

WHAT WAS THE ORIGINAL PURPOSE of the Gospel of Matthew? For whom was it written? In this magisterial two-volume commentary, Walter Wilson interprets Matthew as a catechetical work that expresses the ideological and institutional concerns of a faction of disaffected Jewish followers of Jesus in the late first century CE. Wilson's compelling thesis frames Matthew's Gospel as not only a continuation of the biblical story but also a didactic narrative intended to shape the commitments and identity of a particular group that saw itself as a beleaguered, dissident minority. Thus, the text clarifies Jesus's essential Jewish character as the "Son of David" while also portraying him in opposition to prominent religious leaders of his day—most notably the Pharisees—and open to cordial association with non-Jews.

Through meticulous engagement with the Greek text of the Gospel, as well as relevant primary sources and secondary literature, Wilson offers a wealth of insight into the first book of the New Testament. After an introduction exploring the background of the text, its genre and literary features, and its theological orientation, Wilson explicates each passage of the Gospel with thorough commentary on the intended message to first-century readers about topics like morality, liturgy, mission, group discipline, and eschatology. Scholars, students, pastors, and all readers interested in what makes the Gospel of Matthew distinctive among the Synoptics will appreciate and benefit from Wilson's deep contextualization of the text, informed by his years of studying the New Testament and Christian origins.