

Irony and the Matthean Passion Narrative

PURPOSE

Irony (εἰρωνεία, *eirōneia*) is a literary-rhetorical device of the implied author by which he reveals *what is hidden* (reality) behind *what is seen* (appearance). The reading of irony must parse both of these dimensions of meaning. Irony defies one-dimensional reading and underlines the complexity of reality. In the story world, the implied reader cannot perceive the deeper meaning of the ironic words, situations or character dynamics merely through a surface level reading but only through a “delightful leap of intuition,”¹ which is a result of persuasion based on the so-called “implicit flattery”² between the ironist, the implied author, and his reader. As result, irony offers its reader a superior understanding through which he is able to perceive the distinction between the reality and its shadow.

In the story world of the First Gospel, irony is well observed. The Matthean implied author shapes the narrative in an ironic fashion by embedding crucial information through a strategic choice of words, an intentional arrangement of the story and a revealing characterization. He employs irony within his narrative in an omniscient manner and intends his implied reader, whom he believes capable of understanding irony, to detect his literary technique so that the reader may arrive at an ideal understanding of the story’s reality. At the beginning of Matthew, the implied author provides his reader with a particular divine perspective as the norm of the story that Jesus will save his people from their sins (1:21). The fact that this divine perspective on the

1. Wayne C. Booth, *A Rhetoric of Irony* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 12.

2. Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 229. Also, Robert Fowler, *Loaves and Fishes: The Function of the Feeding Stories in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS no. 54; Chico: Scholars, 1981), 161 says it “winks at the reader.”

person of Jesus is hidden from the characters within the story world but is only revealed to the reader inevitably produces a dualistic story phenomenon and conflict between the characters which are the fundamental elements of irony. This book examines how the Matthean implied author moves the story of Jesus on the course of ironic path and how he molds his story with a view toward communicating the ironic significance of Jesus' death.

The Matthean Passion Narrative (26:1–27:66), beginning with the story of the anointing of Jesus by a woman in Bethany, is the Gospel's most pregnant unit of irony. The theological message of Matthew, in which a rejected, crucified Messiah saves his people from their sins (1:21), is ironic by its nature since so few who witness the divine act of salvation realize what is actually happening. Likewise, David Rhoads and Donald Michie convey that irony is rooted in the theme of the death of Jesus by recapitulating the idea that God saves and rules in ways that people do not expect.³ Under the same observation, both David B. Howell and Mark A. Powell suggest that the passion account displays the evangelist's frequent and intensified use of irony.⁴ The ironic dimension of the Matthean passion narrative reaches its highest level of intensity in Jesus' death on the cross—the goal of the life and ministry of Jesus. Thereby, the Matthean passion narrative is the very seat of revelatory irony where the divinely-willed salvation is disclosed through means of irony and its reversal effect.⁵

Irony, known by intellects from different social classes, including the ancient dramatists, philosophers, and rhetoricians, is not an easy tool to employ without drawing proper limits. In addition to its old and complex history, contemporary understandings of irony not only abound but also often produce different results than the traditional rendering of irony. This diversity can yield great confusion as critics search out the meaning and ramifications of particular instances of irony. Nevertheless, observations of selected literary and biblical sources argue for a consistent tradition of what this book groups together as “conventional irony”—a combination of verbal, dramatic, and character ironies. Under this premise, this current work narrows the scope of its investigation

3. David M. Rhoads and Donald M. Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982), 60. Further see R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 169–75; Powell, *Narrative*, 31.

4. David B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1990), 150; Powell, *Narrative*, 49.

5. Garnett G. Sedgewick, *Of Irony: Especially in the Drama* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1935), 59 suggests, based on Aristotle's theory of tragedy in *Poetica*, XI, that irony implies the principle of a reversal of fortune.

of irony so that it only attends to these three types of irony through which the author-ironist of the Matthean passion narrative presents the intended but covert meaning of Jesus' death.

The goal of this book is to show how the Matthean passion narrative's conventional irony functions as the effective rhetorical device through which the theological significance of Jesus' death is unveiled. To achieve this specific purpose, several preliminary subjects will be examined. These include irony as a means of persuasive communication, the implied author of the Matthean passion narrative as the divine ironist, and the previously unanswered need for an examination of the Matthean passion narrative's irony, a need as yet not met in the current biblical scholarship.

The message of the cross is not only the climax of Jesus' earthly ministry but also the goal of his life. The Matthean passion narrative's implied author delivers this core message of the Gospel by employing irony, one of the rhetorical figures, more commonly called figures of speech. The classic treatment which has been done on this topic is the work of the Roman rhetorician Quintilian (c. 35–100 CE), in his *Institutio oratoria* on which modern classifications and analyses are based. According to him, a figure of speech is a word or phrase that diverges from straightforward, literal expression.⁶ It is crafted for emphasis, intelligibility or stylish delivery of meaning. Quintilian has divided figures of speech into two main categories: tropes (from the Greek verb, τροπέω, “make to turn”) and schemes (from the Greek noun, τό σχῆμα, “form, shape, figure”).⁷ Tropes and schemes are collectively known as figures of speech “in which the actual intent is expressed in words which carry the opposite meaning.”⁸ The former operates through changing or modifying the general meaning of a term to provide ornament to meaning,⁹ while the latter involves a deviation from the ordinary or regular pattern of words.¹⁰ Based on Quintilian's theory, irony is uniquely not only a trope (*tropos*) but also a figure (*schema* or

6. Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria*, 9.1.2.

7. *Ibid.*, 8.5.35, 9.1.1.

8. William Flint Thrall and Addison Hibbard, *A Handbook to Literature* (rev. C. H. Holman; New York: Odyssey, 1960), 248.

9. Quintilian, *Inst.*, 8.6.1, “A trope is a shift of a word or phrase from its meaning to another with a positive stroke . . . A trope, then, is language transferred from its original and principal meaning to another for the sake of decoration of speech” (*tropos est verbi vel sermonis a propria significatione in aliam cum virtute mutation . . . Est igitur tropus sermo a naturali et principali significatione tralatus ad aliam ornandae orationis gratia*). Translation is mine.

10. *Ibid.*, 9.1.4, “A figure, as its very name reveals, is a configuration of a certain speech distinct from the common and immediately principal form” (*figura, sicut nomine ipso patet, conformation quaedam orationis remota a communi et primum se offerente ratione*). Translation is mine.

figura).¹¹ It belongs to the category of tropes because it uses words in a way that conveys a meaning opposite to their ordinary and expected significance.¹² It is a scheme as well because irony represents the complexity of the whole passage and concerns the total shape of the theme.¹³

Irony as a part of classical Western rhetoric is fundamentally the art of persuasion.¹⁴ Aristotle (384–322 BCE), the epitome figure for the development of rhetoric, explains in his book, *Ars rhetorica*,¹⁵ that rhetoric as the art of persuasion concerns itself with “proofs” (αἱ πίστεις) for persuasion.¹⁶ Wayne C. Booth, a prominent student of irony in modern times, extensively expresses a special interest in the rhetorical use of irony in literature. Though he acknowledges irony as an elusive subject to define, he values most the rhetorical function of irony. Booth considers irony as a means of communication and expresses that the prime function of irony is uniting or dividing authors and readers.¹⁷

Furthermore, irony has been frequently used to characterize the relationship between the infinite and the finite. Irony serves a staple ingredient in ancient stories of divine dealings with human beings. Religious man appreciates the idea of a being(s) superior to himself. Mercea Eliade, following Rudolf Otto, terms the divine or the sacred as *the Holy* or *the Wholly Other* (*ganz andere*) who breaks into human experience through hierophany.¹⁸ *Homo Religiosus* takes this revelation as the object of its religious inquiry, a task which encompasses both the religious appreciation of *the sacred* and subjection to it. Man’s encounter with *the Holy* inevitably disclose the different realities of God and man or the two discrete worlds to which each respectively belongs. The relationship of these two worlds of God and man is not necessarily one of hostility but destined to be one of a hierarchical order in which man’s world

11. *Ibid.*, 9.1.7.

