 6:12.

purpose of heaven on earth will be seen. If the goal is for heaven on earth, that would implicitly indicate that God's will be done on earth (as the verse says), but what does that mean?

In the gospel of Matthew, heaven and earth are depicted as two distinct realms of reality. Heaven is inhabited by God and angels, and is the realm of God's rule. Earth, on the other hand, is the world where human beings live. In Matthew, "The emphasis is not primarily on the total universe with its two parts, but on the dichotomy, the innate separateness of the heavenly and mundane spheres."⁸¹ In the gospels, Jesus speaks of heaven in several ways, and identifying how Jesus supposedly spoke about heaven will help us better understand what heaven on earth may look like. First, Jesus speaks of heaven as in the Old Testament or *ouranos* which refers "simply to the sky or the air....For instance, heaven is the domain of the birds as well as the abode of the clouds."⁸² More significantly, heaven is God's dwelling place thus, "it is not surprising that the will of God is done perfectly in heaven."⁸³ Thus, when heaven is on earth, God's will is going to be fulfilled. This is one indicator of what heaven on earth may look like. "Though no explicit discussion is given regarding when heaven begins, most sayings portray the 'end of the age' or the Son of man's return as the inaugural event of the consummated kingdom."⁸⁴ As it is clear, many ideas of heaven and its place on earth are circulated thus making it difficult to acquire a firm understanding of heaven on earth. Many Christians and scholars see heaven on earth referring to the post-apocalypse times

⁸¹ Kari Syreeni, "Between Heaven and Earth: On the Structure of Matthew's Symbolic Universe," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 13, no. 40 (1990): 3.

⁸² Joel B. Green and Scot McKnight, "Heaven," in *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1992), 308.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

that will come. That after a time of suffering and tribulation, then heaven on earth will become manifest.

“Give us this day our daily bread.... (6:11)”

The phrase “daily bread” appears to be another reference to the Old Testament. In Exodus 16:15-21, God gave manna to the Israelites each day while they were in the wilderness. Because they could not keep any manna overnight, they had to depend on God to provide anew each morning. This idea has connections to the Christian form of Holy Communion. Because Holy Communion is bread for today, it serves as our daily bread, the substance we need to keep going. “The remarkable legacy of bread is that the everyday substance of bread became interwoven with the liturgical practices of the church. Every time believers eat... bread during the Eucharist they look to the theological traditions... evoked by the bread.”⁸⁵ Thus, the *act* in this phrase is the Father giving us bread, or satisfying human needs. Those needs could be physical in the sense of food to survive, or spiritual as a foretaste of the bread of heaven, or a sample of enjoying the presence of Jesus in heaven at his table at his banquet. Therefore bread can be seen to denote physical food, but could also signify teaching or learning. Another way to view this idea is to see God not as providing bread but rather providing “the ingredients from which we make the bread. It is therefore ‘our bread’ because we make it. Even more intricate is the realization that we do not ourselves make the bread each time we eat it.”⁸⁶ Rather, we rely on others who make the bread and give it to us, in the mean time presupposing the chain of suppliers from the farmer to “the miller, the baker, the

⁸⁵ L, Juliana and M. Claassens, “Daily Bread,” in *New Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006) 499.

⁸⁶ Betz, 379.

members of the household, the father who breaks and hands out the bread at the meal.”⁸⁷

Yet central to this understanding is that “none of these suppliers could ‘give’ if God did not give before.”⁸⁸ In short, while the bread may be seen as belonging to individuals, it must be acknowledged that the bread only exists because of God.

The *scene* in this verse is daily, showing that humans need fulfillment each day. And the *agent* of that bread is the Father, through the *agency* of either manna or a gift. Meaning the Father does not have to give us bread daily, but does so to achieve the *purpose* or satisfaction for humans. The purpose is satisfaction because daily bread can bring us back once again to the Old Testament. In Deuteronomy 8:2-3 it says that “man cannot live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.”

