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14. Structure and Outline

1. The Criticism of Matthew

The earliest church fathers to mention this Gospel concur that the author was the apostle Matthew. Papias's famous statement (cf. section 3) was interpreted to mean "Matthew composed the *Logia* [Gospel?] in the Hebrew [Aramaic?] dialect and every one interpreted them as he was able." In other words the apostle first wrote his Gospel in Hebrew or Aramaic, and it was subsequently translated into Greek. Matthean priority was almost universally upheld; Mark was considered an abbreviation and therefore somewhat inferior. These factors-apostolic authorship (unlike Mark and Luke) and Matthean priority-along with the fact that Matthew preserves much of Jesus' teaching not found elsewhere, combined to give this first Gospel enormous influence and prestige in the church. With few exceptions these perspectives dominated Gospel study till after the Reformation. The consensus could not last. An indication of its intrinsic frailty came in 1776 and 1778 when, in two posthumously published essays, A.E. Lessing insisted that the only way to account for the parallels and seeming discrepancies among the synoptic Gospels was to assume that they all derived independently from an Aramaic *Gospel of the Nazarenes* . Others (J.A. Eichorn, J.G. Herder) developed this idea; and the supposition of a Primal Gospel, whether oral or literary, began to gain influence. Meanwhile J.J. Griesbach (1745-1812) laid the foundations of the modern debate over the "synoptic problem" (cf. section 3) by arguing with some care for the priority of both Matthew and Luke over Mark, which was taken to be a condensation of the other two. In the middle of the nineteenth century, many in the Tubingen school adopted this view. As a result Matthew as an historical and

theological source was elevated above the other Synoptics. By the end of the nineteenth century, a new tide was running. Owing largely to the meticulous work of H.J. Holtzmann (1834-1910), the "two-source hypothesis" gained substantial acceptance (see EBC, 1:445-47, 510-14). By the beginning of the twentieth century, this theory was almost universally adopted; and subsequent developments were in reality mere modifications of this theory. B.H. Streeter, [1] advocating a "four- source hypothesis" that was essentially a detailed refinement of the two-source theory, argued that Luke's Gospel is made-up of a "Proto-Luke" that was filled out with Mark and Q. This raised the historical reliability of Proto-Luke to the same level as Mark. Streeter's hypothesis still has some followers, and today most scholars adopt some form of the two-source theory or the four-source theory. This consensus has recently

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been challenged (cf. section 3).

These predominantly literary questions combined with the substantial antisupernaturalism of some critics at the turn of the century to produce various reconstructions of Jesus' life and teaching (see EBC, 1:519-21). During the 1920s and 1930s, the source criticism implicit in these efforts was largely passed by in favor of form criticism (see EBC, 1:447-48). Philologists first applied this method to the "folk literature" of primitive civilizations, especially the Maoris. H. Gunkel and H. Gressmann then used it to classify OT materials according to their "form." New Testament scholars, especially K.L. Schmidt, M. Dibelius, and R. Bultmann (*Synoptic Tradition*), applied the method to the Gospels in an effort to explore the so-called tunnel period between Jesus and the earliest written sources. They began by isolating small sections of the Gospels that they took to be units of oral tradition, classifying them according to form (see EBC, 1:447). Only the passion narrative was taken as a connected account from the beginning. Oral transmission was thought to effect regular modifications common to all such literature (EBC, 1:444-45)--e.g., repetition engenders brevity in pronouncement stories and provides names in legends, rhythm and balance in didactic sayings, and multiple details in miracle stories. The form critics then assigned these forms to various *Sitze im Leben* ("life settings") in the church (see EBC, 1:511-13). The historical value of any pericope was then assessed against a number of criteria. For instance, the "criterion of dissimilarity" was used to weed out statements attributed to Jesus that were similar to what Palestinian Judaism or early Christianity might have said. Only if a statement was "dissimilar" could it be ascribed with reasonable confidence to Jesus. The net result was a stifling historical skepticism with respect to the canonical Gospels. Many scholars used the same literary methods in a more conservative fashion (e.g., V. Taylor's great commentary on Mark); but the effect of form criticism was to increase the distance between our canonical Gospels and the historical Jesus, a distance increased yet further in Matthew's case because of the continued dominance of the two-source hypothesis. Few any longer believed

that Matthew the apostle was the first evangelist. [2] Following World War II a major change took place. Anticipated by Kilpatrick's study, which focused on the distinctives in Matthew's theology the age of redaction criticism as applied to Matthew began with a 1948 essay by G. Bornkamm (printed in English as "The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew," *Tradition* , pp. 52-57). He presupposed Mark's priority and then in one pericope sought to explain every change between the two Gospels as a reflection of Matthew's theological interests and biases. Redaction criticism offered one great advantage over form criticism: it saw the evangelists, not as mere compilers of the church's oral traditions and organizers of stories preserved or created in various forms, but as theologians in their own right,

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shaping and adapting the material in order to make their own points. It became important to distinguish between "traditional" material and "redactional" material, i.e., between what came to the evangelist already formed and the changes and additions he made. In other words, while tradition may preserve authentic historical material, redactional material does not do so. It rather serves as the best way of discerning an evangelist's distinctive ideas. In his meticulous study of one pericope, Bornkamm sought to demonstrate a better method of understanding Matthew's theology--a method that could best be discerned by trying to understand how and why Matthew changed his sources (esp. Mark and Q). Countless studies have poured forth in Bornkamm's wake, applying the same methods to virtually every pericope in Matthew. The translation of redaction-critical studies by G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H.J. Held (*Tradition*) has exercised profound influence in the world of New Testament scholarship; and in 1963 the first full-scale redaction-critical commentary on Matthew appeared (Bonnard). Bonnard handles his tools fairly conservatively. He frequently refuses to comment on historical questions and focuses on Matthew's theology and the reasons (based on reconstructed "life settings") for it. His work, which is immensely valuable, became the forerunner of several later English commentaries (notably Hill's). Nevertheless a rather naive optimism regarding historical reconstruction has developed. Virtually all recent writers on Matthew think they can read off from Matthew's redaction the theological beliefs either of Matthew's community or of the evangelist himself as he sought to correct or defend some part of his community. Kilpatrick argues that the book is catechetical, designed for the church of Matthew's time. Stendahl (*School of Matthew*) thinks the handling of the OT quotations reflects a "school" that stands behind the writing of this Gospel, a disciplined milieu of instruction. The major redaction-critical studies all attempt to define the historical context in which the evangelist writes, the community circumstances that call this Gospel into being (it is thought) between A.D. 80 and A.D. 100, and pay little useful attention to the historical context of Jesus. One need only think

of such works as those of Trilling, Strecker (*Weg*), Cope (*Matthew*), Hare, Frankemolle, and the recent books by Thysman and Kunzel, to name a few. [3] Not all redaction critics interpret Matthew's reconstructed community the same way; indeed, the differences among them are often great. Moreover, several recent critics have argued that much more material in the Gospels (including Matthew's) is authentic than was recognized ten years ago. [4] Yet the wide diversity of opinion suggests at least some methodological and presuppositional disarray. A modern commentary that aims primarily to explain the text must to some extent respond to current questions and the more so if it adopts a fairly independent stance. [5] For many of these questions greatly affect our understanding of what the text says.

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2. History and Theology

Few problems are philosophically and theologically more complex than the possible relationships between history and theology. The broader issues in the tension between these two cannot be discussed here: e.g., How does a transcendent God manifest himself in space-time history? Can the study of history allow, in its reconstructions of the past, for authority and influence outside the space-time continuum? To what extent is the supernatural an essential part of Christianity, and what does it mean to approach such matters "historically"? What are the epistemological bases for a system professing to be revealed religion? [6] Even the titles of recent books about Jesus show the chasm that separates scholar from scholar on these points [7]. This section will therefore ask some preliminary methodological questions. [8] How appropriate and reliable are the various methods of studying the Gospels if we are to determine not only the theological distinctives of each evangelist but also something of the teaching and life of the historical Jesus? We must begin by avoiding many of the historical and theological disjunctions [9] notoriously common among NT scholars. An example is the recent essay by K. Tagama, [10] who arrives at his conclusion that the central theme of Matthew is "people and community" by insisting that all other important themes are mutually contradictory and therefore cancel one another out.. But contradiction is a slippery category. As most commonly used in NT scholarship, it does not refer to logical contradiction but to situations, ideas, beliefs that on the basis of the modern scholar's reconstruction of early church history are judged to be mutually incompatible. [11] Such judgments are only as convincing as the historical and theological reconstructions undergirding them; and too often historical reconstructions that in many cases have no other sources than the NT documents depend on illicit disjunctions. Did Jesus preach the nearness of the end of history and of the consummated kingdom? Then he could not have preached that the kingdom had already been inaugurated, and

elements apparently denying this conclusion obviously spring from the church. Or did Jesus preach that the kingdom had already dawned? Then the apocalyptic element in the Gospels must be largely assigned to the later church. (On this particular problem, see comments at 3:2; 10:23; and ch. 24.) Was Jesus a proto-rabbi, steeped in OT law and Jewish tradition? Then Paul's emphasis on grace is entirely innovative. Or did Jesus break Jewish Halakah (rules of conduct based on traditional interpretations of the law)? Then clearly Matthew's emphasis on the law (e.g., 5:17-20; 23:1-26) reflects the stance of Matthew's church, or suggests that Matthew wishes to legislate for his church, without helping us come to grips with the historical Jesus. Better yet Matthew's Gospel may even be considered a Jewish-

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Christian reaction against "Paulinism."

All such disjunctive reconstructions are suspect. Historical "contradictions," as Fischer has shown, too often reside in the eye of the historian. Strange combinations of ideas may coexist side by side in one generation, even though a later generation cannot tolerate them and therefore breaks them up. So we need to be cautious about pronouncing what ideas can be "historically" compatible. Acts and the early Pauline Epistles show us considerable diversity in the fast-growing infant church, as a number of NT studies attempt to explain. [12] Reconstruction is a necessary part of historical inquiry; sometimes meticulous reconstruction from a number of reliable documents shows that some further document is not what it purports to be. But as far as the Gospel of Matthew (or any of the canonical Gospels) is concerned, we must frankly confess we have no access to the alleged "Matthean [or Markan, Lukan, etc.] community" apart from the individual Gospel itself. The numerous studies describing and analyzing Matthew's theology against the background of Christianity and Judaism contemporary with Matthew's "community" in A.D. 80-100 (cf. Stanton, "Origin and Purpose," ch. 3) beg a host of methodological questions. This is not to deny that Matthew's Gospel may have been written within a community about A.D. 80, or may have addressed some such community; rather is it to argue the following points. 1. What Matthew aims to write is a Gospel telling us about Jesus, not a church circular addressing an independently known problem. 2. There is substantial evidence that the early church was interested in the historical Jesus and wanted to know what he taught and why. Equally there is strong evidence that the Gospels constitute, at least in part, an essential element of the church's kerygmatic ministry, its evangelistic proclamation (Stanton, *Jesus of Nazareth*), each Gospel having been shaped for particular audiences. 3. It is therefore methodologically wrong to read off some theme attributed by the evangelist to Jesus and conclude that what is actually being discussed is not the teaching of Jesus but an issue of A.D. 80, unless the theme or saying can be shown to be

anachronistic. 4. Matthew's reasons for including or excluding this or that tradition, or for shaping his sources, must owe something to the circumstances he found himself in and the concerns of his own theology. But it is notoriously difficult to reconstruct such circumstances and commitments from a Gospel about Jesus of Nazareth. 5. Moreover, virtually all the themes isolated as reflections of A.D. 80 could in fact reflect interests of any decade from A.D. 30 to 100. In the early thirties, for instance, Stephen was martyred because he spoke against the law and the temple. Similar concerns dominated the Jerusalem Council (A.D. 49) and demanded thought both before and after the Jewish War (A.D. 66-70). The truth is that such themes as law and

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temple, and even many christological formulations (see section 11), offer very little help in identifying a "life-setting" for the church in Matthew's day. Although Matthean scholarship may advance by trying out new theories, no advance that forces a Procrustean synthesis based on methodologically dubious deductions constitutes genuine progress. Today we are in a position to consider the proper if limited place of redaction criticism. Since this method of study has been scrutinized elsewhere (cf. Carson, "Redaction Criticism," and the literature cited there), only a few points need be made here. 1. The "criteria of authenticity," as has open been pointed out, [13] are hopelessly inadequate. For instance, the "criterion of dissimilarity," viz., that only if a statement was "dissimilar" from what Palestinian Judaism or early Christianity might have said could it be ascribed with reasonable confidence to Jesus, can only cull out the distinctive or the eccentric, while leaving the characteristic untouched--unless one is prepared to argue that Jesus' teaching characteristically never resembled contemporary Judaism and was never adopted by the church. 2. The analysis of the descent of the tradition, though useful in itself, is marred by four major flaws. First, comparative studies in oral transmission have largely dealt with periods of hundreds of years, not decades. On any dating of the Gospels, some eyewitnesses were still alive when the evangelists published their books. Second, the work of several Scandinavian scholars [14] has drawn attention to the role of memory in Jewish education. Their work has been seriously criticized; but even their most perceptive critics [15] recognize that too little attention has been paid to the power of human memory before Guttenberg--a phenomenon attested in many third-world students today. More impressive yet, the detailed attack on form criticism by Guttgemanns [16] is so compelling that one wonders whether form criticism is of any value as a historical (as opposed to literary) tool. Oral traditions, especially religious oral traditions, are not conducive to tampering and falsification but are remarkably stable. Third, convincing reasons have been advanced for concluding that some written notes were taken even during Jesus' public ministry. [17] Written material, of course, necessarily fits into various

"forms" or "genres"; but such genres must be considered quite separately from the "forms" of oral transmission and the shaping that takes place by this means. If traditions of Jesus' words and deeds were passed on by both oral and written forms, many of the historical conclusions of the form-critical model collapse. Fourth, classic form criticism is intrinsically incapable of dealing historically with several similar sayings of Jesus, since they all tend toward the same form. 3. More broadly, the fact that Jesus was an itinerant preacher (cf. comments at 4:23- 25; 9:35-38; 11:21) is passed over too lightly. To attempt a tradition history of somewhat similar sayings, which the evangelists place in quite different contexts,

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overlooks the repetitive nature of itinerant ministry Of course each case must be examined on its own merits and depends in some instances on source-critical considerations; but we shall observe how frequently this basic observation is ignored. See especially the introductory discussion on parables at 13:3a. 4. To deduce that all changes in Mark and Q (however Q be defined), including omissions and additions, are the result of exclusively theological motives fails to reckon with the extreme likelihood of a multiplicity both of reasons for introducing changes and of sources, oral and written, within the first few decades (cf. Luke 1:1-4) and with the possibility that the author was an apostle (cf. section 5). While apostolic authorship would not give the text more authority than nonapostolic authorship, it must affect our judgment of the role of oral and written sources in the making of this Gospel. These factors--multiplicity of sources and possible apostolic authorship--suggest that in most instances there is no compelling reason for thinking that material judged redactional is for that reason unhistorical. 5. Modern redaction criticism also suffers from dependency on a particular solution to the synoptic problem (cf. section 3). 6. Also, it fails to consider how many changes from Mark to Matthew (assuming Mark's priority) might owe something to stylistic predilections rather than theology. For example, F. Neirynck has clearly shown that Matthew's account of the feeding of the five thousand, often said to reflect more clearly than Mark the institution of the Eucharist, in reality turns out to be entirely consistent with the stylistic changes he introduces elsewhere. [18] 7. Too many redaction-critical studies develop an understanding of the theology of Matthew's Gospel solely on the basis of the changes, instead of giving adequate thought to the document as a whole. Surely what Matthew retains is as important to him as what he modifies. The possibility of distortion becomes acute when on the basis of changes Matthew's distinctive theology is outlined and then anything conflicting with this model is reckoned to be "unassimilated tradition" or the like. It is far wiser to check the "changes" again and determine whether they have been rightly understood and, avoiding a priori disjunctions, to seek to integrate them into all Matthew writes down. Such considerations do not

eliminate the need for redaction criticism. In God's providence we are able to compare the synoptic Gospels with one another, and such study helps us better understand each of them. Matthew's topical treatment of miracles (Matt 8-9), his chiastic arrangement of parables (Matt 13), the differences he exhibits when closely compared with Mark--these all help us identify his distinctives more precisely than would otherwise be possible. Thus no responsible modern commentary on the synoptic Gospels can avoid using redaction criticism. But redaction criticism, trimmed of its excesses and weaned from its radical heritage, throws only a little light

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on historical questions; and one must always guard against its dethroning what is essential by focusing on what is distinctive and idiosyncratic. It is possible to approach the question of how much history is found in Matthew by examining the genre of literature--either of the Gospel as a whole or of some section of it. Perhaps a "Gospel" is not meant to convey historical information; perhaps certain stories in Matthew are "midrash" and, like parables, make theological points without pretending to be historical. Anticipating later discussion (section 12), we conclude that the evangelists, including Matthew, intended that their Gospels convey "historical" information. This does not mean they intended to write dispassionate, modern biographies. But advocacy does not necessarily affect truth telling: a Jewish writer on the Holocaust is not necessarily either more or less accurate because his family perished at Auschwitz. Nor is it proper in the study of any document professedly dealing with history to approach it with a neutral stance that demands proof of authenticity as well as proof of inauthenticity. [19] Goetz and Blomberg, in an adaptation of a Kantian argument, write:

If the assumption was that no one ever wrote history for the sake of accuracy,

then no fraudulent history could ever be written with the expectation that it would

be believed. The process of deception is parasitic on the assumption that people

normally write history with the intent of historical accuracy. People must (a)

acknowledge the a priori truth that truth-telling is the logical backdrop to lying,

and (b) *actually* assume that people tell the truth in order for a lie to be told with

the expectation that it will be believed. [20]

So with any particular historian, including Matthew, the writer of history must be assumed reliable until shown to be otherwise. "The reader must make this a priori commitment if the practice of writing history is to be viable." [21] In other words, other things being equal, the burden of proof rests with the skeptic. From this perspective harmonization, which currently has a very bad name in NT scholarship, retains a twofold importance: negatively, it is nothing more than one way of applying the coherence test for authenticity; and, positively, once we no longer insist that every Gospel distinctive is the result of theological commitment or that the only possible sources are Mark, Q. and a little undefined oral tradition, harmonization carefully handled may permit the illumination of one source by an other, provided legitimate redaction critical distinctions are not thereby obliterated. This commentary endeavors to apply these observations and assessments to the Gospel of Matthew. Rigorous application would have trebled the length. Therefore certain sections and pericopes were singled out for more extensive treatment (cf. for instance, at 5:1; 6:9-13; 8:16-17; 13:3; 26:6, 17), in the hope that the positions outlined

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in this introduction could be grounded in the hard realities of the text. The aim must be to understand as closely as possible the Gospel of Matthew.

3. The Synoptic Problem

The recent return of the synoptic problem to center stage as the focus of much debate (see section 1) necessitates some assessment of the developments that impinge on questions of authorship, date, and interpretation of Matthew. One contributing factor to the debate is the quotation from Papias (c. A.D. 135) recorded by Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.16). Several of Papias's expressions are ambiguous: "Matthew *synetaxeto* [composed? compiled? arranged?] the *logia* [sayings? Gospel?] in *hebraidi dialekto* [in the Hebrew (Aramaic?) language? in the Hebrew (Aramaic?) style?]; and everyone *hermeneusen* [interpreted? translated? transmitted?] them as he was able [contextually, who is 'interpreting' what?]." The early church understood the sentence to mean that the apostle Matthew first wrote his Gospel in Hebrew or Aramaic and then it was translated. But few today accept this. [22] Although Matthew has Semitisms, much evidence suggests that it was first composed in Greek. The most important attempts to understand this sentence from Papias include the following. [23] 1. Manson (*Sayings*, pp. 18ff.) has made popular the view that identifies the *logia* with sayings of Jesus found in Q. That would make Matthew the author of Q (a source or sources including approximately 250 verses common to Matthew and Luke), but not of this Gospel. Papias confused the two. This view falters on two facts. First, it cannot explain how an important apostolic source like the Q this theory requires could have so completely disappeared that there is no other mention of it, let alone a copy. Indeed, the entire Q hypothesis, however reasonable, is still only hypothesis. Second, Papias's two other instances of *logia* (recorded by Eusebius) suggest the word refers to both sayings and deeds of Jesus,

while Q is made up almost exclusively of the former. From this perspective *logia* better fits the Gospel of Matthew than a source like Q. 2. This last criticism can also be leveled against the view that *logia* refers to OT "testimonia," a book of OT "proof-texts" compiled by Matthew from the Hebrew canon and now incorporated into the Gospel. [24] Furthermore, it is not certain that such "testimonia" ever existed as separate books; and in any case it would have been unnecessary to compile them in Hebrew and then translate them, since the LXX was already well established. Matthew demonstrably follows the LXX in passages where Mark has parallels (see section 11). 3. If by *logia* Papias meant our canonical Matthew, [25] then in the opinion of many scholars convinced that canonical Matthew was set down in Greek (erg., Hill), Papias was plainly wrong. Either his testimony must be ignored as valueless or we must

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suppose that Papias was right as to the language but confused the Gospel with some other Semitic work, perhaps the apocryphal Gospel According to the Hebrews. 4. Kurzinger [26] offers a possible way out of the dilemma. He thinks *logia* refers to canonical Matthew but that *hebraidi dialekto* refers, not to Hebrew or Aramaic language, but to Semitic style or literary form: Matthew arranged his Gospel in Semitic (i.e., Jewish-Christian) literary form dominated by Semitic themes and devices. In this view the last clause of Papias's statement cannot refer to translation, since language is no longer in view. Kurzinger points out that immediately before Papias's sentence about Matthew, he describes how Mark composed his Gospel by putting down Peter's testimony; and there Mark is called the *hermeneutes* of Peter. This cannot mean Mark was Peter's translator. It means he "interpreted" or "transmitted" (neither English word is ideal) what Peter said. If the same meaning is applied to the cognate verb in Papias's statement about Matthew, then it could be that everyone "passed on" or "interpreted" Matthew's Gospel to the world, as he was able. It is difficult to decide which interpretation is correct. A few still argue that Matthew's entire Gospel was first written in Aramaic. [27] That view best explains the language of Papias, but it is not easy to reconcile with Matthew's Greek. Why, for instance, does he sometimes use a Greek source like the LXX? It cannot be argued that the alleged translator decided to use the LXX for all OT quotations in order to save himself some work, for only some of them are from the LXX. If this interpretation of Papias's statement does not stand, then Papias offers no support for Matthean priority. The other two plausible interpretations of Papias are problematic. The view that Papias was referring to Q or some part of it offers the easiest rendering of *hebraidi dialekto* ("in the Hebrew [Aramaic] language") but provides an implausible rendering for *logia*. Kurzinger's solution provides the most believable rendering of *logia* (viz., canonical Matthew) but a less likely interpretation of *hebraidi dialekto* ("in the Semitic literary form"). Yet this rendering is possible (cf. LSJ, 1:401) and makes sense of the whole, even though Kurzinger's view has not been well received. The important point is that

either of these last two views fits easily with a theory of Markan priority, which may also be hinted at in the fact that, as Eusebius preserves him, Papias discusses Mark at length before turning rather briefly to Matthew. Quite apart from the testimony of Papias, the NT evidence itself demands some decisions, however tentative, regarding the synoptic problem. Its boundaries are well known. About 90 percent of Mark is found in Matthew, and very frequently Matthew agrees with Mark's ordering of pericopes as well as his wording (see esp. Matt 3-4; 12-28). Matthew's pericopes are often more condensed than Mark's but have a great deal of other material, much of it discourses. Of this material about 250 verses are common to Luke, and again the order is frequently (though by no means always) the same. In

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both instances the wording is often so similar throughout such lengthy passages that it is impossible to see oral fixation of the tradition as an adequate explanation. Some literary dependence is self-evident. It seems easiest to support the view that Matthew and Luke both depend on Mark rather than vice versa, largely because Matthew and Mark frequently agree against Luke, and Mark and Luke frequently agree against Matthew, but Matthew and Luke seldom agree against Mark. It is not the argument from order itself that is convincing, for all that proves is that Mark stands in the middle between the other two. What is more impressive is that close study finds it easier to explain changes from Mark to Matthew and Luke than the other way around. [28] The two-source hypothesis, despite its weaknesses--what, for instance, is the best explanation for the so-called minor agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark if both Matthew and Luke depend on Mark?--is still more defensible than any of its competitors. [29] Before pointing out a few of the historical and interpretive implications of this view, notice must be taken of the main alternatives. 1. By far the most common alternative is some form of the Griesbach hypothesis. [30] This argues for Matthean priority, dependence of Luke on Matthew (according to some), and Mark as an abbreviation of Matthew and Luke. Despite increasingly sophisticated defenses of this position, it remains implausible. It appears highly unlikely that any writer, let alone a first-century writer like Mark, would take two documents (in this case Matthew and Luke) and analyze them so carefully as to write a condensation virtually every word of which is in the sources--a condensation that is graphic, forceful, and not artificial (so Hill, *Matthew*, p. 28, citing E.A. Abbott's work in EBr 1879). The impressive list of literary analogies compiled by Frye, [31] who argues that Mark must be secondary because it is much shorter than Matthew and Luke and that literary parallels confirm that writers deeply dependent on written sources condense their sources, actually confounds his conclusion; for where he follows Mark, Matthew's account is almost always shorter. His greater total length--and even the occasional longer Matthean pericope--always comes from new material added to that from the Markan

source. Frye therefore inadvertently supports the two-source hypothesis. Moreover the Griesbach hypothesis flies in the face of other evidence from Papias, who insists that Mark wrote his Gospel on the basis of material from Peter, not by condensing Matthew and Luke (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15). 2. Gaboury and Leon-Dufour [32] argue that the pericopes preserving the same order in the triple tradition (i.e., in Matthew, Mark, and Luke) constitute a primary source on which all three synoptic Gospels have been built. But it is demonstrable that sometimes the evangelists chose topical arrangements quite different from their parallels (e.g., see at chs. 8-9); so why should it be assumed that all three synoptists conveniently chose to take over this alleged source without any change in topical

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arrangements?

3. Several British scholars adopt Markan priority but deny the existence of Q. [33] Parallels between Matthew and Luke are explained by saying that Luke read Matthew before composing his own Gospel. That is possible; but if so, he has hidden the fact extraordinarily well. Compare, for instance, Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2. Gundry

(*Matthew*) holds to the existence of a somewhat expanded Q but argues as well that Luke used Matthew--and this explains the "minor agreements" between Matthew and Luke. But this view, though possible, is linked in Gundry's mind with his theory that sources shared by Matthew and Luke include even such matters as the Nativity story; and that is very doubtful. [34] 4. Rist [35] rejects both the two-source hypothesis and the Griesbach hypothesis and argues for the independence of Matthew and Mark. As many others have done, Rist focuses attention on 4:12-13:58, where there are numerous divergences in order between Matthew and Mark. He examines a short list of passages in the triple tradition where there is not only close verbal similarity but identical order and argues that in each case the order either logical or the result of memory, not literary dependence. But Rist does not adequately weigh the impressive list of instances where Matthew agrees with Mark's order without close verbal similarity. Such order argues strongly for some kind of literary dependence, however the verbal dissimilarities be explained. 5. Others, in the hope of keeping Matthean priority alive, argue that his Gospel was first written in Aramaic; and this became a source for Mark, which in turn influenced the Greek rendering of Matthew. [36] This is possible, but we have already seen that Papias's testimony may not support a Semitic Matthew at all. And it remains linguistically improbable that the whole of Matthew was originally in Aramaic. There are other proposed solutions to the synoptic problem, generally of much greater complexity. [37] But not only do they suffer from the improbability of some of their details, the theories as a whole are so complex as to be unprovable. The two-source hypothesis remains the most

attractive general solution. This does not mean that it can be proved with mathematical certainty or that all arguments advanced in its favor are convincing. [38] But some small details are very weighty. Gundry (*Use of OT*) has shown that the OT quotations and allusions Matthew and Mark have in common are consistently from the LXX, whereas those found in Matthew alone are drawn from a variety of versions and textual traditions. It is singularly unlikely that Mark was condensing Matthew, for so consistent a collection of Matthew's OT quotations--only those from the LXX--seems too coincidental to be believed. The pattern is easy enough to understand if Matthew depended on Mark. [

39]

Yet in itself the two-source hypothesis is almost certainly too simple. Source-critical

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questions are enormously complex; [40] many facets of the question demand tighter controls. [41] Moreover close study has convinced some careful scholars that the evidence does not warrant the degree of certainty with which many hold the two-source hypothesis. [42] Such uncertainty is unpopular; but it is scarcely more scientific to go beyond the evidence than to admit uncertainty where the evidence does not provide an adequate basis for anything more. Such hesitations are especially anathema to radical redaction critics, for every major redaction-critical study of Matthew rests on the two- source hypothesis. Their aim is to find out how Matthew changed Mark. In view of the weaknesses inherent in a radical use of redaction criticism and the uncertainties surrounding the two-source hypothesis, this commentary adopts a cautious stance. The two-source hypothesis is sufficiently credible that we do not hesitate to speak of Matthew's changes of, additions to, and omissions from Mark. But such statements say little about historicity or about the relative antiquity of competing traditions (cf. B.F. Meyer, pp. 71-72). In some instances it is apparent that Matthew used not only Mark but Q (however Q is conceived), probably other sources, and perhaps his own memory as well. In some instances an excellent case can be made for Matthew's use of a source earlier than Mark. Any theory of literary dependence must also face subsidiary problems, such as the perplexing features of Luke's "central section" (see comments at Matt 19:1-2). Changes Matthew has introduced may sometimes be motivated by other than theological concerns; but in any case the total content of any pericope in Matthew's Gospel as a whole is a more reliable guide to determine distinct theological bent than the isolated change. As for dramatic diversity (see comments at 16:13-20; 19:16-30), the detailed differences must be treated and plausible reasons for the changes suggested. Rarely, however, are the solutions offered so dependent on the two-source hypothesis that a shift in scholarly opinion on the synoptic problem would irreparably damage them. The aim throughout has been to let Matthew speak as a theologian and historian independent of Mark, even if Mark has been one of his most important sources.

4. Unity

The question of the unity of Matthew's Gospel has little to do with source-critical questions. Instead it deals with how well the evangelist has integrated his material to form cohesive pericopes and a coherent whole. In sections very difficult to interpret (e.g., Matt 24), it is sometimes argued that the evangelist has sewn together diverse traditions that by nature are incapable of genuine coherence. Failing to understand the material, he simply passed it on without recognizing that some of his sources were mutually incompatible. There are so many signs of high literary craftsmanship in this Gospel that such

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skepticism is unjustified. It is more likely, not to say more humble, to suppose that in some instances we may not understand enough of the first-century setting to be able to grasp exactly what the text says.

5. Authorship

Nowhere does the first Gospel name its author. The universal testimony of the early church is that the apostle Matthew wrote it, and our earliest textual witnesses attribute it to him (*KATA MATTHAION*). How much of that testimony depends on Papias is uncertain. We have already noted that many today think Papias is referring to some source of canonical Matthew rather than to the finished work or, alternatively, that Papias was wrong (cf. section 3). If Papias is right, the theory of Matthew's authorship may receive gentle support from passages like 10:3, where on this theory the apostle refers to himself in a self-deprecating way not found in Mark or Luke. Modern literary criticism offers many reasons for rejecting Matthew's authorship. If the two-source hypothesis is correct, then (it is argued) it is unlikely that the eyewitness and apostle Matthew would depend so heavily on a document written by Mark, who was neither an apostle nor (for most events) an eyewitness. Moreover the reconstructions of canonical Matthew's life-setting, fostered by redaction criticism, converge on A.D. 80-100 in some kind of savage Jewish-Christian conflict. This is probably a trifle late to assume Matthew's authorship (though cf. traditions that say the apostle John composed his Gospel c. A.D. 90); and the details of the reconstructed settings discourage the notion. Kummel (*Introduction* , p. 121) argues further than "the systematic and therefore nonbiographical form of the structure of Mt, the late- apostolic theological position and the Greek language of Mt make this proposal completely impossible." He concludes that the identity of the first evangelist is unknown to us but that he must have been a Greek-speaking Jewish Christian with some rabbinic knowledge, who depended on

"a form of the Jesus tradition which potently accommodated the sayings of Jesus to Jewish viewpoints" (ibid.). These reasons for rejecting Matthew's authorship are widely accepted today. So alternate proposals have sprung up. Kilpatrick (pp. 138-39) suggests that the early patristic tradition connecting the first Gospel with Matthew arose as a conscious community pseudonym by the church that wrote the Gospel, in order to gain acceptance and authority for it. Abel [43] argues that Matthew's extra material is so confused and contradictory that we must assume it represents the efforts of two separate individuals working independently of each other. Several redaction-critical studies have denied that the author was a Jew, feeling that the antipathy exhibited toward Jesus in this Gospel and the ignorance of Jewish life are so deep that the writer must have been a Gentile Christian. [44] Those who think Papias was referring to Q or to some other

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source used by Matthew are often prepared to say that the apostle composed the source if not the Gospel (e.g., Hill, *Matthew*). There are several other theories. The objections are not so weighty as they at first seem. If what the modern world calls "plagiarism" (the wholesale takeover, without acknowledgment, of another document) was an acceptable literary practice in the ancient world, it is difficult to see why an apostle might not find it congenial. If Matthew thought Mark's account reliable and generally suited to his purposes (and he may also have known that Peter stood behind it), there can be no objection to the view that an apostle depended on a nonapostolic document. Kummel's rejection of Matthew's authorship (*Introduction* , p.

121) on the grounds that this Gospel is "systematic and therefore nonbiographical" is a non sequitur because (1) a topically ordered account can yield biographical facts as easily as a strictly chronological account, [45] and (2) Kummel wrongly supposes that apostolicity is for some reason incapable of choosing anything other than a chronological form. The alleged lateness of the theological position may be disputed at every point (see section 6 and this commentary). Those who argue that the author could not have been a Jew, let alone an apostle, allege serious ignorance of Jewish life, including inability to distinguish between the doctrines of the Pharisees and the Sadducees (16:12) or, worse, thinking that the Sadducees were still an active force after A.D. 70 (22:23). But the second of these two passages has synoptic parallels (Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27; here Matthew has interpreted Mark's verb as a historical present); and neither Matthean passage denies that there are differences separating Pharisees and Sadducees--differences Matthew elsewhere highlights (22:23-33)--but merely insists that on some things the Pharisees and Sadducees could cooperate. This is scarcely surprising: after all, both groups sat in the same Sanhedrin. Politics and theology make strange bedfellows (see section 11.f). Other "glaring errors" (so Meier, *Vision* , pp. 17-23) prove equally ephemeral (e.g., Matthew's use of Zech 9:9; see comments at 21:4-5). Also Kilpatrick's suggestion of a conscious community pseudonym cannot offer any parallel. The charge that

the Greek of the first Gospel is too good to have come from a Galilean Jew overlooks the trilingual character of Galilee, the possibility that Matthew greatly improved his Greek as the church reached out to more and more Greek speakers (both Jews and Gentiles), and the discussion of Gundry (*Use of OT* pp. 178-

85), who argues that Matthew's training and vocation as a tax gatherer (9:9-13; 10:3) would have uniquely equipped him not only with the languages of Galilee but with an orderly mind and the habit of jotting down notes, which may have played a large part in the transmission of the apostolic gospel tradition. Moule [46] wonders whether 13:52, which many take as an oblique self-reference by the evangelist, hides a use of *grammateus* that does not mean "teacher of the law" (NIV) but "clerk, secular scribe." "Is it not conceivable that the Lord really did say to that tax-collector

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Matthew: `You have been a "writer" ... ; you have had plenty to do with the commercial side of just the topics alluded to in the parables--farmer's stock, fields, treasure-trove, fishing revenues; now that you have become a disciple, you can bring all this out again--but with a difference.'" [47] Moule proposes an apostle who was a secular scribe and note-taker and who wrote primarily in a Semitic language, leaving behind material that was arranged by an other scribe, a Greek writer unknown to us. One may wonder if *grammateus* , used so often in the Jewish sense of "teacher of the law," can so easily be assigned a secular sense. But whatever its other merits or demerits, Moule's argument suggests that the link between this first Gospel and the apostle Matthew cannot be dismissed as easily as some have thought. None of the arguments for Matthew's authorship is conclusive. Thus we cannot be entirely certain who the author of the first Gospel is. But there are solid reasons in support of the early church's unanimous ascription of this book to the apostle Matthew, and on close inspection the objections do not appear substantial. Though Matthew's authorship remains the most defensible position, [48] very little in this commentary depends on it. Where it may have a bearing on the discussion, a cautionary notice is inserted.

6. Date

During the first three centuries of the church, Matthew was the most highly revered and frequently quoted canonical Gospel. [49] The earliest extant documents referring to Matthew are the epistles of Ignatius (esp. To the Smyrneans 1.1 [cf. Matt 3:15], c.

A.D. 110-15). So the end of the first century or thereabouts is the latest date for the Gospel of Matthew to have been written. The earliest possible date is much more difficult to nail down because it depends on so many other disputed points. If Luke depends on Matthew (which seems unlikely), then

the date of Luke would establish a new *terminus ad quem* for Matthew; and the date of Luke is bound up with the date of Acts. [50] If the Griesbach hypothesis (cf. sections 1 and 3) is correct, then Matthew would have to be earlier than Mark. Conversely, if the two-source hypothesis is adopted, Matthew is later than Mark; and a *terminus a quo* is theoretically established. Even so there are two difficulties. First, we do not know when Mark was written, but most estimates fall between A.D. 50 and 65. Second, on this basis most critics think Matthew could not have been written till 75 or 80. But even if Mark is as late as 65, there is no reason based on literary dependence why Matthew could not be dated A.D. 66. As soon as a written source is circulated, it is available for copying. Two other arguments are commonly advanced to support the view now in the

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ascendancy that Matthew was written between 80 and 100 (between which dates there is great diversity of opinion). First, many scholars detect numerous anachronistic details. Though many of these are discussed in the commentary, one frequently cited instance will serve as an example. It is often argued that Matthew transforms the parable of the great banquet (Luke 14:15-24) into the parable of the wedding banquet (Matt 22:1-14); and the process of transformation includes an explicit reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 (22:7). Therefore this Gospel must have been written after that. But the conclusion is much too hasty. Those who deny that Jesus could foretell the future concede that Mark predicts the Fall of Jerusalem (Mark 13: 14; Matt 24:15), arguing that if Mark wrote about A.D. 65, he was so close to the events that he could see how political circumstances were shaping up. But on this reasoning Matthew could have done the same thing in 66. More fundamentally it is at least doubtful that Matthew's parable (22:1-10) is a mere rewriting of Luke 14:15-24; more likely they are separate parables (cf. Stone house, *Origins* , pp. 35-42). And on what ground must we insist that Jesus could not foretell the future? That conclusion derives, not from the evidence, but from an antisupernatural presuppositionalism. Moreover the language of 22:7 derives from OT categories of judgment (cf. Reicke, "Synoptic Prophecies," p. 123), not from the description of an observer. One could almost say that the lack of more detailed description of the events of A.D. 70 argues for an earlier date. In any event, if it is legitimate to deduce from 22:7 a post-70 date, it must surely be no less legitimate to deduce from 5:23-24, 12:5-7; 23:16-22; and 26:60-61 a pre-70 date, when the temple was still standing. The absurdity of this contradictory conclusion must warn us against the dangers of basing the date of composition on passages that permit other interpretations. Second, recent studies have tended to argue that the life-setting presupposed by the theological stance of the Gospel best fits the conditions of A.D. 80-100. It is more difficult to reconstruct a life-setting than is commonly recognized (cf. section 2). Many of the criteria for doing so are doubtful. Explicit references to "church" (16:18; 18:17-

18) are taken to reflect an interest in later church order. But the authenticity of 16:18 has been ably defended by B.F. Meyer (see comments at 16:17-20). Moreover 18:17- 18 says nothing about the details of order (e.g., elders or deacons are not mentioned) but only of broad principles appropriate to the earliest stages of Christianity. Persecution (24:9) and false prophets (24:11) are often taken to reflect circumstances of 80-100. Yet these circumstances appear as prophecies in Matthew and did not need to wait for 80, as Acts and the early Pauline Epistles make clear. Though Matthew's Gospel seems to presuppose uneasy relations between church and synagogue, the Gospel is less anti-Jewish than anti-Jewish leaders and their position on Jesus (see section 11.f); and such a stance stretches all the way back to the

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days of Jesus' ministry. Significantly Matthew records more warnings against the Sadducees than all other NT writers combined; and after A.D. 70 the Sadducees no longer existed as a center of authority. Other small touches seem to show a definite break with Judaism had not yet occurred; [51] and these agree with Reicke ("Synoptic Prophecies," p. 133), who says, "The situation presupposed by Matthew corresponds to what is known about Christianity in Palestine between A.D. 50 and ca. 64." We must face the awkward fact that criteria such as Matthew's christology are not very reliable indices of Matthew's date (cf. section 11.a). They might easily allow a range from 40-100. Gundry (*Matthew* , pp. 599ff.) has an excellent discussion; because he believes Luke depends on Matthew and Luke-Acts was completed not later than 63, he argues that Matthew must be still earlier. Clearly this conclusion is only as valid as the hypothesis of Luke's dependence on Matthew, a hypothesis that does not seem well grounded. While surprisingly little in the Gospel conclusively points to a firm date, perhaps the sixties are the most likely decade for its composition.

7. Place of Composition and Destination

Most scholars take Antioch as the place of composition. Antioch was a Greek-speaking city with a substantial Jewish population; and the first clear evidence of anyone using the Gospel of Matthew comes from Ignatius, bishop of Antioch at the beginning of the second century. This is as good a guess as any. Yet we must remember that Ignatius depends more on John's Gospel and the Pauline Epistles than on Matthew. But this does not mean they were all written in Antioch. Other centers proposed in recent years include Alexandria (van Tilborg, p. 172), Edessa, [52] the province of Syria, [53] and perhaps Tyre (Kilpatrick, pp. 130ff.) or Caesarea Maratima. [54] In each instance the grounds are inadequate (Stanton, "Origin and Purpose," ch. 5;

Hill, *Matthew*). More plausible is Slingerland's proposal that Matthew 4:15; 19:1 show that the Gospel was written somewhere east of the Jordan (he specifies Pella, but this is an unnecessary and unprovable refinement); see commentary in loc. If he is right, then Antioch is ruled out. Actually we cannot be sure of the first Gospel's place of composition. Still more uncertain is its destination. The usual assumption is that the evangelist wrote it to meet the needs of his own center--a not implausible view. But the evangelist may have been more itinerant than usually assumed; and out of such a ministry he may have written his Gospel to strengthen and inform a large number of followers and given them an evangelistic and apologetic tool. We do not know. The only reasonably certain conclusion is that the Gospel was written somewhere in the Roman province of Syria (so Bonnard, Filson, Hill, Kummel [*Introduction* , pp. 119-20], and many others; for the area covered by the designation "Syria," see comment at 4:25).

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8. Occasion and Purpose

Unlike many of Paul's epistles or even John's Gospel (20:30-31), Matthew tells his readers nothing about his purpose in writing or its occasion. To some extent the Gospel shows Matthew's purpose in the way it presents certain information about Jesus. But to go much beyond this and specify the kind of group(s) Matthew was addressing, the kind of problems they faced, and his own deep psychological and theological motivations, may verge on speculation. Three restraints are necessary. 1. It is unwise to specify too precise an occasion and purpose, because the possibility of error and distortion increases as one leaves hard evidence behind for supposition. 2. It is unwise to specify only one purpose; reductionism cannot do justice to the diversity of Matthew's themes. 3. Great caution is needed in reconstructing the situation in the church of Matthew's time from material that speaks of the historical Jesus (see sections 1-3). In one sense this may be legitimate, for in all probability Matthew did not compose his Gospel simply out of a dispassionate curiosity about history. He intended to address his contemporaries. But it does not necessarily follow that what he alleges occurred in Jesus' day is immediately transferable to his own day. Nowhere are these restraints more important than in weighing recent discussion about the diverse emphases on evangelism in this Gospel. On the one hand, the disciples are forbidden to preach to others than Jews (10:54); on the other, they are commanded to preach to all nations (28:18-20). Because of this bifurcation, some scholars have suggested that Matthew is preserving the traditions of two distinct communities--one that remained narrowly Jewish and the other that was more outward looking. Others think Matthew had to walk a tightrope between conflicting perspectives within his own community and therefore preserves both viewpoints--a sort of committee report that satisfied neither side. Still others erect a more specific "occasion" for this tension, a conflict between the church and the synagogue over the place of Gentile mission, Matthew taking a mediating (not to say compromised)

**position whose aim was to avoid cleavage between the two groups. [55]
Though such reconstructions cannot be ruled out, they suffer from a serious
flaw. They fail to recognize that Matthew himself makes distinctions between
what Jesus expects and demands during his earthly ministry and what he
expects and demands after his resurrection.**

**Matthew 10:5-6 tells us what Jesus required of his disciples in their first-
recorded major assignment; it does not necessarily tell us anything about
what was going on in Matthew's day. The reason Matthew includes 10:6 as
well as 28:18-20, and all the texts akin to one passage or the other, may be to
explain how Jesus began with his own**

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people and moved outward from there. One might argue that Jesus' own example is the foundation of Paul's "first for the Jew, then for the Gentile" (Rom 1:14-17). This change develops not merely on pragmatic grounds but as the outworking of a particular understanding of the OT (see comments at 1:1; 4:12-17; 8:5-13; 12:21; 13:11-17) and of the distinctive role of Jesus the Messiah in salvation history (see comments at 2:1-12; 3:2; 4:12-17; 5:17-20; 8:16-17; 10:16-20; 11:7-15, 20-24, 12:41-42; 13:36-43; 15:21-39; 21:1-11, 42-44; 24:14; 26:26-29, 64; 28:18-20). Matthew thus shows how from the nascent community during Jesus' ministry the present commission of the church developed. If this is a responsible approach to the evidence, then we are not justified in postulating conflicting strands of tradition within the Matthean community. It may be that by this retelling of the changed perspective effected by Jesus' resurrection Matthew is encouraging Jewish Christians to evangelize beyond their own race. Or it may be that he is justifying before non-Christian Jews what he and his fellow Christian Jews are doing. Or it may be that he is explaining the origins of Christian mission to zealous Jewish-Christian personal evangelists who after the warmth of their initial experience want to learn about the historical developments and teaching of Jesus that made the Jewish remnant of his day the church of their own day. Or it may be that, though such questions have not yet arisen, Matthew foresees that they cannot be long delayed and, like a good pastor, decides to forestall the problem by clear teaching. Or it may be that Matthew has Gentile readers in mind. Or it may be that all these factors were at work because Matthew envisages an extensive and varied readership. Several other possibilities come to mind. But such precise reconstructions outstrip the evidence, fail to consider what other purposes Matthew may have had in mind, and frequently ignore the fact that he purports to talk about Jesus, not a Christian community in the sixth, eighth, or tenth decade of the first century. Particularly unfortunate are several recent works that define the purpose of this Gospel in categories, both reductionistic and improbable. Walker argues that this Gospel does not reflect specific church problems but that it was written as a piece of theological combat, designed to show that

Israel has been totally rejected in the history of salvation and had been displaced by the church so completely that the Great Commission must be understood as a command to evangelize Gentiles only (see discussion at 28:18-20). The Jewish leaders are nothing but representative figures, and the Gospel as a whole has no interest in and little accurate information about the historical Jesus. Only rarely is Walker exegetically convincing; nowhere does he adequately struggle with the fact that all the disciples and early converts are Jews. Frankemolle in his final chapter argues that Matthew's work is so different from Mark's--long discourses, careful structure, prologue, epilogue--that it is meaning less to say it is a "Gospel" in the same sense as Mark (see section 12). Instead, Matthew

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belongs to the literary *Gattung* (form or genre) to which Deuteronomy and Chronicles belong. Frankemolle (pp. 394ff.) cites several phrases (e.g., cf. Deut 31:1, 24; 32:44-45) used by Matthew to round off his own discourses; and from such evidence he concludes that Matthew's "Gospel" is in reality a "book of history," not of "salvation history" as normally understood, but of the community as it summarized its beliefs. Matthew, Frankemolle maintains, does not distinguish between the life and teaching of the historical Jesus and the present exalted Lord. In his "literary fiction" (p. 351), Matthew fuses the two. Thus Jesus becomes the idealized authority behind Matthew the theologian who here addresses his community. But Frankemolle overemphasizes formal differences between Mark and Matthew and neglects the substantial differences between Matthew and Deuteronomy or Chronicles. His investigation is far from even-handed. Frankemolle's insistence that Matthew is a unified book is surely right. Yet a book may be theologically unified by appealing to prophecy-fulfillment and other salvation-historical categories. Theological unity does not entail ignoring historical data. Moreover neither Walker nor Frankemolle adequately recognizes that for most of his Gospel Matthew depends heavily on Mark and Q (however Q he understood). Matthew was creative, but not so creative as Walker and Frankemolle think. Goulder offers a lectionary theory. Arguing somewhat along the lines of Carrington and Kilpatrick, [56] Goulder maintains that Matthew's purpose was to provide a liturgical book. He argues that the evangelist has taken the pattern of lections of the Jewish festal year as his base and developed a series of readings to be used in liturgical worship week by week. Mark, a lectionary book for a half-year cycle, has been expanded by Matthew (not the apostle) to a year-long lectionary; and Mark is Matthew's only source. Luke, dependent on Matthew, has also written a lectionary for a full year but has displaced the festal cycle followed by Matthew with the annual Sabbath cycle of readings. Q does not exist. Despite Goulder's immense erudition, there is little to commend his thesis. We know very little of the patterns of worship in first-

century Judaism. [57] At the end of the second century A.D., triennial cycles were used in some Jewish worship. But the annual cycles Goulder discerns behind Luke are almost certainly later than their triennial counterparts. As for Matthew, we have no evidence of a fixed "festal lectionary" in the first century; and even if it existed, it would have been connected with temple worship, with no evidence that it was ever connected with the synagogue worship Goulder's thesis requires (cf. Stanton, "Origin and Purpose," ch. 4). Not only is our knowledge of first-century *Jewish* liturgical custom very slender, our knowledge of *Christian* worship in the first century is even more slender. Thus we do not know whether Christian lectionary cycles--if they existed--developed out of Jewish lectionary cycles--if those cycles existed! Certainly by the time of Justin Martyr, the churches of which he had

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knowledge read the "memoirs of the apostles" (i.e., the Gospels) for "as long as time allowed" (*First Apology* 1.67), not according to some lectionary specification. Moreover, to make his pattern fit, Goulder must postulate lections in Matthew that vary enormously in length. [58] Goulder's thesis is unlikely to convince many. Numerous studies characterized by more sober judgment have recently contributed to our understanding of Matthew's purposes. Many of these are referred to in the commentary. At the broadest level we may say that Matthew's purpose is to demonstrate (1) that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of God, the Son of Man, Immanuel; (2) that many Jews, and especially the leaders, sinfully failed to perceive this during his ministry; (3) that the messianic kingdom has already dawned, inaugurated by the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus; (4) that this messianic reign, characterized by obedience to Jesus and consummated by his return, is the fulfillment of OT prophetic hopes, (5) that the church, the community of those, both Jew and Gentile, who bow unqualifiedly to Jesus' authority, constitutes the true locus of the people of God and the witness to the world of the "gospel of the kingdom"; (6) that throughout this age Jesus' true disciples must overcome temptation, endure persecution from a hostile world, witness to the truth of the gospel, and live in deeply rooted submission to Jesus' ethical demands, even as they enjoy the new covenant, which is simultaneously the fulfillment of old covenant anticipation and the experience of forgiveness bestowed by the Messiah who came to save his people from their sins and who came to give his life a ransom for many. Such a complex array of themes was doubtless designed to meet many needs: (1) to instruct and perhaps catechize (something facilitated by the careful arrangement of some topical sections; cf. Moule, *Birth* , p. 91); (2) to provide apologetic and evangelistic material, especially in winning Jews; (3) to encourage believers in their witness before a hostile world; and (4) to inspire deeper faith in Jesus the Messiah, along with a maturing understanding of his person, work, and unique place in the unfolding history of redemption.

9. Canonicity

As far as our sources go, the Gospel of Matthew was promptly and universally received as soon as it was published. It never suffered the debates that divided the Eastern church and the Western church over, for example, the Epistle to the Hebrews but was everywhere regarded as Scripture, at least from Ignatius (died 110) onward.

10. Text

Compared with that of Acts, the text of Matthew is fairly stable. Important variants

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do occur, however, and some of these are discussed. The most difficult textual questions in Matthew arise because it is a synoptic Gospel. This provides many opportunities for harmonization or disharmonization in the textual tradition (e.g., see comments at 12:47; 16:2-3; 18:10-11). Although harmonization is a secondary feature, this does not necessarily mean that every instance of possible harmonization must be understood as being secondary (e.g., see comments at 12:4, 47; 13:35). Certainly harmonization is more common in the sayings of Jesus than elsewhere. But much work remains to be done in this area, especially in examining the phenomenon of harmonization in conjunction with the synoptic problem (cf. section 3). [59]

11. Themes and Special Problems

We may consider Matthew's principal themes along with the special problems of this Gospel, because so many of Matthew's themes have turned into foci for strenuous debate. To avoid needless repetition, the following paragraphs do not so much summarize the nine themes selected as sketch in the debate and then provide references to the places in the commentary where these things are discussed.

a. Christology

Approaches to the distinctive elements of Matthew's christology usually run along one of three lines, and these are not mutually exclusive. The first compares Matthew with Mark to detect what differences lie between the two wherever they run parallel. Perhaps the first important study along these lines was an essay by Styler. [60] He argues that Matthew's christology is frequently more explicit than Mark's (he compares, for instance, the two accounts of the Triumphal Entry, 21:1-11). This is surely right, at least in

some instances. But it is much less certain that Matthew focuses more attention than Mark on ontology (see comments at 9:1-8; 19:16-17; cf. Hill, *Matthew* , pp. 64-66), at least in those pericopes treated by both evangelists. The second approach examines the christological titles used in Matthew's Gospel. These are rich and diverse. "Son of David" appears in the first verse, identifying Jesus as the promised Davidic Messiah; and then the title recurs, often on the lips of the needy and the ill, who anticipate relief from him who will bring in the Messianic Age (see comment at 9:27). Matthew uses *kyrios* (Lord) more often than Mark, and some have taken this to indicate anachronistic ascription of divinity to Jesus. But *kyrios* is a word with a broad semantic range. It often means no more than "sir" (e.g., 13:27). It seems fairer to say that Matthew frequently uses the word because it is vague. During Jesus' ministry before the Cross, it is very doubtful whether it was used as an

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unqualified confession of Deity. But because it is the most common LXX term for referring to God, the greater insight into Jesus' person and work afforded by the postresurrection perspective made the disciples see a deeper significance to their own use of *kyrios* than they could have intended at first. A somewhat similar but more complex ambiguity surrounds "Son of Man," which is discussed in the Excursus at 8:

20. Other titles receive comment where they are used by the evangelist.

The third approach to Matthew's christology is the examination of broad themes, either in exclusively Matthean material (e.g., Nolan's study on Matt 1-2, which focuses on a christology shaped by the Davidic covenant), or throughout the Gospel (e.g., various studies linking messiahship to the Suffering Servant motif). [61] Some reference is made to these throughout the commentary. Doubtless it is best for these christological titles and themes to emerge from an inductive study of the text, for narrower approaches often issue in substantial distortion. For example, though Kingsbury (*Matthew*) ably demonstrates how important "Son of God" is in Matthew (see comments at 2:15; 3:17; 4:3; 8:29; 16:16; 17:5; 26:63), his insistence that it is the christological category under which, for Matthew's community all the others are subsumed cannot be sustained. [62] Matthew offers his readers vignettes linked together in diverse ways; the resulting colorful mosaic is reduced to dull gray when we elevate one theme (a christological title or something else) to a preeminent place that suppresses others.

b. Prophecy and fulfillment

Untutored Christians are prone to think of prophecy and fulfillment as something not very different from straightforward propositional prediction and fulfillment. A close reading of the NT reveals that prophecy is more complex than that. The Epistle to the Hebrews, for instance, understands the

Levitical sacrificial system to be prophetic of Christ's sacrifice, Melchizedek to point to Jesus as High Priest, and so on. In Matthew we are told that Jesus' return from Egypt fulfills the OT text that refers to the Exodus (2:15); the weeping of the mothers of Bethlehem fulfills Jeremiah's reference to Rachel weeping for her children in Rama; the priests' purchase of a field for thirty pieces of silver fulfills Scriptures describing actions performed by Jeremiah and Zechariah (27:

9); and, in one remarkable instance, Jesus' move to Nazareth fulfills "what was said through the prophets" even though no specific text appears to be in mind (2:23). Add to this one other major peculiarity. A number (variously estimated between ten and fourteen) of Matthew's OT quotations are introduced by a fulfillment formula characterized by a passive form of *pleroo* ("to fulfill") and a text form rather more removed from the LXX than other OT quotations. These "formula quotations" are all asides of the evangelist, his own reflections (hence the widely used German word for

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them, *Reflexionszitate*). What explains these phenomena?

Such problems have been extensively studied with very little agreement. [63] When Matthew cites the OT, this commentary deals with many of these issues. In anticipation of these discussions, four observations may be helpful. 1. From very different perspectives, Gundry and Soares Prabhu argue that Matthew is responsible for the formula quotations (the difference between them is that Gundry thinks the evangelist was the apostle Matthew, Soares Prabhu does not). Wherever he follows Mark, Matthew uses the LXX; but he in no case clearly demonstrates a personal preference for the LXX by introducing closer assimilation. There is therefore no good a priori reason for denying that Matthew selected and sometimes translated the non-LXX formula quotations. Doubtless both Hebrew and Greek OT textual traditions were somewhat fluid during the first century (as the DSS attest); and so it is not always possible to tell where the evangelist is using a text form known in his day and where he is providing his own rendering. What does seem certain, however, is that there is no good reason to support the view that the fulfillment quotations arose from a Matthean "school" (Stendahl) or were taken over by the evangelist from a collection of testimonia (Strecker). 2. Though often affirmed, it does not seem very likely that the evangelists, Matthew included, invented their "history" in order to have stories corresponding to their favorite OT proof-texts. The question is most acute in Matthew 1-2 and 27:9 and is raised there. Several points, however, argue against a wholesale creation of traditions. The NT writers do not exploit much of the rich OT potential for messianic prediction. [64] The very difficulty of the links between story and OT text argues against the creation of the stories, because created stories would have eliminated the most embarrassing strains. The parallel of the DSS cannot be overlooked. Even when they treat the OT most tortuously, the Qumran covenanters do not invent "history" (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT* , pp. 193-204). 3. The ways the events surrounding Jesus are said to fulfill the OT varies enormously and cannot be reduced to a single label. Even the Jewish categories commonly

applied need certain qualification (on "Midrash," cf. section 12). Some of Matthew's fulfillment quotations are said to be examples of pesher exegesis (e.g., Stendahl, *School of Matthew* , p. 203; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis* , p. 143). Such rabbinical exegesis stresses revelation and authoritatively declares, "This event is the fulfillment of that prophecy" (e.g., Acts 2:16). But even here we must be careful. The clearest examples of pesher exegesis are found in 1QpHab. What is striking about its authoritative pronouncements is that the OT prophecy it refers to, Habakkuk, is interpreted exclusively in terms of the "fulfillments" it is related to, making its original context meaningless. [65] Even the most difficult passages in Matthew, such as 2:15, do not hint that the original OT meaning is void--in this case that the people of Israel

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were not called by God out of Egypt at the Exodus.

4. What must now be faced is a very difficult question: Even if Matthew does not deny the OT setting of the texts he insists are being fulfilled in Jesus, on what basis does he detect any relationship of prophecy to fulfillment? The verb *pleroo* ("to fulfill") is discussed in the commentary (see comments at 2:15 and esp. 5:17); but when it refers to fulfilling Scripture, it does not lose all teleological force except in rare and well-defined situations. But opinion varies as to exactly how these OT Scriptures point forward. Sometimes the OT passages cited are plainly or at least plausibly messianic. Often the relation between prophecy and fulfillment is typological: Jesus, it is understood, must in some ways recapitulate the experience of Israel or of David. Jesus must undergo wilderness testing and call out twelve sons of Israel as apostles. Even the kind of typology varies considerably. Yet the perception remains constant that the OT was preparing the way for Christ, anticipating him, pointing to him, leading up to him. When we ask how much of this forward-looking or "prophetic" aspect in what they wrote the OT writers themselves recognized, the answer must vary with the particular text. But tentative, nuanced judgments are possible even in the most difficult cases

(e.g., see comments at 1:23; 2:15, 17-18, 23; 4:15-16; 5:17; 8:16-17; 11:10-11; 12:18-21; 13:13-15; 21:4-5, 16, 42; 22:44; 26:31; 27:9). Care in such formulations will help us perceive the deep ties that bind together the Old and New Testaments.

c. Law

Few topics in the study of Matthew's Gospel are more difficult than his attitude to the law. The major studies are discussed elsewhere (cf. esp. Stanton, "Origin and Purpose," ch. 4.4, and this commentary, esp. at 5:17-

48); but we may summarize some aspects of the problem here. The difficulties stem from several factors. First, several passages can be understood as staunch defenses of the law (e.g., 5:18-19; 8:4; 19:17-18) and even of the authority of the Pharisees and teachers of the law in interpreting it (23:2-3). Jesus' disciples are expected to fast, give alms (6:2-4), and pay the temple tax (17:24-27). Second, some passages can be seen as a softening of Mark's dismissal of certain parts of the law. The addition of the "except" clause in 19:9 and the omission of Mark 7:19b ('In saying this, Jesus declared all foods `clean.' ") in Matthew's corresponding pericope (15:1-20) have convinced many that Matthew does not abrogate any OT command. Third, there are some passages where, formally at least, the letter of OT law is superseded (e.g., 5:33-37) or a revered OT institution appears to be depreciated and potentially superseded (e.g., 12:6). Fourth, there is one passage, 5:17-20, that is widely recognized to be programmatic of Matthew's view of the law. However, it embraces interpretive problems of extraordinary difficulty.

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In light of these things, various theories have been proposed. Bacon (*Studies in Matthew*), followed by Kilpatrick (pp. 107-9), argues that the Gospel of Matthew presents a "new law" that is to the church what the Torah is to Judaism. The five discourses of Matthew (cf. section 14) became the new Pentateuch. Today few follow this theory; its thematic and formal links are just too tenuous. Some suggest that this Gospel reflects a Matthean church that has not yet broken away from Judaism, while others argue that the church has just broken free and now finds it necessary to define itself over against Judaism (cf. expressions such as "their teachers of the law," "their synagogues," or "your synagogues," when addressing certain Jews [e.g., 7:29; 9:35; 23:34])

But such arguments are rather finespun. Does "their synagogue" imply a break with Judaism or distinctions within Judaism? The Qumran covenanters used the pronoun "their" of the Pharisees and mainline Judaism. Therefore could not Jesus himself have used such language to distinguish his position from that of his Jewish opponents without implying he was not a Jew? A liberal or high churchman in the Church of England may refer to their colleges, referring to Church of England training colleges reflecting evangelical tradition, without suggesting that any of the three principal groups does not belong to the Anglican communion. And if Jesus spoke in such terms and if Matthew reports this, then Matthew may also be consciously reflecting the circumstances of his own church. But if so, it still remains unclear whether his church (if it is in his mind at all) has actually broken free from Judaism (see further comments at 4:23; 7:29; 9:35; 10:17; 11:1; 12:9-10; 13:35 et al.). Another example (8:4) is commonly taken to mean that the writer believes Jesus upholds even the ceremonial details of OT law, and that this reflects a conservative view of the continuing validity of the law in Matthew's community. This interpretation, though hard to prove, is logically possible. Alternatively one might also argue that 8:4 reflects a pre-A.D. 70 community since after that offering temple sacrifices was impossible. Again, if Jesus said something like this, then Matthew's

including it may not have been because of his community's conservatism but because it shows how Jesus used even ceremonial law to point to himself (see comment at 8:4). It is very difficult to narrow down these various possibilities. Clearly they are also related to how one uses redaction criticism (cf. sections 1-3, 5, 7-8). Too frequently these methodological questions are not so much as raised, even when the most astounding conclusions are confidently put forward as established fact. Some argue that Matthew's church had so conservative a view of the OT law that the "evildoers" (lit., "workers of lawlessness") denounced in 7:23 are Pauline Christians (e.g., Bornkamm, *Tradition* , pp. 74-75). Quite apart from the authenticity of Jesus' saying and the danger of anachronism, this view misunderstands both Matthew and Paul. Matthew's attacks are primarily directed against Jewish leaders, especially the

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Pharisees, whose legal maneuvers blunt the power of the law and who fail to see the true direction in which the law pointed. They are, as the Qumran covenanters bitterly said, "expounders of smooth things" (CD 1:18). [66] As for Paul, doubtless many saw him as being antinomian. But he too spoke strongly about the kind of behavior necessary to enter the kingdom (Rom 8:14; 13:10; Gal 5:14). Yet if Matthew attacks Pharisees, does this mean the Pharisees of Jesus' day, of Matthew's day, or of both? The least we can say is that Matthew chose to write a Gospel, not a letter. Since he chose to write about Jesus as the Messiah, the presumption must be that he intended to say something about Jesus' life and relation ships. This leads us to ask whether some differences between Matthew and Paul are to be explained by the distinctive places in salvation history of their subject matter. Though he writes after Paul wrote Romans, Matthew writes about an earlier period. Undoubtedly he had certain readers and their needs in mind. Yet it is no help in understanding Matthew's treatment of the law to view the needs of his first readers from the viewpoint of his modern readers without first weighing the historical back ground of his book--viz., the life and teaching of Jesus. Jesus' teaching about the law, whether gathered from Matthew or from all four Gospels, is not easy to define precisely. Sigal ("Halakah") has recently set forth an iconoclastic theory. He argues that the Pharisees of Jesus' day are not to be linked with the rabbis of the Mishnah (see section 11.f) but were a group of extremists wiped out by the events of A.D. 70. These extremists were opposed both by Jesus and by other teachers who occupied roles similar to his own. After all, ordination was unknown in Jesus' day, so there was no distinction between Jesus and other teachers. Jesus was himself a "proto-rabbi"--Sigal's term for the group that gave rise to the ordained rabbis of the post-Jamnian period (A.D. 85 on). All Jesus' legal decisions, Sigal says, fall within the range of what other proto-rabbis might say. Sigal tests this theory in Matthew's reports of Jesus' handling of the Sabbath (12:1-14) and divorce (19:1-12). Sigal makes many telling points. His exegesis (cf. the fuller discussion in the commentary) of 5:17-20 and other test passages is not convincing, however, because he eliminates all

christological claims (e.g., 12:8) as the church's interpolations into the narrative. He nowhere discusses, on literary or historical grounds, the authenticity of Jesus' christological claims but writes them off merely by referring to similar dismissals by other scholars. Yet the issue is crucial: if Jesus offered judgments concerning the law by making claims, implicit or explicit, concerning his messiahship, the function of the law in Jesus' teaching will certainly be presented differently from the way it would be if Jesus saw himself as no more than a "proto-rabbi." The commentary deals at length with this question (see on 5:17-20; 8:1-4, 16-17; 11:2-13; 12:1-14; 21; 13:35, 52; 15:1-20; 17:5-8; 19:3-12; 22:34-40; 27:51). Doubtless we may link Matthew's treatment of the law with his handling of the OT

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(section 11.b). Matthew holds that Jesus taught that the law had a prophetic function pointing to himself. Its valid continuity lies in Jesus' own ministry, teaching, death, and resurrection. The unifying factor is Jesus himself, whose ministry and teaching stand with respect to the OT (including law) as fulfillment does to prophecy. To approach the problem of continuity and discontinuity--what remains unchanged from the Mosaic code--in any other terms is to import categories alien to Matthew's thought and his distinctive witness to Jesus (see esp. comments at 5:17-20; 11:7-15). Within this unifying framework, the problem passages mentioned at the beginning of this discussion can be most fairly explained; by it we may avoid the thesis that makes the double love commandment the sole hermeneutical key to Jesus' understanding of the OT (see comments at 22:34-40).

d. Church

The word *ekklesia* ("church") occurs twice in Matthew (16:18; 18:17). Partly because it appears in no other Gospel, the "ecclesiasticism" of Matthew has often been overstressed. [67] Certain things stand out. First, Matthew insists that Jesus predicted the continuation of his small group of disciples in a distinct community, a holy and messianic people, a "church" (see comment at 16:18). This motif rests on numerous passages, not just one or two texts of disputed authenticity. Second, Jesus insists that obeying the ethical demands of the kingdom, far from being optional to those who make up the church, must characterize their lives. Their allegiance proves false wherever they do not do what Jesus teaches (e.g., 7:21-23). Third, a certain discipline must be imposed on the community (see comments at 16:18-19; 18:15-18). But Matthew describes this discipline in principles rather than in details (there is no mention of deacons, elders, presbyteries, or the like), and therefore this discipline is not anachronistic provided we can accept the fact that Jesus foresaw the continuation of his community. This third theme is much

stronger in Matthew than in Mark or Luke. One might speculate on the pressures that prompted Matthew to include this material--apathy in the church, return to a kind of casuistical righteousness, infiltration by those not wholly committed to Jesus Messiah, the failure to discipline lax members. But this is speculation. The essential factor is that Matthew insists that the demand for a disciplined church goes back to Jesus himself.

e. Eschatology

Matthew consistently distinguishes among four time periods: (1) the period of revelation and history previous to Jesus; (2) the inauguration of something new in his

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coming and ministry; (3) the period beginning with his exaltation, from which point on all of God's sovereignty is mediated through him, and his followers proclaim the gospel of the kingdom to all nations; (4) the consummation and beyond. Many features of Matthew's eschatology are still being studied. The seven most important of these (the number may be eschatologically significant!) and the places where they are principally discussed in this commentary are (1) the meaning of peculiarly difficult verses (e.g., 10:23; 16:28); (2) the distinctive flavor of Matthew's dominant "kingdom of heaven" over against "kingdom of God" preferred by the rest of the NT writers (cf. comment at 3:2); (3) the extent to which the kingdom has already been inaugurated and the extent to which it is wholly future, awaiting the consummation (a recurring theme; cf. esp. ch. 13); (4) the bearing of the parables on eschatology (ch. 13, 25); (5) the relation between the kingdom and the church (an other recurring theme; cf. esp. 13:37-39); (6) the sense in which Jesus saw the kingdom as imminent (see comments at ch. 24); (7) the Olivet Discourse (chs. 24-25).

f. The Jewish leaders

Two areas need clarification for understanding Matthew's treatment of the Jewish leaders. The first is the identification of the "Pharisees" at the time of Jesus. We may distinguish four viewpoints, each represented by able Jewish scholars. 1. The traditional approach is well defended by Guttman, [68] who argues that the Pharisees were more effective leaders than the OT prophets. The prophets were uncompromising idealists; the Pharisees, whose views are largely reflected by their successors, the rabbis behind the Mishnah, were adaptable, adjusting the demands of Torah by a finely tuned exegetical procedure issuing in legal enactments designed to make life easier and clarify right conduct. 2. By contrast Neusner [69] insists that a chasm

yawns between the rabbinic views reflected in Mishnah and pre- A.D. 70 Pharisaism. The Pharisees shaped the life of pre-70 Judaism by extending the purity rituals of the temple to the daily experience of every Jew. 3. Rivkin [70] argues that the Pharisees--a post-Maccabean and theologically revolutionary group were men of considerable learning and persuasiveness. They developed the oral law, now largely codified in the Mishnah, and unwittingly departed radically from their OT roots. Rivkin denies that they had separatistic or ritualistic tendencies; their influence was broad and pervasive. 4. Sigal [71] argues for a complete disjunction between the Pharisees, whom he identifies as the *perushim* ("separatists"), and the rabbis behind Mishnah. In Jesus' day the rabbis were not officially ordained: ordination had not yet been invented. That is why Jesus himself is addressed as "rabbi" in the Gospels (e.g., 26:49; Mark 9:5; 10:

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51; 11:21; John 1:38, 49; 3:2). He belonged to a class of "proto-rabbis," the forerunners of the ordained rabbis of the Mishnaic period. His opponents, the Pharisees, were extremists who died out after A.D. 70 and left virtually no literary trace. The tentative assessment adopted in this commentary is that these competing interpretations of the evidence are largely right in what they affirm and wrong in what they deny. Sigal is almost certainly right in arguing that ordination was unknown in Jesus' day (cf. Westerholm, pp. 26-39), though there may have been informal procedures for recognizing a teacher of Scripture. There can be no simple equation of "Pharisee" and Mishnaic rabbi. But against Sigal, it is unlikely that the Pharisees were so separatistic that they did not embrace most if not all "proto rabbis." The Gospels refer to every other major religious grouping--Sadducees, priests, scribes--and it is almost inconceivable that the evangelists should say almost nothing about the "proto- rabbis," the dominant group after A.D. 70, and vent so much criticism on a group (the Pharisees) so insignificant in Jesus' day that they disappeared from view after A.D. 70. The fairly rapid disappearance of the Sadducees after A.D. 70 is no parallel because much of their life and influence depended on the temple destroyed by the Romans; and in any case the evangelists do give us some description of their theological position. As for Jesus, he cannot be reduced to a "proto-rabbi," training his followers to repeat his legal decisions. His messianic claims cannot so easily be dismissed. To onlookers he appeared as a prophet (21:11, 46) [72] Guttman (n. 68) is right in saying that the Pharisees adapted the laws to the times and were effective leaders. The problem is that their minute regulations made ritual distinctions too difficult and morality too easy. The radical holiness demanded by the OT prophets became domesticated, preparing the way for Jesus' preaching that demanded a righteousness greater than that of the Pharisees (5:20). Though Neusner (n. 69) correctly detects the Pharisees' concern with ceremonial purity (cf. 15:1-12), his skepticism concerning the fixity of many oral traditions and the possibility of knowing more about the Pharisees is unwarranted. The evidence from Josephus cannot be so easily dismissed as Neusner would have us think. Even

allowing for Josephus's own bias toward the Pharisees, his evidence so consistently demonstrates their wide influence in the nation, not to say their centrality during the Jewish War, that it is very difficult to think of them as a minor separatistic group (Sigal) or as exclusively concerned with ritual purity. The Mishnah (c. A.D. 200) cannot be read back into A.D. 30 as if Judaism had not faced the growth of Christianity and the shattering destruction of temple and cultus. Nevertheless it preserves more traditional material than is sometimes thought. One suspects that the Pharisees of Jesus' day include the proto-rabbis, ideological for bears of the Mishnaic Tannaim (lit., "repeaters," i.e., the "rabbis" from roughly A.D. 70 to 200). In this view they included men every bit as learned and creative as the second-

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century rabbis. But they also included many lesser men, morally and intellectually, who were largely purged by the twin effects of the growth of Christianity and the devastation of A.D. 70. These events called forth a "counterreformation," whose legacy is Mishnah. Rivkin (n. 70) is undoubtedly right in seeing the Pharisees as learned scholars whose meticulous application and development of OT law massively influenced Judaism though his identification of Pharisees with scribes and his handling of the development of oral law are simplistic. We hold that the Pharisees were a nonpriestly group of uncertain origin, generally learned, committed to the oral law, and concerned with developing Halakah (rules of conduct based on deductions from the law). Most teachers of the law were Pharisees; and the Sanhedrin included men from their number as well (see comment at 21:23), though the leadership of the Sanhedrin belonged to the priestly Sadducees. The second area needing clarification is the way Matthew refers to Jewish leaders. It is universally agreed that Matthew is quite strongly anti-Pharisaic. Recently however, more and more scholars have argued that Matthew's picture of the Pharisees reflects the rabbis of the period A.D. 80-100, not the situation around A.D. 30. His grasp of the other Jewish parties, which largely fell away after A.D. 70, is shallow and sometimes wrong. Gaston thinks the depth of Matthew's ignorance, especially of the Sadducees, is "astonishing." [73] The question is complex. [74] Certain observations, however, will qualify the charge of Matthew's ignorance. 1. If Matthew's sole target had been the rabbis of A.D. 80-100, designated "Pharisees," it is astonishing that they are virtually unmentioned during the Passion Week and the passion narrative when feeling against Jesus reached its height. What we discover is that the chief opponents are priests, elders, members of the Sanhedrin, which is just what we would expect in the vicinity of Jerusalem before A.D. 70. This demonstrates that Matthew is not entirely ignorant of historical distinctions regarding Jewish leaders; it calls in question the thesis that his opponents are exclusively Pharisees and urges caution in making similar judgments. 2. Matthew mentions the Sadducees more often than all the other evangelists combined. If Matthew was so

ignorant of them, and if they were irrelevant to his alleged circumstances in A.D. 80-100, why did he multiply references to them? 3. Matthew demonstrates that he was aware of some of the Sadducees' doctrinal distinctives (see comment at 22:23-33). This should make us very cautious in evaluating the most difficult point--viz., that in five places Matthew uses the phrase "Pharisees and Sadducees" in a way that links them closely (3:7; 16:1, 6, 11, 11-12). This linking is peculiar to Matthew. The known antipathy between the two groups was sufficiently robust that many modern commentators have concluded this Gospel was written late enough and by someone far enough removed from the setting of A.D. 30

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for this incongruity to slip into the text. But in addition to Matthew's historical awareness, two complementary explanations largely remove the difficulty. First, the linking of Pharisees and Sadducees under one article in Matthew 3:7 may reflect, not their theological agreement, but their common mission. Just as the Sanhedrin raised questions about Jesus' authority, it is intrinsically likely they sent delegates to sound out John the Baptist. The Sanhedrin included both Pharisees and Sadducees (Acts 23:6); and their mutual distrust makes it likely that the delegation was made up of representatives from both parties. The fourth Gospel suggests this. The "Jews of Jerusalem" (who else but the Sanhedrin?) sent "priests and Levites" (John 1:19)--certainly Sadducees--to ask John who he was; but Pharisees were also sent (John 1:24). Matthew's language may therefore preserve accurate historical reminiscence. Something similar may be presupposed in 16:1. We must always remember that though the Pharisees and Sadducees could fight each other fiercely on certain issues, their political circumstances required that they work together at many levels. Second, though the linking of the Pharisees and Sadducees in the remaining references (16:6, 11-12) appears to make their teaching common, the context demands restraint. In certain circumstances, a Baptist may warn against the "teaching of the Presbyterians and Anglicans," not because he is unaware of fundamental differences between them (or even among them!), but because he wishes to set their pedobaptism against his own views. Quite clearly in 16:5-12 Jesus cannot be denouncing everything the Pharisees and Sadducees teach, for some of what they teach he holds in common with them. The particular point of teaching in this context is their attitude toward Jesus and their desire to domesticate revelation and authenticate it--an attitude so blind it cannot recognize true revelation when it appears (see comment at 16:1-4). It is against this "yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees" that Jesus warns his disciples; in his view both parties were guilty of the same error. 4. Categories for the Jewish leaders overlap in the Gospels, Matthew included. As far as we know, the Sanhedrin, for instance, was made up of Sadducees, Pharisees, and elders. The Sadducees were mostly priests. The elders were

mostly lay nobility and probably primarily Pharisees. Thus "Pharisees" in the Sanhedrin were "laymen" in the sense that they were not priests; but many of them were scribes ("teachers of the law") and thus different from the elders. When 21:23 speaks of the chief priests and elders of the people coming to Jesus, it is probably referring to members of the Sanhedrin described in terms of their clerical status rather than their theological position. The ambiguities are considerable, but we must avoid indefensible disjunctions. 5. Our own ignorance of who the Pharisees were and of the distinctive beliefs of the Sadducees (we know them almost entirely through the writings of their opponents--" almost" because some scholars think that Sirach, for instance, is a proto-Sadducean

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document) should make us hesitate before ascribing "astonishing" ignorance to the evangelist. The astonishing ignorance may be our own. One suspects that in some instances Matthew's treatment of Jewish leaders is being pressed into a mold to suit a date of A.D. 80-100. The truth is that our knowledge of both Judaism and Christianity during that period has formidable gaps. Though Matthew may have been written then-- though in my view this is unlikely--his treatment of Jewish leaders cannot be used to defend the late date view. But is Matthew's polemic so harsh that he must be considered anti-Semitic (cf. the commentary at 23:1-36; 26:57-59)? The judgment of Legasse is sound. [75] Matthew's sternest denunciations are not racially motivated; they are prompted by the response of people to Jesus. These denunciations extend to professing believers whose lives betray the falseness of their profession (7:21-23; 22:11-14) as well as to Jews; the governing motives are concern for the perseverance of the Christian community and for the authoritative proclamation of the "gospel of the kingdom" to "all nations," Jew and Gentile alike (see comments at 28:18-20), to bring all to submission to Jesus Messiah.

g. Mission

It has long been recognized that the closing pericope (28:16-20) is fully intended to be the climax toward which the entire Gospel moves. By tying together some of Matthew's most dominant themes, these verses give them a new depth that reaches back and sheds light on the entire Gospel. For instance, the Great Commission is perceived to be the result of God's providential ordering of history (1:1-17) to bring to a fallen world a Messiah who would save his people from their sins (1:21); but the universal significance of Jesus' birth, hinted at in 1:1 and repeatedly raised in the flow of the narrative (e.g., see comments at 2:1-12; 4:14-16, 25; 8:5-13; 10:18-

13:36-52; 15: 21-28; 24:9, 14) is now confirmed by the concluding lines. We have already observed that the extent of the Great Commission has been limited by some--though on inadequate grounds--to Gentiles only (section 8, see comments at 28:18-20). Matthew does not trace the context of the people of God from a Jewish one to an exclusively Gentile one but from a Jewish context to a racially inclusive one. Unlike Luke (Luke 21:24) and Paul (Rom 11:25-27), Matthew raises no questions about Israel's future as a distinct people.

h. Miracles

The biblical writers do not see miracles as divine interventions in an ordered and closed universe. Rather, God as Lord of the universe and of history sustains every

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thing that takes place under his sovereignty. Sometimes, however, he does extraordinary things; and then we in the modern world call them "miracles." Biblical writers preferred terms like "sign," "wonder," or "power." Parallels between Jesus and Hellenistic miracle workers are not so close as some form critics have thought (cf. Albright and Mann, pp. cxxiv-cxxxi). On the other hand, the value of miracles as proof of Jesus' deity is not so conclusive as some conservative expositors have thought. Miracles in Matthew share certain characteristics with those in the other Synoptics, and these characteristics must be understood before Matthew's distinctives can be explored. Jesus' miracles are bound up with the inbreaking of the promised kingdom (8:16-17; 12:22-30; cf. Luke 11:14-23). They are part of his messianic work (4:23; 11: 4-6) and therefore the dual evidence of the dawning of the kingdom and of the status of Jesus the King Messiah. This does not mean that Jesus did miracles on demand as a kind of spectacular attestation (see comments at 12:38-42; cf. John 4:48). Faith and obedience are not guaranteed by great miracles, though faith and God's mighty power working through Jesus are linked in several ways. Lack of faith may be an impediment to this power (e.g., 17:19-20), not because God's power is curtailed, but because real trust in him submits to his powerful reign and expects mercies from him (e.g., 15:28; cf. Mark 9:24). "Nature miracles" (the stilling of the storm or the multiplication of loaves and fish) attest, not only the universal sweep of God's power, but may in some cases (calming the storm) provide the creation rebelling against God with a foretaste of restored order--an order to be climaxed by the consummation of the kingdom. In some cases (the multiplication of loaves and fish, the withered fig tree) miracles constitute a "prophetic symbolism" that promises unqualified fruition (the messianic banquets the certainty of judgment) at the End. Matthew's miracles are distinctive for the brevity with which they are reported. He condenses introductions and conclusions, omits secondary characters and the like (see comments at 8:14). Nevertheless it is too much to say, as Held does, "The miracles are not important for their own sakes, but by reason of the message they contain" (Bornkamm, *Tradition* , p. 210). This

might almost suggest that the tacticity of the miracles is of no consequence to Matthew provided their message is preserved. Matthew himself specifically disallows this (11:3-6). All the evangelists hold that miracles point beyond the mere factuality of wonderful events: in this Matthew is no different from the others. He simply shifts the balance of event and implication a little in order to stress the latter. The particular themes most flavored by Matthew in connection with Jesus' miracles are worked out in the commentary.

i. The disciples' understanding and faith

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Ever since the work of G. Barth (in Bornkamm et al., *Tradition* , pp. 105ff.), many scholars have held that whereas in Mark the disciples do not understand what Jesus says till he explains it to them in secret, Matthew attributes large and instant understanding to the disciples. Indeed, this is what sets them apart from the crowd: the disciples understand, the outsiders do not. Where the disciples falter and must improve is not in their understanding but in their faith. The thesis can be defended by a careful selection of the data, but it will not withstand close scrutiny. Apart from depending too much on the so-called messianic secret in Mark (see comments in this vol. at Mark 9:9), it does not adequately treat the disciples' request for private instruction (13:36), their failure to understand Jesus' teaching about his passion even after his explanations (e.g., 16:21-26; 17:23; 26:51-56), and the passages that deal with "stumbling" or "falling away." These are not peripheral matters; they are integral to what Jesus and Matthew say about discipleship. The thesis also errs, not only for the two reasons mentioned above, but also for a third. Adopting a doctrinaire form of redaction criticism, it so stresses what the relevant passages reveal about Matthew's church that it blunts their real thrust. In particular the failure of the disciples to understand the significance of Jesus' passion and resurrection predictions is largely a function of the disciples' unique place in salvation history. They were unprepared before the events to accept the notion of a crucified and resurrected Messiah; not a few of Jesus' christological claims are sufficiently vague (cf. Carson, "Christological Ambiguities") that their full import could be grasped by those with a traditional Jewish mind-set only after Calvary and the empty tomb. To this extent the disciples' experience of coming to deeper understanding and faith was unique because it was locked into a phase of salvation history rendered forever obsolete by the triumph of Jesus' resurrection. Matthew's readers, whether in the first century or today, may profit from studying the disciples' experience as he records it. But to try subjectively to imitate the disciples' coming to full faith and understanding following Jesus' resurrection is futile. Rather we should look back on this witness to the divine self-disclosure, observing God's wisdom and care as

through his Son he progressively revealed himself and his purposes to redeem a fallen and rebellious race. Feeding our faith and understanding on the combined testimony of the earliest witnesses who tell how they arrived by a unique historical sequence at their faith and understanding, we shall learn to focus our attention, not on the disciples, but on their Lord. This is not to say that the disciples have nothing to teach us about personal growth; rather, it is to insist that we shall basically misunderstand this Gospel if we do not see that it deals with a unique coming to faith and understanding. This topic is so important that the commentary refers to it

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repeatedly (cf. 13:10-13, 23, 36, 43, 51-52; 14:15-17; 15:15-16; 16:21-28; 17:13, 23; 20: 17-19, 22; 23:13-36; 24:1; 28:17). Elsewhere it has been comprehensively treated by Trotter.

12. Literary genre

The interpretation of any piece of literature is affected by an understanding of its genre. A sonnet, novel, parable, history, fable, free verse, or an aphorism must be read according to its literary form.

a. Gospel

What, then, is a Gospel? Many theories have been proposed and affinities discovered in other writings (e.g., apocalyptic literature, OT books, Graeco-Roman biographies, etc.). Recently Talbert [76] has argued that the Gospel belongs to the genre of Graeco-Roman biography. In a convincing rejoinder, Aune [77] has shown that Talbert has misunderstood not a few ancient sources and has arrived at his conclusions by adopting ambiguous categories that hide essential differences. Aune rightly insists that the Gospels belong in a class of their own. This does not mean that the Gospels have no relation to other genres. The truth is that "'new' genres were constantly emerging during the Graeco-Roman period, if by 'new' we mean a recombination of earlier forms and genres into novel configurations." [78] Thus our Gospels are made up of many pericopes, some belonging to recognized genres, others with close affinities to recognized genres. Each must be weighed, but the result is a flexible form that aims to give a selective account of Jesus, including his teaching and miracles and culminating in his death by crucifixion and his burial and resurrection. The selection includes certain key points in his career (his baptism, ministry, passion, and resurrection)

and aims at a credible account of these historical events. At the same time the material is organized so as to stress certain subjects and motifs. The writing is not dispassionate but confessional--something the evangelists considered an advantage. Some of the material is organized along thematic lines, some according to a loose chronology; still other pericopes are linked by some combination of catchwords, themes, OT attestation, genre, and logical coherence. The result is not exactly a history, biography, theology, confession, catechism, tract, homage, or letter-- though it is in some respects all these. It is a "Gospel," a presentation of the "good news" of Jesus the Messiah.

b. Midrash

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Scholars have increasingly recognized the Jewishness of the NT and have therefore cultivated Jewish literary categories for understanding these documents. Among the most important of these categories is midrash. One application of this work, the lectionary theory of Goulder, has already been discussed (section 8). But the most recent development is the commentary by Gundry. He argues that Q is larger than is customarily recognized, embracing material normally designated "M" (cf. section 3), including the birth narratives in Matthew 1-2. What Matthew does according to Gundry, is apply "midrashic techniques" to the tradition he takes over, adding nonhistorical touches to historical material, sometimes creating stories, designated "midrashim," to make theological points, even though the stories, like parables, have no historical referent. Everything depends on definition. Etymologically "midrash" simply means "interpretation." But in this sense, every comment on another text is midrash-- including this commentary. Such a definition provides no basis for saying that because Matthew relates midrashic stories in Matthew 1-2 they are not historically true. Most other definitions, however accurate, are not sufficient to yield Gundry's conclusion. Derrett (*NT Studies* , 2:205ff.), for instance, defines midrashic method in terms of its allusiveness to many sources, not in terms of historicity at all. Snodgrass defines midrash, not as a genre, but "as a process in which forms of tradition develop and enrich or intensify later adaptation of Old Testament texts." [79] Many other definitions have been offered. [80] To compound the difficulty, the term seems to undergo a semantic shift within Jewish literature. By the time of the Babylonian Talmud (fourth century A.D.), midrash had developed a more specialized meaning akin to what Gundry clearly wants. Other Jewish commentaries, mainly the Qumran Pesharim, [81] were characterized by three things: (1) they attempted to deal systematically with every point in the text; (2) they limited themselves almost exclusively to the text; (3) they adopted a revelatory stance toward the text that identified virtually every point in the text with a point of fulfillment in the interpreter's day or later, without any sense of historical context. By contrast the midrashim worked through the

text of Scripture more haphazardly, using Scripture as a sort of peg on which to hang discourse, stories, and other pieces to illuminate the theological meaning of the text. This was in conscious distinction from "peshat," the more "literal" meaning of the text. But in the first two centuries, it is very doubtful whether midrash had a meaning even this specialized. It referred rather to "an interpretive exposition however derived and irrespective of the type of material under consideration" (Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis* , p. 32). In a wide-ranging chapter, Moo ("Use of OT," pp. 8ff.) discusses the various ways in which literature that treats the OT text may be analyzed. He distinguishes literary genre (form and general content), citation procedures (e.g., explicit quotation, allusion,

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conceptual influence, and the like), appropriation technique (the ways the OT text is applied to the contemporary setting), and the hermeneutical axioms implicitly adopted by the interpreter (e.g., that the Scripture was a closed entity needing to be ingeniously interpreted to elicit answers to questions about conduct not specifically treated in the text). Now if "midrash" refers to genre, in the first century it is too wide a term to bear the weight Gundry places on it and is inadequate on other grounds (*Matthew* , pp. 63ff.). Attempts to define "midrash" in terms of appropriation techniques have not proved successful, because none of the techniques is restricted to midrash. Moo tentatively suggests that "midrash" be characterized "in terms of the hermeneutical axioms which guide the approach" ("Use of OT," p. 66). There is considerable merit in this; but of course this results in largely limiting midrash to rabbinic Judaism, since the operative hermeneutical axioms include a largely noneschatological perception of itself and a deep preoccupation with enunciating its identity and directing its conduct (corresponding roughly to the two forms haggadic midrash and Halakic midrash). [82] By contrast the stories of Matthew 1-2 are fundamentally eschatological: they are said to fulfill Scripture in the context of a book in which messianic fulfillment and the dawning of the eschatological kingdom constitute fundamental themes. Matthew 1-2 is little concerned with rules of conduct or the identity of the people of God. It bursts with christological concern and a teleological perspective. When distinctions like these are borne in mind, the modern category "Midrash-Pesher," which some wish to apply to Matthew's treatment of the OT (cf. Moo "Use of OT," p. 174), is seen as an inadequate label for the Qumran commentaries. Midrash and Pesher are alike in many of their techniques, but the hermeneutical axioms are profoundly different. But if the makeshift Midrash-Pesher is inappropriate for the commentaries of Qumran, it is usually inappropriate for Matthew. And in any case it is definitely not a genre recognized by Jewish readers of the first century. These conclusions are inevitable:

1. Gundry cannot legitimately appeal to "midrash" as a well-defined and recognized genre of literature in the first century. 2. In particular, if "midrash" reflects genre, as opposed to hermeneutical axioms irrelevant to Matthew, it is being given a sense more or less well-defined only from the fourth century on. This raises the question of what we could expect Matthew's readers to have thought. Gundry argues that the reason the church has failed to recognize the "midrashic" (and therefore nonhistorical) nature of Matthew 1-2 is that this Gospel was quickly taken over by the Gentiles who had little appreciation for Jewish literary genres. This plausible argument is weakened by strong evidence that midrash in any specialized sense relevant to Gundry's thesis is too late in Jewish circles to be useful. 3. Even if we adopt this late narrowing of the term "midrash," it is still inappropriate

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as a description of Matthew's "M" material. Although the Jewish Midrashim are often only loosely connected with the texts they "expound," yet a line of continuity runs through those OT texts. By contrast Matthew's continuity in chapters 1-2, for instance, is established by the story line, not the OT texts, all of which could be removed without affecting the passage's cohesion. 4. Much of the force of Gundry's argument depends on his assessment of the tendencies in Matthew's editing of sources. Gundry feels that demonstrable tendencies in Matthew require appeal to midrashic technique as the only adequate explanation of material that diverges so radically from the sources. But another assessment of the same evidence is often possible. Few will be convinced by his postulation of a common source behind Matthew 1-2 and Luke 1-2. Moreover some of the "tendencies" he detects in Matthew--e.g., he follows the now popular line on the disciples' understanding (see section 11. i)--are better interpreted in other ways. These points depend on details of exegesis and emerge in this commentary. (See also the review of Gundry in Carson, "Gundry on Matthew.") An important element in Gundry's argument is that the stories cannot be taken as history because, read that way, they include some demonstrable errors. For some of these matters, see the commentary in loc. Here it is sufficient to say that whoever uses "midrash" of any part of Matthew's Gospel should tell his readers precisely what the term means.

c. Miscellaneous

Several other important forms of literature make up the constituent parts of our canonical Gospels: wisdom sayings, genealogies, discourses, parables, and so forth. The most important receive brief treatment in the commentary the most extensive note being devoted to parables (see at 13:3).