12. David Holdcroft, “Irony as a Trope and Irony as Discourse,” *Poetics Today* 4 (1983): 493–511 treats irony as a trope based on J. L. Austin’s theory of speech acts.

13. Quintilian, *Inst.*, 9.2.46.

14. Kenneth Burke, *Language as Symbolic Action* (University of California Press, 1968), 28, suggests that rhetoric induces cooperation by persuasion and discussion.

15. Aristotle’s the “Art of Rhetoric” (Ἡ Τέχνη Ρητορική), in Latin *Ars rhetorica*, is the fifth century (BCE) treatise on the art of persuasion.

16. Aristotle, *Rhet.*, I.ii.2, “Rhetoric is the power of discovering all the persuasive elements in a speech” (ἔστω δὴ ῥητορική δύναμις περὶ ἕκαστον τοῦ θεωρησῆσαι τὸ ἐνδεχόμενον πιθανόν). Translation is mine.

17. Booth, *Rhetoric*, ix, 204–05, 217.

18. Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Traditional Factor in the Idea of the Divine and its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), 25–30; Mercea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: the Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1959), 11.

and its perspective should be subject to the divine world and its governing perspective. Ancient literature testifies to divine dealings with humanity and attests that the economy of divine justice often points to a discrepancy between the ways in which the gods and human beings perceive reality.¹⁹ In a similar way, the Scriptures identify essentially different operational principles of the two entities, God and man, and thus the ironic dynamics produced by their interactions. For example, the author of the Gospel of John employs an adverb, ἄνωθεν (from above) to express the distance between the divine value and the human value. The author explains that all the misconceptions and the oppositions against the protagonist Jesus, the sole carrier of the divine reality, are due to the fundamental difference of the origin between Jesus, whose reality is from “above,” and humanity, whose being is anchored “below.” The uniquely Johannine phrase, “You must be born from above” (δεῖ ὑμᾶς γεννηθῆναι ἄνωθεν, John 3:7) corresponds to the idea that the believer is none other than the one who adopts the divine perspective revealed through Jesus so that he may “see the kingdom of God” (ἰδεῖν τὴν βασιλείαν τοῦ θεοῦ, John 3:3b).

In ancient narratives including religious texts such as biblical writings, irony is predominantly a tool for communicating the divine, or the higher power, beyond human reach.²⁰ In this sense, irony is a revelatory language.²¹ Glenn S. Holland defines such a revelatory function of irony as a religious use of irony and expresses it as follows.

The language that scholars use to describe the ironic perspective is filled with terminology that applies equally well to the divine perspective: it is detached, it is superior, it sees things from above, it reveals the true meaning of things, it sees the present in the light of knowledge about the future.²²

19. For example, the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the Greek tragedies, and the prophetic literature among various religions can represent this type of literature.

20. For example, Aida Besançon Spencer, Gail R. O’Day, Jerry C. Hogatt, Glenn S. Holland, and Walter Brueggemann consider irony as a useful rhetorical tool used in Scripture. See Spencer, “The Wise Fool (and the Foolish Wise): A Study of Irony in Paul,” *NovT* 23 (1981): 351; O’Day, “Narrative Mode and Theological Claim: A Study in the Fourth Gospel,” *JBL* 105 (1986): 663; Hogatt, *Irony in Mark’s Gospel: Text and Subtext* (Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 57–89; Holland, *Divine Irony* (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), 15–16, 23–25; Brueggemann, *Solomon: Israel’s Ironic Icon of Human Achievement* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), xii.

21. O’Day, *Revelation in the Fourth Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 31, notes irony as “a mode of revelatory language.”

22. Holland, *Divine Irony*, 60.

Holland further employs the term “Augustan irony” to name a divine irony which brings about a disclosure of a hidden reality.²³ The ironist of “Augustan irony” accepts divine judgments and perspectives, which create irony, and exhibits godly control over them. Following this line of logic, if irony is a medium for an ironist to reveal the divine cause, this type of irony may be called a divine irony and the one who communicates such irony may be called a divine ironist like the implied author of the Gospel of Matthew.

The presence and activity of divine ironists can be observed within biblical material. James G. Williams notes that the prophets of Israel stand between God and his people as intercessors. He explains that God experiences the *pathos* of the contradiction between his people as they are and as he intends them to be.²⁴ His people, however, always fall short of the expectation of their calling and this is why God suffers such *pathos*. According to Williams, the prophets then adopt the same divine *pathos* in their message. Even though the prophets are privileged in the sense that they share the divine perspective, they also suffer with God because of the instability and deviation of their generation from the will of God. Williams concludes that the prophets use irony along with lament as the channels through which God communicates divine affection toward his people, and therefore the prophets are divine ironists.

Likewise, in the tradition of ancient philosophy, the watershed figure, Socrates, assumed a similar role as a divine ironist through his action in response to a Delphic oracle regarding his incomparable wisdom. According to Plato’s *Apologia* (Apology of Socrates), the core of Socrates’ defense at his Athenian trial is the service he has undertaken on behalf of the gods.²⁵ Socrates says to the jurors (*iudices*) that his friend, Chaerophon, had asked the oracle if there were anyone wiser than Socrates, and in return Chaerephon received an answer saying “no one is wiser.” For Socrates, this Delphic oracle sets him on a path of divine service as he interprets the oracle’s praise as signifying that Socrates is wiser than anybody because he knows that being free of pretension to wisdom is wisdom. His mission is comprised of freeing men from their pretense of wisdom²⁶ and exhorting them to care for its actual attainment through perfecting their souls and acquiring the most precious good: virtue (*virtus*).²⁷ In his performance of this divinely-inspired mission, Socrates was perceived by the

23. *Ibid.*, 54.

24. James G. Williams, “Irony and Lament: Clues to Prophetic Consciousness,” *Semeia* 8 (1977): 51–71.

25. Plato, *Apologia*, 20e–21a.

26. *Ibid.*, 23b, e, 28e, 38a.

27. *Ibid.*, 29e, 30a, 31b.

Athenians as speaking, questioning, and acting ironically, especially through his pretension of ignorance.

