

# The “Drama” of the Messiah in Matthew 8-9. A Study from a Communicative Perspective

---

Solomon Pasala

VISWADEEP VIDYAPEETH HIGH SCHOOL

Nalgodna-508001 - A.P., India

**RESUMEN** En contraste con los otros evangelistas sinópticos, el autor de Mateo actuó de modo diverso en varios aspectos. ¿Por qué colocó diez narraciones de milagros seguidas sin apenas interrupciones? ¿Por qué colocó estos capítulos justo tras el sermón de la montaña? ¿Por qué los incluyó a cada uno entre dos resúmenes? Partiendo de la teoría de Aristóteles sobre el drama o la tragedia, el autor propone que el evangelista ha reelaborado y reorganizado las narraciones de milagros conforme a la estructura del drama clásico. Descubriendo las estrategias narrativas y el aspecto del discurso, se ve cómo cada episodio corresponde a los diferentes momentos de una trama: situación inicial, inicio de la acción, complicación, clímax con suspense y resolución final y conclusión. El resultado final del drama es la justificación de los pecadores. Basándose en la teoría del “Texto espejo”, el autor también demuestra cómo todo el evangelio de Mateo está compuesto como un drama desde el punto de vista temático y estructural.

**PALABRAS CLAVE** Mt 8–9; milagros; estructura; Aristóteles; drama.

**SUMMARY** *In contrast to the other synoptic evangelists, the author of Matthew proceeded differently in many respects. Why did he arrange ten miracle narratives one after the other at one stretch with minor interruptions? Why did he place the “miracle chapters” immediately after the Sermon on the Mount? Why did he enclose them between two summary statements on either side? Beginning with Aristotle’s theory of the drama or tragedy, the author suggests that the way the evangelist has reworked and reorganized the miracle narratives is similar to the structure of the classical drama. By discovering the narrative strategies and the discourse aspect, one can see how each episode corresponds to the different moments of a plot such as the initial situation, inciting moment, complication, climax with suspense and finally resolution and denouement. The final outcome of the drama is the justification of sinners. Basing on the theory of “Mirror Text”, the author also demonstrates how the entire Gospel of Matthew is structured as a drama from thematic and structural point of view.*

**KEY WORDS** *Keywords: Mt 8–9; miracles; structure; Aristotle; drama.*

## INTRODUCTION

Chapters 8 and 9 of Matthew's Gospel are commonly known as the "miracle chapters"<sup>1</sup>. A brief survey of the literature on these two chapters reveals that there is no broader consensus as for the division, the themes and the function of these chapters<sup>2</sup>. However, Luz, speaking about the miracle chapters, pointed out that there is a narrative nature in these chapters where incidents succeed one another in a continuous narrative fashion<sup>3</sup>. G. Theissen has designated introduction (*Einleitung*), exposition (*Exposition*), centre (*Mitte*), and conclusion (*Schluss*) as the basic features of miracle narratives<sup>4</sup>. Nevertheless, so far no one has examined in depth to see if there is a dramatic structure<sup>5</sup> in the way the individual miracle narratives have been reorganized and rearranged in chapters 8–9 of Matthew's Gospel. This article is an attempt in this direction.

I will conduct this study from the communicative or pragmatic perspective, where the reader plays an important role<sup>6</sup>. In the first place, we

---

1 Cf. J. D. KINGSBURY, "Observations on the 'Miracle Chapter' of Matthew 8-9": *CBQ* 40 (1978) 559.

2 Cf. E.-J. VLEDDER, *Conflict in the Miracle Stories: A Socio-Exegetical Study of Matthew 8 and 9* (JNSTSup 125; Sheffield 1997) 172.

3 Cf. U. Luz, "Die Wundergeschichten von Mt 8-9", in: H. D. BETZ, *Traditions and Interpretation in the New Testament. Fs. E. Ellis* (Grand Rapids 1987) 149-165; U. Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Mattheus I-III* (EKK I/1-3; Zurich 1985/1990/1997); Eng. tr.: *Matthew 8-20. A Commentary* (Minneapolis 1998) 1-2. This idea comes out very clearly when he says: "Matthew is certainly not concerned merely to collect miracle stories {...} His aim is to narrate a connected *story*". Though he accepts the narrative to be a sequence of three basic elements like orientation, complication and resolution, he sees in these chapters only beginning of 'complication' of the narrative, while chapters 1–7 provide a particular orientation. Cf. *Id.*, "The Miracle Stories of Matthew 8-9", en: *Studies in Matthew* (Cambridge 2005) 226-227. In another place he notes that 9,18-34 is not primarily a complication of three miracle stories and that the plot in these two chapters is quite confusing on the surface structure. Cf. Luz, "The Miracle Stories", 228 and 232. Like Luz, Vledder also says that the Gospel of Matthew is a narrative text and he sees a plot in chapters 8 and 9. However, he too did not bring out how a dramatic plot functions in these chapters. Cf. VLEDDER, *Conflict*, 169-172.

4 G. THEISSEN, *Urchristliche Wundergeschichten: Ein Beitrag zur Formgeschichtlichen Erforschung der synoptischen Evangelien* (StNT 8; Gütersloh 1974); Eng. tr.: *The Miracle Stories of the Early Christian Tradition* (Edinburgh 1983) 82-83.

5 See note 7 for a definition of drama and dramatic structure.

6 The pragmatic aspect in narrative criticism comes from its shift from the pole of the author (historical criticism) to the pole of the reader. It accepts the triad of author, text and reader. By the inclusion of the reader in the work, the narrative criti-

demonstrate how the author has created narrative strategies in the articulation of the individual miracle narratives and arranged them in such a way to bring out a dramatic tension and a thematic development. In the second place, we validate our findings by demonstrating the function of these two chapters as a drama in the immediate and wider context of the Gospel.

#### 1. DRAMA IN CHAPTERS 8 AND 9 OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL AND THE MESSAGE

According to Aristotle's description, drama or tragedy<sup>7</sup> is a representation of an action, where the emphasis falls not so much on the magnitude of the work, but rather on the completeness of the work. A complete work has three parts: a beginning, middle and an end. These three parts are not independent units but consequences that flow one from the other.

