REFERENCE AND RHETORIC IN THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW *

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Abstract

This article reacts to the view that whereas the Markan narrative functions predominantly on the rhetorical axis of communication, Matthew operates basically on the mimetic axis. Although there are obvious differences between the rhetoric of Matthew and Mark, it is not apt to characterize Matthew's rhetoric as more referential than in the case of Mark. Instead of discovering a moving away from rhetoric in Matthew, one can point to various rhetorical techniques utilized in the narration of the story. A rhetorical reading of Matthew also has to take the power of the text into account.

1. Problem

A perennial problem in the interpretation of literature - and the New Testament - concerns the referentiality of the text. On the one extreme the text is viewed as a message about the real world beyond language. This substantive view reduces a literary work to a document only, while all the emphasis is placed on the aspect of *mimesis*. The other extreme is to see reference to the world as immaterial: the text is then treated only as an object of communication, as a means, with the emphasis on the relational dimension of language. This relational view reduces a literary work and a text to art only, with an exclusive emphasis on the aspect of *creatio*.

In the pre-critical phase of biblical studies the reading of the text consisted of a interest for the pragmatic or rhetorical emphasis of the text, while a critical reading of the text occupied itself very much with an interest in the reference of the text and the resultant eclipse of the biblical narrative (Fowler 1986:4, with reference to Frei).

In the meantime literary studies witnessed a movement away from the representational aesthetic of *mimesis*, to *creatio*, the creative preoccupation with the

words of the text (cf the work of e g R Barthes). But this one-sided emphasis has in its turn gone too far. This trend has been followed in biblical research by structuralist studies, the renewed interest in the literary qualities of the biblical text and the concerted attention to apply the insights of narratological research to the study of the narratives in the Bible (cf Combrink 1986). Nevertheless, the pendulum has started to swing back again and Graff (1979:196f) points to the importance of the referential function of literature, and that conventions need a context, or reference to be understood.

Even though the one-sided emphasis on the self-referentiality of the text has been abandoned by many, it still remains valid that words are not only used to refer, but can also be used in various language games or to perform different speech acts.

It has become clear, then, that language does more than only to depict or to refer. The language of the New Testament therefore not only has an explanatory function, but also an affective appeal and a rhetorical function (more about this later).

In this respect the model of Hernadi (1976) with its two axes, is quite illuminating. He makes clear that language functions along these two axes: the mimetic axis of representation (reference), and the rhetorical axis of communication. Some speech acts function primarily along the rhetorical axis, but there are speech acts with representation or reference as their primary goal.

In an interesting and stimulating article Fowler (1986:12) makes the claim that language can do important things besides to refer. His second claim is that Matthew's revision of Mark is to be seen as the first steps towards meaning-as-reference in the Synoptic Gospels. According to Fowler Mark is functioning primarily along the rhetorical axis of language, while Matthew's Gospel functions on the mimetic axis and is more interested in reference, and giving information (1986:13). After discussing two examples, the baptism and the empty tomb, he concludes (1986:14):

> Matthew takes Mark's narrative, which operates predominately along language's rhetorical axis, and turns it into history-like, representational, realistic narrative, a narrative that operates predominately along the axis of representation.

To my mind it is an open question whether this conclusion can be validated, especially on the evidence of only the examples of the baptism and the empty tomb. When Fowler (1986:13) asserts that the statement by the voice from heaven at the baptism in Matthew now rather refers to than creates a state of affairs, it has to be qualified in the light of the fact that such a statement refers in the first place in the cotext of the narrative and the state of affairs in the narrative world at that stage of the narrative. Yet Fowler (1986:15) also acknowledges that Matthew and Luke are no less rhetorical than Mark:

> They simply have a rather different rhetorical strategy. They use realistic narrative because it is an attractive and seductive rhetorical strategy.