As we have seen through the cases of the prophets of Israel and Socrates, divine ironists are those who adopt the divine perspective and undertake its delivery to the public as their mission. In the same way, the Matthean passion narrative's implied author, who is defined by the reference of the narrative and its voice, takes on the identity of a divine ironist. His perspective on Jesus' death and its theological implication is coherent with the narrative's perspective on the centrality of the cross to the divine plan of salvation. The author-ironist of the Matthean passion narrative arranges the words, the events, and the characters of antagonism surrounding the death of Jesus to reveal how these seemingly tragic happenings eventually achieve God's salvific plan for his people (1:21) which is depicted as the foremost will of God in Matthew.

Prior to modern biblical scholars' critical engagement of irony in the canon, literary critics had developed a tremendous volume of works that illuminate the history, definition, form, and use of irony in ancient and modern literature.²⁸ Their thorough body of work ranges chronologically from ancient Greek dramas, including the Trilogists of tragedy,²⁹ via Socrates (470–399 BCE), to modern German Romantic irony and New Criticism. It also ranges geographically from Europe to North America. Although the large quantity and outstanding quality of this scholarship concerning irony serves as a strong basis for a critical reading of the Matthean passion narrative's irony, its excessively elaborate categorizations of irony, both in its definitions and classifications, make the interpretation of irony rather difficult. Discerning use of the materials at hand is therefore necessary.

In contrast to the exhaustive study of irony achieved by its general critics, the expositions of irony within biblical scholarship have been on a much smaller scale, although the fundamental hermeneutical shift occurring since the 1970s has brought with it growing interest in irony.³⁰ By the early 1970s, literary

28. Several founding scholars and their works in this area of study are Otto Ribbeck, "Über den Begriff des eiron," *Rheinisches Museum* 31 (1876): 381–400; J. A. K. Thomson, *Irony: An Historical Introduction* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1926); Sedgewick, *Of Irony*; David Worcester, *The Art of Satire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1940); Alan R. Thompson, *The Dry Mock: A Study of Irony in Drama* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948); Robert B. Sharpe, *Irony in the Drama: An Essay on Impersonation, Shock, and Catharsis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1959); Edwin M. Good, *Irony in the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965); Douglas Colin Muecke, *The Compass of Irony* (London: Methuen, 1969); Thirlwall, "On the Irony of Sophocles," 483–537; Booth, *Rhetoric*; Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Irony with Continual Reference to Socrates* (ed. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong; Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989).

29. Aeschylus (525–456 BCE), Sophocles (495–406 BCE), and Euripides (480–406 BCE).

critics had begun a new era of studying the New Testament as “literature.” Under this initiative, biblical scholars such as Norman R. Petersen, David Rhoads, Don Michie, R. Alan Culpepper, Jack D. Kingsbury and Robert C. Tannehill engaged in reading the Gospels with a literary-narrative approach.³¹ Through the efforts of these biblical scholars, the Gospels began to be read as stories of Jesus, and the literary features of the Gospels such as plot, character, setting, perspective and other rhetorical techniques of the implied author, such as irony, came under consideration. However, no significant attention has been given to the use of irony as a rhetorical device within Matthew’s narrative,³² particularly the Matthean passion narrative, as an independent subject by any New Testament scholar in a fashion comparable with that of other parts of the canon.³³ At best, one can find rather scattered comments on the ironic utterances, situations, and characters related to parts of Matthew.³⁴ Partial

30. Hoggatt points out that since the 1970s irony has come to be considered a literary phenomenon worthy of exploration in its own right. See Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark’s Gospel*, ix.

31. Norman R. Petersen, “Point of View in Mark’s Narrative,” *Semeia* 12 (1978): 97–121; Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics*. GBS (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978); Rhoads and Michie, *Mark*; David M. Rhoads, “Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark,” *JAAR* 50 (1982): 411–34; Jack Dean Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark’s Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983); Culpepper, *Anatomy*; Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988); Robert Tannehill, *The Narrative Unity of Luke—Acts: A Literary Interpretation*, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986, 1990).

32. In this regard, Dorothy Jean Weaver expresses that “I have not succeeded in locating any major studies, whether essays or monographs, which deal with Matthew’s use of irony as a literary technique.” See Weaver, “Power and Powerlessness: Matthew’s Use of Irony in the Portrayal of Political Leaders,” *SBL* 31 (1992): 454.

33. For example, Stanley Hopper, “Irony—the Pathos of the Middle,” *Cross Currents* 12 (1962): 31–40; Good, *Irony in the Old Testament*; Jacob Jónsson, *Humor and Irony in the New Testament Illuminated by Parallels in Talmud and Midrash* (Reykjavik: Bókauitgáfa Menningarsjóts, 1965); M. Perry and M. Sternberg, “The King through Ironic Eyes: The Narrator’s Devices in the Biblical Story of David and Bathsheba and Two Excurses on the Theory of the Narrative Text,” *Hasifrut* 1 (1968): 263–92; M. H. Levine, “Irony and Morality in Bathsheba’s Tragedy,” *Journal of the Central Conference of American Rabbis* 22 (1975): 69–77; Williams, “Irony and Lament”; S. Bar-Efrat, *The Art of the Biblical Story* (Tel Aviv: Sifriat Hapoalim, 1979); Jerry H. Gill, “Jesus, Irony and the New Quest,” *Enc* 41 (1980): 139–51; Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Sheffield: Almond, 1983); Paul D. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel* (Atlanta: John Knox, 1985); Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981); Spencer, “The Wise Fool”; James M. Dawsey, *The Lukan Voice: Confusion and Irony in the Gospel of Luke* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1986); Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark’s Gospel*; Brueggemann, *Solomon*.

34. David R. Catchpole, “The Answer of Jesus to Caiaphas (MATT. XXVI. 64),” *NTS* 17 (1970): 213–26; Birger Gerhardsson, “Confession and Denial before Men: Observations on Matt 26:57–27:2,” *JSNT* 13 (1981): 46–66; Richard A. Edwards, *Matthew’s Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985);

exceptions to this state of affairs include contributions by Donald Senior, Mark A. Powell, Timothy B. Cargal, John P. Heil, Dorothy Jean Weaver, and Warren Carter. Senior points out that there is a special use of irony in the activity of Judas and the Jewish religious leaders in the Matthean passion narrative, which reveals the fact that they unwittingly assist in achieving the divine goal, namely the death of Jesus.³⁵ In his book, *What is Narrative Criticism?* Powell attests to irony as a rhetorical device employed by the Gospel writers which can be detected through a narrative-critical reading. In his analysis of the conflict in the Matthean passion narrative, he succinctly addresses the “great irony of Matthew’s Gospel” that Jesus must “lose” his conflicts with the religious leaders and with his own disciples to win the greater conflict with Satan.³⁶ The works of Cargal and Heil, though rather fragmentarily, both deal with a common theme: the innocent blood of Jesus and its salvific function which is ironically exposed through one of the most troubling statements in the New Testament³⁷ and the darkest, hardest verse in Matthew’s Gospel, 27:25.³⁸ Both Cargal and Heil consider that this troubling verse challenges the reader to reevaluate the traditional views regarding the intent of Matthew in reporting the cry of the people since the Matthean portrayal of the people’s rejection of Jesus is subtler in its intended meaning than it seems on surface.³⁹ Neither of them, however, describes how this verse works ironically within the Gospel of Matthew which narratologically culminates in the Matthean passion narrative.