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14. Structure and Outline

Matthew was a skilled literary craftsman and gave his Gospel structure, form, and rhythm. Two of his larger chiasms are indicated in the outline below. But the structure of the Gospel as a whole is still disputed. With minor variations there are three main

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views.

First, some (e.g., McNeile) have detected a geographical framework. Matthew 1:1- 2:23 is the prologue; 3:1-4:11 is Jesus' preparation for ministry; 4:12-13:58 finds Jesus in Galilee; 14:1-20:34 pictures him around Galilee and heading toward Jerusalem; and 21:1-28:20 finds him at Jerusalem. The divisions are neither precise nor helpful, for the result tells us nothing of Matthew's purposes.

Second, Kingsbury (*Structure*), taking a hint from Lohmeyer (*Matthaus*) and Stonehouse (*Witness of Matthew* , pp. 129-31), argues for three sections. The first he entitles "The Person of Jesus Messiah" (1:1-4:16), the second "The Proclamation of Jesus Messiah" (4:17-16:20), and the third "The Suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Messiah" (16:21-28:20). Immediately after the two breaks comes the phrase *apo tote* ("from that time on"). Kingsbury further notes that the last two sections each contain three "summary" passages, 4:23-25; 9:35; 11:1 and 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19 respectively; [83] and he suggests that this outline does justice to the centrality of Matthew's christology.

Though this outline has gained adherents, it has serious weaknesses. It is not at all clear that *apo tote* is so redactionally important for Matthew: he also uses it in 26:18 without any suggestion of a break in his outline. One could argue that there are four passion summaries in the third section, not three (add 26:2). Kingsbury's outline not only breaks up the prime Peter passage in an unacceptable way (cf. comments at 16: 13-16), but at both transitions Matthew may have been more influenced by the order of Mark than by "structural" considerations. The most important weakness, however, is the artificiality of the topical headings. The person of Jesus (section one) is still a focal point in sections two and three (e.g., 16:13-16, 22:41-46). Why the proclamation of Jesus should be restricted to section two when two of the discourses (chs. 18; 24-25) and several important exchanges (chs. 21-23)

await the third section is not clear. The last heading, "The Suffering, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Messiah," though it accurately summarizes the increasingly dominant theme of 16:21-28:20, seems an inadequate designation of much in those chapters (e.g., most of 18; 21-25).

The third scheme makes the book center on the five main discourses (see outline below). Each begins by placing Jesus in a specific context and ends with a formula found nowhere else in the Gospel (see comment at 7:28-29) and transitional pericope with links pointing forward and backward. Bacon [84] believed the five discourses correspond to the five books of the Pentateuch; but there is little in favor of this refinement (cf. Gundry, *Matthew*), since Moses typology is very weak in this Gospel and the links between the five discourses and the five books of Moses minimal.

Two frequently raised difficulties must be overcome.

1. Why restrict oneself to *five* discourses when chapter 11 could fall into that category? This objection misses the mark. The fivefold sequence narrative-discourse

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does not assume that Jesus is not portrayed as speaking in the narrative sections. He may do so, even extensively (see also on ch. 21). The point is that the five discourses are sufficiently well-defined that it is hard to believe Matthew did not plan them as such. 2. Does this not relegate the birth narrative (chs. 1-2) and the Passion and Resurrection (chs. 26-28) to a sort of secondary status outside the central outline? There is little difficulty in seeing chapters 1-2 as a prologue anticipating the opening of the Gospel, a formal opening common to all the canonical Gospels (see comment at 1:1). But certainly Matthew 26-28 must not be dismissed as an epilogue; it is too much the point toward which the Gospel moves for that. On the other hand, Matthew 26-28 does not constitute an ordinary "conclusion"; for the final verses are purposely open-ended and anticipatory. It seems best to take 26:5-28:20 as constituting an exceptional sixth narrative section with the corresponding teaching section being laid on the shoulders of the disciples (28:18-20). But no outline should be taken too seriously. The Gospels use vignettes organized ones, doubtless, but vignettes nonetheless. The following outline organizes Matthew's Gospel and reflects some demonstrable structure. That structure is, however, a guide to its contents, not a comprehensive explanation.

Outline (References in outline are tied to commentary.)

I. Prologue: The Origin and Birth of Jesus the Christ (1:1-2:23)

A. The Genealogy of Jesus (1:1-17)

B. The Birth of Jesus (1:18-25)

C. The Visit of the Magi (2:1-12)

D. The Escape to Egypt (2:13-15)

E. The Massacre of Bethlehem's Boys (2:16-18)

F. The Return to Nazareth (2:19-23)

II. The Gospel of the Kingdom (3:1-7:29)

A. Narrative (3:1-4:25)

1. Foundational steps (3:1-4:11)

a. The ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-12)

b. The baptism of Jesus (3:13-17)

c. The temptation of Jesus (4:1-11)

2. Jesus' early Galilean ministry (4:12-25)

a. The beginning (4:12-17)

b. Calling the first disciples (4:18-22)

c. Spreading the news of the kingdom (4:23-25)

B. First Discourse: The Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29)

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1. Setting (5:1-2)

2. The kingdom of heaven: its norms and witness (5:3-16)

a. The norms of the kingdom (5:3-12)

1) The Beatitudes (5:3-10)

2) Expansion (5:11-12)

b. The witness of the kingdom (5:13-16)

1) Salt (5:13)

2) Light (5:14-16)

3. The kingdom of heaven: its demands in relation to the OT (5:17-48)

a. Jesus and the kingdom as fulfillment of the OT (5:17-20)

b. Application: the antitheses (5:21-48)

1) Vilifying anger and reconciliation (5:21-26)

2) Adultery and purity (5:27-30)

3) Divorce and remarriage (5:31-32)

4) Oaths and truthfulness (5:33-37)

5) Personal injury and self-sacrifice (5:38-42)

6) Hatred and love (5:43-47)

c. Conclusion: the demand for perfection (5:48)

4. Religious hypocrisy: its description and overthrow (6:1-18)

a. The principle (6:1)

b. Three examples (6:2-18)

1) Alms (6:2-4)

2) Prayer (6:5-15)

a) Ostentatious prayer (6:5-6)

b) Repetitious prayer (6:7-8)

c) Model prayer (6:9-13)

d) Forgiveness and prayer (6:14-15)

3) Fasting (6:16-18)

5. Kingdom perspectives (6:19-34)

a. Metaphors for unswerving loyalty to kingdom values (6:19-24)

1) Treasure (6:19-21)

2) Light (6:22-23)

3) Slavery (6:24)

b. Uncompromised trust (6:25-34)

1) The principle (6:25)

2) The examples (6:26-30)

a) Life and food (6:26-27)

b) Body and clothes (6:28-30)

3) Distinctive living (6:31-32)

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4) The heart of the matter (6:33)

5) Abolishing worry (6:34)

6. Balance and perfection (7:1-12)

a. The danger of being judgmental (7:1-5)

1) The principle (7:1)

2) The theological justification (7:2)

3) An example (7:3-5)

b. The danger of being undiscerning (7:6)

c. Source and means of power (7:7-11)

d. Balance and perfection (7:12)

7. Conclusion: call to decision and commitment (7:13-27)

a. Two ways (7:13-14)

b. Two trees (7:15-20)

c. Two claims (7:21-23)

d. Two builders (7:24-27)

8. Transitional conclusion: Jesus' authority (7:28-29) 52

III. The Kingdom Extended Under Jesus' Authority (8:1-11:1)

A. Narrative (8:1-10:4)

1. Healing miracles (8:1-17)

a. A leper (8:1-4)

b. The centurion's servant (8:5-13)

c. Peter's mother-in-law (8:14-15)

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Text and Exposition

I. Prologue: The Origin and Birth of Jesus the Christ (1:1-2:23)

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A. The Genealogy of Jesus (1:1-17)

In each Gospel Jesus' earthly ministry is preceded by an account of John the Baptist's ministry. This formal similarity does not extend to the introductions to the Gospels. Mark (1:1) opens with a simple statement. Luke begins with a first-person preface in which he explains his purpose and methods, followed by a detailed and often poetic account of the miraculous births of John and Jesus (1:5-2:20) and brief mention of Jesus' boyhood trip to the temple (2:21-52). Luke reserves Jesus' genealogy for chapter 3. John's prologue (1:1-18) traces Jesus' beginnings to eternity and presents the Incarnation without referring to his conception and birth. In each Gospel the introduction anticipates major themes and emphases. In Matthew the prologue (1:1-2:23) introduces such themes as the son of David, the fulfillment of prophecy, the supernatural origin of Jesus the Messiah, and the Father's sovereign protection of his Son in order to bring him to Nazareth and accomplish the divine plan of salvation from sin (cf. esp. Stonehouse, *Witness of Matthew* , pp. 123-28).

1 The first two words of Matthew, *biblos geneseos* , may be translated "record of the genealogy" (NIV), "record of the origins," or "record of the history." NIV limits this title to the genealogy (1:1-17), the second could serve as a heading for the prologue (1: 1-2:23), and the third as a heading for the entire Gospel. The expression is found only twice in the LXX: in Genesis 2:4 it refers to the creation account (Gen 2:4-25) and in Genesis 5:1 to the ensuing genealogy. From the latter it appears possible to follow NIV (so also Hendriksen; Lohmeyer, *Matthaus* ; McNeile); but because the noun *genesis* (NIV, "birth") reappears in 1:18 (one of only four NT occurrences), it seems likely that the heading in 1:1 extends beyond the genealogy. No occurrence of the expression as a heading for a book-length document has come to light.

Therefore we must discount the increasingly popular view (Davies, *Setting* ; Gaechter, *Matthaus* ; Hill, *Matthew* ; Maier; Zahn) that Matthew means to refer to his entire Gospel, "A record of the history of Jesus Christ." Matthew rather intends his first two chapters to be a coherent and unified "record of the origins of Jesus Christ. " The designation "Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham" resonates with biblical nuances. (For comments regarding "Jesus," see on 1:21.) "Christ" is roughly the Greek equivalent to "Messiah" or "Anointed." In the OT the term could refer to a variety of people anointed for some special function: priests (Lev 4:3; 6:22), kings (1Sam 16:13; 24:10; 2Sam 19:21; Lam 4:20), and, metaphorically, the patriarchs (Ps 105:15) and the pagan king Cyrus (Isa 45:1). Already in Hannah's prayer "Messiah" parallels "king": the Lord "will give strength to his king and exalt the horn of his anointed" (1Sam 2:10). With the rising number of OT prophecies concerning King David's line (e.g., 2Sam 7:12-16; cf. Ps 2:2; 105:15), "Messiah, or "Christ," became

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the designation of a figure representing the people of God and bringing in the promised eschatological reign. In Jesus' day Palestine was rife with messianic expectation. Not all of it was coherent, and many Jews expected two different "Messiahs." But Matthew's linking of "Christ" and "son of David" leaves no doubt of what he is claiming for Jesus. In the Gospels "Christ" is relatively rare (as compared with Paul's epistles). More important it almost always appears as a title, strictly equivalent to "the Messiah" (see esp. 16:16). But it was natural for Christians after the Resurrection to use "Christ" as a name not less than as a title; increasingly they spoke of "Jesus Christ" or "Christ Jesus" or simply "Christ." Paul normally treats "Christ," at least in part as a name; but it is doubtful whether the titular force ever entirely disappears (cf. N.T. Wright, "The Messiah and the People of God: A Study in Pauline Theology with Particular Reference to the Argument of the Epistle to the Romans" [Ph. D. diss., Oxford University, 1980], p. 19). Of Matthew's approximately eighteen occurrences, all are exclusively titular except this one (1:1), probably 1:16, certainly 1:18, and possibly the variant at 16:21. The three uses of "Christ" in the prologue reflect the confessional stance from which Matthew writes; he is a committed Christian who has long since become familiar with the common way of using the word as both title and name. At the same time it is a mark of Matthew's concern for historical accuracy that Jesus is not so designated by his contemporaries. "Son of David" is an important designation in Matthew. Not only does David become a turning point in the genealogy (1:6, 17), but the title recurs throughout the Gospel (9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; 22:42, 45). God swore covenant love to David (Ps 89:29) and promised that one of his immediate descendants would establish the kingdom--even more, that David's kingdom and throne would endure forever (2Sam 7:12-16). Isaiah foresaw that a "son" would be given, a son with the most extravagant titles: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace: "Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign *on David's throne* and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from

that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this" (Isa 9:6-7). In Jesus' day at least some branches of popular Judaism understood "son of David" to be messianic (cf. Pss Sol 17:21; for a summary of the complex intertestamental evidence, cf. Berger, "Die koniglichen Messiastraditionen," esp. pp. 3-9). The theme was important in early Christianity (cf. Luke 1:32, 69; John 7:42; Acts 13:23; Rom 1:3; Rev 22:16). God's promises, though long delayed, had not been forgotten; Jesus and his ministry were perceived as God's fulfillment of covenantal promises now centuries old. The tree of David, hacked off so that only a stump remained, was sprouting a new branch (Isa 11:1).

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Jesus is also "son of Abraham." It could not be otherwise, granted that he is son of David. Yet Abraham is mentioned for several important reasons. "Son of Abraham" may have been a recognized messianic title in some branches of Judaism (cf. T Levi 8:

15). The covenant with the Jewish people had first been made with Abraham (Gen 12:1- 3; 17:7; 22:18), a connection Paul sees as basic to Christianity (Gal 3:16). More important, Genesis 22:18 had promised that through Abraham's off spring "all nations" (*panta ta ethne* , LXX) would be blessed; so with this allusion to Abraham, Matthew is preparing his readers for the final words of this offspring from Abraham--the commission to make disciples of "all nations" (28:19, *panta ta ethne*). Jesus the Messiah came in fulfillment of the kingdom promises to David and of the Gentile- blessings promises to Abraham (cf. also Matt 3:9; 8:11).

2-17 Study has shown that genealogies in the Ancient Near East could serve widely diverse functions: economic, tribal, political, domestic (to show family or geographical relationships), and others (see Johnson; also Robert R. Wilson, *Genealogy and History in the Biblical World* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977]; R.E. Brown, *Birth of Messiah* , pp. 64-66). The danger in such study is that Matthew's intentions may be overridden by colorful backgrounds of doubtful relevance to the text itself. Johnson sees Matthew's genealogy as a response to Jewish slander. H.V. Winkings ("The Nativity Stories and Docetism," NTS 23 [1977]: 457-60) sees it as an answer to late first-century Docetism that denied the essential humanity of Jesus. One wonders whether a virgin birth would have been the best way to go about correcting the Docetists. D.E. Nineham ("The Genealogy in St. Matthew's Gospel and Its Significance for the Study of the Gospels," BJRL 58 [1976]: 491-44) finds in this genealogy the assurance that God is in sovereign control. Yet it is unclear how he reconciles this assurance with his conviction that the genealogy is of little historical worth. If Matthew made much of it up, then we may admire his faith that God was in control. But

since Matthew's basis was (according to Nineham) faulty it gives the reader little incentive to share the same faith. Actually, Matthew's chief aims in including the genealogy are hinted at in the first verse--viz., to show that Jesus Messiah is truly in the kingly line of David, heir to the messianic promises, the one who brings divine blessings to all nations. Therefore the genealogy focuses on King David (1:6) on the one hand, yet on the other hand includes Gentile women (see below). Many entries would touch the hearts and stir the memories of biblically literate readers, though the principal thrust of the genealogy ties together promise and fulfillment. "Christ and the new covenant are securely linked to the age of the old covenant. Marcion, who wished to sever all the links binding Christianity to the Old Testament, knew what he was about when he cut the genealogy out of his edition of

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Luke" (F.F. Bruce, NBD, p. 459).

For many, whatever its aims, the historical value of Matthew's genealogy is nil. R.E. Brown (*Birth of Messiah* , pp. 505-12) bucks the tide when he cautiously affirms that Jesus sprang from the house of David. Many ancient genealogies are discounted as being of little historical value because they evidently intend to impart more than historical information (cf. esp. Wilson, *Genealogy and History*). To do this, however, is to fall into a false historical disjunction; for many genealogies intend to make more than historical points by referring to historical lines. Part of the historical evaluation of Matthew 1:2-17 rests on the reliability of Matthew's sources: the names in the first two-thirds of the genealogy are taken from the LXX (1Chron 1-3, esp. 2:1-15; 3:5-24; Ruth 4:12-22). After Zerubbabel, Matthew relies on extrabiblical sources of which we know nothing. But there is good evidence that records were kept at least till the end of the first century. Josephus (Life 6 [1]) refers to the "public registers" from which he extracts his genealogical information (cf. also Jos. *Contra Apion* I, 28-56 [6-10]). According to Genesis R 98:8, Rabbi Hillel was proved to be a descendant of David because a genealogical scroll was found in Jerusalem. Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3. 19-20) cites Hegesippus to the effect that Emperor Domitian (A.D. 81-96) ordered all descendants of David slain. Nevertheless two of them when summoned, though admitting their Davidic descent, showed their calloused hands to prove they were but poor farmers. So they were let go. But the account shows that genealogical information was still available. While no twentieth-century Jew could prove he was from the tribe of Judah, let alone from the house of David, that does not appear to have been a problem in the first century, when lineage was important in gaining access to temple worship. Whether Matthew had access to the records himself or gleaned his information from intermediate sources, we cannot know from this distance; but in any case we "have no good reason to doubt that this genealogy was transmitted in good faith" (Albright and Mann). More difficult is the question of the relation of Matthew's genealogy to Luke's, in particular the part from David on (cf.

Luke 3:23-31). There are basic differences between the two: Matthew begins with Abraham and moves forward; Luke begins with Jesus and moves backward to Adam. Matthew traces the line through Jeconiah, Shealtiel, and Zerubbabel; Luke through Neri, Shealtiel, and Zerubbabel. More important, Luke (3:31) traces the line through David's son Nathan (cf. 2Sam 5:14), and Matthew through the kingly line of Solomon. It is often said that no reconciliation between the two genealogies is possible (e.g., E.L. Abel, "The Genealogies of Jesus O CHrISTOS", NTS 20 [1974]: 203-10). Nevertheless two theories are worth weighing 1. Some have argued that Luke gives Mary's genealogy but substitutes Joseph's name (Luke 3:23) to avoid mentioning a woman. And there is some evidence to support

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the notion that Mary herself was a descendant of David (cf. Luke 1:32). That Mary was related to Elizabeth, who was married to the Levite Zechariah (Luke 1:5-36), is no problem, since intermarriage between tribes was not uncommon. Indeed, Aaron's wife may well have sprung from Judah (cf. Exod 6:23; Num 2:3) (so Beng., CHS, Luther).

H.A.W. Meyer rearranges the punctuation in Luke 3:23 to read "being the son (of Joseph as was supposed) of Heli [i.e., Mary's father], of Matthat." But this is painfully artificial and could not easily be deduced by a reader with a text without punctuation marks or brackets, which is how our NT Greek MSS were first written. Few would guess simply by reading Luke that he is giving Mary's genealogy. The theory stems, not from the text of Luke, but from the need to harmonize the two genealogies. On the face of it, both Matthew and Luke aim to give Joseph's genealogy. 2. Others have argued, more plausibly, that Luke provides Joseph's real genealogy and Matthew the throne succession--a succession that finally jumps to Joseph's line by default. Hill (*Matthew*) offers independent Jewish evidence for a possible double line (Targ. Zech 12:12). This hypothesis has various forms. The oldest goes back to Julius Africanus (c. A.D. 225; cf. Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 1. 7), who argued that Matthew provides the natural genealogy and Luke the royal--the reverse of the modern theory (so Alf, Farrer, Hill, Taylor, Westcott, Zahn). In its modern form the theory seems reasonable enough: where the purpose is to provide Joseph's actual descent back to David, this could best be done by tracing the family tradition through his real father Heli, to his father Matthat, and thus back to Nathan and David (so Luke); and where the purpose is to provide the throne succession, it is natural to begin with David and work down. As most frequently presented, this theory has a serious problem (cf. R.E. Brown *Birth of Messiah* , pp. 503-4). It is normally argued that Joseph's father in Matthew 1: 16, Jacob, was a full brother of Joseph's father mentioned in Luke 3:23, Heli; that Jacob, the royal heir, died without offspring; and that Heli married Jacob's widow according to the laws of levirate marriage (Deut 25:5-10). (Though levirate marriages may not have been common in the first century, it is unlikely that they were completely

unknown. Otherwise the question of the Sadducees [22:24-28] was phrased in irrelevant terms.) But if Jacob and Heli are to be reckoned as full brothers, then Matthan (Matt) and Matthat (Luke) must be the same man--even though their fathers, Eleazar (Matt) and Levi (Luke) respectively, are different. It seems artificial to appeal to a second levirate marriage. Some have therefore argued that Jacob and Heli were only half-brothers, which entails a further coincidence--viz., that their mother married two men, Matthan and Matthat, with remarkably similar names. We do not know whether levirate marriage was practiced in the case of half-brothers. Moreover since the whole purpose of levirate marriage was to raise up a child in the deceased father's name, why does Luke provide the name of the actual father?

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R.E. Brown judges the problems insurmountable but fails to consider the elegant solution suggested by Machen (pp. 207-9) fifty years ago. If we assume that Matthat and Matthan are *not* the same person, there is no need to appeal to levirate marriage. The difficulty regarding the father of Matthat and the father of Matthan disappears; yet their respective sons Levi and Jacob may have been so closely related (e.g., if Levi was an heirless only son whose sister married Jacob or Joseph) that if Levi died, Jacob's son Joseph became his heir. Alternatively, if Matthan and Mat that *are* the same person (presupposing a levirate marriage one generation earlier), we "need only to suppose that Jacob [Joseph's father according to Matthew] died without issue, so that his nephew, the son of his brother Heli [Joseph's father according to Luke] would become his heir" (p. 208). Other differences between Matthew and Luke are more amenable to obvious solutions. As for the omissions from Matthew's genealogy and the structure of three series of fourteen, see on 1:17.

2 Of the twelve sons of Jacob, Judah is singled out, as his tribe bears the scepter (Gen 49:10; cf: Heb 7:14). The words "and his brothers" are not "an addition which indicates that of the several possible ancestors of the royal line Judah alone was chosen" (Hill, *Matthew*), since that restriction was already achieved by stipulating Judah; and in no other entry (except 1:11; see comment) are the words "and his brothers" added. The point is that, though he comes from the royal line of Judah and David, Messiah emerges within the matrix of the covenant people (cf. the reference to Judah's brothers). Neither the half-siblings of Isaac nor the descendants of Jacob's brother, Esau, qualify as the covenant people in the OT. This allusive mention of the Twelve Tribes as the locus of the people of God becomes important later (cf. 8:11 with 19:28). Even the fact that there were twelve apostles is relevant.

3-5 Probably Perez and Zerah (v. 3) are both mentioned because they are twins (Gen 38:27; cf. 1 Chronicles 2:4); Judah's other sons receive no mention. Ruth 4:12, 18-22 traces the messianic line from Perez to David. There is some evidence that "son of Perez" was a rabbinic designation of Messiah (SBK, 1:18), but the dating of the sources is uncertain. Tamar, wife of Judah's son Er, is the first of four women mentioned in the genealogy (for comment, see on 1:6). Little is known of Hezron (Gen 46:12; 1 Chronicles 2:5), Ram (1 Chronicles 2:9), Amminadab (v. 4; Exod 6:23; Num 1:7; 1 Chronicles 2:10), Nahshon (Num 2:3; 7:12; "the leader of the people of Judah," 1 Chronicles 2:10), and Salmon (v. 5; Ruth 4:18-21; 1 Chronicles 2:11). Amminadab is associated with the desert wanderings in the time of Moses (Num 1:7). Therefore approximately four hundred years (Gen 15:13; Exod 12:40) are covered by the four generations from

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Perez to Amminadab. Doubtless several names have been omitted: the Greek verb translated "was the father of" (*gennao*) does not require immediate relationship but often means some thing like "was the ancestor of" or "became the progenitor of." Similarly, the line between Amminadab and David is short: more names may have been omitted. Whether such names properly fit before Boaz, so that Rahab was not the immediate mother of Boaz (just as Eve was not immediately "the mother of all the living," Gen 3:20), or after Boaz, or both, one cannot be sure. It is almost certain, however, that the Rahab mentioned is the prostitute of Joshua 2 and 5 (see further on 1:6). Boaz (1 Chronicles 2:11-12), who figures so prominently in the Book of Ruth, married the Moabitess (see on 1:6) and sired Obed, who became the father of Jesse (Ruth 4:22; 1 Chronicles 2:12).

6 The word "King" with "David" would evoke profound nostalgia and arouse eschatological hope in first-century Jews. Matthew thus makes the royal theme explicit: King Messiah has appeared. David's royal authority, lost at the Exile, has now been regained and surpassed by "great David's greater son" (so James Montgomery's hymn "Hail to the Lord's Anointed"; cf. Box; Hill, *Matthew* ; also cf. 2Sam 7:12-16; Ps 89:19-29, 35-37; 132:11). David became the father of Solomon; but Solomon's mother "had been Uriah's wife" (cf. 2Sam 11:27; 12:4). Bathsheba thus becomes the fourth woman to be mentioned in this genealogy. Inclusion of these four women in the Messiah's genealogy instead of an all-male listing (which was customary)--or at least the names of such great matriarchs as Sarah, Rebekah, and Leah--shows that Matthew is conveying more than merely genealogical data. Tamar enticed her father-in-law into an incestuous relationship (Gen 38). The prostitute Rahab saved the spies and joined the Israelites (Josh 2, 5); Hebrews 11:31 and James 2:25 encourage us to think she abandoned her former way of life. She is certainly prominent in Jewish tradition, some of it fantastic (cf. A.T. Hanson, "Rahab the Harlot in Early Christian Tradition,"

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[1978]: 53-60). Ruth, Tamar, and Rahab were aliens. Bathsheba was taken into an adulterous union with David, who committed murder to cover it up. Matthew's peculiar way of referring to her, "Uriah's wife," may be an attempt to focus on the fact that Uriah was not an Israelite but a Hittite (2Sam 11:3; 23:39). Bathsheba herself was apparently the daughter of an Israelite (1 Chronicles 3:5 [variant reading]); but her marriage to Uriah probably led to her being regarded as a Hittite. Several reasons have been suggested to explain the inclusion of these women. Some have pointed out that three were Gentiles and the fourth probably regarded as such (Lohmeyer, *Matthaus* ; Maier; Schweizer, *Matthew*). This goes well with the reference to Abraham (cf. on 1:1); the Jewish Messiah extends his blessings beyond Israel, even as Gentiles are included in his line. Others have noted that three of the four were

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involved in gross sexual sin; but it is highly doubtful that this charge can be legitimately applied to Ruth. As a Moabitess, however, she had her origins in incest (Gen 19:30-37); and Deuteronomy 23:3 banned the offspring of Moabites from the assembly of the Lord to the tenth generation. R.E. Brown *Birth of Messiah*, pp. 71-72) discounts this interpretation of the role of the four women, because in first-century Jewish piety they were largely whitewashed and revered. Yet it is not at all certain that Matthew follows his contemporaries in all this. It is important that in this same chapter Matthew introduces Jesus as the one who "will save his people from their sins" (1:21), and this verse may imply a backward glance at some of the better-known sins of his own progenitors. A third interpretation (favored by Allen, R.E. Brown, Filson, Fenton, Green, Hill, Klostermann, Lohmeyer, Peake) holds that all four reveal something of the strange and unexpected workings of Providence in preparation for the Messiah and that as such they point to Mary's unexpected but providential conception of Jesus. There is no reason to rule out any of the above interpretations. Matthew, Jew that he is, knows how to write with an allusive touch; and readers steeped in the OT would naturally call to mind a plethora of images associated with many names in this selective genealogy.

7-10 The names in these verses seem to have been taken from 1 Chronicles 3:10-14. Behind "Asa" (v. 7) lurks a difficult textual decision (cf. Notes). There is no obvious pattern: wicked Rehoboam was the father of wicked Abijah, the father of the good king Asa. Asa was the father of the good king Jehoshaphat (v. 8), who sired the wicked king Joram. Good or evil, they were part of Messiah's line; for though grace does not run in the blood, God's providence cannot be deceived or outmaneuvered. Three names have been omitted between Joram and Uzziah: Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah (2 Kings

8:24; 1 Chronicles 3:11; 2 Chronicles 22:1, 11; 24:27). "Uzziah" (vv. 8-9) is equivalent to Azariah (1 Chronicles 3:11; cf. 2 Kings 15:13, 30 with 2 Kings 15:

1). The three omissions not only secure fourteen generations in this part of the genealogy (see on 1:17) but are dropped because of their connection with Ahab and Jezebel, renowned for wickedness (2 Kings 8:27), and because of their connection with wicked Athaliah (2 Kings 8:26), the usurper (2 Kings 11:1-20). Two of the three were notoriously evil, all three died violently. R.E. Brown *Birth of Messiah* , p. 82) points out that Manasseh was even more wicked, and he is included. Therefore (with Schweizer, (*Matthew*), Brown prefers an explanation of the omissions based on a text-critical confusion between "Azariah" and "Uzziah." This conjecture is plausible; but if it is correct, it would have to be pre- Matthean, because Matthew's "fourteens" (see on 1:17) would require this omission or an equivalent. But there is no textual evidence to support the conjecture. Also,

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Manasseh (v. 10), though notoriously evil, repented, unlike the other three.

11 Another name has been dropped: Josiah was the father of Jehoiakim (609-597

B.C.), who was deposed in favor of his son Jehoiachin (some MSS in both OT and NT have "Jeconiah" for the latter). He was deposed after a reign of only three months and his brother Zedekiah reigned in his stead till the final deportation and destruction of the city in 587 B.C. (cf. 2 Kings 23:34; 24:6, 14-15; 1 Chronicles 3:16; Jer 27:20; 28:1). The words "and his brothers" are probably added in this instance because one of them, Zedekiah, maintained a caretaker reign until the tragedy of 587 B.C. ; but Zedekiah is not mentioned because the royal line does not flow through him but through Jeconiah. The Exile to Babylon marked the end of the reign of David's line a momentous event in OT history. Alternatively "and his brothers" may refer, not to the royal brothers, but to all the Jews who went into captivity with Jeconiah (Gun dry, *Matthew*). The locus of the people of God is thus traced from the patriarchs ("and his brothers," 1:2) to the shame of the Exile, a theme to be developed later (see on 2:16-18).

12 The final list of "fourteen" (see on 1:17) begins with a further mention of the Exile. 1 Chronicles 3:17 records that Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) was the father of Shealtiel. Matthew goes on to present Shealtiel as the father of Zerubbabel, in accord with Ezra 3:2; 5:2; Nehemiah 12:1; Hag 1:1; 2:2, 23. The difficulty lies in 1 Chronicles 3:19, which presents Zerubbabel as the son of Pedaiah, a brother of Shealtiel. Several solutions have been offered, most not very convincing (cf. Machen, pp. 206-7). Some Greek MSS omit Pedaiah in 1 Chronicles 3:19. But the best suggestion is a levirate marriage (Deut 25:5-10; cf. Gen 38:8-9), scarcely an embarrassment to those who have adopted the explanation above (cf. on vv. 2-17) and find no other levirate marriage in the genealogy. If Shealtiel were the

older brother and died childless, Pedaiah might well have married the widow to "build up his brother's family line" (Deut 25:9). In any case Zerubbabel himself becomes a messianic model (cf. Hag 2:20-23).

13-15 The nine names from Abiud to Jacob are not otherwise known to us today. Possibly names have been omitted from this genealogical section also, but then one wonders why this third section of the genealogy appears to lack one entry (see on 1:

17). Gundry's explanations (*Matthew*) of these names is tortured: certain names from Luke's list "catch the evangelist's [Matthew's] eye," as do names from the priestly (nonroyal) list in 1 Chronicles 6:3-14--names that then need abbreviating or changing to mask their priestly connection.

16 The wording in the best reading (cf. Notes), reflected in NIV, is precise. Joseph's royal line has been traced; Joseph is the husband of Mary; Mary is the mother of

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Jesus. The relation between Joseph and Jesus is so far unstated. But this peculiar form of expression cries out for the explanation provided in the ensuing verses. Legally Jesus stands in line to the throne of David; physically he is born of a woman "found to be with child through the Holy Spirit" (1:18). Her son is Jesus, "who is called Christ." The Greek does not make it clear whether "Christ" is titular or not; but name or title, Jesus' messiahship is affirmed.

17 It was customary among Jewish writers to arrange genealogies according to some convenient scheme, possibly for mnemonic reasons. Strictly speaking the Greek text speaks of "all the generations from Abraham to David ... to Christ" (cf. KJV, NASB); but since the omissions are obvious to both Matthew and his readers, the expression must mean "all the generations ... included in this table." So it becomes a hint that the fourteens, here so strongly brought to the reader's attention, are symbolic. Various arrangements of the three fourteens have been proposed. In one the first set of fourteen runs from Abraham to David, the second from Solomon to Jeconiah and the third attains fourteen by repeating Jeconiah and running to Jesus. Hendriksen (pp. 125-26) suggests Matthew purposely counts Jeconiah twice: first he presents Jeconiah as cursed, childless, deported (2 Kings 24:8-12; Jer 22:30); the second time he reminds the reader that Jeconiah was subsequently released from prison and restored and became the father of many (2 Kings 25:27-30; 1 Chronicles 3:17-18; Jer 52:31-34)--a new man as it were. But Matthew does not mention these themes, which do not clearly fit into the main concerns of this chapter. Schweizer prefers to count from Abraham to David. Then, because David is mentioned twice he passes from David to Josiah, the last free king; and then Jeconiah to Jesus provides a third set of fourteen, at the expense of making the central set one member short and of ignoring the small but distinct literary pause at the end of 1:11. McNeile postulates a possible loss of one name between Jeconiah and Shealtiel owing to homoeoteleuton (identical endings), but there is no textual

evidence for it. Gundry (*Matthew*) thinks that Mary as well as Joseph counts for one, pointing to the two kinds of generation, legal (Joseph's) and physical (Mary's). No solution so far proposed seems entirely convincing, and it is difficult to rule any out. The symbolic value of the fourteens is of more significance than their precise breakdown. Herman C. Waetjen ("The Genealogy as the Key to the Gospel According to Matthew," JBL 95 [1976]: 205-30; cf. Johnson, pp. 193-94) tries to solve both problems by appealing to 2 Baruch 53-74 (usually dated c. A.D. 50-70). This apocalyptic book divides history into a scheme of $12 + 2 = 14$ units. Matthew, Waetjen argues, holds that just as David and Jeconiah are transitional figures in the genealogy, so also is Jesus. He is the end of the third period and simultaneously the beginning of the fourth, the inaugurated kingdom. Jesus is therefore the thirteenth and the

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fourteenth entries, the former a period of gloom in 2 Baruch (corresponding to the Passion in Matthew) and the fourteenth opening into the new age. But this analysis will not do. Two objections are crucial: (1) it is not at all clear that one may legitimately jump from schematized time periods in apocalyptic literature to names in a genealogy (Is anything less apocalyptic than a genealogy?) just because of a common number, (2) Waetjen has "corrected" the omission in the third set of fourteen by listing Jesus twice, even though the second reference to Jesus, in his scheme, properly belongs to the inaugurated kingdom and not to the third set, which remains deficient. Schemes like those of Hendriksen and Goodspeed that reduce the 3 X 14 pattern to 6 X 7 and then picture Jesus' coming to inaugurate the seventh seven--the sign of perfection, the dawning of the Messianic Age (cf. 1 Enoch 91:12-17; 93:1-10) stumble over the fact that Matthew has not presented his genealogy as six sevens but as three fourteens (cf. R.E. Brown, *Birth of Messiah*, p. 75). Other suggestions include those of Johnson (pp. 189-208) and Goulder (pp. 228-33). The simplest explanation--the one that best fits the context--observes that the numerical value of "David" in Hebrew is fourteen (cf. Notes). By this symbolism Matthew points out that the promised "son of David" (1:1), the Messiah, has come. And if the third set of fourteen is short one member, perhaps it will suggest to some readers that just as God cuts short the time of distress for the sake of his elect (24:22), so also he mercifully shortens the period from the Exile to Jesus the Messiah.

B. The Birth of Jesus (1:18-25)

Two matters call for brief remarks: the historicity of the Virgin Birth (more properly, virginal conception), and the theological emphases surrounding this theme in Matthew 1-2 and its relation to the NT. First, the historicity of the Virgin Birth is questioned for many reasons.

1. The accounts in Matthew and Luke are apparently independent and highly divergent. This argues for creative forces in the church making up all or parts of the stories in order to explain the person of Jesus. But the stories have long been shown to be compatible (Machen), even mutually complementary. Moreover literary independence of Matthew and Luke at this point does not demand the conclusion that the two evangelists were ignorant of the other's content. Yet if they were, their differences suggest to some the strength of mutual compatibility without collusion. Matthew focuses largely on Joseph, Luke on Mary. R.E. Brown *Birth of Messiah* , p. 35) does not accept this because he finds it inconceivable that Joseph could have told his story without mentioning the Annunciation or that Mary could have passed on her story without mentioning the flight to Egypt. True enough, though it does not follow that

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the evangelists were bound to include all they knew. It is hard to imagine how the Annunciation would have fit in very well with Matthew's themes. Moreover we have already observed that Matthew was prepared to omit things he knew in order to present his chosen themes coherently and concisely. 2. Some simply discount the supernatural. Goulder (p. 33) says Matthew made the stories up; Schweizer (*Matthew*) contrasts the ancient world in which virgin birth was (allegedly) an accepted notion with modern scientific limitations on what is possible. But the antithesis is greatly exaggerated: thoroughgoing rationalists were not uncommon in the first century (e.g., Lucretius); and millions of modern Christians, scientifically aware, find little difficulty in believing in the Virgin Birth or in a God who is capable of intervening miraculously in what is, after all, his own creation. More important, Matthew's point in these chapters is surely that the Virgin Birth and attendant circumstances were most extraordinary. Only here does he mention Magi; and dreams and visions as a means of guidance are by no means common in the NT (though even here one wonders whether Western Christianity could learn something from Third-World Christianity). Certainly Matthew's account is infinitely more sober than the wildly speculative stories preserved in the apocryphal gospels (e.g., *Protevangelium of James* 12:3-20:4; cf. Hennecke, 1:381-85). R.E. Brown *Birth of Messiah*) accepts the historicity of the Virgin Birth but discounts the historicity of the visit of the Magi and related events. But if he can swallow the Virgin Birth, it is difficult to see why he strains out the Magi. (See the useful book of Manuel Miguens, *The Virgin Birth: An Evaluation of Scriptural Evidence* [Westminster, Md.: Christian Classics, 1975].) 3. Many point to artificialities in the narrative: e.g., the structure of the genealogy or the delay in mentioning Bethlehem as the place of birth (Hill, *Matthew*). We have noted, however, that though Matthew's arrangement of the genealogy gives us more than a mere table of names and dates, it does not tell us less. More than any of the synoptists, Matthew delights in topical arrangements. But that does not make his accounts less than historical. We are not shut up to the extreme choice historical chronicles or theological invention! Matthew does not

mention Bethlehem in 1:18-25 because it does not suit any of his themes. In chapter 2, however, as Tatum has shown (W.B. Tatum, Jr., "The Matthean Infancy Narratives: Their Form, Structure, and Relation to the Theology of the First Evangelist" [Ph. D. dissertation, Duke University, 1967]), one of the themes unifying Matthew's narrative is Jesus' "geographical origins"; and therefore Bethlehem is introduced. 4. It has become increasingly common to identify the literary genre in Matthew 1-2 as "midrash" or "midrashic haggadah" and to conclude that these stories are not intended to be taken literally (e.g., with widely differing perspectives, Gundry, *Matthew* ; Goulder; Davies, *Setting* , pp. 66-67). There is nothing fundamentally

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objectionable in the suggestion that some stories in the Bible are not meant to be taken as fact; parables are such stories. The problem is the slipperiness of the categories (cf. Introduction: section 12. b; and cf. further on 2:16-18). If the genre has unambiguous formal characteristics, there should be little problem in recognizing them. But this is far from being so; the frequently cited parallels boast as many formal differences (compared with Matt 1-2) as similarities. To cite one obvious example: Jewish Midrashim (in the technical, fourth-century sense) present stories as illustrative material by way of comment on a running OT text. By contrast Matthew 1-2 offers no running OT text: the continuity of the text depends on the story-line; and the OT quotations, taken from a variety of OT books, could be removed without affecting that continuity (cf. esp. M.J. Down, "The Matthean Birth Narratives," *ExpT* 90 [1978-79]: 51-52; and France, *Jesus* ; see on 2:16-18). R.E. Brown *Birth of Messiah* , pp. 557-63) argues convincingly that Matthew 1-2 is not midrash. Yet he thinks the sort of person who could invent stories to explain OT texts (midrash) could also invent stories to explain Jesus. Matthew 1-2, though not itself midrash, is at least midrashic. That may be so. Unfortunately, not only does the statement fall short of proof, but the appeal to a known and recognizable literary genre is thus lost. So we have no objective basis for arguing that Matthew's first readers would readily detect his midrashic methods. Of course, if "midrashic" means that Matthew intends to present a panorama of OT allusions and themes these chapters are certainly midrashic: in that sense the studies of Goulder, Gun dry, Davies, and others have served us well, by warning us against a too-rigid pattern of linear thought. But used in this sense, it is not at all clear that "midrashic material" is necessarily unhistorical. 5. A related objection insists that these stories "are not primarily didactic" but "kerygmatic" (Davies, *Setting* , p. 67), that they are intended as proclamations about the truth of the person of Jesus but not as factual information. The rigid dichotomy between proclamation and teaching is not as defensible as when C.H. Dodd first proposed it (see on 3:1). More important, we may ask just what the proclamation intended to proclaim. If the stories express the appreciation of

the first Christians for Jesus, precisely what did they appreciate? On the face of it, Matthew in chapters 1-2 is not saying something vague, such as, "Jesus was so wonderful there must be a touch of the divine about him," but rather, "Jesus is the promised Messiah of the line of David, and he is `Emmanuel,' `God with us,' because his birth was the result of God's supernatural intervention, making Jesus God's very Son; and his early months were stamped with strange occurrences which, in the light of subsequent events, weave a coherent pattern of theological truths and historical attestation to divine providence in the matter." 6. Some argue that the (to us) artificial way these chapters cite the OT shows a small

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concern for historicity. The reverse argument is surely more impressive: If the events of Matthew 1-2 do not relate easily to the OT texts, this attests their historical credibility; for no one in his right mind would invent "fulfillment" episodes problematic to the texts being fulfilled. The fulfillment texts, though difficult, do fit into a coherent pattern (cf. Introduction section 11. b), and below on 1. 22-23). More importantly, their presence shows that Matthew sees Jesus as one who fulfills the OT. This not only sets the stage for some of Matthew's most important themes; it also means that Matthew is working from a perspective on salvation history that depends on before and after, prophecy and fulfillment, type and antitype, relative ignorance and progressive revelation. This has an important bearing on our discussion of midrash, because whatever else Jewish midrash may be, it is not related to salvation history or fulfillment schemes. Add to the foregoing considerations the fact that, wherever in chapters 1-2 he can be tested against the known background of Herod the Great, Matthew proves reliable (some details below). There is a good case for treating chapters 1-2 as both history and theology. Second, the following theological considerations require mention.

1. Often it is argued or even assumed (e.g., Dunn, *Christology* , pp. 49-50), that the concepts "virginal" conception and "preexistence" applied to the one person Jesus are mutually exclusive. Certainly it is difficult to see how a divine being could become genuinely human by means of an ordinary birth. Nevertheless there is no logical or theological reason to think that virginal conception and preexistence preclude each other. 2. Related to this is the theory of R.E. Brown *Birth of Messiah* , pp. 140-41), who proposes a retrojected Christology. The early Christians, he argues, first focused attention on Jesus' resurrection, which they perceived as the moment of his installation into his messianic role. Then with further reflection they pushed back the time of his installation to his baptism, then to his birth, and finally to a theory regarding his preexistence. There may be some truth to the scheme. Just as the first Christians did not come to an instant grasp of the relationship between law and gospel (as the Book of Acts amply

demonstrates), so their understanding of Jesus doubtless matured and deepened with time and further revelation. But the theory often depends on a rigid and false reconstruction of early church history (cf. Introduction, section 2) and dates the documents, against other evidence, on the basis of this reconstruction. Worse, in the hands of some it transforms the understanding of the disciples into historical reality: that is, Jesus had no preexistence and was not virgin born, but these things were progressively predicated of him by his followers. Gospel evidence for Jesus' self-perception as preexistent is then facilely dismissed as late and inauthentic. The method is of doubtful worth. Matthew, despite his strong insistence on Jesus' virginal conception, includes

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several veiled allusions to Jesus' preexistence; and there is no reason to think he found the two concepts incompatible. Moreover R.H. Fuller ("The Conception/ Birth of Jesus as a Christological Moment," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 1

[1978]: 37-52) has shown that the virginal conception-birth motif in the NT is not infrequently connected with the "sending of the Son" motif, which (contra Fuller) in many places already presupposes the preexistence of the Son. 3. We are dealing in these chapters with King Messiah who comes to his people in covenant relationship. The point is well established, if occasionally exaggerated, by Nolan, who speaks of the "Royal Covenant Christology." 4. It is remarkable that the title "Son of God," important later in Matthew, is not found in Matthew 1-2. It may lurk behind 2:15. Still it would be false to argue that Matthew does not connect the Virgin Birth with the title "Son of God." Matthew 1-2 serves as a finely wrought prologue for every major theme in the Gospel. We must therefore understand Matthew to be telling us that if Jesus is physically Mary's son and legally Joseph's son, at an even more fundamental level he is God's Son; and in this Matthew agrees with Luke's statement (Luke 1:35). The dual paternity, one legal and one divine, is unambiguous (cf. Cyrus H. Gordon, "Paternity at Two Levels," JBL 96 [1977]: 101).

18 The word translated "birth" is, in the best MSS (cf. Notes), the word translated "genealogy" in 1:1. Maier prefers "history" of Jesus Christ, taking the phrase to refer to the rest of the Gospel. Yet it is best to take the word to mean "birth" or "origins" in the sense of the beginnings of Jesus Messiah. Even a well-developed christology would not want to read the man "Jesus" and his name back into a preexistent state (cf. on 1:1). The pledge to be married was legally binding. Only a divorce writ could break it, and infidelity at that stage was considered adultery (cf. Deut 22:23-24; Moore, *Judaism*, 2:121-22). The marriage itself took place when the groom (already called "husband," 1:19) ceremoniously took the bride home (see on 25: 1-13). Mary is here introduced unobtrusively. Though comparing the Gospel

accounts gives us a picture of her, she does not figure largely in Matthew. "Before they came together" *prin e synelthein autous*) occasionally refers in classical Greek to sexual intercourse (LSJ, p. 1712); in the other thirty instances of *synerchomai* in the NT, there is, however, no sexual overtone. But here sexual union is included, occurring at the formal marriage when the "wife" moved in with her "husband." Only then was sexual intercourse proper. The phrase affirms that Mary's pregnancy was discovered while she was still betrothed, and the context presupposes that both Mary and Joseph had been chaste (cf. McHugh, pp. 157-63; and for the customs of the day, M *Kiddushin* ["Betrothals"] and M *Ketuboth* ["Marriage Deeds"]).

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That Mary was "found" to be with child does not suggest a surreptitious attempt at concealment ("found out") but only that her pregnancy became obvious. This pregnancy came about through the Holy Spirit (even more prominent in Luke's birth narratives). There is no hint of pagan deity-human coupling in crassly physical terms. Instead, the power of the Lord, manifest in the Holy Spirit who was expected to be active in the Messianic Age, miraculously brought about the conception.

19 The peculiar Greek expression in this verse allows several interpretations. There are three important ones. 1. Because Joseph, knowing about the virginal conception, was a just man and had no desire to bring the matter out in the open (i.e., to divulge this miraculous conception), he felt unworthy to continue his plans to marry one so highly favored and planned to withdraw (so Gundry, *Matthew* ; McHugh, pp. 164-72; Schlatter). This assumes that Mary told Joseph about the conception. Nevertheless the natural way to read vv. 18-19 is that Joseph learned of his betrothed's condition when it became unmistakable, not when she told him. Moreover the angel's reason for Joseph to proceed with the marriage (v. 20) assumes (contra Zerwick, par. 477) that Joseph did not know about the virginal conception. 2. Because Joseph was a just man, and because he did not want to expose Mary to public disgrace, he proposed a quiet divorce. The problem with this is that "just" (NIV, "righteous") is not defined according to OT law but is taken in the sense of merciful, not given to passionate vengeance, or even nice (cf. 1Sam 24:17). But this is not its normal sense. Strictly speaking justice conceived in Mosaic prescriptions demanded some sort of action. 3. Because he was a righteous man, Joseph therefore could not in conscience marry Mary who was now thought to be unfaithful. And because such a marriage would have been a tacit admission of his own guilt, and also because he was unwilling to expose her to the disgrace of public divorce, Joseph therefore chose a quieter way, permitted by the law itself. The full rigor of the law might have led to Mary's stoning, though that was rarely

carried out in the first century. Still, a public divorce was possible, though Joseph was apparently unwilling to expose Mary to such shame. The law also allowed for private divorce before two witnesses (Num 5:11-31 interpreted as in *M Sotah* 1:1- 5; cf. David Hill, "A Note on Matthew i. 19," *ExpT* 76 [1964-65]: 133-34; rather similar, A. Tosato, "Joseph, Being a Just Man (Matt 1:19)," *CBQ* 41 [1979]: 547-51). That was what Joseph purposed. It would leave both his righteousness (his conformity to the law) and his compassion intact.

20 Joseph tried to solve his dilemma in what seemed to him the best way possible. Only then did God intervene with a dream. Dreams as means of divine communication in the

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NT are concentrated in Matthew's prologue (1:20; 2:2, 13, 19, 22; else where, possibly 27:19; Acts 2:17). An "angel of the Lord" (four times in the prologue: 1:20, 24; 2:13, 19) calls to mind divine messengers in past ages (e.g., Gen 16:7-14; 22:11-18; Exod 3: 2-4:16), in which it was not always clear whether the heavenly "messenger" (the meaning of *angelos*) was a manifestation of Yahweh. They most commonly appeared as men. We must not read medieval paintings into the word "angel" or the stylized cherubim of Revelation 4:6-8. The focus is on God's gracious intervention and the messenger's private communication, not on the details of angelology and their panoramic sweeps of history common in Jewish apocalyptic literature (Bonnard). The angel's opening words, "Joseph son of David," ties this pericope to the preceding genealogy, maintains interest in the theme of the Davidic Messiah, and, from Joseph's perspective, alerts him to the significance of the role he is to play. The prohibition, "Do not be afraid," confirms that Joseph had already decided on his course when God intervened. He was to "take" Mary home as his wife--an expression primarily reflecting marriage customs of the day but not excluding sexual intercourse (cf. TDNT, 4:11-14, for other uses of the verb)--because Mary's pregnancy was the direct action of the Holy Spirit (a reason that makes nonsense of the attempt by James Lagrand ["How Was the Virgin Mary 'like a man' ... ? A Note on Mt i 18b and Related Syrian Christian Texts," *NovTest* 22 (1980): 97-107] to make the reference to the Holy Spirit in 1:18, *ek pneumatos hagiou* ["through the Holy Spirit"], mean that Mary brought forth, "as a man, by will").

21 It was no doubt divine grace that solicited Mary's cooperation before the conception and Joseph's cooperation only after it. Here Joseph is drawn into the mystery of the Incarnation. In patriarchal times either a mother (Gen 4:25) or a father (Gen 4:26; 5:3; cf. R.E. Brown, *Birth of Messiah* , p. 130)

could name a child. According to Luke 1:31, Mary was told Jesus' name; but Joseph was told both name and reason for it. The Greek is literally "you will call his name Jesus," strange in both English and Greek. This is not only a Semitism (BDF, par. 157 [2]--the expression recurs in 1:23, 25; Luke 1:13, 31) but also uses the future indicative (*kaleseis* , lit., "you will call") with imperatival force--hence NIV, "You are to give him the name Jesus." This construction is very rare in the NT, except where the LXX is being cited; the effect is to give the verse a strong OT nuance. "Jesus" (*Iesous*) is the Greek form of "Joshua" (cf. Gr. of Acts 7:45; Heb 4:8), which, whether in the long form *yehosua* ("Yahweh is salvation," Exod 24:13) or in one of the short forms, e.g., *yesua*(("Yahweh saves," Neh 7:7), identifies Mary's Son as the one who brings Yahweh's promised eschatological salvation. There are several Joshuas in the OT, at least two of them not very significant (1Sam 6:14; 2 Kings 23:8). Two others, however, are used in the NT as types of Christ: Joshua, successor to

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Moses and the one who led the people into the Promised Land (and a type of Christ in Heb 3-4), and Joshua the high priest, contemporary of Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2; 3:2-9; Neh 7:7), "the Branch" who builds the temple of the Lord (Zech 6:11-13). But instead of referring to either of these, the angel explains the significance of the name by referring to Psalm 130:8: "He [Yahweh] himself will redeem Israel from all their sins" (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT*, pp. 127-28). There was much Jewish expectation of a Messiah who would "redeem" Israel from Roman tyranny and even purify his people, whether by fiat or appeal to law (e.g., Pss Sol 17). But there was no expectation that the Davidic Messiah would give his own life as a ransom (20:28) to save his people from their sins. The verb "save" can refer to deliverance from physical danger (8:25), disease (9:21-22), or even death (24:22); in the NT it commonly refers to the comprehensive salvation inaugurated by Jesus that will be consummated at his return. Here it focuses on what is central, viz., salvation from sins; for in the biblical perspective sin is the basic (if not always the immediate) cause of all other calamities. This verse therefore orients the reader to the fundamental purpose of Jesus' coming and the essential nature of the reign he inaugurates as King Messiah, heir of David's throne (cf: Ridderbos, pp. 193ff.). Though to Joseph "his people" would be the Jews, even Joseph would understand from the OT that some Jews fell under God's judgment, while others became a godly remnant. In any event, it is not long before Matthew says that both John the Baptist (3:9) and Jesus (8:11) picture Gentiles joining with the godly remnant to become disciples of the Messiah and members of "his people" (see on 16:18; cf. Gen 49:10; Titus 2:13-14; Rev 14:4). The words "his people" are therefore full of meaning that is progressively unpacked as the Gospel unfolds. They refer to "Messiah's people."

22 Although most EV conclude the angel's remarks at the end of v. 21, there is good reason to think that they continue to the end of v. 23, or at least to the end of the word "Immanuel." This particular fulfillment formula occurs

only three times in Matthew: here; 21:4; 26:56. In the last it is natural to take it as part of Jesus' reported speech (cf. 26:55); and this is possible, though less likely, in 21:4. Matthew's patterns are fairly consistent. So it is not unnatural to extend the quotation to the end of 1:23 as well. (JB recognizes Matthew's consistency by ending Jesus' words in 26:55, making 26:56 Matthew's remark!) This is more convincing when we recall that only these three fulfillment formulas use the perfect *gegonen* (NIV, "took place") instead of the expected aorist. Some take the verb as an instance of a perfect standing for an aorist (so BDF, par. 343, but this is a disputed classification). Others think it means that the event "stands recorded" in the abiding Christian tradition (McNeile; Moule, *Idiom Book* , p. 15); still others take it as a stylistic indicator that Matthew himself introduced the fulfillment passage (Rothfuchs, pp. 33-36). But if we hold that Matthew presents

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the angel as saying the words, then the perfect may enjoy its normal force: "all this has taken place" (cf. esp. Fenton; cf. also Stendahl, Peake; B. Weiss, *Das Matthaus- Etnangelium* [Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1898]; Zahn). R.E. Brown *Birth of Messiah*, p. 144, n. 31) objects that nowhere in Scripture does an angel cite Scripture in this fashion; but, equally, nowhere in Scripture is there a virgin birth in this fashion. Matthew knew that Satan can cite Scripture (4:6-7); he may not have thought it strange if an angel does. Broadus's objection, that the angel would in that case be anticipating an event that has not yet occurred, and this is strange when cast in fulfillment language, lacks weight; for the conception has occurred, and the pregnancy has become well advanced, even if the birth has not yet taken place. Joseph needs to know at this stage that "all this took place" to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet. The weightiest argument is the perfect tense. The last clause is phrased with exquisite care, literally, "the word spoken by [*hypo*] the Lord through [*dia*] the prophet." The prepositions make a distinction between the mediate and the intermediate agent (RHG, p. 636), presupposing a view of Scripture like that in 2 Peter 1:21. Matthew uses the verb "to fulfill" (*pleroo*) primarily in his own fulfillment formulas (1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 26:56; 27:9; cf. 26:54) but also in a few other contexts (3:15; 5:17; 13:48; 23:32). (On Matthew's understanding of fulfillment and on the origins of his fulfillment texts, cf. 5:17-20 and Introduction, section 11. b.) Here two observations are in order. First, most of Matthew's OT quotations are easy enough to understand, but the difficult exceptions have sometimes tended to increase the difficulty of the easier ones. Hard cases make bad theology as well as bad law. Second, Matthew is not simply ripping texts out of OT contexts because he needs to find a prophecy in order to generate a fulfillment. Discernible principles govern his choices, the most important being that he finds in the OT not only isolated predictions regarding the Messiah but also OT history and people as paradigms that, to those with eyes to see, point forward to the Messiah (e.g., see on 2:15).

23 This verse, on which the literature is legion, is reasonably clear in its context here in Matthew. Mary is the virgin; Jesus is her son, Immanuel. But because it is a quotation from Isaiah 7:14, complex issues are raised concerning Matthew's use of the OT. The linguistic evidence is not as determinative as some think. The Hebrew word *almah* is not precisely equivalent to the English word "virgin" (NIV), in which all the focus is on the lack of sexual experience; nor is it precisely equivalent to "young woman," in which the focus is on age without reference to sexual experience. Many prefer the translation "young woman of marriageable age." Yet most of the few OT occurrences refer to a young woman of marriageable age who is also a virgin. The most disputed passage is Proverbs 30:19: "The way of a man with a *maiden* ." Here the

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focus of the word is certainly not on virginity. Some claim that here the maiden cannot possibly be a virgin; others (see esp. E.J. Young, *Studies in Isaiah* [London: Tyndale, 1954], pp. 143-98; Richard Niessen, "The Virginity of the `alemah in Isaiah 7:14," BS 137 [1980]: 133-50) insist that Proverbs 30:19 refers to a young man wooing and winning a maiden still a virgin. Although it is fair to say that most OT occurrences presuppose that the *almah* is a virgin, because of Proverbs 30:19, one cannot be certain the word necessarily means that. Linguistics has shown that the etymological arguments (reviewed by Niessen) have little force. Young argues that *almah* is chosen by Isaiah because the most likely alternative (*betulah*) can refer to a married woman (Joel 1:8 is commonly cited; Young is supported by Gordon J. Wenham, " *Bethulah* , `A Girl of Marriageable Age,'" VetTest 22 [1972]: 326-29). Again, however, the linguistic argument is not as clear-cut as we might like. Tom Wadsworth ("Is There a Hebrew Word for Virgin? *Bethulah* in the Old Testament," *Restoration Quarterly* 23 [1980]: 161-71) insists that every occurrence of *betulah* in the OT does refer to a virgin: the woman in Joel 1:8, for instance, is betrothed. Again the evidence is a trifle ambiguous. In short there is a presumption in favor of rendering *almah* by "young virgin" or the like in Isaiah 7:14. Nevertheless other evidence must be given a hearing. The LXX renders the word by *parthenos* which almost always means "virgin." Yet even with this word there are exceptions: Genesis 34:4 refers to Dinah as a *parthenos* even though the previous verse makes it clear she is no longer a virgin. This sort of datum prompts C.H. Dodd ("New Testament Translation Problems I," *The Bible Translator* 27 [1976]: 301-5, published posthumously) to suggest that *parthenos* means "young woman" even in Matthew 1:23 and Luke 1:27. This will not do; the overwhelming majority of the occurrences of *parthenos* in both biblical and profane Greek require the rendering "virgin"; and the unambiguous context of Matthew 1 (cf. vv. 16, 18, 20, 25) puts Matthew's intent beyond dispute, as Jean Carmignac (The Meaning of *parthenos* in Luke 1. 27: A reply to C.H. Dodd, *The Bible Translator* 28

[1977]: 327-30) was quick to point out. If, unlike the LXX, the later (second century

A.D.) Greek renderings of the Hebrew text of Isaiah 7:14 prefer *neanis* ("young woman") to *parthenos* (so Aq., Symm., Theod.), we may legitimately suspect a conscious effort by the Jewish translators to avoid the Christian interpretation of Isaiah 7:14. The crucial question is how we are to understand Isaiah 7:14 in its relationship to Matthew 1:23. Of the many suggestions, five deserve mention. 1. Hill, J.B. Taylor (Douglas, *Bible Dictionary* , 3:1625), and others support W.C. van Unniks argument ("Dominus Vobiscum," *New Testament Essays* , ed. A.J.B. Higgins [Manchester: University Press, 1959], pp. 270-305), who claimed Isaiah meant that a young woman named her child Immanuel as a tribute to God's presence and

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deliverance and that the passage applies to Jesus because Immanuel fits his mission. This does not take the "sign" (Isa 7:11, 14) seriously; v. 11 expects something spectacular. Nor does it adequately consider the time lapse (vv. 15-17). Moreover, it assumes a very casual link between Isaiah and Matthew. 2. Many others take Isaiah as saying that a young woman--a virgin at the time of the prophecy (Broadus)--would bear a son and that before he reaches the age of discretion (perhaps less than two years from the time of the prophecy), Ahaz will be delivered from his enemies. Matthew, being an inspired writer, sees a later fulfillment in Jesus; and we must accept it on Matthew's authority. W.S. LaSor thinks this provides canonical support for a *sensus plenior* ("fuller sense") approach to Scripture ("The *Sensus Plenior* and Biblical Interpretation," *Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation*, edd. W. Ward Gasque and William S. LaSor [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978], pp. 271-

72). In addition to several deficiencies in interpreting Isaiah 7:14-17 (e.g., the supernaturalness of the sign in 7:11 is not continued in 7:14), this position is intrinsically unstable, seeking either a deeper connection between Isaiah and Matthew or less reliance on Matthew's authority. Hendriksen (p. 140) holds that the destruction of Pekah and Rezin was a clear sign that the line of the Messiah was being protected. But this is to postulate, without textual warrant, two signs--the sign of the child and the sign of the deliverance--and it presupposes that Ahaz possessed remarkable theological acumen in recognizing the latter sign. 3. Many (esp. older) commentators (e.g., Alexander, Hengstenberg, Young) reject any notion of double fulfillment and say that Isaiah 7:14 refers exclusively to Jesus Christ. This does justice to the expectation of a miraculous sign, the significance of "Immanuel," and the most likely meaning of *almah* and *parthenos*. But it puts more strain on the relation of a sign to Ahaz. It seems weak to say that before a period of time equivalent to the length of time between Jesus' (Immanuel's) conception and his reaching an age of discretion Ahaz's enemies will be destroyed. Most commentators in this group insist on a miraculous element in "sign" (v. 11). But though Immanuel's birth is miraculous, how is the "sign" given Ahaz

miraculous? 4. A few have argued, most recently Gene Rice ("A Neglected Interpretation of the Immanuel Prophecy," ZAW 90 [1978]: 220-27), that in Isaiah 7:14-17 Immanuel represents the righteous remnant--God is "with them"--and that the mother is Zion. This may be fairly applied to Jesus and Mary in Matthew 1:23, since Jesus' personal history seems to recapitulate something of the Jews' national history (cf. 2:15; 4:1-4). Yet this sounds contrived. Would Ahaz have understood the words so metaphorically? And though Jesus sometimes appears to recapitulate Israel, it is doubtful that NT writers ever thought Mary recapitulates Zion. 5. The most plausible view is that of J.A. Motyer ("Context and Content in the Interpretation of Isaiah 7:14," *Tyndale Bulletin* 21 [1970]: 118-25). It is a modified

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form of the third interpretation and depends in part on recognizing a crucial feature in Isaiah. Signs in the OT may function as a present persuader (e.g., Exod 4:8-9) or as "future confirmation" (e.g., Exod 3:12). Isaiah 7:14 falls in the latter case because Immanuel's birth comes too late to be a "present persuader." The "sign" (v. 11) points primarily to threat and foreboding. Ahaz has rejected the Lord's gracious offer (vv. 10-12), and Isaiah responds in wrath (v. 13). The "curds and honey" Immanuel will eat (v. 15) represent the only food left in the land on the day of wrath (vv. 18-22). Even the promise of Ephraim's destruction (v. 8) must be understood to embrace a warning (v. 9b; Motyer, "Isaiah 7:14," pp. 121-22). Isaiah sees a threat, not simply to Ahaz, but to the "house of David" (vv. 2, 13) caught up in faithlessness. To this faithless house Isaiah utters his prophecy. Therefore Immanuel's birth follows the coming events (it is a "future confirmation") and will take place when the Davidic dynasty has lost the throne. Motyer shows the close parallels between the prophetic word to Judah (7:1-9:7) and the prophetic word to Ephraim (9:8-11:16). To both there come the moment of decision as the Lord's word threatens wrath (7:1-17; 9:8-10:4), the time of judgment mediated by the Assyrian invasion (7:18-8:8; 10:5-15), the destruction of God's foes but the salvation of a remnant (8:9-22; 10:16-34), and the promise of a glorious hope as the Davidic monarch reigns and brings prosperity to his people (9:1-7; 11:1-16). The twofold structure argues for the cohesive unity between the prophecy of Judah and that to Ephraim. If this is correct, Isaiah 7:1-9:7 must be read as a unit--i.e., 7:14 must not be treated in isolation. The promised Immanuel (7:14) will possess the land (8:8), thwart all opponents (8:10), appear in Galilee of the Gentiles (9:1) as a great light to those in the land of the shadow of death (9:2). He is the Child and Son called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" in 9:6, whose government and peace will never end as he reigns on David's throne forever (9:7).

Much of Motyer's work is confirmed by a recent article by Joseph Jensen ("The Age of Immanuel," CBQ 41 [1979]: 220-39; he does not refer to Motyer), who extends the plausibility of this structure by showing that Isaiah 7:15 should be taken in a final sense; i.e., Immanuel will eat the bread of affliction in order to learn (unlike Ahaz!) the lesson of obedience. There is no reference to "age of discretion." Further, Jensen believes that 7:16-25 points to Immanuel's coming only after the destruction of the land (6:9-13 suggests the destruction extends to Judah as well as to Israel); that Immanuel and Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz, Isaiah's son (8:1), are not the same; and that only Isaiah's son sets a time limit relevant to Ahaz.

The foregoing discussion was unavoidable. For if Motyer's view fairly represents Isaiah's thought, and if Matthew understood him in this way, then much light is shed on the first Gospel. The Immanuel figure of Isaiah 7:14 is a messianic figure, a point

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Matthew has rightly grasped. Moreover this interpretation turns on an understanding of the place of the Exile in Isaiah 6-12, and Matthew has divided up his genealogy (1: 11-12, 17) precisely in order to draw attention to the Exile. In 2:17-18 the theme of the Exile returns. A little later, as Jesus begins his ministry (4:12-16), Matthew quotes Isaiah 9:1-2, which, if the interpretation adopted here is correct, properly belongs to the Immanuel prophecies of Isaiah 7:14, 9:6. Small wonder that after such comments by Matthew, Jesus' next words announced the kingdom (4:17; cf. Isa 9:7). Isaiah's reference to Immanuel's affliction for the sake of learning obedience (cf. on Isa 7:15 above) anticipates Jesus' humiliation, suffering, and obedient sonship, a recurring theme in this Gospel. This interpretation also partially explains Matthew's interest in the Davidic lineage; and it strengthens a strong interpretation of "Immanuel." Most scholars (e.g., Bonnard) suppose that this name in Isaiah reflects a hope that God would make himself present with his people ("Immanuel" derives from *immanuel* , "God with us"); and they apply the name to Jesus in a similar way, to mean that God is with us, and for us, because of Jesus. But if Immanuel in Isaiah is a messianic figure whose titles include "Mighty God," there is reason to think that "Immanuel" refers to Jesus himself, that he is "God with us." Matthew's use of the preposition "with" at the end of 1:23 favors this (cf. Fenton, "Matthew 1:20-23," p. 81). Though "Immanuel" is not a name in the sense that "Jesus" is Messiah's name (1:21), in the OT Solomon was named "Jedidiah" ("Beloved of Yahweh," 2Sam 12:25), even though he apparently was not called that. Similarly Immanuel is a "name" in the sense of title or description. No greater blessing can be conceived than for God to dwell with his people (Isa 60: 18-20); Ezek 48:35; Rev 21:23). Jesus is the one called "God with us": the designation evokes John 1:14, 18. As if that were not enough, Jesus promises just before his ascension to be with us to the end of the age (28:20; cf. also 18:20), when he will return to share his messianic banquet with his people (25:10). If "Immanuel" is rightly interpreted in this sense, then the question must be raised whether "Jesus" (1:21) should receive the same treatment. Does "Jesus" ("Yahweh saves") mean Mary's Son merely brings

Yahweh's salvation, or is he him self in some sense the Yahweh who saves? If "Immanuel" entails the higher christology, it is not implausible that Matthew sees the same in "Jesus." The least we can say is that Matthew does not hesitate to apply OT passages descriptive of Yahweh directly to Jesus (cf. on 3:3). Matthew's quotation of Isaiah 7:14 is very close to the LXX; but he changes "you will call" to "they will call." This may reflect a rendering of the original Hebrew, if 1QIsaa is pointed appropriately (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT* , p. 90). But there is more here: The people whose sins Jesus forgives (1:21) are the ones who will gladly call him "God with us" (cf. Frankemolle, pp. 17-19).

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24-25 When Joseph woke up (from his sleep, not his dream), he "took Mary home as his wife" (v. 24; same expression as in 1:20). Throughout Matthew 1-2 the pattern of God's sovereign intervention followed by Joseph's or the Magi's response is repeated. While the story is told simply, Joseph's obedience and submission under these circumstances is scarcely less remarkable than Mary's (Luke 1:38). Matthew wants to make Jesus' virginal conception quite unambiguous, for he adds that Joseph had no sexual union with Mary (lit., he did not "know" her, an OT euphemism) until she gave birth to Jesus (v. 25). The "until" clause most naturally means that Mary and Joseph enjoyed normal conjugal relations after Jesus' birth (cf. further on 12:46; 13:55). Contrary to McHugh (p. 204), the imperfect *eginosken* ("did not know [her]") does not hint at continued celibacy after Jesus' birth but stresses the faithfulness of the celibacy till Jesus' birth. So the virgin-conceived Immanuel was born. And eight days later, when the time came for him to be circumcised (Luke 2:21), Joseph named him "Jesus."

C. The Visit of the Magi (2:1-12)

Few passages have received more diverse interpretations than this one (cf. W.A. Schulze, "Zur Geschichte der Auslegung von Matth. 2,1-12," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 31 [1975]: 150-60; M. Hengel and H. Merkel, "Die Magier aus dem Osten und die Flucht nach agypten (Mt 2) im Rahmen der antiken Religionsgeschichte und der Theologie des Matthaus," in Hoffmann et al., pp. 139-69). During the last hundred years or so, such diversity has sometimes sprung from a reluctance to accept either the supernatural details or the entire story as historically true. Thus it becomes necessary to find theological motive for creating the pericope. E. Nellesen (*Das Kind und seine Mutter* [Stuttgart: KBW, 1969]), though acute in his theological observations, maintains the evangelist has fused and improved two

Palestinian (and probably Galilean) legends (similarly Soares Prabhu, pp. 261-93). Many (e.g., Gundry, Hill, Schweizer) suppose that the OT quotations constituted a collection of testimonia to Jesus in their own right, before Matthew (or the church from which he sprang) embellished them with midrashic stories to produce our Matthew 2. The stories have doubtful ties with history. Their real point is theological, to show that the Messiah was born in Bethlehem as predicted, that his appearance provoked Jewish hostility but won Gentile acceptance (the Magi), and above all to set up a contrast between Moses and Jesus. Jewish tradition is steeped in stories about Pharaoh's astrologers knowing that the mother of Israel's future deliverer was pregnant, that there was a slaughter (by drowning) of all Jewish and Egyptian infants for the next nine months, that the entire

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house in which Moses was born was filled with great light, etc. Matthew, therefore, may have been trying to show Jesus' significance by ascribing to his birth similar and perhaps greater effects. Full-blown, these stories about Moses are preserved in Midrash Rabbah on Exodus 1, an eighth century A.D. compilation. Their roots, however, stretch at least as far back as the first century (Jos. Antiq. II, 205-7, 15-16

[ix. 2-3]; cf. also Targ. j on Exod 1:15; and Davies, *Setting*, pp. 78-82, for other veiled hints to Moses in Matt 1-2). This reconstruction has numerous weaknesses. The independent existence of collected testimonia is not certain. There is no evidence of Midrashim written on such a diverse collection of texts (if the collection itself ever existed). The presupposed antithesis between theology and history is false; on the face of it, Matthew records history so as to bring out its theological significance and its relation to Scripture. Matthew writes at so early a time that if Jesus had not been born in Bethlehem this claim would have been challenged. We are dealing with decades, not the millennium and a half separating Moses from Josephus. First-century stories about astrological deductions connected with Augustus Caesar's birth (Suetonius *De Vita Caesarum* 94), about Parthian visits to Nero (Cicero *De Divinatione* 1. 47), or about Moses' birth (above) may suggest that Matthew 2:1-12 was fabricated; but they may equally attest the prevalence of astrology and the fact that some such visits undoubtedly occurred in the ancient world. Thus they would establish the verisimilitude of the passage. More important, the stories about Moses' birth (e.g., in Jos.) were almost certainly regarded by most readers as factually true; and there can be little doubt (contra Gundry) that Matthew intends his stories about Jesus to be read the same way. If so, we may conceivably argue that Matthew was himself deceived or else wished to deceive. What we cannot do is to argue that he wrote in a fashion recognized by its form to be divorced from historical reality. In any case, the suggested backdrop--stories about Moses' birth--is not very apt; close study shows the theological matrix of the prologue centering on Jesus as the Davidic King and Son of God (cf. esp. Nolan; Kingsbury, *Matthew*), not on him as the new Moses, to whom the

allusions are few and inexplicit. Of course Matthew did not just chronicle meaningless events. He wrote to develop his theme of fulfillment of Scripture (Had not God promised that nations would be drawn to Messiah's light [Isa 60:3]?); to establish God's providential and supernatural care of this virgin-born Son; to anticipate the hostilities, resentment, and suffering he would face; and to hint at the fact that Gentiles would be drawn into his reign (cf. Isa 60:3; Nellessen, *Das Kind* , p. 120, acutely compares 8:11-12; cf. 28:16-20). The Magi will be like the men of Nineveh who will rise up in judgment and condemn those who, despite their privilege of much greater light, did not receive the promised Messiah and bow to his reign (12:41-42).

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1 Bethlehem, the place near which Jacob buried his Rachel (Gen 35:19) and Ruth met Boaz (Ruth 1:22-2:6), was preeminently the town where David was born and reared. For Christians it has become the place where angel hosts broke the silence and announced Messiah's birth (Luke 2). It is distinguished from the Bethlehem in Zebulun (Josh 19:15) by the words "in Judea." Scholars have seen in these two words a preparation for v. 6: "Bethlehem, in the land of Judah" (though there the Hebrew form "Judah" is used rather than the Greek "Judea"), or for v. 2: "king of the Jews." But "Bethlehem in Judea" may be not much more than a stereotyped phrase (cf. Judg 17: 7, 9; 19:1-20; Ruth 1:1-2; 1Sam 17:12; Matt 2:5). Luke 2:39 makes no mention of an extended stay in Bethlehem and a trip to Egypt before the return to Nazareth; if he knew of these events, Luke found them irrelevant to his purpose. Unlike Luke, Matthew offers no description of Jesus' birth or the shepherd's visit; he specifies the time of Jesus' birth as having occurred during King Herod's reign (so also Luke 1:5). Herod the Great, as he is now called, was born in 73 B.C. and was named king of Judea by the Roman Senate in 40 B.C. By 37 B.C. he had crushed, with the help of Roman forces, all opposition to his rule. Son of the Idumean Antipater, he was wealthy, politically gifted, intensely loyal, an excellent administrator, and clever enough to remain in the good graces of successive Roman emperors. His famine relief was superb and his building projects (including the temple, begun 20 B.C.) admired even by his foes. But he loved power, inflicted incredibly heavy taxes on the people, and resented the fact that many Jews considered him a usurper. In his last years, suffering an illness that compounded his paranoia, he turned to cruelty and in fits of rage and jealousy killed close associates, his wife Mariamne (of Jewish descent from the Maccabeans), and at least two of his sons (cf. Jos. Antiq. XIV-XVIII; S. Perowne, *The Life and Times of Herod the Great* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1956]; and esp. Abraham Schalit, *Konig Herodes: Der Mann und sein Werk* [Berlin: de Gruyter, 1969]).

Traditionally some have argued that Herod died in 4 B.C. ; so Jesus must have been born before that. Josephus (Antiq. XVII, 167 [vi. 4]) mentions an eclipse of the moon shortly before Herod's death, and this has normally been identified as having occurred on 12-13 March 4 B.C. After Herod's death there was a Passover celebration Jos. Wars II, 10 [i. 3]; Antiq. XVII, 213 [ix. 3]), presumably 11 April 4 B.C. ; so the date of his death at first glance seems secure. Recently, however, Ernest L. Martin *The Birth of Christ Recalculated!* [Pasadena: FBR, 1978], pp. 22-49) has advanced solid reasons for thinking the eclipse occurred 10 January 1 B.C. ; and, integrating this information with his interpretation of other relevant data, Martin proposes a birth date for Jesus in September, 2 B.C. (His detailed pinpointing of 1 Sept., based on his understanding of Rev 12:1-5, is too speculative to be considered.) Several lines of evidence stand

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against this thesis: Josephus dates the length of Herod's reign as thirty-seven years from his accession or thirty-four from the time of his effective reign (Antiq. XVII, 191 [viii.1]; Wars I, 665 [xxxiii. 8]), and these favor a death date in 4 B.C. Coins dated at the time of 4 B.C., minted under the reign of Herod's sons, support the traditional date. Martin answers these objections by supposing that Herod's successors antedated their reigns to 4 B.C. in honor of Herod's sons Alexander and Aristobulus whom he had killed in that year and by arguing that between 4 B.C. and 1 B.C. there was some form of joint rule shared by Herod and his son Antipater. In that case Josephus's figures relating to the length of Herod's rule refer to his unshared reign. This is psychologically unconvincing; the man who murdered two of his sons out of paranoia and jealousy and arranged to have hundreds of Jewish leaders executed on the day of his death was not likely to share his authority, even in a merely formal way. The question remains unresolved. For a more traditional dating of Jesus' birth in late 5 B.C. or early 4 B.C., see Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects*, pp. 11-27 (written before Martin's work). The "Magi" (*magoi*) are not easily identified with precision. Several centuries earlier the term was used for a priestly caste of Medes who enjoyed special power to interpret dreams. Daniel (1:20; 2:2; 4:7; 5:7) refers to *magoi* in the Babylonian Empire. In later centuries down to NT times, the term loosely covered a wide variety of men interested in dreams, astrology magic, books thought to contain mysterious references to the future, and the like. Some Magi honestly inquired after truth; many were rogues and charlatans (e.g., Acts 8:9; 13:6, 8; cf. R.E. Brown, *Birth of Messiah*, pp. 167-68, 197-200; TDNT, 4:356-59). Apparently these men came to Bethlehem spurred on by astrological calculations. But they had probably built up their expectation of a kingly figure by working through assorted Jewish books (cf. W.M. Ramsey, *The Bearing of Recent Discovery on the Trustworthiness of the New Testament*, 4th ed. [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1920], pp. 140-49). The tradition that the Magi were kings can be traced as far back as Tertullian (died c. 225). It probably developed under the influence of OT passages that say

kings will come and worship Messiah (cf. Pss 68:29, 31; 72:10-11; Isa 49:7; 60:1-6). The theory that there were *three* "wise men" is probably a deduction from the *three* gifts (2:11). By the end of the sixth century, the wise men were named: Melkon (later Melchior), Balthasar, and Gasper. Matthew gives no names. His *magoi* come to Jerusalem (which, like Bethlehem, has strong Davidic connections [2Sam 5:5-9]), arriving, apparently (cf. Note 5), from the east--possibly from Babylon, where a sizable Jewish settlement wielded considerable influence, but possibly from Persia or from the Arabian desert. The more distant Babylon may be supported by the travel time apparently required (see on 2:16).

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2 The Magi saw a star "when it rose" (NIV mg.; cf. note at 2:1). What they saw remains uncertain. 1. Kepler (died 1630) pointed out that in the Roman year A.U.C. 747 (7 B.C.), there occurred a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn in the zodiacal constellation of Pisces, a sign sometimes connected in ancient astrology with the He brews. Many details can be fitted to this suggestion (Alf; R.E. Brown, *Birth of Messiah* , pp. 172-73; DNTT, 3:735; Maier), not least that medieval Jews saw messianic significance in the same planetary conjunction. Moreover the conjunction occurred in May, October, and November of 7 B.C. ; and one of the latter two appearances could account for 2:9. But there is no solid evidence that the ancients referred to such conjunctions as "stars"; and even at their closest proximity, Jupiter and Saturn would have been about one degree apart--a perceived distance about twice the diameter of the moon--and therefore never fused into one image. 2. Kepler himself preferred the suggestion that this was a supernova--a faint star that violently explodes and gives off enormous amounts of light for a few weeks or months. The suggestion is no more than guess: there is no confirming evidence, and it is difficult on this theory to account for 2:9. 3. Others have suggested comets, what some older writers refer to as "variable stars." The most likely is Halley's Comet (cf. Lagrange), which passed overhead in 12 B.C. ; but this seems impossibly early.

4. Martin opts for a number of planetary conjunctions and massings in 3/2 B.C. This suggestion depends on his entire reconstruction and late date for Herod's death (see on 2:1), which is no more than a possibility. The theory also shares some of the difficulties of 1. 5. In the light of 2:9, many commentators insist that astronomical considerations are a waste of time: Matthew presents the "star" as strictly supernatural. This too is possible and obviously impossible to falsify, but 2:9 is not as determinative as is often suggested (cf. on 2:9). The evidence is inconclusive. Matthew uses language almost certainly alluding to Numbers 24:17: "A star will come out of Jacob; a scepter will rise out of Israel." This oracle, spoken by Balaam, who came

"from the eastern mountains" (Num 23:7), was widely regarded as messianic (Targ. Jonathan and Onkelos; CD 7:19-20; 1QM 11:6; 1QSb 5:27; 4QTest 12-13; T Judah 24:1). Both Matthew and Numbers deal with the king of Israel (cf. Num 24:7), though Matthew does not resort to the uncontrolled allegorizing on "star" frequently found in early postapostolic Christian writings (cf. Jean Danielou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity* [London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1964], pp. 214-24).

Granting Matthew's informed devotion to the OT, he surely knew that the OT mocks astrologers (Isa 47:13-15; Dan 1:20; 2:27; 4:7; 5:7) and forbids astrology (Jer 10:1-2).

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Nevertheless it was widely practiced in the first century, even among Jews (cf. Albright and Mann). Matthew neither condemns nor sanctions it; instead, he contrasts the eagerness of the Magi to worship Jesus, despite their limited knowledge, with the apathy of the Jewish leaders and the hostility of Herod's court--all of whom had the Scriptures to inform them. Formal knowledge of the Scriptures, Matthew implies, does not in itself lead to knowing who Jesus is; just as God sovereignly worked through Caesar's decree that a census be taken (Luke 2:1) to ensure Jesus' birth in Bethlehem to fulfill prophecy, so God sovereignly used the Magi's calculations to bring about the situation this pericope describes. The question the Magi asked does not tell how their astrology led them to seek a "king of the Jews" and what made them think this particular star was "his." The widely held idea that the ancient world was looking for a Jewish leader of renown (based largely on Jos. War VI, 312-13 [v.4]; Suetonius *Vespasian* 4; Tacitus *Histories* v.13; Virgil *Eclogue* 4) cannot stand close scrutiny. The Josephus passage refers to Jewish expectations of Messiah, and the others probably borrowed from Josephus. The Magi may have linked the star to "the king of the Jews" through studying the OT and other Jewish writings--a possibility made plausible by the presence of the large Jewish community in Babylon. We must not think that the Magi's question meant, Where is the one born to become king of the Jews? but, Where is the one born king of the Jews? (cf. Notes). His kingly status was not conferred on him later on; it was his from birth. Jesus' participation in the Davidic dynasty has already been established by the genealogy. The same title the Magi gave him found its place over the cross (27:37). "Worship" (cf. Notes) need not imply that the Magi recognized Jesus' divinity; it may simply mean "do homage" (Broadus). Their own statement suggests homage paid royalty rather than the worship of Deity. But Matthew, having already told of the virginal conception, doubtless expected his readers to discern something more--viz., that the Magi "worshipped" better than they knew.

3 In contrast with (*de* , a mild adversative; NIV, "when") the Magi's desire to worship the King of the Jews, Herod is deeply troubled. In this "all Jerusalem" joins him, not because most of the people would have been sorry to see Herod replaced or because they were reluctant to see the coming of King Messiah, but because they well knew that any question like the Magi's would result in more cruelty from the ailing Herod, whose paranoia had led him to murder his favorite wife and two sons.

4 Here "all" modifies "chief priests and teachers of the law," not "the people," and refers to those who were living in Jerusalem and could be quickly consulted. "Chief priests" refers to the hierarchy, made up of the current high priest and any who had

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formerly occupied this post (since Herod, contrary to the law, made fairly frequent changes in the high priesthood) and a substantial number of other leading priests (cf. Jos. Antiq. XX, 180 [viii. 8]; War IV, 159-60 [iii. 9]; the same Greek word is used for "high priests" and "chief priests"). The "teachers of the law," or "scribes" as other EV call them, were experts in the OT and in its copious oral tradition. Their work was not so much copying out OT MSS (as the word "scribes" suggests) as teaching the OT. Because much civil law was based on the OT and the interpretations of the OT fostered by the leaders, the "scribes" were also "lawyers" (cf. 22:35: "an expert in the law"). The vast majority of the scribes were Pharisees; the priests were Sadducees. The two groups barely got along, and therefore Schweizer (*Matthew*) judges this verse "historically almost inconceivable." But Matthew does not say the two groups came together at the same time; Herod, unloved by either group, may well have called both to guard against being tricked. If the Pharisees and Sadducees barely spoke to one another, there was less likelihood of collusion. "He asked them" (*epynthaneto* , the imperfect tense sometimes connotes tentative requests: Herod may have expected the rebuff of silence; cf. Turner, *Insights* , p. 27) where the Christ (here a title: see on 1:1) would be born, understanding that "the Christ" and "the king of the Jews" (2:2) were titles of the same expected person. (See 26:63; 27:37 for the same equivalence.)

5 The Jewish leaders answered the question by referring to what stands written, which is the force of the perfect passive verb *gegraptai* (NIV, "has written"), suggesting the authoritative and regulative force of the document referred to (Deiss BS, pp. 112-14, 249-50). NIV misses the preposition *dia* (lit., "what stands written *through* the prophet"), which implies that the prophet is not the ultimate source of what stands written (cf. on 1:22). Both in 1:22 and here, some textual witnesses insert the name of the prophet (e.g.,

Micah or even Isaiah). "Bethlehem in Judea" was introduced into the narrative in 2:1.

6 While expectation that the Messiah must come from Bethlehem occurs elsewhere

(e.g., John 7:42; cf. Targ. on Mic 5:1: "Out of you shall come forth before me the Messiah"), here it rests on Micah 5:2 (1 MT), to which are appended some words from 2 Samuel 5:2 (1 Chronicles 11:2). Matthew follows neither the MT nor the LXX and his changes have provoked considerable speculation. 1. "Bethlehem Ephrathah" (LXX, "house of Ephrathah") becomes "Bethlehem, in the land of Judah." Hill (*Matthew*) says this change was made to exclude "any other Judean city like Jerusalem." But this reads too much into what is a normal LXX way of referring to Bethlehem (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT* , p. 91). "Ephrathah" is archaic and even in the MT primarily restricted to poetical sections like Micah 5:2. 2. The strong negative "by no means" *oudamos* is added in Matthew and formally

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contradicts Micah 5:2. It is often argued that this change has been made to highlight Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah. Indeed, Gundry's commentary uses this change as an example of Matthew's midrashic use of the OT, a use so free that he does not fear outright contradiction. There are better explanations. Even the MT of Micah implies Bethlehem's greatness: "though you are small among the clans [or rulers, who personify the cities; KJV's `thousands' is pedantically correct, but `thousands' was a way of referring to the great clans into which the tribes were subdivided; of Judg 6:15; 1Sam 10:19; 23:23; Isa 60:22] of Judah" sets the stage for the greatness that follows. Equally, Matthew's formulation assumes that, apart from being Messiah's birthplace, Bethlehem is indeed of little importance (cf. Hengstenberg, 1:475-76, noted by Gundry, *Use of OT*, pp. 91-92). To put it another way, though the second line of Micah 5:2 formally contradicts the second line of Matthew 2:6, a wholistic reading of the verses shows the contradiction to be merely formal. Matthew 2:6 has perhaps slightly greater emphasis on the one factor that makes Bethlehem great.