Whereas Mark is to be seen as an affective narrative, qualified by a rhetoric of indirection, Matthew is a referential narrative, which can be described by a rhetoric

of direction. Both these Gospels have the same desire, to influence their readers, but they chose different strategies (Fowler 1986:15f). Or to put it in speech act terms: although the locutions of the two Gospels can be the same, their illocutionary force can be different. Yet the question remains whether Matthew has received a fair deal when Fowler concludes his article with (1986:16):

> ... the eclipse of at least one major biblical narrative, namely, the Gospel of Mark, ... and the slow march toward the ultimate triumph of meaning-as-reference, is already well under way when Matthew rewrites Mark's Gospel.

It seems to me that in this manner the rhetoric of Matthew is not valued in a proper manner, but also that the phenomenon of reference in Matthew is also short-circuited. It is, therefore, necessary to deal with the matter of reference and rhetoric more extensively, and to amplify this discussion with reference to some aspects of the Sermon on the Mount by way of an example.

2. Reference

The movement away from the one-sided emphasis of literary criticism on the auto-referentiality of the text was facilitated in more than one way. The theory of Lotman concerning the referentiality of literature was an important contribution toward a balanced view of literature as *creatio* and *mimesis* (Bowker 1983:14). He even maintains (1977:32) that

> ... the assertion that the structural, semiotic study of literature ignores questions of content, meaning, the social and ethical value of art and its ties with reality is based on a misunderstanding.

Another contribution is the reception theory of Iser (1980). He goes a step further than Lotman in the consideration of the social function of literature. According to Iser's concept of indeterminacy, the absence of an exact counterpart of reality in the text, a text is not a copy of thought systems, or a model of reality, but it is to be seen as a reaction to thought systems chosen and incorporated into its own repertoire (1978:72). The reader interacts with the repertoire of the text, thereby constituting its meaning or reference; the meaning is then turned into significance by absorbing the reference of the text into his own existence (Iser 1978:151):

> Iser's concept of repertoire is important because it stresses the general communicative function of literature in which there is a reference to a world outside itself, by emphasizing literature's ability to enable contemporary readers to experience their reality more fully, and subsequent generations of readers to grasp a reality which was never their own (Bowker 1983:26).

The limits of the literature as language model has also been illumined by the language as action model, including the concept of speech acts (cf Walhout 1985). In this approach it is evident that the text is also communicating something about the world beyond the text. There is a growing awareness that language is never completely autonomous, that the meaning/sense of text is related not only to its internal structure and relations, but also to its context, the situation in which it occurs and the functions for which it is used (cf Combrink 1988).

There was in literary theory, therefore, a tendency to remove literature and semiotics from referentiality, but that amounted to a literature separated from the world. It is, however, clear that the relationship between text and reality is again very relevant in literary and biblical studies. In the light of the recent developments, the perception of the problem has changed.

> The question is no longer: to what extent is there congruence between text and reality, but rather: in what way does the text refer to reality? (Lategan & Vorster 1985:1)

This is especially so since the relation literature - reality cannot be stated with the thesis of only a fixed bi-polar rapport: sign - signified, neither with the thesis of a direct rapport sign - referent. One has to reckon at least with some form of the semiotic triangle: sign-signified-referent, though it has to be acknowledged that such a diagram can amount to an over-simplification of the relationships concerned (cf Eco 1979:58ff).

Point of departure is the principle that language is not a passive mirror of reality, but rather functions as a *Zwischenwelt*, a vision of the world constituted by cultural systems. It has further to be noted that within this intermediary sphere there are fixed contents of social and cultural kind, but also variable factors of personal data or subjective concepts (Pagnini 1987:95). This intermediate function does not exhaust or explain the object, but simply organizes the object and constitutes a vision of it, in other words: language structures reality, but this is not an exhaustive or complete structuration. This implies that

> ... language is always insufficient with respect to the real, the 'map' always incomplete with respect to the territory to which it refers (Pagnini 1987:100).

It is further important to note that even the referential aspect of the text, the function of 'mirroring' reality, does not invalidate the autonomy of the text. It is accepted that the signs in a parable refer internally in the narrative world of the parable. But this also applies to the Gospels as a whole where the narrative is the remaking of reality in the form of the narrative world by means of characterization, plot and other narrative devices (Vorster 1985:60).