Focusing on the characters who are opposite and their characterizations in the Gospel of Matthew, Weaver provides much fuller exposition on irony surrounding the character dynamics in the story world of Matthew. She examines the use of irony in the characterization of the Gospel’s political figures—Herod the king (2:1-23), Herod the tetrarch (14:1-12), and Pilate the governor (ch. 27)—and paints the virtual powerlessness of political leaders *vis-à-vis* the genuine powerfulness of Jesus, the protagonist.⁴⁰ From the point of view

David Hill, “Matthew 27:51–53 in the Theology of the Evangelist,” *IBS* 7 (1985): 76–87; Timothy B. Cargal, “‘His Blood Be upon Us and upon Our Children’: A Matthean Double Entendre?” *NTS* 37 (1991): 101–12; Weaver, “Power and Powerlessness”; Kirk Kilpatrick, *Beautiful Irony, Matthew 21:1–14* (Germantown, Tenn.: Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, 1996).

35. Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1985), 104–6.

36. Powell, *Narrative*, 48.

37. Cargal, “His Blood,” 101.

38. Robert H. Smith, “Matthew 27:25: The Hardest Verse in Mathew’s Gospel,” *CurTM* 17 (1990): 421.

39. Cargal, “His Blood,” 111; John P. Heil, “The Blood of Jesus in Matthew: A Narrative-Critical Perspective,” *PRSt* 18 (1991): 117–18.

of postcolonial criticism, Carter argues in his book, *Matthew and Empire*, that the Gospel protests Roman imperialism by asserting that God's purposes and will are performed not by the empire and emperor but by Jesus and his community of disciples. Carter establishes Matthew's imperial context by examining Roman imperial ideology through materials present in Antioch, the place from which he believes Matthew was written. Carter pays particular attention to what he perceives to be the Gospel's central irony, namely that in depicting God's ways and purposes, the Gospel employs the very imperial framework that it resists.⁴¹

Just as literary-critical works concerning the irony of Matthew as a whole are scarce, literary-critical investigations of the Matthean passion narrative's irony as the author's rhetorical device fortifying the meaning of the death of Jesus are likewise scanty. However, despite this relative insufficiency of critical work concerning the irony of Matthew and the Matthean passion narrative, the narrative-critical reading of the First Gospel with emphases on the story's coherency and informing nature points to the potential existence of irony woven therein. In addition to this, the extensive sources for the study of irony provided by both the literary critics in general and the above-mentioned biblical scholars specifically provide helpful examples as we look into the way that irony contributes to the Matthean passion narrative's unique portrait of the death of Jesus and its significance.

METHODOLOGY

To examine the theological implications for the meaning of Jesus' death conveyed from the ironic point of view of the Gospel's author-ironist, we adopt the critical tools for the reading of the Matthean passion narrative's conventional irony and its portrayal of the Christ-event: narrative criticism and Wayne C. Booth's "stable irony."

ADOPTED PRINCIPLES FROM NARRATIVE CRITICISM

To observe the literary-rhetorical use of conventional irony within the Matthean passion narrative, employing some of the principles espoused by narrative criticism is necessary. Several basic assumptions established by narrative criticism are drawn upon such as the presence of the implied author and the implied reader, the organic whole of the narrative under a particular

40. Weaver, "Power and Powerlessness," 466.

41. Warren Carter, *Matthew and Empire: Initial Explorations* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001), 51, 171.

governing norm of the text and the rhetorical-persuasive function of the narrative.

Narrative criticism allows for the reading of the Matthean passion narrative's irony as intended by its implied author. The implied author is not identical with the real author of the text. The implied reader is a reconstruction of the reader informed and guided by the text itself.⁴² In this light all narratives have an implied author, even if the historical author is unknown. The implied author is the important component of the story on several grounds. It is the implied author who invests the story with coherence in its shape which is necessary for a coherent meaning of the book.⁴³ In other words, a story is not a coincidental happening but an outcome of the author's intentional lay-out. Seymour Chatman explains it that the narrative blocks of a story are arranged by the implied author, creating "a logic of connection and hierarchy."⁴⁴ The voice of the implied author, also known as the narrator's voice,⁴⁵ represents the perspective or the evaluating point of view from which the story is told.⁴⁶ The reader perceives the existence of the implied author and his ideas and values through the narrator's distinctive voice. In Matthew as a whole, the narrator is virtually identical with the implied author whose detached voice in third-person narration characterizes and speaks on behalf of the implied author.⁴⁷ The Matthean implied author is reliable⁴⁸ since not only does he promote the

42. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 66–77; Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 147–51; Powell, "Toward a Narrative-Critical Understanding of Matthew," *Int* 46 (1992): 342–43.

43. I used the term, the "shape of the story," as identical with the plot of the story. Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), 45 notes that plot is "an organization that humanizes time by giving it form."

44. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 52–53.

45. J. D. Kingsbury, T. B. Cargal and Janice C. Anderson observe the close relationships that are virtually indistinguishable between the implied author and the narrator and the implied reader and the narratee. See Kingsbury, "Reflections," 455; Cargal, "His blood," 103; Janice C. Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web: Over, and Over, and Over Again* (JSNTSup 91; Sheffield: JSOT, 1994), 48.

46. Powell, *Narrative*, 24 explains the evaluating point of view as "the norms, values, and general worldview that the implied author establishes as operative for the story, by which readers are led to evaluate the events, characters, and setting that comprise the story." The implied reader is requested to adopt authorial perspective to make sense of the text. Also, Boris Uspensky, *A Poetics of Composition: The Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form* (trans. V. Zavarin and S. Wittig; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 56 suggests that all other points of view of the narrative must be subordinate to the point of view of the implied author.

47. Cargal, "His blood," 103 opines that in the case of Matthew, as with most ancient literature, there is no need to distinguish between the implied author and the narrator or the implied reader and the narratee since neither narrator nor narratee emerge as characters within the story. Likewise, Anderson,

normative viewpoint of Jesus, the protagonist of the narrative,⁴⁹ but his point of view of telling the story is consistent with Jesus' teachings and corresponding actions. In Matthew we hear the narrator telling the story of Jesus' death in an ironic mode and therefore its implied author is best characterized as the divine ironist whose point of view represents the divine *pathos* dealing with his people through the death of Jesus. Since irony requires the discrepancy between a higher or true point of view and a lower or false one, recognition of the implied author's over-arching perspective is a crucial element in identifying the irony in the Matthean passion narrative.

The Matthean passion narrative's implied author, namely, the divine ironist, functions as an undramatized and omniscient-omnipresent narrator.⁵⁰ Most distinctively, he has the ability to read the minds of the characters, even Jesus.⁵¹ He knows what Jesus knows and what he is feeling.⁵² Virtually no distance exists between the implied author and Jesus the protagonist whose story the narrator, the voice of the implied author of Matthew, narrates. These listed traits of the Matthean passion narrative's implied author are deduced from an analysis of the voice narrating the passion story of Jesus as an observant reporter in an all-seeing, knowledgeable and linguistically proficient manner.⁵³

Matthew's Narrative Web, 28–29 says that the undramatized reliable narrator of Matthew is indistinguishable from its implied author.