In line with Aristotle, G. Freytag also divided the drama into three parts<sup>8</sup>. According to his theory, a typical plot begins with a rising action, reaches a climax, and ends with a falling action. However, according to J.L. Ska and others, this division of Aristotle and Freytag takes into consideration the "story" aspect of the drama and not so much the "discourse" aspect<sup>9</sup>. In the classical world, most scholars follow the subdivision of drama into different moments like exposition, inciting moment, complication, *climax* or turning point, res-

---

cism opens the text to a variety of values and meanings Cf. E. MCKNIGHT, *The Bible and the Reader. An Introduction to Literary Criticism* (Philadelphia 1985) xviii.

7 "We have laid it down that tragedy is a representation of an action that is whole and complete and of certain magnitude, since a thing may be a whole and yet have no magnitude. A whole is what has a beginning and middle and end. A beginning is that which is not a necessary consequent of anything else but after which something else exists or happens as a natural result. An end on the contrary is that which is inevitably or, as a rule, the natural result of something else but from which nothing else follows, a middle follows something else and something follows from it. Well constructed plots must not therefore begin and end at random, but must embody the formulae we have stated". Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Poetics*, 7. All the references to Aristotle's works are taken from R. MCKEON (ed.), *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York 1941). In other place he says: "The ordered arrangement of the incidents is what I mean by plot". Cf. ARISTOTLE, *Poetics*, 6.

8 Cf. G. FREYTAG, *Technique of the Drama* (Chicago 1908). Cf. J. L. SKA, 'Our Fathers Have Told us'. *Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narrative* (SubBi 13; Roma 1990) 21.

9 Cf. SKA, 21. Also, according to Chatman, in a narrative there is "story" and a "discourse". Cf. S. CHATMAN, *Story and Discourse. Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca NY – London 1978) 9 and 19-43.

olution or transforming action, denouement and the final situation<sup>10</sup>. In doing so, they give more emphasis to the “discourse” aspect of the drama, where plot emerges with clarity. In either case, whether the emphasis falls on the “story” or the “discourse” aspect, we should remember that they are two sides of a coin. Therefore, while taking into consideration different moments of the drama, it is possible to keep to three-part division proposed by Aristotle.

As Ska has rightly pointed out, it is important to remember that these categories belong to the “grammar of the narrative” and the authors apply the rules of the grammar with flexibility and creativity<sup>11</sup>. Hence, instead of imposing a fixed structure from outside, we shall find out how the author has organized these chapters as we proceed step by step.

#### Mt 8,1-17: Initial situation of the drama or exposition

The exposition is the presentation of indispensable pieces of information about the state of affairs that precede the beginning of the action itself. The function of the exposition is to provide the reader with the background information about the setting, about the characters and their relationship (who, what, and where). Eventually, it should give a key to understanding the narrative. The key to know when the narration passes from exposition to action is the change of rhythm. This happens when the narrator suddenly changes the tone. In the exposition, suspense is absent or minimal<sup>12</sup>.

After presenting Jesus as the Messiah of words in the Sermon on the Mount (5–7), in the next two chapters (8–9) the author presents him as the Messiah of deeds (11,2)<sup>13</sup>. The narration begins with the cleansing of a leper (8,2-4), the healing of a pagan centurion’s servant (son?) (8,5-13) and the heal-

10 Cf. SKA, 20-21; Cf. *Id.*, “Sincronia: 1’analisi narrativa”, in: H. SIMIAN-YOFFRE (ed.), *Metodologia dell’antico testamento* (Bologna 1994) 155. According to Marguerat and Bourquin, there are five divisions: 1) initial situation or exposition; 2) complication; 3) transforming action; 4) denouement and 5) final situation. Cf. D. MARGUERAT – Y. BOURQUIN, *Pour lire les recits bibliques* (Paris 1998); Eng.trans.: *How to Read Bible Stories* (London 1999) 40-44.

11 Cf. SKA, ‘*Our Fathers*’, 30.

12 Cf. *Ibid.*, 21-25.

13 Schniewind has put the entire section under his formulation “Messiah of the deeds”. Cf. J. SCHNIEWIND, *Das Evangelium nach Mattheus: Ubersetzt und erklärt* (NTD 1.2; Gottingen 1964) 36 and 103-106.

ing a woman (8,14-15). After narrating three miracles (8,1-15), there is a change of the rhythm and tone where a summary statement is inserted (8,16) and a quotation from the prophet Isaiah is reported (8,17). The quotation from Isaiah is from the fourth song of the suffering servant (Is 52,13-53,12) where the servant is projected as bringing salvation or illumination (52,13) to the people by bearing their iniquities (53,11). With this quotation, the author gives a twist<sup>14</sup> to the entire narration and provides some important information to the reader as to how to understand not only the three foregone miracles, but also the entire activity of Jesus (cf. 8,16; 4,23-24 and 9,35-38).

In these three miracles, Jesus is presented as a Messiah who inclines towards a socially marginalized, harassed and helpless people, not only to eliminate their diseases but also to integrate them into the main stream of the community (cf. 8,4.11). In doing so, he is presented as the Messiah, who brings fulfillment to the law and the prophets (cf. 5,17; Is 56,4-6). However, by specifying that the foregone miracles as fulfillment of the words spoken by the prophet Isaiah (8,17), the author has given a twist to the entire narration<sup>15</sup>. With this quotation, he has identified Jesus with the suffering servant. Just like the suffering servant, Jesus by taking upon himself their infirmities and diseases would remove them (8,17). This concept of a Messiah, who is also a suffering servant, is something new to the reader<sup>16</sup>. Hence it creates a tension and

14 In historical-critical or redactional studies, these types of insertions are understood as *glosses* or *redactional insertions* and as such they are neglected. In Sheeley's view, they are addressed to the audience directly and they have a bearing on the major thematic plot devices. Those asides often intensify the events in their context, thus adding impetus to the movement of the plot. Cf. S. M. SHEELEY, *Narrative Asides in Luke-Acts* (JSNTSup 72; Sheffield 1992) 19, 148. M. Tenny also asserts that these explanatory comments, interjected into the running narrative of the story, are intended to illuminate or to explain how some important statement should be understood. Cf. M. TENNY, "The Footnotes of John's Gospel": *BSac* 117 (1960) 350.

15 In the view of Held, the quotation from Scripture in Matt 8,17 provides foundation for the theme of Servant of God. Cf. H. J. HELD, "Matthäus als Interpret der Wundergeschichten", in: G. BORNKAMM – G. BARTH – H. J. HELD (eds.), *Überlieferung und Auslegung im Matthäusevangelium* (WMANT 1; Neukirchen 1960, 21962); Eng. tr.: "Matthew as the Interpreter of the Miracle Stories", in: *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (London 1963) 248-249. Contrary to Held, Luz says that it has often been over interpreted. Cf. Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 14.