“And forgive us our debts as we have also forgiven our debtors. (6:12)”

At this point in the prayer, the individual is asking God to forgive them so that in turn they can forgive those around them. This verse presents a petition where the “petitioners ask for the remission of debts they have incurred in their relationships with others. The very fact that they present such a petition means that they cannot otherwise make good on these debts.”⁸⁹ This idea affirms God as the *agent* in this verse, in that without Him we would not have our debts forgiven, nor would we know how to forgive others. “The Bible has many words for sin, but debt is the only word for it in the Lord’s Prayer.....A debt is what is due but has not yet been paid.”⁹⁰ The New Interpreters Bible says:

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Betz, 380.

⁹⁰ James Hastings, *The Great Texts of the Bible: St. Matthew*, (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1914), 149.

“We might first note that Jesus...makes the assumption of universal sinfulness. Jesus assumes, and does not argue, that every person who before the Holy One in prayer comes as a guilty one who needs God’s forgiveness. Sin is here thought of as a debt owed to God—a debt one cannot repay.”⁹¹

Therefore, no one is exempt from needing the *act* of forgiveness. The fact that this debt is everlasting and no one can repay it illuminates the *agency* of mercy. It is through his mercy that we are even in existence. The next verse, “As we have also forgiven our debtors,” helps illuminate the *purpose* of this passage. That is, not until God forgives us can we, in turn, forgive others. The *scene* in this passage can be viewed as earth as that is where forgiveness must happen and where humans reside. This verse reminds us that our own ability to forgive comes from the fact that we’re aware of God’s forgiveness of us. It is important to remember that in the second part of this verse, where humans forgive other humans, we do not become the agents as it may seem. God remains the agent because without God’s agency of mercy, we would not have the ability to forgive others. That is, even the ability to forgive comes from God.

“And do not bring us into a time of trial but rescue us from the evil one. (6:13)”

The first item to address the petition “And do not bring us into a time of trial.” This phrase seems to presuppose that God is the one who leads humans into temptation and the petitioners intervene and ask God to stop. “Historically, this theological idea comes from Jewish wisdom theology, according to which God tests and tempts human beings especially the wise and the righteous, for the purpose of their moral education.”⁹² This statement has led to many debates and Betz introduces an interesting interpretation of this phrase. That is, “if God were to continue to tolerate the existence of evil and

⁹¹ *The New Interpreters Bible*, s.v. Matthew 6:13.

⁹² Betz, 380.

thereby the continuation of temptation, he would be implicated in the creation of evil and thus become unrighteous.”⁹³ Because unrighteousness goes strictly against God’s character, he “must choose between becoming entangled with evil himself and taking seriously his obligation to be the guarantor and preserver of righteousness.”⁹⁴ In accordance with the orientation of the prayer as a whole, it is best to interpret this petition as originally having an eschatological reference. “In apocalyptic thought, just before the final victory of God and the coming of the kingdom, the power of evil is intensified, and the people of God endure tribulations and persecution.”⁹⁵

In this case, people are shown how to pray. That God, who always leads the people, will not bring them into this time of testing when the pressure might be so great that it may overcome faith itself. In this passage, the evil one does not refer to the devil. Rather it refers to “manifestations of the ultimate power of evil. The disciple is instructed not to take them lightly, but to see them as a threat to faith and to pray for God’s deliverance from them.”⁹⁶ The words “deliver us from evil” identifies “evil” as the totality of “all unfulfilled and failed obligations contained in the previous petitions.”⁹⁷ This total damage done by all failed obligations is considered so large that the only way out is through the *act* of God’s rescue, also seen as God taking action in a drastic situation. Thus God is the *agent* during this *scene* that is our daily lives, or more specifically times of tribulation or hardship. The pentadic *purpose* in this verse is God saving humanity, or the individual praying from evil. The *agency* can be seen either as

⁹³ Betz, 381.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Hastings, 205.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Betz, 380.