3. Matthew adds the shepherd language of 2 Samuel 5:2, making it plain that the ruler in Micah 5:2 is none other than the one who fulfills the promises to David. It is tempting to think that Matthew sees a pair of contrasts (1) between the false shepherds of Israel who have provided sound answers but no leadership (cf. 23:2-7) and Jesus who is the true Shepherd of his people Israel and (2) between a ruler like Herod and the one born to rule. The words "my people Israel" are included, not simply because they are found in 2 Samuel 5:2, but because Matthew, like Paul, faithfully records both the essential Jewish focus of the OT promises and the OT expectation of broader application to the Gentiles (cf. on 1:1, 5, 21). Jesus is not only the promised Davidic king but also the promised hope of blessing to all the nations, the one who will claim their obeisance (cf. Ps 68:28-35; Isa 18:1-3, 7; 45:14; 60:6; Zeph 3:10). That same duality makes the desires of the Gentile Magi to worship the Messiah stand out against the apathy of the leaders who did not,

apparently, take the trouble to go to Bethlehem. Of course, the Jewish leaders may have seen the arrival of the Magi in Jerusalem as one more false alarm. As far as we can tell, the Sadducees (and therefore the chief priests) had no interest in the question of when the Messiah would come; the Pharisees (and therefore most teachers of the law) expected him to come only somewhat later. The Essenes alone, who were not consulted by Herod, expected the Messiah imminently (cf. R.T. Beckwith, "The Significance of the Calendar for Interpreting Essene Chronology and Eschatology," *Revue de Qumran* 38 [1980]: 167-202). But Matthew plainly says that, though Jesus was the Messiah, born in David's line and certain to be Shepherd and Ruler of Israel, it was the Gentiles who came to worship him.

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7-10 The reason Herod wanted to learn, at his secret meeting with the Magi (v. 7), the exact time the star appeared was that he had already schemed to kill the small boys of Bethlehem (cf: v. 16). The entire story hangs together (see on v. 16). Herod's hypocritical humility--"so that I may go and worship him" (v. 8)--deceived the Magi. Conscious of his success, Herod sent no escort with them. This was not "absurdly trusting" (Schweizer, *Matthew*), since the deception depended on winning the Magi's confidence. Herod could scarcely have been expected to foresee God's intervention (v. 12).

Matthew does not say that the rising star the Magi had seen (cf. on 2:2) led them to Jerusalem. They went first to the capital city because they thought it the natural place for the King of the Jews to be born. But now the star reappeared ahead of them (v. 9) as they made their way to Bethlehem (it was not uncommon to travel at night). Taking this as confirming their purposes, the Magi were overjoyed (v. 10). The Greek text does not imply that the star pointed out the house where Jesus was; it may simply have hovered over Bethlehem as the Magi approached it. They would then have found the exact house through discreet inquiry since (Luke 2:17-18) the shepherds who came to worship the newborn Jesus did not keep silent about what they saw.

11 This verse plainly alludes to Psalm 72:10-11 and Isaiah 60:6, passages that rein force the emphasis on the Gentiles (cf. on v. 6). Nolan's suggestion (pp. 206-9) that the closest parallel is Isaiah 39:1-2 is linguistically attractive but contextually weak. The evidence that Hezekiah served as an eschatological figure is poor and fails to explain why he should be opening up his treasure store to his visitors. Some time had elapsed since Jesus' birth (vv. 7, 16), and the family was settled in a house. While the Magi saw both the child and his mother, their worship (cf. on v. 2) was for him alone. Bringing gifts was particularly important in the ancient East when approaching a superior (cf. Gen 43:11; 1Sam 9:7-8; 1 Kings 10:2). Usually such gifts were reciprocated

(Derrett, *NT Studies* , 2:28). That is not mentioned here, but a first- century reader might have assumed it and seen the Great Commission (28:18-20) as leading to its abundant fruition. Frankincense is a glittering, odorous gum obtained by making incisions in the bark of several trees; myrrh exudes from a tree found in Arabia and a few other places and was a much-valued spice and perfume (Ps 45:8; Ss 3:6) used in embalming (John 19:39). Commentators, ancient (Origen, *Contra Celsum* 1. 60) and modern (Hendriksen), have found symbolic value in the three gifts--gold suggesting royalty, incense divinity, and myrrh the Passion and burial. This interpretation demands too much insight from the Magi. The three gifts were simply expensive and not uncommon presents and may have helped finance the trip to Egypt. The word "treasures" probably means "coffers" or "treasure- boxes" in this context.

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12 This second dream (cf. 1:20) mentions no angel. Perhaps Joseph and the Magi compared notes and saw their danger (cf. P. Gaechter, "Die Magierperikope," *Zeit schrift fur Katholische Theologie* 90 [1968]: 257-95); amid their fear and uncertainty, the dreams led them (vv. 12-13) to flee. Which way the Magi went is unclear; they might have gone around the north end of the Dead Sea, avoiding Jerusalem, or they might have gone around the south end of the sea.

D. The Escape to Egypt (2:13-15)

Many commentators think this account has been created to flesh out the OT text said to be "fulfilled" (v. 15). On the broader critical questions, see introductory comments at 1:18-25 and 2:1-12. Granted what we know of Herod's final years there is nothing historically improbable about this account; and precisely because the fulfillment text is difficult, one may assume that the story called forth reflection on the OT text rather than vice versa.

13-14 The verb "had gone" (v. 13) is the same as "returned" in the preceding verse, tying the two accounts together. This is the third dream in these two chapters, and for the second time an angel of the Lord is mentioned (cf. 1:20; 2:12). The point is that God took sovereign action to preserve his Messiah, his Son--something well understood by Jesus himself, and a major theme in the Gospel of John. Egypt was a natural place to which to flee. It was nearby, a well-ordered Roman province outside Herod's jurisdiction; and, according to Philo (writing c. A.D. 40), its population included about a million Jews. Earlier generations of Israelites fleeing their homeland (1 Kings 11:40; Jer 26:21-23; 43:7) had sought refuge in Egypt. But if Matthew was thinking of any particular OT parallel, probably Jacob and his family (Gen 46) fleeing the famine in Canaan was in his mind, since

that is the trip that set the stage for the Exodus (cf. 2: 15).

The angel's command was explicit. Joseph, Mary, and the Child must remain in Egypt, not only till Herod's death, but till given leave to return (cf. vv. 19-20). The command was also urgent. Joseph left at once, setting out by night to begin the seventy-five mile journey to the border. The focus on God's protection of "the child" is unmistakable. Herod was going to try to kill him (v. 13), and Joseph took "the child and his mother" (v. 14--not the normal order) to Egypt.

15 The death of Herod brought relief to many. Only then, for instance, did the Qumran covenanters return to their center, destroyed in 31 B.C., and rebuild it. In Egypt, Herod's death made possible the return of the Child, Mary, and Joseph, who awaited a

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word from the Lord. The Greek could be rendered "And so was fulfilled" (NIV) or "[This came about] in order that the word of the Lord ... might be fulfilled." Either way the notion of fulfillment preserves some telic force in the sentence: Jesus' exodus from Egypt fulfilled Scripture written long before. The OT quotation (v. 15) almost certainly (cf. Notes) comes from Hosea 11:1 and exactly renders the Hebrew, not the LXX, which has "his children," not "my son." (In this Matthew agrees with Aq., Symm., and Theod., but only because all four rely on the Hebrew.) Some commentators (e.g., Beng.; Gundry, *Use of OT*, pp. 93-94) argue that the preposition *ek* ("out of," NIV) should be taken temporally, i.e., "since Egypt" or, better, "from the time [he dwelt] in Egypt." The preposition can have that force; and it is argued that v. 15 means God "called" Jesus, in the sense that he specially acknowledged and preserved him, from the time of his Egyptian sojourn on, protecting him against Herod. After all, the exodus itself is not mentioned till vv. 21-22. Some commentators interpret the calling of Israel in Hosea 11:1 in a similar way. But there are convincing arguments against this. The context of Hosea 11:1 mentions Israel's *return* to Egypt (11:5), which presupposes that 11:1 refers to the Exodus. To preserve the temporal force of *ek* in Matthew 2:15, Gundry is reduced to the unconvincing assertion that the preposition in Hosea is both temporal and locative. In support of this view, it is pointed out that Jesus' actual departure *out of* Egypt is not mentioned until v. 21. But, although this is so, it is nevertheless implied by vv. 13-14. The reason Matthew has introduced the Hosea quotation at this point, instead of after v. 21, is probably because he wishes to use the return journey itself to set up the reference to the destination, Nazareth (v. 23), rather than the starting-point, Egypt (R.E. Brown, *Birth of Messiah*, p. 220).

If Hosea 11:1 refers to Israel's Exodus from Egypt, in what sense can Matthew mean that Jesus' return to the land of Israel "fulfilled" this text? Four observations clarify the issue. 1. Many have noticed that Jesus is often

presented in the NT as the antitype of Israel or, better, the typological recapitulation of Israel. Jesus' temptation after forty days of fasting recapitulated the forty years' trial of Israel (see on 4:1-11). Else where, if Israel is the vine that does not bring forth the expected fruit, Jesus, by contrast, is the True Vine (Isa 5; John 15). The reason Pharaoh must let the people of Israel go is that Israel is the Lord's son (Exod 4:22-23), a theme picked up by Jeremiah (31:9) as well as Hosea (cf. also Ps 2:6, 12). The "son" theme in Matthew (cf. esp. T. de Kruijf, *Der Sohn des lebendigen Gottes: Ein Beitrag zur Christologie des Matthäusevangeliums* [Rome: BIP, 1962], pp. 56-58, 109), already present since Jesus is messianic "son of David" and, by the virginal conception, Son of God, becomes extraordinarily prominent in Matthew (see on 3:17): "This is my Son, whom I love." 2. The verb "to fulfill" has broader significance than mere one-to-one prediction (cf.

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Introduction, section 11. b; and comments on 5:17). Not only in Matthew but elsewhere in the NT, the history and laws of the OT are perceived to have prophetic significance (cf. on 5:17-20). The Epistle to the Hebrews argues that the laws regarding the tabernacle and the sacrificial system were from the beginning designed to point toward the only Sacrifice that could really remove sin and the only Priest who could serve once and for all as the effective Mediator between God and man. Likewise Paul insists that the Messiah sums up his people in himself. When David was anointed king, the tribes acknowledged him as their bone and flesh (2Sam 5:1), i.e., David as anointed king summed up Israel, with the result that his sin brought disaster on the people (2Sam 12, 24). Just as Israel is God's son, so the promised Davidic Son is also Son of God (2Sam 7:13-14; cf. N.T. Wright, "The Paul of History," *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 [1978]: esp. 66-67). "Fulfillment" must be understood against the background of these interlocking themes and their typological connections. 3. It follows, therefore, that the NT writers do not think they are reading back into the OT things that are not already there germinally. This does not mean that Hosea had the Messiah in mind when he penned Hosea 11:1. This admission prompts W.L. LaSor (Prophecy, Inspiration, and *Sensus Plenior*, *Tyndale Bulletin* 29 [1978]: 49-60) to see in Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 an example of *sensus plenior*, by which he means a "fuller sense" than what was in Hosea's mind, but some thing nevertheless in the mind of God. But so blunt an appeal to what God has absolutely hidden seems a strange background for Matthew's insisting that Jesus' exodus from Egypt in any sense fulfills the Hosea passage. This observation is not trivial; Matthew is reasoning with Jews who could say, "You are not playing fair with the text!" A mediating position is therefore necessary.

Hosea 11 pictures God's love for Israel. Although God threatens judgment and disaster, yet because he is God and not man (11:9), he looks to a time when in compassion he will roar like a lion and his children will return to

him (11:10-11). In short Hosea himself looks forward to a saving visitation by the Lord. Therefore his prophecy fits into the larger pattern of OT revelation up to that point, revelation that both explicitly and implicitly points to the Seed of the woman, the Elect Son of Abraham, the Prophet like Moses, the Davidic King, the Messiah. The "son" language is part of this messianic matrix (cf. Willis J. Beecher, *The Prophets and the Promise* [New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1905], pp. 331-35); insofar as that matrix points to Jesus the Messiah and insofar as Israel's history looks forward to one who sums it up, then so far also Hosea 11:1 looks forward. To ask whether Hosea thought of Messiah is to ask the wrong question, akin to using a hacksaw when a scalpel is needed. It is better to say that Hosea, building on existing revelation, grasped the messianic nuances of the "son" language already applied to Israel and David's promised heir in previous revelation so that had he been able to see Matthew's use of

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11:1, he would not have disapproved, even if messianic nuances were not in his mind when he wrote that verse. He provided one small part of the revelation unfolded during salvation history; but that part he himself understood to be a pictorial representative of divine, redeeming love. The NT writers insist that the OT can be rightly interpreted only if the entire revelation is kept in perspective as it is historically unfolded (e.g., Gal 3:6-14). Hermeneutically this is not an innovation. OT writers drew lessons out of earlier salvation history, lessons difficult to perceive while that history was being lived, but lessons that retrospect would clarify (e.g., Asaph in Ps 78; cf. on Matt 13:35). Matthew does the same in the context of the fulfillment of OT hopes in Jesus Christ. We may therefore legitimately speak of a "fuller meaning" than any one text provides. But the appeal should be made, not to some hidden divine knowledge, but to the pattern of revelation up to that time--a pattern not yet adequately discerned. The new revelation may therefore be truly new, yet at the same time capable of being checked against the old. 4. If this interpretation of Matthew 2:15 is correct, it follows that for Matthew Jesus himself is the locus of true Israel. This does not necessarily mean that God has no further purpose for racial Israel; but it does mean that the position of God's people in the Messianic Age is determined by reference to Jesus, not race.

E. The Massacre of Bethlehem's Boys (2:16-18)

Few sections of Matthew 1-2 have been as widely criticized as this one. Most modern scholars think Matthew made the story up (e.g., Goulder, p. 33, E.M. Smallwood, *The Jews Under Roman Rule* [Leiden: Brill, 1976], pp. 103-4), spinning it out of Jeremiah 31:15, cited in Matthew 2:18 (so C.T. Davis, "Tradition and Redaction in Matthew 1:18-2:23," JBL 90 [1971]: 419). In this view, perhaps Matthew invented the tale to draw an analogy between

Jesus and Moses or between Jesus and late Jewish traditions about Abraham or Jacob or out of an apologetic need to construct an initial sign of the impending judgment on Israel for rejecting her Messiah (Kingsbury, *Structure* , p. 48). But v. 16 cannot be excised from the chapter without rewriting it all. The OT citation in v. 18, like other such citations in Matthew 1-2, is itself not strictly necessary to the narrative. These citations illumine the narrative and show its relation to OT Scripture, but they do not create it (cf. on 1:18-25; 2:1-12). It is difficult to see a real parallel with Moses, since Pharaoh's edict was general and before Moses' birth, whereas Herod's edict is specifically for Bethlehem and came after Jesus' birth. At best the parallel is tenuous. Furthermore vv. 16-18 offer a poor sign of the destruction to befall Israel--not least because Jesus escapes rather than suffers, and the children have done Jesus no harm.

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Actually, the story is in perfect harmony with what we know of Herod's character in his last years (Schalit, p. 648). That there is no extra-Christian confirmation is not surprising; the same can be said of Jesus' crucifixion. The death of a few children (perhaps a dozen or so; Bethlehem's total population was not large) would hardly have been recorded in such violent times. (See the excellent treatment by R.T. France, "Herod and the Children of Bethlehem," *NovTest* 21 [1979]: 98-120; id., "The Massacre of the Innocents," *Livingstone*, pp. 83-94.) "Matthew is not simply meditating on Old Testament texts, but claiming that in what has happened they find fulfillment. If the events are legendary, the argument is futile" (France, "Herod," p. 120).

16 It probably did not take long to carry out Herod's barbarous order. Bethlehem is only five miles from Jerusalem. The Magi set out in the same evening (v. 9) and may have left that same night after their dream (v. 12); the same would be true of Joseph with Jesus and Mary (vv. 13-15). By the next evening Herod's patience would have been exhausted. The two-years age limit was to prevent Jesus' escape; at the time he was between six and twenty months old. Herod, aiming to eliminate a potential king, restricted the massacre to boys. Furious at being deceived (a better translation than "outwitted"), he raged against the Lord and his Anointed One (Ps 2:2). Yet this was no narrow escape. The One enthroned in heaven laughs and scoffs at the Herods of this world (Ps 2:4).

17-18 Jeremiah is named three times in Matthew (cf. 16:14; 27:9) and nowhere else in the NT. The text form of this OT citation in these verses is complex but is probably Matthew's rendering of the Hebrew (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT*, pp. 94-97; R.E. Brown, *Birth of Messiah*, pp. 221-23). It is uncertain whether Jeremiah 31:15 refers to the deportation of the northern tribes by Assyria in 722-721 B.C. or to the deportation of Judah and

Benjamin in 587- 586 B.C. (cf. R.E. Brown, *Birth of Messiah* , pp. 205-6). The latter is more likely. Nebuzaradan, commander of Nebuchadnezzar's imperial guard, gathered the captives at Ramah before taking them into exile in Babylon (Jer 40:1-2). Ramah lay north of Jerusalem on the way to Bethel; Rachel's tomb was at Zelzah in the same vicinity (1Sam 10:2). Jeremiah 31:15 depicts mourning at the prospect of exile; Rachel is seen as crying out from her tomb because her "children," her descendants (Rachel is the idealized mother of the Jews, though Leah gave birth to more tribes than Rachel) "are no more"--i.e., they are being removed from the land and are no longer a nation. But elsewhere we are told that Rachel was buried on the way to Ephrathah, identified as Bethlehem (Gen 35:19; 48:7). Some see a confusion of traditions here and assume that the clan of Ephrathah later settled in Bethlehem and gave it its name, thus starting a

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false connection Matthew follows. The problem, however, is artificial. Genesis 35:16 makes it clear that Jacob was some distance from Bethlehem-Ephrathah when Rachel died--viz., somewhere between Bethel and Bethlehem (only 1Sam 10:2 says more exactly where he Novas). Moreover Matthew does not say Rachel was buried at Bethlehem; the connection between the prophecy and its "fulfillment" is more subtle than that. Why does Matthew refer to this OT passage? Some think the connection results from word association: the children were killed at Bethlehem, Bethlehem = Ephrathah, Ephrathah is connected with Rachel's death, and Rachel figures in the oracle. Rothfuchs (p. 64) sees a parallel between the condemnation to exile as a result of sin her) and the judgment on Israel as a result of rejecting the Messiah (an interpretation that sees the slaughter at Bethlehem as a sign of the latter). More believable is the observation (Gundry, *Use of OT*, p. 210; Tasker) that Jeremiah 31:15 occurs in a setting of hope. Despite the tears, God says, the exiles will return; and now Matthew, referring to Jeremiah 31:15, likewise says that, despite the tears of the Bethlehem mothers, there is hope because Messiah has escaped Herod and will ultimately reign. The further suggestion that the deep grief in Bethlehem reflected the belief that the Messiah had been massacred and news of his escape should assuage that grief (cf. Broadus) is fanciful. But there may be a further reason why Matthew quotes this OT passage, a reason discernible once the differences between Matthew and the OT are spelled out. Here Jesus does not, as in v. 15, recapitulate an event from Israel's history. The Exile sent Israel into captivity and thereby called forth tears. But here the tears are not for him who goes into "exile" but because of the children who stay behind and are slaughtered. Why, then, refer to the Exile at all? Help comes from observing the broader context of both Jeremiah and Matthew. Jeremiah 31:9, 20 refers to Israel = Ephraim as God's dear son and also introduces the new covenant (31:31-34) the Lord will make with his people. Therefore the tears associated with Exile (31:15) will end. Matthew has already made the Exile a turning point in his thought (1:11-12), for at that time the Davidic line was dethroned. The tears of the Exile are now being "fulfilled"--i.e., the tears

begun in Jeremiah's day are climaxed and ended by the tears of the mothers of Bethlehem. The heir to David's throne has come, the Exile is over, the true Son of God has arrived, and he will introduce the new covenant (26:28) promised by Jeremiah.

F. The Return to Nazareth (2:19-23)

19-21 This fourth dream and third mention of the angel of the Lord (v. 19) continues the divine initiative in preserving and guiding the Child, who is again made prominent ("the child and his mother," v. 20). On the date of Herod's death, see on 2:1. (Josephus,

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Antiq. XVII, 168-69 [vi. 5], gives a shocking account of Herod's final illness.) The plural ("those who were trying to take the child's life") may owe something to Exodus 4:19 (so Hill, *Matthew* , following Davies, *Setting*). If so, Jesus is being compared with Moses. But that motif is at best weak in Matthew 1-2, and the plural may be accounted for in other ways. H.A.W. Meyer suggests that Herod's father, Antipater, who died a few days before him, may have been associated with Herod in the massacre. More probably the plural is a generalizing or categorical plural (cf. Turner, *Syntax* , pp. 25-26; BDF, par. 141). "Land of Israel" occurs only in vv. 20-21 (cf. "cities of Israel," 10:23). Although the whole land was before him and he apparently hoped to settle in Judea (perhaps in Bethlehem, the city of David), Joseph was forced to retire to despised Galilee.

22 Probably Joseph had expected Herod Antipas to reign over the entire kingdom but Herod the Great made a late change in his will, dividing his kingdom into three parts. Archelaus, known for his ruthlessness, was given Judea, Samaria, and Idumea (see map, p. 58.). Augustus Caesar agreed and gave him the title "ethnarch" (more honorable than "tetrarch") and promised the title "king" if it was earned. But Archelaus proved to be a poor ruler and was banished for misgovernment in A.D. 6. Rome ruled the south through a procurator. But by that time Joseph had settled the family in Galilee. Herod Antipas, who reappears in Matthew 14:1-10, was given the title "tetrarch" and ruled in Galilee and in Perea. Herod Philip (not to be confused with Herodias's first husband, who was not a king) became tetrarch of Iturea, Trachonitis, and some other territories. He was the best of Herod the Great's children; Jesus frequently retired into his territory (14:13; 15:29; 16:13) away from the weak but cruel Antipas. Joseph, guided by the fifth and final dream, settled the family in Galilee.

23 The town Joseph chose was Nazareth, which, according to Luke 1:26-27;

2:39, was his former home and that of Mary (cf. 13:53-58). This final quotation formula, like that of v. 15, should probably be construed as telic: this took place "in order to fulfill." But the formula is unique in two respects: only here does Matthew use the plural "prophets"; and only here does he omit the Greek equivalent of "saving" and replace it with the conjunction *hoti* , which can introduce a direct quotation (NIV) but more probably should be rendered "that," making the quotation indirect: "in order to fulfill what was said through the prophets, that he would be called a Nazarene" (cf. W. Barnes Tatum, Jr., "Matthew 2. 23," *The Bible Translator* 27 [1976]: 135-37; contra Hartman, "Scriptural Exegesis," pp. 149-50). This suggests that Matthew had no specific OT quotation in mind; indeed, these words are found nowhere in the OT. The interpretation of this verse has such a long history (for older works, cf. Broad us; for recent studies, cf. Gundry, *Use of OT* , pp. 97-104; R.E. Brown. *Birth of*

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Messiah , pp. 207-13) that it is not possible to list here all the major options. We may exclude those that see some word-play connection with an OT Hebrew word but have no obvious connection with Nazareth. This eliminates the popular interpretation that makes Jesus a Nazirite or second Samson (cf. esp. Judg 13:5, 7; 16:17, where LXX has *Naziraios* as opposed to Matthew's *Nazoraaios* ; cf. Luke 1:15). Defenders include Calvin, Loisy, Stendahl, Schweizer, and, more recently, Ernst Zuckerswerdt ('*Nazoraaios* in Matth. 2,23,' *Theologische Zeitschrift* 31 [1975]: 65-77). Also to be eliminated are interpretations that try to find in Matthew's term a reference to some kind of pre-Christian sect. But the evidence for this is feeble (cf. Soares Prabhu, pp. 197-201) and the connection with Nazareth merely verbal. E. Earle Ellis ('How the New Testament Uses the Old,' Marshall, *NT Interpretation* , p. 202) sees a pun here as an "implicit midrash," but significantly he then has to put the word "fulfillment" in quotation marks. Matthew certainly used *Nazoraaios* as an adjectival form of *apo Nazaret* ("from Nazareth" or "Nazarene"), even though the more acceptable adjective is *Nazarenos* (cf. Bonnard, Brown, Albright and Mann, Soares Prabhu). Possibly *Nazoraaios* derives from a Galilean Aramaic form. Nazareth was a despised place (John 7:42, 52), even to other Galileans (cf. John 1:46). Here Jesus grew up, not as "Jesus the Bethlehemite," with its Davidic overtones, but as "Jesus the Nazarene," with all the opprobrium of the sneer. When Christians were referred to in Acts as the "Nazarene sect" (24:5), the expression was meant to hurt. First-century Christian readers of Matthew, who had tasted their share of scorn, would have quickly caught Matthew's point. He is not saying that a particular OT prophet foretold that the Messiah would live in Nazareth; he is saying that the OT prophets foretold that the Messiah would be despised (cf. Pss 22:6-8, 13; 69:8, 20-21; Isa 11:1; 49:7; 53:2-3, 8; Dan 9:26). The theme is repeatedly picked up by Matthew (e.g., 8:20; 11:16-19; 15:7-8). In other words Matthew gives us the substance of several OT passages, not a direct quotation (so also Ezra 9:10-12; cf. SBK, 1:92-93). It is possible that at the same time there is a discreet allusion to the *neser* ("branch") of Isaiah 11:1, which received a messianic

interpretation in the Targums rabbinic literature, and DSS (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT* , p. 104); for here too it is affirmed that David's son would emerge from humble obscurity and low state. Jesus is King Messiah, Son of God, Son of David; but he was a branch from a royal line hacked down to a stump and reared in surroundings guaranteed to win him scorn. Jesus the Messiah, Matthew is telling us, did not introduce his kingdom with out ward show or present himself with the pomp of an earthly monarch. In accord with prophecy he came as the despised Servant of the Lord.

II. The Gospel of the Kingdom (3:1-7:29)

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A. Narrative (3:1-4:25)

1. Foundational steps (3:1-4:11)

a. The ministry of John the Baptist (3:1-12)

For the first time Matthew parallels Mark (1:1-11), Luke (3:1-22), and, more loosely, John (1:19-34). Whatever diversity there is among prologues, the four Gospels unanimously preface the ministry of Jesus with that of John the Baptist. Matthew omits any mention of Jesus' youth (Luke 2:41-52) or of John's birth and background (Luke 1: 5-25, 39-45, 57-80). This may imply that Matthew's readers were already familiar with that background (Tasker) or that Matthew wants to plunge dramatically into his account. After four hundred silent years, God was speaking through a new prophet who called people to repentance and promised someone greater to come. In addition to the implications of this commentary's outline of Matthew, the gospel has many substructures pointing to a writer of great literary skill. Gooding (p. 234) points out interesting parallels between chapters 1-2 and 3-4, too lengthy to be detailed here (cf. also 13:3-53).

1 Matthew's temporal note, "In those days," is vague and reflects a similarly loose expression in the OT (e.g., Gen 38:1; Exod 2:11, 23; Isa 38:1). His phrase may mean "in those crucial days" (Hill, (*Matthew*) or even "in the days in which Jesus and his family lived at Nazareth". (Broadus; cf. 4:13). More likely, however, it is a general term that reveals little chronologically but insists that the account is historical (Bonnard). Luke 3:1 offers more chronological help, but its significance is disputed (cf. Hoehner,

***Chronological Aspects* , pp. 29-44). The year was A.D. 27, 28, or 29 (less likely 26). "John," or "Johanan," had been a popular name among the Jews from the time of John Hyrcanus (died 106 B.C.). Four or five "Johns" are mentioned in the NT. The John in Matthew 3:1 was soon designated "the Baptist" (cf. Notes) because baptism was so prominent in his ministry. He began his preaching in the "Desert of Judea," a vaguely defined area including the lower Jordan Valley north of the Dead Sea and the country immediately west of the Dead Sea. It is hot and, apart from the Jordan itself largely arid, though not unpopulated. It was used for pasturage (Ps 65:12; Joel 2:22; Luke 15:4) and had Essene communities. "Desert" had long had prophetic overtones (the Law was given in the "wilderness"). The Zealots used the desert as a hiding place (cf. Matt 24:26; Acts 21:38; Jos. Antiq. XX, 97-98 [v.1]). Therefore some commentators see more theological than geographical force in Matthew 3:1 (e.g.,**

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Bonnard, Maier). The modifying phrase "of Judea" makes the antithesis between geography and theology false. The desert was a particular area (cf. R. Funk, "The Wilderness," JBL 78 [1959]: 205-14) but may also have had prophetic implications for first-century readers.

2 John's preaching had two elements. The first was a call to repent. Though the verb *metanoeo* is often explained etymologically as "to change one's mind," or popularly as "to be sorry for something," neither rendering is adequate. In classical Greek the verb could refer to a purely intellectual change of mind. But the NT usage has been influenced by the Hebrew verbs *naham* ("to be sorry for one's actions") and *sub* ("to turn around to new actions"). The latter is common in the prophets' call to the people to return to the covenant with Yahweh (cf. DNTT 1:357-59; Turner, *Christian Words* , pp. 374-77). What is meant is not a merely intellectual change of mind or mere grief, still less doing penance (cf. Notes), but a radical transformation of the entire person, a fundamental turnaround involving mind and action and including overtones of grief, which results in "fruit in keeping with repentance." Of course, all this assumes that man's actions are fundamentally off course and need radical change. John applies this repentance to the religious leaders of his day (3:7-8) with particular vehemence. (On the differences between biblical and rabbinic emphases on repentance, cf. Lane, *Mark* , pp. 593-600.) The second element in John's preaching was the nearness of the kingdom of heaven, and this is given as the ground for repentance. Throughout the OT there was a rising expectation of a divine visitation that would establish justice, crush opposition, and renew the very universe. This hope was couched in many categories: it was presented as the fulfillment of promises to David's heir, as the Day of the Lord (which often had dark overtones of judgment, though there were bright exceptions, e.g., Zeph 3:14-20), as a new heaven and a new earth, as a time of regathering of Israel, as the inauguration of a new and transforming covenant (2Sam 7:13-14; Isa 1:24-28; 9:6-7; 11:1-10; 64-66; Jer 23:5-6; 31:31-

34; Ezek 37:24; Dan 2:44; 7:13-14; cf. esp. Ridderbos, pp. 3-17; Ladd, *Presence* , pp. 45-75). The predominant meaning of "kingdom" in the OT (Heb. *malkut* ; Aram. (*malkuta*) is "reign": the term has dynamic force. Similarly in the NT, though *basileia* ("kingdom") can refer to a territory (4:8), the overwhelming majority of instances use the term with dynamic force. This stands over against the prevailing rabbinic terminology in which "kingdom" was increasingly spiritualized or planted in men's hearts (e.g., b *Berakoth* 4a). Contrary to counterclaims (Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1959], pp. 274ff.), in the first century there was little agreement among Jews as to what the messianic kingdom would be like. One very popular assumption was that the Roman yoke would be shattered and there would be

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political peace and mounting prosperity.

Except at 12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43, and in some MSS of 6:33, Matthew always uses "kingdom of heaven" instead of "kingdom of God" (this reckoning excludes references to "my kingdom" and the like), whereas Mark and Luke prefer "kingdom of God." Matthew's preferred expression certainly does not restrict God's reign to the heavens. The biblical goal is the manifest exercise of God's sovereignty, his "reign" on earth and among men. There are enough parallels among the Synoptics to imply that "kingdom of God" and "kingdom of heaven" denote the same thing (e.g., Matt 19:23- 24 = Mark 10:23-25); the connotative distinction is less certain. Dispensationalists (e.g., A.C. Gaebelin, Walvoord) hold that "kingdom of God" is a distinctively spiritual kingdom, a narrower category embracing only true believers, whereas "kingdom of heaven" is the kingdom of millennial splendor, a broader category including (as in the parable, 13:47-50) both good and bad fish. The distinction is unfortunate: it comes perilously close to confusing kingdom and church (see further on ch. 13; 16:17-19), fails to account for passages where the Matthean category is no less restrictive than "kingdom of God" in the other evangelists, and fundamentally misapprehends the dynamic nature of the kingdom. Equally unconvincing is the suggestion of Pamment that "kingdom of heaven" always refers to the future reign following the consummation, whereas in Matthew "kingdom of God" refers to the present manifestation. To arrive at this absolute dichotomy, Pamment must resort to very unlikely interpretations of numerous passages (e.g., 11:12; parables in ch. 13). Many other proposals (e.g., J. Julius Scott, EBC, 1:508) are stated firmly but cannot withstand close scrutiny. The most common explanation is that Matthew avoided "kingdom of God" to remove unnecessary offense to Jews who often used circumlocutions like "heaven" to refer to God (e.g., Dan 4:26; 1Macc 3:50, 60; 4:55; Luke 15:18, 21). The suggestion has merit. Yet Matthew is a subtle and allusive writer, and two other factors may also be involved: (1) "kingdom of heaven" may anticipate the extent of Christ's postresurrection authority: God's sovereignty *in*

***heaven* and on earth is now mediated through him (28:18); and (2) "kingdom of God" makes God the King, and though this does not prevent the other Synoptics from ascribing the kingship to Jesus (cf. Luke 22: 16, 18, 29-30), there is less room to maneuver. Matthew's "kingdom of heaven" assumes it is God's kingdom and occasionally assigns it specifically to the Father (26: 29), though leaving room to ascribe it frequently to Jesus (16:28; 25:31, 34, 40; 27:42; probably 5:35); for Jesus is King Messiah. This inevitably has christological implications. The kingdom of heaven is simultaneously the kingdom of the Father and the kingdom of the Son of Man. This kingdom, John preached, "is near" *engiken* , lit., "has drawn near"). Jews spoke of the Messiah as "the coming one" (11:3) and the Messianic Age as "the**

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coming age" (Heb 6:5): John says it has now drawn "near," the same message preached by Jesus (4:17) and his disciples (10:7). It is possible, but not certain, that the verb has the same force as *ephthasen* in 12:28. There Jesus unambiguously affirms that the kingdom "has come." That passage makes it clear that it is the exercise of God's saving sovereignty or reign that has dawned. The ambiguous "is near" (3:2; 4:17), coupled with the dynamic sense of "kingdom," prepares us for a constant theme: The kingdom came with Jesus and his preaching and miracles, it came with his death and resurrection, and it will come at the end of the age. Matthew has already established that Jesus was born King (2:2). Later Jesus declared that his work testified the kingdom had come (12:28), even though he frequently spoke of the kingdom as something to be inherited when the Son of Man comes in his glory. It is false to say that "kingdom" undergoes a radical shift with the mention of mystery (secrets, NIV; see on 13:11). Already in the Sermon on the Mount, entering the kingdom (5:3, 10; 7:21) is equivalent to entering into life (7:13-14; cf. 19: 14, 16; and see Mark 9:45, 47). These and related themes become clearer as the Gospel progresses (cf. esp. Ladd, *NT Theology* , pp. 57-90). But two observations cannot be delayed. First, the Baptist's terminology, though veiled, necessarily roused enormous excitement (3:5). But assorted apocalyptic and political expectations would have brought about a profound misunderstanding of the kingdom being preached. Therefore Jesus himself purposely used veiled terminology when treating themes like this. This becomes increasingly obvious in the Gospel. The second observation relates to the first. Just as the angel's announcement to Joseph declared Jesus' primary purpose to be to save his people from their sins (1:21), so the first announcement of the kingdom is associated with repentance and confession of sin (3:6). These themes are constantly intertwined in Matthew (cf. Goppelt, *Theologie* , pp. 128-88).

3 If the *gar* ("for") has its full force, then NIV should read, "For this is he"; and v. 3 becomes the ground for the Baptist's preaching in v. 2. This is the one OT citation of Matthew's own eleven direct OT quotations that is not introduced by a fulfillment formula (cf. Introduction, section 11. b). It goes too far, however (contra Gundry), to say that the omission of fulfillment language means that for Matthew, John the Baptist does not fulfill Scripture but serves merely as a "prototypical Christian preacher." If Matthew had wanted to say so little, he would have been better off eliminating the OT passage. Instead he introduces it with a Peshier formula (e.g., Acts 2:16; cf. Introduction, section 11. b) that can only be understood as identifying the Baptist in an eschatological, prophecy-and-fulfillment framework with the one of whom Isaiah (40:3) spoke. The Baptist's role is minimally exemplary. According to John 1:23, the Baptist once

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applied this passage to himself. Here Matthew does it for him. In the MT the words "in the desert" modify "prepare": "In the desert prepare the way of the LORD." But all three Synoptics here follow the LXX. The immediate effect is to locate in the desert the one who is calling. Some have thought this a deliberate attempt to make the fulfillment extend to geographical details. But Mark consistently follows the LXX, and Matthew often follows Mark. So we must not read too much into the change. There may be an error in the Hebrew accents, which associate "in the desert" with "prepare" (Gundry, *Use of OT* , p. 10). In any case, if one shouts a command in the desert, his intent is that it be spread everywhere; so there is little difference in meaning (Alexander). In Isaiah 40:3 the way of Yahweh is being "made straight" (a metaphor using road building to refer to repentance); in Matthew 3:3 it is the way of Jesus. This sort of identification of Jesus with Yahweh is common in the NT (e.g., Exod 13:21 and 1Cor 10:4; Isa 6:1 and John 12:41; Ps 68:18 and Eph 4:8; Ps 102:25-27 and Heb 1:10-12) and confirms the kingdom as being equally the kingdom of God and the kingdom of Jesus. While the deity of Christ is only implicit in such texts, it certainly goes beyond Jesus' being merely a royal envoy. The Qumran covenanters cited the same passage to foster study of the law in preparation for the eschaton (1QS 8:12ff.; 9:19; cf. Fitzmyer, *Semitic Background* , pp. 34-36); but Matthew identifies the Baptist as the voice and the eschatological age as already dawning in Jesus' coming.

4-5 Clothes of camel's hair and a leather belt (v. 4, the latter to bind up the loose outer garment) were not only the clothes of poor people but establish links with Elijah (2 Kings 1:8; cf. Mal 4:5). "Locusts" (*akrides*) are large grasshoppers, still eaten in the East, not the fruit of the "locust tree" (BAGD, s.v.). Wild honey is what it purports to be, not gum from a tree (cf. Judg 14:8-9; 1Sam 14:25-29; Ps 81:16). Both suggest a poor man used to wilderness living, and this suggests a connection with the prophets (cf. 3:1; 11:8-9)--So much so that in Zechariah's day (13:4) some false prophets dressed like

prophets to deceive people. Both Elijah and John had stern ministries in which austere garb and diet confirmed their message and condemned the idolatry of physical and spiritual softness. "Even the food and dress of John preached" (Beng.). John's impact was enormous (v. 5), and his crowds came from a wide area. In Greek, the places are personified (as in 2:3).

6 Confession of sin was commanded in the law, not only as part of a priest's duties (Lev 16:21), but as an individual responsibility for wrongs done (Lev 5:5; 26:40; Num 5:6-7; Prov 28:13). In Israel's better days this was carried out (Neh 9:2-3; Ps 32:5). In the NT (cf. Acts 19:18; 1John 1:9) confession is scarcely less important. Because Matthew does not include "for the forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4), some have deduced that he wants to avoid suggesting any possibility of forgiveness until Jesus' death (Matt 26:

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28). This is too subtle. A first-century reader would hardly hold that sins were not forgiven after being honestly confessed. And since Matthew regularly abbreviates Mark where he uses him, we must be cautious in drawing theological conclusions from such omissions. The Greek does not make clear whether the confession was individual or corporate, simultaneous with baptism or antecedent to it. Josephus (Antiq. XVIII, 116-17 [v.2] says that John, "surnamed the Baptist," required righteous conduct as a "necessary preliminary if baptism was to be acceptable to God." Since John was urging people to prepare for Messiah's coming by repenting and being baptized, we may surmise that open renunciation of sin was a precondition of his baptism, which was therefore both a confirmation of confession and an eschatological sign. Since the discovery of the DSS, many have tried to link John's baptism with that of the Qumran covenanters. But their washings, though related to confession, were probably regarded as purifying and were repeated (cf. 1QS 1:24ff.; 5:13-25) to remove ritual uncleanness. John's baptism, probably a once-only rite (contra Albright and Mann), was unrelated to ceremonial impurity. The rabbis used baptism to in duct proselytes but never Jews (SBK, 1:102-12). As far as we know, though baptism itself was not uncommon, the pointed but limited associations placed on John's baptism stem from the Baptist himself--not unlike circumcision, which predates Abraham but lacked covenantal significance before his time. The Jordan River is fast flowing. No doubt John stationed himself at one of the fords, and prepared the way for the Lord.

7 Many have raised the question of the probability of individuals from groups so mutually hostile as Pharisees and Sadducees (cf. Introduction, section 11. f) presenting themselves together (one article governs both nouns) for baptism. But the Greek text need not be taken to mean that they came to be baptized. It may only mean that they were "coming to where he was

baptizing" (cf. Notes). If so, it might suggest that representatives of the Sanhedrin (composed of both parties with elders) came to examine what John was doing (cf. John 1:19, 24, which mentions not only priests and Levites [Sadducees] but also Pharisees). Or many Pharisees and Sadducees may have come for baptism with the ostentation that characterized their other religious activities (e.g., 6:2, 5, 16)--i.e., they were showing the world how ready they were for Messiah, though they had not truly repented. Matthew lumps them together because they were leaders; elsewhere he distinguishes them (22:34). The question with which the Baptist confronted them has this sense: "Who suggested to you that you would escape the coming wrath?" Thus John's rhetorical question takes on a sarcastic nuance: "Who warned you to flee the coming wrath and come for baptism--when in fact you show no signs of repentance?" Though the question is the same in Luke 3:7, there Luke relates

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it to the crowd, whereas Matthew relates it to the Jewish leaders.

John the Baptist stands squarely in the prophetic tradition--a tradition in which the Day of the Lord points much more to darkness than to light for those who think they have no sin (Amos 2:4-8; 6:1-7). "You brood of vipers!" also belongs to the prophetic tradition (cf. Isa 14:29; 30:6; cf. CD 19:22); in Matthew 12:34, Jesus uses these terms to excoriate the Pharisees.

8-9 The coming of God's reign either demands repentance (v. 2) or brings judgment. Repentance must be genuine: if we wish to escape the coming wrath (v. 7), then our entire lifestyle must be in harmony with our oral repentance (v. 8). Mere descent from Abraham is not enough (v. 9). In the OT God repeatedly cut off many Israelites and saved a remnant. Yet in the intertestamental period the general use of descent from Abraham, in the context of a rising merit theology, supported the notion that Israel was chosen because it was choice and that the merits of the patriarchs would suffice for their descendants (cf. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty*, pp. 39ff.). But not only may God narrow Israel down to a remnant, he may also raise up authentic children of Israel from "these stones" (perhaps stones lying in the river bed--both Hebrew and Aramaic have a pun on "children" and "stones"). Ordinary stones will suffice; there is no need for the "rocks" of the patriarchs and their merits (cf. S. Schechter, *Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* [London: Black, 1903], p. 173; cf. also Rom 4). Verse 9 not only rebukes the self-righteousness of the leaders but implies that participation in the kingdom results from grace and extends the borders of God's people beyond racial frontiers (cf. 8:11).

10 The ax is "already" (emphatic) at the root of the trees (for the idiom, cf. Isa 10:33-34; Jer 46:22). "Not only is there a coming Messianic wrath, but already there is a beginning Messianic discrimination among the

descendants of Abraham" (Broadus). Just as the kingdom is dawning already (v. 2), so also is the judgment, the two are inseparable. To preach the kingdom is to preach repentance; any tree (not "every tree, NIV; cf. Turner, *Syntax* , p. 199), regardless of its roots, that does not bring forth good fruit will be destroyed.

11 Compare vv. 11-12 with Luke 3:15-18 (Q?). Because only Matthew says, "I baptize you with *water for repentance* " (emphasis mine), Hill detects a conscious effort to subordinate John to Jesus. John baptizes as preparation "for repentance", Jesus baptizes for fulfillment "with the Holy Spirit and fire." But both Mark (Mk 1:4) and Luke (Lk 3:3) have spoken of John's baptism as one of repentance. And when Jesus begins to preach, he too demands repentance (4:17). If there is an antithesis here between John and Jesus, it is in all three synoptic Gospels. Matthew may be stressing

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the difference between the baptisms of John and Jesus in order to make a point about eschatology (see below and on 11:7-13). The phrase "for repentance" (*eis metanoian*) is difficult: *eis* plus the accusative frequently suggests purpose ("I baptize you in order that you will repent").

Contextually (v. 6) this is unlikely, even in the peculiar telic sense suggested by Broadus: "I baptize you with a view to continued repentance." But causal *eis* , or something very close to it, is not unknown in the NT (cf. Turner, *Syntax* , pp. 266-67): "I baptize you because of your repentance." The force may, however, be weaker--i.e., "I baptize you with reference to or in connection with repentance." In any case John wants to contrast his baptism with that of the one who comes after him (any allusion here to the messianic title "the one who comes" is doubtful; cf. Arens, pp. 288-90). That one is "more powerful" than John: the same term (*ischyros*) is applied to God in the OT (LXX Jer 32:18; Dan 9:4; cf. also Isa 40:10) and the cognate noun to the Messiah in Psalms of Solomon 17. This is not the normal order: usually the one who follows is the disciple, the lesser one (cf. Matt 16:24; John 13:16; 15:20). But because John's particular ministry is to announce the eschatological figure, he cannot do other than precede him. Though John was the most sought-after preacher in Israel for centuries, he protested that he was not fit to "carry" (Mark and Luke have "untie") the sandals of the Coming One. Many scholars have argued that this saying must be a late invention of Christians determined to keep the Baptist in his place and exalt Jesus. In fact, such humility as John's is in Christian ethics a virtue, not a weakness. Moreover if he saw his role as that of forerunner to the Messiah, John could not well have set himself on a par with the one to whom he pointed (cf. also John 3:28-31). No doubt the church readily used John's self-depreciation in later conflicts with his followers. But there is no evidence they invented it. It follows that just as John's purpose was to prepare a way for the Lord by calling people to repentance, so his baptism pointed to the one who would bring the eschatological baptism in spirit and fire. John's baptism was "essentially preparatory" (cf. J.D.G. Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* [London: SCM, 1970], pp. 14-17; Bonnard; F. Lang, "Erwagungen zur

eschatologischen Verkündigung Johannes des Taufers," in Strecker, *Jesus Christus* , pp. 459-73); Jesus' baptism inaugurated the Messianic Age. "Baptism in the Holy Spirit" is not a specialized term in the NT. Its OT background includes Ezekiel 36:25-27; 39:29; Joel 2:28. We need not think that John the Baptist could not have mentioned the Holy Spirit, not least because of somewhat similar references in the literature at Qumran (1QS 3:7-9; 4:21; 1QH 16:12; cf. Dunn, *Baptism* , pp. 8-10). But Matthew and Luke add "and fire." Many see this as a double baptism, one in the Holy Spirit for the righteous and one in fire for the unrepentant (cf:

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the wheat and chaff in v. 12). Fire (Mal 4:1) destroys and consumes.

There are good reasons, however, for taking "fire" as a purifying agent along with the Holy Spirit. The people John is addressing are being baptized by him; presumably they have repented. More important the preposition *en* ("with") is not repeated before fire: the one preposition governs both "Holy Spirit" and "fire," and this normally suggests a unified concept, Spirit-fire or the like (cf: M.J. Harris, DNTT, 3:1178; Dunn, *Baptism* , pp. 10-13). Fire often has a purifying, not destructive, connotation in the OT (e.g., Isa 1:25; Zech 13:9; Mal 3:2-3). John's water baptism relates to repentance; but the one whose way he is preparing will administer a Spirit-fire baptism that will purify and refine. In a time when many Jews felt the Holy Spirit had been withdrawn till the Messianic Age, this announcement could only have been greeted with excited anticipation.

12 Messiah's coming will separate grain from chaff. A winnowing fork tossed both into the air. The wind blew the chaff away, and the heavier grain fell to be gathered up from the ground. The scattered chaff was swept up and burned and the threshing floor cleared (cf. Ps 1:4; Isa 5:24; Dan 2:35; Hos 13:3). The "unquenchable fire" signifies eschatological judgment (cf. Isa 34:10; 66:24; Jer 7:20), hell (cf. 5:29). "Un quenchable fire" is not just metaphor: fearful reality underlies Messiah's separation of grain from chaff. The "nearness" of the kingdom therefore calls for repentance (v. 2).

b. The baptism of Jesus (3:13-17)

Comparing the three synoptic accounts of Jesus' baptism (cf. Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3: 21-22) reveals distinctive features (e.g., only Matthew has 3:14-15). But it is easy to exaggerate differences. As is often pointed out, Luke does not say John baptized Jesus; but in view of Luke 3:1-21, there is no doubt of this.

As will be shown, some alleged distinctions among the evangelists are artificial; others highlight valuable theological emphases.

13 "Then" (*tote*) is vague in Matthew (see on 2:7); each use needs separate handling. Here *tote* implies that during the time John the Baptist was preaching to the crowds and baptizing them, "then" Jesus came--i.e., it is equivalent to Luke's "When all the people were being baptized, Jesus was baptized too" (3:21). If so, to say that in Luke baptism is a public testimony to Jesus but a private one in Matthew is artificial. This conclusion is especially important to Kingsbury (*Structure* , pp. 13-15) because he wants to avoid any public recognition of Jesus till 4:17. Jeremias (*NT Theology* , p. 51) thinks Luke is closer to historical reality and supposes that Jesus immersed himself along with others in John's presence. Both refinements are too finespun. Any interpretation

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demanding either privacy or crowds at Jesus' baptism as Matthew or Luke report it reads too much into the texts and probably misses the evangelists' chief points. Jesus came from Galilee (Mark specifies Nazareth) to be baptized by John (though Matthew makes this aim explicit, in Mark and Luke it is implicit), and as a result the Father testified to his Son. This much is common to all three accounts, and it matters little whether only John heard this heavenly witness or whether the crowds heard it as well.

14 Matthew 3:14-15 is peculiar to this Gospel. John tried to deter Jesus (imperfect of attempted action) from his baptism, insisting (the pronouns are emphatic) that he stood in need of baptism by Jesus. Earlier John had difficulty baptizing the Pharisees and Sadducees because they were not worthy of his baptism. Now he has trouble baptizing Jesus because his baptism is not worthy of Jesus. There are two possible ways of understanding John's reluctance:

1. John recognizes Jesus as the Messiah and wants to receive Jesus' Spirit-and-fire baptism. Despite the rising popularity of this view, it entails serious difficulties. The Spirit theme is not important in Matthew; righteousness is, and it is central to Jesus' response (v. 15). Matthew does not present Jesus as bestowing his Spirit-and-fire baptism on anyone: the Cross and Resurrection are focal for him; and, writing after Pentecost (Acts 2), Matthew doubtless believes Jesus' baptism was bestowed on his people later than the time he is writing about. In view of the Baptist's statements about his relation to the Messiah (v. 11), if he had recognized Jesus as the Messiah it is doubtful whether Jesus' rebuttal would have convinced him (v. 15). Moreover this view brings Matthew into needless conflict with the fourth Gospel (John 1:31-34), which says the Baptist did not "know" Jesus--i.e., recognize him as the Messiah--till after his baptism. 2. But John's baptism did not have purely eschatological significance. It also signified repentance and confession of sin. Whether John knew Jesus well, we do not know. It is, however, inconceivable

that his parents had not told him of Mary's visit to Elizabeth some three decades earlier (Luke 1:39-45). At the very least John must have recognized that Jesus, to whom he was related, whose birth was more marvelous than his own, and whose knowledge of Scripture was prodigious even as a child (Luke 2:41-

52), outstripped him. John the Baptist was a humble man; conscious of his own sin, he could detect no sin Jesus needed to repent of and confess. So John thought that Jesus should baptize him. Matthew does not tell us when John also perceived that Jesus was the Messiah (though that may be implied by vv. 16-17); Matthew focuses on Jesus' sinlessness and the Father's testimony not on John's testimony (unlike the fourth Gospel, where the Baptist's witness to Jesus is very important).

15 John's consent was won because Jesus told him, "It is proper for us to fulfill all

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righteousness." Here interpretations are legion. They may be summed up as follows:

1. By undergoing baptism Jesus anticipates his own baptism of death, by which he secures "righteousness" for all. This reads in the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53:11 ("by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many"). This view, espoused by many, is well defended by O. Cullmann *Baptism in the New Testament* [London: SCM, 1950], pp. 15ff.). It presupposes that the significance of Christian baptism should be read back into John's baptism and takes no account of its salvation-historical location. Worse, Cullmann reads Paul's use of "righteousness" back into Matthew, who in fact never uses the term that way but always as meaning "conformity to God's will" or the like (cf. Bonnard's discussion and notes, and esp. Przybylski pp. 91-94). Moreover the "us" is not a royal "us"; both Jesus *and* John must "fulfill all righteousness," which renders doubtful any theory that ties the righteousness too closely to Jesus' death. G. Barth (Bornkamm, *Tradition* , pp. 140ff.) rejects Cullmann's view but falls into the same weaknesses, holding that Jesus fulfills all righteousness by humbly entering the ranks of sinners and acting for them. The same objections apply.
2. Others suggest that Jesus must obey ("fulfill") every divine command ("all righteousness"), and baptism is one such command. Put so crassly this view forgets that the baptism relates to repentance and confession of sins, not to righteousness itself. A slight modification of it says that by being baptized Jesus is acknowledging as valid the righteous life preached by John and demanded of those who accept John's baptism, for Jesus acknowledges (21:32) that John came to show the way of righteousness. But this view forces "fulfill" to become "acknowledge" and neglects the fact that John's baptism relates, not to the standards of righteousness John preached, but to repentance.
3. The strengths of the alternative views may be integrated in a better synthesis. John's baptism, it will be remembered, had two foci: repentance and its eschatological significance. Jesus affirms, in effect, that it is God's will ("all righteousness") that John baptize him; and *both* John *and*

Jesus "fulfill" that will, that righteousness, by going through with it ("it is proper for us"). The aftermath, as Matthew immediately notes (vv. 16-17), shows that this baptism really did point to Jesus. Within this framework we may recognize other themes. In particular Jesus is indeed seen as the Suffering Servant (Isa 42:1; cf. on 3:17). But the Servant's first mark is obeying God: he "fulfills all righteousness" since he suffers and dies to accomplish redemption in obedience to the will of God. By his baptism Jesus affirms his determination to do his assigned work. Thus the "now" may be significant: Jesus is saying that John's objection (v. 14) is in principle valid. Yet he must "now," at this point in salvation history, baptize Jesus; for at this point Jesus must demonstrate his willingness to take on his servant role, entailing his identification with the people. Contrary to Gundry, "now" does not serve to tell Christian converts they must not delay "this first step on the way of

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righteousness."

This interpretation assumes that Jesus knew of his Suffering-Servant role from the beginning of his ministry; cf. further at v. 17. This role was hinted at in 2:23, here it makes its first veiled appearance in Jesus' actions. The immediately following temptation narrative confirms it (4:1-11). There Jesus rejects the devil's temptation to pursue messianic glory and power, choosing instead the servant role of obeying every word that comes from the mouth of God.

16 "As soon as" not only suggests that Jesus left the water immediately after his baptism but that the Spirit's witness was equally prompt. Jesus' baptism and its attestation are of a piece and must be interpreted together. "He saw" most naturally refers to Jesus (cf. Mark 1:10), not John, not so much because Matthew excludes John as because he is not the focus of interest. The presence of John (and possibly others) is probably implied by the third-person address "This is my Son" (v. 17), displacing Mark's "You are my Son" (1:11). "Heaven ... opened" calls to mind OT visions (e.g., Isa 64:1; Ezek 1:1; cf. Acts 7:56; Rev 4:1; 19:11). "The Spirit of God descending like a dove" simile could mean either that the manner of the Spirit's descent was like a dove's or that the Spirit appeared in a dove's form. Whether or not the latter is visionary, Luke 3:22 specifies it. Because no clear pre-Christian reference links dove and Holy Spirit, some have advanced complex theories: e.g., Mark collected two stories, one mentioning the Holy Spirit's descent and the other the dove's descent, and fused them together (S. Gero, "The Spirit as a Dove at the Baptism of Jesus," *NovTest* 18 [1976]: 17-35). But to exclude any new metaphor from the Christian revelation is surely rash. The Spirit's descent cannot be adequately considered apart from v. 17; and so resolution of its meaning awaits comment on v. 17.

17 Some see in the "voice from heaven" the *batkol* (lit., "daughter of a voice"), the category used by rabbinic and other writers to refer to divine communication echoing the Spirit of God after the Spirit and the prophets through whom he spoke had been withdrawn. The point, however, is stronger than that. This voice is God's ("from heaven") and testifies that God himself has broken silence and is again revealing himself to men--a clear sign of the dawning of the Messianic Age (cf. 17:5 and John 12:28). What Heaven says in Mark and Luke is "You are my Son"; here it is "This is my Son." The change not only shows Matthew's concern only for the *ipsissima vox* (not generally the *ipsissima verba* ; cf. Notes) but also assumes some one besides Jesus heard heaven's witness. There may have been a crowd; if so, that does not interest Matthew. But John needed to hear the Voice confirm his decision (v. 15). Despite arguments to the contrary (e.g., Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant* , pp. 70ff.), the utterance reflects Isaiah 42:1: "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one

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in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit upon him"; and this has been modified by Psalm 2:7: "You are my Son" (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT* , pp. 29-32; and esp. Moo, "Use of OT", pp. 112ff.). The results are extraordinarily important. 1. These words from heaven link Jesus with the Suffering Servant at the very beginning of his ministry and confirm our interpretation of v. 15. 2. God here refers to Jesus as "my Son"; implicitly the title "Son of God" is introduced and picked up immediately in the next chapter (4:3, 6). Psalm 2 is Davidic: though it was not regarded in the first century as messianic, the link with David recalls other "son" passages where David or his heir is seen as God's son (e.g., 2Sam 7:13- 14; Ps 89:26-29). 3. Jesus has already been set forth as the true Israel to which actual Israel was pointing and as such God's Son (see on 2:15); now the heavenly witness confirms the link. 4. At the same time the virginal conception suggests a more than titular or functional sonship: in this context there is the hint of an ontological sonship, made most explicit in the Gospel of John. 5. Jesus is the "beloved" (*agapetos*) Son: the term may mean not only affection but also election, reinforced by the aorist tense that follows (lit., "with him I was well pleased"), suggesting a pretemporal election of the Messiah (cf. John 1:34 [Gr. mg.]). 6. These things are linked in the one utterance: at the very beginning of Jesus' public ministry, his Father presented him, in a veiled way, as at once Davidic Messiah, very Son of God, representative of the people, and Suffering Servant. Matthew has already introduced all these themes and will develop them further. Indeed he definitely cites Isaiah 42:1-4 in 12:18-21, which ends with the assertion (already made clear) that the nations will trust in this Servant. "Son of God" has particularly rich associations. Therefore it is hard to nail down its precise force at every occurrence. As it is wrong to see ontological sonship in every use, so is it wrong to exclude it prematurely. (For more adequate discussion, see, in addition to the standard dictionaries, Blair, pp. 60ff.; Cullman, *Christology* , pp. 270- 305; Kingsbury, *Structure* , pp. 40-83 [though he exaggerates the importance of the theme in Matthew: cf. Hill, "Son and Servant," pp. 2-16]; Ladd, *NT Theology* , pp. 159- 72; and Moule, *Christology* , pp. 22ff.) The Spirit's descent in v. 16 needs to be

understood in the light of v. 17. The Spirit is poured out on the servant in Isaiah 42:14, to which v. 17 alludes. This outpouring does not change Jesus' status (he was the Son before this) or assign him new rights. Rather it identifies him as the Promised Servant and Son and marks the beginning of his public ministry and direct confrontation with Satan (4:1), the dawning of the Messianic Age (12:28).

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c. The temptation of Jesus (4:1-11)

In the past many scholars took this pericope and its parallel (Luke 4:1-13) as imaginative embellishments of Mark's much briefer account. But J. Dupont ("L'Arriere-fond Biblique du Recit des Tentations de Jesus," NTS 3 [1956-57]: 287-

304) has argued persuasively that Mark's brevity and the ambiguity of such statements as "he was with the wild animals" (Mark 1:13) implies that Mark's readers were familiar with a larger account to which Mark makes brief reference. The account could only have come from Jesus, given to his disciples perhaps after Caesarea Philippi (Dupont). Therefore it gives an important glimpse into Jesus self-perception as the Son of God (3:17; 4:3, 6), and, judging by the Scripture he quotes, the way he perceived his own relation to Israel (cf. France, *Jesus*, pp. 50-53). Both Matthew and Mark tie the temptations to Jesus' baptism (see on 4:1). Luke, however, inserts his genealogy between the two, suggesting a contrast between Adam, who though tested in the bliss of Eden yet fell, and Jesus, who was tested in the hardships of the wilderness yet triumphed. Jesus' responses to Satan (all taken from Deut 6-8; i.e., 6:13, 16; 8:3) have led some to argue that this account is a haggadic midrash--i.e., explanatory but minimally historical stories--on the OT text (cf. esp. B. Gerhardsson, *The Testing of God's Son* [Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1966]). But the story line stands independent of the OT background; there are more themes allusively hidden in Matthew's account than first meet the eye (e.g., possible "new Moses" motifs: Davies, *Setting*, pp. 45-48; cf. Bonnard; Petr Pokorny, "The Temptation Stories and Their Intention," NTS 20 [1974]: 115-27); and the repeated reference to Deuteronomy 6-8 is better explained in terms of Israel-Christ typology. Luke reverses the order of the last two temptations for topographical reasons. Matthew's order is almost certainly original (Schweizer; Walvoord). It is difficult to be certain exactly what happened or in what form Satan came to Jesus. Standing on a high mountain (v. 8) would not itself provide a glimpse

of "all the kingdoms of the world"; some supernatural vision is presupposed. Moreover a forty- day fast is scarcely the ideal background for a trek to three separate and rugged sites. When we remember that Paul was not always sure whether his visions were "in the body or out of the body" (2Cor 12:2), we may be cautious about dogmatizing here. But there is no reason to think the framework of the story is purely symbolic as opposed to visionary, representing Jesus' inward struggles; if the demons could address him directly (e.g., 8:29, 31), it is difficult to say Satan wouldn't or couldn't do this.

1 Jesus' three temptations tie into his baptism, not only by the references to son ship and the Spirit, but by the opening "Then" (*tote*). Jesus' attestation as the Son (3:17) furnishes "the natural occasion for such special temptations as are here depicted"

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(Broadus). The same Spirit who engendered Jesus (1:20) and attested the Father's acknowledgment of his sonship (3:16-17) now leads him into the desert to be tempted by the devil. The "desert" (cf. on 3:1) is not only the place associated with demonic activity (Isa 13:21; 34:14; Matt 12:43; Rev 18:2; Trench, pp. 7-8) but, in a context abounding with references to Deuteronomy 6-8, the place where Israel experienced her greatest early testings. The devil must not be reduced to impersonal "forces" behind racism and pogroms (Schweizer). The Greek word *diabolos* strictly means "slanderer"; but the term is the regular LXX rendering of "Satan" (e.g., 1 Chronicles 21:1; Job 1:6-13; 2:1-7; Zech 3: 1-2), the chief opposer of God, the archenemy who leads all the spiritual hosts of darkness (cf. Gen 3; 2Sam 19:23; John 8:37-40; 1Cor 11:10; 2Cor 11:3; 12:7; Rev 12: 3-9; 20:1-4; 7-10; Maier). In a day of rising occultism and open Satanism, it is easier to believe the Bible's plain witness to him than twenty years ago. That Jesus should be led "by the Spirit" to be tempted "by the devil" is no stranger than Job 1:6-2:7 or 2 Samuel 24:1 (1 Chronicles 21:1). Recognizing that "to tempt"

(*peirazo*) also means "to test" in a good or bad sense somewhat eases the problem. In Scripture "tempting" or "testing" can reveal or develop character (Gen 22:1; Exod 20: 20; John 6:6; 2Cor 13:5; Rev 2:2) as well as solicit to evil (1Cor 7:5; 1Thess 3:5). For us to "tempt" or "test" God is wrong because it reflects unbelief or attempted bribery (Exod 17:2, 7 [Ps 95:9]; Deut 6:16 [Matt 4:7]; Isa 7:12; Acts 5:9; 15:10). Moreover God uses means and may bring good out of his agents' evil motives--see Joseph's experience (Gen 50:19-20). In Jesus' "temptations" God clearly purposed to test him just as Israel was tested, and Jesus' responses prove that he understood.

2 The parallels with historic Israel continue. Jesus' fast (doubtless total abstention from food but not from drink; cf. Luke 4:2) of forty days and nights reflected Israel's forty-year wandering (Deut 8:2). Both Israel's and

Jesus' hunger taught a lesson (Deut 8:3); both spent time in the desert preparatory to their respective tasks. Other parallels have been noticed (cf. Dupont). The main point is that both "sons" were tested by God's design (Deut 8:3, 5; cf: Exod 4:22; Gerhardsson, *Testing God's Son* , pp. 19-35), the one after being redeemed from Egypt and the other after his baptism, to prove their obedience and loyalty in preparation for their appointed work. The one "son" failed but pointed to the "Son" who would never fail (cf. on 2:15). In this sense the temptations legitimized Jesus as God's true Son (cf. Berger, "Die koniglichen Messiastraditionen," pp. 15-18). At the same time Jesus' hunger introduces us to a number of ironies to which Matthew more or less explicitly alludes: Jesus is hungry (v. 2) but feeds others (14:13- 21; 15:29-39); he grows weary (8:24) but offers others rest (11:28); he is the King Messiah but pays tribute (17:24-27); he is called the devil but casts out demons (12:22-

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32); he dies the death of a sinner but comes to save his people from their sins (1:21); he is sold for thirty pieces of silver but gives his life a ransom for many (20:28); he will not turn stones to bread for himself (4:3-4) but gives his own body as bread for people (26:26).

3-4 The tempter came to Jesus--we cannot say in what form--and referred to Jesus' sonship (v. 3). The form of the "if" clause in Greek (*ei* + indicative) does not so much challenge his sonship as assume it to build a doubtful imperative. Satan was not inviting Jesus to doubt his sonship but to reflect on its meaning. Sonship of the living God, he suggested, surely means Jesus has the power and right to satisfy his own needs. Jesus' response is based solely on Scripture: "It is written" (v. 4). The Scripture is Deuteronomy 8:3, following the LXX, which reads "every word" instead of a more ambiguous Hebrew expression (unless the non-LXX reading of D be adopted: cf. Gundry, *Use of OT* , p. 67); and it applies initially to Israel. But the statement itself is an aphorism. Even though "man" (*ho anthropos*) can specify old Israel (e.g., Ps 80:17), yet it is always true that everyone must recognize his utter dependence on God's word. Jesus' food is to do the will of his Father who sent him (John 4:34). The point of each temptation must be determined by closely examining both the temptation and Jesus' response. This clearly shows that this first temptation was no simple incitement to use improper means of making bread (Morison), or an attempt to use a miracle to prove to himself that he was really God's Son (J.A.T. Robinson, pp. 55-56) or to act alone without thought of others (Riesenfeld, pp. 87-88); it was a temptation to use his sonship in a way inconsistent with his God-ordained mission. The same taunt, "If you are the Son of God," is hurled at him in 27:40, when for him to have left the cross would have annulled the purpose of his coming. Similarly, though Jesus could have gained the aid of legions of angels, how then could the Scriptures that say Jesus had to suffer and die have been fulfilled (26:53-54)? Israel's hunger had been intended to show them that hearing and obeying the word of God is the most important thing

in life (Deut 8:2-3). Likewise Jesus learned obedience through suffering as a son in God's house (Heb 3:5-6; 5:7-8). More necessary than bread for Jesus was obedience to God's Word. In the light of these parallels, we must conclude that Satan's aim was to entice Jesus to use powers rightly his but which he had voluntarily abandoned to carry out the Father's mission. Reclaiming them for himself would deny the self-abasement implicit in his mission and in the Father's will. Israel demanded its bread but died in the wilderness; Jesus denied himself bread, retained his righteousness, and lived by faithful submission to God's Word. (There may be an allusion to Hab 2:4; cf. J. Andrew Kirk, "The Messianic Role of Jesus and the Temptation Narrative," EQ 44 [1972]: 11-29, 91-102.)

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5-7 The second temptation (Luke's third) is set in the "holy city" (v. 5), Jerusalem (cf. Neh 11:1; Isa 48:2; Dan 9:24; Matt 21:10; 27:53), on the highest point of the temple complex (*hieron* probably refers to the entire complex, not the sanctuary itself, which Jesus, not being a Levite, would not have approached; but see on 27:5). Josephus (Antiq. XV, 412 [xi.v]) testifies to the enormous height from the structure's top to the ravine's bottom. Late Jewish midrash says that Messiah would prove himself by leaping from the temple pinnacle; but apart from its lateness, it mentions no spectators. So it is unlikely that this was a temptation for Jesus to prove himself to the people as a new "David" who will again rid Jerusalem of the "Jebusites" (i.e., Romans--contra Kirk, "Messianic Role," pp. 91-95). Satan quoted Psalm 91:11-12 (v. 6) from the LXX, omitting the words "to guard you in all your ways." The omission itself does not prove he handled the Scriptures deceitfully (contra Walvoord), since the quotation is well within the range of common NT citation patterns. Satan's deceit lay in misapplying his quotation into a temptation that easily traps the devout mind by apparently warranting what might otherwise be thought sinful. Psalm 91:11-12 refers to anyone who trusts God and thus preeminently to Jesus. The angels will lift such a person up in their hands like a nurse a baby (cf. Num 11:12; Deut 1:31; Isa 49:22; Heb 1:14). At the temple, the place where God has particularly manifested himself, Jesus is tempted to test his sonship ("If you are the Son of God") against God's pledge to protect his own. Deuteronomy 6:16 was Jesus' reply. Jesus' hesitation came, not from wondering whether he or his Father could command the normal forces of nature (cf. 8:26; 14:31), but because Scripture forbids putting God to the test (v. 7). The reference alludes to Exodus 17:2-7 (cf. Num 20:1-13), where the Israelites "put the lord to the test" by demanding water. So Jesus was tempted by Satan to test God; but Jesus recognized Satan's testing as a sort of manipulative bribery expressly forbidden in the Scriptures (cf. esp. J.A.T. Robinson, *Twelve* , pp. 54-56). For both Israel and Jesus, demanding miraculous protection as proof of God's care was wrong; the appropriate attitude is trust and obedience (Deut

6:17). We see then, something of Jesus' handling of Scripture: his "also" shows that he would not allow any interpretation that generates what he knew would contradict some other passage.

8-10 The "very high mountain" (v. 8) does not seem much more than a prop for the vision of the world's kingdoms (cf. introduction to this pericope). It is doubtful that there is a conscious reference to Moses' looking at the Promised Land (Deut 34:1-4; contra Dupont, Hill); the parallels are not close. No condition Moses could have met at that point would have let him enter the land. Satan offers the kingdoms of the world and their "splendor" without showing their

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sin. Jesus, however, came to remove sin. Here was a temptation "to achieve power by worship of God's rival" (France, *Jesus* , p. 52), a shortcut to fullest messianic authority. Satan was offering an interpretation of the theocratic ideal that side stepped the Cross and introduced idolatry. At Jesus' baptism the Voice spoke words that united Davidic messiahship and suffering servanthood (cf. on 3:17); here was enticement to enjoy the former without the latter. Small wonder Jesus would later turn on Peter so sharply when the apostle made a similar suggestion (16:23). Jesus recognized that Satan's suggestion entailed depriving God of his exclusive claim to worship: neither God's "son" Israel nor God's "Son" Jesus may swerve from undivided allegiance to God himself (v. 10; cf. Exod 23:20-33; Deut 6:13; cf. esp. McNeile, Bonnard). So Jesus responded with a third "it is written" and banished Satan from his presence. The time would come when Jesus' expanding kingdom would progressively destroy the kingdom Satan had to offer (12:25-28; cf. Luke 10:18). The day still lies ahead when King Messiah's last enemy is destroyed (1Cor 15:25-26). But Jesus achieves it all without compromising his filial submission to the Father. In other words Jesus had in mind from the very beginning of his earthly ministry the combination of royal kingship and suffering servanthood attested at his baptism and essential to his mission. Moreover the twin themes of kingly authority and filial submission, developed so clearly in the fourth Gospel (cf. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty* , pp. 146-62), are already present as the complementary poles of the life and self- revelation of Immanuel: "God with us."

11 The devil left Jesus "until an opportune time" (Luke 4:13); and Matthew's present tense (*aphiesin*) may suggest the same thing (Hill, *Matthew*). Though the conflict has barely begun, the pattern of obedience and trust has been established. He has learned to resist the devil (cf. James 4:7). The angelic help is not some passing blessing but a sustained one (the

imperfect tense is probably significant). Jesus had refused to relieve his hunger by miraculously turning stones to bread; now he is fed supernaturally
(*diekonoun* , "attended," is often used in connection with food; e.g., 8:15; 25:44; 27:55; Acts 6:2; cf. Elijah in 1 Kings 19:6-7). He had refused to throw himself off the temple heights in the hope of angelic help; now angels feed him. He had refused to take a shortcut to inherit the kingdom of the world; now he fulfills Scripture by beginning his ministry and announcing the kingdom in Galilee of the Gentiles (vv. 12-17).

2. Jesus' early Galilean ministry (4:12-25)

a. The beginning (4:12-17)

12 John the Baptist's imprisonment appears to have prompted Jesus to return (cf.

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Notes) to Galilee. Though Mark 1:14-15 likewise links the two events, it is saying too much to conclude that Matthew has so strengthened the language to make John's imprisonment the cause of Jesus' withdrawal (*akousas* more likely means "when he heard" than "because he heard"). Equally important is the fact that the language suggests that Jesus remained for some time in Judea--unless we suppose the Baptist's arrest immediately followed Jesus' baptism. The Synoptics make no mention of Jesus' early Judean ministry but imply that his ministry began in Galilee. By contrast the fourth Gospel seems to presuppose an earlier Galilean ministry (John 1:19-2:12), a Judean ministry that overlapped with that of the Baptist (John 2:13-3:21), and then a return to the north via Samaria (John 3:22-4:42). The Johannine chronology has often been dismissed as of little historical worth. Yet there are hints even in the synoptic Gospels that presuppose an early Judean ministry (e.g., Luke 10:38), one such hint being the delay implicit in this verse. If this approach is valid, we must ask why the synoptists eliminate Jesus' earliest months of ministry. Several reasons are possible. 1. With the Baptist's removal from the scene, Jesus' ministry entered a new phase. The function of the forerunner was over; the one to whom he pointed had come. This transfer might be neatly indicated by beginning the account of Jesus' ministry from the time of John's imprisonment. (Compare years of intercalation among OT kings and their varied treatment by OT writers.) 2. By contrast, when the fourth Gospel was written, the explicit connection between the Baptist and Jesus may have been of more urgent interest if the writer was responding to organized groups of the Baptist's followers (cf. Acts 19:1-4). The synoptists do not seem to be under such pressure. 3. In Matthew, Galilee is of profound significance because it heralds the fulfillment of prophecy (vv. 14-16) and points to the gospel's extension to "all nations" (28:19). According to 1 Maccabees 5:23, the Jewish population in Galilee in 164 B.C. was so small it could be transported to Judea for protection. By Jesus' day, however, though the large population was mixed, owing to both the proximity of Gentile peoples in surrounding areas and the importation of colonists during the Maccabean conquest, the Jewish

population was substantial. The many theories concerning the influence of this region on Jesus and thence on Christianity have been neatly summarized and criticized by L. Goppelt (*Christentum und Judentum* [Gutersloh: Bertelsmann, 1954] pp. 32-41). "Galilee" as referring to some part of the northern district has long roots (cf. Josh 20: 7; 1 Kings 9:11; 2 Kings 15:29).

13 In Luke, Jesus move from Nazareth to Capernaum (4:31) follows the violent reaction of the Nazareth townspeople (vv. 16-30); and it is uncertain whether Matthew's account (13:54-58) reports the same incident or another one. Capernaum

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("village of Nahum"?) lay a little north of the plain of Gennesaret (14:34), on the northwest shore of Lake Galilee. Tell Hum marks the site today, its synagogue ruins dating from the second century. The village enjoyed a fishing industry that probably demanded the presence of a tax collector's booth (9:9). Here, too, was Peter's house (8:14; cf. Mark 1:29; 2:1). But Matthew is interested in pointing out Capernaum's location with reference to the ancient tribal allotments of Zebulun and Naphtali as showing the minute correspondence with the prophecy cited in vv. 15-16.

14-16 Jesus' move fulfilled (v. 14; cf. Notes) Isaiah 9:1-2. This prophecy is part of a large structure looking to Immanuel's coming (see on 1:23). It is extraordinarily difficult to identify the text form; either this is an independent translation of the Hebrew (Gundry, *Use of OT* , pp. 105-8) or else a modification of divergent LXX MSS (Chilton, *God in Strength* , p. 111). NIV's "the way to the sea" (v. 15) is better translated "seawards," i.e., lying by the Sea of Galilee; and "along the Jordan," though convenient, has little lexical warrant and should be replaced by "beyond the Jordan" (cf. Notes). The point of the quotation is clear enough. In despised Galilee, the place where people live in darkness (i.e., without the religious and cultic advantages of Jerusalem and Judea), the land of the shadow of death (i.e., where the darkness is most dense; cf. Job 10:21; Ps 107:10; Jer 13:16; Amos 5:8), here the light has dawned (v. 16). "Dawned" (*aneteilen*) suggests that the light first shone brilliantly here, not that it was shining brightly elsewhere and then moved here (Lindars, *Apologetic* , p. 198). This was God's prophesied plan. Matthew is not interested in the mere fact that some prophecy was fulfilled in Galilee but in this particular prophecy: from of old the Messiah was promised to "Galilee of the Gentiles" (*ton ethnon*), a foreshadowing of the commission to "all nations" (*panta ta ethne* , 28:19). Moreover if the messianic light dawns on the darkest places, then Messiah's salvation can only be a bestowal of grace--namely, that Jesus came to call, not the righteous, but sinners (9:13).

17 Several have argued that the words "from that time on" (*apo tote*), found only here and in 16:21; 26:16, mark major turning points in this Gospel (Stonehouse, *Witness of Matthews* pp. 129-31; Kingsbury, *Structure*). In its strong form, this theory divides Matthew into three sections (1:14-16; 4:17-16:20; 16:21-28:20) with important interpretive implications. Though there are good reasons for rejecting this structure (cf. Introduction, section 14), the phrase "from that time on" nevertheless marks an important turning point because it ties something new to what has just preceded it. We best see this when we examine the content of Jesus' preaching. Assuming the soundness of the text preserved in the NIV (cf. Notes), the burden of Jesus' preaching so far is, in itself, identical to that of John the Baptist: "Repent, for the kingdom of

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heaven is near" (v. 17; cf. 3:2). Matthew often shows ties between Jesus and John the Baptist (Klostermann; Chilton, *God in Strength*, p. 117). But when John the Baptist says these words, they are placed in an OT context that highlights his function as the forerunner who looks forward to the Messiah and his kingdom (3:2-12); when Jesus says the same words, they are linked (by "from that time") with an OT context that insists Jesus fulfills the promises of a light rising to shine on the Gen tiles (Schweizer). The longstanding debate that largely discounted C.H. Dodd's theory (that "is near" [3:2; 4:17] equals "has come" [12:28]) rather misses the mark. Neither Dodd nor his critics are subtle enough. The kingdom (see on 3:2) is still future. But the separate contexts of the announcements made by John and by Jesus (3:2; 4:17) show that with Jesus the kingdom has drawn so near that it has actually dawned. There fore Jesus' hearers must repent--a demand made not only by the Baptist but by Jesus. The structure of the book thus sets up an implicit parallelism: Jesus is not so much a new Moses as a new Joshua (on their names, cf. 1:21); for as Moses did not enter the Promised Land but was succeeded by Joshua who did, so John the Baptist announces the kingdom and is followed by Jesus (Joshua) who leads his people into it (cf. Albright and Mann).

b. Calling the first disciples (4:18-22)

Since no temporal expression links this pericope with the last one, there may have been some time lapse. Bultmann's skepticism (Synoptic Tradition, p. 28) about the historical worth of these verses is unwarranted (cf. Hill, Matthew). The relation of the various "callings" of the disciples in the Gospel records is obscure. If we take John 1:35-51 as historical, Simon, Andrew, Philip, and Nathaniel first followed Jesus at an earlier date. On returning to Galilee, they again took up their normal work. This is

inherently plausible. The disciples' commitment and understanding advanced by degrees; even after the Resurrection, they returned once more to their fishing (John 21). Here (4:20) an earlier commitment may explain their haste in following Jesus. If the miracle of Luke 5:1-11 occurred the night before Matthew 4:18-22 (Mark 1:16-20), that would be another reason for their immediate response to Jesus. In this connection the meaning of *katartizontas* ("preparing," v. 21; cf. below) is significant. See further 9:9-13; 10:1-4.

18 In Hebrew "sea," like the German See, can refer to lakes. Classical Greek prefers not to use *thalassa* (or *thalatta* --"sea") for lakes; and Luke follows the same pattern by using *limne* ("lake"), though Matthew, Mark, and John prefer "sea." The Sea of Galilee (named from the district), otherwise known as the "Lake of Gennesaret" (the name "Kinnereth" [Num 34:11; Josh 12:3] comes from a plain on its north west shore;

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cf. Matt 14:34), or the "Sea of Tiberias" (a city Herod built on the southwest shore: John 6:1; 21:1), is 12 1/4 by 8 3/4 miles at the longest and broadest points respectively. Its surface is 682 feet below sea level. It is subject to violent squalls. In Jesus' day it supported flourishing fisheries; on its west shore were nine towns, and "Bethsaida" may be freely translated "Fishtown." Simon and his brother Andrew came from Bethsaida (John 1:44), though Capernaum was now their home (Mark 1:21, 29). Simon, Matthew says, was "called Peter"; but he does not tell us how Peter received this name (cf. 10:2; 16:18; Mark 3:16; Luke 6:14). While uncertainties remain, what is quite certain is that *kepa* ("rock," "stone"), the Aramaic equivalent of "Peter," was already an accepted name in Jesus' day (cf. Joseph A. Fitzmyer, "Aramaic Kepha" and "Peter's Name in the New Testament," in Best and Wilson, pp. 121-32)--a fact that has an important bearing on the interpretation of 16:17-18. Simon and Andrew were casting a "net" (*amphiblestron* , a NT hapax legomenon [found only once], with a cognate at Mark 1:16). It refers to a circular "casting-net" and is not to be confused with the more generic term *diktua* in 4:20.

19-20 Greek has several expressions for "follow me" (v. 19; cf. at 10:38; Luke 9:23; 14:27), but they all presuppose a physical "following" during Jesus' ministry. His "followers" were not just "hearers"; they actually followed their Master around (as students then did) and became, as it were, trainees. The metaphor "fishers of men" glances back to the work of the two being called. It may also be reminiscent of Jeremiah 16:16. There Yahweh sends "fishermen" to gather his people for the Exile here Jesus sends "fishermen" to announce the end of the Exile (cf. on 1:11-12- 2:17-18) and the beginning of the messianic reign. But this allusion is uncertain; the danger of "parallelomania" (coined by S. Sandmel, "Parallelomania," JBL 81 [1962]: 2-13) is evident when E.C.B. MacLaurin ("The Divine

Fishermen," *St. Mark's Review* 94

[1978]: 26-28) works out many parallels and then opts for Ugaritic mythology a millennium and a half old. In any case there is a straight line from this commission to the Great Commission (28:18-20). Jesus' followers are indeed to catch men. On the prompt obedience of Simon and Andrew (v. 20), see the comments at the introduction to this section. Peter later used this obedience almost as a bartering point (19:27).

21-22 This second pair of brothers were "preparing their nets" (v. 21), which sounds as if they were just setting out. The verb *katartizo* , however, connotes "mend" or "restore to a former condition." So James and John may have been making repairs after a night's fishing (cf. Luke 5:1-11 and its possible place in the chronology). Fenton notes that Paul uses *katartizo* for perfecting the church (1Cor 1:10; 2Cor 13:11) and sees here an allusion to pastoral ministry. But this is fanciful because the verb is not a

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technical term. The boat (*plōion* was used of all kinds of boats) was big enough for several men (Mark 1:20). Mark's remark that hired men were left with Zebedee when his sons followed Jesus reminds us that we must not exaggerate the ignorance and poverty of Jesus' first followers. While they were not trained scribes or rabbis, they were not illiterate, stupid, or destitute. Indeed, Peter's protest in 19:27 implies that many or all of the Twelve had given up much to follow Jesus. Jesus took the initiative and "called" James and John. In the Synoptics, unlike Paul's epistles, Jesus call is not necessarily effectual. But in this instance it was immediately obeyed.

c. Spreading the news of the kingdom (4:23-25)

Summaries are common to narrative literature; but the one before us, with its parallel in 9:35-38, has distinctive features. 1. It does not just summarize what has gone before but shows the geographical extent and varied activity of Jesus' ministry. 2. It therefore sets the stage for the particular discourses and stories that follow and implies that the material presented is but a representative sampling of what was available. 3. It is not a mere chronicle but conveys theological substance. Thus it is easy to detect different emphases between this summary and 9:35-38 (see comments in loc.). Older commentators see in vv. 23-25 a first circuit of Galilee and in 9:35-38 a second one. This is possible, but both pericopes may refer to the constant ministry of Jesus rather than to tightly defined circuits.

23 Jesus' ministry included teaching, preaching, and healing. Galilee, the district covered, is small (approximately seventy by forty miles); but

according to Josephus (Life 235 [45]; War III, 41-43 [iii.2]), writing one generation later, Galilee had 204 cities and villages, each with no fewer than fifteen thousand persons. Even if this figure refers only to the walled cities and not to the villages (which is not what Josephus says), a most conservative estimate points to a large population, even if less than Josephus's three million. At the rate of two villages or towns per day, three months would be required to visit all of them, with no time off for the Sabbath. Jesus "went around doing good" (Acts 10:38; cf. Mark 1:39; 6:6). The sheer physical drain must have been enormous. Above all we must recognize that Jesus was an itinerant preacher and teacher who necessarily repeated approximately the same material again and again and faced the same problems, illnesses, and needs again and again. The connection between "teaching" and "synagogue" recurs at 9:35; 13:54. A visiting Jew might well be asked to teach in the local synagogue (on which cf. Moore,

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***Judaism* , 1:281-307; Douglas, *Illustrated Dictionary* , 3:1499-503) as part of regular worship (e.g., Luke 4:16). The word "their" may indicate a time when the synagogue and the church had divided. On the other hand, it may simply indicate that the author and his readers viewed these events from outside Galilee (see further on 7:29; 9:35 et al.). The message Jesus preaches is the "good news [*euangelion* , "gospel"] of the kingdom." The term recurs in 9:35; 24:14, and becomes "this gospel" in 26:13. "Of the kingdom" is an objective genitive: the "good news" concerns the kingdom (cf. Notes), whose "nearness" has already been announced (3:2; 4:17) and which is the central subject of the Sermon on the Mount (ch. 5-7). Mark prefers "the gospel" or "the gospel of Christ" or "the gospel of God" (Mark 1:1, 14; 8:35; 10:29; 13:10); but the difference between these expressions and "gospel of the kingdom" is purely linguistic, since the "good news" concerns God and the inbreaking of his saving reign in the person of his Son the Messiah. The healings of various diseases among the people further attest the kingdom's presence and advance (cf. 11:2-6; Isa 35:5-6). Walvoord (p. 39) relegates these "kingdom blessings ... due for fulfillment in the future kingdom" to the status of mere "credentials of the King"; but if the kingdom blessings are present, then the kingdom too must have broken in, even if not yet in the splendor of its consummation (cf. Rev 21:3-5).**

24 The geographical extent of "Syria" is uncertain. From the perspective of Jesus in Galilee, Syria was to the north. From the Roman viewpoint Syria was a Roman province embracing all Palestine (cf. Luke 2:2; Acts 15:23, 41; Gal 1:21), Galilee excepted, since it was under the independent administration of Herod Antipas at this time. The term "Syria" reflects the extent of the excitement aroused by Jesus' ministry; if the Roman use of the term is here presumed, it shows his effect on people far beyond the borders of Israel. Those "ill with various diseases" and "those suffering severe" pain are divided into three overlapping categories: (1) the demon possessed (cf. 8:28-34; 12:22-29); (2) those having seizures--viz., any kind of insanity or irrational behavior whether or not related to demon possession (17:14-18; on

seleniazomenous ["epileptics"], which etymologically refers to the "moonstruck" [i.e., "lunatic"], cf. DNTT, 3:734; J.M. Ross, "Epileptic or Moonstruck?" BTh 29 [1978]: 126-28)--and (3) the paralyzed, whose condition also had various causes. In the NT sickness may result directly from a particular sin (e.g., John 5:14; 1Cor 11:30) or may not (e.g., John 9:2-3). But both Scripture and Jewish tradition take sickness as resulting directly or indirectly from living in a fallen world (cf. on 8:17). The Messianic Age would end such grief (Isa 11:1-5; 35:5-6). Therefore Jesus miracles, dealing with every kind of ailment, not only herald the kingdom but show that God has

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pledged himself to deal with sin at a basic level (cf. 1:21; 8:17).

25 Jesus' reputation at this point extended far beyond Galilee, even though that is where the light "dawned" (v. 16). Two of the named areas, the region across the Jordan (east bank? see on v. 15) and the Decapolis, were mostly made up of Gen tiles, a fact already emphasized (see on 1:3-5; 2:1-12, 22-23; 3:9; 4:8, 15-16). The Decapolis (lit., "Ten Cities") refers to a region east of Galilee extending from Damascus in the north to Philadelphia in the south, ten cities (under varied reckonings) making up the count (cf. S. Thomas Parker, "The Decapolis Reviewed," JBL 94 [1975]: 437-41). People from all these areas "followed" Jesus. Despite contrary arguments "follow" does not necessarily indicate solid discipleship. It may, as here, refer to those who at some particular time followed Jesus around in his itinerant ministry and thus were loosely considered his disciples.