16 Nowhere in Judaism is the Messiah presented as a suffering servant. This is what De Jonge says: "In the Hebrew Bible, people are anointed to become kings, or (high) priests or (in one case only) a prophet. In the great majority of cases, the term 'anointed' is connected with a royal figure". Cf. M. DE JONGE, "Messiah", in: *ABD IV* (New York 1992) 787.

raises an interest in the reader to find out how Jesus, being a suffering servant, can be the Messiah of Israel and bring fulfillment to the Messianic prophecies.

Thus, if we have projected Mt 8,1-17 as exposition of the drama about the Messiah, we have the necessary characteristics of an exposition. The theme of the drama is the identity of the Messiah. Along with this theme, there is a certain insistence on the aspect of faith. Faith in the person of Jesus is defined as the principal element for entering into the kingdom of God or obtaining salvation (8,10-13). Because of this faith, the doors of salvation are opened for all, while sons of the kingdom are thrown out because of their lack of faith. The final outcome of Jesus' action is to make the sick and the marginalized capable of rendering *him* service (8,15).

#### Mt 8,18–9,17: Complication of the drama

In dramatic terms, the word “complication” has a different connotation. It is an attempt to solve the initial problem whereby one comes nearer to the truth<sup>17</sup>. Therefore, when we use the word “complication” for the second part of the drama, it refers to all moments of dramatic action, wherein there is a narrative tension and suspense.

##### - Complicating episodes in the central part

In the central part of our text (8,18–9,17), there are six scenes, which constitute complication. To unify all these events, the author has used the phenomena of questions. Except in the first episode (8,18-22), there are one or two questions in each episode (8,26.27.29; 9,4.5.11.14 and 15) to show the complicated nature of this section. What makes 8,18-22 to be part of the rest of the section is the expression “to the other side”, which is repeated in 8,18 and 8,28.

In the central section (8,18–9,17), Jesus encounters different groups who have problems in understanding him and in accepting him as the Messiah. The scribe, who offers to follow Jesus wherever he goes, presumes to know every-

---

17 Cf. SKA, 'Our Fathers', 25-26.

thing about the Messiah whom he wants to follow (8,19 cf. 5,20)<sup>18</sup> but Jesus has no place to go (8,20). In line with Jewish tradition<sup>19</sup>, one of His disciples wants to go back with an excuse of burying his father (8,21). But Jesus demands a total and an unwavering commitment even at the cost of important family obligations (8,22). In the scene of the tempest, instead of trusting in the Father's care (6,25-33), the disciples manifest their lack of faith (8,26)<sup>20</sup>. After the healing of the Gadarene demoniacs (8,28-34), the town people practically throw Jesus out of their territory because they see in his presence insecurity and instability for their economy<sup>21</sup>. In the scene of the paralytic (9,1-8), when Jesus forgives sins (9,2 cf. 1,21), the scribes call it a blasphemy because it is a prerogative reserved only to God<sup>22</sup>. Further, the Pharisees question his eating with sinners and the outcaste of the community (9,9-13)<sup>23</sup>.

---

18 In the view of R. A. Horsley, expectations of future deliverance and well-being are extremely diverse in biblical and other Jewish literature in postexilic times. Cf. R. A. HORSLEY, "Messianic Movements in Judaism", in: *ABD IV* (New York 1992) 791. In Qumran literature, the Messiah is treated as a teacher of the law and mediator of God's will. His role may be compared to that of the Teacher of Righteousness. Cf. DE JONGE, "Messiah", 783.

19 In contemporary Judaism, burying one's relatives takes precedence over all Torah commands. Cf. Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 18. In asking Jesus permission to bury his father *first*, there is a confrontation taking place between Jewish ideology of family obligation and the discipleship of the new Messiah.

20 "Save us Lord, we are perishing" is an ideal prayer for a disciple, because they address Jesus as Lord and Savior (cf. 1,21). Cf. S. GRASSO, "Il ciclo dei miracoli": *RB 54* (2006) 170-172. However, Jesus does not accept this type of prayer. According to the first evangelist, the prayer of a disciple should not be like the hypocrites because the Father knows what they need, but should be "may Thy will be done" as they are taught in 6,7-13 and they should not be anxious about their life because God the Father cares for them (6,25-34 see the expression 'O men of little faith' in 6,30). Still further, the reader is informed that it is not those who say 'Lord, Lord' who are saved but who does the will of the Father and build their house on a rock foundation (7,21-27).

21 According to S. Grasso, the reason why the Gadarenes rejected is that they see a threat to their economy (the loss of herd of swine). They are not interested in the well being of the persons but in the profit and gain (cf. Mt 6,24; 6,32-33; 19,21-26). Cf. GRASSO, "Il ciclo", 173-174.

22 They contest because according their understanding, this authority is reserved only to God (Ex 34,6-7; Ps 25,18; 32,1-4; Is 43,25) and it is performed only on the day of *Yôm kippûr* through a complex ritual (cf. Lv 4-5; Lv 16). According to the scribes, in the act of forgiving, Jesus is taking upon himself the prerogative reserved to God. However, the reader knows from the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus is not taking upon himself the prerogative of the Father but doing as the Father does (cf. 5,43-48).

23 A banquet in the Jewish context has a messianic connotation. It technically refers to the presence of the Messiah. Cf. D. E. SMITH, "Messianic Banquet", in: *ABD IV* (New York 1992) 788. When the Pharisees interrogate Jesus about calling sin-

According to their expectations the Messiah should associate with the righteous (cf. 9,13). And finally, the disciples of the Baptist also come to interrogate Jesus why his disciples do not fast (9,14-17). In their question they point to a dissonance between what Jesus is doing and what their master has taught them about the coming Messiah (3,1-12)<sup>24</sup>. Therefore, in all these episodes we can see how the identity of the Messiah is contested as each group has its own expectations of a Messiah. Hence, the question being raised is what type of Messiah is Jesus?

- Dramatic moments in Mt 8,18–9,17

In encountering different groups of people, our focus will be on how the author created the dramatic tension, and in doing so, how he constructed his model reader at the discourse level<sup>25</sup>, so that the real reader can come closer to the truth about the Messiah.

a) Inciting moment (8,18-22): The first episode (8,18-22) begins with a command of Jesus to go “to the other side” (8,18). However there is no report about the implementation of this command. Instead, there is a scribe who comes up with a good proposal to follow him wherever he goes (8,19) and a disciple, who wants to return home (8,21). If Jesus is a Man with authority (cf. 7,29) and if a man of authority commands obedience (cf. 8,9) then, in this episode, since Jesus command is not respected, we can say that there is disobedience or lack understanding. They disobeyed him because they do not

---

ners and eating with them, they have a problem with Jesus as the Messiah, who associates with sinners and not with the righteous (cf. 5,20).