In this respect the model proposed by Pagnini (1987:104f) can be illuminating to clarify the triple manner in which the conceptual plane of the text, or the narrative world of a narrative may refer to the extra-textual reality.
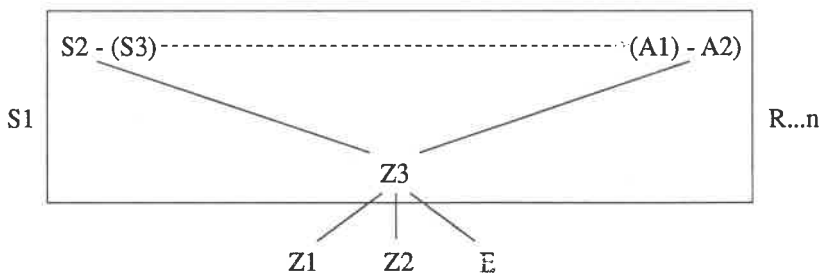
S1　　　　= external author (sender 1)

S2　　　　= implicit author (sender 2)

S3　　　　= second narrator - occasionally present (sender 3)

A1　　　　= internal addressee - occasionally present

A2　　　　= prefigured internal addressee (who can also be identified with A1)

R...n　　　= external receivers

Z1　　　　= conceptual plane of standard language

Z2　　　　= conceptual plane of the natural world's semiotic systems

Z3　　　　= conceptual plane of the work

E　　　　 = empiria, marginal experience with respect to cultural systems (linguistic and non-linguistic)

It has to be observed that the conceptual plane of the work Z3 refers in a triple manner to Z1, Z2 and E. Thus the conceptual plane of the work does not constitute a direct rapport of reality, even when it proposes to mirror or imitate reality.

> The referential plane of literature represents a proposal, or project, to organize (structure and give meaning to) the world different from any plan one may obtain by means of ordinary linguistic structures. The plane (Z3) consequently becomes a fresh experience of things (Pagnini 1987 :106) .

This dimension of a fresh experience of things by the conceptual plane of a work is related to the concept of the redescription of reality as used by Ricoeur (1975) with a view to the provoking of a new referential horizon in front of the text, as well as to the fact that the 'signified' of signs becomes 'sense' by its relationship to the extra-linguistic situation of the socio-cultural context (Pagnini 1987:102). The reference of a work like Matthew, therefore, is intimately bound up with this relationship to the socio-cultural world of the recipients and readers of the Gospel. The communicative nature of the narrative text is completely misunderstood when one has the expectation that the text would duplicate or merely preserve the seminal events or teaching of the life of Jesus.

> It is precisely because of the persuasive powers of the narrative to depict a world which is familiar enough to recognize, but different enough to be inviting, that the evangelists use the narrative form (Lategan 1985:92).

What has been said so far should be seen as the background for questioning Fowler's conclusion that Matthew's rewriting of Mark amounts to the eclipse of narrative and the beginning of the move toward meaning-as-reference instead of meaning in communication on the rhetorical axis. The signs in the Gospel of Matthew refer in the first place internally to the narrative world. But their reference to the extra-textual reality is in an indirect manner, as has been indicated above. In fact, the way in which Matthew refers is fully rhetorical, as will be elaborated further on.

Nevertheless, when dealing with reference in this manner, the question concerning the relationship between the text and the real world beyond it, remains important. Does the emphasis on the autonomy of the text of Matthew, the fact that every narration creates its own narrative world and situation through characters and actions and that this narrative world is, therefore, not a replica of the real world, entails that Matthew is in reality a fictional text? Is this not the inevitable conclusion from the fact that

> Die genaue Beschreibung von Zeitverlauf, Orten, Personencharakteren und weiteren Umständen der Handlungen lässt schliesslich eine einmalige Realität entstehen, die sich nur so in den Evangelien und sonst nirgendwo anders findet? (Dormeyer 1978:83)

In an illuminating discussion of the problems concerning the relationship between the text and the world outside the text, Walhout (1985:48f) underlines that the role of the authorship of a text and the intentions and actions of authors in forming texts in the context of history, is directly relevant (also cf Du Plessis 1984:87). In this respect his distinction between reference and *mimesis* is also important. Reference has to do with the relationship of the language of the text to the world projected by the language, whereas *mimesis* covers the relationship of the fictional world projected by the text to the actual world that we inhabit (Walhout 1985:52).