B. First Discourse: The Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:29)

The Sermon on the Mount is the first of five major discourses in the Gospel of Matthew. All five follow blocks of narrative material; all five end with the same formula (see on 7:28-29; and Introduction, section 14). Not only because it is first and longest of the five, and therefore helps determine the critical approach toward all of them, but also because it deals with ethical issues of fundamental importance in every age, this "sermon" has called forth thousands of books and articles. Some orientation is necessary. A useful starting point is Warren S. Kissingers *The Sermon on the Mount: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1975). K. Beyschlag ("Zur Geschichte der Bergpredigt in der Alten Kirche," *Zeitschrift fur Theologie und Kirche* 74 [1977]: 291-322) and Robert M. Grant ("The Sermon on the Mount in Early Christianity," *Semeia* 12 [1978]: 215-31) unfold the treatment of these chapters in the earliest centuries of

Christianity. For clarification of the varied treatment of the sermon during the present century, we are now indebted to Ursula Berner (*Die Bergpredigt: Rezeption und Auslegung im 20. Jahrhundert* [Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1979]). Popular, recent expositions of use to the working preacher include James M. Boice, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972); Carson, *Sermon on the Mount* ; D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Studies in the Sermon on the Mount* , 2 vols. (London: IVP, 1959-60); F.B. Meyer, *The Sermon on the Mount* (reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Baker, 1959); Stott. Four introductory matters demand comment:

1. *Unity and authenticity of the discourse* . since the work of Hans Windisch (*The Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount* , tr. S.M. Gilmour [1929; reprint ed.,

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Philadelphia: Fortress, 1951]), few have regarded Matthew 5-7 as thoroughly authentic. The most common proposal today is that these Chapters preserve some authentic teaching of Jesus, originally presented at various occasions and collected and shaped by oral tradition. To this the evangelist has added church teaching, taught, perhaps, by an inspired prophet speaking for the exalted Christ; and the discourse has then been further molded by catechetical and liturgical considerations (so, for instance, J. Jeremias, *The Sermon on the Mount* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1963], and the magisterial study by Davies, *Setting*). According to these critics, at best the so-called sermon on the Mount preserves no more than isolated sayings of Jesus. Much of one's judgment in these matters depends on conclusions as to source, form, and redaction criticism (cf. Introduction, sections 1-3). For instance, if one insists that every saying elsewhere in the Gospels similar to any saying in Matthew 5-7 must be traced back to one utterance only (thus ignoring Jesus' role as an itinerant preacher), one may develop a more or less plausible theory of the growth of oral tradition in each case (so, e.g., H.T. Wrege, *Die aberlieferungsgeschichte der Bergpredigt* [WUNT 9; Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1968]). This can be done precisely because so many sayings in these chapters do occur elsewhere, either in roughly similar or in identical language (see on 5:13, 15, 18, 25, 29, 32; 6:9, 22, 24-25; 7:2, 7, 17, 23). Moreover, where parallels exist, Matthew's forms are often more stylized or structured. There is no need to repeat introductory remarks about authenticity. Several observations will, however, focus the approach adopted here. a. We cannot make much out of Matthew's clear tendency to treat his material topically. Nor can we conclude from his grouping of miracles that he has composed his discourses out of grouped but independent sayings. In the former case Matthew does not pretend to do otherwise, whereas in all his discourses he gives the impression, especially in his concluding formulas (7:28-29; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1), that the material is not only authentic but delivered on one occasion. b. We dare not claim too much on the basis of the unity or its lack in the discourses. Even if the Sermon on the Mount represents material Jesus delivered on one occasion, perhaps over several

days, its extreme compression, necessary selection, and problems of translation from Aramaic to Greek (assuming Jesus preached in Aramaic) might all unite to break the flow. If the unity of the discourse be defended (e.g., by A. Farrar, *St Matthew and St Mark* [London: Dacre/A. and C. Black, 1954, 1966], but cf. Davies, *Setting* , pp. 9-13), that unity might be nothing more than the evangelist's editing. He must have seen some coherence in these chapters to leave them in this form. Thus neither unity nor disunity are sufficient criteria for the authenticity of a brief account of extensive discourse. c. We must suppose that Jesus preached the same thing repeatedly (see on 4:23-25); he was an extremely busy itinerant preacher. The pithier the saying, the more likely it

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was to be repeated word-perfect. The more common the natural phenomenon behind a metaphor or aphorism, the more likely Jesus repeated it in new situations. Any experienced itinerant preacher will confirm the inescapability of these tendencies. More important, if one distances oneself from the more radical presuppositions of form and tradition criticism, the NT documents themselves confirm this approach (cf. 11:15 with 13:9; 18:3 with 19:14, and cf. 20:26 [and Luke 12:24-31; John 13:13-17]; Matt 17: 20 with 21:21; 10:32 with Luke 9:26 and 12:8; 10:24 with Luke 6:40 and John 13:16 and 15:20; 10:38-39 with 16:24-25 and Luke 17:33 and John 12:25). Even longer sections like Jesus' model prayer (6:9-13; see discussion below) are susceptible of such treatment, if for different reasons. d. Jesus himself was a master teacher. In his sayings, whose authenticity is not greatly disputed, there is evidence of structure, contrast, and assonance. So when some scholars tell us that Matthew's account has more structure (perhaps from catechetical influence) than the other Synoptics, is this a sign of greater nearness to or distance from Jesus? What criteria are there for distinguishing the two possibilities? Surely if we do not pretend to be able to retrieve all the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus but only his *ipsissima vox*, most of the common criteria for testing authenticity evaporate. e. The assumptions of some form critics make their work more questionable than they think. For if a certain kind of saying tends to take on a certain form in oral tradition, and if the period of oral transmission is long enough to develop that form, then the repetition of the saying on half-a-dozen different occasions in slightly different words would ultimately lead to one common form of the saying. Thus, far from enabling the critic to trace a precise development, form criticism obliterates the richness of the tradition attested by the evangelists themselves. f. As Matthew's Gospel stands, we must weigh two disparate pieces of evidence: (1) that all five of Matthew's discourses are bracketed by introductory and concluding remarks that cannot fail to give the impression that he presents his discourses as not only authentic but delivered by Jesus on the specified occasions and (2) that many individual bits of each discourse find synoptic parallels in other settings. Many think the second point to be so

strong that they conclude that Matthew himself composed the discourses. Conservative writers in this camp say that all of Jesus' sayings are authentic but that Matthew brought them together in their present form. Therefore the first piece of evidence has to be reinterpreted; i.e., the introductory and concluding notes framing each of Matthew's discourses are seen as artistic, compositional devices. A more subtle approach is to say that Jesus actually did deliver a discourse on each of the five occasions specified but that not all the material Matthew records was from that occasion. In other words the evangelist has added certain "footnotes" of his own, at a time when orthography was much more flexible and there were no convenient ways

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to indicate what he was doing. While either of these reconstructions is possible, each faces two steep hurdles: (1) the introductory and concluding brackets around the five discourses do not belong to any clear first-century pattern or genre that would show the reader that they are merely artistic devices and not the real settings they manifestly claim to be; and (2) it is remarkable that each conclusion sweeps together all the sayings of the preceding discourse under some such rubric as "when Jesus had finished saying these things" (a possible exception is 11:1). That the introductory and concluding formulas were not recognizable as artistic devices is confirmed by the fact that for the first millennium and a half or so of its existence, the church recognized them as concrete settings. (This is not a surreptitious appeal to return to precritical thinking but a note on the recognizability of a literary genre.) In view of the above, it seems the wiser course to believe Matthew intended to present real, historical settings for his discourses; and the parallels found elsewhere, though they must be considered individually, do not seem to present insurmountable problems. While many sayings in the Gospels appear in "loose" or in "floating" settings, where an evangelist ostensibly specifies the context, the authenticity of that context must be assumed. This is particularly easy to maintain in Matthew if the date and authorship are as stated in the Introduction (sections 5-6). Thus this commentary takes Matthew's settings seriously. Not that it takes all the discourses as verbatim accounts or unedited reports of Jesus' teaching, it rather assumes that they are condensed notes, largely in Matthew's idiom, selected and presented in accord with his own concerns. But behind them stand the voice and authority of Jesus.

2. *Relation to the Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6:20-49)* . Augustine claimed that Matthew 5-7 and the passage in Luke are two separate discourses, and almost all writers agreed with him till the Reformation. Even after it some scholars followed Augustine (e.g., Alexander, Plumptre), and today some are returning to Augustine's view. Origen, Chrysostom, Calvin, and the majority of recent scholars, however, defend the view (often with appropriate theorizing about Q) that the two accounts represent the same discourse. This has much to commend it. The

two sermons begin with beatitudes and end with the same simile. Nearly everything in the Sermon on the Plain is in some form in the Sermon on the Mount and often in identical order. Both are immediately followed by the same events--viz., entrance into Capernaum and healing the centurion's servant. (The point is valid even if it indicates nothing more than a common link in the tradition.) Luke's sermon is much shorter and has its own thematic emphases (e.g., humility); and much of the extra material in Matthew is scattered elsewhere in Luke, especially in his "travel narrative" (Luke 9:51-18:14; discussed at 19:1-2). Moreover Matthew speaks of a mountain, Luke a plain; and Luke's discourse follows the choosing of the Twelve, which does not take place in Matthew till chapter 10.

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But these problems can be readily solved.

a. Much of what Luke omits, mostly in Matthew 5:17-37; 6:1-18, is exactly the sort of material that would interest Matthew's Jewish readers more than Luke's readers. Luke has also omitted some material from his "Sermon on the Plain" that he has placed elsewhere (Matt 6:25-34; Luke 12:22-31). It is possible that Jesus gave the sermon more than once. Alternatively, Luke's context is so loose that he may have been responsible for the topical rearrangement. In any case to insist that a writer must include everything he knows or everything in his sources is poor methodology. In the other Matthean discourses, Matthew includes much and Luke includes less; in the Sermon on the Mount, though Matthew's account is much longer than Luke's, in certain places Luke preserves a little more than Matthew (compare Matt 5:12 with Luke 6:23-26; Matt 5:47 with Luke 6:33-35). b. Of the several solutions to the mountain or plain, the most convincing one takes Matthew's "on a mountainside" to mean "up in the hills" and Luke's "plain" as being some kind of plateau. The linguistic evidence is convincing (see on 5:1-2). c. Luke's order, placing the sermon after the choosing of the Twelve, is historically believable. But Matthew is clearly topical in his order. Connectives at 5:1; 8:1; 9:35; 11:2; 12:1; 14:1 et al. are loose; his favorite word "then" is general in meaning (see on 2:7). It is unlikely that Matthew intends his readers to think that the Sermon on the Mount succeeded Jesus' circuit (4:23-25). Rather, this sermon was preached during that circuit. Moreover some of Matthew's reasons for placing it here instead of after 10:1-4 are apparent (see below under 4). It seems best, then, to take Matthew 5:7 and Luke 6:20-49 as separate reports of the same occasion, each dependent on some shared tradition (Q?), but not exclusively so. Space limitations prevent tracing all the likely connections; but some attention will be given selected critical problems within this overall approach. 3. *Theological structure and affinities* . Whatever its sources and manner of compilation, the inclusion of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew must be significant. Some have noted its similarities to Jewish thought. G. Eriedlander's classic work,

***The Jewish Sources of the Sermon on the Mount* (New York: Ktav, 1911), shows that virtually all the statements in Matthew 5-7 can be paralleled in the Talmud or other Jewish sources. Of course this is right, but it is a little like saying that the parts of a fine automobile can be found in a vast warehouse. Read any fifty pages of the Babylonian Talmud and compare them with Matthew 5-7, and it becomes obvious that they are not saying the same things. Sigal ("Halakhah") argues that the forms of argument in Matthew 5-7 fit into well-accepted patterns of the early rabbis ("proto-rabbis"); Gary A. Tuttle ("The Sermon on the Mount: Its Wisdom Affinities and Their Relation to Its Structure," JETS 20 [1977]: 213-30) draws attention to connections with the forms of argument in wisdom literature. Both are too restrictive: rabbinic and**

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wisdom argumentation overlap much more than is commonly acknowledged, and Jesus (and Matthew) echo both and more yet they must be interpreted first of all in their own right. The attempt to do that has not produced consistent results. Schweizer lists seven major interpretive approaches to the Sermon on the Mount; Harvey K. McArthur

(*Understanding the Sermon on the Mount* [New York: Harper and Row, 1960], pp. 105-48) lists twelve. Some of the most important are as follows: a. Lutheran orthodoxy often understands the Sermon on the Mount as an exposition of law designed to drive men to cry for grace. This is Pauline (Rom 3-4; Gal 3), and grace is certainly presupposed in the sermon (e.g., see on 5:3). But though one of Jesus' purposes may have been to puncture self-righteous approaches to God, the sermon cannot be reduced to this. The righteousness envisaged (see on 5:20) is not imputed righteousness. Moreover, Paul himself insists that personal righteousness must characterize one who inherits the kingdom (Gal 5:19-24). Above all, this view fails to grasp the flow of salvation history (see below). b. Some have argued that Jesus' eschatology is so "realized" that the ethic of the Sermon on the Mount is a sort of moral road map toward social progress. Classic liberalism has been invalidated by two world wars, the Great Depression and repeated recessions, the threat of nuclear holocaust, and post-Watergate, post-Vietnam, post- OPEC malaise. Nor can it be integrated with apocalyptic elements in Jesus' teaching (e.g., Matt 24) or with the vision of a suffering and witnessing community (Matt 10).

c. Today the sermon is commonly interpreted as a set of moral standards used catechetically within Matthew's community. While that may be so if there was a Matthean community, this view is reductionistic. It fails to wrestle with salvation history. The entire Book of Matthew presents itself as Jesus' teaching and ministry before the church was called into existence in the full, post-Pentecost sense. This Gospel does not present itself as the catechesis of a church but as a theological portrayal of the one who fulfilled

Scripture and introduced the end times. d. The Anabaptist-Mennonite tradition interprets the ethical demands to apply to all believers in every age and every circumstance. The resulting philosophy of pacifism in the context of a power-loving world demands the conclusion that Christians should not seek to be involved in affairs of state. This tradition rightly perceives the separate status of the believing community, which must not be confused with the world (e.g., 7: 13-14, 21-23). But it is insensitive to the place of this sermon in the progress of redemption and absolutizes some of its teaching in a way incompatible with its context and with other Scripture (see on 5:38-42; 6:5-8). e. Existential interpretation finds in these chapters a summons to personal decision and authentic faith but jettisons the personal and infinite God who makes the summons. Also, by denying the uniqueness of the Jesus who delivers the sermon, it fails to cope

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with its fulfillment theme and its implications.

f. Still others claim that Jesus is advocating an "interim ethic" to remain in force till the soon-expected consummation. But Jesus, they assume, erred as to the timing of this event; so the "interim ethic" must be toned down accordingly. All this rests on a view of Jesus derived from other passages (not least Matt 24-25 and parallels). g. It is common among evangelicals and others to interpret the Sermon on the Mount as an intensifying or radicalizing of OT moral law. But this depends largely on a doubtful interpretation of 5:17-20 (cf. below). h. Classic dispensationalism interprets the Sermon on the Mount as law for the millennial kingdom first offered by Jesus to the Jews. This has faced so many objections (e.g., Can any age be justly described as "millennial" that requires "laws" to govern face slapping?) that the approach has been qualified. J. Dwight Pentecost ("The Purpose of the Sermon on the Mount," BS 115 [1958]: 128ff., 212ff, 313ff.) and Walvoord take the ethical content of the sermon to be binding on any age but continue to drive a wedge between these chapters and the Christian gospel by pointing out that they do not mention the cross, justification by faith, new birth, etc. On that basis the Epistle of James is also non-Christian! Moreover they misinterpret Matthew's fulfillment motif and impose a theological structure on this Gospel demanding improbable exegesis of numerous passages (occasionally identified in this commentary). The disjunction between Matthew 5-7 and the Christian gospel is theologically and historically artificial. This sketch overlooks many variations of the principal interpretations of the Sermon on the Mount. Recently several scholars have narrowed the focus: C. Burchard ("The Theme of the Sermon on the Mount," in Schottroff, *Command*, pp. 57-75) understands chapters 5-7 to provide rules of conduct for the Matthean church in the light of opposition to its witness; G. Bornkamm ("Der Aufbau der Bergpredigt," NTS 24 [1977-78]: 419-32) interprets the sermon around the Lord's Prayer (6:9-13). Though these perspectives highlight neglected themes, they overlook both the thrust of the sermon as a whole and its place in Matthew.

The unifying theme of the sermon is the kingdom of heaven. This is established, not by counting how many times the expression occurs, but by noting where it occurs. It envelopes the Beatitudes (5:3, 10) and appears in 5:17-20, which details the relation between the OT and the kingdom, a subject that leads to another literary envelope around the body of the sermon (5:17; 7:12). It returns at the heart of the Lord's Prayer (6:10), climaxes the section on kingdom perspectives (6:33), and is presented as what must finally be entered (7:21-23). Matthew places the sermon immediately after two verses insisting that the primary content of Jesus' preaching was the gospel of the kingdom (4:17, 23). It provides ethical guidelines for life in the kingdom, but does so within an explanation of the place of the contemporary setting within redemption

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history and Jesus' relation to the OT (5:17-20). The community forming around him, his "disciples," is not yet so cohesive and committed a group that exhortations to "enter" (7:13-14) are irrelevant. The glimpse of kingdom life (horizontally and vertically) in these chapters anticipates not only the love commandments (22:34-40) but also grace (5:3; 6:12; 7:7-11; cf. 21:28-46).

4. Location in Matthew . Unlike Luke, Matthew does not place the sermon after the calling of the Twelve (10:1-4); for there he puts a second discourse, one concerning mission. This links the call with the commission, a theme of great importance to Matthew (see on 11:11-12; 28:16-20). Not less important is the location of the Sermon on the Mount so early in the Gospel, before any sign of controversies between Jesus and the Jewish leaders as to the law's meaning. This means that, despite the antitheses in 5:17-48 ("You have heard ... but I tell"), these should not be read as tokens of confrontation but in the light of the fulfillment themes richly set out in chapters 1-4 and made again explicit in 5:17-20: Jesus comes "to fulfill" the Law and the Prophets (i.e., the OT Scriptures). Therefore his announcements concerning the kingdom must be read against that background, not with reference to debates over Halakic details. This framework is Matthew's; by it he tells us that whatever controversies occupied Jesus' attention, the burden of his kingdom proclamation always made the kingdom the goal of the Scriptures, the long-expected messianic reign foretold by the Law and the Prophets alike.

1. Setting (5:1-2)

1 The "crowds" are those referred to in 4:23-25. Here Jesus stands at the height of his popularity. Although his ministry touched the masses, he saw the need to teach his "disciples" (*mathetai*) closely. The word "disciple"

must not be restricted to the Twelve, whom Matthew has yet to mention (10:1-4). Nor is it a special word for full- fledged believers, since it can also describe John the Baptist's followers (11:2). In the Lukan parallel we are told of a "large crowd of his disciples" as well as "a great number of people" (6:17). This goes well with Matthew 4:25, which says large crowds "followed" Jesus. Those who especially wanted to attach themselves to him, Jesus takes aside to instruct; but it is anachronistic to suppose that all are fully committed in the later "Christian" sense of Acts 11:26 (cf. Matt 7:13-14, 21-23). Matthew sees the disciples as paradigms for believers in his own day but never loses sight, as we shall repeatedly notice, of the unique, historical place of the first followers (contra U. Luz, "Die Junger im Matthauevangelium," ZNW 62 [1971]: 141-71--though Luz wisely avoids reducing Matthew's disciples to the Twelve. On the importance of the theme of discipleship in this Gospel, cf. Martin H. Franzmann, *Follow Me: Discipleship According to Saint Matthew* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1961]).

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At this point in his ministry, Jesus could not escape the mounting crowds; and by the end of his sermon (7:28-29), he was surrounded by yet larger crowds. This suggests that his teaching covered several days, not just an hour or two (cf. the three-day meeting, 15:29-39). The place of retreat Jesus chose was in the hill country (cf. Notes), not "on a mountainside." He "sat down" to teach. Sitting was the accepted posture of synagogue or school teachers (Luke 4:20; cf. Matt 13:2; 23:2; 24:3; cf. DNTT, 3:588-89). The attempt of Lachs (pp. 99-101) to find an anachronism here fails because his sources refer to the position of one who is *learning* Torah, not teaching it. Luke has Jesus standing (6:17) but ministering to the larger crowd from which he could not escape (6:17-19).

2 NIV masks the idiom "he opened his mouth and taught them," found elsewhere in the NT (13:35; Acts 8:34; 10:34; 18:14) and reflecting OT roots (Job 3:1; 33:2; Dan 10:16). It is used in solemn or revelatory contexts. "To teach" (*edidasken*) is imperfect and inceptive: "He began to teach them." Contrary to Davies (*Setting* , pp. 7-8), one must not draw too sharp a distinction between preaching (*kerysso* , 4:17) and teaching (*didasko* : see on 3:1 and the linking of these categories in 4:23; 9:35. SBK (1:189) notes that teaching was not uncommonly done outdoors as well as in synagogues.

2. The kingdom of heaven: its norms and witness (5:3-16)

a. The norms of the kingdom (5:3-12)

1) The Beatitudes (5:3-10)

The Beatitudes (Lat. *beatus* , "blessed"), otherwise called macarisms (from Gr. *makarios* , "blessed"), have been the subject of many valuable studies, the most detailed being J. Dupont's *Les Beatitudes* , 3 vols., 2d ed. (Paris: Gabalda, 1969). As to form beatitudes find their roots in wisdom literature and especially the Psalms (for the best discussion of the OT background, cf. W. Zimmerli, "Die Seligpreisungen der Bergpredigt und das Alte Testament, *Donum Gentilicium* , ed. E. Bammel et al. [Oxford: Clarendon, 1978], pp. 8-26; cf. Pss 1:1; 31:1-2; 144:15; Prov 3:13; Dan 12:12). OT beatitudes never bunch more than two together (e.g., Ps 84:4-5 elsewhere, cf. Ecclesiasticus 25:7-9). Comparison of 5:3-12 with Luke 6:20-26 shows that, along with smaller differences, the four Lukan beatitudes stand beside four woes--all in the second person. But Matthew mentions no woes, and his eight beatitudes (vv. 3-10) are in the third person, followed by an expansion of the last one in the second person (vv. 11-12). Pre-NT beatitudes are only rarely in the second person (e.g., 1 Enoch 58:2) and occur with

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woes only in the Greek text of Ecclesiasticus 10:16-17; so on formal grounds there is no reason to see Matthew's beatitudes as late adaptations. No doubt both Matthew and Luke selected and shaped their material. But though this results in differences in the thrust of the two sets of beatitudes, such differences are often overstated (e.g., C.H. Dodd, *More New Testament Studies* [Manchester: University Press, 1968], pp. 7-8). Dupont (*Les Beatitudes*) and Marshall (*Luke*) argue that Luke describes what disciples actually are, Matthew what they ought to be; Luke, the social implications of Jesus' teaching and reversals at the consummation, Matthew, the standards of Christian righteousness to be pursued now for entrance into the kingdom. Similarly, G. Strecker ("Les macarismes du discours sur la montagne," in Didier, pp. 185-208) insists that in Matthew's beatitudes ethics has displaced eschatology: the Beatitudes become ethical entrance requirements rather than eschatological blessings associated with the Messianic Age. A more nuanced interpretation is presented by R.A. Guelich ("The Matthean Beatitudes: 'Entrance-Requirements' or Eschatological Blessings?" JBL 95 [1973]: 415-34). He notes that Matthew 5:3-5 contains planned echoes of Isaiah 61:1-3, which is certainly eschatological in orientation. Moreover both Isaiah 61:1-3 and the Matthean beatitudes are formally declarative but implicitly hortatory: one must not overlook function for form. The Beatitudes "are but an expression of the fulfillment of Isaiah 61, the OT promise of the *Heilszeit* ['time of salvation'], in the person and proclamation of Jesus. This handling of the Beatitudes is certainly in keeping with Matthew's emphasis throughout the Gospel that Jesus comes in light of the OT promise" (ibid., p. 433). The implicit demands of the Beatitudes are therefore comprehensible only because of the new state of affairs the proclamation of the kingdom initiates (4:17, 23), the insistence that Jesus has come to fulfill the Law and the Prophets (5:17).

3 Two words and their cognates stand behind "blessed" and "blessing" in the NT. The word used in vv. 3-11 is *makarios* , which usually corresponds in the LXX to *asre* , a Hebrew term used almost as an interjection: "Oh the blessednesses [pl.] of." Usually *makarios* describes the man who is singularly favored by God and therefore in some sense "happy"; but the word can apply to God (1Tim 1:11; 6:15). The other word is *eulogetos* , found in the LXX primarily for Hebrew *berakah* , and used chiefly in connection with God in both OT and NT (e.g., Mark 14:61; Luke 1:68; Rom 1:25; 2Cor 1:3). *Eulogetos* does not occur in Matthew; but the cognate verb appears five times (14:19; 21:9; 23:39; 25:34; 26:26), in one of which it applies to man (25:34), not God or Christ. Attempts to make *makarios* mean "happy" and *eulogetos* "blessed" (Broadus) are therefore futile; though both appear many times, both can apply to either God or man. It is difficult not to conclude that their common factor is approval: man "blesses"

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God, approving and praising him; God "blesses" man, approving him in gracious condescension. Applied to man the OT words are certainly synonymous (cf. *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament* , 1:356). As for "happy" (TEV), it will not do for the Beatitudes, having been devalued in modern usage. The Greek "describes a state not of inner feeling on the part of those to whom it is applied, but of blessedness from an ideal point of view in the judgment of others" (Allen). In the eschatological setting of Matthew, "blessed" can only promise eschatological blessing (cf. DNTT, 1:216-17; TDNT, 4:367-70); and each particular blessing is specified by the second clause of each beatitude. The "poor in spirit" are the ones who are "blessed." Since Luke speaks simply of "the poor," many have concluded that he preserves the true teaching of the historical Jesus--concern for the economically destitute--while Matthew has "spiritualized" it by adding "in spirit." The issue is not so simple. Already in the OT, "the poor" has religious overtones. The word *ptochos* ("poor"--in classical Gr., "beggar") has a different force in the LXX and NT. It translates several Hebrew words, most importantly (in the pl.) *anawim* ("the poor"), i.e., those who because of sustained economic privation and social distress have confidence only in God (e.g., Pss 37:14; 40: 17; 69:28-29, 32-33; Prov 16:19 [NIV, the oppressed; NASB, "the lowly"]; 29:23; Isa 61:1; cf. Pss Sol 5:2, 11; 10:7). Thus it joins with passages affirming God's favor on the lowly and contrite in spirit (e.g., Isa 57:15; 66:2). This does not mean there is lack of concern for the materially poor but that poverty itself is not the chief thing (cf. the Prodigal Son's "self-made" poverty). Far from conferring spiritual advantage, wealth and privilege entail great spiritual peril (see on 6:24; 19:23-24). Yet, though poverty is neither a blessing nor a guarantee of spiritual rewards, it can be turned to advantage if it fosters humility before God. That this is the way to interpret v. 3 is confirmed by similar expressions in the DSS (esp. 1QM 11:9; 14:6-7; 1QS 4:3; 1QH 5:22). "Poor" and "righteous" become almost equivalent in Ecclesiasticus 13:17-21; CD 19:9; 4QpPs (37) 2:8-11 (cf. Schweizer; Bonnard; Dodd, "Translation Problems," pp. 307-10). These parallels do not prove literary dependence, but they do show that Matthew's

"poor in spirit" rightly interprets Luke's "poor" (cf. Gundry, Use of OT, pp. 69-71). In rabbinic circles, too, meekness and poverty of spirit were highly praised (cf. Felix Bohl, "Die Demut als hochste der Tugenden," Biblische Zeitschrift 20 [1976]: 217-23). Yet biblical balance is easy to prostitute. The emperor Julian the Apostate (332-63) is reputed to have said with vicious irony that he wanted to confiscate Christians' property so that they might all become poor and enter the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, the wealthy too easily dismiss Jesus' teaching about poverty here and elsewhere (see on 6:24) as merely attitudinal and confuse their hoarding with good stewardship. France's "God and Mammon" (pp. 3-21) presents a fine balance in these

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matters.

To be poor in spirit is not to lack courage but to acknowledge spiritual bankruptcy. It confesses one's unworthiness before God and utter dependence on him. Therefore those who interpret the Sermon on the Mount as law and not gospel--whether by H. Windisch's historical reconstructions or by classical dispensationalism (cf. Carson, *Sermon on the Mount* , pp. 155-57), which calls the sermon "pure law" (though it concedes that its principles have a "beautiful moral application" for the Christian)-- stumble at the first sentence (cf. Stott, pp. 36-38). The kingdom of heaven is not given on the basis of race (cf. 3:9), earned merits, the military zeal and prowess of Zealots, or the wealth of a Zacchaeus. It is given to the poor, the despised publicans, the prostitutes, those who are so "poor" they know they can offer nothing and do not try. They cry for mercy and they alone are heard. These themes recur repeatedly in Matthew and present the sermon's ethical demands in a setting that does not treat the resulting conduct as conditions for entrance to the kingdom that people themselves can achieve. All must begin by confessing that by them selves they can achieve nothing. Fuller disclosures of the gospel in the years beyond Jesus' earthly ministry do not change this; in the last book of the canon, an established church must likewise recognize its precarious position when it claims to be rich and fails to see its own poverty (Rev 3:14-22). The kingdom of heaven (see on 3:2; 4:17) belongs to the poor in spirit; it is they who enjoy Messiah's reign and the blessings he brings. They joyfully accept his rule and participate in the life of the kingdom (7:14). The reward in the last beatitude is the same as in the first; the literary structure, an "inclusio" or envelope, establishes that everything included within it concerns the kingdom: i.e., the blessings of the intervening beatitudes are kingdom blessings, and the beatitudes themselves are kingdom norms. While the rewards of vv. 4-9 are future ("they will be comforted," "will inherit," etc.), the first and last are present ("for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"). Yet one must not make too much of this, for the present tense can function as a future, and the future tense can emphasize

certainty, not mere futurity (Tasker). There is little doubt that here the kingdom sense is primarily future, postconsummation, made explicit in v. 12. But the present tense "envelope" (vv. 3, 10) should not be written off as insignificant or as masking an Aramaic original that did not specify present or future; for Matthew must have meant something when he chose *estin* ("is") instead of *estai* ("will be"). The natural conclusion is that, though the full blessedness of those described in these beatitudes awaits the consummated kingdom, they already share in the kingdom's blessedness so far as it has been inaugurated (see on 4:17; 8:29; 12:28; 19:29).

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4 Black (*Aramaic Approach* , p. 157) notes how the Matthean and Lukan (6:21b, 25b) forms of this beatitude could each have been part of a larger parallelism--an observation that goes nicely with the hypothesis that the Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain are reports of one discourse, relying somewhat on common sources (cf. introductory comments). Some commentators deny that this mourning is for sin (e.g., Bonnard). Others (e.g., Schweizer) understand it to be mourning for any kind of misery. The reality is subtler. The godly remnant of Jesus' day weeps because of the humiliation of Israel, but they understand that it comes from personal and corporate sins. The psalmist testified, "Streams of tears flow from my eyes, for your law is not obeyed" (Ps 119:136; cf. Ezek 9:4). When Jesus preached, "The kingdom of heaven is near," he, like John the Baptist before him, expected not jubilation but contrite tears. It is not enough to acknowledge personal spiritual bankruptcy (v. 3) with a cold heart. Weeping for sins can be deeply poignant (Ezra 10:6; Ps 51:4; Dan 9:19-20) and can cover a global as well as personal view of sin and our participation in it. Paul understands these matters well (cf. Rom 7:24; 1Cor 5:2; 2Cor 12:21; Philippians 3:18). "Comfort, comfort my people" (Isa 40:1) is God's response. These first two beatitudes deliberately allude to the messianic blessing of Isaiah 61:1-3 (cf. also Luke 4:16-19; France, *Jesus*, pp. 134-35), confirming them as eschatological and messianic. The Messiah comes to bestow "the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair" (Isa 61:3). But these blessings, already realized partially but fully only at the consummation (Rev 7:17), depend on a Messiah who comes to save his people from their sins (1:21; cf. also 11:28-30). Those who claim to experience all its joys without tears mistake the nature of the kingdom. In Charles Wesley's words:

He speaks, and listening to his voice

New life the dead receive,

The mournful, broken hearts rejoice,

The humble poor believe.

5 This beatitude and those in vv. 7-10 have no parallel in Luke. It would be wrong to suppose that Matthew's beatitudes are for different groups of people, or that we have the right to half the blessings if we determine to pursue four out of the eight. They are a unity and describe the norm for Messiah's people. The word "meek" (*praus*) is hard to define. It can signify absence of pretension (1 Peter 3:4, 14-15) but generally suggests gentleness (cf. 11:29; James 3:13) and the self-control it entails. The Greeks extolled humility in wise men and rulers, but such humility smacked of condescension. In general the Greeks considered meekness a vice

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because they failed to distinguish it from servility. To be meek toward others implies freedom from malice and a vengeful spirit. Jesus best exemplifies it (11:29; 21:5). Lloyd-Jones (*Sermon on the Mount* , 1:65-69) rightly applies meekness to our attitudes toward others. We may acknowledge our own bankruptcy (v. 3) and mourn (v. 4). But to respond with meekness when others tell us of our bankruptcy is far harder (cf. also Stott, pp. 43-44). Meekness therefore requires such a true view about ourselves as will express itself even in our attitude toward others. And the meek--not the strong, aggressive, harsh, tyrannical--will inherit the earth. The verb "inherit" often relates to entrance into the Promised Land (e.g. Deut 4:1; 16: 20; cf. Isa 57:13; 60:21). But the specific OT allusion here is Psalm 37:9, 11, 29, a psalm recognized as messianic in Jesus' day (4QpPs 37). There is no need to interpret the land metaphorically, as having no reference to geography or space; nor is there need to restrict the meaning to "land of Israel" (cf. Notes). Entrance into the Promised Land ultimately became a pointer toward entrance into the new heaven and *the new earth* ("earth" is the same word as "land"; cf. Isa 66:22; Rev 21:1), the consummation of the messianic kingdom. While in Pauline terms believers may now possess all things in principle (2Cor 6:10) since they belong to Christ, Matthew directs our attention yet further to the "renewal of all things" (19:28).

6 "Hunger and thirst" vividly express desire. The sons of Korah cried, "My soul thirsts for God, for the living God" (Ps 42:2; cf. 63:1) for the deepest spiritual famine is hunger for the word of God (Amos 8:11-14). The precise nature of the righteousness for which the blessed hunger and thirst is disputed. Some argue that it is the imputed righteousness of God--eschatological salvation or, more narrowly, justification: the blessed hunger for it and receive it (e.g., Grundmann; Lohmeyer; McNeile, Schniewind, Schrenk [TDNT, 2:198], Zahn; Bornkamm, *Tradition* [pp. 123-24];

Bultmann [*Theology* , 1:273]). This is certainly plausible, since the immediate context does arouse hopes for God's eschatological action, and hungering suggests that the righteousness that satisfies will be given as a gift. The chief objection is that *dikaiosyne* ("righteousness") in Matthew does not have that sense anywhere else (Przybylski, pp. 96-98). So it is better to take this righteousness as simultaneously personal righteousness (cf. Hill, *Greek Words* , pp. 127f.; Strecker, Weg, pp. 156-58) and justice in the broadest sense (cf. esp. Ridderbos, pp. 190f.). These people hunger and thirst, not only that they may be righteous (i.e., that they may wholly do God's will from the heart), but that justice may be done everywhere. All unrighteousness grieves them and makes them homesick for the new heaven and earth--the home of righteousness (2 Peter 3:13). Satisfied with neither personal righteousness alone nor social justice alone, they cry for both: in short, they

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long for the advent of the messianic kingdom. What they taste now whets their appetites for more. Ultimately they will be satisfied (same verb as in 14:20; Philippians 4:12; Rev 19:21) without qualification only when the kingdom is consummated (cf. discussion in Gundry, *Matthew*).

7 This beatitude is akin to Psalm 18:25 (reading "merciful" [ASV] instead of "faithful" [NIV]; following MT [v. 26], not LXX [17:26]; cf. Prov 14:21). Mercy embraces both forgiveness for the guilty and compassion for the suffering and needy. No particular object of the demanded mercy is specified, because mercy is to be a function of Jesus' disciples, not of the particular situation that calls it forth. The theme is common in Matthew (6:12-15; 9:13; 12:7; 18:33-34). The reward is not mercy shown by others but by God (cf. the saying preserved in 1 Clement 13:2). This does not mean that our mercy is the causal ground of God's mercy but its occasional ground (see on 6:14-15). This beatitude, too, is tied to the context. "It is 'the meek' who are also 'the merciful'. For to be meek is to acknowledge to others that *we* are sinners; to be merciful is to have compassion on others, for they are sinners too" (Stott, p. 48, emphasis his).

8 Commentators are divided on "pure in heart."

1. Some take it to mean inner moral purity as opposed to merely external piety or ceremonial cleanness. This is an important theme in Matthew and elsewhere in the Scriptures (e.g., Deut 10:16; 30:6; 1Sam 15:22; Pss 24:3-4 [to which there is direct allusion here]; 51:6, 10; Isa 1:10-17; Jer 4:4; 7:3-7; 9:25-26; Rom 2:9; 1Tim 1:5; 2Tim 2:22, cf. Matt 23:25-28). **2.** Others take it to mean singleness of mind, a heart "free from the tyranny of a divided self" (Tasker; cf. Bonnard). Several of the passages just cited focus on freedom from deceit (Pss 24:4; 51:4-17; cf. also Gen 50:5-6; Prov 22:11). This interpretation also prepares the way for 6:22. The "pure in heart" are thus

"the utterly sincere" (Ph). The dichotomy between these two options is a false one; it is impossible to have one without the other. The one who is singleminded in commitment to the kingdom and its righteousness (6:33) will also be inwardly pure. Inward sham, deceit, and moral filth cannot coexist with sincere devotion to Christ. Either way this beatitude excoriates hypocrisy (cf. on 6:1-18). The pure in heart will see God--now with the eyes of faith and finally in the dazzling brilliance of the beatific vision in whose light no deceit can exist (cf. Heb 12:14; 1John 3:1-3; Rev 21:22-27).

9 Jesus' concern in this beatitude is not with the peaceful but with the peacemakers. Peace is of constant concern in both testaments (e.g., Prov 15:1; Isa 52:7; Luke 24:36; Rom 10:15; 12:18; 1Cor 7:15; Eph 2:11-22; Heb 12:14; 1 Peter 3:11). But as some of

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these and other passages show, the making of peace can itself have messianic overtones. The Promised Son is called the "Prince of Peace" (Isa 9:6-7); and Isaiah 52:7--"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, 'Your God reigns!'"--linking as it does peace, salvation, and God's reign, was interpreted messianically in the Judaism of Jesus' day. Jesus does not limit the peacemaking to only one kind, and neither will his disciples. In the light of the gospel, Jesus himself is the supreme peacemaker, making peace between God and man, and man and man. Our peacemaking will include the promulgation of that gospel. It must also extend to seeking all kinds of reconciliation. Instead of delighting in division, bitterness, strife, or some petty "divide-and-conquer" mentality, disciples of Jesus delight to make peace wherever possible. Making peace is not appeasement: the true model is God's costly peacemaking (Eph 2:15-17; Col 1:

20). Those who undertake this work are acknowledged as God's sons. In the OT, Israel has the title sons (Deut 14:1; Hos 1:10; cf. Pss Sol 17:30; Wisdom 2:13-18). Now it belongs to the heirs of the kingdom who, meek and poor in spirit, loving righteousness yet merciful, are especially equipped for peacemaking and so reflect something of their heavenly Father's character. "There is no more godlike work to be done in this world than peacemaking" (Broadus). This beatitude must have been shocking to Zealots when Jesus preached it, when political passions were inflamed (Morison).

10 It is no accident that Jesus should pass from peacemaking to persecution, for the world enjoys its cherished hates and prejudices so much that the peacemaker is not always welcome. Opposition is a normal mark of being a disciple of Jesus, as normal as hungering for righteousness or being merciful (cf. also John 15:18-25; Acts 14:22; 2Tim 3:12; 1 Peter 4:13-14; cf. the woe in Luke 6:26). Lachs (pp. 101-3) cannot believe Christians were ever persecuted because of righteousness; so he repoints an alleged underlying Hebrew text

to read "because of the Righteous One"--a reference to Jesus. But he underestimates how offensive genuine righteousness, "proper conduct before God" (Przybylski, p. 99), really is (cf. Isa 51:7). The reward of these persecuted people is the same as the reward of the poor in spirit--viz., the kingdom of heaven, which terminates the inclusion (see on 5:3).

2) *Expansion* (5:11-12)

11-12 These two verses (cf. Luke 6:22-23, 26), switching from third person to second, apply the force of the last beatitude (v. 10), not to the church (which would be anachronistic), but to Jesus' disciples. Doubtless Matthew and his contemporaries also applied it to themselves. Verse 11 extends the persecution of v. 10 to include insult,

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persecution, and slander (Luke 6:22-23 adds hate). The reason for the persecution in v. 10 is "because of righteousness"; now, Jesus says, it is "because of me." "This confirms that the righteousness of life that is in view is in imitation of Jesus. Simultaneously, it so identifies the disciple of Jesus with the practice of Jesus' righteousness that there is no place for professed allegiance to Jesus that is not full of righteousness" (Carson, *Sermon on the Mount*, p. 28). Moreover, it is an implicit christological claim, for the prophets to whom the disciples are likened were persecuted for their faithfulness to God and the disciples for faithfulness to Jesus. Not Jesus but the disciples are likened to the prophets. Jesus places himself on a par with God. The change from "the Son of Man" (Luke) to "me" is probably Matthew's clarification (see excursus at 8:20). The appropriate response of the disciple is rejoicing. The second verb, *agalliasathe* ("be glad"), Hill (*Matthew*) takes to be "something of a technical term for joy in persecution and martyrdom" (cf. 1 Peter 1:6, 8; 4:13; Rev 19:7). Yet its range of associations seems broader (Luke 1:47; 10:21; John 5:35; 8:56; Acts 2:26; 16:34). The disciples of Jesus are to rejoice under persecution because their heavenly reward (cf. Notes) will be great at the consummation of the kingdom (v. 12). Opposition is sure, for the disciples are aligning themselves with the OT prophets who were persecuted before them (e.g., 2 Chronicles 24:21; Neh 9:26; Jer 20:2; cf. Matt 21:35; 23:32-37; Acts 7: 52; 1Thess 2:15). This biblical perspective was doubtless part of the historical basis on which Jesus built his own implied prediction that his followers would be persecuted. Treated seriously, it makes ineffective the ground on which some treat the prediction as anachronistic (e.g., Hare, pp. 114-21). Stendahl's suggestion (Peake, par. 678k) that Matthew here refers to Christian prophets is not only needlessly anachronistic but out of step with both Matthew's use of "prophet" and his link between the murder of "prophets" and the sin of the "forefathers" (23:30-32), which shows that the prophets belong to the OT period. These verses neither encourage seeking persecution nor permit retreating from it, sulking, or retaliation. From the perspective of both redemptive history ("the prophets") and eternity ("reward in heaven"),

these verses constitute the reasonable response of faith, one which the early Christians readily understood (cf. Acts 5:41; 2Cor 4:17; 1 Peter 1:6-9; cf. Dan 3:24-25). "Discipleship means allegiance to the suffering Christ, and it is therefore not at all surprising that Christians should be called upon to suffer. In fact it is a joy and a token of his grace" (Bonhoeffer, pp. 80-81). But in reassuring his disciples that their sufferings are "neither new, nor accidental, nor absurd" (Bonnard), Jesus spoke of principles that will appear again (esp. chs. 10, 24).

b. The witness of the kingdom (5:13-16)

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1) Salt (5:13)

13 Salt and light are such common substances (cf. Pliny, *Natural History* 31.102: "Nothing is more useful than salt and sunshine") that they doubtless generated many sayings. Therefore it is improper to attempt a tradition history of all Gospel references as if one original stood behind the lot (cf. Mark 4:21; 9:50; Luke 8:16; 11:33; 14:34-35). Salt was used in the ancient world to flavor foods and even in small doses as a fertilizer (cf. Eugene P. Deatrick, "Salt, Soil, Savor," BA 25 [1962]: 44-45, who wants *tes ges* to read "for the soil," not "of the earth"; but notice the parallel "of the world" in v. 14). Above all, salt was used as a preservative. Rubbed into meat, a little salt would slow decay. Strictly speaking salt cannot lose its saltiness; sodium chloride is a stable compound. But most salt in the ancient world derived from salt marshes or the like, rather than by evaporation of salt water, and therefore contained many impurities. The actual salt, being more soluble than the impurities, could be leached out, leaving a residue so dilute it was of little worth. In modern Israel savorless salt is still said to be scattered on the soil of flat roofs. This helps harden the soil and prevent leaks; and since the roofs serve as play grounds and places for public gathering, the salt is still being trodden under foot (Deatrick, "Salt," p. 47). This explanation negates the attempt by some (e.g., Lenski, Schniewind, Grosheide) to suppose that, precisely because pure salt cannot lose its savor, Jesus is saying that true disciples cannot lose their effectiveness.. The question "How can it be made salty again'?" is not meant to have an answer, as Schweizer rightly says. The rabbinic remark that what makes salt salty is "the afterbirth of a mule" (mules are sterile) rather misses the point (cf. Schweizer, *Matthew*). The point is that, if Jesus' disciples are to act as a preservative in the world by conforming to kingdom norms, if they are "called to be a moral disinfectant in a world where moral standards are low, constantly changing, or non-existent ... they can discharge this function only if they themselves retain their virtue" (Tasker).

2) *Light* (5:14-16)

14-15 As in v. 13, "you" is emphatic--viz., You, my followers and none others, are the light of the world (v. 14). Though the Jews saw themselves as the light of the world (Rom 2:19), the true light is the Suffering Servant (Isa 42:6; 49:6), fulfilled in Jesus himself (Matt 4:16; cf. John 8:12; 9:5; 12:35; 1John 1:7). Derivatively his disciples constitute the new light (cf. Eph 5:89; Philippians 2:15). Light is a universal religious symbol. In the OT as in the NT, it most frequently symbolizes purity as opposed to filth, truth or knowledge as opposed to error or ignorance, and divine revelation and presence as opposed to reprobation and abandonment by God.

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The reference to the "city on a hill" is at one level fairly obvious. Often built of white limestone, ancient towns gleamed in the sun and could not easily be hidden. At night the inhabitants' oil lamps would shed some glow over the surrounding area (cf. Bonnard). As such cities could not be hidden, so also it is unthinkable to light a lamp and hide it under a peckmeasure (v. 15, NIV, "bowl"). A lamp is put on a lampstand to illuminate all. Attempts to identify "everyone in the house" as a reference to all Jews in contrast with Luke 11:33, referring to Gentiles (so Manson, *Sayings*, p. 93) are probably guilty of making the metaphor run on all fours, especially in view of the Gentile theme so strongly present in Matthew. But the "city on a hill" saying may also refer to OT prophecies about the time when Jerusalem or the mountain of the Lord's house, or Zion, would be lifted up before the world, the nations streaming to it (e.g., Isa 2:2-5; cf. chs. 42, 49, 54, 60). This allusion has recently been defended by Grundmann, Trilling (p. 142), and especially K.M. Campbell ("The New Jerusalem in Matthew 5.14," *SJT* 31 [1978]: 335-63). It is not a certain allusion, and the absence of definite articles tells against it; if valid it insists that Jesus' disciples constitute the true locus of the people of God, the outpost of the consummated kingdom, and the means of witness to the world--all themes central to Matthew's thought.

16 Jesus drives the metaphor home. What his disciples must show is their "good works," i.e., all righteousness, everything they are and do that reflects the mind and will of God. And men must see this light. It may provoke persecution (vv. 10-12), but that is no reason for hiding the light others may see and by which they may come to glorify the Father--the disciples' only motive (cf. 2Cor 4:6; 1 Peter 2:12). Witness includes not just words but deeds; as Stier remarks, "The good word with out the good walk is of no avail." Thus the kingdom norms (vv. 3-12) so work out in the lives of the kingdom's heirs as to produce the kingdom witness (vv. 13-16). If salt (v. 13)

exercises the negative function of delaying decay and warns disciples of the danger of compromise and conformity to the world, then light (vv. 14-16) speaks positively of illuminating a sin- darkened world and warns against a withdrawal from the world that does not lead others to glorify the Father in heaven. "Flight into the invisible is a denial of the call. A community of Jesus which seeks to hide itself has ceased to follow him" (Bonhoeffer, p. 106).

3. The kingdom of heaven: its demands in relation to the OT (5:17-48)

a. Jesus and the kingdom as fulfillment of the OT (5:17-20)

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Three important debates bear on the interpretation of these complex yet programmatic verses. 1. Apart from parallels to v. 18 in Mark 13:31 and Luke 16:17, these verses have no synoptic parallel. Partly because of this, many have argued that these four verses represent four separate sayings from different and even conflicting churches or strata, heavily edited by Matthew (for discussion and recent examples, cf. R.G. Hamerton- Kelly, "Attitudes to the Law in Matthew's Gospel," *Biblical Research* 17 [1972]: 19-32; Arens, pp. 91-116). G. Barth, for instance, insists that the leap from v. 19 to v. 20 is so great that both could not have come from Matthew (Bornkamm, *Tradition* , p. 66). A better synthesis is possible. Yet even if the leap between these verses were as great as Barth imagines, what possessed Matthew (or the "final redactor") to put them together? He must have thought they meant something. And then how does one distinguish methodologically between weak links discerned by a redactor and weak links written up by an author? We shall focus primary attention on the meaning of the text as it stands. 2. The theological and canonical ramifications of one's exegetical conclusions on this pericope are so numerous that discussion becomes freighted with the intricacies of biblical theology. At stake are the relation between the testaments, the place of law in the context of gospel, and the relation of this pericope to other NT passages that unambiguously affirm that certain parts of the law have been abrogated as obsolete (e.g., Mark 7:19; Acts 10-11; Heb 7:1-9:10). Only glancing attention may be given to these issues here. 3. It is often argued that the setting of the pericope is debate in the church, especially among Palestinian Jewish Christians, about the continuation of law. There is no inherent implausibility in this hypothesis if by setting we refer to the circle in which these teachings were preserved because of their immediate relevance. But it must be remembered that Matthew presents these sayings as the teaching of the historical Jesus, not the creation of the church; and we detect no implausibility in his claim.

17 The formula "Do not think that" (or "Never think that," Turner, *Syntax* , p. 77) is repeated by Jesus in 10:34 (cf. 3:9). Jesus' two sayings were designed to set aside potential misunderstandings as to the nature of the kingdom; but neither demonstrably flows out of open confrontation on the issue at stake. Matthew has not yet recorded any charge that Jesus was breaking the law. (On the relation between these verses and the preceding pericopes, cf. W.J. Dumbull, "The Logic of the Role of the Law in Matthew v.1-20," *NovTest* 23 [1981]: 1-21). Some have argued that many Jews in Jesus' day believed that law would be set aside and a new law introduced at Messiah's coming (cf. esp. Davies, *Setting*, pp. 109ff., 446ff.). But this view has been decisively qualified by R. Banks ("The Eschatological

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Role of Law," *Pre- and Post-Christian Jewish Thought* , ed. R. Banks [Exeter: Paternoster, 1982], pp. 173-85; id. *Jesus* , pp. 65ff.), who presents a more nuanced treatment. The upshot of the debate is that the introductory words "Do not think that" must be understood, not as the refutation of some well-entrenched and clearly defined position, but as a teaching device Jesus used to clarify certain aspects of the kingdom and of his own mission and to remove potential misunderstandings. Moreover, comparison with 10:34 shows that the antithesis may not be absolute. Few would want to argue that there is *no* sense in which Jesus came to bring peace (cf. on 5:9). Why then argue that there is no sense in which Jesus abolishes the law? The words "I have come" do not necessarily prove Jesus' consciousness of his preexistence, for "coming" language can be used of prophets and indeed is used of the Baptist (11:18-19). But it can also speak of coming into the world (common in John; cf. also 1Tim 1:15) and in the light of Matthew's prologue is probably meant to attest Jesus' divine origins. At very least it shows Jesus was sent on a mission (cf. Maier). Jesus' mission was not to abolish (a term more frequently connected with the destruction of buildings [24:2; 26:61; 27:40], but not exclusively so [e.g., 2Macc 2:22]) "the law or the prophets." By these words Matthew forms a new "inclusio" (5:17-7:12), which marks out the body of the sermon and shows that Jesus is taking pains to relate his teaching and place in the history of redemption to the OT Scriptures. For that is what "Law or the Prophets" here means: the Scriptures. The disjunctive "or" makes it clear that neither is to be abolished. The Jews of Jesus' day could refer to the Scriptures as "the Law and the Prophets" (7:12; 11:13; 22:40; Luke 16:16; John 1:45; Acts 13:15; 28:23; Rom 3:21); "the Law ..., the Prophets, and the Psalms" (Luke 24:44); or just "Law" (5:18; John 10:34; 12:34; 15:25; 1Cor 14:21); the divisions were not yet stereotyped. Thus even if "or the Prophets" is redactional (Dalman, p. 62, and many after him), the referent does not change when only law is mentioned in v. 18, but it may be a small hint that law, too, has a prophetic function (cf. 11:13, and discussion). Yet it is certainly illegitimate to see in "Law and Prophets" some vague reference to

the will of God (so G.S. Sloyan, *Is Christ the End of the Law?* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978], pp. 49f.; Sand, p. 186; K. Berger, *Die Gesetzesauslegung Jesu* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1972], p. 224) and not to Scripture, especially in the light of v. 18. The nub of the problem lies in the verb "to fulfill" (*pleroo*). N.J. McEleney ("The Principles of the Sermon on the Mount," JBL 41 [1979]; 552-70) finds the verb so difficult in a context (vv. 17-48) dealing with law that he judges it a late addition to the tradition. Not a few writers, especially Jewish scholars, take the verb to reflect the Aramaic verb *qum* ("establish," "validate," or "confirm" the law). Jesus did not come to abolish the law but to confirm it and establish it (e.g., Dalman, pp. 56-58; Daube,

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New Testament , pp. 60f.; Schlatter, pp. 153f.; and esp. Sigal, "Halakah," pp. 23ff.)

There are several objections.

1. The focus of Matthew 5 is the relation between the OT and Jesus' teaching, not his actions. So any interpretation that says Jesus fulfills the law by doing it misses the point. 2. If it is argued that Jesus confirms the law, even its jot and tittle, by both his life and his teaching (e.g., Hill; Ridderbos, pp. 292ff.; Maier)--the latter understood as setting out his own *Halakah* (rules of conduct) within the framework of the law (Sigal)-- one marvels that the early church, as the other NT documents testify, misunderstood Jesus so badly on this point; and even the first Gospel, as we shall see, is rendered inconsistent. 3. The LXX never uses *pleroo* ("fulfill") to render *qum* or cognates (which prefer *histanai* or *bebaioun* ["establish" or "confirm"]). The verb *pleroo* renders *male* and means "to fulfill." In OT usage this characteristically refers to the "filling up" of volume or time, meanings that also appear in the NT (e.g., Acts 24:27; Rom 15:19). But though the NT uses *pleroo* in a number of ways, we are primarily concerned with what is meant by "fulfilling" the Scriptures. Included under this head are specific predictions, typological fulfillments, and even the entire eschatological hope epitomized in the OT by God's covenant with his people (cf. C.F.D. Moule, "Fulfillment Words in the New Testament: Use and Abuse," NTS 14 [1967-68]: 293-320; see on 2:15). The lack of background for *pleroo* ("fulfill") as far as it applies to Scripture requires cautious induction from the NT evidence. In a very few cases, notably James 2:23, the NT writers detect no demonstrable predictive force in the OT passage introduced. Rather, the OT text (in this case Gen 15:6) in some sense remains "empty" until Abraham's action "fulfills" it. But Genesis 15:6 does not predict the action. Most NT uses of *pleroo* in connection with Scripture, however, require some teleological force (see note on 1:22); and even the ambiguous uses presuppose a typology that in its broadest dimensions is teleological, even if not in every

detail (see discussion on 2:15). In any case the interchange of *male* ("fulfill") and *qum* ("establish") in the Targumim is not of sufficient importance to overturn the LXX evidence, not least owing to problems of dating the Targumim (cf. Meier, *Law* , p. 74; Banks, *Jesus* , pp. 208f.). Other views are not much more convincing. Many argue that Jesus is here referring only to moral law: the civil and ceremonial law are indeed abolished, but Jesus confirms the moral law (e.g., Hendriksen; D. Wenham, "Jesus and the Law: an Exegesis on Matthew 5:17-20," *Themelios* 4 [1979]: 92-96). Although this tripartite distinction is old, its use as a basis for explaining the relationship between the testaments is not demonstrably derived from the NT and probably does not antedate Aquinas (cf. the work of R.J. Bauckham in Carson, *Sabbath* ; and Carson, "Jesus"). Also, the interpretation is invalidated by the all-inclusive "not the smallest letter, not the least

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stroke of a pen" (v. 18).

Others understand the verb *pleroo* to mean that Jesus "fills up" the law by providing its full, intended meaning (e.g., Lenski), understood perhaps in terms of the double command to love (so O. Hanssen, "Zum Verstandnis der Bergpredigt," *Der Ruf Jesu und die Antwort der Gemeinde*, ed. Edward Lohse [Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1970], pp. 94-111). This, however, requires an extraordinary meaning for *pleroo*, ignores the "jot and tittle" of v. 18, and misinterprets 22:34-40. Still others, in various ways, argue that Jesus "fills up" the OT law by extending its demands to some better or transcendent righteousness (v. 20), again possibly understood in terms of the command to love (e.g., Bornhauser; Lagrange; A. Feuillet, "Morale Ancienne et Morale Chretienne d'apres Mt 5.17-20; Comparaison avec la Doctrine de l'epitre aux Romains," NTS 17 [1970-71]: 123-37, esp. p. 124; Grundmann; Trilling, pp. 174-79). Thus the reference to prophets (v. 17) becomes obscure, and the entire structure is shaky in view of the fact that mere extension of law will not abolish any of its stringencies--yet in both Matthew and other NT documents some abolition is everywhere assumed. H. Ljungmann (*Das Gesetzerfullen: Matth.5, 17ff. und 3, 15 untersucht* [Lund: C.W.K. Gleerup, 1954]) takes the "fulfillment" to refer to the fulfillment of Scripture in the self-surrender of the Messiah, which in turn brings forgiveness of sins and the new righteousness the disciples are both to receive and do. But in addition to weaknesses of detail, it is hard to see how all this can be derived from vv. 17-20. The best interpretation of these difficult verses says that Jesus fulfills the Law and the Prophets in that they point to him, and he is their fulfillment. The antithesis is not between "abolish" and "keep" but between "abolish" and "fulfill." "For Matthew, then, it is not the question of Jesus' relation to the law that is in doubt but rather its relation to him!" (Robert Banks, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law: Authenticity and Interpretation in Matthew 5:17-20," JBL 93 [1974]: 226-42). Therefore we give *pleroo* ("fulfill") exactly the same meaning as in the formula quotations, which in the prologue (Matt 1-2) have already laid great stress on

the prophetic nature of the OT and the way it points to Jesus. Even OT events have this prophetic significance (see on 2:15). A little later Jesus insists that "all the Prophets and the Law prophesied" (11:13).

The manner of the prophetic foreshadowing varies. The Exodus, Matthew argues (2:

15), foreshadows the calling out of Egypt of God's "son." The writer to the Hebrews argues that many cultic regulations of the OT pointed to Jesus and are now obsolete. In the light of the antitheses (vv. 21-48), the passage before us insists that just as Jesus fulfilled OT prophecies by his person and actions, so he fulfilled OT law by his teaching. In no case does this "abolish" the OT as canon, any more than the obsolescence of the Levitical sacrificial system abolishes tabernacle ritual as canon.

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Instead, the OT's real and abiding authority must be understood through the person and teaching of him to whom it points and who so richly fulfills it. As in Luke 16:16-17, Jesus is not announcing the termination of the OT's relevance and authority (else Luke 16:17 would be incomprehensible), but that "the period during which men were related to God under its terms ceased with John" (Moo, "Jesus," p.

1); and the nature of its valid continuity is established only with reference to Jesus and the kingdom. The general structure of this interpretation has been well set forth by Banks (*Jesus*), Meier (*Law*), Moo ("Jesus"), Carson ("Jesus"; at a popular level, *Sermon on the Mount* , pp. 33ff.). For a somewhat similar approach, see Zumstein (pp. 119f.) and McConnell (pp. 96-97), who points out that Jesus' implicit authority is also found in the closing verses of the sermon (7:21-23) where as eschatological Judge he exercises the authority of God alone. The chief objection to this view is that the use of "to fulfill" in the fulfillment quotations is in the passive voice, whereas here the voice is active. But it is doubtful whether much can be made out of this distinction (Meier, *Law* , pp. 80f:). Three theological conclusions are inevitable.

1. If the antitheses (vv. 21-48) are understood in the light of this interpretation of vv. 17-20, then Jesus is not primarily engaged there in extending, annulling, or intensifying OT law, but in showing the direction in which it points, on the basis of his own authority (to which, again, the OT points). This may work out in any particular case to have the same practical effect as "intensifying" the law or "annulling" some element; but the reasons for that conclusion are quite different. On the ethical implications of this interpretation, see the competent essay by Moo ("Jesus"). 2. If vv. 17-20 are essentially authentic (see esp. W.D. Davies, "Matthew 5:17, 18," *Christian Origins and Judaism* [London: DLT, 1962], pp. 31-66; and Banks, "Matthew's Understanding") and the above interpretation is sound, the christological implications are important. Here Jesus presents himself as the eschatological goal of the OT, and thereby its sole authoritative interpreter,

the one through whom alone the OT finds its valid continuity and significance. 3. This approach eliminates the need to pit Matthew against Paul, or Palestinian Jewish Christians against Pauline Gentile believers, the first lot adhering to Mosaic stipulations and the second abandoning them. Nor do we need the solution of Brice Martin, who argues that Matthew's approach to law and Paul's approach are non complementary but noncontradictory: they simply employ different categories. This fails to wrestle with Matthew's positioning of Jesus within the history of redemption; and Paul well understood that the Law and the Prophets pointed beyond them selves (e.g., Rom 3:21; Gal 3:4; cf. Rom 8:4). The focus returns to Jesus, which is where, on the face of it, both Paul and Matthew intend it to be. The groundwork is laid out in the Gospels for an understanding of Jesus as the one who established the essentially

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christological and eschatological approach to the OT employed by Paul. But this is made clearer in v. 18.

18 "I tell you the truth" signals that the statement to follow is of the utmost importance (cf. Notes). In Greek it is connected to the preceding verse by an explanatory "for"

(*gar*): v. 18 further explains and confirms the truth of v. 17. The "jot" (KJV) has become "the smallest letter" (NIV): this is almost certainly correct, for it refers to the letter y (*yod*), the smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet. The "tittle" (*keraiā*) has been variously interpreted: it is the Hebrew letter v (*waw*) (so G. Schwarz, "iöta hen ë mia keraia [Matthaus 518]," ZNW 66 [1975]: 268-69); or the small stroke that distinguishes several pairs of Hebrew letters (dhkhdhrrbhkh) (so Filson, Lenski, Allen, Zahn); or a purely ornamental stroke, a "crown" (Tasker, Schniewind, Schweizer; but cf. DNTT, 3:182); or it forms a hendiadys with "jot," referring to the smallest part of the smallest letter (Lachs, pp. 106-8). In any event Jesus here upholds the authority of the OT Scriptures right down to the "least stroke of a pen." His is the highest possible view of the OT. But vv. 17-18 do not wrestle abstractly with OT authority but with the nature, extent, and duration of its validity and continuity. The nature of these has been set forth in v.

17. The reference to "jot and tittle" establishes its extent: it will not do to reduce the reference to moral law, or the law as a whole but not necessarily its parts, or to God's will in some general sense. "Law" almost certainly refers to the entire OT Scriptures, not just the Pentateuch or moral law (note the parallel in v. 17). That leaves the duration of the OT's authority. The two "until" clauses answer this. The first--"until heaven and earth disappear"--simply means "until the end of the age": i.e., not quite "never" (contra Meier, *Law* , p. 61), but "never, as long as the present world order persists." The second--"until everything is accomplished"--is more difficult. Some take

it to be equivalent to the first (cf. Sand, pp. 36-39). But it is more subtle than that. The word *panta* ("all things" or "everything" has no antecedent. Contrary to Sand (p. 38), Hill, Bultmann (*Synoptic Tradition* , pp. 138, 405), Grundmann, and Zahn, the word cannot very easily refer to all the demands of the law that must be "accomplished," because (1) the word "law" almost certainly refers here to all Scripture and not just its commands--but even if that were not so, v. 17 has shown that even imperatival law is prophetic; (2) the word *genetai* ("is accomplished") must here be rendered "happen," "come to pass" (i.e., "accomplished" in that sense, not in the sense of obeying a law; cf. Meier, *Law* , pp. 53f; Banks, *Jesus* , pp. 215ff.). Hence *panta* ("everything") is best understood to refer to everything in the law considered under the law's prophetic function--viz., until all these things have taken place as prophesied. This is not simply pointing to the Cross (Davies, "Matthew 5:17, 18," pp. 60ff.; Schlatter), nor simply to the end of the age (Schniewind). The parallel

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with 24:34-35 is not that close, since in the latter case the events are specified. Verse 18d simply means the entire divine purpose prophesied in Scripture must take place; not one jot or tittle will fail of its fulfillment. A similar point is made in 11:13. Thus the first "until" clause focuses strictly on the duration of OT authority but the second returns to considering its nature; it reveals God's redemptive purposes and points to their fulfillment, their "accomplishment," in Jesus and the eschatological kingdom he is now introducing and will one day consummate. Meier (*Law*) ably establishes the centrality of the death and resurrection of Jesus as the pivotal event in Matthew's presentation of salvation history. Before it Jesus' disciples are restricted to Israel (10:5-6); after it they are to go everywhere. Similarly, the precise form of the Mosaic law may change with the crucial redemptive events to which it points. For that which prophesies is in some sense taken up in and transcended by the fulfillment of the prophecy. Meier has grasped and explained this redemptive- historical structure better than most commentators. He may, however, have gone too far in interpreting v. 18d too narrowly as a reference to the Cross and the Resurrection.

19 The contrast between the least and the greatest in the kingdom probably supports gradation within kingdom ranks (as in 11:11, though the word for "least" is different there; cf. 18:1-4). It is probably not a Semitic way of referring to the exclusion-inclusion duality (contra Bonnard). The one who breaks "one of the least of these commandments" is not excluded from the kingdom--the linguistic usage is against this interpretation (see Meier, *Law* , pp. 92-95)--but is very small or very unimportant in the kingdom (taking *elachistos* in the relative sense). The idea of gradations of privilege or dishonor in the kingdom occurs elsewhere in the synoptic Gospels (20:20-28; cf. Luke 12:47-48). Distinctions are made not only according to the measure by which one keeps "the least of these commandments" but also according to

the faithfulness with which one teaches them. But what are "these commandments"? It is hard to justify restriction of these words to Jesus' teachings (so Banks, *Jesus* , pp. 221-23), even though the verb cognate to "commands" (*entolon*) is used of Jesus' teachings in 28:20 (*entellomai*); for the noun in Matthew never refers to Jesus' words, and the context argues against it. Restriction to the Ten Commandments (TDNT, 2:548) is usually alien to the concerns of the context. Nor can we say "these commandments" refers to the antitheses that follow, for in Matthew *houtos* ("this," pl. "these") never points forward. It appears, then, that the expression must refer to the commandments of the OT Scriptures. The entire Law and the Prophets are not scrapped by Jesus' coming but fulfilled. Therefore the commandments of these Scriptures--even the least of them (on distinctions in the law, see on 22:36; 23:23)--must be practiced. But the nature of the practicing has already

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been affected by vv. 17-18. The law pointed forward to Jesus and his teaching; so it is properly obeyed by conforming to his word. As it points to him, so he, in fulfilling it, establishes what continuity it has, the true direction to which it points and the way it is to be obeyed. Thus ranking in the kingdom turns on the degree of conformity to Jesus' teaching as that teaching fulfills OT revelation. His teaching, toward which the OT pointed, must be obeyed.

20 And that teaching, far from being more lenient, is nothing less than perfection (see on 5:48). The Pharisees and teachers of the law (see on 2:4; 3:7; and Introduction, section 11.f) were among the most punctilious in the land. Jesus' criticism is "not that they were not good, but that they were not good enough" (Hill, *Matthew*). While their multiplicity of regulations could engender a "good" society, it domesticated the law and lost the radical demand for absolute holiness demanded by the Scriptures. What Jesus demanded is the righteousness to which the law truly points, exemplified in the antitheses that follow (vv. 21-48). Contrary to Flender (pp. 45f.), v. 3 (poverty of spirit) and v. 20 (demand for radical righteousness) do not stand opposite each other in flat contradiction. Verse 20 does not establish how the righteousness is to be gained, developed, or empowered; it simply lays out the demand. Messiah will develop a people who will be called "oaks of righteousness ... for the display of [Yahweh's] splendor" (Isa 61:3). The verb "surpasses" suggests that the new righteousness outstrips the old both qualitatively and quantitatively (Bonnard) (see on 25:31-46). Anything less does not enter the kingdom.

b. Application: the antitheses (5:21-48)

1) Vilifying anger and reconciliation (5:21-26)

Verses 21-48 are often called the six antitheses because all six sections begin with some variation of "you have heard it said ... but I say." Daube (*New Testament* , pp. 55-

62) offers a number of much-cited rabbinic parallels, some of which, in the first part, raise an interpretation as a theoretical possibility only to reject it, and others of which raise a literal interpretation only to circumscribe it with broader considerations. Daube rightly points out that the first part of Matthew's formulas means something like "you have understood" or "you have literally understood." That is Jesus is not criticizing the OT but the understanding of the OT many of his hearers adopted. This is especially true of vv. 22, 43, where part of what was "heard" certainly does not come from the OT. Beginning with this point, many (e.g., Stendahl [Peake], Hill) hold that Jesus nowhere abrogates the law but merely intensifies it or shows its ultimate meaning.

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Others (e.g., McConnell) point out that, formally speaking, some OT laws are in deed contravened (e.g., laws on oaths, vv. 33-37). R.A. Guelich ("The Antitheses of Matthew 5:21-48: Traditional or Redactional?" NTS 22 [1975-76]: 444-57), in the course of arguing that the first, second, and fourth are traditional, and the third, fifth, and sixth redactional, suggests that the former transcend the law's demands, whereas the latter annul the law--a point contested by G. Streaker ("Die Antithesen der Bergpredigt," ZNW 69 [1978]: 36-72). Apart from the fact that the traditional- redactional bifurcation is not an entirely happy one (cf. Introduction, sections 1-3), a unifying approach to the antitheses is possible in the light of our exegesis of vv. 17-20. The contrast between what the people had heard and what Jesus taught is not based on distinctions like casuistry versus love, outer legalism versus inner commitment, or even false interpretation versus true interpretation, though all of them impinge collaterally on the text. Rather, in every case Jesus contrasts the people's misunderstanding of the law with the true direction in which the law points, according to his own authority as the law's "fulfiller" (in the sense established in v. 17). He makes no attempt to fence in the law (contra Przvbylski, pp. 80-87) but declares unambiguously the true direction to which it points. Thus if certain antitheses revoke at least the letter of the law (and they do: cf. Meier, *Law* , pp. 125ff.), they do so, not because they are thereby affirming the law's true spirit, but because Jesus insists that his teaching on these matters is the direction in which the laws actually point. Likewise Jesus' "you have heard ... but I say" is not quite analogous to corresponding rabbinic formulas; Jesus is not simply a proto-rabbi (contra Daube, Sigal). The Sermon on the Mount is not set in a context of scholarly dispute over *halakic* details but in a context of messianic and eschatological fulfillment. Jesus' authority bursts the borders of the relatively "narrow context of legal interpretation and innovation which the rabbis circumscribed for themselves" (Banks, *Jesus* , p. 85). It is for this reason that the crowds were amazed at his authority (7:28-29).

21-22 Jesus' contemporaries had heard that the law given their forefathers (cf. Notes) forbade murder (not the taking of all life, which could, for instance, be a judicial mandate: cf. Gen 9:6) and that the murderer must be brought to "judgment" (*krisis* , which here refers to legal proceedings, perhaps the court set up in every town [Deut 16:18; 2 Chronicles 19:5; cf. Jos. Antiq. IV, 214 (vii.14); War II, 570-71 (xx.5)]; or the council of twenty-three persons set up to deal with criminal matters, SBK, 1:275). But Jesus insists--the "I" is emphatic in each of the six antitheses--that the law really points to his own teaching: the root of murder is anger, and anger is murderous in principle (v. 22). One has not conformed to the better righteousness of the kingdom simply by refraining from homicide. The angry person will be subject to *krisis* ("judgment"), but it is presupposed this is God's judgment, "since no human court is

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competent to try a case of inward anger" (Stott). To stoop to insult exposes one not merely to (God's) council (*synedrion* can mean either "Sanhedrin" [NIV] or simply "council") but to the "fire of hell." The expression "fire of hell" (*geenna tou pyros* , lit., "gehenna of fire") comes from the Hebrew *gehinnom* ("Valley of Hinnom," a ravine south of Jerusalem once associated with the pagan god Moloch and his disgusting rites [2 Kings 23:10; 2 Chronicles 28:3; 33:6; Jer 7:31; Ezek 16:20; 23:37], prohibited by God [Lev 18:21, 20: 2-5]). When Josiah abolished the practices, he defiled the valley by making it a, dumping ground for filth and the corpses of criminals (2 Kings 23:10). Late traditions suggest that in the first century it may still have been used as a rubbish pit, complete with smoldering fires. The valley came to symbolize the place of eschatological punishment (cf. 1 Enoch 54:12; 2Bar 85:13; cf. Matt 10:28; 23:15, 33, and 18:9 for the longer expression "gehenna of fire"). Gehenna and Hades (11:23 [NIV mg.]; 16:18) are often thought to refer, respectively, to eternal hell and the abode of the dead in the intermediate state. But the distinction can be maintained in few passages. More commonly the two terms are synonymous and mean "hell" (cf. W.J.P. Boyd, "Gehenna--According to J. Jeremias," in Livingstone, 2:9-12). "Brother" (*adelphos*) cannot in this case be limited to male siblings. Matthew's Gospel uses the word extensively. Whenever it clearly refers to people beyond physical brothers, it is on the lips of Jesus; and its narrow usage is almost always Matthean. This suggests that the Christian habit of calling one another "brother" goes back to Jesus' instruction, possibly part and parcel of his training them to address God as Father (6:9). Among Christian brothers, anger is to be eliminated. The passage does not suggest a gradation and climax of punishments (Hendriksen, pp. 297-99), for this would require a similar gradation of offense. There is no clear distinction between the person with seething anger, the one who insultingly calls his brother a fool, and the one who prefers, as his term of abuse, "Raca" (transliteration for Aram. *reka* , "imbecile," "fool," "blockhead"). To a Greek, *moros* would suggest foolishness, senselessness; but to a speaker of Hebrew, the Greek word might call to mind the Hebrew *moreh* , which has

overtones of moral apostasy, rebellion, and wickedness (cf. Ps 78:8 [77:8 LXX]; Jer 5:23). Many Jewish maxims warn against anger (examples in Bonnard), but this is not just another maxim. Here Jesus offers not just advice but insists that the sixth commandment points prophetically to the kingdom's condemnation of hate. Jesus' anger, expressed in diverse circumstances (21:12-19; 23:17; Mark 3:1-5), is no personal inconsistency. 1. Jesus is a preacher who gets down to essentials on every point he makes. Thus for a clear understanding of his thought on a particular issue, one must examine the balance of his teaching. Compare, for instance, 6:2-4 with Luke 18:1-8. Similarly, to

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learn all Jesus says about anger, it is necessary to integrate this passage with others such as 21:12-13 without absolutizing any one text. 2. When suffering, Jesus is proverbial for his gentleness and forbearance (Luke 23: 34; 1 Peter 2:23). But if he comes as Suffering Servant, he comes equally as Judge and King. His anger erupts not out of personal pique but out of outrage at injustice sin, unbelief, and exploitation of others. Unfortunately his followers are more likely to be angered at personal affronts (cf. Carson, *Sermon on the Mount* , pp. 41f.).

23-24 Jesus gives two illustrations exposing the seriousness of anger, the first in a setting of temple worship (vv. 23-24, which implies a pre-70 setting), and the second in a judicial setting (vv. 25-26). The first concerns a brother (see on v. 22); the second an adversary. Remarkably neither illustration deals with "your" anger but with "your" offense that has prompted the brother's or the adversary's rancor. Some take this as a sign that vv. 23-26 represent displaced, independent logia. Yet the connection with vv. 21-22 is very powerful. We are more likely to remember when we have something against others than when we have done something to offend others. And if we are truly concerned about our anger and hate, we shall be no less concerned when we engender them in others. The "altar" (v. 23) is the one in the inner court. There amid solemn worship, recollection of a brother with something against one (on the expression, cf. Mark 11: 25) should in Christ's disciples prompt immediate efforts to be reconciled (v. 24). Only then is formal worship acceptable.

25-26 Compare Luke 12:57-59, where the contextual application warns impenitent Israel to be reconciled to God before it is too late. Many conclude that Matthew has "ethicized" an originally eschatological saying. But the language of the two pericopes is not close, and it is more realistic to postulate

two stories from one itinerant preacher. Explanations for one or two of the changes (e.g., McNeile) are not convincing unless they fit a pattern that justifies all the changes. Jesus again urges haste (v. 25). Settle matters with the offended adversary while still "with him on the way" to court, not on "the road to life" (Bonnard). In the ancient world debtors were jailed till the debts were paid. Thus v. 26 is part of the narrative fabric and gives no justification for purgatory, universal restoration, or urgent reconciliation to God. It simply insists on immediate action: malicious anger is so evil-- and God's judgment so certain (v. 22)--that we must do all in our power to end it (cf. Eph 4:26-27).

2) Adultery and purity (5:27-30)

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27-28 The OT command not to commit adultery (Exod 20:14; Deut 5:18) is often treated in Jewish sources not so much as a function of purity as of theft: it was to steal another's wife (references in Bonnard). Jesus insisted that the seventh commandment points in another direction--toward purity that refuses to lust (v. 28). The tenth commandment had already explicitly made the point; and *gyne* here more likely means "woman" than "wife." "To interpret the law on the side of stringency is not to annul the Law, but to change it in accordance with its own intention" (Davies, *Setting* , p. 102; cf. Job 31:1; Prov 6:25; 2 Peter 2:14). Klaus Haacker ("Der Rechtsatz Jesu zum Thema Ehebruch," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 21 [1977]: 113-16) has convincingly argued that the second *auten* ("[committed adultery] with her") is contrary to the common interpretation of this verse. In Greek it is unnecessary, especially if the sin is entirely the man's. But it is explainable if *pros to epithymesai auten* , commonly understood to mean "with a view to lusting for her," is translated "so as to get her to lust." The evidence for this interpretation is strong (cf. Notes). The man is therefore looking at the woman with a view to enticing her to lust. Thus, so far as his intention goes, he is committing adultery with her, he makes her an adulteress. This does not weaken the force of Jesus' teaching; the heart of the matter is still lust and intent.

29-30 The radical treatment of parts of the body that cause one to sin (cf. Notes) has led some (notoriously Origen) to castrate themselves. But that is not radical enough, since lust is not thereby removed. The "eye" (v. 29) is the member of the body most commonly blamed for leading us astray, especially in sexual sins (cf. Num 15:39; Prov 21:4; Ezek 6:9; 18:12; 20:8; v. 11. Eccl 11:9); the "right eye" refers to one's best eye. But why the "right hand" (v. 30) in a context dealing with lust? This may be merely illustrative or a way of saving that even lust is a kind of theft. More likely it is a euphemism for the male sexual organ (cf. *yad* , "hand," most likely used in this way in Isa 57:8

[cf. BDB, s.v., 4.g]; see Lachs, pp. 108f.). Cutting off or gouging out the offending part is a way of saying that Jesus' disciples must deal radically with sin. Imagination is a God-given gift; but if it is fed dirt by the eye, it will be dirty. All sin, not least sexual sin, begins with the imagination. Therefore what feeds the imagination is of maximum importance in the pursuit of kingdom righteousness (compare Philippians 4:8). Not everyone reacts the same way to all objects. But if (vv. 28-29) your eye is causing you to sin, gouge it out; or at very least, don't look (cf. the sane exposition of Stott, pp. 88-91)! The alternative is sin and hell, sin's reward. The point is so fundamental that Jesus doubtless repeated it on numerous occasions (cf. 18:8-9).

3) Divorce and remarriage (5:31-32)

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31-32 The introductory formula "It has been said" is shorter than all the others in this chapter and is linked to the preceding by a connective *de* ("and"). Therefore, though these two verses are innately antithetical, they carry further the argument of the preceding pericope. The OT not only points toward insisting that lust is the moral equivalent of adultery (vv. 27-30) but that divorce is as well. This arises out of the fact that the divorced woman will in most circumstances remarry (esp. in first-century Palestine, where this would probably be her means of support). That new marriage, whether from the perspective of the divorcee or the one marrying her, is adulterous. The OT passage to which Jesus refers (v. 31) is Deuteronomy 24:1-4, whose thrust is that if a man divorces his wife because of "something indecent" (not further defined) in her, he must give her a certificate of divorce, and if she then becomes another man's wife and is divorced again, the first man cannot remarry her. This double restriction-- the certificate and the prohibition of remarriage--discouraged hasty divorces. Here Jesus does not go into the force of "something indecent." Instead he insists that the law was pointing to the sanctity of marriage. The natural way to take the "except" clause is that divorce is wrong because it generates adultery *except* in the case of fornication. In that case, where sexual sin has already been committed, nothing is laid down, though it appears that divorce is then implicitly permitted, even if not mandated (cf. the paraphrase in Stonehouse, *Witness of Matthew* , p. 203). The numerous points for exegetical dispute (e.g., the meaning of *porneia* ["fornication," or, in NIV, "marital unfaithfulness"], the force of the "except" clause, and the tradition history behind these verses and their relationship to 19:3-9, Mark 10: 11-12; Luke 16:18) are treated more fully at 19:3-12. The one theory that must be rejected here (because it has no counterpart in 19:3-12) is that which takes the words "makes her an adulteress" to mean "stigmatizes her as an adulteress (even though it is not so)" (B. Ward Powers, "Divorce and the Bible," *Interchange* 23 [1938]: 159). The Greek uses the verb, not the noun (cf. NIV's "causes her to become an adulteress"). The verbal construction disallows Powers's paraphrase.

4) Oaths and truthfulness (5:33-37)

33 "Again" probably confirms 5:31-32 as an excursus to the preceding antithesis rather than a new one. Matthew now reports an antithesis on a new theme. What the people have heard is not given as direct OT quotation but as a summary statement accurately condensing the burden of Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:2, and Deuteronomy 5:11; 6:3; 22:21-23. The Mosaic law forbade irreverent oaths, light use of the Lord's name, broken vows. Once Yahweh's name was invoked, the vow to which

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it was attached became a debt that had to be paid to the Lord.

A sophisticated casuistry judged how binding an oath really was by examining how closely it was related to Yahweh's name. Incredible distinctions proliferate under such an approach. Swearing by heaven and earth was not binding, nor was swearing by Jerusalem, though swearing *toward* Jerusalem was. That an entire mishnaic tract (M *Shebuoth*) is given over to the subject (cf. also M *Sanhedrin* 3.2, *Tosephta Nedarim* 1; SBK, 1:321-36) shows that such distinctions became important and were widely discussed. Matthew returns to the topic with marvelous examples in the polemical setting of 23:16-22. The context is not overtly polemical here but simply explains how Jesus relates the kingdom and its righteousness to the OT.

34-36 If oaths designed to encourage truthfulness become occasions for clever lies and casuistical deceit, Jesus will abolish oaths (v. 34). For the direction in which the OT points is the fundamental importance of thorough and consistent truthfulness. If one does not swear at all, one does not swear falsely. Not dissimilar reasoning was found among the Essenes, who avoided taking oaths, "regarding it as worse than perjury for they say that one who is not believed without an appeal to God stands condemned already" (Jos. War II, 135 [viii.6])--though they did require "tremendous oaths" of neophytes joining the community (ibid., 139 [viii.7]; cf. 1QS 5:7-11; CD 15:5). Jesus insists that whatever a man swears by is related to God in some way, and therefore every oath is implicitly in God's name--heaven, earth, Jerusalem, even the hairs of the head are all under God's sway and ownership (v. 36). (There may be allusions here to Ps 48:2; Isa 66:1.) Significantly, Matthew breaks the flow to say (in Gr.) "toward Jerusalem" rather than "by Jerusalem" (on the distinction, cf. on v. 33). The "Great King" (v. 35) may well be God, but see on 25:34.

37 The Greek might more plausible be translated "But let your word be, 'Yes, Yes; No, No.'" The doubling has raised questions: according to some rabbinic opinion, a doubled "yes" or "no" constitutes an oath; and Broadus suggests this is an appropriate way to strengthen an assertion. This sounds like casuistry every bit as tortuous as that which Jesus condemns. The doubling is probably no more than preacher's rhetoric, the point made clear by NIV (cf. James 5:12). *Tou ponerou* could be rendered either "of evil" or "of the evil one" ("the father of lies," John 8:44). The same ambiguity recurs at 5:39; 6:13; 13:38. Many groups (e.g., Anabaptists, Jehovah's Witnesses) have understood these verses absolutely literally and have therefore refused even to take court oaths. Their zeal to conform to Scripture is commendable, but they have probably not interpreted the text very well. 1. The contextual purpose of this passage is to stress the true direction in which the

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OT points--viz., the importance of truthfulness. Where oaths are not being used evasively and truthfulness is not being threatened, it is not immediately obvious that they require such unqualified abolition. 2. In the Scriptures God himself "swears" (e.g., Gen 9:9-11; Luke 1:68, 73; cf. Ps 16:10 and Acts 2:27-31), not because he sometimes lies, but in order to help men believe (Heb 6:17). The earliest Christians still took oaths, if we may judge from Paul's example (Rom 1:9; 2Cor 1:23; 1Thess 2:5, 10; cf. Philippians 1:8), for much the same reason. Jesus himself testified under oath (26:63-64). 3. Again we need to remember the antithetical nature of Jesus' preaching (see on 5: 27-30; 6:5-8). It must be frankly admitted that here Jesus formally contravenes OT law: what it permits or commands (Deut 6:13), he forbids. But if his interpretation of the direction in which the law points is authoritative, then his teaching fulfills it.

5) Personal injury and self-sacrifice (5:38-42)

The order of the last two antitheses (vv. 38-48) is reversed in Luke 6:27-36. While the reasons for this are debatable, if both evangelists are recording the same sermon, the reversal shows that rearranging the order of the materials (preserved in Q and/or other notes) was thought acceptable. Bonnard rightly criticizes the tradition history of Wrege. Parallels repudiating vengeance and vindictiveness are not unknown (T Benjamin 4:1-5:5; 1QS 10:18; CD 8:5-6). The distinctive element in Jesus' teaching is the way he sets it over against the *lex talionis* (the principle of retribution) and the reasons he does this.

38 The OT prescription (Exod 21:24; Lev 24:19-20; Deut 19:21) was not given to foster vengeance; the law explicitly forbade that (Lev 19:18). Rather, it was given, as the OT context shows, to provide the nation's judicial system with a

ready formula of punishment, not least because it would decisively terminate vendettas. On occasion payment in money or some other commodity was exacted instead (e.g., Exod 21:26-27); and in Jesus' day the courts seldom imposed *lex talionis* . The trouble is that a law designed to limit retaliation and punish fairly could be appealed to as justification for vindictiveness. But it will not do to argue that Jesus is doing nothing more than combatting a personal as opposed to a judicial use of the *lex talionis* , since in that case the examples would necessarily run differently: e.g., if someone strikes you, don't strike back but let the judiciary administer the just return slap. The argument runs in deeper channels.

39 Jesus' disciple is not to resist "an evil person" (*to ponero* could not easily be taken

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to refer here to the Devil or to evil in the abstract). In the context of the *lex talionis*, the most natural way of understanding the resistance is "do not resist in a court of law." This interpretation is required in the second example (v. 40). As in vv. 33-37, therefore, Jesus' teaching formally contradicts the OT law. But in the context of vv. 17- 20, what Jesus is saying is reasonably clear: the OT, including the *lex talionis*, points forward to Jesus and his teaching. But like the OT laws permitting divorce, enacted because of the hardness of men's hearts (19:3-12), the *lex talionis* was instituted to curb evil because of the hardness of men's hearts. "God gives by concession a legal regulation as a dam against the river of violence which flows from man's evil heart" (Piper, p. 90). As this legal principle is overtaken by that toward which it points, so also is this hardness of heart. The OT prophets foretold a time when there would be a change of heart among God's people, living under a new covenant (Jer 31:31-34; 32:37-41; Ezek 36:26). Not only would the sins of the people be forgiven (Jer 31:34; Ezek 36:25), but obedience to God would spring from the heart (Jer 31:33; Ezek 36:27) as the eschatological age dawned. Thus Jesus' instruction on these matters is grounded in eschatology. In Jesus and the kingdom, fulfillment (even if partial) of the OT promises, the eschatological age that the Law and Prophets had prophesied (11:13) arrives; and the prophecies that curbed evil while pointing forward to the eschaton are now superseded by the new age and the new hearts it brings (cf. Piper, pp. 89-91). Four illustrations clarify Jesus' point and drive it home. In the first, a man strikes another on the cheek--not only a painful blow, but a gross insult (cf. 2Cor 11:20). If a right-handed person strikes someone's right cheek, presumably it is a slap by the back of the hand, probably considered more insulting than a slap by the open palm (cf. *M Baba Kamma* 8:6). The verb "strikes" (*rhapizei*) probably refers to a sharp slap. Many commentators contrast Luke's *typto* ("strikes," Luke 6:29), arguing the latter refers to blows with a rod--i.e., Luke deals not with insult but with pain and damage. The contrast is false; the semantic overlap between the two verbs is substantial, and *typto* can refer to a slap (e.g., Acts 23:3). But instead of seeking recompense at law under the

***lex talionis* , Jesus' disciples will gladly endure the insult again. (There are overtones of Isa 50:6 here, applied in Matt 26:67 to Jesus; cf. Gundry, *Use of OT* , pp. 72-73.)**

40 Although under Mosaic law the outer cloak was an inalienable possession (Exod 22: 26; Deut 24:13), Jesus' disciples, if sued for their tunics (an inner garment like our suit but worn next to the skin), far from seeking satisfaction, will gladly part with what they may legally keep. Luke 6:29 says nothing about legal action but mentions the garments in reverse order. This has led some to think that Luke had violent robbery in mind because then the outer garment would be snatched off first. But perhaps the order is

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simply that in which the garments would normally be removed.

41 The third example refers to the Roman practice of commandeering civilians to carry the luggage of military personnel a prescribed distance, one Roman "mile." (On the verb *angareuo* , "I commandeer," cf. W. Hatch, *Essays in Biblical Greek* [Oxford: Clarendon, 1889], pp. 37-38.) Impressment, like a lawsuit, evokes outrage; but the attitude of Jesus' disciples under such circumstances must not be spiteful or vengeful but helpful--willing to go a second mile (exemplars of the Western text say "two more [miles]," making a total of three!). This illustration is also implicitly anti-Zealot.

42 The final illustration requires not only interest-free loans (Exod 22:25; Lev 25:37; Deut 23:19) but a generous spirit (cf. Deut 15:7-11; Pss 37:26; 112:5). The parallel form of this verse (Luke 6:30) does not imply two requests but only one; the repetition reinforces the point. These last two illustrations confirm our interpretation of vv. 38-39. The entire pericope deals with the heart's attitude, the better righteousness. For there is actually no legal recourse to the oppression in the third illustration, and in the fourth no harm that might lead to retaliation has been done. While these four vignettes have powerful shock value, they were not meant to be new legal prescriptions. Verse 42 does not commit Jesus' disciples to giving endless amounts of money to every one who seeks a "soft touch" (cf. Prov 11:15; 17:18; 22:

26). Verse 40 is clearly hyperbolic: no first-century Jew would go home wearing only a loin cloth. Nor does this pericope deal with the validity of a state police force. Yet the illustrations must not be diluted by endless equivocations; the only limit to the believer's response in these situations is what love and the Scriptures impose. Paul could "resist" (same Gr. word) Peter to his face (Gal 2) because love demanded it in light of the damage being done to the gospel and to fellow believers. (On the practical

outworking of this antithesis, cf. Neil, pp. 160-63; Piper, pp. 92-99; Stott, pp. 104-14.)