- 24 In Mt 3,1-12, we have a picture of Baptist and his preaching. He is a rigorous man and he preaches repentance accompanied by good actions. In this section, he depicts the Messiah as the one who burns the evil with unquenchable fire (3,11-12). From this background, it is possible to imagine the type of Messiah they are expecting.
- 25 According to Howell, there are two levels of information in a text; the level of the story and the discourse. On the level of the story, characters act, speak. On the level of the narrative, however, the narrator gives information that only a model reader is allowed to know. The different levels have their own temporal sequence and are related to one another by plotting devices used to tell the story. Cf. D. B. HOWELL, *Matthew's Inclusive Story. A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel* (JSNTSup 42; Sheffield 1990) 97. Luz also speaks of two levels of communication and he calls the second level of communication 'transparency'. Cf. U. Luz, "The Miracle Stories of Matthew 8-9", in: *Studies in Matthew* (Cambridge 2005) 238-239.

yet know him and what it means to follow him<sup>26</sup>. Hence, this scene is called the inciting moment<sup>27</sup>.

b) Preparatory scenes for climax (8,23–9,1): In the absence of obedience to his command, in the next scene, Jesus himself gets into the boat first, followed by his disciples (8,23). In the act of calming the sea, the disciples begin to recognize who Jesus is and why they need to obey him. The presence of the word "to obey" in 8,27 is a confirmation that disobedience was the problem.

In the scene of Gadarens (8,28–9,1), while showing what happens to a disciple, if he "goes away", the focus is on the negative behavior of the town people, to make impact on the reader so that he does not repeat the same mistake<sup>28</sup>. Because of this reason, we call these two episodes preparatory scenes for the *climax*<sup>29</sup>.

c) The turning point or the climax of the Drama (9,2-8): If what have gone before are preparatory scenes, then there must be a reaction in the following scene (9,2-8). The reader can notice the reaction of the people in the act of carrying the paralytic (9,2)<sup>30</sup>. The central issue in this episode is whether Jesus has the authority to forgive sins or not (9,3-5). If we want to understand and appreciate the dramatic tension and the beauty of the argument, we need the help of the model reader, who is a textual construct. In the miracle of the centurion's servant, the author has taken extra time to explain

26 According to Sternberg, if there is no ignorance there is no conflict, and if there is no conflict, there is no plot. Cf. M. STERNBERG, *The Poetics of Biblical Narratives* (Bloomington 1985) 172-179.

27 Inciting moment is the moment in which the conflict or the problem appears for the first time and arouses the interest of the reader. Often it is the 'what' of the story. In many cases, it is difficult to distinguish it from the exposition or the complication. Cf. SKA, 'Our Fathers', 25.

28 A. Stewart-Sykes, commenting on the abbreviations the author makes to this miracle notes that it is to highlight the reactions of the observers. A. STEWART-SYKES, "Mathew's 'miracle chapters': from composition to narrative, and back again": *ScRB* 25/2 (1995) 59. Here we have a narrative technique known as "opacity" (cf. Lk 24,13-35), which aims at creating an impression on the reader at the cost of the actors. Cf. MARGUERAT – BOURQUIN, *How to Read*, 118-119.

29 To heighten the narrative tension and prepare the climax of a narrative, the Bible also uses 'preparatory scenes'. Cf. SKA, 'Our Fathers', 25-26.

30 In introducing a paralytic at this point, one can notice a continuity of the narrative flow and building of a model reader in the form of the reaction of the people. Therefore Jesus does not need any formal request for healing.

the relationship between the authority, obedience and faith (8,9-10). According to this argument, authority necessarily invites obedience and to obey a man of authority means to have faith in him. In short, faith is manifested in the act of obedience.

With this background, the scene of paralytic has a dramatic tension. According to the above understanding (8,9), the authority of Jesus can be proved only if some one obeys him. Already we have seen how the command of Jesus has been disobeyed in 8,18. Will Jesus take another chance to prove his authority? Yes, he will, because, he has seen a sign of change in the act of carrying the paralytic (9,2). Therefore, when Jesus gives a command to the paralytic “to get up and walk” (9,6b see the imperatives), there is a positive response (9,7), whereby he proves the authority of Jesus.

There is a trick in the argument and the author kills two birds with one stone. While proving the authority of Jesus, the emphasis equally falls on the realization and the insight gained by the disciples (8,27) and the people (9,2). For obeying the command of Jesus, the paralytic should know that Jesus has authority or power and that a man of authority commands obedience. In other words, he should have faith in Jesus. Because the paralytic has obeyed the command of Jesus, he proved not only the authority of Jesus but also his new insight about the identity of Jesus and his faith in him. The presence of the technical term *peripeteia*<sup>31</sup>, (*to walk*) in 9,5, is sign of further confirmation for our argument that a dramatic change has taken place. Hence, we call it the turning point of the drama.

d) The suspense of the drama (9,9-17): To give a further confirmation that a turning has taken place, in the next episode the author has introduced the call of Matthew. By inserting the call of Matthew at this stage of the drama, the author of Matthew shows the continuity of the theme from the pre-

31 In the classical world, the word *peripeteia* is used to show “turning point” or the “climax” of the drama. It can be the moment of highest tension, or an appearance of a decisive element or character. Citing Aristotle, Chatman makes a distinction between a plot of action and a plot of knowledge. In a plot of action, the resolution is called *peripeteia*. It is the change from one state of affairs to its exact opposite. In a plot of knowledge or discovery, the resolution is from ignorance to knowledge. For this reason, it is also known as *anagnorisis*. Cf. CHATMAN, *Story*, 85. However, it is also possible that these two types of plots are combined in one plot. Cf. SKA, “Sincronia”, 154.

vious scenes and the thematic development (see the command and obedience in 9,7.9). The man Matthew, who got up and followed Jesus, is not only a real person but also a model reader, who has followed what has happened so far. In getting up and following Jesus instantly, he demonstrates the change that has taken place in the dramatic action. In responding to the call as a disciple, he manifested a better understanding and deeper faith in the person of Jesus (cf. 8,18.22.25).