In turning to a discussion of historical texts, Walhout points to the similarities and differences between fictional and historical texts. They are alike in that both kinds of texts project worlds, but unlike fictional texts historical texts do not project fictional or imagined worlds, but are used to make claims about the actual world (1985:69). Even in the case of literary works, it has to be conceded that although assertions about the world beyond the text are not always central to the structure of such works, there are works organized by theme, by assertions about the world (Phelan 1984:362f). Unlike the novelist with a fictional stance, the author of a historical text has an assertive stance and

> ... claims - asserts - that the projected world (the story) of the text together with the authorial point of view counts as a story and an interpretation of events as they actually occurred (Walhout 1985:69).

The fact that we also encounter a narrative world in the biblical narratives, does not qualify these texts as fictional texts, since our decision on the kind of text will depend on the accuracy of description, the authorial point of view, and the use of the text by its audience (Walhout 1985:73; cf Schenk [1989]:5,14). A true historical interest in the text is therefore not interested primarily in the pastness of the text, but especially in finding the courage to realize the possibilities of the text anew in the present (Lategan 1985:25).

In asserting that a historical interest cannot be denied to biblical narratives, the fact of the narrative world projected by the language of the text is not invalidated. Sternberg points to the three important principles regulating the biblical narratives: ideological, historiographic, and aesthetic (1985:41). These three, however, converge and interrelate to constitute the distinctive biblical narratives where the three regulating principles merge into a single poetics. In this manner the projection of the

world of actual events is also influenced by the ideological (theological) and aesthetic components (Sternberg 1985:45f).

3. Rhetoric

It has become evident from our discussion so far that reference and rhetoric should not be taken to be mutually excluding concepts. In the model of Hernadi it is clear that these two dimensions of the text form the two basic axes of the communication event. Eco (1979:277f) draws attention to the difference between the classical view of rhetoricians according to whom rhetoric centered largely in the emotionally and pragmatic influencing of the listener, and the new rhetoric (Perelman 1969) according to which nearly all human reasoning and most types of discourse (with the exception of apodictic discourse) can be taken as rhetoric.

In the previous section it was pointed out that the way in which the text refers cannot be divorced from its own conceptual plane and poetics. It is furthermore necessary to keep in mind the distinction between the rhetoric of a discourse - the strategies whereby the author communicated with his contemporaries or with his modern readers - and the rhetoric in a discourse - the strategies whereby the characters in the narrative communicate with their audience in the narrative (Sloane 1984:799f). Too often rhetoric, even when not understood in the pejorative sense of the word as became customary during the last two or three centuries, is understood in a restricted sense as dealing only with stylistics and then as rhetorical tropes or figures. In this sense, rhetorical criticism has become indistinguishable from literary criticism. Rhetoric has rather to be taken to be 'rhetoric reinvented' or 'rhetoric revalued' (cf Wuellner 1987:453).

Wuellner (1988:284, 288) also stresses the undermining of referentiality taking place in the act of reading and the questionability of the distinguishing of the referential from the rhetorical, without, however, dispensing with referentiality. This implies that the key issue in the relationship of the text to the real world should be seen as textuality, and not referentiality. Giving adequate attention to the rhetorical structure, which is the textuality of a text (and not only the rhetorical structure(s) in a text), therefore, entails attention to the materiality of the reading of the text (Wuellner 1988:285f, 301f, 305). This has to do with the discourse level or authorial level of the narrator, as well as with the story or diegetic level. Rhetorical criticism highlights the persuasive aspect of texts, emphasizing especially the power of the text (Kennedy 1984:158). When this is kept in mind in the case of the Gospel of Matthew, it again seems difficult to discern a moving away in Matthew from rhetoric to reference. But this will have to be substantiated more fully below.