48. Regarding the reliable narrator of Matthew, see Kingsbury, "The Figure of Jesus in Matthew's Story: A Rejoinder to David Hill," *JNT* 25 (1985): 65 and Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 55. Not every narrator projected in the Gospels has been considered reliable. Dawsey, *The Lukan Voice*, 41, 152 has suggested that Luke does employ a narrator who proves unreliable. However, Tannehill, *Narrative Unity of Luke—Acts*, 7 has discounted this position. Likewise Tannehill, Powell, *Narrative*, 54 regards the narrators of the Gospels as reliable and their evaluative points of view are always true. It is reasonable to see that biblical narratives do not employ an unreliable narrator which is assumed due to the significance and directness of the Gospel message itself unlike modern literature which sometimes employs the device of an unreliable narrator, whose views the reader is expected to question.

49. The Gospel traditions depict Jesus a reliable and normative character, representing the point of view of God, which is a powerful and normative rhetorical device in itself. Jesus' reliability as a character in the Gospel of Matthew was evidenced from the beginning through his genealogy, birth story, baptism, fulfillment quotations, and valid witnesses about him from other characters within the story, the narrator, God, and even Satan.

50. Anderson, *Matthew's Narrative Web*, 70 regards the Matthean implied author as frequently privileged to have inside views of characters, even what Jesus knows and feels. His omniscience and correctness of perception are proved by Jesus.

51. Matt. 9:3, 21; 16:7; 21:25; 26:4, 8, 10, 16, 22, 37, 43, 59–60, 75; 27:1, 3, 14, 18.

52. Matt. 12:15b, 25; 16:8; 22:18; 26:10.

53. Matt. 26:3, 6, 17, 20, 25, 30, 36, 47–51, 57–58, 63–74; 27:1–2, 5–8, 15, 19–20, 33, 46.

As is the case for the implied author, the implied reader is a construct of the text itself.⁵⁴ He is the reader whom the implied author had in mind and “in whom the intention of the text to be thought of as always reaching its fulfillment.”⁵⁵ In narrative-critical terms, the text calls for any real human of any era to become its implied reader, to be formed and guided by the text through the communication process, and be summoned to experience its purposes which reach fulfillment. The importance of the implied reader should not be minimized because, in a nutshell, the goal of narrative criticism is to read the text as the implied reader.⁵⁶ Even though the actual responses of real readers are unpredictable, there may be clues within the narrative that indicate an anticipated response from the implied reader.⁵⁷ Taking this into account, the formation of an interpretive community between the implied author and the implied reader is inevitable.⁵⁸ Most likely this interpretive enterprise generated between these two parties in the story world depends on rhetorical devices, such as irony, at the disposal of the implied author.⁵⁹

When we consider the implied author of the Matthean passion narrative as the divine ironist, employing irony as the means of communication, it is reasonable to consider that his intended counterpart must be a reader who is competent in understanding irony. Therefore, the ideal implied reader of the Matthean passion narrative’s irony is one who carefully follows the narrative’s plot and the rhetorical patterns of the text,⁶⁰ picking up on the clues that the

54. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 149 notes that “the implied reader is distinct from any real, historical reader in the same way that the implied author is distinct from the real, historical author.”

55. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 38.

56. Powell, *Narrative*, 20. Also, see Powell, “Expected and Unexpected Readings in Matthew: What the Reader Knows,” *AsTJ* 48 (1993): 32.

57. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 150.

58. Powell, *Narrative*, 28; Richard A. Edwards, “Reading Matthew,” *List* 24 (1989): 251–61; Howell, *Matthew’s Inclusive Story*, 110–30; Bernard Brandon Scott, “The Birth of the Reader,” *Semeia* 52 (1990): 83–102; Powell, “Toward a Narrative,” 343 all consider that the implied author must pay attention to the manner in which the implied reader is expected to be educated in the process of reading the narrative to accomplish the goal of the text.

59. Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 229 refers this communicative interaction between the implied author and his partner, the implied reader, as “implicit flattery,” and Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, 38–39 notes that “irony rewards its followers with a sense of community.” Even though Warren Carter, *Matthew: Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996), 278–79, expresses his concern for the essentially unrealistic and impossible task to grasp all the complex interrelationships that may occur within a text, it cannot be disregarded that the text provides for the concrete contours of their interactions.

60. H. J. Bernard Combrink, “The Structure of the Gospel of Matthew as Narrative,” *TynBul* 34 (1983): 61–90 and Frank J. Matera, “The Plot of Matthew’s Gospel,” *CBQ* 49 (1987): 233–53 explain that

implied author left for his interpretive partner.⁶¹ He is summoned to be attentive to the character dynamics and the differences in values which each distinctive group of characters upholds. He makes a value judgment on the characters not based on his personal beliefs, but based on the divine point of view, which the implied author suggests as the ultimate norm of the story. It is a task of utmost importance for the implied reader to adopt the governing perspective of the narrative primarily because the implied authors of biblical narratives have made God's evaluative point of view normative for their works.⁶² Although the implied reader has the freedom and ability to "draw near" or "distance" himself from any given character(s), he is best described as one privileged and guided by the text for a specific achievement: understanding of the story. In short, the notion of both the implied author and reader espoused by narrative criticism is critically text-centered.

Moving on to the principle concerning coherence of the narrative as a whole, it is necessary to pay attention to the preeminence of the text as an entity full of essential information for the meaningful interpretation of the Matthean passion narrative's irony. The boundary where the interpretive interaction between the implied author and reader occurs is none other than the finished form of the entire text.⁶³ Livia Polanyi,⁶⁴ Louis Mink,⁶⁵ and Robert Culley⁶⁶ all have pointed out that the narrative must be self-contained, coherent, and

narrative criticism is interested in how the story that Matthew tells unfolds for the reader. These scholars consider that paying attention to the plot of the story is equal to looking for the rhetorical patterns of the text which give rise to the story's continuity, i.e. the continuity existing between the episodes.

61. Powell, *Narrative*, 32 puts this as the implied reader's experience of "like-mindedness" with the implied author.

62. Kingsbury, "The Figure of Jesus," 4-7. Based on the notion that the implied author is the defender of the divine perspective, it can be said that the implied author is the foremost believer and the prime example for the reader. In the same vein, Powell, *Narrative*, 88-89 considers that that narrative criticism stands in a close relationship with the believing community since it treats the text in a manner that is consistent with a Christian understanding of the canon and seeks to interpret a given text at its canonical level. He goes further saying that narrative criticism emphasizes that a Christian doctrine of spiritual revelation is considered to be an event that happens now, through an interaction of the reader with the text and through the active role of the Holy Spirit. Also, Powell, *Narrative*, 24-25 points out that the Gospels allow for another way of thinking: a second perspective opposing God's perspective and representing the point of view of Satan. In the Gospel tradition Satan's point of view is always incorrect though he sometimes correctly identifies Jesus as the Son of God.