However, after the turning point, the author introduces another two groups of people with another two questions in order to create the suspense of the drama<sup>32</sup>. In the question of the Pharisees, the emphasis falls on why "sinners" instead of "the righteous" (9,11). In the answer of Jesus (9,12-13), which consists of three sentences, there is a logical development. In the first place, there is a universal truth about the need of the sick for a doctor. In the second place, by quoting the prophet Hosea, Jesus brings out the essential quality of Yahweh, whose mercy and fidelity surpasses human mercy and sacrifices (cf. Hos 1-6). Basing on the above propositions, in the final sentence, Jesus comes to conclusion. In line with Yahweh, he affirms that his mission is for sinners because it is they who need mercy. This choice of Jesus for sinners is unmerited gift for the sinners. This God's merciful action is manifested in the call of a sinful man named Matthew, whose name signifies a "gift of God"<sup>33</sup>.

By introducing the disciples of the Baptist with another question the dramatic suspense takes another twist. If in the previous episode, the problem was "why" with regard to the sinner, in this episode, the question is "how" sinners can be saved without fasting or good works<sup>34</sup>. In the answer of Jesus,

32 According to Ska, between the climax and the final conclusion, there can be a moment of delay or retardation (final suspense). Cf. Ska, *'Our Fathers'*, 28.

33 R. Meynet, commenting on the parallel text from the Gospel of Luke, where the author of Luke retains the name of Levi, says that the name "Levi" is a symbolic one because it denotes a change of attitude of the people. The people of Israel are brought out of infidelity or prostitution to join to the Lord. Cf. R. MEYNET, "A Vino nuovo, otri nuovi!" [On line edition visited on 22-1-2002: [www.unigre.it](http://www.unigre.it)> Pubblicazione> Retorica biblica> Studia Retorica (2002) 10].

34 The presence of  $\tau\omicron\tau\epsilon$  helps us understand the consequential nature of the previous argument 9,14. McNeile argues that Matthew's use of  $\tau\omicron\tau\epsilon$  as a connective particle to introduce a subsequent subject or event represents the force of "waw" consecutive in Hebrew idiom. Cf. A. H. McNEILE, "T $\omicron$  $\tau\epsilon$  in St. Matthew": *JThS* 12 (1911) 127.

which consists of more than seventy-five words, there are some symbolic images, which need to be interpreted in the right perspective in order to get to the point.

In the answer of Jesus, fasting is not totally abolished for the disciples (cf. 4,2; 6,16-18) but rather, it is postponed to a future event, namely till the death of the Bridegroom (9,15)<sup>35</sup>. By repeating the covenantal symbols<sup>36</sup> like “old”, “new”, “wine”, “wineskins” and “cloth” (cf. Gen 3,7; 9,15-27; Ez 16,1-63, Hos 2,9-10; Jos 9,4-27) Jesus recalls the last supper (9,17 and 26,29), where he will offer His blood as the sign of the “new” covenant for forgiveness of sins (26,20-35). After His death, Jesus by calling His disciples as “my brothers” (28,10)<sup>37</sup> will manifest his forgiveness concretely for those who negated and betrayed him. This means that his disciples will be forgiven or saved not because of their fasting but for the merciful action of Jesus<sup>38</sup>. In short, to the question of how His disciples are saved without fasting, the answer of Jesus is once again the same. It is not because of their fasting or good works that sinners are saved but for the merciful action of Jesus on the cross, which illumines or redeems sinners.

Now the reader is in a better situation to understand why the author has prolonged the complication by introducing two more interlocutors. If Jesus was identified with the figure of the suffering servant in 8,17, the last two episodes explain what type of Messiah Jesus is. If in the inciting moment the problem was ignorance about the Messiah, towards the end of the section

---

35 When the Baptist says that he is not worthy to touch his sandals, he means to say that Jesus is the Bridegroom and the Spirit is his bride (3,16). Jesus, by speaking about his violent death as a Bridegroom (9,15), recalls the levirate law, which says that when a man dies without leaving children, his brothers must take up the widow to raise the children for the dead brother (Dt 25,5-10). In a way, this reference prepares for the future action of Jesus, who will call his disciples as ‘my brothers’ (28,10), whereby they have to take the responsibility for his bride, the Church. It is from that moment, they will fast.

36 R. Meynet in his article on Lk 5,17-6,11, which is a parallel text with that of Mt 9,1-17, says that all these symbolic expressions have something to do with the covenantal theme. Cf. MEYNET, “A vino nuovo”, 24-27.

37 According to R. Meynet, the description of the disciples as “my brothers” recalls the forgiveness granted to Cain, who killed his brother (Gen 4,1-16) and forgiveness granted by Joseph to his brothers, who sold him into slavery (Gen 45,4-5; 50,20). Cf. *Id.*, *Morto e Risorto secondo le Scritture* (Bologna 2002) 51.

38 In the view of Lohfink the central theme of the covenant is the forgiveness of sins. Cf. N. LOHFINK, “Covenant”, in: *IBC* (Minnesota 1998) 445.

the reader has an answer. Hence, the identity of Jesus is that he is a suffering Messiah. Just as the suffering servant brings salvation by bearing their iniquities (Is 53,11), so too Jesus will bring fulfillment and salvation by his suffering and death.

#### Mt 9,18-34: Resolution or the final situation of the drama

If in the central part of the drama ignorance was removed, then in the final part one must see the results or the consequences of that action. Accordingly, we have three other scenes (Mt 9,18-34) where the results are demonstrated<sup>39</sup>. As it has been noted by Luz, in the final section (9,18-34), there is particular and remarkable linguistic and thematic reminiscences of 8,1-9,17<sup>40</sup>. For this reason, in this section, we do not find the words of healing or cleansing (καταρίζω 8,2.3x, ἰᾶμαι 8,8.13, θεραπεύω 8,7.16) as in the first section, but rather words like ζάω or σῶζω (to live and to save cf. 9,18.22), in which case Jesus comes to be accepted as the Saviour, life giver. This usage of words indicates a changed situation<sup>41</sup>. Added to that, one can notice a changed situation in the final part. If Jesus was taking initiative to go to people in the central part of the drama, in the final part, people go to Jesus. Above all, it is also possible to see how the author has worked out different moments of the drama in the final part.

a) The resolution of the drama (9,18-26): If resolution is the solution to the initial problem<sup>42</sup>, then in the final part, we have a solution. The problem in the initial situation was the identity of Jesus (8,17) and the salvation of those who have faith in him (8,11-12). In the leader who comes to Jesus,

<sup>39</sup> The consequential nature of this section can be seen from the way the author has depicted the action of Jesus in the central part and in the final part. While in the central part, it was Jesus who takes initiative (cf. 8,18.23.28; 9,1.9-10), in the final part it is the leader, the woman and the people (9,18.20.27 and 32) who take initiative to go to Jesus.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Luz, "The Miracle Stories", 225.