Without going extensively into all the aspects of a rhetorical reading of the text, attention can be drawn to some relevant aspects, especially with a view to the Sermon on the Mount and the function of the beatitudes in it and in the Gospel as a whole. In this manner, I hope to substantiate that only a rhetorical reading of Matthew is a responsible reading (cf Thiselton, A C 1985:107).

An important concept in rhetoric is the rhetorical situation. This has to be distinguished from the historical situation, as the rhetorical situation deals specifically with the exigence of the situation, the stasis, the basic issue of the case to be made. The response made is conditioned by the rhetorical situation and has to do with the persons, events, objects, relations, time and place. Brinton (1981:236, 239, 246) underlines that the relation between the rhetorical situation and the rhetorical act is mainly a normative one; i e a fitting response to a specific situation. The exigence is, therefore, relational to an external term.

The fitting response can then take the form of one of the three rhetorical genres: judicial, deliberative or epideictic. While the primary field of application of rhetoric was legal and political rhetoric in ancient Greek and Rome (characterized specifically by persuasion), it is now acknowledged that a specific religious rhetoric can also be identified. In this case, however, an important characteristic is authoritative proclamation (Kennedy 1984:6).

A further aspect of the rhetorical situation are the *topoi* or *loci communes* underlying the text, something in common with the opponents as was the Holy Scripture for Paul and the Jews (cf Kennedy 1984:20; Bouwman 1980:69f).

Other important aspects are the disposition or arrangement of material in the text, the subdivisions in the text; as well as the rhetorical techniques and style being utilized.

In rhetoric the role of the audience as those whom the speaker wishes to influence by his argumentation, is of extreme importance.

> There is only one rule in this matter: adaptation of the speech to the audience, whatever its nature. Arguments that in substance and form are appropriate to certain circumstances may appear ridiculous in others (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969:25).

It is evident that the argumentation in Matthew has been adapted with a specific audience in mind. This can be deduced from e g the well-known emphasis on the fulfillment of the prophecies, and the demand that the law be done (Mt 7:13-27).

In the light of the fact that we have already seen that the role of the author and his illocutions and speech-acts are back on the agenda of research again, it is significant that Rickman (1981:105) also emphasizes the role of the speaker (author) in rhetoric, while he declares (1981:118):

> Rhetoric is about the process of communication from the point of view of the speaker, hermeneutics about the problems of the listener.

Finally it is important to note that certain things can only be told by way of the rhetoric of narrative, and that a story can reveal more than we had thought (Booth 1974:186; Wilder 1983:353).

4. A rhetorical reading of Matthew

It has already been shown time and again how pervasive the influence of the Greek language and culture had been in Palestine in the time of Jesus. What perhaps need to be emphasized more, is the extent to which the Hellenistic education in which the persuasive technique of being able to operate successfully in the council, assembly or courts occupied a central position, was also influential in cities in Palestine. Even more important is the fact that a very decisive Greek influence can be detected on the Hebrew educational milieu of the period, centering on the three central concerns of knowledge of the law; knowledge of the unwritten interpretations and applications of the Torah embodied in the Mishna and interpretation skills; as well as rhetorical genres and techniques (Kinneavey 1987:82-91). Many of the typical traits of the Greek rhetorical genres are also present in the Jewish tradition and Hebrew poetry. But it can be shown that the rabbinical schools in Jerusalem were until well after the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 decisively influenced by Greek rhetoric and law.

> Our survey of the schools in Palestine in the Hellenistic period shows that they were massively under the influence of Greek education. Particularly in law and rhetoric, Greek education found its way into the Greek schools of the free city-states and into the Hebrew schools, both at the secondary and at the higher level, in the schools and in the synagogues (Kinneavey 1987:91).