mercy, or God's desire for righteousness. "According ancient thought, righteousness is nothing other than the overcoming of evil is through good."⁹⁸

"For the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours forever. (6:14)"

The final phrase in this prayer is rather straight forward. It is a definitive statement that once again gives all glory to the Father, and acknowledges human's need for God's help. The phrase claims the idea that regardless of how much success or power one obtains, the final word and ultimate power lies with the Father. The phrase is congruent with the rest of the prayer according to pentadic analysis because it seems re-affirm the Father's ultimate agency. For Betz, using this prayer is a part of self definition wherein the individuals step forward and confess to be members of the human community. Yet, it is interesting to note that at this closing verse, "the Lord's Prayer ceases to be a petitionary prayer and becomes an intercessory prayer."⁹⁹ Meaning, the prayer is primarily a human cry for help. Pentadic analysis shows that through praying the Lord's Prayer, humans acknowledge that they have no agency without God having it first. It should be noted that at the end, the prayer becomes intercessory as "The charge of being egotistical is anticipated and refuted because all petitions are simultaneously intercessory."¹⁰⁰ Humans petition the Father for help throughout the prayer, and at the end humble themselves to him.

VI. Conclusion

The Lord's Prayer re-affirms that "human beings like all other creatures 'have need....'"¹⁰¹ In fact, not only is God aware of these needs but he created them. "When

⁹⁸ Hastings, 205.

⁹⁹ Betz, 382.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Betz, 368.

people turn to God with petitions, they do so because they are faced with needs they themselves are unable to take care of.”¹⁰² Therefore no point exists in attempting to inform God about what we think our needs are. Betz argues that “The Lord’s Prayer has been designed from the perspective of God.”¹⁰³ Because it can be seen as God’s words, and it is often labeled as the model prayer for believers, it is important to understand what God is trying to say in the prayer and to understand that different forms of analysis can bring unique perspectives to a text.

Attempting to identify the message of the prayer can prove to be an ambiguous task, yet the purpose of this paper is to illuminate new ways to look at a text, not to argue the absolute that only one interpretation can exist. Thus, ambiguity is not disheartening. The first form of analysis discussed, redaction criticism, is theologically based and one of the more widely used forms of analysis. When applied to the Sermon on the Mount as a whole, some redaction critics labeled the sermon a “proclamation through the mouth of Jesus of the conditions of entrance [into the Kingdom of Heaven] ordained by God.”¹⁰⁴ Others see specifically the Lord’s Prayer as the author of Matthew attempting to criticize members of the Jewish cult. Some even talk about the sermon as a way for God to tell humans that we should love others as much as ourselves. Despite these various viewpoints, all redaction critics who look at the Sermon on the Mount seek to find the liberties that the author of Matthew took in changing or editing the text when they recorded the sermon. While these efforts are helpful in understanding the meaning of the Sermon on the Mount, or more specifically the Lord’s Prayer, redaction criticism proves to not go far enough in its interpretation.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Bornkamm, *The New Testament: A Guide to its Writings*, 16.

While redaction criticism can be helpful, it must be understood that it not the only way to view a text. Pentadic analysis is a form of criticism that when applied specifically to the Lord's Prayer illuminates a new way to read a text. Its application shows that while humans have agency in choosing their actions, their agency only comes through God having agency first. In pentadic analysis, humans are at the complete mercy of God regardless of how pure and just they live their lives. A pentadic analysis says a lot about the Christianity of the Lord's Prayer. For example, only one place in the prayer exists where humans have agency, which is in forgiving each other. The Lord's Prayer frames God differently from what we think. Meaning, God doesn't provide agency to humans, even in the act of praying, God is directing it. The proposal that God has agency through the rest of the prayer takes initial control away from humans. Even though humans are agents in the sense that they can choose whether or not to pray, they aren't able to pray until God acts first and provides them with a prayer.