<sup>41</sup> In the view of Luz, in a narrative, "courses of events are presented in such a way that an initial situation gives way to a changed final situation". Cf. *ibid.*, 226.

<sup>42</sup> The resolution is the solution to the initial situation. It is a transforming action, which aims at removing the difficulty or the disturbance announced by the story. The transforming dynamic action can consist of a particular action or a long process of change. Cf. SKA, 'Our Fathers', 27-30.

we have a man who recognizes in Jesus, a Savior (9,18). He is similar to the leper and the centurion in the aspects of kneeling and imploring (cf. 8,2,5), but he is different in his request (9,18). He requests salvation for his daughter who has died (9,18 cf. Mk 5,23 and Lk 8,42)<sup>43</sup>.

In a similar way, the woman with a haemorrhage is presented as a model or paradigm of faith (9,22 cf. 8,11)<sup>44</sup>. In spite of hopelessness of her suffering, she lays all her burden on him by a symbolic gesture of touching Jesus' garment (9,20-21 see the mention of garments in 9,16-17). She is seeking not just physical healing but an encounter with the Messiah, who can save her (cf. 1,21). Because of this new understanding and faith of the people, Jesus goes out to give a new life (9,18-25) whereby he transforms them as sons and daughters (9,22 cf. 9,2). Hence, we could call it the resolution of the drama, where not only Jesus' identity is accepted but also his promise of salvation for those who have faith in him (8,10-12) becomes a reality.

b) The denouement of the drama (9,27-31): The episode of blind men in 9,27-31 linguistically and thematically recalls Mt 18,18-27. In their cry to Jesus "have mercy on us, Son of David", the two blind men manifest a renewed understanding about Jesus as a merciful Messiah (cf. 9,11-13), who can forgive their sins. If the result of their faith is not merely sight but rather insight<sup>45</sup> about the Messiah, then they cannot keep it hidden (5,14-16)<sup>46</sup>. The disobedience in this case becomes a symbol of denouement<sup>47</sup>, where the effects of salvation are manifested in their life (cf. Is 52,13; 53,11).

c) Conclusion of the drama (9,32-34): In the episode of dumb and deaf demoniacs (9,32-33), the dumb are not only those who cannot speak and hear

43 Klostermann sees in the words of Jairus' an incredible faith. Cf. E. KLOSTERMANN, *Das Matthäusevangelium* (HNT 4; Tübingen 1927) 82.

44 M. GRILLI, "Vangelo secondo Matteo", in: V. MANCUSO – P. PELLIZZARI (eds.), *La Bibbia Piemme* (Bologna 1995) 23-27.

45 Here, the sight that blind men have received is not merely a physical 'sight' but above all it is an 'insight' (see the presence of the word *ginōsko* in 9,30), which could be compared to a light or wisdom. The "light" is a fundamental concept of divine revelation and it is also identified with salvation of men. Cf. B. MARCONCINI, "I canti del servo", in: B. MARCONCINI et al. (eds.), *Profeti e Apocalittici* (Logos 3; Torino 1994) 285.

46 In the view of Grasso, an encounter with Jesus cannot be hidden. Cf. GRASSO, "Il ciclo", 180.

47 The literal sense of the word "denouement" means untying or precipitating the final action, where the mystery is solved or the understanding becomes clear. Cf. SKA, 'Our Fathers', 27-30.

(Mt 11,5; 12,22) but figuratively they are people "without knowledge" (cf. Deut 29,3-4; Wis 10,21). If, in the previous miracle narrative, the sight the two blind men have received is compared to light or wisdom, then, wisdom opens their mouths. The last miracle, in the form of healing the deaf and dumb demoniac, completes this process of the final stage of the drama<sup>48</sup>. Thus the author not only connects the outcome of the drama to next phase of the narration, where the twelve are nominated and are instructed to be sent out to preach (Mt 10,5)<sup>49</sup> but also explains the significance of salvation as the capacity to listen and glorify him and render him service (cf. 8,15).

## 2. THE FUNCTION OF THE DRAMA IN THE IMMEDIATE AND THE WIDER CONTEXT OF THE GOSPEL

In pragmatics, the term function is used for indicating the role of some sub-structure in a unity that is much wider. It presupposes the organic function of structural unity<sup>50</sup>.

### Function of the drama in the immediate context of the Gospel (4,17-11,1)

It is a known fact that chapters 8 and 9 along with 5-7 are enclosed in between two summary statements (4,23-25 and 9,35-38) as boundary markers to form a unit<sup>51</sup>. On either side of these summary statements, there is the call of the

48 The final situation is a type of conclusion to the narrative and contains the results and the sequels. It describes the effects of the transforming action on the people concerned or the way in which the situation is re-established. However, it is also possible that some narratives are open ended or contain elements that prepare for another plot. Cf. SKA, 'Our Fathers', 28-29.

49 Davies and Allison say that, while composing these episodes, the evangelist was already thinking about chapters 10 and 11. Cf. W. D. DAVIES – D. C. ALLISON, *The Gospel according to saint Matthew. A Critical and Exegetical Commentary I-III* (ICC; Edinburgh 1988/1991/1997) 141.

50 Cf. M. B. PAPI, *Che cos'è la pragmatica* (Milano 1993) 105-106.

51 Kingsbury speaking about these chapters has commented: "The narrow context of chapters 8-9 is marked off by the almost identical summary-passages in 4,23 and 9,35. These summary statements function as the 'inclusion' (*inclusio*) to juxtapose chapters 8-9 to the Sermon on the Mount (chapters 5-7)". Cf. KINGSBURY, "Observations", 566. We could say that while the Sermon on the Mount is presented in the form of *Halakah*, the miracle narratives are presented in the form of *'Aggadah* of the new law. As such, they are two faces of the same coin.

four disciples (4,17-22) and the calling and appointing of the twelve where Jesus associates them to His mission (10,1–11,1)<sup>52</sup>.