6) Hatred and love (5:43-47)

43 The command "Love your neighbor" is found in Leviticus 19:18, but no OT Scripture adds "and hate your enemies." Rabbinic literature as it was later preserved does not usually leap to so bold and negative a conclusion. Thus some commentators have taken this passage as a later Christian mockery of Jewish values. But other considerations question this. 1. The Qumran covenanters explicitly commanded love for those within the community ("those whom God has elected") and hatred for the outsider (cf. 1QS 1:4, 10; 2:4-9; 1QM 4:1-2; 15:6; 1QH 5:4), and they doubtless represent other groups with similar positions. This love-hate antithesis may be mitigated by the covenanters'

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conviction that they alone were the faithful remnant; at least some of the language anticipates divine eschatological language. But not all of it can be dismissed so easily (cf. Davies, *Setting* , pp. 245ff.). 2. Quite apart from the problems in dating rabbinic literature, we must remember that such literature represents scholarly debate, not common thought. For example, Carl F.H. Henry writes learned tomes read by a few thousand; Hal Lindsey writes popular material read by millions. In a hundred years if the world lasts that long, some of Henry's work may still be in print, but few will remember Lindsey. Yet today Lindsey is read by far more church people than Henry; and the wise preacher will not forget it. Likewise the popular perversion of Leviticus 19:18 presupposed by Matthew 5:43 was doubtless far more widespread than the rabbinic literature intimates. The quotation also omits "as yourself," words included in 19:19; 22:39; and the attitude reflected ignores the fact that Leviticus 19:33-34 also commands love of the same depth for the sojourner, the resident alien in the land. The popular reasoning seems to have been that if God commands love for "neighbor," then hatred for "enemies" is implicitly conceded and perhaps even authorized. Luke 10:25-37 shows how far the "neighbor" category extends.

44-47 Jesus allowed no casuistry. The real direction indicated by the law is love, rich and costly, and extended even to enemies. Many take the verb "love" (*agapao*) and the noun (*agape*) as always signifying self-giving regardless of emotion. For instance, Hill (*Matthew*) comments on this passage. "The love which is inculcated is not a matter of sentiment and emotion, but, as always in the OT and NT, of concrete action." If this were so, 1 Corinthians 13:3 could not disavow "love" that gives everything to the poor and suffers even to martyrdom; for these are "concrete actions." The same verb is used when Amnon incestuously loves his half-sister Tamar (2Sam 13:1 LXX); when Demas, because he loves this world (2Tim 4:10),

forsakes Paul; and when tax collectors love those who love them (Matt 5:46). The rise of this word group in Greek is well traced by Robert Joly, *Agapan et Philein: Le vocabulaire chretien de l'amour, est-il original?* (Bruxelles: Presses Universitaires, 1968). Christians doubtless took over the word group and largely filled it with their own content; but the content of that love is not based on a presupposed definition but on Jesus' teaching and example. To love one's enemies, though it must result in doing them good (Luke 6:32-33) and praying for them (Matt 5:44), cannot justly be restricted to activities devoid of any concern, sentiment, or emotion. Like the English verb "to love," *agapao* ranges widely from debased and selfish actions to generous, warm, costly self-sacrifice for another's good. There is no reason to think the verb here in Matthew does not include emotion as well as action. Much recent scholarship identifies the "enemies" with the persecutors of Matthew's

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church. Verses 44-47 are then seen as Matthew's transformation of Luke's more general exhortation (6:32-35) into encouragement for believers in Matthew's day to submit graciously to their persecutors. If Matthew's first readers were being persecuted for their faith, that was doubtless one application they made, though it is unlikely that Matthew himself intends to be quite so restrictive and anachronistic. The words "those who persecute you" introduce one important kind of "enemy" but do not exclude other kinds. Jesus himself repeatedly warns his disciples of impending persecution (e.g., vv. 10-12; 10:16-23; 24:9-13); so there is little need to doubt the authenticity of the warning here. One manifestation of love for enemies will be in prayer; praying for an enemy and loving him will prove mutually reinforcing. The more love, the more prayer; the more prayer, the more love.

Jesus seems to have prayed for his tormentors actually while the iron spikes were

being driven through his hands and feet; indeed the imperfect tense suggests that

he kept praying, kept repeating his entreaty, "Father, forgive them; for they know

not what they do" (Luke 23:34). If the cruel torture of crucifixion could not silence

our Lord's prayer for his enemies, what pain, pride, prejudice or sloth could justify

the silencing of ours? (Stott, p. 119).

Jesus' disciples have as their example God himself, who loves so indiscriminately that he sends sun and rain (they are his to bestow) on both the righteous and the unrighteous (cf. *Seneca De Beneficiis* 4.26; b *Taanith* 7b). Yet we must not conclude that God's love toward men is in all respects without distinction, and that therefore all must be saved in the end. The same Jesus teaches otherwise--e.g., in 25:31-46--and the NT shows that some aspects of God's love are indeed related to his moral character and demands for obedience (e.g., John 15:9-11; Jude 21). Theologians since Calvin have related God's love in vv. 44-45 to his "common grace" (i.e., the gracious favor God bestows "commonly," without distinction, on all men). He could with justice condemn all; instead he shows repeated and prolonged favor on all. That is the point here established for our emulation, not that God's love is amoral or without any distinctions whatsoever. It is equally unsound to conclude that the OT requires harsh terms for an enemy, but that the NT overcomes this dark portrait with new demands for unqualified love. Counter evidence refutes this notion: the OT often mandates love for others (e.g., Exod 23:4-5; Lev 19:18, 33-34; 1Sam 24:5; Job 31:29; Ps 7:4; Prov 24:17, 29; 25:21-22 [cf. Rom 12:20], and the NT speaks against the reprobate (e.g., Luke 18:7; 1Cor 16: 22; 2Thess 1:6-10; 2Tim 4:18; Rev 6:10). Rather, vv. 44-45 insist that the OT law cited (v. 43) points to the wealth of love exercised by the heirs of the kingdom, a love

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qualitatively different from that experienced by other people (see on vv. 46-47).

God's example provides the incentive for Jesus' disciples to be (*genesthe* , more likely "become") sons of their Father (v. 45). Ultimately this clause does not mean that the disciples act in a loving way to show what they already are (contra Schniewind, Zahn) but to become what they not yet are (Bonnard, Lagrange)--sons of the Father, in the sense established in v. 9. The point of the passage is not to state the means of becoming sons but the necessity of pursuing a certain kind of sonship patterned after the Father's character. "To be persecuted because of righteousness is to align oneself with the prophets (5:12); but to bless and pray for those who persecute us is to align oneself with the character of God" (Carson, *Sermon on the Mount* , p. 53). "To return evil for good is devilish; to return good for good is human; to return good for evil is divine" (Plummer). Both these verses show that Jesus' disciples must live and love in a way superior to the patterns around them. Luke 6:32 uses *charis* ("grace"; NIV, "credit") rather than *misthos* ("reward"), a distinction that has fostered various complex theories concerning the relationship between the two passages. But in the same context, Luke also speaks of *misthos* ("reward," 6:35), and his use of *charis* means no more than thanks or gratitude: "What thanks have you?" (cf. BAGD, p. 878b; hence "credit" in NIV). The two passages are therefore very close, and neither construes "reward" in purely meritorious categories (see on v. 12). But the Scriptures do appeal to the hopes and fears of men (e.g. Heb 11:2, 26, cf. Matt 5:12; 6:1) and to greater and lesser felicity in heaven and punishment in hell (Luke 12:47-48; cf. 1Cor 9: 16-18). The verb *echete* ("you have"; NIV, "you get") may be a literal present; but more likely it is future along the line of 6:19-21: i.e., a man "stores up" and therefore "has" various treasure awaiting him in heaven. The tax collectors in the Synoptics are not the senior holders of the tax-farming contracts (Lat. *publicani*), usually foreigners, but local subordinate collectors (Lat. *portitores*) working under them. (BAGD). The latter were despised, not only because the tax-

farming scheme encouraged corruption on a massive scale, but also because strict Jews would perceive them as both traitorous (raising taxes for the enslaving power) and potentially unclean (owing to possible contamination from association with Gentiles--a danger for at least the senior ranks of *portitores* , who necessarily had dealings with their Gentile overlords). They are often associated with harlots and other public sinners (cf. Notes). But even these people love those who love them--at least their mothers and other tax collectors! Proper salutation was a mark of courtesy and respect; but if Jesus' disciples tender such greeting only to their "brothers"--i.e., other like-minded disciples (see on vv. 23-24), they do not rise above the standards of *ethnikoi* (strictly speaking, "Gentiles"; but since most Gentiles were pagans, the word came to have more than racial overtones). "In loving his friends a man may in a certain sense be loving only himself--

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a kind of expanded selfishness" (Broadus). Jesus will not condone this. "The life of the old (fallen) humanity is based on rough justice, avenging injuries and returning favors. The life of the new (redeemed) humanity is based on divine love, refusing to take revenge but overcoming evil with good" (Stott, p. 123).

c. Conclusion: the demand for perfection (5:48)

48 Some interpret this verse as the conclusion of the last antithesis (vv. 43-47; e.g., Allen, Hendriksen). In that case the perfection advocated is perfection in love. But "perfection" has far broader associations, and it is better to understand v. 48 as the conclusion to the antitheses. The word *teleios* ("perfect") usually reflects *tamim* ("perfect") in the OT. It can refer to the soundness of sacrificial animals (Exod 12:5) or to thorough commitment to the Lord and therefore uprightness (Gen 6:9; Deut 18:13; 2Sam 22:26). The Greek word can be rendered "mature" or "full-grown" (1Cor 14:20; Eph 4:13; Heb 5:14; 6:1). Many judge its force to be nonmoral in v. 48, which becomes an exhortation to total commitment to God (e.g., Bonnard; B. Rigaux, "Revelation des Mysteres et Perfection a Qumran et dans le Nouveau Testament," NTS 4 [1957-58]: 237-62). But this makes for a fairly flat conclusion of the antitheses. A better understanding of the verse does justice to the word *teleios* but also notes that the form of the verse is exactly like Leviticus 19:2, with "holy" displaced by "perfect," possibly due to the influence of Deuteronomy 18:13 (where NIV renders *teleios* by "blameless"; cf. Gundry, *Use of OT*, pp. 73f.). Nowhere is God directly and absolutely called "perfect" in the OT: he is perfect in knowledge (Job 37:16) or in his way (Ps 18:30), and a man's name may be "Yahweh is perfect" (so *yotam* [Jotham], Judg 9:5; 2 Kings 15:32). But here for the first time perfection is predicated of God (cf.

L. Sabourin, "Why Is God Called 'Perfect' in Mt 5, 48?" *Biblische*

Zeitschrift 24**[1980]: 266-68).**

In the light of the preceding verses (vv. 17-47), Jesus is saying that the true direction in which the law has always pointed is not toward mere judicial restraints, concessions arising out of the hardness of men's hearts, still less casuistical perversions, nor even to the law of love (contra C. Dietzfelbinger, "Die Antithesen der Berg predigt im Verstandnis des Matthaus," ZNW 70 [1979]: 1-15; cf. further on 22:34-35). No, it pointed rather to all the perfection of God, exemplified by the authoritative interpretation of the law bound up in the preceding antitheses. This perfection Jesus' disciples must emulate if they are truly followers of him who fulfills the Law and the Prophets (v. 17). The Qumran community understood perfection in terms of perfect obedience, as measured exclusively by the teachings of their community (1QS 1:99, 13; 2:1-2; 4:22-

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23; 8:9-10). Jesus has transposed this to a higher key, not by reducing the obedience, but by making the standard the perfect heavenly Father. Ronald A. Ward (*Royal Theology* [London: MMS, 1964], pp. 117-20) points out that in classical and Hellenistic usage *teleios* can have a static and a dynamic force, "the one appropriate to One Who does not develop, and the other suitable for men who can *grow* in grace" (p. 119, emphasis his): "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." The Gospel writers refer to God as Father only in contexts pertaining to the Messiah or to believers. He is not the Father of all men but the Father of Jesus and the Father of Jesus' disciples (cf. H.F.D. Sparks, "The Doctrine of the Fatherhood of God in the Gospels," in Nineham, *Studies* , pp. 241-62). Just as in the OT it was the distinctive mark of Israel that they were set apart for God to reflect his character (Lev 19:2; cf. 11:44-45; 20:7, 26), so the messianic community carries on this distinctiveness (cf. 1 Peter 1:16) as the true locus of the people of God (cf. France, *Jesus* , pp. 61-62). This must not encourage us to conclude that Jesus teaches that unqualified perfection is already possible for his disciples. He teaches them to acknowledge spiritual bankruptcy (v. 3) and to pray "Forgive us our debts" (6:12). But the perfection of the Father, the true eschatological goal of the law, is what all disciples of Jesus pursue.

4. Religious hypocrisy: its description and overthrow (6:1-18)

a. The principle (6:1)

1 If the text behind NIV is correct (cf. Notes), Jesus, having told his disciples of the superior righteousness expected of them, now warns them of the danger of religious hypocrisy. "Your righteousness," first occurring in 5:20, recurs here, though the focus has changed from "righteousness" in a purely

positive sense to "righteousness" in a formal, external sense. Modern translations try to show the distinction by various means: NIV renders the word "acts of righteousness" (in quotation marks), RSV offers Beware of practicing your piety before men, and NEB, "Be careful not to make a show of your religion before men." Unfortunately they are overstepping the evidence. "To do righteousness" is an expression found elsewhere (Ps 106:3; Isa 58:2; 1John 2:29; 3:7, 10). In 1John 2:29, for instance, it is rendered by NIV "to do what is right"; and that could suffice in Matthew 6:1 as well. Jesus is not so much dealing with a different kind of righteousness or with mere acts of righteousness as with the motives behind righteous living. To attempt to live in accord with the righteousness spelled out in the preceding verses but out of motives eager for men's applause is to prostitute that righteousness. For this there will be no reward (see on 5:12) from the heavenly Father. There is no contradiction with 5:14-16, where disciples are told to let their light shine

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before men so that they may see their good deeds; there the motive is for men to praise the heavenly Father. Righteous conduct under kingdom norms must be visible so that God may be glorified. Yet it must never be visible in order to win man's acclaim. Better by far to hide any righteous deed that may lead to ostentation. To trade the goal of pleasing the Father for the trivial and idolatrous goal of pleasing man will never do. This verse introduces the three chief acts of Jewish piety (cf. vv. 2-18)--almsgiving, prayer, fasting (C.G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* [London: Macmillan, 1938], pp. 412-39; Moore, *Judaism* , 2:162-79). In each act the logical structure is the same: (1) a warning not to do the act to be praised by men, (2) a guarantee that those who ignore this warning will get what they want but no more, (3) instruction on how to perform the act of piety secretly, and (4) the assurance that the Father who sees in secret will reward openly (for details of the logical structure, cf. H.D. Betz, "Eine judenchristliche Kult-Didache in Matthaüs 6:1-18," in Stalker, *Jesus Christus* , pp. 445-57).

b. Three examples (6:2-18)

1) Alms (6:2-4)

Although 6:1-6 has no parallel in the synoptic Gospels, its authenticity is supported by the numerous word plays in Aramaic reconstructions (cf. Black, *Aramaic Approach* , pp. 176-78).

2 The "you" is singular (see on 5:28). While some in Jesus' day believed almsgiving earned merit (Tobit 12:8-9; Ecclesiasticus 3:30; 29:11-12; cf. SBK in loc.), ostentation, not merit theology, is the point here. Jesus assumes his disciples will give alms: "When you give to the needy," he says, not "If you

give to the needy" (cf. 10:42; 25:35-45; 2Cor 9:6-7; Philippians 4:18-19; 1Tim 6:18-19; James 1:27). Rabbinic writers also warn against ostentation in almsgiving (cf. SBK, 1:391ff.): the frequency of the warnings attests the commonness of the practice. The reference to trumpet announcements is difficult. Many commentators still say this refers to "the practice of blowing trumpets at the time of collecting alms in the Temple for the relief of some signal need" (Hill, *Matthew* , following Bonnard); but no Jewish sources confirm this, and the idea seems to stem only from early Christian expositors who assumed its correctness. Likewise there is no evidence (contra Calvin) that the almsgivers themselves really blew trumpets on their way to the temple. Alfred Edersheim (*The Temple: Its Ministry and Services* [London: Religious Tract Society, n.d.], p. 26), followed by Jeremias (*Jerusalem* , p. 170, n. 73), suggests this is a reference to horn-shaped collection boxes used at the temple to discourage pilfering.

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Lachs (*Textual Observations* , pp. 103-5), without mentioning Edersheim, has followed up on that idea by postulating a mistranslation from an underlying Semitic source. But unless the trumpet is a metaphorical caricature (like "tooting your own horn")--a poorly attested suggestion--the solution of A. Buchler ("St. Matthew vi 1-6 and Other Allied Passages," JTS 10 [1909]: 266-70) still seems best: public fasts were proclaimed by the sounding of trumpets. At such times prayers for rain were recited in the streets (cf. v. 5), and it was widely thought that alms-giving insured the efficacy of the fasts and prayers (e.g., b *Sanhedrin* 35a; P. *Tannith* 2:6; *Leviticus* R 34:14). But these occasions afforded golden opportunities for ostentation. Lachs objects that this interpretation makes the givers pompous but not hypocrites. In older Greek a *hypokrites* ("hypocrite") was an actor, but by the first century the term came to be used for those who play roles and see the world as their stage. What Lachs overlooks is that there are different kinds of hypocrisy. In one the hypocrite feigns goodness but is actually evil and knows he is being deceptive (e.g., 22:15-18). In another the hypocrite is carried away by his own acting and deceives himself. Such pious hypocrites (as in 7:1-5), though unaware of their own deceit, do not fool most onlookers; and this *may* be the meaning here. A third kind of hypocrite deceives himself into thinking he is acting for the best interests of God and man and also deceives onlookers. The needy are unlikely to complain when they receive large gifts, and their gratitude may flatter and thus bolster the giver's self-delusion (cf. D.A. Spieler, "Hypocrisy: An Exploration of a Third Type," *Andrerts University Seminary Studies* 13 [1975]: 273-79). Perhaps it is best to identify the hypocrisy in 6:2 with this third type. The Pharisees' great weakness was that they loved men's praise more than God's praise (cf. John 5:44; 12:43). Those who give out of this attitude receive their reward in full (such is the force of *apechousin* ; cf. Deiss LAE, pp. 110-11). They win human plaudits, and that is all they get (cf. Ps 17:14).

3-4 The way to avoid hypocrisy is not to cease giving but to do so with such secrecy that we scarcely know what we have given. Jesus' disciples must themselves be so given to God (cf. 2Cor 8:5) that their giving is prompted by obeying God and having compassion on men. Then their Father, who sees what is done in secret (Heb 4:13), will reward them. The verb "to reward" (*apodidomai*), with God as subject, here and in vv. 6, 18, is different from that used in v. 2. Bonnard rightly notes it has a sense of "pay back," and this is compatible with "reward" (see on 5:12). "Openly" (KJV), here and in vv. 6, 18, is a late gloss designed to complete the antithetic parallelism with "secretly" or "in secret." Jesus does not discuss the locale and nature of the reward; but we will not be far from the NT evidence if we understand it to be "both in time and in eternity, both in character and in felicity" (Broadus).

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2) *Prayer* (6:5-15)

a) *Ostentatious prayer* (6:5-6)

5 Again Jesus assumes that his disciples will pray, but he forbids the prayers of "hypocrites" (see on v. 2). Prayer had a prominent place in Jewish life and led to countless rabbinic decisions (cf. M *Berakoth*). In synagogue worship someone from the congregation might be asked to pray publicly, standing in front of the ark. And at certain times prayers could be offered in the streets (M *Taanith* 2:1-2; see on v. 2). But the location was not the critical factor. Neither is the "standing" posture in itself significant. In the Bible people pray prostrate (Num 16:22; Josh 5:14; Dan 8:17; Matt 26:39; Rev 11:16), kneeling (2 Chronicles 6:13; Dan 6:10; Luke 22:41, Acts 7:60; 9: 40; 20:36; 21:5), sitting (2Sam 7:18), and standing (1Sam 1:26; Mark 11:25; Luke 18: 11, 13). Again it is the motive that is crucial: "to be seen by men." And again there is the same reward (cf. v. 2 and v. 5).

6 If Jesus were forbidding all public prayer, then clearly the early church did not understand him (e.g., 18:19-20; Acts 1:24; 3:1; 4:24-30). The public versus private antithesis is a good test of one's motives; the person who prays more in public than in private reveals that he is less interested in God's approval than in human praise. Not piety but a reputation for piety is his concern. Far better to deal radically with this hypocrisy (cf. 5:29-30) and pray in a private "room"; the word *tameion* can refer to a storeroom (Luke 12:24), some other inner room (Matt 12:26; 24:26; Luke 12:3, 24), or even a bedroom (Isa 26:20 LXX, with which this verse has several common elements; cf. also 2 Kings 4:33). The Father, who sees in secret, will reward the disciple who prays in secret (see on v. 4).

b) Repetitious prayer (6:7-8)

7-8 Matthew 6:7-15 digresses from the three chief acts of Jewish piety. Yet the content of these verses is certainly relevant to the second of these, which is prayer. Prayer is central to a believer's life. So Jesus gives further warnings and a positive example. Many argue that whereas vv. 5-6 warn against the prayer practices of Jews, vv. 7-8 warn against those of Gentiles (pagans; see on 5:47), partly because the parallel in Luke 11:2 (MS D) has "the rest of men." But the distinction is not quite so cut and dried. Every religious group harbors some who pray repetitiously. So with the Jews of Jesus' day. He labeled all such praying--even that of his own people--as pagan! "Pagans" (cf. 1 Kings 18:26) are not so much the target as the negative example of all

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who pray repetitiously.

The verb *battalogeo* ("keep on babbling") is very rare, apart from writings dependent on the NT (BAGD, p. 137b). It may derive from the Aramaic *battal* ("idle," "useless") or some other Semitic word; or it may be onomatopoeic: if so, "babble" is a fine English equivalent. Jesus is not condemning prayer any more than he is condemning almsgiving (v. 2) or fasting (v. 16). Nor is he forbidding all long prayers or all repetition. He himself prayed at length (Luke 6:12), repeated himself in prayer (Matt 26:44; unlike Ecclesiasticus 7:14!), and told a parable to show his disciples that "they should always pray and not give up" (Luke 18:1). His point is that his disciples should avoid meaningless, repetitive prayers offered under the misconception that mere length will make prayers efficacious. Such thoughtless babble can occur in liturgical and extemporaneous prayers alike. Essentially it is thoroughly pagan, for pagan gods allegedly thrive on incantation and repetition. But the personal Father God to whom believers pray does not require information about our needs (v. 8). "As a father knows the needs of his family, yet teaches them to ask in confidence and trust, so does God treat his children" (Hill, *Matthew*).

c) Model prayer (6:9-13)

"The Lord's Prayer," as it is commonly called, is not so much his own prayer (John 17 is just that) as the model he gave his disciples. Much of the literature has focused on the complex question of the relation between 6:9-13 and Luke 11:24. The newer EVs reveal the many differences. KJV does not show the differences so clearly because it preserves the numerous assimilations to Matthew in late MSS of Luke (cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary* , pp. 154-56). Various theories attempt to account for the differences. 1. Formerly some argued that Matthew's form is the original

and Luke's a simplified version of it. This view is no longer popular, largely because of the difficulty of believing that Luke, who was highly interested in Jesus' prayer life, would omit words and clauses from one v. 11 his prayers if they were already in a source. 2. Others have argued strongly that Luke's account is original and that Matthew has added to it according to his own theology and linguistic habit (so Jeremias, *Prayers* , pp. 85ff., and Hill). Several reasons for this theory follow. a) All Luke's content is found in Matthew 6:9-13. But this could support condensation by Luke as easily as expansion by Matthew. More important, mere expansion-condensation theories do not account for the linguistic differences (e.g., tense in the fourth petition, vocabulary and tense in the fifth), and the theory is further weakened when it is argued (e.g., by Hill, *Matthew*) that in the fourth petition the priorities are reversed and Matthew's form is probably more original than Luke's.

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b) Matthew's more rhythmical, liturgical formulation may reflect the desire to construct an ecclesiastical equivalent, for Jewish Christians, of the synagogue's main prayer, the *Eighteen Benedictions* (Davies, *Setting* , pp. 310ff.), to which the Lord's Prayer structurally and formally corresponds. But these correspondences have been greatly exaggerated. They are no closer than those found in fine extemporaneous prayers prayed in evangelical churches every Wednesday night (on the differences, cf. Bornkamm, *Jesus* , pp. 136f:). Moreover, Jesus was far removed from innovation for its own sake. Why should he not have expressed himself in current forms of piety? c) Hill (*Matthew*) argues that the Matthean introduction (v. 9) suggests that the prayer is a standardized liturgical form. On the contrary, the text reads "this is *how* [*houtos*] you should pray," not "this is what you should pray." The emphasis is on paradigm or model, not liturgical form. d) Hill (*Matthew*) also argues that the emphatic "you" (v. 9) "sets off the new Christian community from the synagogue (and Gentile usage) whose piety is being contrasted with Christian worship in the surrounding context." But not only is this needlessly anachronistic, it also ignores the constant stress on "you" designating Jesus' disciples as the exclusive messianic community in Jesus' day (see on 6:2). 3. Ernst Lohmeyer (*The Lord's Prayer* [London: Collins, 1965], p. 293) argues that the two prayers do not spring from one source (Q?) but from two separate traditions. In Matthew the prayer reflects the liturgical tradition of the Galilean Christian community and emphasizes a certain eschatological outlook, whereas in Luke the prayer reflects the liturgical tradition of the Jerusalem church and focuses more on daily life. He refuses to be drawn out on what stands behind these two traditions. Lohmeyer's geographical speculations are not convincing, but his emphasis on two separate traditions of the Lord's Prayer is worth careful consideration. Evidence from the *Didache* and the demonstrable tendency for local churches to think of themselves as Christian synagogues (e.g., in the letters of Ignatius) and to adopt some synagogal liturgical patterns combine to suggest that the Lord's Prayer was used in corporate worship from a very early date. If (and this is a big "if") such church liturgies stretch back to the

time when Matthew and Luke were written, it seems unlikely that the evangelists would disregard the liturgical habits of their own communities, unless for overwhelming historical or theological reasons (e.g., correction of heresy within the accepted liturgy). But none such is evident. This reinforces the theory of two separate liturgical traditions. On the other hand, if fixed liturgical patterns had not yet included any form of the Lord's Prayer by the time the evangelists wrote, the differences between the two are not easily explained by a common source. 4. These complexities have generated several mediating theories. To give but one, Marshall (*Luke* , p. 455) suggests that Luke either drew his form of the prayer from Q or from a recension of Q different from that of Matthew, whereas Matthew drew his

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either from separate tradition and substituted it for what he found in Q (if his recension of Q was the same as Luke's) or else from a separate recension. This is little more than an elegant way of saying that Lohmeyer's two-traditions theory is basically correct. It may be too elegant: many suspect that Q is not a single document (Introduction, section 3), and to speak thus of recensions of Q when our knowledge of Q is so uncertain makes one wonder how to distinguish methodologically between recensions of Q and entirely separate accounts of two historical occasions within Jesus' ministry. Resolving the unknown by appealing to the more unknown is of dubious merit. 5. Though the evidence for two traditions is strong, equally significant is the fact that there are two entirely different historical settings of the prayer. Unless one is prepared to say that one or the other is made up, the reasonable explanation is that Jesus taught this sort of prayer often during his itinerant ministry and that Matthew records one occasion and Luke another. Matthew's setting is not so historically specific as that of Luke only if one interprets the introduction and the conclusion of the entire discourse loosely or if one postulates Matthew's freedom to add "foot notes" to the material he provides (see prefatory remarks for 5:1-7:29). The former is exegetically doubtful, the latter without convincing literary controls; and even in these instances the evidence for two separate traditions for the Lord's Prayer is so strong that the simplest comprehensive explanation is that Jesus himself taught this form of prayer on more than one occasion. Few have doubted that the prayer is in some form authentic. Goulder (pp. 296-301) argues that Matthew composed it from fragments, most of which were authentic but uttered on other and separate occasions, and that Luke copied and adapted Matthew's work. His theory is unconvincing because it does no more than show parallels between elements of this prayer and other things Jesus said or prayed. The same evidence could equally be read as supporting the prayer's authenticity. It is well worth noting that there is no anachronism in the prayer--no mention of Jesus as high priestly Mediator, no allusion to themes developed only after the Resurrection. There are signs of Semitic background, whether Aramaic (e.g., Black, *Aramaic Approach* , pp. 203-8) or

Hebrew (Carmignac, pp. 29-52). Scholars debate whether Matthew's version has six petitions (Chrysostom, Calvin, and Reformed theologians) or seven, interpreting v. 13 as two (Augustine, Luther, most Lutheran theologians). The issue affects the meaning but little. More important, as Bengel remarks, is the division of the petitions: the first three are cast in terms of God's glory ("your ... your ... your"); the others in terms of our good ("us ... us ... us").

9 By contrast with ostentatious prayer (vv. 5-6) or thoughtless prayer (vv. 7-8), Jesus gives his disciples a model. But it is only a model: "This is how [not what] you should pray."

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The fatherhood of God is not a central theme in the OT. Where "father" does occur with respect to God, it is commonly by way of analogy, not direct address (Deut 32:6; Ps 103:13; Isa 63:16; Mal 2:10). One can also find occasional references to God as father in the Apocrypha and pseudepigrapha (Tobit 13:4; Ecclesiasticus 23:1; 51:10; Wisdom 2:16; 14:3; Jub 1:24-25, 28; T Levi 18:6; T Judah 24:2--though some of these may be Christian interpolations). There is but one instance in the DSS (1QS 9:35); the assorted rabbinic references are relatively rare and few unambiguously antedate Jesus

(b. *Taanith* 25b; the fifth and sixth petitions of the *Eighteen Benedictions*). Pagans likewise on occasion addressed their gods as father: e.g., *Zeu pater* ("Zeus, Father"; Lat. *Jupiter*). But not till Jesus is it characteristic to address God as "Father" (Jeremias, *Prayers* , pp. 11ff.). This can only be understood against the background of customary patterns for addressing God. The overwhelming tendency in Jewish circles was to multiply titles ascribing sovereignty, lordship, glory, grace, and the like to God (cf. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty* pp. 45ff.). Against such a background, Jesus' habit of addressing God as his own Father (Mark 14:36) and teaching his disciples to do the same could only appear familiar and presumptuous to opponents, personal and gracious to followers. Unfortunately, many modern Christians find it very difficult to delight in the privilege of addressing the Sovereign of the universe as "Father" because they have lost the heritage that emphasizes God's transcendence. Jesus' use of *Abba* ("Father" or "my Father"; Mark 14:36; cf. Matt 11:25; 26:39, 42; Luke 23:34; John 11:41; 12:27; 17:1-26) was adopted by early Christians (Rom 8: 15; Gal 4:6); and there is no evidence of anyone before Jesus using this term to address God (cf. DNTT, 1:614-15). Throughout the prayer the reference is plural: "Our Father" (which in Aram. would have been *abinu* , not *abba*). In other words this is an example of a prayer to be prayed in fellowship with other disciples (cf. 18:19), not in isolation (cf. John 20:17). Very striking is Jesus' use of pronouns with "Father." When forgiveness of sins is discussed, Jesus speaks of "your Father" (6:14-15) and excludes himself. When he speaks of his unique

sonship and authority, he speaks of "my Father" (e.g., 11:27) and excludes others. The "our Father" at the beginning of this model prayer is plural but does not include Jesus, since it is part of his instruction regarding what his disciples should pray. This opening designation establishes the kind of God to whom prayer is offered: He is personal (no mere "ground of being") and caring (a Father, not a tyrant or an ogre, but the one who establishes the real nature of fatherhood, cf. Eph 3:14-15). That he is "our Father" establishes the relationship that exists between Jesus' disciples and God. In this sense he is not the Father of all men indiscriminately (see on 5:45). The early church was right to forbid non-Christians from reciting this prayer as vigorously as they forbade them from joining with believers at the Lord's Table. But that he is "our Father

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in heaven" (the designation occurs twenty times in Matthew, once in Mark [11:25], never in Luke, and in some instances may be a Matthean formulation) reminds us of his transcendence and sovereignty, while preparing us for v. 10b. The entire formula is less concerned with the proper protocol in approaching Deity than with the truth of who he is, to establish within the believer the right frame of mind (Stott, p. 146). God's "name" is a reflection of who he is (cf. DNTT, 2:648ff.). God's "name" is God himself as he is and has revealed himself, and so his name is already holy. Holiness, often thought of as "separateness," is less an attribute than what he is. It has to do with the very godhood of God. Therefore to pray that God's "name" be "hallowed" (the verbal form of "holy," recurring in Matt only at 23:17, 19 [NIV, "makes sacred"]) is not to pray that God may become holy but that he may be treated as holy (cf. Exod 20:8; Lev 19:2, 32; Ezek 36:23; 1 Peter 1:15), that his name should not be despised (Mal 1:6) by the thoughts and conduct of those who have been created in his image.

10 As God is eternally holy, so he eternally reigns in absolute sovereignty. Yet it is appropriate to pray not only "hallowed be your name" but also "your kingdom come." God's "kingdom" or "reign," as we have seen (see on 3:2; 4:17, 23), can refer to that aspect of God's sovereignty under which there is life. That kingdom is breaking in under Christ's ministry, but it is not consummated till the end of the age (28:20). To pray "your kingdom come" is therefore simultaneously to ask that God's saving, royal rule be extended now as people bow in submission to him and already taste the eschatological blessing of salvation and to cry for the consummation of the kingdom (cf. 1Cor 16:22; Rev 11:17; 22:20). Godly Jews were waiting for the kingdom (Mark 15:43), "the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25). They recited "Qaddish" ("Sanctification"), an ancient Aramaic prayer, at the close of each synagogue

service. In its oldest extant form, it runs, "Exalted and *hallowed* be his great name in the world which he created according to his will. *May he let his kingdom rule* in your lifetime and in your days and in the lifetime of the whole house of Israel, speedily and soon. And to this, say: amen" (Jeremias, *Prayers* , p. 98, emphasis his). But the Jew looked forward to the kingdom, whereas the reader of Matthew's Gospel, while looking forward to its consummation, perceives that the kingdom has already broken in and prays for its extension as well as for its unqualified manifestation. To pray that God's will, which is "good, pleasing and perfect" (Rom 12:2), be done on earth as in heaven is to use language broad enough to embrace three requests. 1. The first request is that God's will be done now on earth as it is now accomplished in heaven. The word *thelema* ("will") includes both God's righteous demands (7:21; 12: 50; cf. Ps 40:8) and his determination to bring about certain events in salvation history (18:14; 26:42; cf. Acts 21:14). So for that will to be "done" includes both moral obedience and the bringing to pass of certain events, such as the Cross. This prayer

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corresponds to asking for the present extension of the messianic kingdom.

2. The second request is that God's will may ultimately be as *fully accomplished* on earth as it is now accomplished in heaven. "Will" has the same range of meanings as before; and this prayer corresponds to asking for the consummation of the messianic kingdom. 3. The third request is that God's will may ultimately be done on the earth *in the same way* as it is now accomplished in heaven. In the consummated kingdom it will not be necessary to discuss superior righteousness (5:20-48) as antithetical to lust, hate, retaliatory face-slapping, divorce, and the like; for then God's will, construed now as his demands for righteousness, will be done as it is now done in heaven: freely, openly, spontaneously, and without the need to set it over against evil (Carson, *Sermon on the Mount*, pp. 66f.). These first three petitions, though they focus on God's name, God's kingdom, and God's will, are nevertheless prayers that he may act in such a way that his people will hallow his name, submit to his reign, and do his will. It is therefore impossible to pray this prayer in sincerity without humbly committing oneself to such a course.

11 The last petitions explicitly request things for ourselves. The first is "bread," a term used to cover all food (cf. Prov 30:8; Mark 3:20; Acts 6:1; 2Thess 3:12; James 2:

15). Many early fathers thought it inappropriate to talk about physical food here and interpreted "bread" as a reference to the Lord's Supper or to the Word of God. This depended in part on Jerome's Latin rendering of *epiousios* ("daily," NIV) as *superstantialem*: Give us today our "supersubstantial" bread--a rendering that may have depended in part on the influence of Marius Victorinus (cf. F.F. Bruce, "The Gospel Text of Marius Victorinus," in Best and Wilson, p. 70). There is no linguistic

justification for this translation. The bread is real food, and it may further suggest all that we need in the physical realm (Luther). That does not mean that *epiousios* ("daily") is easy to translate. The term appears only here and in Luke's prayer (11:3); and the two possible extrabiblical references, which could support "daily," have had grave doubt cast on them by B.M. Metzger ("How Many Times Does *epiousios* Occur Outside the Lord's Prayer?" Exp 69 [1957-58]: 52-54). P. Grelot has recently attempted to support the same translation ("daily") by reconstructing an Aramaic original ("La quatrieme demande du `Pater' et son arriereplan semitique," NTS 25 [1978-79]: 299-314). But his article deals inadequately with the Greek text, and other Aramaic reconstructions are possible (e.g., Black, *Aramaic Approach* , pp. 203-7). The prayer is for our needs, not our greeds. It is for one day at a time ("today"), reflecting the precarious lifestyle of many first-century workers who were paid one day at a time and for whom a few days' illness could spell tragedy. Many have suggested a

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derivation from *epi ten ousan* [viz., *hemeran*] ("for today") or *he epiousa hemera* ("for the coming day"), referring in the morning to the same day and at night to the next. This meaning is almost certainly right; but it is better supported by deriving the word from the fem. participle *epiousa* , already well established with the sense of "immediately following," by the time the NT was written (cf. the forthcoming article by C.J. Hemer in JSNT). Whatever the etymological problems, this makes sense of Luke 11:3, where "each day" is part of the text: "Give us each day our bread for the coming day." Equally it makes sense in Matthew, where "today" displaces "each day": "Give us today our bread for the coming day." This may sound redundant to Western readers, but it is a precious and urgent petition to those who live from hand to mouth. Some derive *epiousios* ("daily") from the verb *epienai* , referring not to the future, still less to the food of the messianic banquet (contra Jeremias, *Prayers*, pp. 100-102), but to the bread that belongs to it, i.e., that is necessary and sufficient for it (cf. R. Ten Kate, "Geef ons heden ons `dagelijks' brood," *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 32 [1978]: 125-39; with similar conclusions but by a different route, H. Bourgoin, "Epiousios explique par la notion de prefixe vide," *Biblica* 60 [1979]: 91-96; and for literature, BAGD, pp. 296-97; Gundry, *Use of OT* , pp. 74-75). This has the considerable merit of meshing well with both "today" and "each day" (Matthew and Luke respectively), and in Matthew's case it may be loosely rendered "Give us today the food we need." But the derivation is linguistically artificial (cf. C.J. Hemer). The idea of God "giving" the food in no way diminishes responsibility to work (see further on vv. 25-34) but presupposes not only that Jesus' disciples live one day at a time (cf. v. 34) but that all good things, even our ability to work and earn our food, come from God's hand (cf. Deut 8:18; 1Cor 4:7; James 1:17). It is a lesson easily forgotten when wealth multiplies and absolute self-sufficiency is portrayed as a virtue.

12 The first three petitions stand independently from one another. The last three, however, are linked in Greek by "ands," almost as if to say that life sustained by food is not enough. We also need forgiveness of sin and deliverance from temptation. In Matthew what we ask to be forgiven for is *ta opheilemata hemon* ("our debts") in Luke, it is our "sins." Hill (*Matthew*) notes that the crucial word *to opheilema* ("debt") "means a literal `debt' in the LXX and NT, except at this point." And on this basis S.T. Lachs ("On Matthew vi.12," *NovTest* 17 [1975]: 6-8) argues that in Matthew this petition of the Lord's Prayer is not really dealing with sins but with loans in the sixth year, one year before the Jubilee. But the linguistic evidence can be read differently. The word *opheilema* is rather rare in biblical Greek. It occurs only four times in the LXX (Deut 24:10 [bis]; 1Esd 3:20; 1Macc 15:8); and in Deuteronomy 24:10, where it occurs twice, it renders two different Hebrew words. In the NT it appears only here and in Romans 4:4. On this basis it would be as accurate to say the word always means sin

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in the NT except at Romans 4:4, as to say it always means "debt" except at Matthew 6:12.

More important, the Aramaic word *hoba* ("debt") is often used (e.g., in the Targums) to mean "sin" or "transgression." Deiss BS (p. 225) notes an instance of the cognate verb *hamartian opheilo* (lit., "I owe sin"). Probably Matthew has provided a literal rendering of the Aramaic Jesus probably most commonly used in preaching; and even Luke (11:4) uses the cognate participle in the second line, *panti opheiloni hemin* ("everyone who sins against us"). There is therefore no reason to take "debts" to mean anything other than "sins," here conceived as something owed God (whether sins of commission or of omission). Some have taken the second clause to mean that our forgiveness is the real cause of God's forgiveness, i.e., that God's forgiveness must be earned by our own. The problem is often judged more serious in Matthew than Luke, because the latter has the present "we forgive," the former the aorist (not perfect, as many commentators assume) *aphekamen* ("we have forgiven"). Many follow the suggestion of Jeremias (*Prayers*, pp. 92-93), who says that Matthew has awkwardly rendered an Aramaic *perfectum praesens* (a "present perfect"): he renders the clause "as we also herewith forgive our debtors." The real solution is best expounded by C.F.D. Moule ("` ... As we forgive ... `: a Note on the Distinction between Deserts and Capacity in the Understanding of Forgiveness," *Donum Gentilicium*, edd. E. Bammel et al. [Oxford: Clarendon 1978], pp. 68-77), who, in addition to detailing the most important relevant Jewish literature, rightly insists on distinguishing "between, on the one hand, earning or meriting forgiveness, and, on the other hand, adopting an attitude which makes forgiveness possible--the distinction, that is, between deserts and capacity.... Real repentance, as contrasted with a merely self-regarding remorse, is certainly a *sine qua non* of receiving forgiveness--an indispensable condition" (pp. 71-72). "Once our eyes have been opened to see the enormity of our offense against God, the injuries which others have done to us appear by comparison extremely

trifling. If, on the other hand, we have an exaggerated view of the offenses of others, it proves that we have minimized our own" (Stott, pp. 149-50; see on 5:5, 7; 18:23-35).

13 The word *peirasmos* ("temptation") and its cognate noun rarely if ever before the NT mean "temptation" in the sense of "enticement to sin" (whether from inward lust or outward circumstances) but rather "testing" (cf. also on 4:1-12). But testing can have various purposes (e.g., refinement, ascertaining the strength of character, enticement to sin) and diverse results (greater purity, self-confidence, growth in faith, sin); and as a result the word can slide over into the entirely negative sense of "temptation." See comments on the cognate verb in 4:1. The word sustains the

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unambiguous meaning in James 1:13-14, which assures us that "God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone [i.e., with evil]" (cf. also Matt 4:1, 3; 1Cor 7:5; 1Thess 3:5; Rev 2:10). In this light *peirasmos* cannot easily mean "temptation" in Matthew 6:13; for that would be to pray God would not do what in fact he cannot do, akin to praying that God would not sin. But if *peirasmos* in v. 13 means testing, we face another problem. The NT everywhere insists that believers will face testings or trials of many kinds but that they should be faced with joy (James 1:2; cf. 1Cor 10:13). If this be so, to pray for grace and endurance in trial is understandable; but to pray not to be brought to testings is strange. For detailed probing of the problem and interaction with the sources, see

C.F.D. Moule, *An Unsolved Problem in the Temptation-Clause in the Lord's Prayer*, *Reformed Theological Review* 33 (1974): 65-75. Some have argued that the testing is the eschatological tribulation, the period of messianic woes (e.g., Jeremias, *Prayers*, pp. 104-7) characterized by apostasy. The petition becomes a plea to be secured from that final apostasy and is reflected in NEB's do not bring us to the test. But not only is *peirasmos* ("temptation") never used for this tribulation unless carefully qualified (and therefore Rev 3:10 is no exception, regardless of its interpretation), but one would at least expect to find the article in the Matthean clause. Carmignac (pp. 396, 445) so reconstructs the alleged Hebrew original that he distinguishes "to testing" from "into testing," interpreting the latter to mean actually succumbing. The prayer then asks to be spared, not from testing, but from failing.

Unfortunately his linguistic arguments are not convincing. Many cite b *Berakoth* 60b as a parallel: "Bring me not into sin, or into iniquity, or into temptation, or into contempt." It is possible that the causative form of the Lord's Prayer is, similarly, not meant to be unmediated but has a permissive nuance: "Let us not be brought into temptation [i.e., by the devil]." This interpretation is greatly strengthened if the word "temptation" can be taken to mean "trial or temptation that results in fall"; and this appears to be required in two NT passages (Mark 14:38; Gal 6:1; cf. J.V. Dahms, "Lead Us Not Into Temptation," *JETS* 17 [1974]: 229). It also may be that we are

forcing this sixth petition into too rigid a mold. The NT tells us that this age will be characterized by wars and rumors of wars (see on 24:6) but does not find it incongruous to urge us to pray for those in authority so "that we may live peaceful and quiet lives" (1Tim 2:2). While Jesus told his disciples to rejoice when persecuted (5:10-12) he nevertheless exhorted them to flee from it (10:23) and even to pray that their flight should not be too severe (24:20). Similarly, a prayer requesting to be spared testings may not be incongruous when placed beside exhortations to consider such testings, when they come, as pure joy. "Deliver us" could mean either, on the one hand, "spare us from," "preserve us against" or, on the other hand, "deliver us out of," "save us from" (BAGD, p. 737, s.v.

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rhyomai). Both are spiritually relevant, and which way the verb is taken largely depends on how the preceding clause is understood. The words *tou ponerou* ("the evil one") could be either neuter ("evil"; cf. Luke 6:45; Rom 12:9; 1Thess 5:22) or masculine ("the evil one," referring to Satan: 13:19, 38; Eph 6:16; 1John 2:13-14; 3: 12; 5:19). In some cases the Greek does not distinguish the gender (see on 5:37). However, a reference to Satan is far more likely here for two reasons: (1) "deliver us" can take either the preposition *ek* ("from") or *apo* ("from"), the former always introducing things from which to be delivered, the latter being used predominantly of persons (cf. J.B. Bauer, "Liberanos a malo," *Verbum Domini* 34 [1965]: 12-15 Zerwick par. 89); and (2) Matthew's first mention of temptation (4:1-11) is unambiguously connected with the Devil. Thus the Lord's model prayer ends with a petition that, while implicitly recognizing our own helplessness before the Devil whom Jesus alone could vanquish (4:1-11), delights to trust the heavenly Father for deliverance from the Devil's strength and wiles. The doxology--"for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen"--is found in various forms in many MSS. The diversity of what parts are attested is itself suspicious (for full discussion, cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary* pp. 16-17; cf. Hendriksen, pp. 337f.); and the MS evidence is overwhelmingly in favor of omission--a point conceded by Davies (*Setting* , pp. 451-53), whose liturgical arguments for inclusion are not convincing. The doxology itself, of course, is theologically profound and contextually suitable and was no doubt judged especially suitable by those who saw in the last three petitions a veiled allusion to the Trinity: the Father's creation and providence provides our bread, the Son's atonement secures our forgiveness, and the Spirit's indwelling power assures our safety and triumph. But "surely it is more important to know what the Bible really contains and really means, than to cling to something not really in the Bible, merely because it gratifies our taste, or even because it has for us some precious associations" (Broadus).

d) Forgiveness and prayer (6:14-15)

14-15 These verses reinforce the thought of the fifth petition (see on v. 12). The repetition serves to stress the deep importance for the community of disciples to be a forgiving community if its prayers are to be effective (cf. Ps 66:18). The thought is repeated elsewhere (18:23-35; Mark 11:25). (On the possible literary relation with Mark 11:25, see Lane, pp. 410-11.)

3) Fasting (6:16-18)

16 Under Mosaic legislation, fasting was commanded only on the Day of Atonement

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(Lev 16:29-31; 23:27-32; Num 29:7); but during the Exile regular fasts of remembrance were instituted (Zech 7:3-5; 8:19). In addition to these national fasts, both OT and NT describe personal or group fasts with a variety of purposes, especially to indicate and foster self-humiliation before God, often in connection with the confession of sins (e.g., Neh 9:1-2; Ps 35:13; Isa 58:3, 5; Dan 9:2-20; 10:2-3; Jonah 3:5; Acts 9:9) or to lay some special petition before the Lord, sometimes out of anguish, danger, or desperation (Exod 24:18; Judg 20:26; 2Sam 1:12; 2 Chronicles 20:3; Ezra 8:21-23; Esth 4:16; Matt 4:1-2; Acts 13:1-3; 14:23). It may belong to the realm of normal Christian self-discipline (1Cor 9:24-27; cf. Philippians 3:19; 1 Peter 4:3); but already in the OT it is bitterly excoriated when it is purely formal and largely hypocritical (Isa 58: 3-7; Jer 14:12; Zech 7:54)--when, for instance, men fasted but did not share their food with the hungry (Isa 58:1-7). In Jesus' day the Pharisees fasted twice a week (Luke 18:12; cf. SBK, 2:242ff.), probably Monday and Thursday (M *Taanith* 1:4-7). Some devout people, like Anna, fasted often (Luke 2:37). But such voluntary fasts provided marvelous opportunities for religious showmanship to gain a reputation for piety. One could adopt an air that was "somber" (or "downcast," Luke 24:17, the only other place in the NT where the word *skythropos* is used) and disfigure oneself, perhaps by not washing and shaving, by sprinkling ashes on one's head to signify deep contrition or self-abnegation, or by omitting normal use of oil to signify deep distress (cf. 2Sam 14:2; Dan 10:3). The point is not that there was no genuine contrition but that these hypocrites were purposely drawing attention to themselves. They wanted the plaudits of men and got them. And that's all they got.

17-18 Yet Jesus, far from banning fasting, assumes his disciples will fast, even as he assumes they will give alms and pray (vv. 3, 6). His disciples may not fast at the moment, for the messianic bridegroom is with them; and it is

the time for Joy (9:14-17). But the time will come when they will fast (9:15). (Observe in passing that here Jesus assumes the continued existence of his disciples after his departure.) What he condemns is ostentation in fasting. Moreover he forbids any sign at all that a fast has been undertaken, because the human heart is so mixed in its motives that the desire to seek God will be diluted by the desire for human praise, thus vitiating the fast. Washing and anointing with oil (v. 17) were merely normal steps in hygiene. Oil does not here symbolize extravagant joy but normal body care (cf. Ruth 3:3; 2Sam 12:20; Pss 23:5; 104:15; 133:2; Eccl 9:8; Luke 7:46; cf. DNTT, 1:120). The point of v. 18 is not to draw attention to oneself, whether by somber mien or extravagant joy. Jesus desires reticence, not deception. And the Father, who sees in secret, will provide the reward (see on v. 4). The three principal acts of Jewish piety (vv. 1-18) are only examples of many

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practices susceptible of religious hypocrisy. Early in the second century, the Christian document *Didache*, while polemicizing against the Monday and Thursday "fasts of the hypocrites," enjoins Christians to fast on Wednesday and Friday (8:1). Christian copyists added "fasting" glosses at several points in the NT (Matt 17:21; Mark 9:29; Acts 10:30; 1Cor 7:5). Hypocrisy is not the sole preserve of Pharisees. The solution is not to abolish fasting (cf. Alexander's remark that mortification of the flesh "can be better attained by habitual temperance than by occasional abstinence") but to set it within a biblical framework (references on v. 16) and sincerely to covet God's blessing. For if the form of vv. 1-18 is negative, the point is positive--viz., to seek first God's kingdom and righteousness (cf. v. 33).

5. Kingdom perspectives (6:19-34)

Many argue that these verses are made up of four blocks of material that originally had independent settings: (1) Matthew 6:19-21 = Luke 12:33-34; (2) Matthew 6:22-23 = Luke 11:34-36; (3) Matthew 6:24 = Luke 16:13; (4) Matthew 6:25-34 = Luke 12:22-

31. But the first pair are very different and should be treated as separate traditions of separate sayings; the third pair are very close (only a one-word difference) and both Matthew and Luke assign it to the same sermon; the second and fourth pairs are fairly close, but exegesis of Luke suggests his settings are topical. The context Matthew establishes should be accepted at face value. Certainly the flow is coherent: having excoriated religious piety that is little more than ostentation, Jesus warns against the opposite sins of greed, materialism, and worry that stem from misplaced and worldly priorities. Instead, he demands unswerving loyalty to kingdom values (vv. 19-24) and uncompromised trust (vv. 25-34).

a. Metaphors for unswerving loyalty to kingdom values (6:19-24)

1) Treasure (6:19-21)

Black (*Aramaic Approach* , pp. 178-79) shows the poetical character of vv. 19-21, v. 19 warning against the wrong way, v. 20 prescribing the right way, and v. 21 rounding it off with a memorable aphorism. "Such rhythm and balance suggest that these verses contain original dominical teaching" (Hill, *Matthew*). The assessment is fair; one wonders, however, why similar structure and rhythm should elsewhere be judged liturgical, catechetical, and inauthentic (see on 5:1-12).

19 The present tense prohibition *me thesaurizete* could well be rendered "Stop storing up treasures" (Turner, *Syntax* , p. 76) rather than "Do not store up"; the time for a

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decisive break has come (similarly at v. 25).

The love of wealth is a great evil (1Tim 6:10), calling forth frequent warnings. For heirs of the kingdom to hoard riches in the last days (James 5:2-3) is particularly shortsighted. Yet as with many of Jesus' prohibitions in this sermon, it would be foolhardy so to absolutize this one that wealth itself becomes an evil (cf. Luke 14:12; John 4:21; 1 Peter 3:3-4; for other statements that cannot properly be absolutized). Elsewhere the Scriptures require a man to provide for his relatives (1Tim 5:8), commend work and provision for the future (Prov 6:6-8), and encourage us to enjoy the good things the Creator has given us (1Tim 4:3-4; 6:17). Jesus is concerned about selfishness in misplaced values. His disciples must not lay up treasure *for themselves* ; they must honestly ask where their heart is (vv. 20-21). This verse does not prohibit "being provident (making sensible provision for the future) but being covetous (like misers who hoard and materialists who always want more)" (Stott, p. 155). But it is folly to put oneself in the former category while acting and thinking in the latter (cf. France, "God and Mammon"). The "treasures on earth" might be clothing that could be attacked by moths. Fashions changed little, and garments could be passed on. They could also deteriorate. "Rust" (*broxis*) refers not only to the corrosion of metals but to the destruction effected by rats, mildew, and the like. Older commentaries often picture a farm being devoured by mice and other vermin. Less corruptible treasures could be stolen: thieves could break in (*dioryssousin* , "dig through," referring to the mud brick walls of most first-century Palestinian homes) and steal.

20-21 By contrast, the treasures in heaven are forever exempt from decay and theft (v. 20; cf. Luke 12:33). The words "treasures in heaven" go back to Jewish literature (M *Peah* 1:1; T Levi 13:5; Pss Sol 9:9). Here it refers to

whatever is of good and eternal significance that comes out of what is done on earth. Doing righteous deeds, suffering for Christ's sake, forgiving one another--all these have the promise of "reward" (see on 5:12; cf. 5:30, 46; 6:6, 15; 2Cor 4:17). Other deeds of kindness also store up treasure in heaven (Matt 10:42; 25:40), including willingness to share (1Tim 6:13-19). In the best MSS the final aphorism (v. 21) reverts to second person singular (cf. vv. 2, 6, 17; see on 5:23). The point is that the things most highly treasured occupy the "heart," the center of the personality, embracing mind, emotions, and will (cf. DNTT, 2:180-84); and thus the most cherished treasure subtly but infallible controls the whole person's direction and values. "If honour is rated the highest good, then ambition must take complete charge of a man; if money then forthwith greed takes over the kingdom; if pleasure, then men will certainly degenerate into sheer self-indulgence" (Calvin). Conversely, those who set their minds on things above (Col 3:1-2), determining to live under kingdom norms, discover at last that their deeds follow them (Rev 14:13).

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2) *Light* (6:22-23)

22-23 "The eye is the lamp of the body" (v. 22) in the sense that through the eye the body finds its way. The eye lets in light, and so the whole body is illuminated. But bad eyes let in no light, and the body is in darkness (v. 23). The "light within you" seems ironic; those with bad eyes, who walk in darkness, think they have light, but this light is in reality darkness. The darkness is all the more terrible for failure to recognize it for what it is (cf. John 9:41). This fairly straightforward description has metaphorical implications. The "eye" can be equivalent to the "heart." The heart set on God so as to hold to his commands (Ps 119:10) is equivalent to the eye fastened on God's law (Ps 119:18, 148; cf. 119:36-37). Similarly Jesus moves from "heart" (v. 21) to "eye" (vv. 22-23). Moreover the text moves between physical description and metaphor by the words chosen for "good" and "bad." *Haplous* ("good," v. 22) and its cognates can mean either "single" (vs. *diplous*, "double," 1Tim 5:17) in the sense of "single, undivided loyalty" (cf. 1 Chronicles 29:

17) or in cognate forms "generous," "liberal" (cf. Rom 12:8; James 1:5). Likewise, *poneros* ("bad," v. 23) can mean "evil" (e.g., Rom 12:9) or in the Jewish idiomatis expression "the evil eye" can refer to miserliness and selfishness (cf. Prov 28:22). Jesus is therefore saying either (1) that the man who "divides his interest and tries to focus on both God and possessions ... has no clear vision, and will live without clear orientation or direction" (Filson)--all interpretation nicely compatible with v. 24; or (2) that the man who is stingy and selfish cannot really see where he is going; he is morally and spiritually blind--an interpretation compatible with vv. 19-21. Either way, the early crossover to metaphor may account for the difficult language of v. 22. At the physical level the "whole body" is just that, a body, of which the eye is the part that provides "light" (cf. R. Gundry, *Soma* [Cambridge: University Press, 1976], pp. 24-25). At the metaphorical level it represents the entire person who is plunged into moral darkness. The "light within

you" is therefore the vision that the eye with divided loyalties provides, or the attitude characterized by selfishness, in both cases it is darkness indeed. This approach, which depends on the OT and Jewish usage, is much to be preferred to the one that goes to Hellenistic literature and interprets "the light within you" in a neoplatonic sense (e.g., H.D. Betz, "Matthew vi.22f and ancient Greek theories of vision," in Best and Wilson, pp. 43-56).

3) *Slavery* (6:24)

24 "Jesus now explains that behind the choice between two treasures (where we lay them up) and two visions (where we fix our eyes) there lies the still more basic choice

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between two masters (whom we are going to serve)" (Stott, p. 158). "Money" renders Greek *mamona* ("mammon"), itself a transliteration of Aramaic *mamona* (in the emphatic state; "wealth," "property"). The root in both Aramaic and Hebrew (*mn*) indicates that in which one has confidence; and the connection with money and wealth, well attested in Jewish literature (e.g., *Peah* 1:1; b *Berakoth* 61b; M *Aboth* 2:7; and not always in a negative sense), is painfully obvious. Here it is personified. Both God and Money are portrayed, not as employers, but as slave owners. A man may work for two employers; but since "single ownership and full time service are of the essence of slavery" (Tasker), he cannot serve two slave owners. Either God is served with a single-eyed devotion, or he is not served at all. Attempts at divided loyalty betray, not partial commitment to discipleship, but deep-seated commitment to idolatry.

b. Uncompromised trust (6:25-34)

1) The principle (6:25)

25 "Therefore," in the light of the alternatives set out (vv. 19-24) and assuming his disciples will make the right choices, Jesus goes on to prohibit worry. KJV's "Take no thought" is deceptive in modern English, for Jesus himself demands that we think even about birds and flowers (vv. 26-30). "Do not worry" can be falsely absolutized by neglecting the limitations the context imposes and the curses on carelessness, apathy, indifference, laziness, and self-indulgence expressed elsewhere (cf. Carson, *Sermon on the Mount* , pp. 82-86; Stott, pp. 165-68). The point here is not to worry about the physical necessities, let alone the luxuries implied in the preceding verses, because such fretting suggests that our entire existence focuses on and is limited to such things. The argument is *a fortiori* ("how much more") but not

(contra Hill, *Matthew*) *a minori ad maius* ("from the lesser to the greater") but the reverse: if God has given us life and a body, both admittedly more important than food and clothing, will he not also give us the latter? Therefore fretting about such things betrays the loss of faith and the perversion of more valuable commitments (cf. Luke 10:41-42; Heb 13:5-6).

2) The examples (6:26-30)

a) Life and food (6:26-27)

26 To worry about food and drink is to have learned nothing from the natural creation. If the created order testifies to God's "eternal power and divine nature" (Rom 1:20), it testifies equally to his providence. The point is not that disciples need not work--birds do not simply wait for God to drop food into their beaks--but that they need not fret.

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Disciples may further strengthen their faith when they remember that God is in a special sense their Father (not the birds' Father), and that they are worth far more than birds ("you" is emphatic). Here the argument is from the lesser to the greater. This argument presupposes a biblical cosmology without which faith makes no sense. God is so sovereign over the universe that even the feeding of a wren falls within his concern. Because he normally does things in regular ways, there are "scientific laws" to be discovered; but the believer with eyes to see simultaneously discovers something about God and his activity (cf. Carson, *Sermon on the Mount* , pp. 87-90)

27 The word *helikia* ("life") can also be rendered "stature" (cf. Luke 19:3), and *pechys* ("hour") means either "cubit" (about eighteen inches) or "age" (Heb 11:11). No combination fits easily; no one would be tempted to think worrying could add eighteen inches to his stature (KJV), and a linear measure (eighteen inches) does not fit easily with "life." This disparity accounts for the diversity of translations. Most likely the linear measure is being used in a metaphorical sense (cf. "add one cubit to his span of life" [RSV]), akin to "passing a milepost" at one's birthday. Worry is more likely to shorten life than prolong it, and ultimately such matters are in God's hands (cf. Luke 12:13-21). To trust him is enough.

b) Body and clothes (6:28-30)

28-30 "Lilies of the field" (v. 28) may be any of the wild flowers so abundant in Galilee, and these "flowers of the field" correspond to "birds of the air." The point is a little different from the first illustration, where birds work but do not worry. The flowers neither toil nor spin (cf. Notes). The point is not that Jesus' disciples may opt for laziness but that God's providence and care

are so rich that he clothes the grass with wild flowers that are neither productive nor enduring (v. 30). Even Solomon, the richest and most extravagant of Israel's monarchs, "in all his splendor" (v. 29) was not arrayed like one of these fields. Small wonder that Jesus gently chastises his disciples as *oligopistoi* ("people of little faith"; cf. 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; and the abstract noun at 17:20). The root of anxiety is unbelief.

3) *Distinctive living* (6:31-32)

31-32 In the light of God's bountiful care ("So"), the questions posed in v. 31 (cf. v. 25) are unanswerable; and the underlying attitudes are thoughtless and an affront to God who knows the needs of his people (cf. v. 8). Worse, they are essentially pagan (v. 32); for pagans "run after" (*epizetousin*, a strengthened form of "seek") these things, not God's kingdom and righteousness (v. 33). Jesus' disciples must live lives qualitatively

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different from those of people who have no trust in God's fatherly care and no fundamental goals beyond material things.

4) The heart of the matter (6:33)

33 In view of vv. 31-32, this verse makes it clear that Jesus' disciples are not simply to *refrain* from the *pursuit* of temporal things as their primary goal in order to differentiate themselves from pagans. Instead, they are to *replace* such pursuits with goals of far greater significance. To seek first the kingdom ("of God" in some MSS) is to desire above all to enter into, submit to, and participate in spreading the news of the saving reign of God, the messianic kingdom already inaugurated by Jesus, and to live so as to store up treasures in heaven in the prospect of the kingdom's consummation. It is to pursue the things already prayed for in the first three petitions of the Lord's Prayer (6:9-10). To seek God's righteousness is not, in this context, to seek justification (contra Filson, McNeile). "Righteousness" must be interpreted as in 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1. It is to pursue righteousness of life in full submission to the will of God, as prescribed by Jesus throughout this discourse (cf. Przybylski, pp. 89-91). Such righteousness will lead to persecution by some (5:10), but others will themselves become disciples and praise the Father in heaven (5:16). Such goals alone are worthy of one's wholehearted allegiance. For any other concern to dominate one's mind is to stoop to pagan fretting. "In the end, just as there are only two kinds of piety, the self-centered and the God-centered, so there are only two kinds of ambition: one can be ambitious either for oneself or for God. There is no third alternative" (Stott, p. 172). Within such a framework of commitment, Jesus' disciples are assured that all the necessary things will be given them by their heavenly Father (see on 5:45; 6:9), who demonstrates his faithfulness by his care even for the birds and his concern even for the grass.

5) Abolishing worry (6:34)

34 In view of God's solemn promise to meet the needs of those committed to his kingdom and righteousness (v. 33), "therefore" do not worry about tomorrow. Today has enough *kakia* ("trouble," NIV; what is evil from man's point of view; once applied to crop damage caused by hail [MM]; and frequently translates Heb. *raah* ["evil," "misfortune," "trouble"] in LXX: Eccl 7:14; 12:1; Amos 3:6) of its own. Worry over tomorrow's misfortunes is nonsensical, because today has enough to occupy our attention and because tomorrow's feared misfortunes may never happen (cf. b *Sanhedrin* 100b; b *Berakoth* 9a). It is almost as if Jesus, aware that his disciples are still unsettled and immature, ends his argument by setting the highest ideals and

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motives aside for a moment and, in a whimsical sally, appeals to common sense. At the same time, he is implicitly teaching that even for his disciples today's grace is sufficient only for today and should not be wasted on tomorrow. If tomorrow does bring new trouble, there will be new grace to meet it.

6. Balance and perfection (7:1-12)

Many argue that these verses have (1) no connection with what precedes, (2) little internal cohesion, and (3) probably find their original context in Luke 6:37-38, 41-42. Only the third assertion is believable. 1. The lack of Greek connectives at vv. 1, 7 is not inherently problematic; similar omissions (e.g., 6:19, 24) do not disturb the flow of thought so much as indicate a new "paragraph" or set off an aphorism. The connection with what precedes is internal. The demand for the superior righteousness of the kingdom, in fulfillment of the OT (5:17-20), has called forth warnings against hypocrisy (6:1-18) and the formulation of kingdom perspectives (6:19-34). But there are other dangers. Demands for perfection can breed judgmentalism (vv. 1-5), while demands for love can cause chronic shortage of discernment (v. 6). 2. Thus the internal connection is in part established by dealing with opposing evils. But such great demands on Jesus' followers must force them to recognize their personal inadequacy and so drive them to prayer (vv. 7-11). The Golden Rule (v. 12) summarizes the body of the sermon (5:17-7:12). 3. The relationship between 7:1-12 and Luke 6:37-38, 41-42 (part of Luke's "sermon") is difficult to assess. After his beatitudes and woes (Luke 6:20-26), Luke adds material (6:27-30) akin to Matthew 5:38-48. He then adds the Golden Rule (Luke 6:31), some material akin to Matthew 5, and then the parallel to Matthew 7:1-5. Thus he omits all of Matthew 6, while Matthew 7:1-5 omits part of what Luke keeps in 6:37-42. One or both of the evangelists have rearranged the order of the material.

Both make such good sense in their own context that it seems impossible to decide in favor of either. Though a saying as aphoristic as the Golden Rule may well have been repeated during the course of several days' teaching, there is no sure way of demonstrating this was or was not the case.

a. The danger of being judgmental (7:1-5)

1) The principle (7:1)

1 The verb *krino* ("judge") has a wide semantic range: "judge" (judicially), "condemn," "discern." It cannot here refer to the law courts, any more than 5:33-37

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forbids judicial oaths. Still less does this verse forbid all judging of any kind, for the moral distinctions drawn in the Sermon on the Mount require that decisive judgments be made. Jesus himself goes on to speak of some people as dogs and pigs (v. 6) and to warn against false prophets (vv. 15-20). Elsewhere he demands that people "make a right judgment" (John 7:24; cf. 1Cor 5:5; Gal 1:8-9; Philippians 3:2; 1John 4:1). All this presupposes that some kinds of "judging" are not only legitimate but mandated. Jesus' demand here is for his disciples not to be judgmental and censorious. The verb *krino* has the same force in Romans 14:10-13 (cf. James 4:11-12). The rigor of the disciples' commitment to God's kingdom and the righteousness demanded of them do not authorize them to adopt a judgmental attitude. Those who "judge" like this will in turn be "judged," not by men (which would be of little consequence), but by God (which fits the solemn tone of the discourse). The disciple who takes it on himself to be the judge of what another does usurps the place of God (Rom 14:10) and therefore becomes answerable to him. The *hina me* ("in order that ... not"; NIV, "or") should therefore be given full telic force: "Do not assume the place of God by deciding you have the right to stand in judgment over all--do not do it, I say, in order to avoid being called to account by the God whose place you usurp" (cf. b *Shabbath* 127b; M *Sotah* 1: 7; b *Baba Metzia* 59b).

2) *The theological justification* (7:2)

2 The strong play on words in Greek suggests that this is a proverbial saying. Formally it is very close to M *Sotah* 1:7; but the use made of it is in each case rather distinctive (cf. Dalman, pp. 223f.). Indeed, precisely because it is a proverb, Jesus himself elsewhere turns it to another use (cf. Mark 4:24). The point is akin to that already established (5:7; 6:12, 14-15): the judgmental person by not being forgiving and loving testifies to his own arrogance and

impenitence, by which he shuts him self out from God's forgiveness (cf. Manson, *Sayings* , p. 56). According to some rabbis, God has two "measures"--mercy and justice (Lev R 29.3). Possibly Jesus used this language, adapting it to his own ends. He who poses as a judge cannot plead ignorance of the law (Rom 2:1; cf. James 3:1); he who insists on unalloyed justice for others is scarcely open to mercy himself (James 2:13; 4:12). The problem returns in 18:23-35; here "the command to *judge not* is not a requirement to be blind, but rather a plea to be generous. Jesus does not tell us to cease to be men (by suspending our critical powers which help to distinguish us from animals) but to renounce the presumptuous ambition to be God (by setting our selves up as judges)" (Stott, p. 177, emphasis his).

3) An example (7:3-5)

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3-5 The *karphos* ("speck of sawdust") could be any bit of foreign matter (v. 3). The *dokos* ("plank" or "log") is obviously colorful hyperbole. Jesus does not say it is wrong to help your brother (for "brother," see on 5:22; Jesus is apparently referring to the community of his disciples) remove the speck of dust in his eye, but it is wrong for a person with a "plank" in his eye to offer help. That is sheer hypocrisy of the second sort (see on 6:2). 2 Samuel 12:1-12 is a dramatic OT example (cf. also Luke 18:9). It will not do to say that Jesus' words in this pericope are "meant to exclude all condemnation of others" (Hill, *Matthew*), for to do that requires not taking v. 5 seriously and excluding what v. 6 says. In the brotherhood of Jesus' disciples, censorious critics are unhelpful. But when a brother in a meek and self-judging spirit (cf. 1Cor 11:31; Gal 6:1) removes the log in his own eye, he still has the responsibility of helping his brother remove his speck (cf. 18:15-20).

b. The danger of being undiscerning (7:6)

6 Though used later to exclude unbaptized persons from the Eucharist (*Didache* 9.5), that is not the purpose of this saying. Nor is it connected with the previous verses by dealing now with persons who, though properly confronted about their "specks," refuse to deal with them, as in 18:12-20 (so Schlatter). Rather, it warns against the converse danger. Disciples exhorted to love their enemies (5:43-47) and not to judge (v. 1) might fail to consider the subtleties of the argument and become undiscerning simpletons. This verse guards against such a possibility. The "pigs" are not only unclean animals but wild and vicious, capable of savage action against a person. "Dogs" must not be thought of as household pets: in the Scriptures they are normally wild, associated with what is unclean, despised (e.g., 1Sam 17:43; 24:14; 1 Kings 14:11; 21:19; 2 Kings 8:13; Job 30:1; Prov 26:11; Eccl 9:4; Isa 66:3; Matt 15:27; Philippians 3:2; Rev 22:15). The two animals serve together as a picture of what is vicious, unclean, and abominable (cf. 2 Peter

2:22). The four lines of v. 6 are an ABBA chiasmus (Turner, *Syntax* , pp. 346-47). The pigs trample the pearls under foot (perhaps out of animal disappointment that they are not morsels of food), and the dogs are so disgusted with "what is sacred" that they turn on the giver. The problem lies in *to hagion* ("what is sacred"). How is this parallel to "pearls," and what reality is envisaged to make the story "work"? 1. Some suggest *to hagion* refers to "holy food" offered in connection with the temple services (cf. Exod 22:31; Lev 22:14; Jer 11:15; Hag 2:12). But this is a strange way to refer to it, and it is not obvious why the dogs would spurn it. 2. Another suggestion is that *to hagion* is a mistranslation of the Aramaic *qedasa* (Heb. *nezem* , "ring", referring to Proverbs 11:22 (cf. Black, *Aramaic Approach* , pp.

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200ff.). But appeals to mistranslation should not be the first line of approach; and here the parallelism of pearls and pigs, pearls obviously being mistaken for food, is destroyed. 3. P.G. Maxwell-Stuart ("Do not give what is holy to the dogs." [Mt 7:6]," ExpT 90 [1978-79]: 341) offers a textual emendation. 4. However, it seems wiser to recognize that, as in 6:22-23, the interpretation of the metaphor is already hinted at in the metaphor itself. "What is sacred" in Matthew is the gospel of the kingdom; so the aphorism forbids proclaiming the gospel to certain persons designated as dogs and pigs. Instead of trampling the gospel under foot, everything must be "sold" in pursuit of it (13:45-46). Verse 6 is not a directive against evangelizing the Gentiles, especially in a book full of various supports for this, not least 28:18-20 (10:5, properly understood, is no exception). "Dogs" and "pigs" cannot refer to all Gentiles but, as Calvin rightly perceived, only to persons of any race who have given clear evidences of rejecting the gospel with vicious scorn and hardened contempt. The disciples are later given a similar lesson (10:14; 15:14), and the postresurrection Christians learned it well (cf. Acts 13:44-51; 18:5-6; 28:17-28; Titus 3:10-11). So when taken together vv. 1-5 and v. 6 become something of a Gospel analogue to the proverb "Do not rebuke a mocker or he will hate you; rebuke a wise man and he will love you" (Prov 9:8).

c. Source and means of power (7:7-11)

7-8 Zahn tries to establish a connection between these verses and the preceding ones by saying that Jesus now teaches that it is best to ask God to remove the speck in the other person's eye. Stott understands vv. 1-11 in terms of relationships: to believers (vv. 1-5), to "pigs" and "dogs" (v. 6), and to God (vv. 7-11). Bonnard best exemplifies those who say there is no connection at all between vv. 7-11 and

the preceding verses. Yet there are in fact deep thematic connections. Schlatter perceives one of them when he remarks that Jesus, having told his disciples the difficulties, now exhorts them to prayer. Moreover one of the most pervasive features of Jesus' teaching on prayer is the assurance it will be heard (cf. H.F. von Campenhausen, "Gebetserhorung in den uberlieferten Jesusworten und in den Reflexion des Johannes," *Kerygma und Dogma* 23 [1977]: 157-71). But such praying is not for selfish ends but always for the glory of God according to kingdom concerns. So here: the Sermon on the Mount lays down the righteousness, sincerity, humility, purity, and love expected of Jesus' followers; and now it assures them such gifts are theirs if sought through prayer. The sermon has begun with acknowledgment of personal bankruptcy (5:3) and has already provided a model prayer (6:9-13). Now (v. 7) in three imperatives (ask, seek, knock) symmetrically repeated (v. 8) and in the present tense to stress the persistence

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and sincerity required (cf. Jer 29:13), Jesus assures his followers that, far from demanding the impossible, he is providing the means for the otherwise impossible. "One may be a truly industrious man, and yet poor in temporal things; but one cannot be a truly praying man, and yet poor in spiritual things" (Broadus). Far too often Christians do not have the marks of richly textured discipleship because they do not ask, or they ask with selfish motives (James 4:2-3). But the best gifts, those advocated by the Sermon on the Mount, are available to "everyone" (v. 8) who persistently asks, seeks, and knocks. Jesus' disciples will pray ("ask") with earnest sincerity ("seek") and active, diligent pursuit of God's way ("knock"). Like a human father, the heavenly Father uses these means to teach his children courtesy, persistence, and diligence. If the child prevails with a thoughtful father, it is because the father has molded the child to his way. If Jacob prevails with God, it is Jacob who is wounded (Gen 32:22-32).

9-11 Another *a fortiori* argument (see on 6:25) is introduced. In Greek both v. 9 and v. 10 begin with *e* ("or"), probably meaning "or to put the matter another way, which of you, etc." No parent would deceive a child asking for bread or fish by giving him a similar looking but inedible stone or a dangerous snake. The point at issue is not merely the parents' willingness to give but their willingness to give good gifts--even though they themselves are evil. Jesus presupposes the sinfulness (v. 11) of human nature (himself exempted; "you," he says, not "we") but implicitly acknowledges that does not mean all human beings are as bad as they could be or utterly evil in all they do. People are evil; they are self-centered, not God-centered. This taints all they do. Nevertheless they can give good gifts to their children. How much more, then, will the heavenly Father, who is pure goodness without alloy, give good gifts to those who ask? Four observations will tie up some loose ends.

1. Lachs ("Textual Observations," pp. 109f.) insists that the "concept that man is evil from birth, born in sin, and similar pronouncements, is a later theological development" and therefore proposes to emend the text of an alleged Semitic original. While it is true that rabbinic literature does not normally portray man as inherently evil, it is false to say that the idea arose only after Jesus, presumably with Paul (cf. Pss 14:1-3; 51; 53:1-3; Eccl 7:20). Jesus regularly assumes the sinfulness of humanity (cf. TDNT, 6:554-55). Therefore the rabbinic parallels to vv. 7-11 are of limited value: they stress the analogy of the caring parent, but not on the supposition that the human parent is evil. 2. The fatherhood-of-God language is reserved for God's relationship with Jesus' disciples (see on 5:45). The blessings promised as a result of these prayers are not the blessings of common grace (cf. 5:45) but of the kingdom. And though we must ask for them, it is not because God must be informed (6:8) but because this is the Father's way

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of training his family.

3. What is fundamentally at stake is man's picture of God. God must not be thought of as a reluctant stranger who can be cajoled or bullied into bestowing his gifts (6:7-8), as a malicious tyrant who takes vicious glee in the tricks he plays (vv. 9-10), or even as an indulgent grandfather who provides everything requested of him. He is the heavenly Father, the God of the kingdom, who graciously and willingly bestows the good gifts of the kingdom in answer to prayer. 4. On the "good gifts" as spiritual gifts (cf. Rom 3:8; 10:15; Heb 9:11; 10:1) and the parallel reference to the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13), see Marshall, *Luke* , pp. 469f.

d. Balance and perfection (7:12)

12 The Golden Rule was not invented by Jesus; it is found in many forms in highly diverse settings. About A.D. 20, Rabbi Hillel, challenged by a Gentile to summarize the law in the short time the Gentile could stand on one leg, reportedly responded, "What is hateful to you, do not do to anyone else. This is the whole law; all the rest is commentary. Go and learn it" (b *Shabbath* 31a). Apparently only Jesus phrased the rule positively. Thus stated it is certainly more telling than its negative counter part, for it speaks against sins of omission as well as sins of commission. The goats in 25:31- 46 would be acquitted under the negative form of the rule, but not under the form attributed to Jesus. The *oun* ("therefore") might refer to vv. 7-11 (i.e., because God gives good gifts, therefore Jesus' disciples should live by this rule as a function of gratitude) or to vv. 1- 6 (i.e., instead of judging others, we should treat them as we ourselves would want to be treated). But more probably it refers to the entire body of the sermon (5:17-7:12), for here there is a second reference to "the Law and the Prophets"; and this appears to

form an envelope with 5:17-20. "Therefore," in the light of all I have taught about the true direction in which the OT law points, obey the Golden Rule; for this is (*estin* ; NIV, "sums up") the Law and the Prophets (cf. Rom 13:9). This way of putting it provides a powerful yet flexible maxim that helps us decide moral issues in a thousand cases without the need for multiplied case law. The rule is not arbitrary, without rational support, as in radical humanism; in Jesus' mind its rationale ("for") lies in its connection with revealed truth recorded in "the Law and the Prophets." The rule embraces quantity ("in everything") and quality (*houtos kai* , "[do] even so"). And in the context of fulfilling the Scriptures, the rule provides a handy summary of the righteousness to be displayed in the kingdom. Above all this verse is not to be understood as a utilitarian maxim like "Honesty pays." We are to do to others what we would have them do to us, not just because we expect the same in return, but because such conduct is the goal of the Law and the

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Prophets. The verb *estin* (NIV, "sums up") might properly be translated "fulfill," as in Acts 2:16. In the deepest sense, therefore, the rule is the Law and the Prophets in the same way the kingdom is the fulfillment of all that the Law and the Prophets foretold.

7. Conclusion: call to decision and commitment (7:13-27)

a. Two ways (7:13-14)

The Sermon on the Mount ends with four warnings, each offering paired contrasts: two ways (vv. 13-14), two trees (vv. 15-20), two claims (vv. 21-23), and two builders (vv. 24-27). They focus on eschatological judgment and so make it plain that the theme is still the kingdom of heaven. But if some will not enter it (vv. 13-14, 21-23), the sole basis for such a tragedy is present response to Jesus' words. At the close of the sermon, the messianic claim is implicit and only thinly veiled.

13-14 "Two ways" language is common in Jewish literature, both canonical and extracanonical (e.g., Deut 30:19; Ps 1; Jer 21:8; Ecclesiasticus 21:11-14; 2Esd 7:6-14; T Asher 1:3, 5; 1QS 3:20ff.). The general picture is clear enough: there are two gates, two roads, two crowds, two destinations. The "narrow" gate (KJV's "strait" is from Lat. *strictum*, "narrow"; nothing is said about gate or road being "straight," despite the modern phrase "straight and narrow") is clearly restrictive and does not permit entrance to what Jesus prohibits. The "wide" gate seems far more inviting. The "broad" road (not "easy," RSV) is spacious and accommodates the crowd and their baggage; the other road is "narrow"--but two different words are used: *stene* ("narrow," v. 13) and *tethlimmene* (v. 14), the latter being cognate with *thlipsis* ("tribulation"), which almost always refers to persecution. So this

text says that the way of discipleship is "narrow," restricting, because it is the way of persecution and opposition--a major theme in Matthew (see on 5:10-12, 44; 10:16-39; 11:11-12; 24:4-13; cf. esp. A.J. Mattill, Jr., "The Way of Tribulation," JBL 98 [1979]: 531-46). Compare Acts 14:22: "We must go through many hardships [*dia pollon thlipseon* , `through much persecution'] to enter the kingdom of God." But the two roads are not ends in themselves. The narrow road leads to life, i.e., to the consummated kingdom (cf. vv. 21-23; John's Gospel); but the broad road leads to *apoleia* ("destruction")-- "definitive destruction, not merely in the sense of the extinction of physical existence, but rather of an eternal plunge into Hades and a hopeless destiny of death" (A. Opeke, TDNT, 1:396); cf. 25:34, 46; John 17:12; Rom 9:22, Philippians 1:28; 3:19, 1Tim 6:9, Heb 10:39, 2 Peter 2:1, 3; 3:16; Rev 17:8, 11). (On the relative numbers ["many ... few"], see 22:14; Luke 13:22-30; Rev 7:9.) Democratic decisions do not determine truth and righteousness in the kingdom. That

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there are only two ways is the inevitable result of the fact that the one that leads to life is exclusively by revelation. But if truth in such matters must not be sought by appealing to majority opinion (Exod 23:2), neither can it be found by each person doing what is right in his own eyes (Prov 14:12; cf. Judg 21:25). God must be true and every man a liar (Rom 3:4). There remains an important metaphorical difficulty. Granted the correctness of the text (cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, p. 19), are we to think of roads heading up to the gate, so that once through the gate the traveler has arrived at his destination, whether destruction or the consummated kingdom? Or is the gate something entered *in this life*, with the roads, broad and narrow, stretching out before the pilgrim? Tasker and Jeremias (TDNT, 6:922-23) adopt the former alternative, Jeremias appealing to Luke 13:23-24, where a door, not a road, is mentioned. He argues that Jesus originally said something about entering a door or gate and that Matthew's form is a popular *hysteronproteron* ("later-earlier") way of saying things with the real order reversed (like "thunder and lightning"). Not only is Luke 13:23-24 so far removed from the language of Matthew 7:13-14 (even "door," not "gate") that one may question whether the two spring from the same saying, but even in Luke entrance through the door is not merely eschatological since there comes a time when the door is shut and no more may enter. This suggests that it is the shutting of the door that eliminates further opportunity for entrance, while the entrance itself takes place now--a form of realized eschatology. This conceptual parallel with Matthew, plus the order of gate-road, suggests, not that the gate marks entrance into the consummated kingdom, nor that the gate and road are a hendiadys (Ridderbos), but that entrance through the gate into the narrow way of persecution begins now but issues in the consummated kingdom at the other end of that way (Grosheide, Hendriksen). The narrow gate is not thereby rendered superfluous; instead, it confirms that even the beginning of this path to life is restrictive. Here is no funnel that progressively narrows down but a decisive break. This exegesis entails two conclusions.

1. Jesus is not encouraging committed disciples, "Christians," to press on along the narrow way and be rewarded in the end. He is rather commanding his disciples to enter the way marked by persecution and rewarded in the end. Jesus' "disciples" (see on 5:

1) are therefore not full-fledged Christians in the post-Pentecost sense. Jesus is dealing with people more or less committed to him but who have not yet really entered on the "Christian" way. How could they have entered on it? Only now was it being introduced into the stream of redemptive history as the fulfillment of what had come before. That Matthew should preserve such fine distinctions speaks well of his ability to follow the development of salvation history and thus avoid historical anachronism. Theologian though he is, Matthew is a responsible historian.

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2. Implicitly, entrance into the kingdom--or, to preserve the language Matthew uses here but not always elsewhere (e.g., 12:28), entrance into the way to the kingdom-- begins here and now in coming through the small gate, onto the narrow way of persecution, and under the authority of Jesus Christ (cf. vv. 21, 26).

b. Two trees (7:15-20)

Much recent debate has focused attention on the identity of these false prophets in the Matthean church. The argument turns in large part on identifying v. 15 as Matthew's creation and on attempting to discuss the tradition history of vv. 16-20; 12: 33-35; Luke 6:43-45. The same evidence is better interpreted to support the thesis that Jesus in his itinerant preaching uses similar metaphors in a wide variety of ways. Verse 15 has no synoptic parallel; but the thought is certainly not foreign to Jesus' other warnings (e.g., 24:4-5, 11, 23-24; Mark 13:22), and Matthew's language is small evidence for inauthenticity (cf. Introduction, section 2). The very diversity of the identifications--the false prophets are Zealots, Gnostics, scribes, antinomians, anti- Paulinists (for a recent survey, cf. D. Hill, "False Prophets and Charismatics: Structure and Interpretation in Matthew 7, 15-23," *Biblica* 57 [1976]: 327-48)--argues that Jesus gave a warning with rather broad limits susceptible to diverse applications. Hill himself sees Pharisees of the A.D. 80 period in vv. 15-20 (Were rabbis of A.D. 80 ever called Pharisees?) and Charismatics in vv. 21-23. E. Cothenet ("Les prophetes chretiens dans l'Evangile selon Saint Matthieu," Didier, pp. 281-308) thinks Jesus in vv. 15-23 is condemning Zealots, but Matthew reapplies his words to condemn antinomians. And Paul S. Minear ("False Prophecy and Hypocrisy in the Gospel of Matthew," Gniska, *Neues Testament* , pp. 76-93) criticizes theories that center on antinomians and Pharisees and understands the pericope to warn against hypocrisy and false prophecy entirely within the

Christian community. There is nothing intrinsically unlikely about the notion that Jesus warned against false prophets, provided he foresaw the continued existence of his newly formed community for a sustained period. He was doubtless steeped in the OT reports of earlier false prophets (Jer 6:13-15; 8:8-12; Ezek 13; 22:27; Zeph 3:4). Certainly the first Christians faced the false prophets (cf. v. 15) Jesus had predicted (Acts 20:29; 2Cor 11:11-15; 2 Peter 2:1-3, 17-22; cf. 1John 2:18, 22; 4:1-6). In view of Matthew's care in preserving historical distinctions (see on 7:13-14), there is little reason to doubt that he is here dealing with the teaching of the historical Jesus. Of course this presupposes that Jesus saw himself as true prophet (cf. 21:11, 46).

15 Warnings against false prophets are necessarily based on the conviction that not all prophets are true, that truth can be violated, and that the gospel's enemies usually

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conceal their hostility and try to pass themselves off as fellow believers. At first glance they use orthodox language, show biblical piety, and are indistinguishable from true prophets (cf. 10:41). Thus it is vital to know how to distinguish sheep from wolves in sheep's clothing. Jesus does not explicitly say who will have the discernment to protect the community but implies that the community itself, by whatever agency, must somehow protect itself from the wolves. Neither the damage these false prophets do nor their brand of false teaching is stated, but the flow of the Sermon on the Mount as well as its OT background suggest that they neither acknowledge nor teach the narrow way to life subject to persecution (vv. 13-14; cf. Jer 8:11; Ezek 13, where prophets cry "Peace!" when there is no peace). They have never really come under kingdom authority (vv. 21-23); and since the only alternative to life is destruction (vv. 13-14), they imperil their followers.

16-20 From a distance the little black berries on the buckthorn could be mistaken for grapes, and the flowers on certain thistles might deceive one into thinking figs were growing (v. 16). But no one would be long deceived. So with people! One's "fruit"--not just what one does, but all one says and does--will ultimately reveal what one is (cf. James 3:12). The Semitic way of expression (i.e., both positive and negative--viz., every good tree bears good fruit, no good tree bears bad fruit, etc.) makes the test certain, but not necessarily easy or quick. Living according to kingdom norms can be feigned for a time; but what one is will eventually reveal itself in what one does. However guarded one's words, they will finally betray him (cf. 12:33-37; Luke 6:45). Ultimately false prophets tear down faith (2Tim 2:18) and promote divisiveness, bitterness (e.g., 1Tim 6:4-5; 2Tim 2:23), and various kinds of ungodliness (2Tim 2:16). Meek discernment and understanding the dire consequences of the false prophets' teachings are needed. But at the same time censoriousness over minutiae must be avoided. The common wording between 3:10 (spoken by the Baptist) and 7:19 may suggest that v.