Against this background, it should be clear that the author and the readers of the Gospel of Matthew lived in a context where the use of rhetoric was to be expected and appreciated. But in accordance with the idea of 'rhetoric revalued', as discussed above, attention should be given not only to the rhetoric in Matthew, but also to the rhetoric of Matthew.

Space prohibits discussing the structure and arrangement of Matthew in detail. Suffice it to say that a concentric or chiastic structure of Matthew (on the basis of the five speeches of Jesus) can be correlated with the linear development of the narrative plot (cf Combrink 1983). When it is noted that the five speeches of Jesus circumscribe the central section of the narrative (for a different view cf Kingsbury 1975:25), the complication (4:18-25:46), it is significant that the Sermon on the Mount as the first major speech by Jesus functions in a programmatic manner as the opening of this central section of Matthew. From this perspective, the beatitudes which can be seen to serve as the proem to the Sermon on the Mount, is placed in a position of extreme importance in the Gospel as a whole as well.

The Sermon on the Mount is a deliberative speech, though it has to be pointed out that various types of rhetorical arguments and forms can be found in a single speech. It is important to keep in mind that a form may contain also units of varying length (Robbins 1985b:149). The exigence of the speech has to be deduced from the plot of the narrative in the first place, and not from text-external factors.

After the setting of the narrative (1:1-4:17), the complication (4:18-25:46) starts with the first episode in Jesus's public ministry when He commissions the four brothers to follow Him and become fishers of men (4:18-22), thereby positing for Himself the narrative programme of making them fishers of men. Directly after this the *inclusio*

of the teaching and the healing activity of Jesus (4:23 and 9:35) relates His first healings and the following of Jesus by the multitudes to the following chapters (5-9) (cf Kingsbury 1988:59). The Sermon on the Mount now gives advice to these people: disciples who had been called to follow Jesus and to become fishers of men, as well as people who had been healed from their illness and who are to be healed (Mt 8-9). They are told what this total new life of following Jesus and choosing the kingdom of God entails.

In the light of 7:24-27 the proper reaction to the sayings of Jesus is 'hearing and doing'. This speech of Jesus at this point of the narrative of Matthew then intends

> ... to stimulate and maintain what in Hellenistic philosophical terms is called askein kai meletan (Betz 1985:10).

Betz maintains that the literary genre of the Sermon on the Mount is that of an epitome presenting the theology of Jesus in a systematic fashion (1985:12). The epitome functions as a systematic condensation of a larger work and is not intended for outsiders or beginners, but to facilitate a process of learning for those who have already made progress in the main principles of the system.

> To say it pointedly: The SM (Sermon on the Mount HJBC) is not law to be obeyed, but theology to be intellectually appropriated and internalized, in order then to be creatively developed and implemented in concrete situations of life (Betz 1985 15).

There is still not complete unanimity concerning the structure of the Sermon on the Mount (cf Bornkamm 1978; Allison 1987:427). According to Kennedy (1984:24) the deliberative structure is usually a simplified version of the judicial: proem, proposition, proof, and epilogue. In the Sermon on the Mount this then amounts to

5:3-16   proem: attracting the attention of the audience
5:17-20   basic proposition: Jesus did not come to abolish the law, but to fulfill it
5:21-7:12   the exposition of the proposition
7:13-27   epilogue.

The interesting thing is now that in the beatitudes as part of the proem of the Sermon on the Mount, it becomes evident that the followers of Jesus will suffer persecution (5:10-12). This already implies conflicting ideologies in the rhetorical situation. Emphasis is put on the points of contact and continuity with the tradition, rather than on the contradictions, as can be seen in 5:17-20 (Van Tilborg 1986:5). This a typical rhetorical trait to anticipate possible objections (*prokatalepsis*).

The rhetorical situation is further qualified by stern warnings in the epilogue (7:13-27). The epilogue usually serves to summarize the main points of a speech and to urge the audience to action. Whereas Kennedy (1984:62) restricts the epilogue to 7:21-27, there are good reasons to see it as starting at 7:13 (Nicol 1977:85). The audience had been warned already in the proem of the impending persecution. Now in the epilogue they are again warned that there is no safe middle road. These stern warnings underline that exactly in a situation of impending persecution they are prone to the danger of false prophecy and of only having the appearance of true

disciples without being able to pass the test of the Lord. It will not be sufficient only to say 'Lord, Lord'.