Through the lens of pentadic analysis the Lord's Prayer depicts the speaker (the person who is praying), as one who petitions for mercy and help, for it is only through the Father that humans will see "heaven on earth." Humans need God not only for salvation but for the fulfillment of their everyday biological needs such as food. Also, the appropriate response to all situations is to ask the Father for help because everything humans do is because of God. Humans are merely a tool for God to use for God's purposes, and these purposes are unknown to humans. Thus, the motive of the individual who is praying the way that God taught them to pray is to gain salvation as they are acknowledging God's agency as prior to their own.

This thesis poses a challenge to believers. That is, if scriptures such as Paul's teachings on women's roles in the church can be deemed outdated because of their context, then the entire New Testament must be read within its first century context. Yet this claim is more ambiguous than it may appear. Meaning, what is meant by context? Context could apply to historical, textual, or even the scripture writer's particular bias. This thesis presented two very different forms of analysis, which were applied to a well known Biblical text to demonstrate that the text may, in fact, mean something other than what a reader may see at first glance. Earlier, the argument was made that pentadic analysis draws two conclusions. First, the pentad serves as a tool for content analysis. Second, pentadic analysis shows how one describes a situation is a revelation of what they see as the appropriate response to various human situations. When it comes to the Lord's Prayer, pentadic analysis portrays the author of Matthew as an individual who gives God primary agency, and in the author's point of view, the appropriate response to any situation is not only prayer, but following the model prayer that was given to humans by God. This idea shows the reaffirmation of God as the agent, moreover, without God human agency would not exist.

Looking at this well known Biblical text through two very different lenses, supports the view that Christians cannot take the Bible for what it appears to be at first glance, regardless of the verse or its popularity. Rather all scripture should be subjected to some form of analysis. This analysis is extremely important for Christian communities because it reminds us that we need to know what we are praying for! In redaction criticism, Jesus becomes a character who is subjected to the beliefs of the editor. The editor has the power to frame Jesus however they see fit, and most likely the depiction of

Jesus is one that fits with the needs of the first century community. The analysis seems to simply list out the conditions and expectations that Christians must meet if they want to get into heaven or see the anticipated heaven on earth. Moreover, the weaknesses of redaction criticism may lead to an incorrect interpretation of the text. For example, the Lord's Prayer in the gospel of Matthew differs from the Lord's Prayer found in the gospel of Luke. While the differences may imply different theologies, they may also suggest an unintentional change in wording that exemplifying an editor's individual style. In other words, it must be understood that not all changes are significant.

Application of pentadic analysis then could serve as an addition to redaction criticism. Because pentadic analysis searches for the motives of the rhetor (in this case the individual who wrote the gospel of Matthew), readers are granted a unique insight as to see why the text is the way it is. It is important to note that according to Kenneth Burke, it is common, if not assumed that the rhetor is unaware of their motive, which is why pentadic criticism can serve to be so revealing, as it colors a text in a way that may yield fresh insights into the rhetor's motive, thus giving us a deeper understanding of the text's meaning.

It must be understood that the purpose of this thesis is *not* to convince the reader to choose the conclusions of either redaction criticism or pentadic analysis. Rather its purpose is to illustrate that by understanding and recognizing that different ways to interpret the text do exist, each individual can decide for him/herself how they want to understand scripture. It was said at the beginning that all too often Christian communities label particular scriptures as irrelevant to contemporary believers because of their context. Yet this study has shown that even the texts upon which contemporary

Christianity lays some of its ethical cornerstones, when subjected to certain forms of criticism, the text may mean something other than what communities think or assume. Even if the views proposed in this paper are not adapted into Christian communities, it is important for believers to understand that all scripture can have different meaning if it is viewed in a different light. The charge that this paper makes is for Christians to open their eyes and examine all not some scripture, under a critical eye and ensure that it can mean what they think it does. In short, if a call for contextual understanding is going to be applied to some scripture, it should be applied to all.

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