63. Carter, *Matthew*, 276-77 describes the interactions occurring between the implied author and the implied reader as a game and asserts that it must be enjoyed within the boundary and rule of the text.

64. Livia Polanyi, "What Stories Can Tell Us about Their Teller's World," *Poetics Today* 2.2 (1981): 97-112.

65. Louis Mink, "History and Fiction as Modes of Comprehension," *NLH* 1 (1970): 541-48.

have a single unifying point, which Culley calls the story's "core cliché." Therefore, narrative criticism enables us to see the text of the Gospel of Matthew as thematically coherent document, and at the same time it demands that the reader pursue a coherent and consistent interpretation by relying on the interrelations of the textual elements. The implied reader of the text is supposed to know or believe everything that the Gospel expects him to know or believe.⁶⁷ Conversely, he does not know or believe anything that the Gospel does not expect him to know or believe because necessary knowledge and the content of belief are revealed, assumed or implied within the narrative. According to narrative criticism, the text is a unit for meaning. Narrative criticism not only treats the text as an end in itself but also establishes the authority of the text by giving a hermeneutical preference to the word (i.e. voice) of the implied author over its real author since the implied author's point of view through which the story is narrated can be determined without considering anything extrinsic to the narrative. The text presumes authority in the sense that the narrative speaks for itself and that the interpretive key lies within the text itself. In this regard, the narrative "context" is important because all interpretative activities are supposed to occur within the given information of the narrative. Accordingly, the Matthean passion narrative's irony must be read in the whole framework of the Gospel of Matthew as well as in its particular context.⁶⁸ As result, a narrative sensitive and close reading of Matthew as an organic whole will show the ironically-ridden Matthean passion narrative positioned at its theological height.

In summary, narrative criticism offers an impetus for fresh interpretation of the biblical story of Jesus because it allows the story to speak to any real reader in ways that enable the reader to become the implied reader. Further, with its emphases on the finished form of the Gospel and its poetic and rhetorical functions of the text, narrative criticism provides the reader an eye to appreciate the implied author's literary-rhetorical devices, such as irony, for the purpose of engaging in persuasive communication.⁶⁹ The rhetorical function of irony in challenging the surface meaning of things and thus highlighting the deeper

66. Robert Culley, *Studies in the Structure of Hebrew Narrative* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), 13–20.

67. Powell, "Expected and Unexpected Readings of Matthew," 32–48.

68. Booth, "Irony and 'Ironic' Poetry," *College English* 9 (1948): 232–33, 237, highlights the importance of the context for the interpretation of irony.

69. Applying it to the Gospel of Matthew, Powell, "Toward a Narrative," 341 points out that "narrative criticism views Matthew's Gospel as a form of communication that cannot be understood without being received and experienced."

level of meaning of the text by appealing to the sensibility of the text corresponds well to the general outlook of narrative criticism. Therefore, attention to irony is indispensable for narrative criticism.

WAYNE C. BOOTH'S "STABLE IRONY"

Wayne C. Booth makes an enduring impact on the history of the study of irony. In particular, Booth's "stable irony" shares many points of contact with the examined principles of narrative criticism, and both together create the ground on which a narrative-critical reading of the Matthean passion narrative's irony can take place. Prior to Booth, Douglas Colin Muecke began pioneering work by classifying irony under several categories.⁷⁰ Booth adopted some of his classifications, but also added another important distinction: "stable and unstable irony."⁷¹ Booth identifies "stable irony" as "tamed irony" or a "less savage beast" and "unstable irony" as "untamed irony."⁷² A later scholar, Paul D. Duke, explains the essence of "untamed irony," namely, the assumption that irony is everywhere, saying

Scholars and critics who quest after ironies in a text are prone, once they have caught the thrill of the hunt, to become downright intoxicated, not only bagging their limit so to speak, but opening fire on everything in the text that moves.⁷³

Both Booth's self-explanatory phrase "untamed irony" and Duke's description of it indicate that the concept of "untamed irony" exists as a kind of irony that is not rooted so much in explicit textual features as it is in the critic who is "untamed" in his freedom to interact with the text guided chiefly by his own experiences. Contrastingly, Booth's "stable irony" contributes to the study of irony since the theory focuses on a specific type of irony and rejects broad and meaningless extensions of the word "irony" to cover nearly any complex and ambiguous literary statement. Booth's "stable irony" emphasizes that the ironist establishes the relationship to his audience-reader who is highly associative and

70. Muecke, *Compass*, 40–215 provides several classifications of irony such as three grades of irony (overt, covert, private irony), four modes of irony (impersonal, self-disparaging, ingénue, dramatized irony), ironies pertaining to situation (irony of simple incongruity, irony of events, dramatic irony, irony of self-betrayal, irony of dilemma), general irony including cosmic irony, and romantic irony.

71. Booth, *Rhetoric*, 1–27, 233–67.

72. Booth, "The Pleasures and Pitfalls of Irony: or, Why Don't You Say What You Mean?" in *Rhetoric, Philosophy, and Literature: An Exploration*, ed. Don M. Burks (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1978), 5.

73. Duke, *Irony in the Fourth Gospel*, 2.

willing to engage. According to Booth, stable irony occurs when the ironist, whether implicitly or explicitly, provides the reader-audience a firm ground for discerning irony and thus subverting the surface meaning. Unstable irony, on the other hand, offers no fixed standpoint for meaningful reading.

Classical stable irony, the principles of which this study adopts, exhibits four characteristics: (i) it is intended (by the implied author-ironist), (ii) it is covert (having been embedded in the narrative), (iii) it is stable or fixed (not susceptible to further creativity of the reader), and (iv) it is finite in application (having unequivocal meaning). Booth calls these traits “the marks of stable irony.”⁷⁴ Stable irony is by no means accidental or unconscious but rather deliberately created by the author to be read and understood. It is also hidden in the deep tissue of the text because the implied author seems to intend it “to be reconstructed with meanings different from those on the surface.”⁷⁵ Further, stable irony is characterized by both its finitude and stability. Stable irony is fixed in the sense that the reader is not allowed to undermine a reconstruction of meaning that has once been made with additional “demolitions and reconstructions.”⁷⁶ Also, it is finite in application because the reconstructed meanings are bound to a specific context that is textual, immediate and local. Conversely, “unstable irony,” which is unintended, overt, and unlimited in its exposition, literally falls to the free disposal of the reader who is limited only by his own reference and imagination.

Booth underlines the inevitable link between the author and stable irony, a so-called intentionality of irony.⁷⁷ Such intentionality of irony lies close to the core agenda of the narrative.⁷⁸ In other words, it is embedded in the narrative and invites the reader to undertake some interpretative exercise. While Booth calls the reader’s interaction with the text a “delightful leap of intuition,”⁷⁹ the “intellectual dance”⁸⁰ and a “secret communication,”⁸¹ Weaver refers to it as an “act of mental gymnastics.”⁸² Regardless of the multiple sub-categories of stable and unstable ironies,⁸³ Booth strongly believes that irony must be

74. Booth, *Rhetoric*, 3–8.

75. *Ibid.*, 6.