19 was proverbial or that during the time Jesus and the Baptist were both ministering, various expressions became standard (cf. 3:2; 4:17). Verse 19 is an important example of this, for here we have independent evidence that Jesus preached in this vein (cf. Mark 1:15) so that there is no need to suppose Matthew has transferred a saying of the Baptist to the lips of Jesus.

c. Two claims (7:21-23)

21-23 If vv. 15-20 deal with false prophets, vv. 21-23 deal with false followers. Perhaps some became false because of the false prophets. Their cry of "Lord, Lord" (v. 21) reflects fervency. In Jesus' day it is doubtful whether "Lord" when used to address

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him meant more than "teacher" or "sir." But in the postresurrection period, it becomes an appellation of worship and a confession of Jesus' deity. Therefore some suspect an anachronism here. Two factors support authenticity: (1) the parallel in Luke 6:46 (cf. also John 13:12-16); (2) the fact that throughout Jesus' ministry he referred to himself in relatively veiled categories whose full significance could only be grasped after the Resurrection. The latter point is central to understanding the "Son of Man" title (see on 8:20), recurs in various forms throughout all the Gospels, and is especially focal in John (cf. Carson, "Christological Ambiguities"; id., "Understanding Misunderstandings in the Fourth Gospel," *Tyndale Bulletin* [1982]: 59-91). On the background of *kyrios* ("Lord") as a christological title, see Fitzmyer, *Wandering Aramaen*, pp. 115-32. Here Jesus' point is made during his ministry, if at that time his disciples understood "Lord" to mean "teacher." But implicitly Jesus is claiming more, since his "name" becomes the focus of kingdom activity; and he alone decrees who does or does not enter the kingdom (vv. 22-23). Thus the warning and rebuke would take on added force when early Christians read the passage from their postresurrection perspective. Indeed, the tables may be turned. Far from providing evidence that virtually every use of *kyrios* ("Lord") in this Gospel is anachronistic because it presupposes a high christology (e.g., Kingsbury, *Matthew*), these verses suggest that Matthew is painfully aware that the title may mean nothing. This explains, for instance, the deep irony of Peter's "Never, Lord" (16:22). Jesus himself is preparing his followers to put the deepest content in the title. For finally obedience, not titles, is decisive. The determinative factor regarding who enters the kingdom is obedience to the Father's will (v. 19; cf. 12:50). This is the first use of "my Father" in Matthew (cf. Luke 2:49; John 2:16); as such it may support the truth, taught throughout the sermon, that Jesus alone claims to be the authoritative Revealer of his Father's will (v. 21). It quite misses the point to say that the Father's will is simply the OT law mildly touched up by Jesus, and that therefore the Matthean church "seems to have been unaware of or uninfluenced by Pauline Christianity" (Hill, *Matthew*), for: 1. If the

preceding exegesis of the Sermon on the Mount is correct, Matthew is not saying that Jesus is simply taking over the law but that Jesus *fulfills* the law and thus determines the nature of its continuity. 2. Within this framework Matthew presents Jesus as standing at a different (i.e., earlier) point in salvation-history than any church in Matthew's day, for Jesus is the one who brings about the new dispensation. 3. Paul's alleged antinomian tendencies are implicitly exaggerated by Hill's reconstruction, for it is difficult to think of one thing in the sermon Paul does not say in other words. The differences between Matthew and Paul--and there are major ones-- have more to do with differences in interest and in their relative place in the stream of

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redemptive history. Moreover, Matthew, as we shall see, strongly stresses grace; therefore it is legitimate to wonder whether he is presenting obedience to the will of the Father as the ground or as the requirement for entrance to the kingdom. Paul would deny only the former and insist on the latter no less than Matthew would. "That day" is the Day of Judgment (cf. Mal 3:17-18; 1 Enoch 45:3; cf. Matt 25:31-46; Luke 10:12; 2Thess 1:7-10; 2Tim 1:12; 4:8; Rev 16:14). The false claimants have prophesied in Jesus' name and by that name exorcised demons and performed miracles. There is no reason to judge their claims false; their claims are not false but insufficient. Significantly the miracles Jesus specifies were all done by his disciples during his ministry (cf. 10:1-4): he does not mention a later gift, such as tongues. Verse 23 presupposes an implicit christology of the highest order. Jesus himself not only decides who enters the kingdom on the last day but also who will be banished from his presence. That he never knew these false claimants strikes a common biblical note, viz., how close to spiritual reality one may come while knowing nothing of its fundamental reality (e.g., Balaam; Judas Iscariot; Mark 9:38-39; 1Cor 13:2; Heb 3:14; 1John 2:19). "But not everyone who speaks in a spirit is a prophet, except he have the behavior of the Lord" (*Didache* 11.8). Two final observations can be made. First, although "I have nothing to do with you" is the mildest of rabbinic bans (SBK, 4:293), the words used here are clearly final and eschatological in a solemn context of "that day" and entrance into the kingdom. Second, "Away from me, you evildoers" is quoted from Psalm 6:8 (cf. Luke 13:27). In the psalm the sufferer, vindicated by Yahweh, tells the evildoers to depart. Again it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Jesus himself links the authority of the messianic King with the righteous Sufferer, however veiled the allusion may be (see on 3:17).

d. Two builders (7:24-27)

24-27 Luke's sermon ends on the same note (Luke 6:47-49). Probably the evangelists adapted the parable to the situation of their readers. Verses 21-23 contrast "saying" and "doing"; these verses contrast "hearing" and "doing" (Stott, p. 208), not unlike James 1:22-25; 2:14-20 (cf. Ezek 33:31-32). Moreover the will of the Father (v. 21) becomes definitive in what Jesus calls "these words of mine" (v. 24): *his* teaching is definitive (see on 5:17-20; 28:18-20). In the light of the radical choice of vv. 21-23, "therefore" (v. 24) the two positions can be likened to two builders and their houses. Each house looks secure in good weather. But Palestine is known for torrential rains that can turn dry wadis into raging torrents. Only storms reveal the quality of the work of the two builders. The thought reminds us of the parable of the sower in which the seed sown on rocky ground lasts only a short time, until "trouble or persecution comes because of the word" (13:21).

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The greatest storm is eschatological (cf. Isa 28:16-17; Ezek 13:10-13; cf. Prov 12:7). But Jesus' words about the two houses need not be thus restricted. The point is that the wise man (a repeated term in Matthew; cf. 10:16; 24:45; 25:2, 4, 8-9) builds to withstand anything. What wisdom (*phronimos* ; the term is absent from Mark and occurs twice in Luke [12:42; 16:8]) consists of is clear. A wise person represents those who put Jesus' words into practice; they too are building to withstand anything. Those who pretend to have faith, who have a merely intellectual commitment, or who enjoy Jesus in small doses are foolish builders. When the storms of life come, their structures fool no one, above all not God (cf. Ezek 13:10-16). The sermon ends with what has been implicit throughout it--the demand for radical submission to the exclusive lordship of Jesus, who fulfills the Law and the Prophets and warns the disobedient that the alternative to total obedience, true righteousness, and life in the kingdom is rebellion, self-centeredness, and eternal damnation.

8. Transitional conclusion: Jesus' authority (7:28-29)

28-29 This is the first of the five formulaic conclusions that terminate the discourses in this Gospel. All five begin with *kai egeneto* (lit., "and it happened") plus a finite verb (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1), a construction common in the LXX (classical Greek preferred *egeneto* plus the infinitive; cf. Zerwick, par. 388; Beyer, pp. 41-60). The only other occurrence in Matthew is of the rather different "Hebrew" construction *kai egeneto ... kai* (lit., "and it happened ... and") plus finite verb, which appears once (9:10). Matthew's formula is therefore a self-conscious stylistic device that establishes a structural turning point. (It is not necessary to adopt Bacon's theory of parallelism to the Five Books of Moses; cf. Introduction, section 14.) Moreover, in each case the conclusion is transitional and prepares for

the next section. Here (as we shall see below) mention of Jesus' authority leads into his authority in other spheres (8:1-17). In 11:1 Jesus' activity sets the scene for John the Baptist's question (11:2-3). And 13:53 anticipates rejection of Jesus in his home town, while 19:1-2 points forward to his Judean ministry with new crowds and renewed controversies. Finally, 26:1-5 looks to the Cross, now looming very near. The crowds--probably a larger group than his disciples--again pressing in on him (see on 5:1-2), are amazed (v. 28). Because this is the only conclusion to a discourse that mentions the crowds' amazement, Hill (*Matthew*) suggests that Matthew is returning to Mark 1:22 (Luke 4:32) as his source. This is very tenuous: (1) a closer Matthean parallel is 13:54; (2) the next pericope in Matthew (8:1-4) is paralleled in Mark by 1: 40-45, too far on for us to believe Matthew has "returned to his source" at 1:22. The word *didache* ("teaching," v. 29) can refer to both content and manner (see also

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on 3:1); and no doubt the crowds were astonished at both. Their astonishment says nothing about their own heart commitment. The cause of their astonishment was Jesus' *exousia* ("authority"). The term embraces power as well as authority, and the theme becomes central (cf. 8:9; 9:6, 8; 10:1; 21:23-24, 27; 28:18). In his authority Jesus differs from the "teachers of the law" (see on 2:4). Many of them limited their teaching to the authorities they cited, and a great part of their training centered on memorizing the received traditions. They spoke by the authority of others; Jesus spoke with his own authority. Yet many teachers of the law did indeed offer new rulings and interpretations; so some have tried to interpret vv. 28-29 along other lines. Daube (pp. 205-16), in arguing that Jesus' lack of official rabbinic authority was an early issue in his ministry, says that some of the crowds' response in Galilee was because they did not often hear ordained rabbis so far north. Sigal ("Halakah"), dating the sources a little differently, insists (probably rightly) that there was no official ordination of rabbis till after Jesus' death. He argues that Jesus himself was not essentially different in his authority from other proto-rabbis. Both these instructions miss the central point, which transcends Halakic applications of the law, the formulas used, and the latitude of interpretation permitted. The central point is this: Jesus' entire approach in the Sermon on the Mount is not only ethical but messianic--i.e., christological and eschatological. Jesus is not an ordinary prophet who says, "Thus says the Lord!" Rather, he speaks in the first person and claims that his teaching fulfills the OT; that he determines who enters the messianic kingdom; that as the Divine Judge he pronounces banishment; that the true heirs of the kingdom would be persecuted for their allegiance to him; and that he alone fully knows the will of his Father. It is methodologically indefensible for Sigal to complain that all such themes are later Christian additions and therefore to focus exclusively on points of Halakic interpretation. Jesus' authority is unique (see on 5:21-48), and the crowds recognized it even if they did not always understand it. This same authority is now to be revealed in powerful, liberating miracles, signs of the kingdom's advance (chs. 8-9; cf. 11:2-5).

III. The Kingdom Extended Under Jesus' Authority (8:1-11:1)

A. Narrative (8:1-10:4)

1. Healing miracles (8:1-17)

a. A leper (8:1-4)

Matthew's arrangement of the pericopes in chapters 8-9 is demonstrably topical, not

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chronological. All these pericopes except 8:5-13, 18-22; 9:32-34 are paralleled in Mark, but not in the same order, and these three are paralleled in Luke. Mark 1:40-2: 22 appears to provide the basic framework with numerous exceptions. The events in Matthew 8:18-22 originally occurred not only after the Sermon on the Mount but apparently after the "day of parables" (ch. 13; cf. Luke 8:22-56). On the other hand, 8: 2-4; 8:14-17; 9:2-13 almost certainly took place before the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mark 1:29-34, 40-45, Luke 4:38-41; Hendriksen). Matthew does not purport to follow anything other than a topical arrangement, and most of his "time" indicators are very loose. This does not mean that Matthew's arrangement is entirely haphazard but that it is governed by themes. Linkage from pericope to pericope is provided by ideas, catchwords, dominant motifs (cf. K. Gatzweiler, "Les recits de miracles dans l'Evangile selon saint Matthieu," in Didier, pp. 209-20). However, it does not follow that all the outlines suggested by various scholars to explain this topical design are equally convincing. Klostermann, for instance, notes the central place of the ten plagues in Jewish thought (e.g., *Pirke Aboth* 5:5, 8) and suggests that the ten miracles in these chapters are planned to picture Jesus as the new Moses or the church as a new Exodus (cf. Grundmann; Davies, *Setting* , pp. 86-93). But this is not convincing: Matthew lays no stress on the number ten, his miracles are not individually parallel to the plagues, and his main themes run on other lines. J.D. Kingsbury ("Observations on the Miracle Chapters of Matthew 8-9," CBQ 40 [1978]: 559-73) ably discusses and rejects outlines proposed by Burger, Schniewind, Thompson, and others, and opts for a modification of Burger's fourfold division: (1) 8:1- 17 treats christology; (2) 8:18-34 concerns discipleship, (3) 9:1-17 focuses on questions pertaining to the separation of Jesus and his followers from Israel; (4) 9:18-34 centers on faith; and over all the "Son of God" christology predominates. But it is hard to avoid the feeling that this outline, like the others, is too simplistic. Christology extends beyond 8:1-17; a new title appears in 8:20 and reappears in 9:6; and Jesus' godlike authority to forgive sins does not appear till chapter 9. Why

discipleship should be restricted to 8:18-34 when Matthew is called in 9:9-13 and the distinctive habits of Jesus' disciples are discussed in 9:14-17 is unclear. The distinctions between Jesus' followers and racial Israel can scarcely be said to await 9:1-17 in the light of 8:10, 28-

34. Faith, far from awaiting the fourth division, is already central in 8:5-13. And we have already seen that Kingsbury tends to emphasize the Son-of-God theme while minimizing other equally strong christological emphases (see on 3:17). These chapters cannot legitimately be broken down so simplistically. Though Matthew's pericopes cohere nicely, he intertwines his themes, keeping several going at once like a literary juggler. Thus these chapters are best approached inductively; and one can trace emphases on faith, discipleship, the Gentile mission, a diverse

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christological pattern, and more. At the same time these chapters prove that Jesus, whose mission in part was to preach, teach, and heal (4:23; 9:35), fulfilled the whole of it. Matthew has shown Jesus preaching the gospel of the kingdom (4:17, 23) and teaching (chs. 5-7). Now he records some examples of his healing ministry. The first miracle, the healing of a leper, is much shorter in Matthew (vv. 1-4) than in Mark (1:40-45). The omission of Mark 1:41a, 45 and several other bits prompts some to think Matthew is here independent of Mark (Lohmeyer, Schlatter), others to think oral tradition is still having its influence (Bonnard, Hill), still others to offer some theological explanation, e.g. that Matthew suppressed any reference to Jesus' compassion because it did not fit the image the Matthean church members had formed of Christ (e.g., Leopold Sabourin, *L'Evangile selon Saint Matthieu et ses principaux paralleles* [Rome: BIP, 1978], in loc.; cf. Hull, pp. 133f.). But when Matthew follows Mark, he condenses controversy stories by about 20 percent, stories that prove Jesus is the Christ by about 10 percent, actual sayings of Jesus scarcely at all, and miracle stories by about 50 percent (cf. Schweizer). Matthew, though allusive, is a highly disciplined writer, rigorously eliminating everything unrelated to his immediate concerns. So we must take it as a rule of thumb that Matthew's theology cannot be accurately discovered by studying what he omits--which cannot show more than what is not his immediate concern, and even then some of his omissions are purely stylistic-- but primarily by what he includes. This is especially significant in the miracles where Matthew leaves out so much. In the leper's healing, Sabourin's suggestion is especially implausible since Matthew stresses elsewhere Jesus' compassion and draws theological meaning from it (9:35-38).

1 Jesus came down out of the hills (see on 5:1), where the Sermon on the Mount had been delivered; and still the great crowds (4:23-25; 7:28-29)

pursued him.

2-3 The introductory *kai idou* (lit., "and behold"; also in Luke, absent from Mark, untranslated in NIV) does not require that this healing immediately follow the sermon. In Matthew *kai idou* has a broad range, sometimes serving as a loose connective, sometimes introducing a startling thought or event, and sometimes, as here, marking the beginning of a new pericope. Whether NT leprosy was actual leprosy ("Hansen's disease"; cf. DNTT, 2:463-66) or a broader category of skin ailments including leprosy is uncertain. But the Jews abhorred it, not only because of the illness itself, but because it rendered the sufferer and all with whom he came in direct contact ceremonially unclean. To be a leper was interpreted as being cursed by God (cf. Num 12:10, 12; Job 18:13). Healings were rare (cf. Num 12:10-15; 2 Kings 5:9-14) and considered as difficult as raising the dead (2 Kings 5:7, 14; cf. SBK, 4:745ff.). In the Messianic Age there would be no leprosy (cf. 11:5).

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The man *prosekynei* ("knelt") before Jesus, but the verb can also mean "worshiped." Clearly the former is meant in this historical setting. Yet as with the title "Lord" (see on 7:22-23), Christian readers of Matthew could not help concluding that this leper spoke and acted better than he knew. "If you are willing" reflects the leper's great faith, prompted by Jesus' healing activity throughout the district (4:24): he had no question about Jesus' healing power but feared only that he would be passed by. In affirming his willingness to heal, Jesus proved that his will is decisive. He already had the authority and power and only needed to decide and act. J.D. Kingsbury ("Retelling the `Old, Old Story,'" *Currents in Theology and Missions* 4 [1976]: 346) suggests that "reached out his hand" symbolizes the exercise of authority (cf. Exod 7:5; 14:21; 15:6; 1 Kings 8:42); but Matthew's use of the same Greek expression elsewhere (12:13 [bis], 49; 14:31; 26:51) shows that Kingsbury's interpretation is fanciful. More probably Jesus had to reach to touch the leper because the leper did not dare come close to him. By touching an unclean leper, Jesus would become ceremonially defiled himself (cf. Lev 13-14). But at Jesus' touch nothing remains defiled. Far from becoming unclean, Jesus makes the unclean clean. Both Jesus' word and touch (8:15; 9:20-21, 29; 14:36) are effective, possibly implying that authority is vested in his message as well as his person.

4 Despite Held's view (Bornkamm, *Tradition* , p. 256), this verse is not the "entire goal of this story." That is reductionistic and ignores the intertwined themes (cf. comments on 8:1-4; Heil, "Healing Miracles," p. 280, n. 25). While prohibitions against telling of cures and exorcisms are more common in Mark than Matthew, they are not unknown in the latter (8:4; 9:30; 12:16; cf. 16:20; 17:9). They have nothing to do with the so- called messianic secret proposed by Wrede and defended by Bultmann (as Hill rightly holds). Nor does this particular prohibition enjoin silence only till the cured leper has been to Jerusalem to be cleared by the priest (Lenski, Barnes). The synoptic

parallels (Mark 1:45; Luke 5:15) as well as other similar occurrences in Matthew demonstrate that these commands to be silent have other functions--to show that Jesus is not presenting himself as a mere wonder worker (Stonehouse, *Witness of Matthew* , p. 62; Maier) who can be pressured into messiahship by crowds whose messianic views are materialistic and political. Jesus' authority derives from God alone, not the acclaim of men (Bonnard); he came to die, not to trounce the Romans. The people who disobeyed Jesus' injunctions to silence only made his mission more difficult. Jesus commanded the cured man to follow the Mosaic prescriptions for lepers who claimed healing (cf. Lev 14). This, he said, was *eis martyrion autois* ("as a testimony to them"). Much debate surrounds *autois* . Is the testimony positive, "for them" (Trilling, pp. 128f.), as proof of the healing, or negative, "against them" (Hummel, pp. 81f.), as a

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sort of denunciation of their unbelief? Such conflicting categories are not helpful. Of the other places where the Synoptics use *eis martyrion* ("for a witness," 10:18; 24:14; Mark 1:44; 6:11; 13:9; Luke 5:14; 9:5; 21:13), only two require "witness against" (contra Frankmolle, p. 120, n. 193, who insists 10:18 and 24:14 are also negative). Most of the rest are "neutral" and imply division around the "witness" presented. Better progress can be made by asking why, in this setting, Jesus commands obedience. It cannot be simply to prove that Jesus remains faithful to the law (Calvin) and so encourages Matthew's Jewish Christians to be similarly faithful (Hill, Schniewind, Schweizer). Formally speaking, Jesus has already transcended the law by touching the leper without being defiled, a confirmation of our exegesis of 5:17-20. Furthermore, if around A.D. 85 (when Hill thinks the first Gospel was written) Matthew were simply trying to get his community to adhere (unlike Pauline communities) to the details of OT law, he chose a singularly ill-suited story to make his point, because by that date the destruction of the temple had effectively abolished priests and offerings. It is far easier to deduce from the setting that this material is authentic. In one sense Jesus does submit to the law. He puts himself under its ordinances. But the result is startling: the law achieves new relevance by pointing to Jesus. In conforming to the law, the cured leper becomes the occasion for the law to confirm Jesus' authority as the healer who needs but to will the deed for it to be done. Thus the supreme function of the "gift" Moses commanded is not as a guilt offering (Lev 14:10-18) but as a witness to men concerning Jesus. In this context "to them" is relatively incidental: it might refer to the priests or the people, but in either case it points to Jesus Christ (see on 5:17-20).

b. The centurion's servant (8:5-13)

If this story (cf. Luke 7:1-10) comes from Q, then at least in this instance Q

contains more than short sayings of Jesus; or, better, this is evidence against a unitary Q. It is uncertain whether this account is the same as the one in John 4:46-53. The many differences argue against this, though admittedly some of these are overemphasized. In John, Jesus rebukes the centurion and the onlookers for their love of signs; but though there is no mention of that here, Matthew treats that theme elsewhere (12:38-39; 16:1-

4). Most modern scholars, unlike those of earlier generations, simply assume that there is but one incident. However, the matter is ably discussed by Edward F. Siegman, "St. John's Use of Synoptic Material," CBQ 30 (1968): 182-98. (On the distinctive theological emphases of Matthew and Luke, cf. R.P. Martin, "The Pericope of the Healing of the `Centurion's' Servant/Son [Matt 8:5-13 par. Luke 7:1-10]: Some Exegetical Notes," *Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, ed. R.A. Guelich [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978], pp. 14-22.

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Form critics find the purpose of the story in the dialogue to which the miracle leads and call it a "pronouncement story" or "apophthegm" rather than a "miracle story." One wonders why it can't be both (cf. Stephen H. Travis, "Form Criticism," Marshall, *NT Interpretation* , esp. pp. 157-60). The chief difference, apart from theological emphases, between vv. 5-13 and Luke 7:1-10 is the use of intermediaries in the latter. Probably Matthew, following his tendency to condense, makes no mention of the servants in order to lay the greater emphasis on faith according to the principle *qui facit per alium facit per se* ("he who acts by another acts himself")--a principle the centurion's argument implies (vv. 8-9).

5 This is Matthew's second mention of Capernaum (cf. 4:13). In Jesus' day it was an important garrison town. No Roman legions were posted in Palestine, but there were auxiliaries under Herod Antipas, who had the right to levy troops. These were non- Jews, probably recruited from outside Galilee, perhaps from Lebanon and Syria. Centurions were the military backbone throughout the empire, maintaining discipline and executing orders. Luke stresses this centurion's Jewish sympathies and his humility, Matthew his faith and race (vv. 10-11). Indeed, one reason Matthew says nothing of the intermediaries may be because they were Jews, and he does not want to blur the racial distinction.

6-7 On "Lord," see on 7:21-23. The word *pais* (v. 6) can mean "servant" or "son." Luke's word (*doulos*) means "servant," and many (e.g., Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition* , p. 38, n. 4) insist Matthews *pais* means son. But fair examination of NT usage (cf. France, *Exegesis*, p. 256) reveals that only one of twenty-four NT occurrences requires "son," viz., John 4:51. This further supports the view that John 4 records a different healing on a separate occasion. Conceivably it was the earlier healing of an official's son (John 4) that strengthened the

centurion's faith in this instance. Though paralysis coupled with severe pain is attested elsewhere (e.g., 1Macc 9:55-56), the nature of the servant's malady is unknown. Derrett's psychosomatic speculations (*NT Studies* , 1: 156-57, 166-68) are fanciful. Jewish rabbis, like ministers today, were often invited to pray for the sick (cf. SBK, 1:475); but the parallels are not close, for the centurion is implicitly asking for healing, not prayers. Many (Zahn; Klostermann; Turner [*Insights* , pp. 50f.]; Held [Bornkamm, *Tradition* , p. 194]) interpret Jesus' response (v. 7) as a question: "Shall I [*ego* , emphatic; i.e., I, a Jew] come and heal him?" This is probably right. The parallel with the Canaanite woman (15:21-28) is compelling, and otherwise it is difficult to explain the emphatic "I." Jesus' response was not based on fears of ritual defilement--vv. 1-4 set that to rest or even on his general restriction of his minis try to Israel (see on 10:5- 6; 15:24; but even in Matthew there are significant exceptions, e.g., 8:28-34). It was

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based on a desire to find out exactly what the centurion was after and what degree of faith stood behind his ambiguous request (v. 6).

8-9 Both here and in the story of the Canaanite woman (15:21-28), faith triumphs over the obstacle Jesus erects. Luke records neither Jesus' question (see on v. 7) nor the story of the Canaanite woman; his treatment of faith is not quite so pointed. The centurion's reply opens with "Lord" (v. 8), implying tenacity and deference (cf. v. 6; 7: 21-23). As John the Baptist felt unworthy to baptize Jesus, so this centurion felt unworthy to entertain him in his home. The feeling of unworthiness did not arise from an awareness that the centurion might render Jesus ceremonially defiled (contra Bonnard); race had nothing to do with it. *Hikanos* ("sufficient," "worthy") here as elsewhere (3:11; 1Cor 15:9; 2Cor 2:16) reveals the man's sense of unworthiness (NIV, do not deserve) in the face of Jesus authority (cf.: TDNT, 3:294; France. "Exegesis,"

p. 258). "Here was one who was in the state described in the first clauses of the `Beatitudes,' and to whom came the promise of the second clauses; because Christ *is* the connecting link between the two" (LTJM 1:549; emphasis his). The centurion believed that Jesus' word was sufficient to heal his servant. It is significant that we have no recorded evidence that up to this point Jesus had performed a healing miracle at a distance and by word alone (unless John 4:46-53 is an exception). The centurion's thinking (v. 9) is profound. There is no need to take the first clause as implying that the *only* parallel between his authority and that of Jesus was in their ability to order things to be done: "I, although I am a man under orders, can effect things by my word" (Hill, *Matthew*). That is a barely possible rendering of the opening *kai gar ego* ; the more natural translation is that of NIV ("for I myself"), which applies the words to the entire verse. This means that the centurion's words presuppose an understanding of the Roman military system. All "authority" (*exousia* , as in 7:29) belonged to the emperor and was delegated. There fore, because he was under the emperor's authority, when

the centurion spoke, he spoke with the emperor's authority, and so his command was obeyed. A footsoldier who disobeyed would not be defying a mere centurion but the emperor, Rome itself, with all its imperial majesty and might (cf. Derrett, *NT Studies* , 1:159f.). This self-understanding the centurion applied to Jesus. Precisely because Jesus was under God's authority, he was vested with God's authority, so that when Jesus spoke, God spoke. To defy Jesus was to defy God; and Jesus' word must therefore be vested with God's authority that is able to heal sickness. This analogy, though not perfect, reveals an astonishing faith that recognizes that Jesus needed neither ritual, magic, nor any other help: his authority was God's authority, and his word was effective because it was God's word.

10 In Mark 6:6 Jesus is astonished at deeply rooted unbelief. Here he is astonished

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(same verb) at the faith of the centurion. "Though amazement is not appropriate for God, seeing it must arise from new and unexpected happenings, yet it could occur in Christ, inasmuch as he had taken on our human emotions, along with our flesh" (Calvin). Jesus spoke to those following him (not necessarily his disciples; cf. 4:25; 8:1) with the prefatory notice ("I tell you"; cf. on 5:22) that warns of the solemn remark to follow. Jesus commended the man's faith (cf. also v. 13). The greatness of his faith did not rest in the mere fact that he believed Jesus could heal from a distance but in the degree to which he had penetrated the secret of Jesus' authority. That faith was the more surprising since the centurion was a Gentile and lacked the heritage of OT revelation to help him understand Jesus. But this Gentile penetrated more deeply into the nature of Jesus' person and authority than any Jew of his time. Matthew's words stress even more than Luke's the uniqueness of the centurion's faith and underline the movement of the gospel from the Jews to the Gentiles, or rather from the Jews to all people regardless of race--a movement prophesied in the OT, developed in Jesus' ministry (see on 1:1, 3-5; 2:1-12; 3:9-10; 4:15-16), and commanded by the Great Commission (28:18-20). "This incident is a preview of the great insight which came later through another centurion's faith, 'Then to the Gentiles God has granted repentance unto life' (Acts 11:18)" (France, "Exegesis," p. 260).

11-12 Again "I say to you" (v. 11) solemnizes what follows (cf. v. 10). Most interpreters assume that Matthew has added these two verses (not in Luke) to the narrative, taking them from an entirely different setting (viz., Luke 13:28-29; e.g., Chilton, *God in Strength*, pp. 179-201). But this is problematic apart from clear criteria distinguishing it from the obvious alternative--that Jesus said similar things more than once. The words of the saying are not very close in the two passages; but the imagery is so colorful that an itinerant

preacher could have used it repeatedly, especially if warnings to the Jews and the prospect of Gentile admission to the fellowship of God's people were two of his major themes. The picture is that of the "messianic banquet," derived from such OT passages as Isaiah 25:6-9 (cf. 65:13-14) and embellished in later Judaism (cf. TDNT, 2:34-35). These embellishments did not usually anticipate the presence of Gentiles at the banquet, which symbolized the consummation of the messianic kingdom (cf. 22:1-14; 25:10; 26:29). But Jesus here insists that many will come from the four points of the compass and join the patriarchs at the banquet. These "many" can only be Gentiles, contrasted as they are (v. 12) with "subjects of the kingdom" (*hoi huioi tes basileias*, lit., "the sons of the kingdom"). "Son of" or "sons of" can mean "belonging to" or "destined for" (cf. "sons of the bridal chamber" [9:15; NIV, "guests of the bridegroom"]) and "son of hell" [23:15; cf.

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SBK, 1:476-78; 1QS 17:3; and comments on 5:9]). So the "subjects of the kingdom" are the Jews, who see themselves as sons of Abraham (cf. 3:9-10), belonging to the kingdom by right. Some Jews (e.g., those at Qumran) restricted the elect to a smaller group of the pious within Israel. But Jesus reverses roles (cf. 21:43); and the sons of the kingdom are thrown aside, left out of the future messianic banquet, consigned to darkness where there are tears and gnashing of teeth--elements common to descriptions of gehenna, hell (cf. 4Ezra 7:93; 1 Enoch 63:10; Pss Sol 14:9; 15:10; Wisdom 17:21; cf. Matt 22:13; comments on 5:29). The definite articles with "weeping" and "gnashing" (cf. Gr.) emphasize the horror of the scene: *the* weeping and *the* gnashing (Turner, *Syntax* , p. 173). Weeping suggests suffering and gnashing of teeth despair (McNeile). The reversal is not absolute. The patriarchs themselves are Jews, as were the earliest disciples (Rom 11:1-5). But these verses affirm, in a way that could only shock Jesus' hearers, that the locus of the people of God would not always be the Jewish race. If these verses do not quite authorize the Gentile mission, they open the door to it and prepare for the Great Commission (28:18-20) and Ephesians 3. There may be a still deeper implication in these words of Jesus. OT passages that may be reflected in vv. 11-12 can be divided into three groups: (1) those that describe a gathering of Israel from all quarters of the earth (Ps 107:3; Isa 43:5-6; 49:12); (2) those that predict the worship of God by Gentiles in all parts of the earth (Isa 45:6; 59: 19; Mal 1:11); (3) those that predict the coming of Gentiles to Jerusalem (Isa 2:2-3; 60:34; Mic 4:1-2; Zech 8:20-23). The closest literary parallels lie between vv. 11-12 and the first group (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT* , pp. 76f.); and on this basis France (*Jesus* , p. 63; id., *Exegesis*, pp. 261-63) proposes that a typology is assumed--the true "Israel" is now being gathered from the four corners of the earth, i.e., from the Gentiles. This is possible, for we have already seen several ways Matthew treats OT history as prophetic. But because he is not using fulfillment language here, Jesus may be using OT language without affirming that the relationship between OT and NT at this point is typological.

13 The *hos* ("just as," NIV) must be rightly understood: Jesus performed a miracle, not in proportion to the centurion's faith, nor because of the centurion's faith but in content what was expected by the centurion's faith (cf. 15:28, where the emphasis is also on faith).

c. Peter's mother-in-law (8:14-15)

14-15 In Mark 1:29-31; Luke 4:38-39, this incident follows the casting out of a demon on a Sabbath from a man in the synagogue at Capernaum. Presumably this healing

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takes place on that same Sabbath. Matthew, however, condenses the account by omitting what does not bear on his immediate theme--Jesus' authority. Peter was married (1Cor 9:5) and had moved with his brother Andrew from their home in Bethsaida (John 1:44) to Capernaum, possibly to remain near Jesus (Matt 4:

13). His mother-in-law's fever (v. 14) may have been malarial; fever itself was considered a disease, not a symptom, at that time (cf. John 4:52; Acts 28:8). Jewish Halakah forbade touching persons with many kinds of fever (SBK, 1:479f.). But Jesus healed with a touch (v. 15). As in v. 3, the touch did not defile the healer but healed the defiled. The imperfect *diekonei* is best taken as conative: "began to serve," almost certainly a reference to waiting on him. Matthew mentions her service, not to tell his readers that those touched by Jesus become his servants (contra P. Lamarche, "La guerison de la belle-mere de Pierre et le genre litteraire des evangiles," *Nouvelle Revue Theologique* 87 [1965]: 515-26), but to make it clear that the miracle was effective and instantaneous (cf. v. 26, where the result of Jesus' stilling the storm is complete calm). Jesus' authority instantly accomplishes what he wills.

d. Many at evening (8:16-17)

16 Because the context is still the Sabbath in Mark 1:32-34; Luke 4:40-41, mention of the evening there suggests that the people waited till Sabbath was over at sun down before again flocking to Jesus with their sick. Here in Matthew, where there is no indication this is a Sabbath, mention of the evening simply shows the pace of Jesus' ministry (cf. also other summaries--4:23-24; 9:35; 11:4-5; 12:15; 14:35; 15:30; 19:2). With the exception of the quotation from Isaiah 53 (v. 17), most of Matthew's other changes are not very significant. The addition of "a word" is neither typical (vv. 3, 8) nor atypical (v. 15) of Matthew's healing reports. The change from "many"

(Mark) to "all" (Matthew) is less significant than is often claimed, for Mark does not say Jesus healed many but not all the sick; rather, when "the whole town gathered at the door," he healed "many" of the people (Mark 1:33-34). Matthew does not say that Jesus forbade the demons to tell who he was; he prefers to focus attention on Jesus' power and on the Scripture witness to his person and ministry. Other differences are even more minor. (Omission of Luke 4:41 may tell against Kingsbury's view of the centrality of the "Son of God" theme.) Jesus drives out *ta pneumata* ("the spirits" ["demons" in Mark and Luke]), often recognized in intertestamental literature as agents of disease. They are normally qualified by the adjective "evil" in the NT. On the idiom for "the sick," see on 4:24.

17 (On the fulfillment formulas, see on 1:23; 2:5, 15, 23; 4:14; Introduction, section 11.

b.) This quotation is Isaiah 53:4. Matthew's rendering does not follow LXX or Targum,

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both of which spiritualize the Hebrew. Most likely v. 17 is Matthew's own translation of the Hebrew (Stendahl, *School* , pp. 106f.). Because Isaiah 52:13-53:12, the fourth "Servant Song," pictures the Servant suffering vicariously for others, whereas, on the face of it, Matthew renders the Hebrew in such a way as to speak of "taking" and "carrying" physical infirmities and physical diseases but not in terms of suffering vicariously for sin, many detect in this passage strong evidence that Matthew cites the OT in an indefensible and idiosyncratic fashion. McConnell (p. 120) sees this as another instance of Matthew's using an OT passage out of context for his own ends (cf. also Rothfuchs, pp. 70-72). McNeile suggests Isaiah 53:4 had already become detached from its context when Matthew used it. There are, however, better ways of interpreting this passage:

1. It is generally understood since the work of C.H. Dodd (*According to the Scriptures* [London: Nisbet, 1952]) that when the NT quotes a brief OT passage, it often refers implicitly to the entire context of the quotation. This is very likely here for Matthew has a profound understanding of the OT. Moreover, Isaiah 53:7 is probably alluded to in Matthew 27:12, Isaiah 53:9 in Matthew 27:57, and Isaiah 53:10-12 in Matthew 20:28, the latter in a context affirming vicarious atonement theology. Any interpretation of v. 17 that does not take into account the thrust of the entire Servant Song is therefore dubious.
2. Both Scripture and Jewish tradition understand that all sickness is caused, directly or indirectly, by sin (see on 4:24; cf. Gundry, *Use of OT* , pp. 230f.). This encourages us to look for a deeper connection between v. 17 and Isaiah 53:4.
3. Isaiah is thinking of the servant's "taking the diseases of others upon himself through his suffering and death for their sin" (Gundry, *Use of OT* , p. 230). The two verbs he uses are *nasa* ("took up [our infirmities]") and *sebalam* ("carried [our sorrows]"), which do not themselves necessarily have the force of substitution, though they can be interpreted that way. The LXX spiritualizes "infirmities" to "sins"; and in this sense the verse is referred to in 1 Peter 2:24 in defense of substitutionary atonement. That interpretation of the verse is legitimate because the flow of

the Servant Song supports it. But strictly speaking Isaiah 53:4 simply speaks of the Servant's bearing infirmities and carrying sicknesses; and it is only the context, plus the connection between sickness and sin, that shows that the way he bears the sickness of others is through his suffering and death. 4. Isaiah 53, as we have seen, is important among NT writers for understanding the significance of Jesus' death (e.g., Acts 8:32-33; 1 Peter 2:24); but when Matthew here cites Isaiah 53:4, at first glance he applies it only to Jesus' healing ministry, not to his death. But in the light of the three preceding points, the discrepancy is resolved if Matthew holds that *Jesus' healing ministry is itself a function of his substitutionary death* , by which he lays the foundation for destroying sickness. Matthew's two verbs,

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contrary to some opinion, exactly render the Hebrew: the Servant "took up" (*elaben*) our infirmities and "carried" (*ebastasen*) our diseases (Gundry, *Use of OT* , pp. 109, 111). Matthew could not have used the LXX and still referred to physical disease. Yet his own rendering of the Hebrew, far from wrenching Isaiah 53:4 out of context, indicates his profound grasp of the theological connection between Jesus' healing ministry and the Cross. 5. That connection is supported by various collateral arguments. The prologue insists Jesus came to save his people from their sin, and this within the context of the coming of the kingdom. When Jesus began his ministry, he not only proclaimed the kingdom but healed the sick (see on 4:24). Healing and forgiveness are tied together, not only in a pericope like 9:1-8, but by the fact that the consummated kingdom, in which there is no sickness, is made possible by Jesus' death and the new covenant that his death enacted (26:27-29). Thus the healings during Jesus' ministry can be understood not only as the foretaste of the kingdom but also as the fruit of Jesus' death. It could be that Matthew also judges Isaiah 53:4 appropriate because it seems to form a transition from the Servant's being despised to his suffering and death. Certainly at least some rabbinic tradition understood Isaiah 53:4 to refer to physical disease (cf. SBK, 1:481-82).

6. This means that for Matthew, Jesus' healing miracles pointed beyond them selves to the Cross. In this he is like the evangelist John, whose "signs" similarly point beyond themselves. 7. But even here there is a deeper connection than first meets the eye. These miracles (ch. 8) have been framed to emphasize Jesus' authority. This authority was never used to satisfy himself (cf. 4:1-10). He healed the despised leper (vv. 1-4), a Gentile centurion's servant who was hopelessly ill (vv. 5-13), other sick (vv. 14-15), no matter how many (vv. 16-17). Thus when he gave his life a ransom for many (20:28), it was nothing less than an extension of the same authority directed toward the good of others (cf. Hill, "Son and Servant," pp. 9, 11,

who also points out how reductionistic Kingsbury's "Son of God" christology is in light of such intertwining themes). Jesus' death reflected the intermingling of authority and servanthood already noted (e.g., 3:17) and now progressively developed. After all, following the momentous miracles of vv. 1-17, the Son of Man had nowhere to lay his head (v. 20).

Despite the stupendous signs of kingdom advance, the royal King and Suffering Servant faced increasingly bitter opposition. The Father had committed everything to him, but he was gentle and humble in heart (11:27, 29). This moving theme needs to be traced out inductively (cf. B. Gerhardsson, "Gottes Sohn als Diener Gottes: Messias, *Agape* und Himmelherrschaft nach dem Matthaus-evangelium," ST 27 [1973]: 73-106). If the Davidic Messiah of Jewish expectation (Pss Sol 17:6) purifies his people by annihilating sinners, Matthew's Davidic Messiah-Suffering Servant purifies his people

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with his death, takes on himself their diseases, and opens fellowship to sinners (cf. Hummel, pp. 124-25). This discussion does not resolve two related questions.

1. Did Jews in Jesus' day understand Isaiah 53 messianically? Most scholars say no. Jeremias answers more cautiously--viz., many Jews did so interpret Isaiah's "Servant" but ignored references to his suffering (cf. Jeremias and Zimmerli). 2. Did Jesus interpret his own ministry in terms of the Suffering Servant? Matthew 8:17 does not help us because it gives us no more than Matthew's understanding of the significance of Jesus' healing miracles. (See further on 20:28; cf. Hooker, *Jesus and the Servant* ; T.W. Manson, *The Servant Messiah* [Cambridge: University Press, 1953], pp. 57-58, 73.) It should be stated that this discussion cannot be used to justify healing on demand. This text and others clearly teach that there is healing in the Atonement; but similarly there is the promise of a resurrection body in the Atonement, even if believers do not inherit it until the Parousia. From the perspective of the NT writers, the Cross is the basis for all the benefits that accrue to believers, but this does not mean that all such benefits can be secured at the present time on demand, any more than we have the right and power to demand our resurrection bodies. The availability of any specific blessing can be determined only by appealing to the overall teaching of Scripture. Modern Christians should avoid the principal danger of Corinth, viz., an over-realized eschatology (cf. A.C. Thistleton, "Realized Eschatology at Corinth," NTS 24 [1977]: 510-26), which demands blessings that may not be ours till the end of the age.

2. The cost of following Jesus (8:18-22)

Compare Luke 9:57-62, in a later but detached setting, with three inquirers,

not two. The stilling-of-the-storm incident (vv. 23-27; Mark 4:35-41), following the "day of parables," shows that Matthew 8:18 parallels Mark 4:35. Matthew does not specify the time of this pericope (vv. 18-22) beyond saying that it was one of many occasions when crowds pressed Jesus. Apparently Matthew chose to insert these two vignettes here because they help show the nature of Jesus' ministry and the disciples he was seeking. Hengel's attempt to limit to a few selected individuals Jesus' call to discipleship (M. Hengel, *Nachfolge und Charisma* [Berlin: Topelmann, 1968], pp. 68-70) is insensitive to Jesus' place in the history of redemption and the ambiguity of what it meant at that time to be his disciple (see further, below).

18-19 Perhaps Jesus' imminent departure to the east side of the lake (v. 18) prompted certain people to beg him to include them in the circle of disciples going with him. Discipleship in the strict sense required close attachment to the master's person. The

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fact that the first candidate was "a [*heis* , "one," can have the force of *tis* , "a certain," in NT Gr.: cf. Zerwick, par. 155; Moule, *Idiom Book* , p. 125] teacher of the law" (see on 2:4) has led to no little controversy; for it is often argued that the opponents in Matthew are Pharisees and scribes ("teachers of the law"), yet here a scribe appears as a candidate for discipleship. R. Walker (pp. 26-27) and others therefore say Jesus rejected this teacher of the law (v. 19). By comparison with the next inquirer, he is neither called a disciple nor told to follow Jesus (vv. 21-22). But this reasoning will not stand up. 1. "Disciple" does not necessarily refer to a fully committed follower and cannot have that force in v. 21 (see on 5:1). Albright and Mann dislike this fact so much that they are reduced to emending the text. It is difficult to see why a wedge should be drawn between the two inquirers, both "disciples" in this loose sense. 2. Verse 21 does not say, "Another man, one of his disciples" (NIV), but, "An other of his disciples," implying that the teacher of the law was also a disciple in this loose sense. Moreover *heteros* ("another," sometimes "another of a different kind") cannot normally be distinguished in the NT from *allos* ("another," sometimes "an other of the same kind"), and certainly not in Matthew (cf. BAGD, p. 315). 3. Judged by their respective approaches to Jesus, if either of the two approaches Jesus with no hesitation, it is the teacher of the law, not the "other disciple." Significantly, the scribe, a teacher of the law, addressed Jesus as "teacher" and simply promised to follow him anywhere. 4. In this light Jesus' response to the second man--"Follow me"--does not mean he is preferred but is necessary precisely because the inquirer was not at this time planning to follow Jesus. Scholars who reject the reconstruction of Walker and others argue that Matthew, far from being opposed to teachers of the law, has positive things to say about them (v. 19; 13:52; 23:8-10, 34), some of which even suggest that Matthew's church had leaders who called themselves "teachers of the law" (cf. Grundmann; Hummel p. 27; Kilpatrick, pp. 110ff.). But this reverse argument is too strong. What other categories could Jesus have used for his church's future leaders than those already established (13:52; 23:34)? A great deal of the reconstructed Matthean church hangs by the thread of

overdrawn exegesis. But they have correctly pointed out that vv. 19-20 and similar passages show that Matthew is not in principle antiscribe or anti-anyone else: rather, in Matthew's view, all people, scribes or not, divide around the absolute claims of Jesus and must be weighed according to their response to him (cf. van Tilborg, pp. 128-31). This is the fruit, not of anti-Semitism (see further on 26:57-68), but of claims to truth and, like other matters judged offensive by both Jews and Gentiles (1Cor 1:21-23), cannot be eliminated without relativizing truth and him who is the truth.

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20 Jesus' response shows that he identifies the scribe's request as less the commitment of an Ittai (2Sam 15:21) than the overconfidence of a Peter (Luke 22:33). "Nothing has done more harm to Christianity than the practice of filling the ranks of Christ's army with every volunteer who is willing to make a little profession, and talk fluently of experience" (Ryle). "Nothing was less aimed at by our Lord than to have *followers* , unless they were genuine and sound; he is as far from desiring this as it would have been easy to attain it" (Stier, emphasis his). Jesus' reply says nothing about the inquirer's response. Strictly speaking it was neither invitation nor rebuke but a pointed way of saying that true discipleship to the "Son of Man" (see excursus, below) is not comfortable and should not be undertaken without counting the cost (cf. Luke 14:25-33). In the immediate context of Jesus' ministry, the saying does not mean that Jesus was penniless but homeless; the nature of his mission kept him on the move (cf. 4:23- 25; 9:35-38) and would keep his followers on the move.

21-22 For the significance of the reference to "disciples," see on vv. 19-20. If the scribe was too quick in promising, this "disciple" was too slow in performing (v. 21). Palestinian piety, basing itself on the fifth commandment (Exod 20:12; cf. Deut 27:16), expected sons to attend to the burial of their parents (cf. Tobit 4:3; 14:10-11; M Berakoth 3:1; cf. Gen 25:9; 35:29; 50:13). Jesus' reply used paradoxical language (as in 16:25): Let the (spiritually) dead bury the (physically) dead (cf. Notes). Yet the response seems harsh to many interpreters; so they understand the inquirer to be requesting a delay to wait for an aged parent to die rather than a delay to bury a father who has died. Hebrew or Aramaic could mean that, Greek only With difficulty; and it is difficult to see how it makes Jesus' answer (v. 22) more compassionate. Though in the OT certain people were not permitted to come in contact with corpses (Lev 21:1-12; Num 6:7), it is doubtful that Jesus saw his followers as priests or Nazirites needing special ceremonial safeguards (contra Trench, *Studies* , p. 169). More likely vv. 21-22 are a powerful way of expressing the

thought in 10:37--even closest family ties must not be set above allegiance to Jesus and the proclamation of the kingdom (Luke 9:60). In actuality we may well question whether Jesus was really forbidding attendance at the father's funeral, any more than he was really advocating self-castration in 5:27-30. In this inquirer he detected insincerity, a qualified acceptance of Jesus' lordship. And that was not good enough. Commitment to Jesus must be without reservation. Such is the importance Jesus himself attached to his own person and mission.

Excursus: "The Son of Man" as a christological title

During the last twenty-five years, more than a dozen books and scores of important

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articles on the Son of Man have appeared. This excursus on the Son of Man as a christological title will provide some of the evidence and its interpretation in the recent debate and will sketch in the approach adopted for the commentary. Good summaries of earlier treatments are found in the work of A.J.B. Higgins *Jesus and the Son of Man* [London: Lutterworth, 1964]), J. Neville Birdsall ("Who Is This Son of Man?" EQ 42 [1970] 7-17), and I. Howard Marshall ("The Son of Man in Contemporary Debate," EQ 42 [1970]: 67-87). More recent treatments of the term and its major theological implications may be found in the works and bibliographies of C. Colpe (TDNT, 8:400-477), C.F.D. Moule (*Christology* , pp. 11-22), I. Howard Marshall (*The Origins of Christology* [Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1976], pp. 63-82), the essays edited by R. Pesch and R. Schnackenburg (*Jesus und der Menschensohn* [Freiburg: Herder, 1975]), Goppelt (*NT Theologie* , pp. 226-53), Ladd (*NT Theology* , pp. 145-58), Dunn (*Christology* , pp. 65-97), Guthrie (*NT Theology* , pp. 270-82), Matthew Black ("Jesus and the Son of Man," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 1 [1978]: 4-18), and Stanton (*Jesus of Nazareth* pp. 156ff). To this can be added the recent work by Maurice Casey and that of A.J.B. Higgins (*The Son of Man in the Teaching of Jesus* [Cambridge: University Press, 1980]). The expression Son of Man occurs eighty-one times in the Gospels, sixty-nine in the Synoptics. In every instance it is found either on Jesus' lips or, in two instances, on the lips of those quoting Jesus (viz., Luke 24:7; John 12:34). Out side the Gospels it is found in the NT as a christological title only in Acts 7:56; Revelation 1:13, 14:14 (Heb 2:6-8 is not relevant). The Gospel occurrences are usually classified according to the themes associated with the title: (1) the apocalyptic Son of Man who comes at the end of the age; (2) the suffering and dying Son of Man; and (3) the earthly Son of Man, engaged in a number of present ministries (in this context the title many serve as a circumlocution for "I"). Ladd (NT Theology, pp. 149-51) offers a typical breakdown of all the passages. There is some overlap of these categories and room for differences of interpretation. But of the thirty occurrences of "Son

of Man" in Matthew, approximately thirteen belong to the first category (13:41; 16:27; 19:28; 24:27, 30 [*bis*], 37, 44; 25:31; 26:64; probably 24:39; and possibly 10:23; 16:28), ten to the second (12:40; 17:9, 12, 22; 20:18, 28; 26:2, 24 [bis], 45), and seven to the third (8:20, 9:6, 11:19-12:8, 32; 13:37; probably 16:13; cf. also the variant at 18:11). The meaning of any term or title depends at least in part on the way it has been used before. Much of the debate surrounding the precise significance of "Son of Man" in the Gospels turns on the influence ascribed to one or the other of the following backgrounds. 1. Daniel 7:13-14 pictures "one like a son of man" who approaches the Ancient of Days and is given "authority, glory and sovereign power" and "an ever lasting dominion that will not pass away" in which "all peoples, nations and men of every

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language" worship him.

2. In Psalm 8:4 it is used generically for man.

3. In Ezekiel it appears repeatedly in the vocative as God's favorite way of addressing the prophet. 4. Psalm 80:17 places "son of man" in the context of vine imagery in such a way that it clearly refers to the nation Israel. 5. In 1QapGen 21:13 it appears as a Semitism for man generically ("I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth, which no son of man can number"). According to Vermes, "son of man" or "the son of man" in Aramaic was used in Jesus' day to refer generically to man or as a circumlocution by which a speaker might refer to himself (cf. G. Vermes in Black, *Aramaic Approach* , Appendix E; id., "The `Son of Man' Debate" *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* [1978]: 19-32). But some of his claims must be tempered by the more sober dating and philology of Joseph A. Fitzmyer ("Another View of the `Son of Man' Debate," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 4 [1979]: 58-68). 6. Many detect a background in the Similitudes of Enoch (1 Enoch 37-71) or other apocalyptic literature. Some have raised grave doubts that such literature is pre-Christian, based largely on the fact that the Similitudes are not found in the DSS copy of 1 Enoch; and if they are right, clearly the use of "Son of Man" in 1 Enoch 37-71 cannot have influenced Jesus' use of the term (cf. Longenecker, *Christology* , pp. 82- 88; Dunn, *Christology* , pp. 67-82). The consensus among specialists of 1 Enoch, however, is that the Similitudes were in fact written before Christ's ministry, but that the "Son of Man" in these writings unambiguously refers to Enoch. The famous but unsupported emendation by R.H. Charles ("This is the Son of Man who was born unto Righteousness," 1 Enoch 71:14) is without warrant: the text reads "Thou, O Enoch, art the Son of Man" (cf. further James H. Charlesworth, *The Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament* [Cambridge: University Press, forthcoming]). We thus reach an ironic conclusion: the similitudes are pre-Christian and therefore must be considered a possible influence on Jesus'

usage of "the Son of Man"; but they narrowly identify the figure with Enoch, and so whatever influence they exercised cannot be more than that of model or pattern, if that. Against such diverse backgrounds, then, how are we to understand "the Son of Man" in the NT? Numerous proposals have been made, many of which fail to explain the evidence. The following are the most important. 1. Bultmann (*NT Theology* , 1:29-31, 49) made popular the view, later espoused by P. Vielhauer, H. Conzelmann, and H.M. Teeple, that Jesus never used the title "Son of Man" of himself but only of another figure coming in the future; and this future figure was based in Jesus' mind on the apocalyptic redeemer figure in 1 Enoch. This idea has been developed by other scholars who say that Jesus originally justified his authority

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by referring to a future apocalyptic figure who would come and vindicate him but that the church connected that figure with Jesus himself. This will not do, for even if the Similitudes are not a late addition to 1 Enoch, the "Son of Man" figure there *may* not be an apocalyptic figure (cf. Casey, pp. 99-112) and in any case refers primarily to Enoch. Moreover the NT evidence connects Jesus with the Son of Man (e.g., Mark 14: 62 and parallels); and, more important yet, any interpretation is called in question that flies in the face of the fact that the Gospel writers never use the term to describe Jesus but always report it as being on Jesus' lips. On the face of it, this shows that it was Jesus' favorite self-designation and that the early church respected this, even when it did not always know what to make of it (cf. further Jeremias, *NT Theology* , pp. 267f.). 2. Jeremias (*NT Theology* , pp. 257-76) has argued that some of the Son-of-Man sayings in all three classifications are authentic; but where in synoptic parallels one Gospel includes the reference to the Son of Man and another omits it (e.g., Matt 24: 39- Luke 17:27; Matt 10:32- Luke 12:8), the latter is authentic. On the last point, some have argued just the reverse (e.g., F.H. Borsch, *The Son of Man in Myth and History* [London: SCM, 1967]). The weakness of Jeremias's view lies primarily in the consistency with which the expression occurs on Jesus' lips alone: if evangelists were adding the title to displace "I," it is at least strange they never use the title to refer to Jesus in contexts where there is no synoptic parallel. Here it seems best to side with Borsch, though we cannot be sure. Moreover Jeremias's chosen background runs from Daniel 7:13-14 in a straight line through the Similitudes of Enoch to the NT. Thus he depends on an established apocalyptic Son-of-Man figure that the sources do not support. 3. By appealing to Aramaic background, Vermes (Black, *Aramaic Approach* , Appendix E) argues that only those passages are authentic in which "Son of Man" is no more than a circumlocution for "I," by which the speaker refers to himself obliquely out of modesty or humility; the other uses in the Gospels are the creation of an apocalyptically minded church. Somewhat similar stances are adopted by Casey, who deems authentic the sayings that refer to mankind generally, and Barnabas Lindars ("Jesus as

Advocate: A Contribution to the Christology Debate," BJRL 62 [1980]: 476-97; id., "The New Look on the Son of Man," BJRL 63 [1981]: 437-62), who argues that the use of the article (*ho*) in Greek, making the expression " *that* Son of Man" or "the [known] Son of Man" or "the [expected] Son of Man," shows that it was the translation of the tradition from Aramaic to Greek that gave messianic or Danielic meaning to the term. Therefore usages reflecting such meaning cannot be authentic. Quite apart from problems surrounding the dating of the linguistic evidence (cf. Fitzmyer, above), this theory postulates a creative church and a comparatively dull Jesus even though the evangelists consistently restrict the creative use of "Son of Man" to Jesus. The more it is argued that the church exercised a creative role in the

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theological development of this title, the stranger it is that the evangelists themselves do not apply the term to Jesus. 4. In his most recent book (*Son of Man*), Higgins reiterates and polishes his thesis that the "kernel" (i.e., authentic) sayings are all from Q and refer without exception to some of the future activities of the Son of Man, but not to his "coming" or "coming in glory," based on the "reasonable assumption of the existence of a Son of man concept in Judaism" (p. 124), and on a strange appeal to multiple attestation even though all his "kernel" sayings originally spring from Q (p. 125). Higgins says Jesus does not so much identify himself as the Son of Man (counterevidence, such as Mark 14:62, he ascribes to the church) as confine the term "to Jesus' clothing of his message of his anticipated judicial function in the judgment in symbolic imagery" (ibid.). The theory therefore falls under the strictures raised against 1 and 2. 5. C.F.D. Moule ("Neglected Features in the Problem of 'the Son of Man,'" in Gnailka, *Neues Testament* , pp. 413ff.; id., *Christology* , pp. 11-22), in contrast to Vermes, insists that the definite article (used everywhere except John 5:27) proves the designation to be titular, and thus whatever Semitic construction lay behind it, it must have referred to a particular, known "Son of Man." The only candidate is the figure in Daniel 7:13-14, possibly expounded in Judaism. This figure was understood to refer in a corporate way to "the saints of the Most High" (Dan 7:18); and, applied to Jesus, the title simultaneously affirms that he represents those saints and is a part of them. "Son of Man" is less a title than "a symbol of a vocation to be utterly loyal, even to death, in the confidence of ultimate vindication in the heavenly court.... Jesus is thus referring to the authority (whether in heaven or on earth) of true Israel, and so, of authentic Man, obedient, through thick and thin, to God's design" (*Christology* , p. 14). Despite attractive features of this reconstruction, some reservations must be voiced. There appears to be more titular (indeed, messianic) force in some passages than Moule allows (e.g., Matt 16:13-20; 26:63-64); yet ironically he may be overemphasizing the significance of the definite article, since there is evidence in the Gospels that the people of Jesus' day did not always understand the designation to refer to the "well-known"

Son of Man (e.g., Matt 16:13-30; John 12:34). The best explanation attempts to avoid the reductionism that is implicit in most of the previous approaches, which too quickly rules out certain kinds of evidence or takes them as late creations of the church. Apart from the fact that in the Gospels "Son of Man" is always found on Jesus' lips, the authenticity of the Son-of-Man sayings stands up well under the criteria of redaction criticism (R.N. Longenecker, "'Son of Man' Imagery," JETS 18 [1975]:8-9). But what did Jesus mean by the expressions? The simplest answer is that he used the term precisely because it was ambiguous: it could conceal as well as reveal (cf. E. Schweizer, "The Son of Man," JBL 79 [1960]: 128; Longenecker, "'Son of Man'

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Imagery," pp. 10-12; Hendriksen; Marshall, *Origins* , pp. 76-78). When Jesus vested the term with its full messianic significance, it could only refer to Daniel 7:13-14. He did this most often toward the end of his ministry when alone with his disciples and talking about eschatological events (esp. 24:27, 30 and parallels), or when under oath at his trial (26:63-64). Despite the fact that the Danielic figure is often said to be a symbol for the saints of the Most High (Dan 7:18), this is not certain. A good case can be made for the hypothesis that "one like a son of man" is not a symbol for the saints (7:18, 27). *He* is in the presence of the Ancient of Days; *they* are on earth during the time of the "little horn" (v. 21). Perhaps "one like a son of man" secures the everlasting kingdom for the saints of the Most High (cf. W.J. Dumbrell, "Daniel 7 and the Function of Old Testament Apocalyptic," *Reformed Theological Review* 34 [1975]: 16ff.; and esp. Christopher Rowland, "The Influence of the First Chapter of Ezekiel on Jewish and Early Christian Literature," [Ph. D. dissertation, Cambridge University, 1974], p. 95). One "like a son of man" is a representative figure, not a corporate one; and the use of the symbol of the cloud rider favors a personal rather than a corporate interpretation. Be that as it may, the messianic import of the title in some NT passages can scarcely be doubted. But Daniel 7:13-14 did not wield such large influence on first-century Judaism that simple reference to "the Son of Man," even with the article, would be instantly taken to refer to the Messiah. John Bowker ("The Son of Man," *JTS* 28 [1977]: 19-48) has decisively shown how many Semitic passages--in Ezekiel, Psalm 8, the Targums--use the term to contrast the chasm between frail, mortal man and God himself. This admirably suits a host of NT references, not only the suffering and passion texts, but others like Matthew 8:20. Jesus combined the two, Danielic Messiah and frail mortal, precisely because his own understanding of messiahship was laced with both themes. We have already detected in Matthew the intermingling of Davidic Messiah and Suffering Servant. While "Son of Man" captures both authority and suffering, it is ambiguous enough that people who did not think of the

Messiah in this dual was would have been mystified till after the Cross. It may well have been an acceptable way for a speaker to refer to himself, in which case the titular usage could only have been discerned from the context. Moreover it would have been extremely difficult for Jews expecting a purely political and glorious Messiah to know what the title meant, because just when they thought they had discerned its messianic significance, Jesus inserted something about the Son of Man's sufferings. That explains the perplexed question, "Who is this `Son of Man'?" John 12:34; cf. Luke 22:69-70). Even the disciples who had at some level begun to recognize Jesus the Son of Man as Messiah (Matt 16:13-16) could not accept or comprehend Jesus' repeated assertions that the Son of Man was destined to suffer and die (Matt 16:21-23; 17:9-12, 22, and parallels). Only when

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under oath and when it no longer mattered whether his enemies heard his clear claim to messiahship did Jesus reveal without any ambiguity at all that he, the Son of Man, was the messianic figure of Daniel 7:13-14 (Matt 26:63-64 and parallels); and then his opponents did not realize that an essential part of his messiahship was suffering and death. In Jesus' ministry "Son of Man" both reveals and conceals. Therefore he chose it as the ideal expression for progressively, and to some extent retrospectively, revealing the nature of his person and work. After the Passion, Jesus' disciples could not help but find in his frequent earlier use of the term a messianic claim. Indeed, it is a mark of their fidelity to the separate historical stages of the unfolding history of redemption that in describing Jesus' prepassion ministry they confine the designation to the lips of Jesus alone. Thus no reader of Matthew who through the prologue knows that Jesus though a man is more than a man and through 16:13-20; 26:63-64 knows that the Son of Man is the Messiah could fail to see irony in 9:1-8. Jesus forgives sins and performs a miracle so that the onlookers may know that the "Son of Man" has authority on earth to forgive sins; but the people praise God because he has given such authority "to men." They are right (Jesus, the Son of Man, is mortal, a man born of woman, and heading for suffering and death), and they are wrong (they do not yet recognize him as more than a man, virgin born, and the messianic figure who appeared "as a son of man"--i.e., in human form--in one of Daniel's visions). So the interpretation that prevailed from the second century on--that "Son of Man" designates Jesus' humanity and "Son of God" his divinity--is not so much wrong as simplistic. In Matthew 8:20, "the Son of Man" could easily be replaced by "I." Moreover it occurs in a setting that stresses Jesus' humanity and may foreshadow his sufferings. For postpassion Christian readers, it could only speak of the Messiah's wonderful self-humiliation. For the teacher of the law (vv. 18-19), it was a great challenge just how great a one could only be known after the Resurrection.

3. Calming a storm (8:23-27)

Jesus' authority over nature is now displayed. He may have less shelter than the beasts and birds of nature (v. 20); yet he is nature's master (cf. parallels in Mark 4:35- 41; Luke 8:22-25). Cope's attempt (*Matthew* , pp. 96-98) to argue that the pericope, at a pre-Matthean level, has been structured on Jonah is far from convincing. His parallels are either painfully forced ("a miraculous stilling related to the main character") or so general that it is difficult to conceive of any miraculous stilling-of-the-sea story that would not fit in his list of parallels.

23-25 The narrative moves forward from v. 18; the order to cross the lake to escape

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the crowd is now carried out. A *ploion* ("boat") was a vessel of almost any size and description (v. 23). Here it is doubtless a fishing boat, big enough for a dozen or more men and a good catch of fish, but not large, and without sails. Bornkamm's insight--viz., that this pericope faces Matthew's readers with the demand for greater faith (v. 26) in a setting requiring total discipleship (vv. 18-22; cf. Bornkamm, *Tradition* , pp. 52-57)--has been distorted to make discipleship the exclusive concern. Because the disciples "followed" Jesus into the boat, Matthew, it is alleged (e.g., Bonnard, Hill), is using a characteristic theme, almost a technical term, to describe discipleship: those who follow Jesus need not fear, for they will be safe in any storm. But in Matthew *akolouthéo* ("to follow"), though it can refer to true followers (e.g., 4:20, 22; 9:9), often describes the action of the crowd as opposed to the disciples (e.g., 4:25; 8:1, 10; 12:15). When someone is physically following another, it is risky to invest the term with deep notions of discipleship; in 9:19 Jesus and his disciples "follow" (Gr.) the ruler but were certainly not his disciples! And if "follow" is so crucial a category for Matthew, why in 8:28-34 does he omit the parallel reference to following Jesus (Mark 5:18-20)? Tertullian (*De Baptismo* 12) saw in the boat a picture of the church. Therefore some conclude that the storm "is a threat to the boat, rather than to the disciples" because it stands for the church, "and, in particular, the Church facing the upheaval of persecution (perhaps under Domitian, A.D. 81-96)" (Hill, *Matthew* ; cf. Bonnard). But aside from the anachronistic nature of this appeal to Domitian, it is historically very doubtful whether there was widespread persecution under his reign (cf. John Sweet, *Revelation* [London: SCM, 1979], esp. pp. 25-27). And is Matthew's story greatly helped by seeing danger for the boat but not the disciples? One wonders what would happen to them if the boat were destroyed. While Matthew may have seen some kind of valid application of the principles in this pericope to his own situation, the story was for him primarily a miracle story with christological implications (see on vv. 26-27). Some redaction critics, in their desire to interpret the Gospels exclusively in terms of reconstructed church life- settings instead of

hearing the church's thoughtful witness to the historical Jesus, come close to undisciplined allegorizing. It is well known that violent squalls (the term *seismos* can refer to an earthquake or a sea storm) develop quickly on Lake Galilee (v. 24). The surface is more than six hundred feet below sea level, and the rapidly rising hot air draws from the south eastern tablelands violent winds whose cold air churns up the water. Those among Jesus' contemporaries who really knew the OT would remember that in it God is presented as the one who controls and stills the seas (cf. Job 38:8-11; Pss 29:3-4, 10-11; 65:5-7; 89:9; 107:23-32). The form of the cry, *Kyrie , soson* (lit., "Lord, save!" v. 25), is often thought to reflect

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liturgical influence (cf. Mark 4:38; Luke 8:24). But it is doubtful that the disciples all used the same words; and the verbal differences among the Synoptics may reflect, not theological motivation, but historical recollection of various cries (esp. if Matthew was present). This event almost certainly occurs later chronologically than Matthew's call (9:9-13; cf. Luke 5:27-32). The words of later liturgy took on this form. Yet we know almost nothing about first-century liturgy, and it is more likely that the Bible influenced the shape of liturgy than vice versa. Significantly, later textual tradition adds "us" (cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, p. 22). The verb *akolouthéo* ("follow") does not require a direct object, though it is difficult to see why "us" should have been eliminated if it had been there originally. The later liturgical form prefers to abandon the "us." If that form was not strong enough to control the textual tradition, is it likely that it was strong enough (let alone early enough) to control the shape of the cry in the transfer from Mark to Matthew?

26-27 "He does not chide them for disturbing him with their prayers, but for disturbing themselves with their fears" (Matthew Henry). The word *oligopistoi* ("you of little faith," v. 26) occurs five times in the NT (6:30; here; 14:31; 16:8; Luke 12:28; cf. the cognate noun at Matt 17:20) and always with reference to disciples. Lack of faith among those for whom faith must be central is especially disappointing. Mark (4:40) has "Do you still have no faith?" and Matthew's "little faith" is therefore taken by many as a conscious toning down of the rebuke, perhaps because he cannot envisage discipleship apart from some faith (Gundry, *Matthew*). But there are reasons for thinking this conclusion is somewhat hasty. 1. It may be pushing Mark's question too hard to understand it as meaning that the disciples were utterly without faith. An exasperated preacher might well berate those he regards as believing disciples with words like those in Mark precisely because he believes their conduct in the face of some crisis belies their profession of faith. The large change in meaning ascribed to Matthew may

therefore rest on too pedantic an understanding of Mark. This is confirmed by Mark's not developing the notion of "disciples" who have no faith. 2. *Both* Matthew (17:17) *and* Mark (9:19) preserve sayings about the unbelieving generation that must in context be applied to Jesus' disciples. 3. The word *oligopistoi* ("you of little faith") probably does not refer merely to quantity of faith but to its poor quality (see on 17:20). If so, Matthew may be credited with a little more theological precision than Mark but scarcely a radically new meaning. The change from a question (Mark) to the one word epithet *oligopis toi* (Matthew) is quite within the range of reportage in the Gospels. What Jesus' exact words were, we cannot know; nor can we be certain that Matthew's only access to the event was Mark's report.

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4. If Matthew were so eager to insist that true discipleship involves *some* faith and changes Mark's expression for this reason, it is strange that he would insert a verse like 17:20 (contrast Mark 9:29). It is more likely that Matthew favors *oligopis toi* as part of his working vocabulary, but without heavy, theological implications the demonstrable redactional tendencies of an author do not necessarily bear on questions of authenticity (cf. Introduction, section 2).

5. What is clear is that both Mark and Matthew set faith over against fear. Faith chases out fear, or fear chases out faith. That the disciples could cry to Jesus for help reveals that they believed, or hoped he could do something. More than others they had witnessed his miracles and apparently believed he could rescue them. Jesus' rebuke is therefore not against skepticism of his ability, nor against the fear that the disciples like others might drown. Rather they failed to see that the one so obviously raised up by God to accomplish the messianic work could not possibly have died in a storm while that work remained undone. They lacked faith, not so much in his ability to save them, as in Jesus as Messiah, whose life could not be lost in a storm, as if the elements were out of control and Jesus himself the pawn of chance. This aspect of their unbelief is hinted at in Mark and Luke; in Matthew it is rendered more explicit with the disciples' cry to save them, for here they cannot be thought to be awakening Jesus because of pique at his still being asleep. Jesus' sleep stems not only from his exhaustion (see on v. 16) or from the Son of Man having nowhere to lay his head (v. 20) but from his confidence that, to use John's language, his hour had not yet come. The disciples' response to the miracle (v. 27) does not weaken this interpretation, as if their surprise shows they were not expecting Jesus to intervene. Just as a crowd expects a magician to do his trick, yet marvels when it is done, so the disciples turn to Jesus for help, yet are amazed when he stills the storm so that there is complete calm. What kind of man is this? Readers of this Gospel know the answer--he is the virgin-born Messiah who has come to redeem his people from their sins and whose mission is to fulfill God's redemptive purposes. But the disciples did not yet understand these things. They saw that his authority extended over nature and were thus helped in their faith.

Yet they did not grasp the profundity of his rebuke. Indeed, wherever *oligopistos* is used in Matthew, a root cause of the "little faith" is the failure to see beyond the mere surface of things. Thus the pericope is deeply christological: themes of faith and discipleship are of secondary importance and point to the "kind of man" (cf. BDF, par. 298 [3]) Jesus is. It may also be that Matthew is again juxtaposing Jesus with man's limitations and Jesus with God's authority, a device he so effectively uses in this Gospel. As Jesus is tempted but rebukes Satan (4:1-11), as he is called the devil but casts out demons (12: 22-32); so he sleeps from weariness but muzzles nature (see farther at 4:2).

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4. Further demonstration of Jesus' authority (8:28-9:8)

a. Exorcising two men (8:28-34)

All three synoptists (cf. Mark 5:1-20, Luke 8:26-39) place this event after the boat landed, after the storm had been stilled. Matthew's account is much shorter than the other two; and he does not refer to "Legion," or to the desire of the liberated men to follow Jesus. The central motif, Jesus' authority over the evil spirits, is accented and only lightly interwoven with other themes.

28 The locale seems to have been in the district controlled by the town of Gadara, near the village of Gerasa (cf. Notes), which lay about midpoint on the lake's eastern shore. On the adjacent hillside are ancient tombs. Probably small antechambers or caves provided some protection from the weather; and a graveyard would, apparently, prove a congenial environment for demons and render the man ceremonially defiled. This region lay in the predominantly Gentile territory of the Decapolis (see on 4:25); the presence of the pigs (v. 30), inconceivable in a Jewish milieu, points to its Gentile background. Jesus has withdrawn here, not for ministry, but to avoid the crowds (v. 18). Yet there can be no rest as long as the hosts of darkness oppose him. On differences between Jewish and NT views of demon possession, see Edersheim (LTJM, Appendix XVI; cf. SBK, 1:491-92). Matthew mentions two men; Mark and Luke only one. This pattern occurs elsewhere (20:30), making it very unlikely that Matthew changed the number because he saw an implication of more than one man in Mark's "Legion" (applied to the demons). It is even less likely that Matthew introduced the extra person to make up the legally acceptable minimum of two witnesses, since not only is the witness theme not found either of the two Matthean pericopes (vv. 28-34; 20:29-34), but here Matthew has eliminated

the witness theme (cf. Mark 5:18-20). While the disciples could have served as witnesses, the best explanation is that Matthew had independent knowledge of the second man. Mention of only one by the other Gospel writers is not problematic. Not only was one sufficient for the purpose at hand, but where one person is more remarkable or prominent, it is not uncommon for the Gospels to mention only that one (cf. "I saw John Smith in town today. I hadn't seen him in years"--even though both John and Mary Smith were in fact seen). The violence of these demoniacs is more fully described by Mark and Luke.

29 "While the men in the boat are doubting what manner of man this is, that even the winds and the sea obey him, the demons come to tell them" (Theophylact, cited in

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Broadus). They knew who Jesus was and yet remained demons; to know Jesus yet hate him is demonic. The question the demoniacs hurled at Jesus could be either harsh or gentle, depending on context (2Sam 16:10; Mark 1:24; John 2:4). Here it is hateful and tinged with fear. The title "Son of God" is probably to be taken in its richest sense: Jesus was recognized, not solely in terms of his power but in terms of his person. He was the Messiah, God's Son (see on 3:17). Even if Jesus had already begun to confront them when they reacted so venomously (cf. Mark 5:7-8), there was nothing in Jesus' command in itself to betray his identity. We must suppose that the demons enjoyed some independent knowledge of Jesus' identity (cf. Acts 19:15; Ladd, *NT Theology* , p. 165).

The second question shows that there will be a time for demonic hosts to be tortured and rejected forever (cf. Jude 6; Rev 20:10; cf. 1 Enoch 16:1; Jub 10:8-9; T Levi 18:12, 1QS 3:24-25; 4:18-20). As the question is phrased, it recognizes that Jesus is the one who will discharge that judicial function at the "appointed time"; therefore it confirms the fullest meaning of "Son of God." That Jesus was in any sense circumscribing their activity before the appointed time (Matthew only) already shows that Jesus' casting out of demons was an eschatological function, a sign that the kingdom was dawning (cf. 12:28).

The significance of "here" is disputed. It can mean either (1) "here in this Gentile territory," reflecting "the difficulty of the Church's mission in those regions of Palestine" (Hill, *Matthew*)--but surely demon possession was not restricted to Gentile territory (cf. 10:5, 8; 12:22-24), and "the appointed time" makes little sense in such an interpretation--or (2) "here on earth, here where we have been given some freedom to trouble men before the end." This obvious sense of the text presupposes that Jesus has come to the earth before the End. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Jesus' preexistence is presupposed.

30-31 Mark (5:13) puts the number of the herd at two thousand and says it was "there." Matthew says it was "some distance from them" (v. 30), the sort of detail an eyewitness might well remember. This detail also weakens the suggestion that the pigs stampeded because of the men's convulsions. J.D.M. Derrett's proposed reconstruction ("Legend and Event: The Gerasene Demoniac: An Inquest into History and Liturgical Projection," in Livingstone, 2:63-73), based on the Romans' sacrificing of pigs and on Jewish myths connecting Gentiles with bestiality, has no textual support. There are other reasons why the demons may have pled (v. 31) to be sent into the herd of pigs: (1) desire for a bodily "home"; (2) hatred of God's creatures; (3) desire to stir up animosity against Jesus. The first does not seem likely because the first thing the demons do is precipitate the death of their new "home." The second and third are more plausible, because the Gospels elsewhere show that exorcized evil spirits sometimes

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expressed their rage by visible acts of violence or mischief (e.g., 17:14-20 = Mark 9: 14-32; cf. Jos Antiq. VIII, 48 [ii.5], often cited, but of doubtful relevance because the exorcist there commands the demon to manifest himself). Gundry (*Matthew*) observes that the herd rushes down the slope but that in Matthew "they" (pl.) die; i.e., Matthew has transformed Mark to make the demons die. Thus Jesus "tortures" the demons "before the appointed time" by sending them to the torments of hell, and Matthew thus "deals in a bit of realized eschatology." This reconstruction is far from convincing. 1. There is no hint that the drowning of the pigs sends the demons to hell.

2. Mark also shifts from the singular--the herd rushing down the slope--to the plural--"were drowning." The only difference is that Matthew has omitted reference to the number "two thousand." 3. But if Matthew's plural verb cannot refer back to "two thousand," its most natural subject is the word "pigs," found in this same verse (v. 32). The reason Matthew does not use a singular verb for died is because it would be awkward to speak of a herd's dying. Matthew has therefore preserved Mark's pattern--single verb followed by plural verb.

32-34 The question as to why Jesus would grant the demons their desire and let them destroy the herd of pigs (v. 32), the livelihood of their owners, is part of larger questions as to why human beings are possessed or why disease, misfortune, or calamity overtake us--questions only to be answered within the context of a broad theodicy outside the scope of this commentary. But the context offers some hints. He who is master of nature (vv. 23-27) is also its ultimate owner (vv. 28-34; cf. Ps 50:10). The "appointed time" (v. 29) for full destruction of the demons' power has not yet arrived. The pigs' stampede dramatically proved that the former demoniacs had indeed been freed (v.

33). But in the light of vv. 33-34, the loss of the herd became a way of exposing the real values of the people in the vicinity. They preferred pigs to persons, swine to the Savior. This ending of the pericope bears significantly on its total meaning. If the story shows once more that Jesus' ministry was not restricted to the Jews but foreshadowed the mission to the Gentiles, it likewise shows that opposition to Jesus is not exclusively Jewish. To this extent it confirms earlier exegesis (see on 8:11-12) that showed that opponents in Matthew are not selected on the basis of race but according to their response to Jesus.

b. Healing a paralytic and forgiving his sins (9:1-8)

Again Matthew's account is shortened (cf. Mark 2:2-12; Luke 5:17-26), the en

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trance through the roof having been eliminated. The interrelationships among the Synoptics in this pericope are complex. It has been shown, as Bo Reicke says, that the various narrative elements "cannot be derived from any source that did not include the essentials of the quotation elements represented by three gospels together" ("The Synoptic Reports on the Healing of the Paralytic: Matt. 9:1-8 with Parallels," in Elliott, p. 325; though it is doubtful that Reicke has disproved the two-source hypothesis, as he seems to think). The shortened opening does not change this from a "miracle story" to a "controversial story (contra Held, in Bornkamm, *Tradition* , pp. 176f.). Heil (Healing Miracles," pp. 276-78) has shown that the form-critical marks of a miracle story are retained. Still less is this a miracle story into which a controversy about forgiving sin has been inserted, sparked by the church's attempt to tie its own forgiving function to Jesus' ministry (so Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition* , pp. 14-16). The pericope is exclusively christological and has nothing to do with the disciples. Form-critical categories are handled mechanically if taken a priori to require that no controversy triggered by the way Jesus performed a healing could have been passed on! More over the close connections between sin and sickness (see on v. 17) and this extension of Jesus' authority beyond healing, nature, and the demonic realm to the forgiveness of sins make the narrative internally coherent and contextually suitable.

1 It is unclear whether this verse ties in more closely with 8:28-34 or with 9:2-8. The problem is not just academic, for the preceding pericope is almost certainly chronologically later (cf. Mark 5:1-20) than this one (cf. Mark 2:2-12); and a break more easily fits between 9:1 and 9:2 than between 8:34 and 9:1. Begged to leave (8:34), Jesus embarked in the boat he had so recently left and returned to "his own town," viz., Capernaum (4:13), on the western shore of the lake. A

larger problem concerning synoptic interrelationships now faces us. Matthew 9:14 and Luke 5:33 show that the questions about fasting sprang from the dinner Matthew sponsored. And 9:18 shows that the healing of Jairus's daughter and of the hemorrhaging woman immediately followed. Mark 5:21-23 and Luke 8:40-44 place the raising of Jairus's daughter after Jesus returned from Gadara (as in Matthew) but the healing of the paralytic (Mark 2:2-12; Luke 5:17-26) much earlier--even though Matthew places it after Gadara and seems to tie it to the pericopes that follow in his account. Harmonization should be avoided where details are obscure, but refusal to attempt harmonization of documents treating the same events is methodologically irresponsible. Here a fairly straightforward solution is possible. There is a significant time lapse between Matthew's calling and the dinner he gives his friends. All three synoptists put these two personally related events side by side. But significantly no synoptist makes a

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temporal connection between the two. The following shows the arrangement.

Time A: before | healing of a paralytic

Gadara | calling of Matthew

| All Synoptics | Mark and | Matthew

[TIME LAPSE: Gadara | put these | Luke | places

incident and others] | two events | place | all four

| together | these | together

| | three | at

Time B: after | | together | Time B

Gadara | dinner given by Matthew | | at Time A |

| raising of Jairus's daughter

Thus all the Synoptics put the raising of Jairus's daughter in the correct chronological order. Mark and Luke report the healing of the paralytic and the calling of Matthew at the earlier time, when they occurred, but then link to this Matthew's dinner--a topical arrangement. Matthew links all four together, placing them later though there is a chronological break at vv. 1-2 (see above) and again between Matthew's call and Matthew's dinner. The first evangelist has introduced the first chronological break in order to preserve the topical arrangement of his presentation of Jesus' authority and the second break (vv. 9-10), along with Mark and Luke because of the personal connection (Matthew's call and Matthew's dinner). This rather

obvious solution is invalid only if Matthew's (and Luke's) sole source of information in this pericope is Mark. But despite some critics, this is most unlikely (cf. Introduction, sections 1-5).

2 Many (e.g., Weiss, Hill) insist that though in Mark and Luke the paralytic is lowered through a roof, here the imperfect *prosepheron* ("they were bringing," NASB) means the paralytic and his bearers met Jesus in the street. But the imperfect tense often adds color to action (cf. the imperfect even in Luke), and little is gained by manufacturing discrepancies. Jesus "saw" *their* faith--presumably that of the paralytic and those carrying him--exemplified in their coming. But he spoke only to the paralytic. "Son" (*teknon*) is no more than an affectionate term from one's senior (cf. 1John 2:1, 28 et al.). What Jesus went on to say implies a close link between sin and sickness (see on 8:17 perhaps in this case a direct one (cf. John 5:14; 1Cor 11:29-30). It implies that of the two, paralysis and sin, sin is the more basic problem. The best MSS read *aphientai* ("Your sins are forgiven"), not the perfect *apheontai* ("Your sins have been forgiven"): see Notes. The latter might imply that the man's sins were forgiven at some time in the past and now remain forgiven.

3 Some teachers of the law (see on 2:4; 8:18-22) muttered among themselves that Jesus was blaspheming. It is God alone who forgives sin (Isa 43:25; 44:22), since it is

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against him only that men commit sin (Ps 51:4). The verb *blasphemeo* often means "slander"; and when something is said that slanders God, the modern meaning of "blaspheme" is not far away. Though among Jews in Jesus' day the precise definition of blasphemy was hotly disputed (cf. SBK, 1:1019f.), the consensus seemed to be that using the divine name was an essential element. Here the teachers of the law in their whispered consultation, expanded blasphemy to include Jesus' claim to do something only God could do.

4 Jesus had seen the faith of the paralytic and his friends, now he saw the evil thoughts of some of the teachers of the law (cf. Notes). Such discernment may have been supernatural, though not necessarily so. In this situation it would not have been difficult to surmise what the teachers of the law were whispering about. Jesus' charge probed beyond their talk of blasphemy to what they were thinking in their hearts. And what they were thinking was untrue, unbelieving, and blind to what was being revealed before their eyes.

5-7 Jesus did not respond to his opponents' thoughts according to the skeptical view-- viz., that to say "your sins are forgiven" is easier to say than "Get up and walk" (v. 5). On the contrary, he responded according to the perspective of the teachers of the law-- viz., that to say "Get up and walk" is easier since only God can forgive sins. Jesus claimed to do the more difficult thing. Thus v. 6 is ironical--"All right, I'll also do the lesser deed." Yet if Jesus had blasphemed in pronouncing forgiveness, how could he now perform a miracle (cf. John 9:31)? But so that they might know that he had authority to forgive sin, he proceeded to the easier task. The healing therefore showed that Jesus truly had authority to forgive sins. To do this is the prerogative of the "Son of Man." This expression goes beyond self-reference and, seen in the light of the postresurrection period, surely indicates that the eschatological Judge had already come "on earth" (cf.

"here" in 8:29) with the authority to forgive sin (cf. Hooker, *Son of Man* , pp. 81-93). This is the authority of Emmanuel, "God with us" (1:23), sent to "save his people from their sins" (1:21). Jesus did not finish the sentence: the broken syntax (BDF, par. 483) is followed by Jesus' word of power and his command to the paralytic to go home (*hypage* , "go," is here gentle as in 8:13, not rough as in 4:10). To sum up, the healing not only cured the paralytic (v. 7), it also assured him that his sins were forgiven and refuted the charge of blasphemy.

8 The external evidence for "were afraid" is early and in three text types (Alexandrian, Western, Caesarean). Copyists, failing to see the profundity of the verb, softened it to "were amazed." NIV's "were filled with awe" implies fear but is too paraphrastic. Men *should* fear the one who has the authority to forgive sins. Indeed

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they should fear whenever they are confronted by an open manifestation of God (cf. 17: 6; 28:5, 10). Such fear breeds praise. Matthew alone adds the clause "who had given such authority to men." Many argue that "to men" refers to the church and cite 16:19; 18:18 in support (e.g., Benoit, Held, Hill, Hummel). But this is unlikely. If "Son of Man" (v. 6) refers to the eschatological Judge, then it is unlikely that this function is to be shared with the church, at least in the same way (cf. Colpe, TDNT, 8:405). The pericope has christological, not ecclesiastical, concerns, compatible with the prologue (1:21, 23; see on vv. 5-7). The onlookers simply saw a man exercising the authority of God, but readers recognize him as "God with us" and eschatological "Son of Man." God's gracious reign has come "on earth" (v. 6); the kingdom of David's Son, who came to save his people from their sins, has dawned.

5. Calling Matthew (9:9)

9 The locale is probably the outskirts of Capernaum. Matthew was sitting "at the tax collector's booth," a customs and excise booth at the border between the territories of Philip and Herod Antipas. On attitudes toward tax collectors, see on 5:46 (cf. also SBK, 1:377-80). Having demonstrated his authority to forgive sins (vv. 1-8), Jesus now called to himself a man whose occupation made him a pariah--a sinner and an associate of sinners (cf. 1Tim 1:15). The name "Matthew" may derive from the Hebrew behind "Mattaniah" (1 Chronicles 9:15), meaning "gift of God," or, in another etymology, from a word meaning "the faithful" (Heb. *emet*). In Mark the name is "Levi" (though in Mark there are difficult textual variants), and the change to "Matthew" in the first Gospel has prompted much speculation. The most radical theory is that of R. Pesch ("Levi- Matthaüs," ZNW 59 [1968]: 40-56), who says that the first evangelist purposely substituted a

name from the apostolic band because he habitually uses "disciple" for the Twelve and therefore could not allow an outsider to stand. The evangelist then made a "sinner" out of him to represent the "sinners" among the apostles. "Matthew" in the first Gospel is thus reduced entirely to a redactional product. But Pesch's understanding of "disciple" is questionable (see on 5:1-2; 8:18-22), and his skepticism is vast. Since Jews not uncommonly had two or more names, the simple equation of Levi and Matthew is the most obvious course to take. Matthew may have been a Levite. Such a heritage would have assumed intimate acquaintance with Jewish tradition. Mark and Luke have "Matthew" in their lists of apostles (Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Pesch has to say Mark 3:18 is also redactional). See for another example of a prominent NT figure with two names the apostle Paul. Acts has both "Saul" and "Paul," but in his own

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writings Paul always refers to himself by the latter name. So Mark and Luke use both "Levi" and "Matthew," but Matthew uses only the latter. (There is no evidence that either "Paul" or "Matthew" are Christian names, and the parallel is inexact because "Paul," unlike "Matthew," is a Gentile name.) Gundry (*Use of OT* , pp. 181-83) suggests that Matthew's work as a tax collector assured his fluency in Aramaic and Greek and that his accuracy in keeping records fitted him for note taking and later writing his Gospel. Hill (*Matthew*), following Stendahl (Peake, p. 673j), thinks it unlikely that a person living on "the despised outskirts of Jewish life" could be responsible for this Gospel. But does it not also seem unlikely that "a son of thunder" should become the apostle of love, or that the arch- persecutor of the church should become its greatest missionary and theologian? If Matthew wrote 9:9 regarding his own call, it is significant that it is more self- deprecating than Luke's account, which says that Matthew "left everything" and followed Jesus.

6. *Eating with sinners* (9:10-13)

On the chronological relation between v. 9 and vv. 10-13, see on 9:1. Matthew abbreviates the account of Jesus' eating with tax collectors and sinners, excluding descriptive elements that do not contribute to the confrontation, but adding an OT quotation (v. 13).

10-11 For comment on the opening words *kai egeneto* ("and it came to pass"; NIV "while"), see on 7:28-29. The Greek text does not mention "Matthew's" house, though v. 9 implies it is Matthew's and both Mark and Luke specify it (so NIV). Jesus himself had said that even a tax collector has his friends (5:46), and Matthew's dinner substantiates this. "Sinners" may include

common folk who did not share all the scruples of the Pharisees (cf. TDNT, 1:324-25); hence the quotation marks in NIV. But almost certainly it groups together those who broke Pharisaic Halakoth (rules of conduct)--harlots, tax collectors, and other disreputable people (cf. Hummel, pp. 22ff.). Though eating with them entailed dangers of ceremonial defilement, Jesus and his disciples did so. The Pharisees' question, put not to Jesus but to his disciples, was less a request for information than a charge; and contemptuously it lumped together "tax collectors and sinners" under one article (cf. 11:19; Luke 15:1-2 for the same attitude). There can be little doubt that Jesus was known as a friend to tax collectors and sinners (Matt 11:19; cf. M. Volkel, "'Freund der Zollner und Sunder,'" ZNW 69 [1978]: 1-10; and see note on 5:46).

12-13 These verses again connect Jesus' healing ministry with his "healing" of sinners

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(see on 8:17). The sick need a doctor (v. 12), and Jesus healed them; likewise the sinful need mercy, forgiveness, restoration, and Jesus healed them (v. 13). The Pharisees were not so healthy as they thought (cf. 7:1-5); more important they did not understand the purpose of Jesus' mission. Expecting a Messiah who would crush the sinful and support the righteous, they had little place for one who accepted and transformed the sinner and dismissed the "righteous" as hypocrites. Jesus explained his mission in terms reminiscent of 1:21. There is no suggestion here that he went to sinners because they gladly received him; rather, he went to them because they were sinners, just as a doctor goes to the sick because they are sick. The quotation (v. 13) is from Hosea 6:6 and is introduced by the rabbinic formula "go and learn," used of those who needed to study the text further. Use of the formula may be slightly sardonic: those who prided themselves in their knowledge of and conformity to Scripture needed to "go and learn" what it means. The quotation, possibly translated from the Hebrew by Matthew himself, is cast in Semitic antithesis: "not A but B often means B is of more basic importance than A." The Hebrew word for "mercy" (*hesed*) is close in meaning to "covenant love," which, according to Hosea, is more important than "sacrifice." Through Hosea, God said that the apostates of Hosea's day, though continuing the formal ritual of temple worship, had lost its center. As applied to the Pharisees by Jesus, therefore, the Hosea quotation was not simply telling them that they should be more sympathetic to outcasts and less concerned about ceremonial purity, but that they were aligned with the apostates of ancient Israel in that they too preserved the shell while losing the heart of the matter, as exemplified by their attitude to tax collectors and sinners (cf. France, *Jesus*, p. 70). Jesus' final statement (v. 13b) therefore cannot mean that he viewed the Pharisees as righteous people who did not need him, who were already perfectly acceptable to God by virtue of their obedience to his laws so that their only fault was the exclusion of others (contra Hill, *Greek Words*, pp. 130f.). If the Pharisees were so righteous, the demand for righteousness surpassing that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law (5:20) would be incoherent. On the other hand, it may not

be exactly right to say that "righteous" is ironic here. The saying simply defines the essential nature of Jesus' messianic mission as he himself saw it. If pushed he would doubtless have affirmed the universal sinfulness of man (cf. 7:11). Therefore he is not dividing men into two groups but disavowing one image of what Messiah should be and do, replacing it with the correct one. His mission was characterized by grace, a pursuit of the lost, of sinners. The verb *kalesai* ("to call") means "to invite" (unlike Paul's usage, where the call is always efficacious). By implication those who do not see themselves in the light of Jesus' mission not only fail to grasp the purpose of his coming but exclude them selves from the kingdom's blessings.