Immediately after the instructions to the twelve (10,1–11,1), when the disciples of the Baptist come to enquire about the identity of Jesus (11,2-6), the response of Jesus is very simple: He refers to chapters 5–9 as a whole (see the words “hear” and “see”) which provide an answer to the question of his identity. In this answer, Jesus affirms that if they want to know about his identity, these chapters will provide an answer. Hence, we can say that function of the miracle chapters in the immediate context of the Gospel is to provide a synthesis about the identity of Jesus<sup>53</sup>.

As for the theme of the discipleship, we need to ask a pertinent question: why did the author enclose chapters 5–9 in between two summary statements? While summary statements function as inclusion, they are used to narrate an event that has taken place several times. The usage of the verb *periāgo* in the imperfect (“to go about” in 4,23 and 9,35) is a good example of the *iterative*<sup>54</sup> narrative which shows the transition and progression. Instead of narrating all the individual events of calling one after the other, which would be less attractive, the author has taken the Sermon on the Mount and the miracles narratives and enclosed them in between two summary statements as a unit to explain the meaning of discipleship (cf. Mt 9,9-13). Therefore, when we go to the next chapter, the reader can understand who these twelve are and even the call of the four disciples in 4,18-22, which was narrated very rapidly, becomes clear from this enclosure. Hence, we could say that the theme of Christology and discipleship fit in well in the immediate context of the Gospel.

---

52 Cf. M. GRILLI, *Comunità e Missione: le direttive di Matteo. Indagine esegetica su Mt 9,35-11,1* (EHS.T 458; Frankfurt a.M. 1992) 90-100.

53 According to Hagner, these chapters are seen with an eye towards the scripture quoted in 11,2-6. Cf. D. A. HAGNER, *Matthew I-II* (WBC 33; Dallas 1993/1995) 195.

54 *Iterative* narratives relate once something that has happened several times. Such narratives are placed on the edge of the plot to allow the transition between two scenes. Cf. SKA, *Our Fathers*, 14-15 and 23.

The function of miracle chapters in the wider context of the Gospel Except for the rejection (8,34) and opposition from the religious groups (9,3.11), while working the miracles Jesus did not suffer as intended by Isaiah<sup>55</sup>. So the question is how is Jesus the suffering Servant, if he does not really suffer at the moment of working the miracles? Second, by the end of the drama, if disciples are rendered worthy to serve Jesus, to proclaim him, why then do they need to be instructed further (10,5-42), and after the instruction it is not disciples but Jesus who goes about teaching and preaching (11,1)? Finally, if the drama ended with a negative note of Pharisees (9,34), which is a sign that the drama is not complete, what is the purpose of this drama?

In order to explain these questions, I propose to make use of a literary technique known as 'mirror text', which is known to both the OT and the NT<sup>56</sup>. A mirror text or *mise en abyme* has a relationship of likeness to the work, which contains it<sup>57</sup>. As J.L. Ska says it has a 'proleptic' function, in as much as they prefigure the coming events<sup>58</sup>. In short, they have a function to help the reader so that he may not get lost in the wilderness of words. If that is the case, in what way, our miracle chapters help us to understand the Gospel from thematic and structural point of view?

#### - Messianic function of the miracle narratives

According to Kingsbury, there is an emphasis on the Son of God theology in the Gospel of Matthew<sup>59</sup>. This can be verified in the first part of the Gospel (1,1-4,16)<sup>60</sup>, where Matthew's chief concern is to present Jesus as the Messi-

55 Schniewind says that, the miracles of Jesus, which are described as a part of the suffering of the servant remain questionable. Cf. SCHNIEWIND, *Das Evangelium*, 112.

56 According to Ska, the technique of mirror texts are present in Deut 6,20-25 and in 26,1-11, where they explain the meaning of a rite. Cf. SKA, *'Our Fathers'*, 48. Marguerat and Bourquin explain this phenomenon with more than two examples from the OT and the NT. Cf. MARGUERAT – BOURQUIN, *How to Read*, 108-109.

57 Cf. *Ibid.*, 108; Eco calls it *fabula in fabula*. Cf. U. Eco, *The Role of the Reader. Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington 1979) 213.

58 Cf. SKA, *'Our Fathers'*, 48.

59 Cf. KINGSBURY, *Matthew, Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Minneapolis 1982) 42-53.

60 As the problem of the division of the Matthew's Gospel is not yet settled, initially I would like to follow the three part division proposed by Kingsbury, and later on present my view with regard to the division of the Gospel.

ah (1,1.18) the Son of God (2,15; 3,17; 4,3.6), who would save his people from their sins (1,21-23).

We have traces of this theme in the central part, when Peter confesses that Jesus is Son of God in 16,16. However, the reader can appreciate the confession of Peter if only he sees how Peter has come to this conclusion. After the initial action of Jesus (4,17–11,1), where Jesus calls and instructs his disciple, in 11,2-6, there is the problem of the identity of Jesus<sup>61</sup>. After a series of events in between, (11,7-16,12)<sup>62</sup>, at Caesarea Philippi Peter offers a definitive answer to the question when he says, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God” (16,16). However, what seems to be the turning point of the drama with the pronouncement about the suffering Messiah in Mt 16,21 turns out to be the anti-climax. As such, the phrase in 16,21 indicates another beginning of the dramatic complication<sup>63</sup>.

In 16,21-23 the problem is once again the identity of Jesus, but with a difference: How can Jesus, the suffering and humiliated Son of Man, be the Messiah? In the following episodes, along with the teaching on the suffering messiah (16,21; 17,22-23; 20,17-19) the emphasis equally falls on the identity of Jesus (17,22-23; 20,17-19) and it becomes the main issue in the trial scene, where Jesus is condemned to death on account of his identity as the Son of God (26,63-66). Just like Peter’s confession, the author uses the confession of the centurion as the second turning point when he says: “Truly this man was God’s Son!” (27,54)<sup>64</sup>.

---

61 Kingsbury sees in this pericope a beginning of repudiation. Cf. *Id.*, “The Figure of Jesus in Matthew”: *JSNT* 21 (1984) 12.

In 11,2-6 Matera see the *leitmotiv* of this section. Cf. F. J. MATERA, “The Plot of Matthew’s Gospel”: *CBQ* 49 (1987) 244.

62 It is interesting to note that in this section, besides other teachings, Jesus takes his disciples to ‘other side’ (14,22-15,39) just like in the case of the miracle chapters. The quotation from Hosea is repeated once again in 12,7-8 to show a type of discontinuity from miracle stories and give a separate identity to the main story.

63 In the Bible, there are some examples of stories with a double climax and resolution (cf. Gen 21,1-21 and 22,1-19; Gen 45,1-21 and 50,15-21), where a narrative seems to have come to a conclusion when an element of surprise then creates a new crisis. Cf. SKA, ‘*Our Fathers*’, 28.