76. *Ibid.*

77. Booth, “The Pleasures and Pitfalls of Irony,” 10.

78. Hoggatt, *Irony in Mark’s Gospel*, ix says, “irony lies close to the narrative’s score.”

79. Booth, *Rhetoric*, 12.

80. Booth, “The Empire of Irony,” *GR* 37 (1983): 729.

81. Booth, *Rhetoric*, 12.

82. Weaver, “Power and Powerlessness,” 454.

83. Booth, *Rhetoric*, 233–77. On the one hand the sub-categories of “stable irony” include stable-covert-local (or definite), stable-overt, and stable-covert-infinite and on the other hand the sub-

discovered by the reader.⁸⁴ This notion embraces the possibility that some readers will go astray including the possibility of misinterpretation on the reader's part.⁸⁵ Despite the importance of the reader as an interpreter of irony, Booth firmly rejects the practice of "uncritical minds" who call "anything under the sun ironic" when "ironic" means simply "odd" or "interesting."⁸⁶ For him, "stable irony" salvages irony from the chaotic manipulations of the free thinker who takes unreserved delight in pursuing the "wild beast," namely an aforementioned "untamed irony." Conclusively, Booth's view of stable irony bespeaks a kind of mutually dependent communication on the part of the implied author requiring the ironically-capable implied reader.

Although irony is an art of "indirection" and "disguise" which distinguishes itself from a direct statement, stable irony represents a definite meaning in that it primarily concerns not the interpretative ingenuity of the reader but authorial intention.⁸⁷ For that reason, the recognition of a localized meaning of irony, indebted to the intention of the ironist, is equal to the art of stopping at the right spot rather than of knowing when to start.⁸⁸ At this juncture, some may raise the question of how authorial intention is detected. Glenn S. Holland answers this based on two criteria: external and internal.⁸⁹ If the "collective experience" of the reader regarding the author's credibility as an ironist serves

categories of "unstable irony" consist of unstable-overt-local, unstable-covert-local, unstable-overt-infinite, and unstable-covert-infinite. Booth further distinguishes some shades of "stable irony" so that stable irony can vary in its degree of secretiveness based on the ad hoc purpose of the ironist. For example, when Cicero, *In Catalinam* I.8.19, speaks of his opponent Catiline as "*virum optimum*" (a noble man), both Cicero and his audience-reader understand that the word expressed, "*optimum*" (noble), must mean "*pessimum*" (wicked). For certain, Cicero's remark about the rebel of the state (*patricidia*), Catiline, uses "stable irony." It is intended by the author and is finite in its exposition, yet it is also clearly overt. These multiplications within each genus warn us that not only the definition of irony but also the categorization of irony requires a literary sensitivity, a keen-intellect, and an open mind on account of its difficult nature.

84. Booth, *Rhetoric*, 5–6.

85. Booth, "The Pleasures and Pitfalls of Irony," 5. Also Gregory Vlastos, "Socratic Irony," *CQ* 37 (1987): 79, points that "when irony riddles it risks being misunderstood," and Brenda Austin-Smith, "Into the Heart of Irony," *Canadian Dimension* 27 (1990): 51 notes the possibility mostly embraced by the modern that "irony as product undermines irony as process."

86. Booth, "The Empire of Irony," 721.

87. Maurice Natanson, "The Arts of Indirection" in *Rhetoric, Philosophy and Literature* (ed. Don M. Burks; West Lafayette: Purdue University Press, 1978), 39–40 identifies irony as an "art of indirection" and Claudette Kemper, "Irony Anew, with Occasional Reference to Byron and Browning," *SEL*, 1500–1900, 7 (1967): 705 as "disguise."

88. Booth, "The Pleasures and Pitfalls of Irony," 10.

89. Holland, *Divine Irony*, 39–42.

as an example for an external criterion, the text itself is the prime, internal indication of the author's ironic intention. Holland asserts that the perception of irony by an alert, competent reader is only inspired by the text through its rhetorical persuasion.

Booth suggests four steps for interpretation of irony.⁹⁰ As the first step, the reader must reject the literal meaning when he recognizes some incongruity, signaling an unspoken proposition, in statements or events. Booth considers this first step as essential to irony. Next, the reader should try out alternative interpretations or explanations which will in some degree be incongruent with what the surface statement seems to say. Then, the reader moves onto the third step: making decisions about knowledge or beliefs of the implied author, which are found in the work itself, because it is most unlikely that the author could arrange ironic sayings or events in a specific fashion without having intended them as such. When the reader has gone through these three steps in order, though Booth sees that these steps are often virtually simultaneous,⁹¹ the reader can finally try a new meaning that is in synchronization with that which the reader knows or can infer about the implied author's beliefs and intentions.

In summary, the theological exposition of the Matthean passion narrative's conventional irony relies on the principles provided by both narrative criticism and Booth's stable irony. Taken as a whole, the adopted principles of narrative criticism share the core characteristics of stable irony. First, narrative criticism focuses on the internal communication or a bonding process between the implied author (the ironist) and the implied reader (the ironically-capable reader).⁹² Second, narrative criticism focuses on the text as a meaningful whole and also on irony as the rhetorical vehicle for an intended implication by the implied author.⁹³ Just as Booth considers that authorial intention establishes an evaluative point of view essential to the proper perception of irony, a narrative-critical reading prioritizes the textual features in a given narrative which reveal the regulating norm of the implied author, the ironist. Thereby both narrative criticism and Booth's stable irony perceive irony as a stable literary device. Lastly, guided by these premises, the implied reader of the

90. Booth, *Rhetoric*, 10–14.

91. *Ibid.*, 12.

92. Booth, "The Empire of Irony," 729 acknowledges that the "intellectual dance" which the reader of irony performs to understand it, brings him into a tight bonding with the ironist by stimulating him to take part in his mental processes. In the same vein, Joseph A. Dane, "The Defense of the Incompetent Reader," *Comparative Literature* 38 (1986): 62 says that Booth's stable irony is "less a fact of a text than a process that occurs between the text and a reader."

93. Powell, *Narrative*, 31 opines that "attention to irony is essential to narrative criticism."

Matthean passion narrative's irony not only yields himself to the authority of the text, but also considers information provided by the text sufficient for meaningful interpretation. Therefore, in the course of reading, when the implied reader encounters a point on which the text is silent, he does not attempt to fill the gap inventively beyond what the narrative supplies him. Both narrative criticism and Booth's stable irony point to priority of the text and its referentiality rather than the reader and his poetical creativity in establishing the referential meaning of the narrative. As far as the reading of the Matthean passion narrative's conventional irony is concerned, it is the reading of the ironically-capable implied reader, whose reading of irony will follow a pattern shaped and governed by the rhetorical rubric of the narrative.