This rhetorical situation calls for the deliberative type of rhetoric. Yet the beatitudes function in epideictic manner.

> The Beatitudes are epideictic elements in that they celebrate qualities, but their position at the beginning of the speech requires that they function as proem; ... A proem regularly shows epideictic traits (Kennedy 1984:45).

Berger discusses the beatitudes in the context of symbuleutic or deliberative texts. Nevertheless, he concedes that there is no causal link of deeds and effects to be seen in the beatitudes (Berger 1984:189). It is, however, important to keep the pragmatic relations of the beatitudes also in mind, i e the systematic relations between a text and its context. Robbins (1985a:40) underlines the propositional nature of the beatitudes:

> ... the beginning of a speech is the place to introduce basic propositions which will be developed in the speech.

It is also relevant to note that the beatitudes as propositions are to be treated as enthymemes, or rhetorical syllogisms. The interesting thing here is that each beatitude has an unstated premise (Robbins 1985a: 40).

This is not the place to discuss the structure of the beatitudes extensively. There are strong grounds to argue for two stanzas of four beatitudes each in 5:3-10 (Michaelis 1968). On the other hand the phenomenon of *inclusio* of the 1st and 8th beatitude has been noticed often too. What has not been as clear always is that the series of beatitudes ends in the same manner as it begins:

> ... the attribution of the highest power in people in whom all oppressive power is absent (Van Tilborg 1986:42).

An interesting - and to my mind convincing - proposal stems from Kodjak (1986). He proposes three groups of two beatitudes, each within the *inclusio* of 5:3 and 10. Each of these pairs of beatitudes consists of one more internally, personally oriented, and one more externally and socially oriented beatitude. What is more, a certain hierarchical development between these three pairs also correlates with the reaction of persecution (5:11-12) elicited through such a way of life - firstly personal ridicule or defamation, then physical removal or ostracism, and finally ideological defamation or slander (Kodjak 1986:64f). It should be noted that in this manner the change from the third person beatitudes (5:3-10) to the second person beatitude (5:11-12) is very securely and smoothly linked. This change in form of the beatitudes links the beatitudes to 5:13-16 where the audience is addressed again in the second person plural. Robbins also sees in the beatitudes a 'qualitative' or 'accumulative' sequence rather than a logical sequence. This entails that (1985a:49)

> ... instead of the beatitudes following one another like premises to conclusions, one beatitude introduces a quality which prepares the auditor for another quality, which the auditor accepts as appropriate in relation to the preceding qualities.

It is rhetorically important that the proem of the Sermon on the Mount consists not only of the beatitudes, but also of the section 5:13-16. After the paradoxical acclamations of blessedness in 5:3-12 constituting the characteristics of the community, the disciples are then explicitly described with the metaphors of light and salt and in this way called with a specific vocation (cf Betz 1985:35). But the two alarming possibilities of salt losing its taste and a light being hid, form the premises of the enthymemes with the conclusion that man can also lose his effectiveness like salt and light (cf Kennedy 1984:53). The reference to the earth and the world furthermore underlines the universal dimensions of the vocation of the small group of persecuted disciples. The relationship to the preceding beatitudes remains of the utmost importance. Because their good deeds result in the people giving glory to the Father, it is clear that the world sees people who in being salt and light are

> ... both blessed and a blessing for others (Patte 1987:70).

Though this might result in persecution, this is no reason for hiding their light.

> Inhaltlich zu füllen sind die 'guten Werke' von den vorangegangenen Seligpreisungen und von den folgenden Antithesen her (Luz 1985:225).