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If Matthew does not add "to repentance" after "sinners" (as Luke 5:32), it is not because he is disinterested in repentance (cf. 3:2; 4:17). Rather, the words are riot in his principal source (Mark) and do not in any case contribute to his present theme.

Hosea 6:6 is also quoted in 12:7, again in a context challenging the Pharisees' legal scruples. Cope (*Matthew* , pp. 68-70) suggests that the verse reveals a contrast between the substantial demands of mercy and merely legal and ceremonial piety, a contrast traceable in the following pericopes (vv. 14-17, 18-26, 27-34, 35-38). But his evidence is slightly overdrawn. In 9:27-34, for instance, vv. 27-31 raise no overt hints of ceremonial defilement.

7. Fasting and the dawning of the messianic joy (9:14-17)

14 Mark (2:18-22; cf. Luke 5:33-39) says that both the Pharisees and the disciples of John were fasting--probably on one of the regularly observed but voluntary fast days (see on 4:2; 6:16-18)--and that "some people" asked this question. Luke makes it the Pharisees, Matthew the disciples of John. On the face of it (see Luke), the setting is the same as for the previous pericope, and regarding fasting the disciples of John are in accord with the Pharisees. The Baptist himself showed a noble freedom from jealousy when Jesus' ministry began to supersede his own (cf. esp. John 3:26-31). But some of John's disciples felt differently now that he was in prison (4:12); and because they kept up their leader's asceticism (11:18), not heeding his strong witness to Jesus, they saw an occasion for criticism. Most modern commentators believe that here Matthew is referring to the Baptist's followers who never accepted Jesus' supremacy and who by the end of the first century had developed their own sect. Doubtless Matthew would have cheerfully applied Jesus' response to them also. But there is no reason to deny that this incident happened during Jesus' ministry. Moreover, after the bridegroom was taken

away (v. 15), Jesus' disciples often fasted (e.g., Acts 13:3; 14:23; 27:9), making it less likely that these Baptist sectarians would have leveled their charge after the Passion and Resurrection than before it. Just as the "questioners" (accusers?) had approached Jesus' disciples about his conduct (v. 11), so now questioners approached Jesus about his disciples' conduct.

15 For his response Jesus used three illustrations (Luke 5:39 adds a fourth), all given in the same order by the Synoptics. There seems little to be gained by sup posing that the sayings were at one time separate. The first illustration about the "guests of the bridegroom" (lit., "the sons of the brides chamber"; see on 5:9; 8:12) picks up a metaphor from the Baptist, who saw himself as the "best man" and Jesus as the groom (John 3:29). This similar metaphor

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would therefore be the more effective to this audience--Jesus is the groom and the disciples his "guests" who are so overjoyed at being with him that for them to fast is inappropriate. In exonerating his disciples' eating, Jesus used messianic-eschatological terms. In the OT the bridegroom metaphor was repeatedly applied to God (Isa 54:5-6; 62:4-5; Hos 2:16-20); and Jews sometimes used it of marriage in connection with Messiah's coming or with the messianic banquet (cf. SBK, 1:500-518; and in the NT, cf. Matt 22: 2; 25:1; 2Cor 11:2; Eph 5:23-32; Rev 19:7, 9; 21:2). Thus Jesus' answer was implicitly christological: he himself is the messianic bridegroom, and the Messianic Age has dawned. The objection is often made that the second part of Jesus' answer, regarding the disciples' mourning once the groom is taken (*aparthē*, "taken," may bear overtones of Isa 53:8 LXX) from them, is not authentic on two chief grounds. 1. Such an obvious reference to the Passion (and Ascension?) comes too early in Jesus' ministry. Some try to avoid this objection by supposing that Jesus was saying no more than that he like other men must die sometime. Neither the objection nor its proposed solution is relevant to one who has already revealed so formidable a messianic self-consciousness. 2. Matthew has allegorized the original parable--a sign of late accretion or adaptation. Yet this simplistic view of "parable" will not withstand scrutiny (cf. further on 13:3a). Above all the language is so cryptic that it is doubtful whether even Jesus' disciples grasped the messianic implications of these words till the early weeks of the postresurrection church.

16-17 Luke 5:36 labels these illustrations "parables." In general terms the first of this pair is clear enough: a piece of unshrunk cloth tightly sewed to old and well-shrunk cloth in order to repair a tear will cause a bigger tear (v. 16). Admittedly the grammar is difficult (cf. Notes). The second (v. 17) is also a "slice of life" in the ancient world. Skin bottles for carrying various

fluids were made by killing the chosen animal, cutting off its head and feet, skinning the carcass, and sewing up the skin, fur side out, to seal off all orifices but one (usually the neck). The skin was tanned with special care to minimize disagreeable taste. In time the skin became hard and brittle. If new wine, still fermenting, were put into such an old skin, the buildup of fermenting gases would split the brittle container and ruin both bottle and wine. New wine was placed only in new wineskins still pliable and elastic enough to accommodate the pressure. These illustrations show that the new situation introduced by Jesus could not simply be patched onto old Judaism or poured into the old wineskins of Judaism. New forms would have to accompany the kingdom Jesus was now inaugurating; to try to domesticate him and incorporate him into the matrix of established Jewish religion

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would only succeed in ruining both Judaism and Jesus' teaching.

Two extreme interpretations must be avoided.

1. Some, noticing that the words "and both are preserved" (v. 17) are found only in Matthew, conclude that this first Gospel, unlike Mark, envisages the renewal and preservation of Judaism, not its abolition. This will not do: the "both" that are preserved refers to the new wine and the new wineskins, not the old wineskins. Jesus' teaching and the kingdom now dawning must be poured into new forms. Matthew makes it at least as clear as does Mark that the new wine can only be preserved in new forms. Is it any surprise that Matthew includes explicit mention of the church (16:18; 18:17)?
2. Dispensationalists are inclined to make this wine so new that there is no connection whatever with what has come before. Walvoord (p. 70) cites Ironside: "He had not come to add something to the legal dispensation but to supersede it with that which was entirely new.... The new wine of grace was not to be poured into the skin-bottles of legality." So sharp an antithesis is suspect on three grounds: (1) the grace- legality disjunction is greatly exaggerated; (2) it is not very obviously a set of Matthean categories; and (3) Matthew, as we have seen, repeatedly connects the OT with his own message in terms of prophecy and fulfillment. The two parables of vv. 16-17 are frequently said to be independent sayings tacked on here, since they go beyond the question of fasting. That may be, but all three synoptists put them in the same place. Moreover they go beyond the question of fasting only to lay the groundwork for the coherence of Jesus' answer about fasting. The newness Jesus brings cannot be reduced to or contained by traditions of Jewish piety. The messianic bridegroom has come. These parables bring unavoidable and radical implications for the entire structure of Jewish religion as its leaders then conceived it. Scholars who understand the first Gospel to reflect a Jewish Christian community that preserves all the old forms of piety not only misinterpret 5:17-20 but do not

adequately weigh this pericope.

8. A resurrection and more healings (9:18-34)

a. Raising a girl and healing a woman (9:18-26)

For the chronology, see on v. 1. Matthew abbreviates Mark (5:21-43; cf. Luke 8:40-46) by almost one-third. Again, the three synoptists are very close in reporting the words of Jesus. Gerard Rochais (*Les recits de resurrection des morts dans le Nouveau Testament* [Cambridge: University Press, 1980], pp. 88-99) reduces the point of Matthew's account to the importance of faith. Faith is indeed an important theme (v. 22), but

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scarcely exclusive of others. While these are best discovered inductively, we may note that in vv. 18-34 Jesus performs three new kinds of miracles: raising the dead (the healing of the hemorrhaging woman is already an integral part of this account in the Markan source) and healing the blind and the dumb. The latter two appear in Matthew much earlier than in the closest parallels in Mark and Luke (see on vv. 27-31), because his topical concerns demand it. He includes at this point these final examples of spheres over which Jesus has authority because they figure in his defense to the disciples of John the Baptist (11:2-5): the blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear (usually also associated with muteness), the dead are raised. Jesus' messianic credentials are thus being grouped together.

18-19 Matthew tightly links this narrative to the dinner in his house. Mark 5:21 provides another setting: while Jesus was by the lake, etc. This anomaly has called forth numerous explanations, mostly unsatisfactory. Some have postulated that Matthew here follows another source (a desperate expedient that does not explain why he chooses to contradict Mark); others that Matthew simplifies Mark in the interests of catechesis (How is catechesis helped by a different setting almost as long as the first?); others by supposing the dinner party in v. 10 took place in a house by the lake (barely possible but artificial); others that vv. 14-17 should be detached from the dinner (barely possible, but artificial in light of Luke 5:33). The best solution accepts the connection between Matthew's dinner (vv. 9-13), the discussion about fasting (vv. 14-17), and this miracle (vv. 18-26). But the NIV rendering of Mark 5:21-22 links Jesus by the lake with the approach of the synagogue ruler ("While he was by the lake, one of the synagogue rulers ... "). The Greek does not suggest this; syntactically Jesus' presence by the lake terminates the thought of Mark 5:21: Jesus crossed back after the Gadara episode, a large crowd again gathered, and he was by the lake. Verse 22 then begins a new pericope without a necessary transition--which is exactly what

Mark does elsewhere (e.g., 3:20, 31; 8:22; 10:46; 14:66). In some instances like this one (Mark 5:22; cf. 1:40), the precise division is ambiguous. But Mark's practice elsewhere encourages us to think this interpretation is right, and the NIV translation wrong. Further, the words *kai idou* in Luke 8:41 should not be rendered "Just then" (NIV). This suggests that Jairus approached Jesus almost immediately on disembarking from the boat. In fact, *kai idou* in Luke very often either does not or cannot mean "just then" (e.g., Luke 5:18; 7:37, 9:30, 39 et al.) and is not so rendered by NIV. Though the words can fix a chronological connection, they may simply suggest a new or surprising development or even serve as a loose connective. There seems little merit in translating them so as to exclude the possibility of an obvious harmonization. "A ruler" (cf. Notes) in the context of Capernaum almost certainly refers to a

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synagogue ruler (v. 18), a point made explicit by Mark 5:22, which also tells us his name was Jairus. He must therefore have been a Jew and a man of considerable influence in the lives of the people. He "knelt before" Jesus: the verb here does not suggest "worship" (contra KJV) but deep courtesy, a pleading homage before some one in a position to grant a favor (see on 2:2; 8:2). His daughter "has just died": attempts to make *arti eteleutesen* mean is now dying (NIV mg.) stem not from Greek syntax but from too simplistic a desire to harmonize this account with Mark and Luke. Better to recognize that Matthew, having eliminated the messengers as extraneous to his purposes, condenses "so as to present at the outset what was actually true before Jesus reached the house" (Broadus): such is Matthew's condensed style elsewhere (see on 8:5). The synagogue ruler felt Jesus' touch had special efficacy, but his faith was not as great as that of the centurion who believed that Jesus could heal by his word (8:5-13). Jesus did not refuse him but responded to faith, small or great. He "got up" (v. 19; the word *egeiro* most likely means, in this context, "rose from reclining at table" [of v. 10]; see on harmonization problem, above) and "went with [*akoloutho* , an evidence that this verb does not necessarily imply discipleship; see on 8:23] him."

20-21 The nature of the woman's hemorrhage (v. 20) is uncertain; if, as seems probable, it was chronic bleeding from the womb, then she was perpetually unclean (cf. Lev 15:25-33). The regulation of such a woman's life was considered so important that the Mishnah devotes an entire tractate to the subject (*Zabim*) and gives some of the "remedies" for staunching the flow. Having heard of others who had been healed at Jesus' touch, this woman decided to touch even a tassel of Jesus' cloak (v. 21). Moved in part by a superstitious view of Jesus, she struggled through the crowd, which, because of her "unclean" condition, she should have avoided. The word *kraspedon* can mean either "edge" or "tassel." The former may be the

meaning here (so NIV); but the latter is certainly the meaning in 23:5. Tassels (Heb. *sisit*) were sewn on the four corners of every Israelite's cloak (Num 15:37-41; Deut 22:12) as reminders to obey God's commands. While the tassels could easily become mere showpieces (23:5), Jesus himself, like any male Jew, doubtless wore them.

22 Though Matthew's account is again abbreviated, various explanations of this--e.g., short accounts are easier to memorize (Hill, *Matthew*), or Matthew eliminates magical elements (Hull, pp. 136f.)--are less convincing than the obvious one: viz., Matthew keeps only what is of most interest to him. The account is so short that it is not entirely clear whether Jesus turned and saw the woman before or after she touched him. The parallel accounts say the latter, and this may well be reflected in the perfect tense "your faith has healed you." The woman was healed on touching Jesus' cloak. He said

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that it was her faith that was effective, not the superstition mingled with it.

This seems better than the view that holds that Jesus first encouraged the woman ("Take heart, daughter") and then healed her without any reference to touching. Matthew 9:2; 14:27 are cited as parallels for this order. In fact, the three incidents differ somewhat; 9:2 according to the best variant says, in effect, "Take heart, for I now forgive you"; 9:22 says, "Take heart, for you have now been healed"; and 14:27 is quite different, since "Take heart" logically relates to "It is I," and the miracle of the stilling of the tempest is yet future. The final clauses of v. 22 should therefore be interpreted to mean, not that the woman was healed from the "moment" Jesus spoke, but that she was healed from the *hora* (lit., "hour") of this encounter with Jesus.

23-26 Flute players (v. 23) were employed both on festive occasions (Rev 18:22) and at funerals. Matthew alone mentions them, not so much because he had special knowledge of Jewish funeral customs (cf. *M Ketuboth* 4:4, which required even a poor family to hire two flute players and one professional wailing woman), but out of personal recollection. Jesus was about to reverse funeral symbolism of the finality of death. The "noisy crowd" was made up of friends mourning, not in the hushed whispers characteristic of our Western funerals, but in loud outbursts of grief and wailing augmented by cries of hired mourners. Jesus' miracle not only brought a corpse to life (v. 24) but hope to despair.

"Laughed" (*katagelao*) occurs only here (v. 24) and in the synoptic parallels. The crowd mocked Jesus, not just because he had said, "The girl is not dead but asleep," but even more because they thought that this great healer had arrived too late. Now he was going too far; carried away by his own success, he would try his skill on a corpse and make a fool of himself. In such a situation Jesus' words became, in retrospect, all the more profound.

They not only denied that death--confronted by his power--was final, they also assumed that contrary to the Sadducean view (22:23) "sleep" better described the girl's condition. In the Bible "sleep" often denotes "death" but never "nonexistence" (cf. Dan 12:2; John 11:11; Acts 7:60; 1Cor 15:6, 18; 1Thess 4:13-15; 2 Peter 3:4). The mocking crowd was ejected from the house (v. 25). Matthew does not tell us, as Mark does, that the five witnesses remained; nor does he give us Jesus' words. But Matthew says that Jesus touched the corpse; and the body, far from defiling him, came to life. By itself the miracle did not prove Jesus to be more than a prophet or an apostle (cf. 1 Kings 17:17-24; 2 Kings 4:17-37; Acts 9:36-42). But prophets and apostles never claimed to be more than their office indicated. Jesus made vastly greater claims; so for Matthew the miracle showed that Jesus' authority as the Christ extended even over the dead.

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b. Healing two blind men (9:27-31)

This pericope is usually taken as a doublet of the Bartimaeus miracle (20:29-34; Mark 10:46-52; Luke 18:35-43). But close examination shows little verbal correspondence between the Synoptics; and such correspondence as exists is considerably less than that between two pericopes in Matthew telling of entirely different miracles (cf. Bornkamm, *Tradition* , pp. 219-20). Blindness was and still is common in the Mideast. Jesus performed many such miracles (see on 4:23; 8:16-17; 9:

35). The most striking parallel is the cry "Have mercy on us, Son of David" (v. 27). But this also occurs in 15:22 in a story having nothing to do with blindness; so the title "Son of David" may well have another explanation (see below). Certainly the point of 20:29-34 is quite different from this pericope. Here the focus is on Jesus' authority and the blind men's faith; there it is on the compassion of Jesus the King as he interrupts his journey to Jerusalem to respond to their cries. Moreover Matthew, we have repeatedly observed, condenses his narratives. Proposals that similar stories are doublets (a form of lengthening) must therefore be treated with suspicion. Likewise the supposition that Matthew has two blind men because Mark (his source) has two stories (8:22-26; 10:46-52), each describing the healing of one blind man, and that Matthew has simply added the number of the men and put them into one story is fanciful. Mark does have two stories of separate healings, one of which Matthew takes over (Mark 10:46-52; Matt 20:29-34). And Matthew and Mark each add another healing-of-the- blind miracle (Matt 9:27-31; Mark 8:22-26). This is scarcely surprising, in view of the prevalence of blindness and the extent of Jesus' healing ministry.

27-28 Apparently Jesus was returning from the ruler's house (v. 23) either to his own house (4:13) or to that of Matthew (vv. 10, 28--the article in Greek implies it was either his own dwelling or the one previously mentioned). We

should probably envisage a large crowd after the dramatic raising of the ruler's daughter. Attached to the crowd were two blind men who had faith enough to follow him indoors. This is the first time Jesus is called "Son of David" (v. 27), and there can be no doubt that the blind men were confessing Jesus as Messiah (see on 1:1). They may have been physically blind, but they really "saw" better than many others--further evidence that Jesus came to those who needed a doctor (vv. 12-13; see on 15:22). "The use of the Davidic title [cf. 15:22; 20:30; 21:9, 15; 22:42] in address to Jesus is less extraordinary than some think: in Palestine, in the time of Jesus, there was an intense Messianic expectation" (Hill, *Matthew*). The Messianic Age was to be characterized as a time when "the eyes of the blind [would be] opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped," when "the lame [would] leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shout for joy" (Isa 35:5-6). If Jesus was really the Messiah, the blind reasoned, then he

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would have mercy on them; and they would have their sight. So their need drove them to faith. Perhaps this is what lies behind the fact in the Synoptics that "Son of David" is so often associated with the needy--those possessed by demons or, as here, in need of healing (cf. C. Burger, *Jesus als Davidsson* [Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1970]; Dennis C. Duling, "The Therapeutic Son of David: An Element in Matthew's Christological Apologetic," NTS 24 [1978]: 392-410). Jesus did not deal with the blind men until they were indoors (v. 28). This may have been to dampen messianic expectations (see on v. 30) on a day marked by two highly public and dramatic miracles (v. 26). It may also have been a device to increase their faith. The latter is suggested by his question (v. 28), which accomplished two other things: (1) it revealed that their cries were not merely those of desperation only but of faith; and (2) it showed that their faith was directed not to God alone but to Jesus' person and to his power and authority. Their title for Jesus was therefore right; he is truly the messianic Son of David. Thus we return to the first reason for delaying the healing--its being done within the house prevented the excited crowd from witnessing an implicit christological claim.

29-31 Jesus' touching the blind men's eyes (v. 29)--perhaps no more than a compassionate gesture to encourage faith--was not the sole means of this healing: it also depended on Jesus' authoritative word. "According to your faith" does not mean "in proportion to your faith" (so much faith, so much sight) but rather "since you believe, your request is granted"--cf. "your faith has healed you" (v. 22). The miracle accomplished (v. 30), Jesus "warned them sternly" to tell no one: *embrimaomai* ("I sternly warn") occurs only five times in the NT and always in connection with deep emotion (cf. Mark 1:43; 14:5; John 11:33, 38). This rather violent verb reveals Jesus' intense desire to avoid a falsely based and ill-conceived acclaim that would not only

impede but also endanger his true mission (see on 8:4). But the men whose faith brought them to Christ for healing did not stay with him to learn obedience. So the news spread like wildfire throughout the region (cf. v. 26).

c. Exorcising a dumb man (9:32-34)

Again many see in these verses a "partial doublet," this time with 12:22-24; and again the verbal parallels are minimal. Hill (*Matthew*) says that 9:32-34 has been formed out of 12:22-24 "in order to complete the cases of miraculous healing presupposed in 11:5 and 10:1." But Matthew 4:24 shows that Jesus performed many exorcisms. Was Matthew so pressed for another example that he had to tell the same story twice? If so, why is the demon-possessed man in Matthew 12 both blind and mute and this one only mute? Moreover, if v. 34 is genuine (see below), it is surely not

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surprising that the charge of being in league with Beelzebub (12:24) should begin on a private scale and take some time to explode into the open (12:24). In any case the charge is presupposed by 10:25.

32-33 The word *kophos* ("could not talk") in classical, Hellenistic, and biblical Greek means "deaf" or "dumb" or "deaf mute"; the two ailments are commonly linked, especially if deafness is congenital. Perhaps the man here (v. 32) was not only mute but a deaf mute. (On demon possession, see on 4:24, 8:28, 31.) The NT frequently attributes various diseases to demonic activity; but since the same ailment appears elsewhere without any suggestion of demonic activity (e.g., Mark 7:32-33), the frequent connection between the two is not based on primitive superstition but presupposes a real ability to distinguish between natural and demonic causes. The crowd's amazement (v. 33) climaxes the earlier excitement (vv. 26, 31). Nothing has ever been seen like this in Israel--and, by implication, if not among God's chosen people, then nowhere. But the same amazement ominously sets the stage for the Pharisees' cynical response (v. 34).

34 This verse is missing from the Western textual tradition; and Allen, Klostermann, Zahn, and others follow suit, detecting an intrusion from 12:24. But the external evidence is strong; and the verse seems presupposed in 10:25. This is not the first intimation of direct opposition to Jesus in Matthew (vv. 3, 11, 14, 24; cf. 5:10-12, 44); and even here the imperfect *elegon* (lit., "they were saying"; NIV, "said") may imply that the ferment was constantly in the background. But the tide of opposition, which later brought Jesus to the cross, now becomes an essential part of the background to the next discourse (cf. esp. 10:16-28).

9. Spreading the news of the kingdom (9:35-10:4)

a. Praying for workers (9:35-38)

As 4:23-25 prepares for the first discourse (5:7), so vv. 35-38 provide a report and summary that prepares for the second (10:5-42). A new note is added, not only are we told again of the extensiveness of Jesus' labors, but we now learn that the work was so great that many workers were needed. This leads to the commissioning of 10:1-4 and to the related discourse of 10:5-42.

Mark 6:6b has few affinities with this passage. Verse 35 is close to 4:23. Verse 36 is akin to Mark 6:34, and vv. 37-38 to Luke 10:2 (cf. also John 4:35).

35 The setting is the same as in Mark 6:6b. For the exegesis, see on 4:23. The

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principal difference is the omission of any mention of Galilee, though doubtless that is the region in view. It is possible, as older commentaries suggest, that this represents a second circuit through Galilee; but in view of Matthew's highly topical arrangement, it is precarious to deduce so much from it. Verse 35 summarizes the heart of Jesus' Galilean ministry and prepares us for the new phase of mission via the Twelve. (On "their" synagogues, see also on 7:29 and 10:17.)

36 Like Yahweh in the OT (cf. Ezek 34), Jesus showed compassion on the shepherdless crowds and judgment on the false leaders. The "sheep" Jesus sees are "harassed" (not "fainted" [KJV], which has poor attestation), i.e., bullied, oppressed; and in the face of such problems, they are "helpless," unable to rescue themselves or escape their tormentors. The language of the verse is close to Numbers 27:17 (which could almost make Joshua a "type" of Jesus); but other parallels (e.g., 1 Kings 22:17; 2 Chronicles 18:16; Isa 53:6; Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24) remind us not only of the theme's rich background but also that the shepherd can refer either to God or to the Davidic Messiah God will send (cf. 2:6; 10:6, 16; 15-24; 25:31-46; 26:31).

37-38 The metaphor changed from sheep farming to harvest (v. 37), as Jesus sought to awaken similar compassion in his disciples. Later on the harvest is the end of the age (13:49) and the judgment it brings--a common symbol (cf. Isa 17:11; Joel 3:13). Many commentators see this verse as a warning to Israel that judgment time is near. The word "plentiful" stands in the way of this interpretation; it makes sense only if here *therismos* does not mean "harvest-time" but "harvest-crop" (cf. BAGD, s.v.), as in Luke 10:2; John 4:35b. In that case the crop will be plentiful; many people will be ready to be "reaped" into the kingdom. Jesus is speaking here to "his disciples," which many take to refer to the Twelve. More likely "his disciples" designates a larger group exhorted to ask (v. 38) that the Lord of the harvest (possibly

"Lord who is harvesting," if this is a verbal genitive, cf. G.H. Waterman, "The Greek `Verbal Genitive,'" in Hawthorne, p. 292) will thrust laborers into his *therismou* (here in the sense "harvest field"). By contrast the Twelve are immediately commissioned as workers (10:1-4). This interpretation best fits 10:1: Jesus "called his twelve disciples to him." The clause is clumsy if they are the same as the "disciples" of 9:37-38 and natural only if they are part of the larger group.

b. Commissioning the Twelve (10:1-4)

1 He whose word (chs. 5-7) and deed (chs. 8-9) were characterized by authority now delegates something of that authority to twelve men. This is the first time Matthew has explicitly mentioned the Twelve (cf. v. 2; 11:1; 20:17; 26:14, 20, 47), who are

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introduced a little earlier in Mark (3:13-16). This commission appears to be the culmination of several previous steps (John 1:35-51; see on Matt 4:18-22). Indeed, Matthew's language suggests that the Twelve became a recognized group somewhat earlier. At the same time this commission was a stage in the training and preparation of those who, after Pentecost, would lead the earliest thrust of the fledgling church. Twelve were chosen, probably on an analogy to the twelve tribes of Israel (cf. also the council of twelve at Qumran, 1QS 8:1ff.), and they point to the eschatological renewal of the people of God (see on 19:28-30). The authority the Twelve received enabled them to heal and drive out "evil [lit., `unclean'] spirits"--spirits in rebellion against God, hostile to man, and capable of inflicting mental, moral, and physical harm, directly or indirectly. This is the first time in Matthew that demons are so described, and only again at 12:43 (but see on 8:16). "Every kind of disease and sickness" is exactly the expression in 4:23; 9:35. The authority granted the Twelve is in sharp contrast to the charismatic "gifts [pl.] of healing" at Corinth (1Cor 12:9, 28), which apparently were individually more restricted in what diseases each could cure.

2-4 For the first and only time in Matthew, the Twelve are called "apostles." *Apostolos* ("apostle"), cognate with *apostello* ("I send"), is not a technical term in the background literature. This largely accounts for the fact that as used in NT documents it has narrower and wider meanings (cf. DNTT, 1:126:37). Luke 6:13 explicitly affirms that Jesus himself called the Twelve "apostles"; and certainly Luke shows more interest in this question than the other three, partly in preparation for his work on the Acts of the Apostles. But in the NT the term can mean merely "messenger" (John 13:16) or refer to Jesus ("the apostle and high priest whom we confess," Heb 3:1) or elsewhere (esp. in Paul) denote "missionaries" or "representatives"--i.e., a group larger than the Twelve and Paul (Rom 16:7; 2Cor 8:23).

Nevertheless, the most natural reading of 1 Corinthians 9:1-5; 15:7; Galatians 1:17, 19 et al. is that even Paul could use the term in a narrow sense to refer to the Twelve plus himself (by special dispensation, 1Cor 15:8-10). Lists of the Twelve are found here and in three other places in the NT: Many significant things arise from comparing these lists.

1. Peter is always first, Judas Iscariot always last. Matthew uses "first" in connection with Peter; the word cannot mean he was the first convert (Andrew or perhaps John was) and probably does not simply mean "first on the list," which would be a trifling comment (cf. 1Cor 12:28). More likely it means *primus inter pares* ("first among equals"; cf. further on 16:13-20). 2. The first four names of all four lists are those of two pairs of brothers whose call is mentioned first (cf. 4:18-22).

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3. In each list there are three groups of four, each group headed by Peter, Philip (not to be confused with the evangelist), and James the son of Alphaeus respectively. But within each group the order varies (even from Luke to Acts!) except that Judas is always last. This suggests, if it does not prove, that the Twelve were organizationally divided into smaller groups, each with a leader. 4. The commission in Mark 6:7 sent the men out two by two; perhaps this accounts for the pairing in the Greek text of Matthew 10:2-4. 5. Some variations in order can be accounted for with a high degree of probability. For the first four names, Mark lists Peter, James, John, and appends Andrew, doubtless because the first three were an inner core privileged to witness the raising of Jairus's daughter and the Transfiguration and invited to be close to Jesus in his Gethsemane agony. Matthew preserves the order suggested by sibling relationships. He not only puts himself last in his group but mentions his less-than-savory past. Is this a sign of Christian humility? 6. Apparently Simon the Canaanite (Matt, Mark) is the same person as Simon the Zealot (Luke, Acts). If so, then apparently Thaddaeus is another name for Judas the brother of (or son of James (see further below). Not much is known concerning most of these men. For interesting but mostly incredible legends about them, see Hennecke (pp. 167-531).

***Simon Peter* . Simon is probably a contraction of Simeon (cf. Gen 29:33). Natives of Bethsaida on Galilee (John 1:44), he and his brother Andrew were fishermen (Matt 4: 18-20) and possibly disciples of John the Baptist before they became disciples of Jesus (John 1:35-42). Jesus gave Simon the name Cephas (in Aram.; "Peter" in Gr. [John 1: 43]; see on 4:18). Impulsive and ardent, Peter's great strengths were his great weaknesses. New Testament evidence about him is abundant. Tracing Peter's movements after the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15) is very difficult..**

***Andrew* . Peter's brother is not nearly so prominent in the NT. He appears again only in Mark 13:3; John 1:35-44; 6:8; 12:22, and in late and unreliable traditions. The Johannine evidence shows him to have been quietly committed to bringing others to Jesus.**

***James and John* . James was probably the older (he almost always appears first). But as he became the first apostolic martyr (Acts 12:2), he never achieved his brother's prominence. The brothers were sons of Zebedee the fisherman, whose business was successful enough to employ others (Mark 1:20) while his wife was able to support Jesus' ministry (Matt 27:55-56; Luke 8:3). His wealth may help account for the family's link with the house of the high priest John 18:15-16), as well as for the fact that**

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he alone of the Twelve stood by the cross. The brothers' mother was probably Salome (cf. Matt 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1), and her motives were not unmixed (see on Matt 20:20-21). Perhaps the sons inherited something of her aggressive nature; whatever its source, the nickname "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17; cf. also Mark 9:38-41, Luke 9: 54-56) reveals something of their temperament. John may have been a disciple of John the Baptist John 1:35-41). Of James we know nothing until Matthew 4:21-22. John was undoubtedly a special friend of Peter (Luke 22:8; John 18:15; 20:2-8; Acts 3:1-4:21; 8: 14; Gal 2:9). Reasonably reliable tradition places him after the Fall of Jerusalem in Ephesus, where he ministered long and usefully into old age, taking a hand in the nurture of leaders like Polycarp, Papias, and Ignatius. Broadus's summary does not seem too fanciful: "[The] vaulting ambition which once aspired to be next to royalty in a worldly kingdom (20:20 ff.), now seeks to overcome the world, to bear testimony to the truth, to purify the churches, and glorify God."

Philip . Like Peter and Andrew, Philip's home was Bethsaida John 1:44); he too left the Baptist to follow Jesus. For incidents about him, see John 6:5-7; 12:21-22; 14:8-14. In the lists he invariably appears first in the second group of four. Polycrates, a second- century bishop, says Philip ministered in the Roman province of Asia and was buried at Hierapolis.

Bartholomew . The name means "son of Tolmai" or "son of Tholami" (cf. LXX Josh 15:14) or "son of Tholomaeus" (cf. Jos. Antiq. XX, 5 [i.1]). Many have identified him with Nathanael on the grounds that (1) the latter is apparently associated with the Twelve John 21:2; cf. 1:43-51), (2) Philip brought Nathanael to Jesus John 1:43-46), and (3) Philip and Bartholomew are always associated in the lists of apostles. The evidence is not strong; but if it is solid, we also know he came from Cana (John 21:2). He is remembered for Jesus' tribute to him (John 1:47).

Thomas . Also named "Didymus" (John 11:16; 21:2), which in Aramaic means "Twin," Thomas appears in Gospel narratives only in John 11:16; 14:5; 20:24-29. Known for his doubt, he should also be known for his courage (John 11:16) and his profound confession John 20:28). Some traditions claim he went to India as a missionary and was martyred there; others place his later ministry in Persia.

Matthew . See on 9:9; Introduction, section 5.

James the son of Alphaeus . The extra phrase distinguishes him from James the son of Zebedee. If we assume (and this is highly likely) that this James is not the same as "James the brother" of Jesus (see on 13:55), we know almost nothing about him.

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Assuming Matthew = Levi (see on 9:9), then Matthew's father was also called Alphaeus (Mark 2:14); and if this is the same Alphaeus, then James and Matthew are another pair of brothers among the Twelve. Some have argued that Alphaeus is an alternative form of Cleophas (Clopas), which would mean that "James son of Alphaeus" is the same person as "James the younger" (Mark 15:40) and that his mother's name was Mary (Matt 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1; John 19:25). But such connections are by no means certain.

Thaddaeus . The textual variants are difficult. The longer ones (e.g., KJV, "Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus") are almost certainly confections. "Thaddaeus" has the support of early representatives from Alexandrian, Western, and Caesarean witnesses (cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary* , p. 26). Through elimination he appears to be identified with (lit.) "Judas of James"--which could mean either "Judas son of James" or "Judas brother of James." The former is perhaps the more normal meaning; but the author of the Epistle of Jude designates himself as "Jude [Gr. *Ioudas*] ... a brother of James" (Jude 1, where *adelphos* ["brother"] is actually used). If Jude is the apostolic "Judas of James," then the meaning of the latter expression is fixed. On the other hand, if canonical Jude is the half-brother of Jesus and full brother of Jesus' half-brother James (see on 13:55), then "Judas of James" most likely means "Judas son of James." "Thaddaeus" comes from a root roughly signifying "the beloved." Perhaps this apostle was called "Judas the beloved" = "Judas Thaddaeus," and "Thaddaeus" was progressively used to distinguish him from the other Judas in the apostolic band. Only John 14:22 provides us with information about him. Later traditions are worthless.

Simon the Zealot . Matthew and Mark have "Simon the Cananaean" (not "Canaanite," which would suggest a pagan Gentile; cf. the different Gr.

word in 15:22). "Cananaean" (*qanan*) is the Aramaic form of "Zealot" specified in Luke--Acts. The Zealots were nationalists, strong upholders of Jewish traditions and religion; and some decades later they became a principal cause of the Jewish War in which Rome sacked Jerusalem. The Zealots were probably not so influential in Jesus' time. The nickname may reveal Simon's past political and religious associations; it also distinguishes him from Simon Peter.

Judas Iscariot . Judas's father is called "Simon Iscariot" in John 6:71; 13:26. Scholarly interest has spent enormous energy and much ingenuity on the name "Iscariot." Explanations include (1) "man of Kerioth" (there are two eligible villages of that name (cf. ZPEB, 3:785; IBD, 2:830); (2) transliteration of Latin *sicarius* , used to refer to a Zealot-like movement; (3) "man of Jericho," an explanation depending on a Greek

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corruption; (4) a transliteration of the Aramaic *seqaryac* ("falsehood," "betrayal"; cf.

C.C. Torrey, *The Name Iscariot*, HTR 36 [1943]: 51-62), which could therefore become a nickname for Judas only after his ignominy and not at this point in his life; (5) "Judas the dyer," reflecting his occupation (cf. A. Ehrman, "Judas Iscariot and Abba Saqqara," JBL 97 [1978]: 572f.; Y. Arbeitman, "The Suffix of Iscariot," JBL 99 [1980]: 122-24); (6) as an adaptation of the last, "Judas the redhead" (Albright and Mann). The first and fifth seem most likely; the second is currently most popular. Judas was treasurer for the Twelve, but not an honest one (John 12:6, 13:29; see also on 26:14-16; 27:3-10). Matthew and Mark add the damning indictment-"who betrayed him." Luke 6:16 labels him a traitor.

B. Second Discourse: Mission and Martyrdom (10:5-11:1)

1. Setting (10:5a)

5 For a general introduction to the discourses and their problems, see comments at 5:1. On the face of it, this discourse is as tightly bracketed as the others (v. 5a; 11:1), giving at least the impression that all the material of vv. 5b-42 was delivered on one occasion. It is also peculiarly difficult. Two separate but related questions need careful attention before a judgment is formed.

The literary question . Roughly speaking, vv. 5-15 have some parallels with Mark 6: 8-11; Luke 9:3-5; 10:5-15. The last of these references, however, concerns the mission of the Seventy-two, not found in Matthew or Mark. Matthew 10:16a is close to Luke 10:3. But Matthew 10:17-25, concerning the disciples' persecution and their arraignment before tribunals, finds its closest

parallel in the Olivet Discourse (Mark 13:9-13; Luke 21:12-19; cf. Matt 24:9-14). The final section (vv. 26-42), setting out conditions for discipleship in more general terms, resembles material in Mark 9 and Luke 12:2-12. With the exception of only a few places (vv. 5-6, 8, 16b), little in vv. 5-42 is peculiar to the first Gospel, though admittedly some parallels are not as close as others. The most common literary theory is that Matthew composed this address from segments of his two principal sources, Mark and Q. Those who reject Mark's priority and insist on Matthew's priority do not need Q and have an easier time defending the unity of this chapter. But Mark's priority still has best credentials (cf. Introduction, section 3), and so the problems remain. David Wenham ("The `Q' Tradition") has followed Schurmann and Lambrecht in arguing that almost this entire discourse comes from various strands of the Q tradition (this does not necessarily mean Q is a single, written document). Mark's parallels are thereby judged secondary and condensations of earlier sources.

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The historical and theological question . How do such source theories affect the context Matthew establishes? Here there is little agreement. F.W. Beare ("The Mission of the Disciples and the Mission Charge: Matthew 10 and Parallels," JBL 89

[1970]: 1-13) does not think there ever was a mission of the Twelve. The setting is a fabrication designed to enhance the discourse, itself an edited collection of sayings, few of them authentic. Many scholars, including conservative ones, suppose the discourse to be an amalgam of authentic material given on at least two separate occasions (Allen, Grosheide, Ridderbos). Tasker leaves the question open. R. Morosco ("Redaction Criticism and the Evangelical: Matthew 10 a Test Case," JETS 22 [1979]: 323-31) resurrects the old theory of B.W. Bacon, assuming not only five discourses in Matthew, but also their having been modeled on the five books of the Pentateuch (cf. Introduction, section 14). Morosco does not make clear, however, whether he thinks

(1) that there is some historical commissioning of the Twelve to which a collage of material has been attached, (2) that a discourse was delivered on that occasion and this is an expanded adaptation of it, or (3) that the setting itself is fictitious. Related to the historical question are several observations about the content of Matthew 10. In vv. 5-16, all Jesus instructions neatly fit the situation of the Twelve during Jesus' public ministry. This includes Jesus' prohibition of ministry to others than Jews (vv. 5-6). But vv. 17-22 clearly envisage a far more extensive ministry--even to kings and Gentiles. The persecution described does not fit the period of the first apostolic ministry but looks beyond it to times of major conflict long after Pentecost. As a result the great majority of modern commentators take this to be what Schuyler Brown describes as a literary means for Jesus to instruct "the Matthean community through the transparency of the twelve missionary disciples" ("The Mission to Israel in Matthew's Central Section," ZNW 69 [1978]: 73-90)--though, of course, many of the sayings are not thought to be dominical. The historical and especially the literary issues are complex and intertwined, as is clear from the diversity of proposed solutions. The

evidence can be weighed variously. Most solutions mask some unproved presuppositions and embrace a succession of judgments that could go another way. The setting Matthew gives must be accepted. Although he arranges much of his material topically, uses loose time-connectives, condenses his sources and sometimes paraphrases them, there is no convincing evidence that Matthew *invents* settings. Nor will appeal to some elusive genre suffice. If Matthew is a coherent writer, such nonhistorical material must be reasonably and readily separable from his historical material, if the alleged "genre" was recognizable to the first readers. Verse 5a could scarcely be clearer: "These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions." Since Luke records both the commission of the Twelve and that of the Seventy-two (9:1-6; 10:1-16), we must assume that these were separate events. But probably the

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Twelve were part of the Seventy-two; instructions given the latter were therefore given the former. Although v. 5a is historically specific about the fact of Jesus' instructing the Twelve and commissioning them, it does not pinpoint the exact time in his ministry when this took place. We have already found that Matthew, in condensing the account of the raising of Jairus's daughter and omitting the messengers, effectively collapses the first approach of Jairus and the news from the messengers, with the result that the daughter is presented as dead a little earlier than in the synoptic parallels (see on 9:18-26). Similarly, if Jesus instructed the Twelve both at their own first commissioning and later as part of the commissioning of the Seventy-two, the omission of the latter might well be motive enough to combine elements of the two sets of instructions. Both v. 5a and 11:1 would still be strictly true. David Wenham ("The `Q' Tradition") would go further: he notes that 11:1 is the only ending to a Matthean discourse that omits "these words" or "these parables" or the like and wonders whether the omission might be a hint that this second discourse, unlike the others, is meant to be taken as a Matthean collection of Jesus' sayings. Such an argument from silence seems a slender thread on which to hang so much, not least because, apart from the opening words *kai egeneto* (lit., "and it happened"--see on 7:28-29), the fivefold formula at the end of each discourse varies considerable. But it is difficult simply to discount the possibility; and the suggestion that Matthew has collapsed the two commissionings is not implausible, even if not demonstrable. Careful study of vv. 5-42 suggests that the discourse is more unified than often recognized. Many of the alleged discrepancies are artificial. There is no conflict, for instance, between the ready harvest of 9:37-38 and the resistance in 10:16-22 (contra Morosco, *Redaction Criticism*, p. 325). "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church" is a valid principle; and many great awakenings, including the Whitefield and Wesleyan revivals, have shown afresh that the harvest is most plentiful when the workers reap in the teeth of opposition. If Matthew omits the account of the Twelve's actual departure and return (kept in Mark 6:12-13; Luke 9:6, 10), it cannot mean that he does not know of the event or does not believe it happened;

otherwise 10:1, 5; 11:1 are incoherent. Matthew is less interested in the details of many events he relates than in Jesus' words; but "less interested" does not mean "not interested," which seems to be the favorite disjunction of many redaction critics. Certainly vv. 17-23 go beyond the immediate mission of the Twelve, and in at least two ways the latter verses envisage a mission to the Gentiles, unlike vv. 5b-6, and far severer opposition than anything the Twelve faced during Jesus' ministry. Yet these are not new themes; we have already found Jesus predicting severe persecution (5:10- 12 et al.), seeing a time of prolonged witness to the "world" (5:13-14; 7:13-14) after his departure (9:15), and many Gentiles participating in the messianic banquet (8:11-12). Therefore it is surely not unnatural for Jesus to treat this commission of the Twelve as

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both an explicit short-term itinerary and a paradigm of the longer mission stretching into the years ahead. For the latter, the Twelve need further instruction beyond those needed for the immediate tour, which they must see as in part an exercise anticipating something more. In this sense the Twelve become a paradigm for other disciples in their post-Pentecost witness, a point Matthew understands (cf. 28:18-20); and in this sense he intends that Matthew 10 should also speak to his readers. The very fact that Matthew includes both what is historically specific in the first, short-term commission (e.g., restriction to Jews, certain clothing) and what is historically relevant only to the post-Pentecost church strongly supports his material's authenticity. If he were simply addressing his own community, much of chapter 10 would be irrelevant. Attempts to get around this by envisaging a divided Matthean community of people for or against a Gentile mission (e.g., S. Brown, "The Two-fold Representation of the Mission in Matthew's Gospel," ST 31 [1977]: 21-32 are extremely speculative. Such a theory depends not only on a selective reading of the Gospels that judges inauthentic all evidence that refutes it, but also on an evangelist abysmally incapable of editing his sources into a coherent whole. Yet Schuyler Brown ("Matthean Community," p. 194) writes: "The fact that contradictory missionary mandates are placed on Jesus' lips is evidence enough that he himself took no position on this matter, one way or the other, and this is not surprising. Jesus took for granted that he and his disciples were sent to Israel." The presuppositions here are (1) that Jesus did not envisage a racially mixed church and (2) that the Gospels must be read as church documents that do not distinguish between Jesus' day and the time of writing. The first point is repeatedly denied by all four Gospels; the second is called in question by explicit "before-after" passages (e.g., John 2:20-22) and themes or titles (see excursus at 8:20). Jesus says and does many things in the Gospels before the Cross and Resurrection that are fully comprehensible only after these events. The real contrast between vv. 5-16 and vv. 17-42 is salvation- historical. There is implicit recognition that the two situations are not the same, but the first prepares for the second. This distinction is

ascribed to Jesus and thus confirms that he saw a continuing community that would grow under fire. Moreover there is evidence elsewhere that Jesus was prepared to discuss widely separate events within the same framework if those separate events are internally connected in some way (see on chs. 24-25). If this second discourse is coherent, some account must be given of parallels scattered elsewhere in the Synoptics. Earlier discussion (see on chs. 5-7) is still relevant: Jesus was an itinerant preacher who said the same things many times in similar words; the evangelists rarely claim to present *ipsissima verba* but only *ipsissima vox* (see on 3:17); their discourses are very substantial condensations in line with their own interests; they do not hesitate to rearrange the order of presentation of some

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material within a discourse in order to highlight topical interests. But the sad fact is that there are few methodologically reliable tools for distinguishing between, say, two forms of one aphoristic saying, two reports of the same saying uttered on two occasions, or one report of one such saying often repeated in various forms but preserved in the tradition in one form (surely not problematic if only the *ipsissima vox* is usually what is at stake). Suppose, for instance, that David Wenham ("The `Q' Tradition") is essentially right, and most of vv. 5-42 comes from Q. conceived as a variety of sources, oral and written, of Jesus' words: what historical conclusions does such a theory entail? The surprising answer is "Not much." For it is possible that some sayings of Jesus, repeated by him often and on diverse occasions, were jotted down in a sort of amalgam form encapsulating their substance and then used by the evangelists in different contexts and adapted accordingly. Those contexts may well include the historical settings in which the teaching was first uttered. That would be easy to believe if the apostle Matthew really did compose the first Gospel (cf. Introduction, section 5). Authorship does not necessarily affect the authority of any NT book. But it does affect the way the tradition descended and thereby limits the wildest form-critical speculation (cf. Introduction, section 2). Although Wenham's Q hypothesis may be challenged at many points on the ground that his argument turns on debatable judgments, yet the chief point is that the notion of Q sources behind vv. 5-42 does not itself preclude the authenticity or unity of this discourse. A dozen variations could be shown to produce the same equivocal result. Problems arise only when theories regarding the contributing factors (authors, sources, context, redaction, historical reconstruction of Jesus' life and of the early church) are so aligned as to produce a synthesis that quite unnecessarily contradicts the text or some part of it. This is extremely unfortunate when in fact the text is the only hard evidence we have. It is not possible in small compass to demonstrate the many factors contributing to scholars' diverse decisions in each passage of the mission discourse and how such factors may, taking full account of the hard evidence, come together in a way justifying Matthew's presentation of this material as a discourse to the

Twelve. While the following exposition focuses on the meaning of the text as it stands, a few hints are given as to how difficult source critical and historical problems may be most profitably probed.

2. The commission (10:5b-16)

5b-6 Jesus forbade the Twelve (v. 5b) from taking "the road to the Gentiles" (cf. Notes)--presumably toward Tyre and Sidon in the north or the Decapolis in the east--

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and from visiting Samaritan towns in the south. They were to remain in Galilee, ministering to the people of Israel (v. 6). Jews despised Samaritans, not only because they preserved a separate cult (cf. John 4:20), but also because they were a mixed race, made up partly of the poorest Jews who had been left in the land at the time of the Exile and partly of Gentile peoples transported into the territory and with whom the remaining Jews had intermingled, thereby succumbing to some syncretism (cf. 2 Kings 17:24-28; cf. ISBE, 4:2673-74). The Twelve were to restrict themselves to "the lost sheep of Israel." This designation does not refer to a certain segment of the Jews (so Stendahl, Peake, 683-84), since in the OT background (esp. Ezek 34; see on Matt 9:36; cf. Isa 53:6; Jer 50:6) the term refers to all the people (Hill, *Matthew*). Why this restriction? In part it was probably because of pragmatic considerations. That Jesus felt it necessary to mention the Samaritans at all presupposes John 4. The disciples, happy in the exercise of their ability to perform miracles, might have been tempted to evangelize the Samaritans because they remembered Jesus' success there. Judging by Luke 9:52-56, however, the Twelve were still temperamentally ill-equipped to minister to Samaritans. And even after Pentecost, despite an explicit command from the risen Lord (Acts 1:8), the church moved only hesitantly toward the Samaritans (Acts 8). The most important consideration, however, was not pragmatic but theological. Jesus stood at the nexus in salvation history where as a Jew and the Son of David he came in fulfillment of his people's history as their King and Redeemer. Yet his personal claims would offend so many of his own people that he would be rejected by all but a faithful remnant. Why increase their opposition by devoting time to Gentile ministry? His mission, as predicted, was worldwide in its ultimate aims (see on 1:1; 2:1; 3:9-10; 4:15-16; 5:13-16; 8:1-13; 10:18; 21:43; 24:14; 28:16-20); and all along he had warned that being a Jew was not enough. But his own people must not be excluded because premature offense could be taken at such broad perspectives. Therefore Jesus restricted his own ministry primarily (15:24), though not exclusively (8:1-13; 15:21-39), to Jews. He himself was sent as their Messiah. The messianic people of God developed

out of the Jewish remnant and expanded to include Gentiles. The restriction of vv. 5-6, therefore, depends on a particular understanding of salvation history (cf. Meier, *Law* , pp. 27-30), which ultimately goes back to Jesus. This Paul well understood: both salvation and judgment were for the Jew first, then for the Gentile (Rom 1:16); and this conviction governed his own early missionary efforts (e.g., Acts 13:5, 44-48; 14:1 et al.). On modern theories of the significance of vv. 5-6, see on v. 5a.

7-8 The content of the disciples' message was very like that in 3:2; 4:17. "Repent" is not mentioned but is presupposed. The long-awaited kingdom was now "near" enough

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(see on 4:17) to be attested by miracles directed at demonism and malady. The "authority" in v. 1 cannot be limited to the list of powers mentioned there, for here (v.

8) two more are added: raising the dead (textually well attested, if not quite certain) and cleansing lepers (see on 9:18-26; 8:1-4, respectively). Jesus expected the Twelve to be supported by those to whom they were to minister (cf. vv. 9-13; 1Cor 9:14), but they needed to understand that what they had received-- the good news of the kingdom, Jesus' authority, and this commission--they had received "freely" (not "in large bounty"--though that was true--but gratis). Therefore it would have been mercenary to charge others (NEB: "You have received without cost; give without charge"; cf. *Didache* 11-13; *Pirke Aboth* 1:13). The danger of profiteering is still among us (cf. Micah 3:11).

9-10 The imperative *me ktesesthe* ("Do not take along," v. 9) more likely means "Do not procure" (as in Acts 1:18; 8:20; 22:28). Even then the longer expression *me ktesesthe ... eis* ("Do not procure ... with a view to [filling your belts]") could mean either "Do not accept money [i.e., fill your moneybelt] for your ministry" or "Do not provide your belt with money when you start out." The parallel in Mark 6:9 obviously means the latter. Gold, silver, and copper refer either to money or to a supply of the metals that could be exchanged for goods or money. Mark permits "taking" (*airo*) sandals and a staff (a walking stick) and forbids everything else (6:8); Matthew's account forbids "procuring" (*ktaomai*) even sandals or a walking stick (v. 10). It may be that Mark's account clarifies what the disciples are permitted to bring, whereas Matthew's assumes that the disciples already have certain things (one cloak, sandals, a walking stick) and forbids them from "procuring" anything more. Two cloaks (cf. on 5:40) might seem too much but would be comforting if sleeping out. The disciples needed to learn the

principle that "the worker is worth his keep" (cf. 1Cor 9:14; 1Tim 5:17-18) and to shun luxury while learning to rely on God's providence through the hospitality of those who would take them in overnight, thus obviating the need for a second cloak. See further discussion in the Notes. What is clear is that the Twelve must travel unencumbered, relying on hospitality and God's providence. The details ensure that the instructions were for that mission alone (cf. Luke 22:35-38) and confirm Matthew's consciousness of the historicity of this part of the discourse.

11-15 To settle into the house of a "worthy" person (v. 11) implies that the disciples were not to shop around for the most comfortable quarters. In this place "worthy" probably does not refer to a morally upright, honorable, or religious person but to one willing and able to receive an apostle of Jesus and the gospel of the kingdom (cf. discussion in Bonnard)--the opposite of "dogs" and "pigs" (7:6). As the disciples

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entered the house, they were to give it their "greeting." Luke (10:5) gives us the actual words: "Peace to this house." Neither Matthew nor Luke is introducing postresurrection notions of *salom* ("peace"), even though later Christians would be reminded of the peace Jesus achieved for them (Luke 24:36; John 14:27 et al.). Instead the greeting prepares for v. 13: "As you enter the home" (NIV; same word as "house" in v. 12, probably with the meaning "household"), you are to give the normal greeting; but if the home turns out to be "unworthy" (as defined above), contrary to what you had been led to believe, then let your greeting of peace return to you (v. 13); i.e., don't stay. The Twelve were emissaries of Jesus. Those who received them received him (cf. v. 40). Their greeting was of real value because of their relationship to him. Loss of their greeting was loss of their presence and therefore loss of Jesus. Potiphar's household was blessed because of Joseph's presence (Gen 39:3-5). How much more those homes that harbored the apostles of the Messiah! What was true for the home applied equally to the town (v. 14). A pious Jew, on leaving Gentile territory, might remove from his feet and clothes all dust of the pagan land now being left behind (SBK, 1:571), thus dissociating himself from the pollution of those lands and the judgment in store for them. For the disciples to do this to Jewish homes and towns would be a symbolic way of saying that the emissaries of Messiah now view those places as pagan, polluted, and liable to judgment (cf. Acts 13:51; 18:6). The actions, while outrageously shocking, accord with Matthew 8:11-12; 11:20-24. Sodom and Gomorrah faced catastrophic destruction because of their sin (Gen 19) and became bywords of loathsome corruption (Isa 1:9; Matt 11:22-24; Luke 17:29; Rom 9: 29; 2 Peter 2:6; Jude 7; cf. Jub 36:10). Although there is still worse to come for them on the Day of Judgment, there is yet more awful judgment for those who reject the word and the messengers of the Messiah (cf. Heb 2:1-3). Once again the christological claim, though implicit, is unambiguous. As in 7:21-23, Jesus here insists that one's eternal destiny turns on relationship to him or even to his emissaries. At the same time, even in their early ministry, Jesus' apostles were to face the certainty of opposition--as did Jesus himself, rejected at Nazareth (13:53-

58) and in Samaria (Luke 9:52-53), and not believed in the towns of Galilee (11:20-24). That early opposition pointed to the greater suffering still to come (vv. 17 ff.) and also aligned the disciples of Jesus with the prophets of old (5:10-12) and with Jesus himself (10:24-25). Thus the disciples began to learn that the advance of the kingdom was divisive (vv. 34, 35; cf. 2Cor 2:15-16) and would meet with violent opposition (see on 11:11-12).

16 The first part of v. 16 has a close parallel in Luke 10:3, part of the commission to the Seventy-two. Because it is short and aphoristic, it is impossible to be certain how many times Jesus said it. Here it links the preceding pericope with the following warnings about persecution. The verse goes as well with what succeeds as what

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precedes.

Jesus pictured his disciples, defenseless in themselves, located in a dangerous environment. This is where he himself was sending them. The shepherd in this metaphor sends his sheep into the wolf pack (cf. 7:15; John 10:12; Acts 20:29). Therefore they must be *phronimoi* ("shrewd") as serpents, which in several ancient Near Eastern cultures were proverbial for prudence. But prudence can easily degenerate into cheap cunning unless it goes with simplicity. The disciples must prove not only "shrewd" but *akeraioi* ("innocent"; used elsewhere in the NT only in Rom 16: 19; Philippians 2:15). Yet innocence becomes ignorance, even naivete, unless combined with prudence. The dove was not an established symbol. In Hosea 7:11 a dove is pictured as "easily deceived and senseless." In a late Midrash the serpent-dove contrast appears ("God saith to the Israelites: `Towards me they are sincere as doves, but toward the Gentiles they are cunning as serpents'" [Cant.R. 2:14]). Yet not only is this Midrash late, the contrast is not at all what Jesus had in mind. His followers were to be, not prudent toward outsiders and innocent toward God, but both prudent and innocent in their mission to outsiders. In this light the dove image becomes clear. Doves are retiring but not astute; they are easily ensnared by the bowler. So Jesus' disciples, in their mission as sheep among wolves, must be "shrewd," avoiding conflicts and attacks where possible; but they must also be "innocent," i.e., not so cautious, suspicious, and Dinning that circumspection degenerates into fear or elusiveness. The balance is difficult, but not a little of Jesus' teaching combines such poles of meaning (see on 7:1-6).

3. Warnings of future sufferings (10:17-25)

a. The Spirit's help (10:17-20)

There are parallels in vv. 17-25 both to 24:9, 13 and to Luke 6:40. 12:11-12; 21:12. Although it has often been affirmed, it is doubtful that Matthew has simply pulled back some material from the Olivet Discourse (see on 10:5a). But there may be substantial reliance on Q (cf. D. Wenham, "The `Q' Tradition"). The language is demonstrably Palestinian. Even if Matthew applies some of these things to his own readers (cf. Hare, pp. 96-114), there is no reason to doubt the authenticity of these warnings. What this means is that Jesus envisaged an extended time of witness in the midst of persecution--in short, a witnessing and suffering church.

17 The *de* ("But," NIV) does not have adversative force. It merely connects this warning with the aphorism in v. 16, showing how it is to be applied. The men who will

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hand the disciples over must be Jews, as the context is the synagogue; and so the persecution here envisaged is Jewish persecution of Christians (unlike v. 18). The *synedria* ("local councils," pl. only here in the NT), which could be civic or synagogal, were charged with preserving the peace. That flogging is used for punishment, rather than the broader term "beating," implies that the opposition is not mob violence but the result of judicial action (Hare, p. 104). Moreover Jesus is envisaging a time before the absolute separation of church and synagogue has taken place, for synagogue floggings (cf. 23:34; Mark 13:9; Acts 22:19; cf. 2Cor 11:24-25) were most easily inflicted on synagogue members. At a later period the worshipers would sometimes sing a psalm while the flogging took place. But there is no evidence this was practiced in NT times. In any case we are reminded of the slowness with which Jewish Christians withdrew from broader Jewish worship in the post-Pentecost period. The reference to "their" synagogues is often interpreted as an anachronism, reflecting the church-synagogue polarity (see on 4:23; 7:29; 9:35; 11:1; 12:9; 13:54). Normally the word "their" is explicitly Matthean, but here Jesus uses it. This may suggest redactional phrasing. Significantly, however, the OT prophets in speaking for God commonly used "their" and "them" language when referring to apostate Israel. Here it is very likely that the OT background explains the usage. And because Matthew makes much of the failure of most Jews to receive their own Messiah, it is likely that the OT has affected his phrasing elsewhere. Certainly Christian readers, understanding themselves to be recipients of the revelation most Jews had refused, would see the "their" within this polarized context. Nevertheless the term itself is no proof of anachronism unless it was similarly anachronistic in its OT setting, which is absurd. Indeed, if this OT background is determinative, then both Jesus and Matthew self-consciously spoke of Israel from the perspective of a divine revelatory stance that warned Israel afresh against apostasy a theme elsewhere made explicit (e.g., 8:11-12).

18 As the witness would extend at some future time beyond Galilee and the Jewish race, so also the opposition: "governors" (*hegemonas* , rulers and magistrates at various levels) and "kings" make this clear. As in 8:4 and 24:14, the "witness" is not against people but to them; it becomes either the means by which they accept the truth or, when they reject it, a condemnation. The disciples would be harassed and persecuted, not on account of who they are but on account of who Christ is (see on 5: 10-12). For his sake their witness would extend "to them and to the Gentiles"--probably not a reference "to Jews [or Jewish magistrates] and to the Gentiles," but "to governors and kings and to [other] Gentiles." Overlapping between the paired elements is not uncommon in such constructions (e.g., Mark 16:7; Gr. of Acts 5:29; 9: 16; cf. Hare, pp. 108-9).

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19-20 The translation of *paradidomi* (lit., "I hand over," as in v. 17) as "arrest" (v. 19) is doubtful. The subject is ambiguous: "people," "opponents," or "Jewish leaders" could be "handing over" the disciples to the Gentile authorities. Later on this happened to Paul and other Christians, who at first witnessed to their faith with relative impunity under the Roman laws granting exemptions from emperor worship to Jews, but fell victim to increasing Roman wrath as the Jews progressively denied any link between themselves and Christians. Confronting a high Roman official would be far more terrifying to Jewish believers than confronting a synagogue council. High officials, even when hated, were accorded far greater respect than in modern democracies; and they used professional orator- lawyers in legal matters (e.g., Tertullus, Acts 24:1). But if Jesus warned his disciples of dangers, he also promised them help: the Spirit would speak through them when the time came; so they should not fret about their response. This promise is neither a sop for lazy preachers nor equivalent to the promises given the Twelve in the farewell discourse (John 14-16) that the Spirit would recall to their memory all they had heard from Jesus (John 14:16, 26). It is a pledge to believers who have been brought before tribunals because of their witness. The promised assistance does not assume an absolute disjunction between "you" and the "Spirit" (v. 20), for the underlying Semitic disjunction is rarely absolute (e.g., Gen 45:8; Exod 16:8; cf. Zerwick, par. 445). The history of Christian martyrs is studded with examples of the fulfillment of this promise. Unlike Luke, Matthew does not often mention the Spirit. But from other passages in his Gospel, it is clear that he associates the Spirit with the kingdom's dramatic coming (3:11; 12:28, 31) and the church's witness (28:18-20). That same Spirit, "the Spirit of your Father," would provide Jesus' followers with the help they needed under persecution when facing hostile officials.

b. Endurance (10:21-23)

21-22 It is not enough for Jesus' disciples to be opposed by Jewish and Gentile officialdom; they will be hounded and betrayed by their own family members (v. 21; see further vv. 34-39). The theme of division between persons as a sign of the End is not unknown in Jewish apocalyptic literature (4Ezra 5:9; Jub 23:19; 2 Baruch 70:3--though none of these refers explicitly to family divisions). Here the allusion is to Micah 7:6, quoted in vv. 35-36. "All men" (v. 22) does not mean "all men without exception," for then there would be no converts, but "all men without distinction"--all men irrespective of race, color, or creed. That the good news of the kingdom of God and his righteousness should elicit such intense and widespread hostility is a sad commentary on "all men." The hatred erupts, Jesus says, *dia to onoma mou* (lit., "on account of my name")--either because one bears the name "Christian" (cf. 1 Peter 4:14) or, less

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anachronistically and more likely, "on account of me" (see on 5:10-12.

The one who "stands firm"--the verb *hypomeno* does not signify active resistance so much as patient endurance (cf. LXX Dan 12:12; Mark 13:13; Rom 12:12; 1 Peter 2:20) will be saved; but he must stand firm *eis telos* ("to the end"). Though this anarthrous expression could be taken adverbially to mean "without breaking down," it is far more likely purposely ambiguous to mean either "to the end of one's life" or, because of the frequent association of *telos* ("end") and cognates with the eschatological end, "to the end of the age." This is not to say that only martyrs will be saved; but if the opposition one of Jesus' disciples faces calls for the sacrifice of life itself, commitment to him must be so strong that the sacrifice is willingly made. Otherwise there is no salvation. Thus from earliest times Christians have been crucified, burned, impaled, drowned, starved, racked--for no other reason than that they belonged to him. As with martyrs among God's people before the coming of Christ, so now: the world was not worthy of them (Heb 11:38).

23 This verse is among the most difficult in the NT canon. The textual variants (cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, p. 28) are complex but affect the main interpretive questions little. 1. Some have understood the coming of the Son of Man to refer to a coming of the historical Jesus in the wake of the mission of the Twelve as in the mission of the Seventy-two (Luke 10:1). The focus of attention has thus reverted back to the immediate commission (vv. 5b-16). Jesus is telling the Twelve to "get a move on," because they will not have visited the cities of Israel before he "comes" to them--i.e., catches up with them. This view has been elegantly defended by J. Dupont ("Vous n'aurez pas achevé les villes d'Israël..." [Mat. X23], *NovTest* 2 [1958]: 228-44), who points out that elsewhere Matthew can bring the title "Son of Man" back (from 16:21 to 16:13) to a new location where it is equivalent to no more than a sonorous "I" (assuming his source is Mark 8:27, 31). Dupont suggests that in Matthew's source 10: 23 was read after 10:5-6, which would

confirm his interpretation. This view therefore turns in part on finding a source common to Matthew 10:23 and Luke 10:1--presumably a Q tradition--and this possibility has been strengthened somewhat by the source-critical arguments of H. Schurmann ("Zur Traditions-und Redaktionsgeschichte von Mt 10, 23," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 3 [1959]: 82-88) and David Wenham ("The `Q' Tradition"), who try to show that v. 23 springs from Q. The arguments are unconvincing. In Wenham's case they hinge on the assertion that v. 23 is awkward because the literary parallel with vv. 19-20 is inexact (v. 23 uses the verb "to persecute" instead of the verb "to hand over"). But it is not at all clear why Matthew should use the same verb: most Semitic parallelism depends on small verbal changes. David Wenham ("The `Q' Tradition") argues that v. 23 "seems something of an

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afterthought in its present position following the climactic 'he who endures to the end shall be saved.'" But v. 23 is anticlimactic only if the coming of the Son of Man refers exclusively to Jesus follow-up ministry. If instead Jesus in v. 22 is enjoining perseverance amid suffering witness, in clear reference to a post-Pentecost setting, then the persecution in v. 23 should be similarly interpreted. The disciples' perseverance to the end does not mean withdrawal but moving on from city to city until the Son of Man comes. In this light v. 23 is still difficult but certainly not anticlimactic. Indeed, this first interpretation fails to come to grips with two major hurdles. It fails to explain adequately why Matthew should move a comprehensible saying from a location following vv. 5-6 (or even v. 14) and place it here, where (we must implausibly suppose) the verse has nothing to do with its immediate context. Moreover, the geographical territory to be covered (see on 4:23-25) embraces enough towns and villages that, under this interpretation, the urgent call for haste seems inept. And Luke 10:1; the alleged parallel, does not speak of ministry to all the cities of Israel but only to the towns to which Jesus was about to go. Above all there is no evidence in any Gospel that the Twelve were actively persecuted during their first mission but only on occasion rebuffed (as in vv. 11-15).

2. Some take "the Son of Man's coming" to refer to the public identification of Jesus as the Messiah, presumably at the Resurrection (Sabourin) or shortly after. Not only would this be an odd use of the expression, but the interpretation fails to show how the disciples were actually persecuted up to that time, or how there could be any urgency in such a deadline. Older commentators follow a similar line, exchanging the coming of the Spirit (John 14:23) for the Resurrection (e.g., Chrysostom, Calvin, Beza). But we have noted that the Spirit is not a major theme in Matthew (see on v. 20); and in any case never in the NT is the Son of Man completely identified with him. A better modification of this view is offered by Stonehouse (*Witness of Matthew* , pp. 139f.) and Gaechter (*Matthaus*), who argue that this is the lesser inbreaking of the kingdom in the events succeeding Pentecost, the most probable meaning of 16:28 (below). But in v. 23 this interpretation fails to account for the note of urgency. One might

almost make a case for delaying witness until such an inbreaking. 3. Others take the verse to refer to the Second Coming, equivalent to 24:30; 25:31; 26:64. Although some would argue the point (see on Matt 24-25), the language of the Son of Man's coming most easily fits that interpretation. The problem then is the words "of Israel," so difficult in this interpretation that they are wrongly omitted by B (Alexandrian) and D (Western). Various expedients are appealed to in order to mitigate the problem: "Israel" is a symbol for the world or for the church, or there is some kind of double fulfillment (on the latter, cf. Hendriksen, who speaks of "prophetic foreshortening"; and A. Feuillet, "Les origines et la signification de Mt 10, 23b," CBQ 23 (1961): 197f.-though the article as a whole, pp. 182-90, supports 7 below). That

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"Israel" represents church or world is almost impossible in the context of Matthew's theology, and that there is some kind of double fulfillment is not much more than a surreptitious appeal for double incoherence: in the first fulfillment the difficulties of 1 remain, and in the second the problem words "of Israel" are still not explained. Whatever one thinks of multiple fulfillment in the Scriptures, this is not a clear instance of it. Bonnard sees a reference to Jesus' second coming in v. 23b but sees no urgency. The verse simply insists on all the possibilities of witness given in Israel until the End and closely ties together Israel with that end (as in Rom 11:25). This view has its attractions. Nevertheless the note of urgency linking v. 23a and v. 23b cannot be disposed of so easily. Gundry has a similar view and also argues that the verse is redactional and therefore not authentic. 4. At the turn of the century, Schweitzer (pp. 358ff.) used this text to develop his "thoroughgoing eschatology." He argued that v. 23b shows that Jesus believed the end of time would take place so soon that he did not expect to see the disciples return before the End arrived. Jesus was wrong, of course, and therefore had to readjust his own theology. This was the first "delay of the Parousia." Unfortunately Jesus was also wrong in expecting God to exonerate him before he died. Therefore the church was forced to adjust its theology to accommodate these errors; and only a few traces of Jesus' earliest teachings, like this passage, still peep unambiguously through the text. This view is well criticized by Kummel (*Jesus' Promise* , pp. 61ff.). 5. A combination of the last two views is now espoused by several scholars (e.g., Fenton, Hill) who think v. 23b refers to the Second Coming and that Jesus expected it within one generation or so (see also on 24:34; Hill specifies forty or fifty years). But there are so many hints of a much longer delay before the Second Coming (e.g., 13:24- 33; 18:15-35; 19:28; 21:43; 23:32, 39 et al.; cf. Maier) that there seems little to be gained by this interpretation and much to be lost. 6. Dispensationalists are inclined to see v. 23b as a reference to the Second Coming that "views the entire present church age as a parenthesis not taken into account in this prophecy" (Walvoord; cf. A.C. Gaebelein). Quite apart from the correctness or otherwise of the entire theological structure

presupposed by this interpretation, it detaches v. 23 from its context (if vv. 16-22 refer to post-Pentecost *Christian* experience--so Walvoord) or else detaches vv. 16-23 from their context (if the verses do not apply to any of Jesus' disciples but to believers living during the Tribulation after the church has been raptured away). There is no exegetical warrant for either detachment; and both would be incomprehensible, not only to Jesus' hearers, but also to the first readers of Matthew's Gospel. 7. The "coming of the Son of Man" here refers to his coming in judgment against the Jews, culminating in the sack of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple (so France, *Jesus* , p. 140; Feuillet, "Les origines," pp. 182-98; Moule, *Birth* , p. 90; J.A.T.

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Robinson, *Jesus and His Coming* [London: SCM, 1957], pp. 80, 91-92; and others). Calvin thinks this interpretation farfetched, Hill that it is improbable. In fact a powerful case can be made for it. The coming of the Son of Man refers to the same event as the coming of the kingdom, even though the two expressions are conceptually complementary. Thus *the* coming of the Son of Man brings in the consummated kingdom (see on 24:30-31; 25:31). But the kingdom, as we have seen, comes in stages (see on 4:17; 12:28). In one sense Jesus was born a king (see on 2:2); in another he has all authority as a result of his passion and resurrection (28:18); and in yet another his kingdom awaits the end. Mingled with this theme of the coming of the kingdom are Jesus' repeated warnings to the Jews concerning the disaster they are courting by failing to recognize and receive him (cf. esp. Feuillet). In this he stands on the shoulders of the OT prophets; but his warnings are unique because he himself is the eschatological judge and because the messianic reign is now dawning in both blessing and wrath (8:11-12; 21:31-32). Against this background the coming of the Son of Man in v. 23 marks that stage in the coming of the kingdom in which the judgment repeatedly foretold falls on the Jews. With it the temple cultus disappears, and the new wine necessarily takes to new wineskins (see on 9:16-17). The age of the kingdom comes into its own, precisely because so many of the structured foreshadowings of the OT, bound up with the cultus and nation, now disappear (see on 5:17-48). The Son of Man comes. Above all this interpretation makes contextual sense of v. 23. The connection is not with v. 22 alone but with vv. 17-22, which picture the suffering witness of the church in the post-Pentecost period *during a time when many of Jesus' disciples are still bound up with the synagogue*. During that period, Jesus says in v. 23, his disciples must not use the opposition to justify quitting or bravado. Far from it. When they face persecution, they must take it as no more than a signal for strategic withdrawal to the next city (W. Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 2 vols. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], 1:378-80) where witness must continue, for the time is short. They will not have finished evangelizing the cities of Israel before the Son of Man

comes in judgment on Israel. Interpreted in this way the "Son of Man" saying of v. 23 belongs to the eschatological category (see excursus on 8:20), but the eschatology is somewhat realized. The strength of this interpretation is sometimes diluted by applying it unchanged to 16:28; 24:31 (so France, *Jesus*). In fact there are important differences disallowing the view that all these texts refer to the Fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. Nevertheless they confirm the view that "the coming of the Son of Man" bears in Matthew the same rich semantic field as "the coming of the kingdom" (see on 6:10; 12:28).

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c. Inspiration (10:24-25)

24-25 The two brief analogies in vv. 24-25a occur in various forms elsewhere in the NT (Luke 6:40; John 13:16; 15:20) and in Jewish literature (b *Berakoth* 58b); and like many good proverbs, they could be applied variously by capable preachers. Here Jesus forbids the disciples from being surprised when they suffer persecution. If they follow him, they should expect no less. The statement reveals something of Jesus' perception of the nature of his own ministry and of the way the "gospel of the kingdom" will advance in the world. Those who deny the authenticity of vv. 24-25a and other passages in which Jesus speaks implicitly of his sufferings do so not on literary evidence but on the basis of a priori decisions about what Jesus could and could not have known. The insult "Beelzebub" (or, to preserve the best orthography, *Beelzeboul*) has an uncertain derivation. In the NT the term occurs only here and at 12:24, 27; Mark 3:22, Luke 11:15, 18-19. It may have come from OT Hebrew *baalzebub* ("lord of flies"), a mocking takeoff of *baal zebul* ("Prince Baal"), a pagan deity (2 Kings 1:2-3, 16). But in that case one wonders why the final syllable has been changed in NT Greek to *boul*. Other derivations include a mocking "lord of dung" and "lord of the heights" (heaven). One of the best suggestions is that of E.C.B. MacLaurin ("Beelzeboul," *NovTest* 20 [1978]: 156-60), who shows it may well be a straightforward translation of *oikodespotes* ("head of the house," NIV). Beelzeboul is recognized in the NT as the prince of the demons and identified with Satan (12:24-27; Mark 3:22-26, Luke 11:18-19). Thus the real head of the house, Jesus, who heads the household of God, is being willfully confused with the head of the house of demons. The charge is shockingly vile--the Messiah himself rejected as Satan! If so, why should his disciples expect less? This verse has not been constructed by the evangelist out of bits from 12:22-32, as if the charge were leveled at Jesus only the once. On the contrary, 9:34 suggests that it was a frequent slur.

4. Prohibition of fear (10:26-31)

a. The emergence of truth (10:26-27)

Probably vv. 26-27 are also transitional, like v. 16. Consideration of how disciples must expect to face persecution and opprobrium makes it necessary to say something about how to handle fear (vv. 26-31) and about the high standards of discipleship such a perspective presupposes. There are similar sayings elsewhere (cf. Luke 12:2-9; see also Mark 4:22; 8:38; Luke 9:26; 21:18). Yet there is no easy source pattern (cf. Hill); and most of the individual sayings are brief, easily memorized, and usable again and

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again.

26-27 "Them" refers to the persecutors (v. 23). The connective *oun* ("So") may simply begin a new exhortation based on the preceding (Bonnard), or it may offer a tighter connection: in view of a master who suffers ahead of his disciples, *therefore* do not fear, etc. The truth must emerge; the gospel and its outworkings in the disciples may not now be visible to all, but nothing will remain hidden forever. And if the truth will emerge at the End, how wise to declare it fully and boldly now. Flat rooftops of Palestinian houses provided excellent places for speakers (cf. Jos. War II, 611 [xxi. 5]). In a sense the apostles were to have more of a public ministry than Jesus himself. He told them things in private, some of which they did not even understand till after the Resurrection (see excursus on 8:20; cf. John 14:26; 16:12-15). But they were to teach them fully and publicly.

b. The nonfinality of death (10:28)

28 The second reason for learning not to fear men emerges from the fact that the worst they can do does not match the worst God can do. Though Satan may have great power (6:13; 24:22), only God can destroy soul and body in hell. "The fear of the LORD is" therefore "the beginning of wisdom" (Prov 9:10); for if God be truly feared, none other need be. Fear of men proves to be a snare (Prov 29:25). The same thought is found in extracanonical Jewish literature (e.g., Wisdom 16:13-14; 2Macc 6:26; 4Macc 13:14-15).

For "hell," see on 5:22. The force of *psyche* ("soul") in the NT is closely related to *nepes* ("soul") and *leb* ("heart," "inner man") in the OT (for full discussion, cf. DNTT, 3:676-89). The thought is not so much of an ontological part utterly distinct from body as of the inner man destined for salvation or

damnation (cf. 1 Peter 1:9; 2:11, 25; 4:19). Unavoidable in this context is the thought that hell is a place of torment for the whole person: there will be a resurrection of the unjust as well as of the just.

c. Continuing providence (10:29-31)

29-31 The third reason for not being afraid is an a fortiori argument: If God's providence is so all embracing that not even a sparrow drops from the sky apart from the will of God, cannot that same God be trusted to extend his providence over Jesus' disciples? The sparrow was used for food by very poor people. Two might be sold for "a penny" (one-sixteenth of a denarius, which was about a day's wage; cf. Deiss LAE, pp. 272-75). "Your Father" adds a piquant touch: this God of all providence is the disciples' Father. God's sovereignty is not limited only to life-and-death issues; even

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the hairs of our heads are counted. Jesus' third argument against fear is thus the very opposite of what is commonly advanced. People say that God cares about the big things but not about little details. But Jesus says that God's sovereignty over the tiniest detail should give us confidence that he also superintends the larger matters.

5. Characteristics of discipleship (10:32-39)

a. Acknowledging Jesus (10:32-33)

32-33 Many assume that Matthew here edits Mark 8:38, which was addressed to a crowd (cf. also Luke 12:8-9). But Mark's words have a structure that has led to much of the debate over the "Son of Man" question.

Whoever confesses me ...

The Son of Man will confess ...

Whoever disowns (or is ashamed of) me ...

The Son of Man will disown (or be ashamed of)...

This ABAB parallelism has induced many, especially since Bultmann (*Synoptic Tradition* , pp. 112, 128), to argue that the historical Jesus distinguished the Son of Man from himself (cf. excursus on 8:20), and that Matthew's editing, by eliminating the "Son of Man" elements and substituting the first person personal pronoun, has identified Jesus with the Son of Man. The explanation of Hooker (*Son of Man* , pp. 120- 21, 189) is

generally satisfying. The I clauses in Mark picture Jesus speaking to those thinking of following him in his earthly life; the "Son of Man" clauses picture Jesus in the future, and at this point some of his claims are still veiled. It is difficult to see how Jesus could have proclaimed another Son of Man and still have left room for himself. Elsewhere he explicitly identifies the two (Mark 14:61-62). But we may take Hooker's argument one step further. Obviously vv. 32-33 are not addressed to indiscriminate crowds but to the Twelve. The reason for the clarity of Matthew's form of the saying may therefore turn, not on a development in the church's theology, but on the distinction in the audience. This was one of the things Jesus said clearly to his disciples in secret and which they would one day shout from the housetops (v. 27). Though addressed to the Twelve (vv. 1-5), like much of vv. 17-42, this saying looks beyond the apostles to disciples at large. The point is made clear by "Whoever" (v. 32). A necessary criterion for being a disciple of Jesus is to acknowledge him publicly (cf. Rom 1:16; 10:9). This will vary in boldness, fluency, wisdom, sensitivity, and frequency from believer to believer (cf. Calvin); but consistently to disown Christ (same verb as in 26:69-75) is to be disowned by Christ. Jesus now speaks not of "your

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Father" (as in v. 29) but of "my Father." In view is his special filial relationship with the Father, by which the final destiny of all humanity depends solely on his word (see on 7:21-23; cf. 25:12). The christological implications of Jesus' words are unavoidable. "Jesus makes the entire position of men in the world to come, whether for weal or woe, to depend upon their relationship to and attitude toward him in this present world. Is this a claim which any mere man might have made? Do we not encounter here essentially the exclusiveness of Acts 4:12?" (Stonehouse, *Origins* , p. 190).

b. Recognizing the gospel (10:34-36)

34-36 As many Jews in Jesus' day thought the coming of Messiah would bring them political peace and material prosperity, so today many in the church think that Jesus' presence will bring them a kind of tranquility. But Jesus insisted that his mission entailed strife and division (v. 34). Prince of Peace though he is (see on 5:9), the world will so violently reject him and his reign that men and women will divide over him (vv. 35-36); cf. Luke 12:49-53; cf. Neil, pp. 157-60). Before the consummation of the kingdom, even the peace Jesus bequeaths his disciples will have its setting in the midst of a hostile world (John 14:27; 16:33; cf. James 4:4). The repeated statement "I have come" shows Jesus' christological and eschatological awareness (contra Arens, pp. 63-90 who uses the same evidence to argue that such elements must be church creations). Earlier he warned his disciples of the world's hatred of his followers, a hatred extending even to close relatives (vv. 21-22); now he ties this perspective to an OT analogy (Mic 7:6; on the text form, cf. Stendahl, School, pp. 90f.; Gundry, *Use of OT* , pp. 78f.). Micah describes the sinfulness and rebellion in the days of King Ahaz; but insofar as Jesus' disciples by following him align themselves with the prophets (5:10-12), then the situation in Micah's time points to the greater division at Messiah's

coming. Many critics think these verses apply solely to Christians in Matthew's day, and doubtless they caused Matthew's readers to think of their own sufferings. But some older commentators (e.g., Plumptre) wonder whether the Twelve, even during Jesus' earthly ministry, did not face some opposition from family and friends--as did Jesus himself (13:53-58; John 7:3-5). Even today the situation has not greatly eased. In the "liberal" West people who have become Christians have occasionally been disowned and disinherited by their families and have lost their jobs. And under totalitarian regimes of the right or the left there has been and still is untold suffering for Christ--witness Christians in the Gulag Archipelago.

c. Preferring Jesus (10:37-39)

37-39 The absolutism of the Semitic idiom (Luke 14:26) is rightly interpreted by

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Matthew: a man must love (for comments on this verb, see on 5:43) his wife, family, friends, and even his enemies; but he must love Jesus supremely (v. 37). Again the saying is either that of the Messiah or of a maniac. The rabbinic parallels of the master-disciple relationship (cf. M *Baba Metzia* 2:11) are not very close; though they place the master above the father, they allow the disciple's personal interest to stand above his allegiance to his master. Jesus demanded death to self (vv. 38-39). "Taking one's cross" does not mean putting up with some awkward or tragic situation in one's life but painfully dying to self. In that sense every disciple of Jesus bears the same cross. After Jesus' death and resurrection, the emotional impact of these sayings must have been greatly heightened; but even before those events, the reference to Crucifixion would vividly call to mind the shame and pain of such a sacrifice. For "worthy," see on v. 11. The appeal is not to gloom but to discipleship. There is a strong paradox here. Those who lose their *psyche* ("soul," "life"--see on vv. 29-30), whether in actual martyrdom or disciplined self-denial, will "find" it in the age to come. Those who "find" it now (the expression in classical Greek means "to win or preserve" life) by living for themselves and refusing to submit to the demands of Christian discipleship lose it in the age to come (cf. 16:25; Mark 8:35; Luke 9:24; 17:33).

6. Encouragement: response to the disciples and to Jesus (10:40-42)

The foregoing teaching about what it means to be a disciple of Jesus has its darker side. This final section of the discourse is more encouraging--it reverts again to the ultimate tie between the treatment of Jesus and that of his followers (see on vv. 24-25); it turns our eyes to the future (see on v. 28) and shows us that God is indebted to no one.

40-42 It is commonly understood in the NT that a man's agent must be received as the man himself (v. 40; cf. Luke 10:16; John 12:44-45; 13:20; Acts 9:4). And as this section closes the discourse that opens with instructions to the Twelve, many interpret "prophet" and "righteous man" (v. 41) as alternative designations of the apostles in v. 40, and v. 42 as an extension to all disciples (e.g., Bonnard; Allen; Manson, *Sayings* , p. 183). By contrast David Hill ("Dikaioi as a Quasi-Technical Term," NTS 11 [1964-65]: 296-303; cf. also Cothenet) has advanced another interpretation. He suggests that both "prophets" and "righteous men" refer to distinguishable classes within Christianity. "Prophets" are distinguishable from "apostles," and "righteous men" refers to some other distinguishable group of teachers (cf. also 13:17; 23:29 and on 7:15-23). Hill further suggests (*Matthew*) that v. 42, derived from Mark 9:41, is given this setting "to suggest that travelling and persecuted missionaries [the "little ones"] are dependent

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on the hospitality and help of non-Christians." E. Schweizer ("Observance of the Law and Charismatic Activity in Matthew," NTS 16 [1969-70]: 213-30) says the coloration of "prophet" and "righteous man" in v. 41 means that Matthew urges his community to imitate the ideal of a charismatic ("prophet") still bound by the law as interpreted by Jesus ("righteous man"). E. Kasemann (*New Testament Questions of Today* [London: SCM, 1969], pp. 90-91) sees in "prophets" the leaders of Matthew's community and in "righteous men" the general body of believers. A better synthesis is possible. As the discourse, viewed as a whole, moves from the Twelve to all believers, so also does its conclusion. Verse 40 probably refers primarily to the apostles, and vv. 41-42 move through "prophets" and "righteous men" down to "these little ones"--viz., the least in the kingdom, seen as persecuted witnesses in the latter part of the discourse. The order "descends" only according to prominence. But the classes mentioned are not mutually exclusive, since "these little ones" surely includes the apostles, prophets, and righteous men, they are all "little ones" because they are all targets of the world's enmity. To give a cup of cold freshly drawn water, the least courtesy demands, to the least disciple just because he is a disciple does not go unrewarded. Thus the "little ones" are not portrayed as a special class of "travelling missionaries" (contra Hill, *Matthew*) but as disciples. "Prophets" are referred to, not because Christian prophets are in view, but because this is an already accepted category for God's spokesmen and for those with whom Jesus' followers are aligned (5: 10-12).

"Righteous men" is more difficult. But in two of the three passages where the term occurs in connection with "prophets" (13:17; 23:29), it must refer to righteous men of earlier generations--OT and perhaps Maccabean figures, not Christian contemporaries of Matthew, and not traveling teachers. It seems best to take the term here from the same perspective. None of Hill's evidence points unambiguously to a class of teachers known as "righteous men." Most of his DSS evidence (1QS 3:20, 22; 5:2, 9; 9:14; 1QSa 1:2, 24; 2:3) clearly demonstrates that the sectarians perceived themselves as "the

righteous" over against other men. Moreover it is far from certain that Daniel 12: 3 refers to a part of the people of God with a special assignment to teach righteousness: even there it is easy to detect a reference to all of God's people. After all, "righteousness" is a category already used in Matthew to describe all of Jesus' disciples (5:20). Some scholars have been too eager to read anachronisms into the text and detect special groups on the basis of slender evidence. In reality v. 40, though very general, applies in the first instance to the Twelve; v. 41 repeats the aphorism twice more using OT categories familiar to Jesus but extending the application from prophets to all of God's righteous people. Verse 42 groups the previous aphorisms together to make it quite clear that the sole reason for rewarding those who treat Jesus' disciples well is

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not because they are prophets or righteous people--they are in fact but "little ones"-- but because they are Jesus' disciples. The prophet's reward and the righteous man's reward are therefore not disparate but kingdom rewards (see on 5:12) that are the fruit of discipleship. To receive a prophet because he is a prophet (as in 1 Kings 17:9-24; 2 Kings 4:8-37) presupposes, in the context of v. 40, that he is Christ's prophet--so also for the "righteous man." Thus the person who receives a prophet receives Christ, his word, his ways, and his gospel, and expresses solidarity with the people of God, these little ones, by receiving them for Jesus' sake (cf. 2John 10-11; 3John 8). No such person will lose his reward. While the applications to Matthew's churches, as to our own, are many, the text itself does not venture so far.

7. Transitional conclusion: expanding ministry (11:1)

1 For the significance of the formulas that end Jesus' discourses, see on 7:28-29. This one omits "these things" or the like (see on 10:5a). Unlike Mark 6:30; Luke 9:10, there is no mention of the return of the Twelve, since their early successes are of less concern to Matthew than is Jesus' teaching. Attention returns to Jesus' ministry, for he did not send out the apostles in order to relieve himself of work but in order to expand the proclamation of the kingdom (9:35-10:4).

IV. Teaching and Preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom: Rising Opposition (11:2-13:53)

A. Narrative (11:2-12:50)

1. Jesus and John the Baptist (11:2-19)

a. John's question and Jesus' response (11:2-6)

Matthew 12-13 depends in large part on Mark 2:23-3:12; 3:20-4:34. Before this comes 11:2-30, most of which is paralleled in various parts of Luke. Thematically the three chapters (chs. 11-13) are held together by the rising tide of disappointment in and opposition to the kingdom of God that was resulting from Jesus' ministry. He was not turning out to be the kind of Messiah the people had expected. Even John the Baptist had doubts (vv. 2-19), and the Galilean cities that were sites of most of Jesus' miracles hardened themselves in unbelief (vv. 20-24). The nature of Jesus' person and ministry were "hidden" (an important word) from the wise, despite the most open and compassionate of invitations (vv. 28-30). Conflicts with Jewish leaders began to intensify (12:1-45), while people still misunderstood the most basic elements of Jesus'

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teaching and authority (12:46-50). But does this mean that he had been checkmated or that the kingdom had not come after all? Matthew 13 is the answer--the kingdom of God was continuing its advance even though it was often contested and ignored.

Matthew 11:2-19 is closely paralleled by Luke 7:18-35. Occasional divergences are noted below (see esp. on v. 19).