CHAPTER LAYOUTS

Building upon chapter 1, which introduced the subject matter and the purpose of the study, chapter 2 will present a general overview of irony in two *foci*: one, the history of irony with a suggestion of a working definition of irony, and two, the formal requirements of irony. The first part of chapter 2 will only provide summary of the history of irony since this study is not intended to exhaust the history of irony but only to provide the essentials needed to equip the reader with a basic understanding of irony which is indispensable for a successful reading of the present work. The section about the history of irony will show the argument made by each main critic of irony in antiquity as well as a certain connection between these primary critics' observations on irony. Following after the review of the concept of irony among the early authors, the transitional stage of irony in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance will be described. The use of irony in these eras denotes the fundamental discrepancy regarding the understanding of irony between the ancient and the modern mind. While the ancient mind's concept of irony arises from that which is centered in the belief of the divine, the infinite, and the holy, the modern mind's concept of irony is rooted in human perception of the humane, the finite, and the cynical mistrust of institutions and common truths. Concluding the section on the history of irony, the discussion of irony in the modern times will attend to its noticeable growth and diverse ramifications due to the change within Western European philosophical trends and the critics' autonomy in dealing with the subject.

The second part of chapter 2 will review the formal elements of irony. In some sense, it seems that defining irony precisely is an impossible task. On the other hand, identifying what generally constitutes irony is realistic and identifying the formal requirements of irony can provide interpretative guideposts for the reader of a narrative which operates through irony.

In chapter 3, the form and use of conventional ironies will be reviewed. In this part of the discussion, the definition of verbal, dramatic, and character irony will be explored and select examples pertaining to each category within ancient literature as well as within the biblical narratives will be given. Chosen examples of conventional irony from non-biblical source are ancient dramas such as *Nubes* by Aristophanes (c. 446–388 BCE), *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles (495–406 BCE), *Bacchae* by Euripides (c. 480–406 BCE), and *Metamorphoses* by Apuleius (c. 123–180 CE). Furthermore, the tradition around Socrates is also included because he is regarded as the founder of “irony” (εἰρωνεία, *eirōneia*). The rationale for examining these ancient sources is that they illustrate the classical examples and rhetorical models of conventional irony within literature and therefore, they are useful to strengthen the reader’s understanding of irony. They will not receive a full comparative study, but will assist the reader in acquiring a skill for detecting conventional irony and a deeper familiarity with its definitions, characteristics, and functions so that he can properly decipher conventional irony within a given literary context such as the Matthean passion narrative.

Based on the critical information about irony provided by the earlier chapters, chapter 4 will launch a sequential narrative-critical reading of the Matthean passion narrative’s irony. The first half of chapter 4 will define the limits of the literary unit of the Matthean passion narrative (26:1–27:66). The last half will explicate the use of conventional irony within the Matthean passion narrative through the stance of narrative criticism. Instead of lining up cases of irony under each category of conventional irony, the book will expose their occurrences according to the chapter of the Matthean passion narrative in which it is found. In this way, the Matthean passion narrative will be read chronologically not fragmentarily. Also, it will be observed that not every case of conventional irony in the Matthean passion narrative belongs to only one category. In fact, the Matthean passion narrative’s conventional irony is so complex that the reader may detect combinations of irony, such as an instance of verbal irony with situational irony, a moment of situational irony in an example of character irony, an occurrence of character irony with a case of verbal irony, or in some cases, all in one.

The concluding chapter 5 will synthesize the data to present the characteristic Matthean theological interpretation on the death of Jesus communicated through the conventional irony of the Matthean passion narrative in four categories: (i) the identity of Jesus, (ii) the saving will of God, the governing norm of the Matthean passion narrative (iii) God’s universal

salvation, and (iv) *Deus triumphus* (God the victorious) vs. *Satan victus* (Satan the defeated), the outcome of the Christ-event.

First, the Matthean passion narrative's ironic portrait of Jesus' death decidedly answers the most crucial question of "who Jesus is." Throughout the Gospel, the Gospel's implied author-ironist presents the complexity of Jesus' identity and allows his reader to acquire comprehensive knowledge of the person of Jesus by exposing him to direct and indirect statements of Jesus regarding himself and to the testimonies of key witnesses of Jesus. Despite the abundance of information regarding "who Jesus is," the Gospel depicts that the central cause of conflict between Jesus and his antagonists hinges on the issue of Jesus' identity. In the most heated moments of confrontation in the Matthean passion narrative, when Jesus' identity is questioned by the representatives of his people, irony hidden in their accusations and belittlements turns their emphatic denouncement of Jesus into an irrefutable affirmation in spite of their ignorance accompanied by disbelief.

Second, the Matthean passion narrative's irony reveals the will of God (τὸ θέλημα τοῦ θεοῦ, 26:42) as the governing norm of Jesus' entire life and ministry culminating in his passion. Matthew constantly stresses this theme throughout the narrative and considers that God's saving will is fully accomplished in Jesus' death. Jesus drinks "the cup" (τὸ ποτήριον, 26:39), which is a symbolic description of the will of God in the Gospel, and thus embraces his Father's will through his radical obedience that is expressed in his innocent death. As Jesus, the Son of God carried out his Father's will. His disciples are likewise called to bear their own crosses (10:3-39), the tokens of utter submission. The Matthean passion narrative's irony reveals bearing one's cross and following after Jesus in this path as the most desirable pattern for true discipleship, despite the persecution and even "passion" awaiting them (10:24-25).

Third, the Matthean passion narrative's irony pertaining to the irreconcilable conflict between the innocence of Jesus (that is, the innocent blood of Jesus) and the shame of the cross which he endures sums up the core message of Christianity that God's universal salvation is proffered through the death of his Son, Jesus, for both Jews and Gentiles alike. It is particularly important to observe how the Matthean passion narrative's irony exposes the hidden agenda of the death of Jesus in the most controversial scene of the Matthean passion narrative where his people (1:21) makes a collective decision to reject him but yet unwittingly come under the insuperable embrace of God (27:24-25). Although it is apparently tragic that God's people, for whom God sent his Son (1:21; 3:17; 17:5), attempt to sever their tie from that very one who is sent by God, it is the revelation of the Matthean passion narrative's irony

that there is no scandal of sin that cannot be overcome by the salvation secured through the death of Jesus. Additionally, God's salvation achieved through Jesus' death is also for the nations beyond the Jewish race, despite the fact that Jesus comes as the Jewish Messiah (1:1) and eventually dies under the charge of being the King of the Jews (27:37). Jesus' entire ministry manifests his equally compelling compassion and care for the "sinners" (9:11-13) and this attests to the universal nature of his saving ministry as he unequivocally explains that the reason for his ordeal is to save "many" (that is, "all", 20:28; 26:28).

Lastly, the reading of the Matthean passion narrative's irony presents the death of Jesus as the most indicative incident revealing the ultimate *Deus triumphus*. The cross of Jesus is the place where the undefeatable God manifests himself in the way he deals with Satan. The literary-critical reading of the First Gospel shows that Satan's activity ironically contributes to what God intends to achieve through his Son, Jesus. Even though Jesus seems to be caught in a mechanism of evil when he is surrounded by the streams of opposition and the growing ferocity of violence, the Matthean passion narrative's irony subtly discloses that the kingdom of Satan is divided and that Jesus' passion is God's checkmate on Satan who is stuck in a dilemma, neither moving forwards nor backwards, while his associates unknowingly act against the aspiration of their head.