64 In the confession of the pagan centurion, Matera sees the conclusion of the plot. Cf. MATERA, “The Plot”, 252. Hence, we could say that that the second part of the drama, which begins in 4,17 ends in 27,54.

If the function of the miracle chapters is to project what is going to happen in the main story, we have a clear picture of Jesus' identity as main issue in the main story. If our two chapters projected Jesus as the suffering servant, in the main story we see how Jesus is the suffering servant. It is on the cross, in his suffering and death that Jesus brings salvation and in doing so, he is recognized as the Son of God.

- The theme of discipleship and mission

In the infancy narratives, Joseph is presented as a good example of a disciple. The quality of discipleship emerges in the act of obedience that Joseph manifests (1,21.24-25; 2,13-15; 2,21-23 cf. with 7,21). When Jesus begins his mission, the theme of discipleship is taken up with call of first disciples (4,17-22) and appointing and instructing of the twelve (10,1-42). However, it reappears after the death of Jesus decisively<sup>65</sup>, which I call the third part of the drama, where the results of the central part are demonstrated. In the person of Joseph from Arimathea, (27,55-61), who comes out openly to bury Jesus, the theme of discipleship returns (cf. 14,12). In the narration of the resurrection, Jesus by calling His disciples as "my brothers" (28,7.10) not only grants forgiveness to those who negated and betrayed him, but also gives them a new identity as "sons of God" and a new responsibility. If disciples have become "my brothers", in line with levirate law (Dt 25,5-10) they have an obligation to take the widow of the dead brother to generate children to him (cf. With I Cor 4,15)<sup>66</sup>. In obeying commands of Jesus "to go to Galilee" (28,10.16) and

---

65 After the confession of the centurion, there are mainly three episodes: the burial (27,55-61), the resurrection (27,62-28,15) and the sending of the disciples on a mission (28,16-20). The most important factor that unites these three episodes is the theme of discipleship (27,57; 28,7.16.19). At this point, we are in a better position to propose a three part division to the Gospel of Matthew, taking the help of the mirror text, which foreshadows the main text both thematically and structurally. Accordingly, we could divide the Gospel of Matthew into three parts: 1) 1,1-4,16 as the Initial situation or exposition 2) 4,17-27,54 as Complication, where after the initial action of Jesus (4,17-11,1 where he calls the twelve and instructs them), the identity of the Messiah is resolved, and 3) 27,55-28,20 as the final situation. For further details cf. S. PASALA, *The "Drama" of the Messiah in Matthew 8 and 9. A Study from a Communicative Perspective* (Frankfurt am Main 2008) 283-289.

66 P. Proulx and L. Alonso Schökel in their article about the sandals of the Messiah quote several fathers of the Church and

to baptize all nations (28,19-20), the disciples manifested the true quality of discipleship.

In the light of what we have said above about discipleship, the problem why the disciples of Jesus do not fast (9,15) and why they did not go on mission immediately becomes clear. Now that the Bridegroom has been taken away from them (cf. 9,15), they begin to fast and begin their mission. It is now, after the death and the resurrection of Jesus that a real turning takes place in the lives of the disciples as such, they are ready to go on the mission. This is what we have seen in the third part of the drama. Hence we can comfortably say that the miracle chapters foreshadow what is going to happen in the main story as for the theme of discipleship and the mission.

- The theme of universality

In the healing of the Gadarene demoniacs, Luz sees a proleptic character<sup>67</sup>. Even so, in the solemn declaration of Jesus there is reference of the universality of Jesus' mission (8,11-12). The author has introduced this theme at the beginning, in the genealogy (see mention of pagan woman in 1,3.5.6) and in the event of the Magi (2,1-12)<sup>68</sup>.

This theme has been developed in the central part of the Gospel (12,15-21) and especially when Jesus goes to pagan territory, where he heals the daughter of Canaanite woman (Mt 15,21-28). In the final part of the Gospel (28,16-20), when Jesus commanded his disciples to go to all nations (28,19) the proleptic nature of Jesus saying in 8,11-12 comes to be realized.

---

explain this reference to "my brothers" in this way. Cf. P. PROULX – L. ALONSO SCHÖKEL, "Las sandalias del mesías esposo": *Bib* 59 (1978) 1-35.

67 Cf. LUZ, "The Miracle Stories", 235.

68 Tisera has rightly demonstrated that in the narration of genealogy and magi, the author has already made a point about the future salvific mission of Jesus for gentiles. Cf. G. TISERA, *Universalism according to the Gospel of Matthew* (Frankfurt am Main 1993) 21-73.

## CONCLUSION

As a conclusion, we would like to recall that, if we have proposed that there exists a drama in the way the miracle narratives have been arranged in chapters 8 and 9 of Matthew's Gospel, we are able to demonstrate it by applying the rules of the drama. In the three-act drama, we are able to show how the author has constructed the model reader not only to bring out the dramatic action but also a thematic development. In front of diversity of opinions that existed regarding the theme and function of these two chapters, we are able to demonstrate that the miracle chapters have a well-defined thematic development and a specific function in the Gospel.

Miracles, which are treated as out-dated categories by modern man because of change of perspective, have become a fine literary work. In fact, they become the model reader guiding the real reader in the right path towards the better understanding of the themes and structure of the Gospel. When miracles are considered as records of the past (historical method), they provide only some information about Jesus. However, when the same miracles are seen from a pragmatic point of view, they bring out the dynamism of the miracles. As such, miracles are not only a past reality but also a universal reality in sense that they can happen in the life of every believer who has faith in Jesus. This can happen only when we look at them from a different perspective. Hence, pragmatic or communicative perspective becomes very essential in understanding and interpreting the Gospels for the modern man.

If we accept the theory of mirror text, not only the age-old problem of division of the Gospel of Matthew could be solved, but also, we could present the Gospel in an impressive way. It opens itself for variety of interpretations and helps the reader to find the dynamism of the Word. By viewing the miracle chapters as a mirror text, the Gospel of Matthew becomes a fine artistic marvel, which engulfs the reader into its narrative beauty. By approaching the biblical text from pragmatic point of view, the Word of God not only becomes alive and active but also achieves its final scope of putting the reader to action. In short, Jesus can lead all those who have faith in him from

ignorance to knowledge, from darkness to light (9,31) and from death (8,22) to life (9,25) so that they can become sons of God like the Son.