In this manner the proem to the Sermon on the mount is completed. Whereas the beatitudes function as the paradoxical indicative of the grace of the kingdom of God for those without any resources of their own, 5:13-16 is the imperative not only to be blessed, but also to be a blessing to the world. But even so this call is immediately accompanied by an implicit warning of the possibility of failing in this vocation. Yet the life of the disciples is also related to the heavenly Father and in this manner a direct link to the rest of the Sermon on the Mount is established since the Father is very prominent in the rest of the Sermon on the Mount (6:1,4,6,8,14,18).

An interesting problem arises when Kennedy (1984:46f) asserts that a rhetorical reading of the Sermon on the Mount amounts to a doctrine of salvation by works. He draws this conclusion in accordance with the principle of linearity according to which the audience is taken from the initial appeal of the beatitudes through the discussion of specific commandments to the final warnings to obey the commandments, and left at that point. According to him a doctrine of grace can only be accepted in the Sermon on the Mount when it is approached as a literary product which can be read and reread, in which the beatitudes is set back to back to the rest of the sermon to challenge the reader (1984:47).

This can be challenged on two grounds. It seems to be a short-circuiting of the principle of textuality of a rhetorical reading to treat it in this 'referential' manner excluding the functioning of the beatitudes as a proem for the rest of the sermon. Furthermore, there is a difference of opinion about the most convincing order of arguments: the order of increasing strength, the order of decreasing strength, or the Nestorian order beginning and ending with the strongest arguments, with the rest in the middle (Perelman 1982:148). This, however, does not invalidate the importance of the beatitudes as the proem to this programmatic first speech of Jesus in this gospel. The rhetorical implications of such an opening proposition is clear in the following statement:

> The proposition gives a direction to the speech, but also involves the assumption of a definite position that is binding on the speaker. The advantage in the immediate statement of the proposition is that it brings enlightenment to the audience; it takes possession of the ground (Perelman & Olbrechts-Tyteca 1969:498f).

This is corroborated by the fact that the initial statement of grace in the Sermon on the Mount is taken up again at the end of the final section of the central part of the sermon 7:7-12. Here the central part is concluded - just before the epilogue with its telltale warnings - with the assurance that they who are willing to be dependent on God their Father, will be accepted and their petitions answered. It is precisely because of the initial proposition of grace in the beatitudes that the imperative to the blessed to be a blessing too, can be added in 5:13-16, as well as in the rest of the sermon, especially in the epilogue.

Although the historicity of an occasion like the Sermon on the Mount can be accepted without any doubt, it seems curious that Kennedy (1984:68) - in spite of his own rhetorical approach - links the Sermon on the Mount to a specific basic speech by Jesus which He repeated frequently. This is difficult to accept for the Sermon on the Mount as we have it now in Matthew. A rhetorical reading of the sermon and the gospel as a whole takes place in the first instance on the conceptual plane of the text. The links to the extra-textual reality are thus of a more indirect nature.

One could add other examples from Matthew to illustrate how the repetition of episodes (e g double and triple stories) has a powerful rhetorical effect, as well as point to the role of the context and the phenomenon of redundancy (Anderson 1985). Or one could discuss the parable chapter Mt 13 in context, or Mt 23 whose primary function is not to provide information about the social conditions or circumstances of its origin, but rather to serve as a vehicle for the message (Lategan 1985:22).

As has been pointed out earlier already, a rhetorical approach to Matthew should take into consideration not only the rhetorical structures in the text, but should also deal with the 'power' of the text which is related to the materiality of reading the text involving each time a unique reading of the text. It has to be noted too that a rhetorical reading of the text may bring to light points of resistance to meaning, points which undermine referentiality such as rhetorical figures in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 7:3 - speck/log in the eye); historical figures (Pharisees, scribes); social or political powers or values (Mt 10:18 kings and governors). As the aim of an argumentation presupposes the contact of minds, attention should be given to factors such as these inside and outside the text (dealing with the position of the real reader) which may prevent this contact of minds (Wuellner 1988: 285ff).

> As soon as a communication tries to influence one or more persons, to orient their thinking, to excite or calm their emotions, to guide their actions, it belongs to the realm of rhetoric (Perelman 1982:162).

This clearly applies to the Gospel of Matthew as narrative.

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