2-3 According to Josephus (Antiq. XVIII, 119 [v.2]), Herod imprisoned John the Baptist in the fortress of Machaerus, east of the Dead Sea. The bare fact is recorded in Matthew 4:12, the circumstances in 14:3-5. Apparently John had been in prison during Jesus' extensive Galilean ministry, perhaps as long as a year. The one to whom he had pointed, the one who would come in blessing and judgment (3:11-12), had brought healing to many but, it would seem, judgment to none--not even to those who had immorally and unlawfully confined the Baptist in a cruel prison, doubtless made the more unbearable for its contrast with his accustomed freedom (cf. Luke 1:80). John heard "what Christ was doing" (v. 2). The clause hides two subtle points. First, the use of (lit.) "the Christ" is peculiar, for at this stage in Jesus' ministry there was but little thoughtful ascription of this title to Jesus; and Matthew normally avoids it. Some have thought that at this point Matthew was somewhat careless about consistency in his narrative. Precisely the opposite is the case. The entire Gospel is written from the perspective of faith. The very first verse affirms Jesus as the Messiah, and the prologue (chs. 1-2) seeks to prove it. So at this point Matthew somewhat unusually refers to Jesus as "the Christ" in order to remind his readers who it was that John the Baptist was doubting. Though John doubted, from Matthew's perspective the time for doubt had passed. Far from being an anachronism this use of "the Christ" is Matthew's own designation of Jesus. Indeed, Matthew's fidelity is attested by the way he distinguishes between his own understanding and insight, drawn from his postresurrection perspective, and

the gradual development of that understanding historically, including the Baptist's doubts. The second point is that *ta erga tou Christou* (lit., "the works of Christ"; NIV, "what Christ was doing") is suitably vague to embrace a triple allusion, not only to Jesus' miracles (chs. 8-9), but also to his teaching (chs. 5-7) and growing mission (ch. 10). As a result of these reports, John sent a pointed question "by" (reading *dia* as in RSV, not *duo* ["two"] as in KJV) his disciples. This use of "disciples" shows that the term is a nontechnical one for "Christians" or "the Twelve" in Matthew (see on 5:1-6; 9:37). The objection, probably first raised by D.F. Strauss (*The Life of Jesus Critically Examined* [1846; reprint ed., London: SCM, 1973], pp. 219-30, esp. p. 229), that John was in no position to send messengers presumes to know more about security arrangements at Machaerus than we do the more so since the Gospels show that Herod himself was ambivalent toward the prophet (Mark 6:17-26). John's question was

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whether Jesus was *ho erchomenos* ("the coming one," v. 3), exactly the same expression ascribed to John at 3:11 (cf. also 21:9; 23:39; John 6:14; 11:27; Heb 10:37). The expression is not a common messianic title in intertestamental literature. It probably was drawn from such passages as Psalm 118:26; Isaiah 59:20. The description of the actions of "the coming one" in 3:11 nullifies the old theory (Schweitzer) that the Baptist merely expected Elijah *redivivus* ("come to life again") to follow him. John was asking Jesus whether he was the Messiah. The question at first glance seems so out of character for what we know of the Baptist that many of the Fathers and Reformers, and even Bengel, suggest that John asked it, not for his own sake, but for the sake of his followers. Not a shred of exegetical evidence supports this view. Not only may the Baptist have become demoralized, like his namesake Elijah, but the Baptist had preached in terms of imminent blessing and judgment. By contrast Jesus was preaching in veiled fulfillment terms and bringing much blessing but no real judgment (cf. Dunn, *Jesus*, pp. 55-62), and as a result the Baptist was having second thoughts.

4-6 Jesus' answer briefly summarized his own miracles and preaching, but in the language of Isaiah 35:5-6; 61:1, with possible further allusions to 26:19; 29:18-19. At one level the answer was straightforward: Isaiah 61:1 is an explicit messianic passage, and Isaiah 35:5-6, though it has no messianic figure, describes the return of God's people to Zion with accompanying blessings (e.g., restoration of sight). Jesus definitely claimed that these messianic visions were being fulfilled in the miracles he was performing and that his preaching the Good News to the poor (see on 5:3) was as explicit a fulfillment of the messianic promises of Isaiah 61:1-2 as Luke 4:17-21. The powers of darkness were being undermined; the kingdom was advancing (cf. v. 12). But there is a second, more subtle level to Jesus' response. All four of the Isaiah passages refer to judgment in their immediate context: e.g., "your

God will come ... with vengeance; with divine retribution" (35:4); "the day of vengeance of our God" (Isa 61:2). Thus Jesus was allusively responding to the Baptist's question: the blessings promised for the end time have broken out and prove it is here, even though the judgments are delayed (cf. Jeremias, *Promise* , p. 46; Dunn, *Jesus* , p. 60). Verse 6, which may include an allusion to Isaiah 8:13-14 (in which case Jesus is set in the place of Yahweh: see on 11:10), is then a gentle warning, applicable both to John and his disciples: Blessed (see on 5:3) is the "man who does not fall away" (for this verb, see on 5:29) on account of Jesus, i.e., who does not find in him and his ministry an obstacle to belief and therefore reject him. The miracles themselves were not irrefutable proof of who Jesus was (cf. Mark 8:11-12 and parallels); faith was still required to read the evidence against the background of Scripture and to hear in Jesus' claim the ring of truth. But the beatitude in this form assumes the questioner has begun well and now

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must avoid stumbling. It is therefore an implicit challenge to reexamine one's presuppositions about what the Messiah should be and do in the light of Jesus and his fulfillment of Scripture and to bring one's understanding and faith into line with him.

b. Jesus' testimony to John (11:7-19)

1) John in redemptive history (11:7-15)

John had often borne witness to Jesus; now Jesus bears witness to John. But, as we will see, the effect is to point back to himself as the sole figure who brings in the kingdom. Historically it was almost inevitable for Jesus to define the position of John the Baptist with respect to himself. Most scholars doubt he did so consecutively as set forth here. Nevertheless the passage holds together well, and there is little literary or historical evidence to suggest that this is a composite of words spoken on other occasions. The parallel in Luke 7:24-35 preserves the same themes and movement. It omits Matthew 11:12-13 and adds Luke 7:29-30. The extra verses in Matthew are usually said to derive from Mark 9:11-13. But the two passages are linguistically and thematically rather distinct, and it is easy to imagine that Jesus had to take some position on John more than once and very definitely so for his disciples. Moreover the tone of this passage reflects no personal conflict between John and Jesus. And this, contrary to much recent discussion, is typical of the NT witness of the relationship between the two men (cf. esp. J.A.T. Robinson, *Twelve* , pp. 28-52).

7-8 "Began" (v. 7) does not imply that Jesus commences his remarks while the Baptist's disciples were leaving and completed them only after they had gone (Broadus); as in v. 20, it means that he took the opportunity to speak to

the crowd about John. The rhetorical questions are a gently ironic way of eliminating obviously false answers in order to give the truth in vv. 10-11. "A reed [probably a collective singular referring to cane grass, found in abundance along the Jordan] swayed by the wind" suggests a fickle person, tossed about in his judgment by the winds of public opinion or private misfortune (Lucian uses a similar metaphor, BAGD, p. 398). Certainly the people did not go out to witness such an ordinary spectacle. Nor did they go out into the desert to find a man dressed "in fine clothes" (v. 8). "Fine" (*malakos*), used elsewhere in the NT only at Luke 7:25 and 1 Corinthians 6:9, connotes "softness" or even "effeminacy" and may be ironic. Contrast the rugged garb the prophet actually wore (see on 3:4-6). Those who are "in kings' palaces" is a sly cut at the man who was keeping John in prison. It appears, then, that Jesus spoke in this way to disarm suspicion among the people that John's question (v. 3) might betray signs of fickleness (v. 7) or undisciplined

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weakness (v. 8). Not so, responds Jesus; the man the people went out to see was neither unstable nor faithless His question arose not from personal weakness or failure but from misunderstanding about the nature of the Messiah, owing to John's place in salvation history (see on v. 11). Hence Jesus addressed the crowd, not to defend himself following the Baptist's question, but to defend the Baptist.

9-11 What the people had flocked to the desert to see was a prophet (v. 9), since it was commonly agreed that a true prophet had not appeared for centuries but only the *batkol* (lit., "daughter of a voice"; see on 3:17). Small wonder there was such excitement. Jesus confirms the crowd's judgment but goes beyond it--John was not only a prophet but more than a prophet. In what respect? In this: Not only was he, like other OT prophets, a direct spokesman for God to call the nation to repentance, but he himself was also the subject of prophecy--the one who, according to Scripture, would announce the Day of Yahweh (v. 10). The form of the quotation shows influence from Exodus 23:20 (LXX) in the first clause (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT*, pp. 11f.). Yet there is no doubt that the primary passage being cited is Malachi 3:1. The messenger in Malachi 3:1 (Elijah in Mal 4:5-6) prepares the way for the great and dreadful Day of Yahweh. The form of the text, adding "ahead of you" (probably by using Exod 23:20) in the first line, changing "before me" to "before you" in the second line, and adding "your," has the effect of making Yahweh address Messiah. On any reading of Malachi 3:1 (on which see France, *Jesus*, pp. 91f., n. 31), Yahweh does not address Messiah; but inasmuch as the messenger prepares the way for Yahweh (Mal 4:5-6), with whom Jesus is constantly identified in the NT (see on 2:6; and esp. 3:3), this periphrastic rendering makes Jesus' identity unambiguous (cf. France, *Jesus*, p. 155). Even if Malachi 3:1 had been exactly quoted, the flow of the argument in Matthew demands that if John the Baptist is the prophesied Elijah who prepares the way for Yahweh (3:3; cf. Luke 1:76) or for the Day of Yahweh (Mal 4:5-6), and John the Baptist is

Jesus' forerunner, then Jesus himself is the manifestation of Yahweh and brings in the eschatological Day of Yahweh. Hill (*Matthew*) comments: "It is probable that the quotation has been inserted by the evangelist; it breaks the logical connection between verses 9 and 11, and anticipates the mysterious announcement in verse 14." It seems difficult to have it both ways: if the quotation anticipates v. 14, then it must be left in place unless v. 14 is also judged inauthentic. More important, v. 10, far from breaking them up, ties v. 9 and v. 11 together. By citing Malachi, Jesus (v. 10) has shown in what way John the Baptist is greater than a prophet: he is greater in that he alone of all the prophets was the forerunner who prepared the way for Yahweh-Jesus and personally pointed him out. While the OT prophets doubtless contributed to the corpus of revelation that pointed to Messiah, they did not serve as immediate forerunners. This is what makes John

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greater than a prophet (v. 9)--indeed the greatest born of women (v. 11; i.e., the greatest human being; cf. Job 14:1). Thus far the argument flows coherently. But who is the "least in the kingdom of heaven," and how is he greater than John the Baptist? Many have found this comparison so difficult that some fanciful suggestions have been made. McNeile holds the kingdom to be entirely future: the least in the kingdom will *then* be greater than John *now* is. But will not John also be in the kingdom then? And how will this contribute to the argument? Others argue that *ho mikroteros* means not "the least" but "the younger," the "lesser" in a purely temporal sense. In this view it refers to Jesus: Jesus, though lesser through being younger, is greater than John the Baptist (so Chrysostom; Augustine; cf. Fenton; BDF par. 61 [2]; O. Cullmann, "Ho opisö mou erchomenos," *Coniectanea Neotestamentica* 11 [1947]: 30; Zerwick, par. 149; M. Brunec, "De Legationi Ioannis Baptistae (Mt 11:2-24)," *Verbum Domini* 35 [1957]: 262-70). This implies that John the Baptist is himself, according to Matthew in the kingdom--a conclusion widely defended, largely on the grounds of comparing the ministries of John and Jesus (e.g., 3:2; 4:17; so, for instance, Walter Wink, *John the Baptist in the Gospel Tradition* [Cambridge: University Press, 1968], pp. 33-35). It must be admitted, however, that *ho mikroteros* is made to mean "the younger" chiefly because v. 11 is so difficult. In view of the fact that a comparison establishing John as greater than the prophets immediately precedes this text, it is most natural to take *ho mikroteros* as meaning "the least" in the kingdom. This entails the view that John the Baptist was not himself in the kingdom. Parallels between John's and Jesus' preaching are readily explained (see on 4:17), and v. 12 can best be taken that way as well (see below). In what way, then, is the least in the kingdom greater than John the Baptist? The answer must not be in terms of mere privilege--viz., the least are greater because they live to see the kingdom actually inaugurated--but in terms of the greatness already established for John. He was the greatest of the prophets because he pointed most unambiguously to Jesus. Nevertheless even the least in the kingdom is greater yet because, living after the crucial revelatory and eschatological

events have occurred, he or she points to Jesus still more unambiguously than John the Baptist. This interpretation entirely suits the context and accomplishes three things. 1. It continues a defense of John by showing that his question (v. 3), which springs neither from fickleness nor weakness (vv. 7-8), does not make him forfeit his primacy among the prophets because of his being the forerunner of Jesus (vv. 9-10), but that the question owes its origin to his still-veiled place in the redemptive history now unfolding. 2. By contrast it continues the theme of discipleship whose essential function is to acknowledge Jesus before people (10:32-33) and establishes that function as the

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disciples' essential greatness. Even the least in the kingdom points to Jesus Christ more clearly than all his predecessors, not excluding John. For they either live through the tumultuous events of the ministry, Passion, and beyond, after which things are much clearer; or they enter the kingdom after these events, with the same clear understanding. Thus the ground is being laid for the Great Commission: clear witness to Christ before men is not only a requirement of the kingdom (10:32-33) and a command of the resurrected Lord (28:18-20) but the true greatness of the disciple (11:11).

3. At the same time, by explaining John's greatness and his place in salvation history, this verse points back to the preeminence of Jesus himself.

12 This enigmatic saying has called forth a host of interpretations. These depend on several alternatives related to several exegetical turning points that can be combined variously. A complete list of the possibilities (for bibliography, see Chilton, *God in Strength* , pp. 203ff.) must be passed over in favor of an interpretation that does justice both to the context and to the language. The turning points are three. 1. "From the days of John the Baptist until now." As already pointed out (vv. 10-11), most commentators understand "until" in v. 13 to be an exclusive usage, putting John within the kingdom (though most scholars hold that Luke 16:16 is an inclusive usage of "until"). Indeed, John P. Meier ("John the Baptist in Matthew's Gospel," JBL 99

[1980]: 383-405) makes it the crux of his interpretation of Matthew's treatment of the Baptist. The phrase "from the days of John the Baptist" is almost certainly a Semitic way of saying "from the time of the activity of John the Baptist" (cf. Jeremias, *NT Theology* , pp. 46f.). John's ministry provides the *terminus a quo* , the phrase "until now" the *terminus ad quem* . But many argue that "until now" means "up until" Matthew's time of writing, not "up until" Jesus' time of speaking (e.g., Cope, *Matthew* , pp.

75f.; Albright and Mann). This interpretation is rendered plausible (Albright and Mann) because the rest of the verse seems to picture violent men ransacking the kingdom (see discussion below); and this certainly did not happen in the short time between the Baptist's death and this saying by Jesus during his earthly ministry. A better synthesis emerges by taking the text strictly. The idiom "from ... " in Matthew *includes* the following term (cf. 1:17; 2:16; 23:35; 27:45; Schweizer). But the entire expression "from the days of John the Baptist" does not say that John inaugurates the kingdom but only that during his time of ministry it was inaugurated and (or) attacked. The expression does not even assume John's death; it only assumes that the crucial period of his ministry during which the kingdom was inaugurated lies in the past. Now that kingdom has begun, in however preliminary a way, with Jesus' preaching and powerful works during "the days of John the Baptist." Thus there is no reason why the Prophets and the Law should not prophesy "until John" in an inclusive

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sense (v. 13)--an interpretation that not only agrees with Luke 16:16 but goes best with Matthew 11:9-11. Whether the kingdom has been "forcefully advancing" (NIV) or attacked (see below), this has been going on from its inception under Jesus' ministry during the days of John the Baptist (there had to be temporal overlap if the forerunner was to prepare his way and point him out) "until now"--viz., till this point in Jesus' ministry. This does not mean that the activity (whether of forceful advance or of being attacked) stops at that point, any more than the same expression in John 2:10 (the only other place it occurs in the NT) means that everybody at the wedding instantly stopped drinking the best wine. The continuation is not the focus of interest. 2. "The kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing." The crux of the problem is the verb *biazetai* ("has been forcefully advancing"). The form is either middle or passive. If the former, the NIV rendering, or something like it, is right; if the latter, it means that the kingdom is being attacked (in a negative sense) or is being forcefully advanced (by God?) (cf. TDNT, 1:610f.). In Greek sources relevant to the NT, *biazetai* is considerably more common in the deponent middle than in the active or passive voices (in the NT the verb is found only here and in Luke 16:16); and this supports the NIV rendering of the clause (cf. BAGD, pp. 140-41; DNTT, 3:711-12) as Ridderbos, NEB (mg.), Hendriksen, Chilton, and others do. But many object to this rendering on one of two grounds: (1) it brings a notion of "force" to the kingdom contrary to the Gospels' emphases; and (2) it deals poorly with the last clause of the text, since *biastes* really must not be rendered "forceful man" (in a positive sense) but "violent man" (see discussion, below). The first objection is insubstantial. The kingdom has come with holy power and magnificent energy that has been pushing back the frontiers of darkness. This is especially manifest in Jesus' miracles and ties in with Jesus' response to the Baptist (v. 5). Some kind of compulsion even of people is presupposed elsewhere (Luke 14:23). Moreover the force implied by the middle deponent verb is not always violent or cruel (cf. BAGD). The second objection is important and brings us to the third part of the verse. 3. "And forceful men lay hold of it." Hendriksen, for instance, thinks the cognate noun *biastes*

("forceful man") finds its meaning now established by the considerations discussed above for the meaning of the verb *biazetai* ("has been forcefully advancing"). The kingdom is making great strides; now is the time for courageous souls, forceful people, to take hold of it. This is no challenge for the timorous or fainthearted. This interpretation is possible but not convincing. The noun *biastes* is rare in Greek literature (only here in the NT), but where it occurs it always has the negative connotations of violence and rapacity. Moreover the verb *harpazousin* ("lay hold of"), a fairly common verb, almost always has the same evil connotations (a rare exception is Acts 8:39). For these reasons most commentators see a reference to violent men and

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then read the verb in the preceding clause as a passive: "the kingdom of heaven is suffering violence and violent men are seizing it"--so, more or less, KJV, NASB, Wey, NEB (text), Hill, Gaechter, Maier, Hobbs, E. Moore ("Biazö, harpazö and Cognates in Josephus," NTS 21 [1975]: 519-43), C. Spicq (*Notes de lexicographie neo- testatnentaire* , 2 vols. [Gottingem Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978], s.v.), and many others. There are many conflicting views about who the violent men are--Zealots, Pharisees, evil spirits and their human hosts, Herod Antipas, Jewish antagonists in general. But the thrust is the same in any case. Not satisfied with this, others have made suggestions, none convincing. The kingdom of heaven "has been taken by storm and eager men are forcing their way into it" (offered by Ph and Wms and defended by McNeile) is a rendering that combines the unlikelihood of a passive verb with the unlikelihood of a positive-connotative noun. James Swetnam, in a review of Spicq (*Biblica* 61 [1980]: 440-42), wants the verse to mean that from the time of John the kingdom has been suffering violence (passive verb) *of interpretation* ; and those who are of like-minded violence--i.e., who understand the kingdom in the same way--are the ones who snatch it away. To the weaknesses of the last suggestion, this one adds an unparalleled meaning ("to suffer violence of interpretation") to the verb. The best solution is to take the verb in its most likely voice, middle deponent, and the noun and verb of the last clause with their normal evil connotations: viz., from the time of John the Baptist (as explained above) until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing; and violent or rapacious men have been trying (conative present) to plunder it--so Pamment (pp. 227f.), though she then makes the rendering nearly incoherent by saying the kingdom of heaven is exclusively future (see also on 5: 3). Furthermore, the verbs in the last two clauses are both in the present tense. If they are rendered as presents in English, the syntax is wrong: "From the time of Join until now the kingdom is forcefully advancing, and violent men are pillaging it." But that acceptable Greek syntax calls in question Pamment's views on the futurity of the kingdom of heaven and sets up the picture of a tremendous, violent struggle being waged even as Jesus

speaks. Certainly "Jesus considers his ministry to be a time when the Kingdom can be attacked as being present" (Hill, *Matthew* ; cf. Kummel, *Jesus' Promise* , pp. 121ff.). If this is a form of antanclasis (a figure of speech in which the same word is repeated in a different or even contradictory sense), based in this instance not on exactly the same word but on a cognate, the verse admirably suits the context. The argument up to v. 11 has established John the Baptist's greatness, grounded in his ministry of preparing for and pointing out Christ; and it has anticipated the witness of those in the kingdom who are even greater than John because the least of them testifies to Christ yet more clearly. Now, Jesus goes on to say, from the days of the Baptist--i.e., from the

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beginning of Jesus' ministry--the kingdom has been forcefully advancing (the point also made in Luke 16:16). But it has not swept all opposition away, as John expected (see on vv. 2-4). Simultaneous with the kingdom's advance have been the attacks of violent men on it. That is the very point John could not grasp. Now Jesus expressly affirms it. The statement is general because it does not refer to just one kind of opposition. It includes Herod's imprisonment of John (cf. J.A.T. Robinson, *Twelve*, pp. 44-45), the attacks by Jewish leaders now intensifying (9:34; 12:22-24), the materialism that craved a political Messiah and the prosperity he would bring but not his righteousness (11:20-24). Already Jesus has warned his disciples of persecution and suffering (10:16-42); the opposition was rising and would get worse. Meanwhile, not the aggressive zealots will find rest for their souls, but the weary the burdened, the children to whom the Father has revealed the truth (vv. 25-30). The last-mentioned passage is the death-knell of those who think the *biastai* are "forceful men" (in a positive sense): that is exactly what the chapter, taken as a whole, rules out. Instead, we are hearing the sound of divine grace, a note that becomes a symphony later in this Gospel. If this interpretation is sound, there seems little reason either for thinking that v. 12 is out of place or for seeing in it the later creation of the church.

13 In view of the preceding, "until John" means up to and including John. The Baptist belongs to the last stage of the divine economy before the inauguration of the kingdom (as in Luke 16:16). Sigal ("Halakah," pp. 68f.) mishandles this verse because he treats it as if the Prophets and the Law must prophesy about John rather than until John. Some of what the OT says about John has been set out in v. 10, here the point is to set out the redemptive-historical turning point that has brought about the transformation of perspectives explained in vv. 11-12. The two anomalies in the verse are (1) "the Prophets" precedes "the Law," an unusual order (cf.

5:17; 7:12), and (2) both "Prophets" and "Law" prophesy--and both anomalies serve the same purpose: a powerful way of saying that the entire OT has a prophetic function, a function it maintained up until, and including, John the Baptist. In the twin settings of Matthew's "fulfillment" theme (see on 2:15; 5:17-20) and the role of John the Baptist (11:10), it is understood that now, after John the Baptist, that which Prophets and Law prophesied has come to pass--the kingdom has dawned and Messiah has come. This establishes the primary function of the OT in Matthew's Gospel: it points to Jesus and the kingdom. This confirms our interpretation of 5:17-20. The *gar* ("For") therefore ties v. 13, not to v. 11, but to v. 12 (confirming v. 12 as an integral part of the argument). Verse 13 further explains that "from the days of John the Baptist"--i.e., from the beginning of Jesus' ministry--the kingdom has been forcefully advancing. The Prophets and the Law prophesied until then and, implicitly,

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prophesied of this new era. And from that time on, the fulfillment of the prophecy, the kingdom itself, has been forcefully advancing.

14-15 The argument returns to vv. 9-10, stating explicitly what Jesus said there: John the Baptist was the prophesied "Elijah" (v. 14). This locates his place and function in the history of redemption and affirms again that what Jesus was doing was eschatological--he was bringing in the Day of Yahweh. The clause "if you are willing to accept it" does not cast doubt on the truth of the identification; but, like v. 15, it acknowledges how difficult it was to grasp it, especially before the Cross and the Resurrection. For if the people had truly understood, they would necessarily have seen Jesus' place in salvation history as the fulfillment of OT hopes and prophecy. That is why the sonorous formula of v. 15 is added (cf. 13:9, 43; 24:15; Rev 2:7, 11 et al.): the identification of John with prophesied Elijah has messianic implications that "those with ears" would hear. The formula is both a metaphorical description of and a challenge to spiritual sensitivity to the claims of the gospel

2) The unsatisfied generation (11:16-19)

16-17 See the close parallel in Luke 7:31-35. "Comparison" stands at the heart of Jesus' parables (see on 13:24). Here Jesus uses an analogy to show his view of "this generation" (v. 16), a designation recurring in Matthew 12:41-42, 45; 23:36; 24:34 (cf. 12:39; 16:4; 17:17) and used of Jesus' generation in connection with their general rejection of himself as Messiah. This identification of "this generation" is confirmed here by the next pericope (vv. 20-24). "It cannot but be noted that the Lord, *nihil humani a se alienum putans* [judging nothing human to be without interest to himself], as he took notice of the rending of mended garments (9:16), and the domestic concerns of the children in their beds (Luke 11:7), so also observes the

children's play in the market place, and finds in everything the material for the analogies of his wise teaching" (Stier). There are either two kinds of games (v. 17), a wedding game and a funeral game, or, less likely, two cries within one game; but the children cannot be satisfied with either.

18-19 "For" shows that Jesus now gives the reason the behavior of "this generation" suggests the comparison he has drawn. John the Baptist lived ascetically, "neither eating nor drinking" (v. 18), i.e., neither indulging in dinner parties (cf. 3:4) nor drinking alcohol (cf. Luke 1:15). Although he drew crowds (vv. 7-8) and many were willing to enjoy his light for a time (John 5:35), yet the people as a whole rejected him, even charging him with demon possession. Jesus came eating and drinking (9:10-11; Luke 15:1-2; cf. John 2:1-11) and was charged with gluttony, drunkenness, and bad

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associations (v. 19; cf. Prov 23:20). Like disgruntled children, "this generation" found it easier to whine their criticisms and voice their discontent than to "play the game." Jesus says in effect: "But all you do is to give orders and criticize. For you the Baptist is a madman because he fasts, while you want to make merry; me you reproach because I eat with publicans, while you insist on strict separation from sinners. You hate the preaching of repentance, and you hate the proclamation of the Gospel. So you play your childish game with God's messengers while Rome burns!" (Jeremias, *Parables* , pp. 161-62). But the criticism runs at a still deeper level. If they had understood John, they would have understood Jesus, and vice versa; the thought has links with vv. 7-15 (Bonnard). Here Jesus uses Son of Man not only as a self-reference but as a veiled messianic allusion (see on 8:20). For tax collectors and sinners, see on 5:46. The closing proverb has provoked much debate because Luke has "all her children" and Matthew "her actions." This proved so difficult that copyists in many MSS assimilated Matthew to Luke, where the text is relatively firm (cf. Metzger, *Textual Criticism* , p. 30; and esp. O. Linton, "The Parable of the Children's Game," NTS 22 [1975-76]: 165-71). But the problem cannot be so easily evaded. Aramaic reconstructions are not convincing. Luke's form is probably original. It is commonly interpreted to mean that the claims of wisdom are proved true by all her children--all who accept the message of wisdom's envoys, John and Jesus (cf. Luke 7:29-30; some do accept it: cf. Marshall, *Luke* , pp. 303f.). Why the change to "actions" in Matthew? Suggs (pp. 36-58) argues that the proverb should not be read as the conclusion to the immediately preceding parable but to vv. 2-18 and notes the use of *erga* ("actions") in v. 2 (NIV, "what Christ was doing"). On this basis he argues that the proverb in Matthew reflects Son-of-Man "wisdom" christology: Wisdom is proved right by her actions, and those actions are the actions of Christ (vv. 2-5). Jesus is therefore wisdom incarnate (similarly, but more cautiously, David R. Catchpole, "Tradition History," in Marshall, *NT Interpretation* , pp. 167-71; Dunn, *Christology* , pp. 197f.; and many others). Certainly wisdom, already personified in the OT (e.g., Job 28; Prov 1; 8) and

developed in Jewish tradition into a quasi-personal hypostasis in heaven, an agent who (or which) expresses the mind of God (cf. TDNT, 7:469-526, F. Christ, *Jesus Sophia* [Zurich: Zwingli, 1970], pp. 13-60, 156-63), sometimes serves in the NT as a vehicle for christology. Yet here wisdom is best understood in its more traditional association with God. God's wisdom is vindicated by her (wisdom's) actions. The wisdom-christology theory must be rejected here. The theme of chapters 11 is not christology but the place of John the Baptist (and therefore of Jesus) in salvation history. The addition of such a christology in v. 19b adds little to the argument, and Suggs's detailed reasons for defending this view entail reconstructions of church history fundamentally questionable

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on other grounds.

The proverb should be read in the light of the preceding parable: God's wisdom has been vindicated (*edikaiothe* ; NIV, "is proved right"--but the aorist, contra Jeremias

[*Parables* , p. 162, n. 42] and Turner [*Syntax* , p. 73], should not be taken as gnomic in this highly specific context) by her actions--i.e., by the lifestyles of both John and Jesus, referred to in the previous verses. Wisdom in the OT is much concerned with right living. John and Jesus have both been criticized and rejected for the way they live. But wisdom, preeminently concerned about right living, has been vindicated by her actions: their respective lifestyles are both acknowledged as hers (for questions of authenticity, of TDNT, 8:431-32). A similar approach best interprets Luke. The phrase "all her children" does not refer to all those who accept John and Jesus as wisdom's envoys: vv. 29-30 do not picture the masses accepting them but, unlike the Pharisees and other leaders merely hearing them gladly. The parable follows in which this generation is denounced for not truly understanding and participating. Wisdom's "children" are therefore John and Jesus, not the crowds. "All her children" does not militate against this, because the form is proverbial and meant to include all God's messengers, even those so radically different as John and Jesus. The two forms of the saving are therefore not very far apart. Luke focuses on the lifestyles of John and Jesus as wisdom's children, thus concentrating on their persons, Matthew on their actions. Not only is this interpretation coherent and contextually suitable, but it wraps up the preceding section in which Jesus has been exonerating the Baptist by explaining his role in redemptive history and simultaneously castigating the people for their spiritual dullness.

2. The condemned and the accepted (11:20-30)

a. The condemned: woes on unrepentant cities (11:20-24)

See Luke 10:12-15, in the context of the commission to the Seventy-two. The structure of the two passages is not close, the language moderately so. There is no particular reason to think that Matthew 11:20-24 is the original: "then" is a loose expression in this Gospel (see on 3:13) and "began" (see on v. 7) not much tighter. Luke's context is not clearly original; the second person in 10:13-15 may argue against it (but see on v. 24, below). But there is no way to rule out the possibility Jesus uttered these "woes" repeatedly as warnings. The denunciation in the last pericope (vv. 16-19) now becomes sharper. Structurally there are two series of warnings, each with the same sequence of warning (vv. 21a, 23a), explanation (vv. 21b, 23b), and comparison (vv. 22, 24) (cf. Joseph A. Comber, "The Composition and Literary Characteristics of Matt 11:20-24," CBQ 39 [1977]):

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497-504).

20 The verb *oneidizein* ("to denounce"), used only here and in 5:11; 27:44 in Matthew, is a strong verb, conveying indignation along with either insults (as in 5:11) or justifiable reproach (as here; cf. BAGD, s.v.). The expression *hai pleistai dynameis autou* (lit., "his very many miracles," elative superlative; cf. Turner, *Insights* , p. 34; id., *Syntax* , p. 31) is rightly rendered "most of his miracles." Jesus did not denounce these cities for vicious opposition but because, despite the fact that most of his miracles took place there--miracles that attested his messianic mission (vv. 5-69 they had not repented (see on 3:2; 4:17). The many miracles again remind us of the extent of Jesus' ministry (cf. 4:23; 8:16; 9:35; John 20:30; 21:25) and of the depth of responsibility imposed on those with more light. "Every hearer of the New Testament is either much happier (v. 11), or much more wretched than them of old time" (Beng.)-- those who lived before Christ.

21-22 *Ouai* can mean doom or solemn warning ("woe") or pity ("alas"); both are mingled here (v. 21). Warnings have been given before; now woes are pronounced. Korazin is mentioned in the NT only here and in Luke 10:13. Its ruins may probably be identified with Kirbet Keraze, about two miles northwest of Capernaum. The Bethsaida in question was probably the home of Andrew, Peter, and Philip (John 1:44, 12:21) on the west side of Galilee, not Bethsaida Julius on the northeast shores near the Jordan inlet. Tyre and Sidon were large Phoenician cities on the Mediterranean, not far away, and often denounced by OT prophets for their Baal worship (Isa 23; Ezek 26:28; Joel 3:4; Amos 1:9-10; Zech 9:2-4). "Sackcloth" is a rough fabric made from the short hairs of camels and usually worn next to the skin to express grief or sorrow (2Sam 3:31; 1 Kings 21:27; 2 Kings 6:30; Joel 1:8; Jonah 3:5-8). Ashes were added in cases of deep emotion (cf. Job 42:6; Dan 9:3), whether one put them on the head (2Sam 13:19; Lam 2:10), sat in them (Jonah 3:6), lay on them (Esth 4:3), or even rolled in them (Jer 6:26; Mic 1:10). For "But

I tell you" (v. 22), properly "Indeed I tell you" (here and in v. 24), see on 26:64. Three large theological propositions are presupposed by Jesus' insistence that on the Day of Judgment (see on 10:15; cf. 12:36; Acts 17:31; 2 Peter 2:9; 3:7; 1John 4:17; Jude 6), when he will judge (7:22; 25:34), things will go worse for the cities that have received so much light than for the pagan cities. The first is that the Judge has contingent knowledge: he knows what Tyre and Sidon would have done under such- and-such circumstances. The second is that God does not owe revelation to anyone, or else there is injustice in withholding it. The third is that punishment on the Day of Judgment takes into account opportunity. There are degrees of felicity in paradise and degrees of torment in hell (12:41; 23:13; cf. Luke 12:47-48), a point Paul well

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understood (Rom 1:20-2:16). The implications for Western, English-speaking Christendom today are sobering.

23-24 For Capernaum, see on 4:13. The city was not only Jesus' base (4:13), but he performed many specific miracles there (8:5-17; 9:2-8, 18:33; Mark 1:23-28; John 4: 46-54). For the difficult textual variants, see Metzger (*Textual Commentary* , pp. 30f.) and France (*Jesus* , p. 243): the question, kept in the NIV (v. 23), is probably right. Whether "go down" (conforming to Isa 14:15) or "will be brought down" (conforming to Luke 10:15) is correct, the thrust is clear; and the allusion to Isaiah 14:15 is unmistakable. The favored city of Capernaum, like self-exalting Babylon, will be brought down to Hades (see on 5:22). The OT passage is a taunt against the wicked and arrogant city, personified in its king; and Capernaum is lumped together with Babylon, which all Jews regarded as the epitome of evil (cf. Rev 17:5). The heaven- hades contrast can be metaphorical for exaltation-humiliation or the like (cf. Job 11:8; Ps 139:8; Amos 9:2; Rom 10:6-7). But in view of the surrounding references to "day of judgment," Hades must be given more sinister overtones. Similarly, though Sodom (Gen 19) was proverbial for wickedness (cf. Ezek 16:48), it will be easier on the Day of Judgment for "the land of Sodom" (so Gr., recalling that several cities were involved in the sin and the destruction) than for Capernaum (see on vv. 21-22). In the words "I tell you" (v. 22), "you" is plural, probably implying the crowd (v. 7), since the singular "you" is used for the city (vv. 23-24, Gr.). This means that using the second person to address the cities is no more than a rhetorical device of Jesus' preaching.

b. The accepted (11:25-30)

1) Because of the revelation of the Father (11:25-26)

If vv. 20-24 describe the condemned, vv. 25-30 describe the accepted. Verses 25-30 can be broken into three parts: vv. 25-26, 27, 28-30. The first two are paralleled by Luke 10:21-22. The unity of the three parts and the authenticity of each has been hotly debated. Contrary to earlier opinion (esp. E. Norden, *Agnostos Theos* [Stuttgart: Teubner, 1913]), the language is not that of Hellenistic mysticism (Norden proposed Ecclesiasticus 51 as the closest parallel, following Strauss) but is thoroughly Semitic (cf. W.D. Davies, "Knowledge in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Matthew 11:25-30," *Christian Origins and Judaism* [London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 1962], pp. 119- 44; Manson, *Sayings* , p. 79; Jeremias, *NT Theology* , pp. 24, 57f.), which means that the provenance is Palestinian. Further aspects of the authenticity question are discussed below (see esp. A.M. Hunter, *Gospel and Apostle* [London: SCM, 1975], pp.

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60-67). Jesus' prayer builds on his rejection (vv. 16-24) while still recognizing his mission (cf. 10:5-42).

25 The Greek *en ekeino to kairo* ("At that time") is a loose connective in Matthew (cf. 12:1; 14:1), loosely historical (it was about that time) and tightly thematic (this pericope must be read in terms of the preceding denunciation). Luke 10:21 has Jesus saying these words "at that hour" (*en aute te hora* ; NIV, "At that time") when the Seventy- two joyfully returned from their mission, an event Matthew does not record. Luke's connective relates to the success of the mission; Matthew's assumes that there has been some success (God has revealed these things to little children) but draws a sharper antithesis between the recipients of such revelation and the "wise and learned" who, like the inhabitants of the cities just denounced, understand nothing. While *exomologoumai soi* ("I praise you") can be used in the sense of "I confess my sins" (cf. 3:6), the basic meaning is acknowledgment. Sins truly acknowledged are sins confessed. When this verb is used with respect to God, the person praying "acknowledges" who God is, the propriety of his ways, and the excellence of his character. At that point acknowledgment is scarcely distinguishable from praise (as in Rom 14:11; 15:9; Philippians 2:11; cf. LXX of Ps 6:6; 7:18; 17:50 et al.). Here Jesus addresses God as "Father" and "Lord of heaven and earth" (cf. Ecclesiasticus 51:10; Tobit 7:18). These are particularly appropriate titles, because the former indicates Jesus' sense of sonship (see on 6:9) and prepares for v. 27, while the latter recognizes God's sovereignty over the universe and prepares for vv. 25-26. God is sovereign, free to conceal or reveal as he wills. God has revealed "these things"-- the significance of Jesus' miracles (cf. vv. 20-24), the Messianic Age unfolding largely unnoticed, the content of Jesus' teaching--to *nepiois* ("little children," "childlike disciples," "simple ones"; Jeremias, *NT Theology* , p. 111; see further on 18:1-5; cf. John 7:48-49; 1Cor 1:26-29; 3:18); and he has hidden them from the "wise and learned." Many restrict the "wise and learned" to the Pharisees and

teachers of the law, but the context implies something broader. Jesus has just finished pronouncing woes on "this generation" (v. 16) and denouncing entire cities (vv. 20-24). These are "the wise and learned" (better: "the wise and understanding") from whom the real significance of Jesus' ministry is concealed. The point of interest is not their education, any more than the point of interest in the "little children" is their age or size. The contrast is between those who are self-sufficient and deem themselves wise and those who are dependent and love to be taught. For revealing the riches of the good news of the kingdom to the one and hiding it from the other, Jesus uttered his praise to his Father. Zerwick (par. 452) argues that though the construction formally puts God's concealing and his revealing on the same

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level, in reality it masks a Semitic construction (cf. Rom 6:17, which reads literally, "But thanks be to God that you were servants of sin, you obeyed from the heart the form of teaching with which you were entrusted."). But this example does not greatly help here; for even when rendered concessively ("I praise you ... because, though you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, you have revealed them to little children"), God remains the one who reveals and conceals. Yet we must not think that God's concealing and revealing are symmetrical activities arbitrarily exercised toward neutral human beings who are both innocent and helpless in the face of the divine decree. God is dealing with a race of sinners (cf. 1:21; 7:11) whom he owes nothing. Thus to conceal "these things" is not an act of injustice but of judgment--the very judgment John the Baptist was looking for and failed to find in Jesus (see on 11:2-6). The astonishing thing about God's activity is not that God acts in both mercy and judgment but who the recipients of that mercy and judgment are: those who pride themselves in understanding divine things are judged, those who understand nothing are taught. The predestination pattern is the counterpoint of grace.

26 Far from bemoaning or finding fault with his Father's revealing and concealing, Jesus delighted in it. The conjunction *hoti* is best understood as "because" or "for" (NIV): I thank you *because* this was your good pleasure; and that is what Jesus "acknowledges" or "praises." Whatever pleases his Father pleases him. "It is often in a person's prayers that his truest thoughts about himself come to the surface. For this reason the thanksgiving of Jesus here recorded is one of the most precious pieces of spiritual autobiography found in the Synoptic Gospels" (Tasker). Jesus' balance mirrored the balance of Scripture: he could simultaneously denounce the cities that did not repent and praise the God who does not reveal, for God's sovereignty in election is not mitigated by man's stubbornness and sin, while man's

responsibility is in no way diminished by God's "good pleasure" that sovereignly reveals and conceals (cf. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty* , pp. 205ff.).

2) Because of the agency of the Son (11:27)

27 Despite contrary opinions, the arguments for the authenticity of this saying are very strong. Long rejected because it was thought to reflect Johannine theology, which was judged to be the product of late Hellenization, this verse has by and large gained the recognition of scholarship that the "knowledge" categories here are Jewish and the structure of the verse Semitic (cf. Jeremias, *Prayers* , pp. 45ff.). Dunn (*Christology* , pp. 199-200) has shown that the closest parallels to v. 27 are in the election language of the OT, a strong argument for the unity of vv. 25-27. Hill (*Matthew*) denies the authenticity of the saying but candidly admits, "The

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greatest barrier to the acceptance of the genuineness of the verse is the supposition that Jesus could not have made such an absolute claim for himself." This turns in part on the observation that, apart from the fourth Gospel, the absolute expression "the Son" is exceedingly rare. But significantly it does occur twice more in Matthew, at 24: 36 (cf. Mark 13:32) and 28:19 (elsewhere, cf. 1Cor 15:28; Heb 1:8). Jeremias (*Prayers*) argues that Jesus' habit of addressing God as "Father" could well have contributed to such a self-understanding on the part of Jesus; but even he thinks v. 27 should be understood generically: "Just as only a father really knows his son, so only a son really knows his father" (p. 50). But even if he is right, in a context where (1) Jesus has just addressed God as "Father" (vv. 25-26), (2) makes himself a son in an exclusive sense, (3) with the sole power to mediate knowledge of God, one must conclude that the "generic" statement Jeremias finds could *only* be applied to Jesus, and that in such a way as to make his sonship exclusive. Past interpreters often said that "the Son" is never used in pre-Christian sources as a title for the Messiah. With the discovery of 4QFlor 10-14, citing 2 Samuel 7:14 and applying to "the Branch" of David the words "I will be his Father and he shall be my Son," this judgment must be reconsidered. Though it may not be a direct messianic title, it was certainly used to refer to an apocalyptic figure who was the son of a king, presumably David and thus picks up OT uses of "Son" (cf. Ps 2; see on 2:15; 3:17; 16: 13-16; cf. Fitzmyer, *Wandering Aramaen* , pp. 102-7; M. Hengel, *The Son of God* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976]; Guthrie, *NT Theology* , 301ff.). As with "Son of Man" (see excursus on 8:20), so with "Son of God": it appears that Jesus used a designation not firmly defined and open to several interpretations as part of his gradual self-disclosure, a revelation that could be fully grasped only after the Cross and the Resurrection. Thus for Matthew there is no doubt of what Jesus is saying, because Matthew's "Son" or "Son of God" categories must be seen against the backdrop, not only of the prologue, but also of 3:17. The latter passage raises a still more basic point. Cannot Jesus himself be thought to originate some things? Was the church so rich in imagination and Jesus so

imaginatively poor that all new developments in titles and theology must be ascribed only to the church? If 3:17 is historical, why should not Jesus think of himself as the Son in 11:27? Is it necessary to conclude, with Hill, that 11:27 cannot be authentic because it sounds like the authority of the postresurrection Jesus in 28:18? And if the two do sound alike, why should we not therefore conclude that there is more continuity between the earthly ministry of Jesus and the resurrected Lord than most scholars are prepared to admit? Verse 27 is a christological claim of prime importance, fitting easily into the context. After declaring that the Father gives true understanding of "these things" to "little children" (vv. 25-26), Jesus now adds that he is the exclusive agent of that revelation.

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"All things" may have reference not to "all authority" (as in 28:18) but to "all divine knowledge," all knowledge of "these things" (in v. 25). But because the Son has not only knowledge but the authority to choose those to whom he will reveal God, probably "all things" includes authority. The reciprocal knowledge of Son and Father where the Father is God presupposes a special sonship indeed. And this unique mutual knowledge guarantees that the revelation the Son gives is true. Not least astonishing about this reciprocity is the clause "No one knows the Son except the Father." Even if it is rendered in Jeremias's way (above), in this exclusivistic context it makes a claim no mere mortal could honestly make. There is a self-enclosed world of Father and Son that is opened to others only by the revelation provided by the Son. "It is one thing to know by equality of nature, and another by the condescension of him who reveals" (Jerome, cited in Broadus). This revelation is not only factual (the Son reveals "these things") but personal (the Son reveals "him"--the Father). The Son reveals the Father to those whom he, from time to time, wills (present subjunctive: cf. Turner, *Syntax* , p. 107). Just as the Son praises the Father for revealing and concealing according to his good pleasure (v. 26), so the Father has authorized the Son to reveal or not according to his will. The text places enormous emphasis on Jesus' person and authority. The thought is closely echoed both in John (3:35; 8:19; 10:15; 14:9; 16:15) and in the Synoptics (Matt 13:11; Mark 4:11--Jesus makes known the secrets of the kingdom; cf. Matt 10:37-39; 11:25; Luke 10:23-24; ch. 15 et al.). What is made clear in this passage is that sonship and messiahship are not quite the same. "Sonship precedes messiahship and is in fact the ground for the messianic mission" (Ladd, *NT Theology* , pp. 165-67, esp. p. 167).

3) Because of the Son's gentle invitation (11:28-30)

These verses are only in Matthew. Jesus is the one who alone reveals the Father (v.

27). Jesus it is who invites, not "the wise and learned" (v. 25), but "the weary and burdened" (v. 28). The Son reveals the Father, not to gratify learned curiosity or to reinforce the self-sufficiency of the arrogant, but to bring "the little children" (v. 25) to know the Father (v. 27), to introduce the weary to eschatological rest (v. 28)--or, as the angel once said to Joseph, so that Jesus Messiah might save his people from their sins (1:21). Partly because these verses have some links with Ecclesiasticus 51:23-27, where wisdom invites men to her yoke, several have argued that Matthew here identifies Jesus with hypostasized wisdom (e.g., Zumstein, pp. 140ff.; Dunn, *Christology* , pp. 200f.). But the contrasts between Ecclesiasticus 51 and this passage are more impressive than the similarities. In the former, Sirach is in fact inviting men to take on the yoke of studying Torah as the means of gaining acceptance and rest; in the latter,

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Jesus offers eschatological rest, not to the scholar who studies Torah, but to the weary. Jesus' teaching must be adopted, not Torah; and this stands, as the next pericopes show (12:1-8, 9-14), in welcome relief to legalistic understanding of the OT.

28 The "me" is grammatically unemphatic but in the wake of v. 27 extremely important. Jesus invites the "weary" (the participle suggests those who have become weary through heavy struggling or toil) and the "burdened" (the passive side of weariness, overloaded like beasts of burden) to come to him; and he (not the Father) will give them rest. There is an echo of Jeremiah 31:25, where Yahweh refreshes his people through the new covenant. While there is no need to restrict the "burdens," it is impossible not to be reminded of the "heavy loads" the Pharisees put on men's shoulders (23:4; cf. 12:1-14; cf. Schlatter; Klostermann; M. Maher, "'Take my yoke upon you' [Matt. xi.29]," NTS 22 [1976]: 97-103). The "rest" (cf. use of cognate term in Heb 3-4) is eschatological (cf. Rev 6:11; 14:13) but also a present reality.

29-30 The "yoke" (v. 29), put on animals for pulling heavy loads, is a metaphor for the discipline of discipleship. If Jesus is not offering the yoke of the law (*Pirke Aboth* 3:6, cf. Ecclesiasticus 51:26), neither is he offering freedom from all constraints. The "yoke" is Jesus' yoke, not the yoke of the law; discipleship must be *to him* . In view of v. 27, learn from me cannot mean imitate me or learn from my experience (contra Stauffer, TDNT, 2:348f.) but learn from the revelation that I alone impart (cf. Schmid). The marvelous feature of this invitation is that out of his overwhelming authority (v. 27) Jesus encourages the burdened to come to him because he is "gentle and humble in heart." Matthew stresses Jesus' gentleness (18:1-10, 19:13-15). Apparently the theme is connected with the messianic servant language (Isa

42:2-3; 53:1-2; cf. Zech 9:9, cited in Matt 21:5) that recurs in 12:15-21. Authoritative revealer that he is, Jesus approaches us with a true servant's gentleness. For the present his messianic reign must not be understood as exclusively royal. On "rest" see v. 28; but here the words "and you will find rest for your souls" are directly quoted from Jeremiah 6:16 (MT, not LXX). The entire verse is steeped in OT language (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT*, p. 136); but if this is intended to be not just an allusion but a fulfillment passage, then Jesus is saying that "the ancient paths" and "the good way" (Jer 6:16) lie in taking on his yoke because he is the one to whom the OT Scriptures point. That yoke is "easy" (good, comfortable) and his burden is light (v. 30). The "rest" he promises is not only for the world to come but also for this one as well. The implicit contrast between Jesus' yoke and that of others is not between antinomianism and legalism, for in a deep sense his demands (5:21-48) are far more radical than theirs; nor between salvation by law and salvation by grace (contra

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Bornkamm, *Tradition* , p. 148, n. 2); nor between harsh attitudes among Jewish teachers of the law and Jesus' humane and humble approach (Klostermann). No, the contrast is between the burden of submission to the OT in terms of Pharisaic regulation and the relief of coming under Jesus' tutelage as under the authority of gentle Revealer to whom the OT, the ancient paths, truly pointed (cf. H.D. Betz, "The Logion of the Easy Yoke and of Rest [Matt 11:28-30]," JBL 86 [1967]: 10-24).

3. Sabbath conflicts (12:1-14)

a. Picking heads of grain (12:1-8)

Opposition to Jesus had already surfaced (9:3, 11, 14, 34; 10:25; 11:19). Now it erupts in a concrete issue that generates enough hatred to lead Jesus' enemies to contemplate murder (v. 14). Matthew now picks up the narrative from Mark 2:23 (cf. Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-5) at the point where he had left the source as far back as Matthew 9:18. Only here does he speak of conflicts over the Sabbath (though cf. 13:54-58; 24:20). The Jewish rules of conduct about Sabbath were extremely detailed; and it was wryly admitted that "the rules about the Sabbath ... are as mountains hanging by a hair, for [teaching of] Scripture [thereon] is scanty and the rules many" (M *Hagigah* 1:8). Yet for many Jews of Jesus' day the Sabbath was a joyful festival, a sign of the covenant, a reminder of divine creation in six days, and, provided the rules were obeyed, a means of gaining merit for Israel (Mek Exod 20:16; 23:15; 26:13; b *Shabbath* 10b). At many points there were diverse interpretations; and though the Pharisees were strict, the Qumran covenanters were stricter yet (CD 10:14-11:8). (For detailed study and bibliography of vv. 1-14 in the context of the canonical question of the relation between Sabbath and Lord's Day, cf. Carson, "Sabbath.")

1 "At that time" need not mean the same day as the events of chapter 11 but "at about that time" (see on 3:1; 11:25; cf. 13:1). Here it introduces an *example* of burdensome Pharisaic regulation (arising out of 11:28-30) along with the theme of rising opposition to Jesus that ties much of this section (11:2-13:53) together. Various explanations for what Jesus' disciples (presumably the Twelve) did have been advanced. Some scholars have noted that only Matthew mentions their hunger and have suggested that they ate the grain out of necessity (Kilpatrick, p. 116; Willy Rordorf, *Sunday*, tr. A.A.K. Graham [London: SCM, 1968]). But there is no necessity unless one has not eaten for days. The reference to hunger is simply part of the story: why else would the disciples pick a little grain? Samuele Bacchiocchi's suggestion
(*From Sabbath to Sunday* [Rome: Pontifical Gregorian University Press, 1977], p. 50)

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that Jesus' rebuke (v. 7) implies that the Pharisees should have taken Jesus and his disciples home for lunch after the synagogue service instead of criticizing them for picking heads of grain is fanciful. Manson (*Sayings* , p. 190) remarks that Jesus and his disciples were going from place to place on missionary work and so invests their act with kingdom significance. But why, then, were they not charged with exceeding a Sabbath day's journey (about eleven hundred meters; cf. *M Sotah* 5:3)? And what were the Pharisees doing there? The scene is reminiscent of a Sabbath afternoon stroll within the permitted distance.

P.K. Jewett (*The Lord's Day* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971], p. 37) suggests the disciples were making a path for Jesus, an idea based on Mark's "began to make their way." This will not do in Matthew and wrongly interprets Mark. A path cannot be made merely by picking heads of grain. At the time fields were not separated by fences but by landmark stones (cf. *Deut* 19:14). Paths went right across fields or closely skirted them, the grain being sown to the field's very edge and sometimes beyond (cf. 13:4); and the right to pluck grain casually (though not necessarily on the Sabbath) was established by *Deuteronomy* 23:25.

2 The Pharisees' charge that the disciples were breaking the law was based, not on their picking grain in someone else's field, but on the fact that picking grain--i.e. "reaping" (cf. *j. Shabbath* 7.2,9.c)--was one of thirty-nine kinds of work forbidden on the Sabbath (*M Shabbath* 7:2) under prevailing Halakah. Though exceptions to these were granted in the case of temple service and where life was at stake, neither exception applied here. Sigal ("Halakah," p. 160) argues that not all authorities prohibited what the disciples were doing; but *M Shabbath* 10:2, to which he refers, does not deal with casually picking grain in an open field and so is in any case irrelevant. At a much later period, the Gemara expressly permits picking grain by hand and eating it on the Sabbath but merely forbids the use of a tool (*b Shabbath* 128a, b; cf. Bonnard). But this refinement is much later and may even owe something to

Christian influence.

3-4 The use of counterquestion and appeal to Scripture was common, though not exclusively so, in rabbinic debates (cf. v. 5; 19:4; 21:16, 42; 22:31). The account to which Jesus refers is from the "former prophets," as the Jews called these books (1Sam 21:1-6). (On the regulations regarding the consecrated bread [lit., "bread of the presentation"], see Exod 25:30; Lev 24:5-9.) The "house of God" that David entered was the tabernacle (cf. Exod 23:19; Judg 18:31; 1Sam 1:7, 24; 3:15; 2Sam 12:20; Ps 5:7), at that time at Nob, just south of Jerusalem. Both David and his companions ate what should only have been eaten by the priests and did so after lying to the priest about their mission. It is possible that this

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event took place on a Sabbath, since 1 Samuel 21:5-6 sounds as if the consecrated bread had just been changed. Many Jews understood the text that way (cf. SBK, 1: 618f.; TDNT, 7:22). But Jesus makes nothing of David's deceit nor depends on any supposition regarding the day on which it occurred. If it was on a Sabbath, others than the priests should not have eaten that bread; and if it was not a Sabbath, the bread should not have been changed, let alone eaten by nonpriests. The argument takes a common rabbinical form (cf. Sigal, "Halakah," pp. 162f.): viz; the juxtaposition of two apparently contradictory statements from Scripture in order to draw a Halakic conclusion (a conclusion regarding regulations for conduct). On the one hand, David ate; on the other, it was unlawful for him to do so. Jesus' point is not simply that rules admit of exceptions but that the Scriptures themselves do not condemn David for his action; therefore the rigidity of the Pharisees' interpretation of the law is not in accord with Scripture itself (cf. Cranfield, *Mark*, pp. Elf.; Lane, *Mark*, p. 117). The point is not "The Sabbath is delivered unto you, you are not delivered unto the Sabbath" (Mek Exod 26:13, cf. 2Macc 5:19) but that the Pharisees' approach to the OT was wrong and could not explain the incident of David. How, then, does this apply to Jesus and his disciples? They were not desperate and famished, unlike David and his men. It is not even clear how they were breaking any OT law, where commandments about the Sabbath were aimed primarily at regular work. The disciples were not farmers trying to do some illicit work, but they were itinerant preachers casually picking some heads of grain. Indeed, apart from Halakic interpretations, it is not at all obvious that any commandment of Scripture was being broken. It seems, then, that Jesus used the David incident not merely to question the Pharisees' view of the Sabbath, for the David incident was not directly relevant. Rather he was questioning their approach to the law itself. There is more. In the incident to which Jesus referred, regulations (even of the written law) were set aside for David "and his companions." Is there not therefore a case for setting aside regulations (which had no clear base in the written law) for Jesus and those with him (so Hooker, *Son of Man*

, pp. 97f.)? This analogy holds good only if Jesus is at least as special as David, and it is to this conclusion that the argument builds in the following verses.

5-6 Jesus' second appeal, preserved only in Matthew (doubtless because it was of interest to his Jewish-Christian readers), is from Torah in the narrow sense of Pentateuch (cf. Num 28:9-10). Formally speaking the Levitical priests "broke" the Sabbath every week (v. 5), since the right worship of God in the temple required them to do some work (changing the consecrated bread [Lev 24:&] and offering the doubled burnt offering [Num 28:9-10]). In reality, of course, the priests were guiltless; the law that established the Sabbath also established the right of the priests, formally

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speaking, to "break" it (for a similar argument, cf. John 7:21-23).

But how does this apply to Jesus and his disciples? The form of the argument is *qal wahomer* (lit., "the light and the weighty," an *a fortiori* argument [see on 5:25-30]), a recognized procedure for establishing a Halakic regulation (Daube, *New Testament*, pp. 67ff.). But this is valid only if the "one greater than the temple" (v. 6) is truly greater. The "one greater" is neuter (the masculine variant is poorly attested) as in vv. 41-42--i.e., "something greater" (NIV mg.). The neuter, however, can refer to persons when some quality is being stressed rather than the individual per se (Turner, *Syntax*, p. 21).

So the question remains, Who or what is greater than the temple? B. Gerhardsson ("Sacrificial Service and Atonement in the Gospel of Matthew," *Reconciliation and Hope*, ed. R. Banks [Exeter: Paternoster, 1974], p. 28), followed by David Hill ("On the Use and Meaning of Hosea vi.6 in Matthew's Gospel," NTS 24 [1978]: 115) argues that this refers to the service or worship of God in which Jesus was engaged. This is greater than the service of the temple performed by the priests. But Jesus and his disciples were not really "engaged" in such service while plucking heads of grain, the way the priests were engaged in worship on the Sabbath. Moreover the comparison in the text is not with the service of the temple but with the temple itself. Others have argued that what is greater than the temple is the love command (Sigal, "Halakah," pp. 163-66; cf. D.M. Cohn-Sherbok, "An Analysis of Jesus' Arguments Concerning the Plucking of Grain on the Sabbath," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 2 [1979]: 31-41; cf. Sand, pp. 43-45), finding support for this in the plea for mercy in v. 7. But the supremacy of the love command has not yet been introduced (cf. 22:34-40). More importantly the argument neglects the sequential-eschatological "is here." This refutes Sigal's insistence that Jesus is answering purely on the level of dispute over Halakah. Instead, he is insisting that a new and greater development- thing-person has arrived at this point in history, something not

there before. And the reference to "mercy" (v. 7) is open to a better interpretation. There are still other suggestions. But the most likely is that the "something greater" is either Jesus himself (Bornkamm, *Tradition* , p. 35; Georges Gander, *L'Evangile de L'Englise: Commentaire de L'Evangile selon Matthieu* [Aix-en-Provence: Faculte Libre de Theologie Protestante, 1967]) or the kingdom (Lohmeyer, *Matthaus*). And in fact the two merge into one. If the kingdom, it is the kingdom Jesus is inaugurating; if Jesus, it is not only Jesus as a man but as Messiah, Son of David (vv. 3-4), Son of Man (v. 8), the one who ushers in the Messianic Age. Yet "Jesus" is perhaps marginally more plausible, not only because of the christological connections just alluded to, but also because of the parallel drawn by Jesus himself between his own body and the temple (26:61; cf. John 2:20-21). Jesus' argument, then, provides an instance from the law itself in which the Sabbath

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restrictions were superseded by the priests because their cultic responsibilities took precedence: the temple, as it were, was greater than the Sabbath. But now, Jesus claims, "something" greater than the temple is here. And that, too, takes precedence over the Sabbath. This solution is entirely consistent with what we have perceived to be Jesus' attitude to the law in this Gospel. The law points to him and finds its fulfillment in him (see on 5:17-48). Not only, then, have the Pharisees mishandled the law by their Halakah (vv. 3-4), but they have failed to perceive who Jesus is. The authority of the temple laws shielded the priests from guilt; the authority of Jesus shields his disciples from guilt. It is not a matter of comparing Jesus' action with the action of the priests; nor is it likely that Jesus is suggesting that all his disciples are priests (contra Lohmeyer). "Rather, it is a question of *contrasting* [new emphasis] His authority with the authority of priests" (Carson, "Sabbath," p. 67).

7-8 Again (cf. v. 3) Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their failure to understand the Scriptures (cf. John 5:39, and this time (v. 7) he quoted Hosea 6:6 as he had once before (see on 9:13). The relevance of this quotation from the "latter prophets" depends on the Pharisees' attitude to the law being as worthy of condemnation as the attitude of those who relied superficially and hypocritically on mere ritual in Hosea's day. Jesus claims, in effect, that the Pharisees had not really grasped the significance of the law, and this was demonstrated by their Halakah. The accusers stand accused; the disciples are explicitly declared "innocent." Their innocence was not (contra Rordorf) established on their being hungry but on the ground that something greater than the temple was present. In other words the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath. Whether "For" (v. 8) relates to v. 6 or v. 7 is unclear and of little consequence. If the former, it sums up Messiah's supremacy over the temple; if the latter, it does the same but also serves as explicit ground for the innocence of the disciples. Some have argued that "Son of Man" here has corporate significance: the community of Jesus'

disciples together is "Lord" of the Sabbath (e.g., T.W. Manson, "The Son of Man in Daniel, Enoch and the Gospels," BJRL 32 [1949-50]: 191). But this is based on a disputed understanding of "Son of Man" (see excursus on 8:20) and on a misunderstood connection with Mark 2:27 (on which cf. Carson, "Sabbath," pp. 62-65). In all three Synoptics the Son of Man is David's son, Jesus the Messiah (Hill). But the title is ambiguous enough that few would grasp the point till after the Resurrection, at which time few could miss it. The claim (v. 8) is implicitly messianic, a claim that goes beyond the mere right to tamper with Halakah. It places the Son of Man in a position to handle the Sabbath law any way he wills, or to supersede it in the same way that the temple requirements superseded the normal Sabbath restrictions (cf. Hooker, *Son of Man* , pp. 100ff.).

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b. Healing a man with a shriveled hand (12:9-14)

Luke (6:6-11) specifies that this event took place on another Sabbath (cf. Mark 3:1-

6). Unlike the previous pericope, Jesus does not refer to Scripture. This time it *is his* activity that is in question, not that of his disciples; and his argument, at first glance a stinging *ad hominem* , holds deeper implications. The first-century Jews discussed at length what was permitted in caring for the sick on the Sabbath (e.g., M *Eduyoth* 2:5; M *Shabbath* 6:3; Mek Exod 22:2; 23:13). Jesus' attitude was more fundamental: it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.

9-10 "Going on from that place" (v. 9) is a Matthean connective to move the action from the field to the synagogue without reference to time. Regarding "their" synagogue, see on 10:17; 11:1. All three synoptists make plain the malice in the Pharisees' watching (Mark) and question (Matthew). In Mark and Luke, Jesus precipitates the action by calling forward the man with the shriveled hand; in Matthew that is omitted. The form of the Pharisees' question in Matthew (v. 10) is general. The customary Jewish ruling was that healing was permitted on the Sabbath when life was in danger (cf. M *Yoma* 8:6; Mek Exod 22:2; 23:13), which of course did not apply here. Even so, what rabbinic discussion had in view was medical help by family members or professionals, not miraculous healings. But Jesus did not reply on that level.

11-13 For the third time in this Gospel, Jesus' argument depends on a

contrast between animals and men (cf. 6:26; 10:31) and presupposes the greater value of human beings based on their special creation: man alone was made in the image of God (Gen 1-2). This particular argument occurs only in Matthew; but a similar analogy is drawn in Luke 13:15; 14:5. In all three instances Jesus assumed that the Pharisees would lift an animal out of a pit on the Sabbath--though the most that was allowed at Qumran was to do something that would enable the animal to help itself (CD 11:13-14). Sigal ("Halakah," pp. 169f.), in support of his too rigid theory that the Pharisees are to be identified as *perushim* (see Introduction, section 11.f), is reduced to thinking that *probaton hen* (v. 11) should be taken literally to mean "one sheep," viz., the last one. But the expression probably means no more than "a sheep" (see on 8:19). Jesus' argument is again *qal wahomer* (see on vv. 5-6): If a sheep, how much more a man (v. 12)? Neither the sheep in the pit nor the man in Jesus' presence is in mortal danger. The question is simply one of doing good. This does not mean Jesus is saying that failure to do good is itself an evil thing (e.g., Klostermann; Cranfield, *Mark*, p. 120). Jesus is talking about what is "lawful," not what is required and if it were absolutely true that failure to do good is *always* evil, there would be no possibility of

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any rest at all. Jesus' rhetorical question therefore has a narrower focus: Was the Sabbath a day for maleficent activity--like their evil intentions in questioning him--or for beneficent action, like the healing about to be done? The healing (v. 13), like that in 9:1-8, comes after the shocking word (in all three Synoptics) and therefore serves to confirm that word. The miracle itself says nothing of the cripple's faith, since the focus is not on him but on the Pharisees. Yet in light of the preceding interchange, it also confirms Jesus' claim to lordship over the Sabbath, as his healing in 9:1-8 confirmed his authority to forgive sins.

14 A great deal has been made of the fact that Matthew omits mention of the Herodians (Mark 3:6), as if that proves that the point of reference is now after A.D. 70, when the Herodians no longer existed and the sole opponents were the Pharisees (e.g., Hummel, pp. 12ff.; Hill, *Matthew*). But giving reasons for *omissions* in Matthew is extremely hazardous (see on 8:1-4). And in this instance it is noteworthy that Matthew mentions the Herodians in 22:16 and refers often to the Sadducees. Sigal ("Halakah," p. 175) wants *apolesosin* ("destroy") to mean, not "kill," but "put under the synagogue ban," because no Pharisee would consider executing another Jew merely over a Halakic dispute. While he is correct in the latter supposition, the point is that these Sabbath confrontations are *not* mere disputes over Halakah. They have to do with Jesus' fundamental messianic claims, a point vigorously denied by Sigal, who generally assigns passages like v. 8 to later Christian theology and reduces the remainder to purely Halakic categories. But it is very doubtful (contra Sigal) that Jesus tolerated the oral tradition implicit in much Jewish Halakah (cf. Jeremias, *NT Theology* , pp. 208-11). Moreover the Sabbath-controversy pericopes cohere as they stand: this first mention of a plot to kill Jesus springs not from disputes over the legality of various Sabbath activities

but over Jesus' authority. The Sabbath conflicts are not the cause of the plotting but its occasion. Therefore Sabbath disputes were not mentioned at Jesus' trials; in themselves they were never as much an issue as Jesus' claim to be Sabbath's Lord.

4. Jesus the prophesied Servant (12:15-21)

Verses 15-16 constitute a brief summary of Mark 3:7-12, omitting, among other things, a "Son of God" title. To this summary Matthew adds a fulfillment passage citing Isaiah 42:1-4. Thus he interprets Jesus' healing ministry, not so much in terms of "Son of God" or even royal "Son of David" christology, but in terms of Yahweh's Suffering Servant (see also on 8:17). This section simultaneously contrasts the hatred of the Pharisees (v. 14) with Jesus' tranquility (v. 19) and gentleness (v. 20) and prepares the way for themes in the rest of the chapter (discussed below).

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15-17 Jesus often withdrew when opposition became intense (cf. 4:12; 14:13; 15:21; 16:5); at least that was his custom until the appointed hour arrived (26:45; cf. John 7:8). This practice becomes for his disciples an example of moving from place to place (10:23). Thus his extensive ministry continued (cf. 4:23; 8:16; 9:35). Warnings to those healed to keep silence increased for the same reasons as before and with as little effect (cf. 8:4; 9:30). But Jesus' conduct under these pressures, Matthew perceives, was nothing less than the fulfillment of the Scriptures. Though the Pharisees might plot to kill him (v. 14), he would not quarrel or cry out (v. 19). Despite all Matthew has done to show Jesus to be the messianic Son of David and unique Son of God, he wants to separate himself from exclusively royal and militaristic interpretations of Messiah's role. He knows that the ministry of Jesus Messiah must also be understood as the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Suffering Servant.

18-21 This quotation (Isa 42:1-4), the longest in Matthew, is remarkable for its text form. The changes have been variously assigned to Matthew's "school" (Stendahl, *School*, pp. 107ff.), to a developing Christian apologetic (Lindars, *Apologetic*, pp. 147-52), to the evangelist's redactional interests (Hill, *Matthew*). Certainly there is a mixed text-character here (for details, cf. Gundry, *Use of OT*, pp. 110-16), and the reason for each change is not easy to discern. The noun *pais* ("servant," v. 18) can also mean "son," though the Hebrew is unambiguously "servant." Cope (*Matthew*, pp. 44f.), in line with his generally plausible view that this quotation anticipates the major themes of the rest of Matthew 12 suggests that Matthew exploits the Son-Servant ambiguity to anticipate vv. 46-50--his disciples are brothers and sisters, but he is the unique Son of the Father. This seems tenuous, for elsewhere in Matthew God is the Father of the disciples (e.g. 6:9, 26; 10:29) as well as of Jesus (though in a somewhat different sense). The link

between this quotation and vv. 46-50 is on a different level, a christological one: viz., Jesus cannot be understood in terms of the normal family relationships that bind humanity. He is God's chosen Servant, the one on whom God has poured out his Spirit with a specific mission in view. Therefore his disciples, not his family, must be reckoned closest to him. The words "whom I have chosen" (Heb. "whom I uphold") may have been borrowed by Matthew from the second line of Isaiah 42:1, or from Isaiah 43:10; 44:1 (thus making the quotation composite); and "the one I love" carries overtones of Matthew 3:17; 17:5, because love and election are closely connected. God's "delight" in his servant and the mention of the Spirit God puts on him to a special degree (cf. John 3:34) remind us of both Jesus' baptism and his transfiguration (3:16-17; 17:5), where Jesus was called God's Son. Yet far from subsuming Jesus' servant role under his

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sonship (Kingsbury), Matthew omits Mark's mention of "Son of God" (Mark 3:11) and here makes the servant motif preeminent (cf. Hill, "Son and Servant," pp. 4-12). This "servant" will proclaim "justice" to the nations: neither the Hebrew *mispat* nor Greek *krisis* easily suggests "the true faith" (JB). But the suggestion is not entirely without merit, since what is in view is "justice"--i.e., righteousness broadly conceived as the self-revelation of God's character for the good of the nations (cf. Isa 51:4), yet at the same time calling them to account. Concern for the Gentiles thus emerges again (cf. 1:1; 2:1-12; 3:9; 4:15-16; 8:5-13 et al.) in anticipation of the Great Commission (28: 18-20).

But even within this chapter, the twin themes of Spirit and Gentiles are programmatic (Cope, *Matthew* , pp. 32ff.; Hill, "Son and Servant," pp. 10f.). God has poured out his Spirit on his Servant; so the exorcisms he performs by the Spirit constitute proof of the kingdom's inauguration (v. 28). Therefore blasphemy against that Spirit cannot be forgiven (see on v. 32). Moreover the pericope about the sign of Jonah (vv. 38-41) returns to the theme of the place of the Gentiles in the merciful salvation of God and warns "this wicked generation" (v. 45) once more. The servant "will not quarrel or cry out" or raise his voice in the streets (v. 19). The picture is not one of utter silence (else how could he "proclaim" justice [v. 18]? cf. John 7:37) but of gentleness and humility (11:29), of quiet withdrawal (see on vv. 15-17) and a presentation of his messiahship that is neither arrogant nor brash. The first two lines of v. 20 are very close to both LXX and MT. The double metaphor breathes compassion: the servant does not advance his ministry with such callousness to the weak that he breaks the bruised reed or snuffs out the smoldering wick (smoldering either because it is poorly trimmed or low on oil). This may include reference to Jesus' attitude to the sick (v. 15). But the last clause of v. 20 ("till he leads justice to victory"), apparently a paraphrase of Isaiah 42:3 ("in faithfulness he will bring forth justice") and Isaiah 42:4 ("till he establishes justice on earth") under influence of Habakkuk 1:4 (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT* , pp. 114f.), suggests something more--

namely that he brings eschatological salvation to the "harassed and helpless" (9:36), the "weary and burdened" (11:28). "Leads" is a trifle weak for *ekbale* : though the verb can have a wide semantic range, it requires something like "thrusts forth" in this context (used elsewhere in this chapter in vv. 24, 26, 27 [*bis*], 28, 35 [*bis*]). What is pictured is a ministry so gentle and compassionate that the weak are not trampled on and crushed till justice, the full righteousness of God, triumphs. And for such a Messiah most Jews were little prepared (cf. Pss Sol 17:21). Small wonder that the Gentiles put their hope in his name (v. 21, cf. Isa 11:10; Rom 15:12). The Hebrew reads literally "the coastlands wait for his laws," but the word "coastlands" often signifies Gentiles (*ethne* ; NIV, "nations"); and "will put their hope" is idiomatic for "look forward to" or "expect."

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"Name" follows the LXX, even though MT has "law" (*torah* , "teaching"). In view of the mixed text-character, which testifies to Matthew's ability and willingness to use the MT or to set it aside (unless, with Gundry [*Use of OT* , pp. 115f.], we postulate that LXX here renders a lost Hebrew original), this must be thought strange if certain recent reconstructions of the importance of the law in Matthew are correct (cf. Introduction, section 11.c). However, if, as we have maintained, the law in this Gospel serves primarily to point to Jesus, then it is not surprising that Matthew prefers the LXX term. For "in his name," see on 5:10-12.

5. Confrontation with the Pharisees (12:22-37)

a. The setting and accusation (12:22-24)

For a convenient summary of the parallels, see Albright and Mann. The analogous incident in 9:32-34 is not a doublet but a sample of the same outrageous charge that is raised in v. 24.

22 The *tote* ("then") is very loose (see on 2:7; 11:20), and probably this event took place a good deal later (compare Mark and Luke). NIV sounds as if the man suffered from three distinct ailments; the Greek, very condensed, puts blind and mute (*kophos* , as in 9:32) in opposition to "demon-possessed," suggesting the latter is the cause of the other two. The healing itself is told with admirable brevity for it is not so much the miracle itself that captures the attention of the synoptists as the confrontation that follows.

23-24 The acute astonishment of the crowd (the verb *existanto* , "were astonished," is used only here in Matthew, though it is common in Mark and

Luke) prompted the question (v. 23). Its form in Greek suggests the crowds were none too sure: "This couldn't be the Son of David, could it?" The question does not ask whether Jesus is a magician of the kind attributed by popular superstition to David's son Solomon (contra Loren L. Fisher, "Can This Be the Son of David?" *Jesus and the Historian*, ed. F.T. Trotter [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1968], pp. 82-97) but whether Jesus is the Messiah (see on 1:1; 9:27; 15:22). The Messiah was expected to perform miracles (cf. v. 38); so the exorcism-healing stood in Jesus' favor. But perhaps his reticence, his nonregal sayings, and his servant ministry engendered doubt. Matthew's readers can see the connection between the Suffering Servant (vv. 18-21) and the Son of David (vv. 22-23), but those who witnessed Jesus' ministry could not view it in the light of the Resurrection. On "Beelzebub" (v. 24), see on 10:25.

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b. Jesus' reply (12:25-37)***1) The divided kingdom (12:25-28)***

While the structure of vv. 25-37 is parallel to that of Mark 3:23-30, Matthew's length is surprising. Some but not all of Matthew's "response" section is closer to Luke than to Mark. Most likely Matthew used both Mark and a "Q" source for this narrative. Part of Jesus' response in Matthew is scattered in Luke (cf. Luke 6:43-45; 11:17-23; 12:10), prompting some to think this passage to be a composite of a number of independent sayings. That is possible; the transitions are loose, and, unlike the five major discourses, the end of the response is not decisive. But it is also possible that one of the two Lukan parallels (Luke 6:43-45) has been placed elsewhere for topical reasons and that the other (12:10) is simply a report of a similar saying. At any rate the argument in Matthew 12:25-37 is unified and coherent.

25-26 Jesus "knew their thoughts" (v. 25; cf. 9:4). The narrative is condensed (cf. Mark 3:20, 23), and the "house" is not mentioned. The argument is clear: any kingdom, city, or household that develops internal strife will destroy itself. The same holds true for Satan's *basileia* ("kingdom," v. 26), his exercise of authority among his minions (cf. H. Kruse, "Das Reich Satans," *Biblica* 58 [1977]: 29-61). "For the prince of the demons to cast out his subjects would be virtually casting out himself, since they were doing his work" (Broadus).

27 Whether the words *hoi huioi hymon* (lit., "your sons") mean no more than "your people" (the Jews) or those instructed by the Pharisees (cf. 22:15-16, 23:9-15) is uncertain. Jesus' argument is ad hominem: he is saying "your

sons" cast out demons on occasion (a not uncommon practice linked to some bizarre notions; cf. Jos. Antiq. VIII, 45-48 [ii.5]; id., Wars VII, 185 [vi.3]; Tobit 8:2-3; Justin Martyr *Dialogue* 85; cf. Acts 19:13), and I do this so powerfully that great damage is done to Satan's kingdom. So if I who do so much damage to his kingdom by my exorcisms perform them by Satan's power, by whom do your sons drive out demons

28 Luke 11:20 has "the finger of God" instead of "the Spirit of God." Possibly the latter is original (cf. Dunn, *Jesus* , pp. 44-46), but the matter is of little consequence since they both refer to the same thing (cf. Exod 8:19; Deut 9:10; Ps 8:3). Matthew's phrase makes a clearer connection with 12:18 (Isa 42:1) and a more specific contrast with Beelzebub (cf. Gundry, Matthew). Only here and in Matthew 19:24; 21:31, 43 does Matthew have "kingdom of God" instead of "kingdom of heaven" (see on 3:2);

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and this may reflect his source, common to Luke (though elsewhere, when following a source, Matthew changes to "kingdom of heaven" except at 19:24), or he may use "kingdom of God" stylistically to go with "Spirit of God." What is certain is that Jesus knows that his exorcisms, performed by the Spirit of God, prove that the kingdom age has already dawned. Of course this also implies that Jesus is King Messiah without explicitly affirming it. Dunn *Jesus* , pp. 46-69) rightly emphasizes the realized eschatology but overstates his Spirit christology when he adds, "The eschatological kingdom was present for Jesus only because the eschatological Spirit was present in and through him. In other words, it was not so much a case of 'Where *I* am there is the kingdom,' as, 'Where the Spirit is there is the kingdom'" (emphasis his). Four considerations argue strongly against this view.

1. Dunn has introduced a disjunction alien to the text ("only because the eschatological Spirit was present," he says) and maintains the disjunction by interpreting Jesus' messianic claims in non-Spirit dress as anachronistic. Jesus knew *both* that he was unique, the promised Messiah, *and* that the eschatological Spirit was on him. 2. If Jesus' self-recognition turned exclusively on his ability to exorcise demons by the Spirit's power, then on what basis could he deny similar self-recognition to the "your people" (v. 27) who also drove out demons? In other words, Spirit-prompted phenomena were not sufficient in themselves for Jesus' self-understanding, especially in the light of his own warnings in this respect (cf. 7:21-23). 3. Dunn has too quickly turned this pericope into a question of Jesus' self-understanding ("The eschatological kingdom was present for Jesus," he says), whereas on the face of it Jesus is arguing, not to convince himself, but manifestly to convince the Pharisees that the kingdom had come on them. 4. In his Gospel's structure Matthew is less interested in Jesus' self-understanding than in his apologetics and fulfillment of OT prophecies (see the reference to Spirit in v. 18).

2) The strong man's house (12:29)

29 The opening *e* (lit., "or"; cf. 7:9; 12:5; 20:15) here means "Or look at it another way." Some Jewish expectation looked forward to the binding of Satan in the Messianic Age (As Moses 10:1; cf. Rev 20:2); and under this metaphor Jesus is the one who ties up the strong man (Satan) and carries off his "possessions" (*ta skeue* ; "vessels" preserves the metaphor of the house and has no relation to [demonic] possession except metaphorically). The argument has thus advanced: if Jesus' exorcisms cannot be attributed to Satan (vv. 25-26), then they reflect authority greater

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than that of Satan. By this greater power Jesus is binding "the strong man" and plundering his "house." So the kingdom of heaven is forcefully advancing (see on 11:12).

3) Blasphemy against the Spirit (12:30-32)

30 Here several of Jesus' sayings are aphoristic. Their relation to the pericope is internal, not grammatical; and the relation to what precedes goes back to the tradition itself and cannot be ascribed to Matthew (cf. Luke 11:23).

The general thrust of v. 30 is straightforward: in our relationship to Jesus there can be no neutrality. As to some issues and persons, neutrality is possible and may even be wise. But in the great struggle (vv. 25-29), neutrality is impossible. The claims of the kingdom and the demands of Jesus are so exclusivistic that to be indifferent or apathetic to him is to be on the side of those who do not confess that he is the Messiah who brings in the kingdom of God (cf. 11:16-24). Jesus' claim implies a high christology, which is underlined by the harvest figure in v. 30b (cf. 3:12; 6:26; John 4:36). Jesus is the one who will harvest in the last days, a function the OT regularly assigns to God. Hill (*Matthew*) objects to the authenticity of the setting of this saying on the grounds that an affirmation about the impossibility of neutrality with respect to Jesus "is hardly likely to have been addressed to implacable opponents such as the Pharisees." But crowds were also present (v. 23). And this form of statement could serve as both a rebuke to the Pharisees and a warning to the questioning crowd (v. 23) that failure to follow Jesus wholeheartedly is as dangerous as outright opposition.

The inverted saying-"whoever is not against us is for us" (Mark 9:40; Luke 9:50)-- and this one "are not contradictory if the one was spoken to the

indifferent about themselves and the other to the disciples about someone else" (McNeile).

31-32 "And so"-- *dia touto* (lit., "on account of this")--ties the statements about blasphemy against the Spirit (v. 31) to the preceding verse. But the transition cannot easily be readily grasped till vv. 31-32 are understood. Introduced by the solemn "I tell you" (see on 5:18), these statements constitute a pair, one from Mark (v. 31 = Mark 3:28), one from Q (v. 32 = Luke 12:10, in a different context; cf. comment, above). "Blasphemy" is extreme slander (see on 9:3), equivalent to "speaking against" (cf. v. 32). Blasphemy against God was viewed by Jews with utmost gravity (26:65); but here Jesus makes a sharp distinction between blasphemy against the Son of Man, which is forgivable, and blasphemy against the Spirit, which is not.

His statement is remarkable because one of the glories of the biblical faith is the great emphasis Scripture lays on the graciousness and wideness of God's forgiveness (e.g., Pss 65:3; 86:5; 130:3-4; Isa 1:18; Mic 7:19; 1John 1:7). A common interpretation

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of vv. 31-32 is that they originated with a Christian prophet speaking for the exalted Jesus and are here read back into the life of the earthly Jesus. The blasphemy against the Son of Man is rejection of him by nonbelievers, and this is clearly forgivable when a person becomes a Christian. But blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is committed by a Christian (Christians after Pentecost would understand that only believers enjoy the Spirit) and is equivalent either to apostasy or to rejection of a Christian prophet's inspired message. For this there is no forgiveness (so Stendahl, Peake, 684q; and in a highly structured scheme, M.E. Boring, "The Unforgivable Sin Logion Mark III 28-29/ Matt XII 31-32/Luke XII 10: Formal Analysis and History of the Tradition," *NovTest* 18 [1976]: 258-79).

But there is strong and consistent evidence that the writers of the NT did not read words of Christian prophets back into the life of the historical Jesus (cf. esp. Bonnard;

J.D.G. Dunn, "Prophetic 'I'-Sayings and the Jesus Tradition: The Importance of Testing Prophetic Utterances within Early Christianity," *NTS* 24 [1978]: 175-98). It is highly unlikely that "Son of Man" would be used as an object of blasphemy without some qualifications about "Son of Man" (i.e., as "earthly Jesus only," etc.), which do not appear until Origen. Moreover this does not explain what these sayings are doing in their Gospel contexts (esp. Mark and Matthew). The views of many older conservative scholars are also unhelpful. Broadus, for instance, ties blasphemy against the Holy Spirit to the "age of miracles" when the Spirit's power could be directly perceived--and rejected. But apart from the question of whether miracles take place now, Jesus elsewhere warned that miracles are not *necessarily* the criterion of true discipleship (7:21-23), i.e., they do not *necessarily* reveal the Spirit's presence and power. Among the many other interpretations of this difficult incident, the best treats it in its setting during Jesus' life. The Pharisees have been attributing to Satan the work of the Spirit and have been doing so, as Jesus makes plain, in such a way as to reveal that they speak, not, out of ignorance or unbelief, but out of a

"conscious disputing of the indisputable" (the phrase is from G.C. Berkouwer, *Sin* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971], p. 340; cf. pp. 323-53, to which this exposition is indebted).

The distinction between blasphemy against the Son of Man and blasphemy against the Spirit is not that the Son of Man is less important than the Spirit, or that the first sin is prebaptismal and the second postbaptismal, still less that the first is against the Son of Man and the second rejects the authority of Christian prophets. Instead, within the context of the larger argument the first sin is rejection of the truth of the gospel (but there may be repentance and forgiveness for that), whereas the second sin is rejection of the same truth in full awareness that that is exactly what one is doing-- thoughtfully, willfully, and self-consciously rejecting the work of the Spirit even though there can be no other explanation of Jesus' exorcisms than that. For such a sin there is

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no forgiveness, "either in this age or the age to come" (cf. 13:22; 25:46)--a dramatic way of saying "never" (as in Mark 3:29). If this interpretation is correct, the distinction between Son of Man and Spirit is relatively incidental. After all, blasphemy against the Spirit is also a rejection of Jesus' own claims: the christological] implications of the sin are not diminished but increased in moving from "blasphemy against the Son of Man" to "blasphemy against the Spirit." This provides a clue for understanding how the unforgivable sin of which Jesus here speaks compares with the sins referred to in Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-31; and possibly 1John 5:16. In each instance there is self-conscious perception of where the truth lies and the light shines--and a willful turning away from it. This is very different from Paul's persecution of the church (1Cor 15:9), which was not unforgivable (1Tim 1:13).

C.K. Barrett (*The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition* [London: SPCK, 1966], pp. 106-7) discusses this matter wisely, except for his assumption that the sin is committed within the church and "because it denies the root and spring of the Church's life, cannot rediscover the forgiveness by which the sinner first entered the community of the forgiven." But the biblical texts are more subtle than that. The author of Hebrews says, with a surprising combination of tenses, "We have come [perfect] to share in Christ if we hold firmly [aorist subjunctive] to the end the confidence we had at first" (Heb 3:14). In other words our past participation in the blessings of the gospel is valid only if we continue in it. John presupposes the same thing--that those who leave the church show that they never really belonged in it (1John 2:19; 2John 9). Even Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26-31 shows how much of the truth may be grasped, how much of the life of the age to come may be sampled, without coming to the place from which there is no turning back (cf. Philip E. Hughes, *A Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1977], in loc.). This is apostasy, and it involves a break with what one has formally adhered to. The universal witness of the NT is that apostasy

if persisted in not only damns but shows that salvation was never real in the first place. The NT reveals how close one may come to the kingdom--tasting, touching, perceiving, understanding. And it also shows that to come this far and reject the truth is unforgivable. So it is here. Jesus charges that those who perceive that his ministry is empowered by the Spirit and then, for whatever reason--whether spite, jealousy, or arrogance--ascribe it to Satan, have put themselves beyond the pale. For them there is no forgiveness, and that is the verdict of the one who has authority to forgive sins (9:5-8). The significance of the transitional words "And so" now becomes plain. Neutrality to Jesus is actually opposition to him (v. 30); and therefore Jesus gives this warning regarding those who blaspheme against the Spirit, since the self-professedly neutral person may not recognize the inherent danger of his position.

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4) *Nature and fruit* (12:33-37)

This section has no parallel in Mark, but it fits well into Matthew. A similar metaphor occurs in 7:16-19; but there the point is that Jesus' disciples must test character by conduct, whereas here it is that conduct, especially speech, reveals character. Therefore the only remedy is a radical change of heart. Parts of vv. 33-34 are also reflected in Luke 6:43-45.

33 It is possible to construe the expression "make a tree good ... bad" to mean "suppose a tree is good ... bad." But in that case the word "and" fits badly, and the final "for" clause relates poorly to what precedes. Jesus is rather telling his hearers to make the tree good or bad, knowing that its fruit will be correspondingly good or bad, because a tree is recognized by its fruit (cf. Ecclesiasticus 27:6). To speculate on the means--pruning, grafting, watering, fertilizing--is to go beyond the metaphor.

34-35 Then Jesus drives the point home. "You brood of vipers" (v. 34; see on 3:7; 23:

33) was most likely addressed to the Pharisees in the crowd (cf. vv. 23-24), though this is not certain (cf. 7:11). Verse 35 makes a tight connection with v. 33: what a person truly is determines what he says and does. Out of the *perisseuma* ("overflow," v. 34-- what remains, the excess) the "mouth speaks." *Perisseuma* is used in the NT only here and in Mark 8:8; Luke 6:45; 2 Corinthians 8:14 (*bis*) of the heart, the center of human personality (see on 5:8). It is the mouth that reveals what is in the heart. How, then, can those who are evil say anything good? What is needed is a change of heart.

36-37 These two verses occur only in Matthew. That Jesus describes the evil of the "brood of vipers" in terms of their hearts or natures does not thereby

excuse them. Far from it! A person will be held accountable on the Day of Judgment for "every careless word" (v. 36). The Greek *argos* ("careless") does not refer here to "unfounded" words (JB) but to words that might be thought "insignificant" (Stendahl, Peake) except for their revealing what is in the heart. Jesus is saying that every spoken word reflects the heart's overflow and is known to God. Therefore words are of critical importance (cf. Eph 5:3-4, 12; Col 3:17; James 1:19; 3:1-12). The change to the second person (v. 37) implies that the saying may be proverbial. Here it heightens the warning that what one says about Jesus and his miracles reveals what one is and that he will be judged accordingly. Jesus' authority in saying this is staggering. It is not he who is being assessed when men ask, "Could this be the Son of David?" (v. 23), or utter blasphemies (v. 24); it is they who are being assessed, and by their words they will be judged.

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c. Continued confrontation (12:38-42)

1) Request for a sign (12:38)

38 One might take *apekrithesan* ("answered"; NIV, "said") as meaning that the Pharisees and teachers of the law were continuing the controversy. That is possible and the parallel in Luke 11:29-32 is sufficiently detached from its context to permit this interpretation. But *apekrithesan* does not always have its full strength in Matthew (see on 11:25); so it seems best not to insist on the continuance of the controversy. In 9:11 Matthew mentions only Pharisees, whereas the parallel in Mark 2:16 has Pharisees and teachers of the law. On that basis many say Matthew has pruned the expression because in his day, unlike the days of Jesus' ministry, only the Pharisees, understood to represent the rabbis (cf. Introduction, section 11.f), constituted any real opposition. Here, however, the roles are reversed: Mark (8:11) has "Pharisees"; Matthew (12:38) mentions "Pharisees and teachers of the law." Such changes are of little use in establishing Matthew's life-setting. The Jewish leaders phrased their question respectfully ("Teacher"; see on 8:19) and asked for a "sign" (*semeion*), not just for another miracle. Jesus had already done many miracles. Old Testament and intertestamental Jewish literature shed light on the request (cf. K.H. Rengstorf, TDNT, 7:208-21, 225-29; F.J. Helfmeyer, TDOT, 1:167-88; and 1Sam 2:30-33; 1 Kings 20:1-14; Isa 7:10-25; b *Sanhedrin* 98a; b *Baba Metzia* 59b; cf. O. Linton, "The Demand for a Sign from Heaven [Mk.8,11-12 and Parallels]," ST 19 [1965]: esp. 123ff.). A sign was usually some miraculous token to be fulfilled quickly, or at once, to confirm a prophecy. The Jews were not asking for just another miracle, since they had already persuaded themselves that at least some of those Jesus had performed were of demonic agency (12:24); they were asking for a "sign" performed on command to remove what seemed to them to be the ambiguity of Jesus' miracles. (In John "sign" is not so much something

people ask for as the evangelist's standard label for what the synoptists call "powers" or "wonders." The "signs" Jesus performs under John's pen bear implicit and explicit symbolic weight.)

2) The sign of Jonah (12:39-42)

39-40 The Pharisees and teachers of the law did not, in Jesus' view, stand alone: they represented this "wicked and adulterous generation" (v. 39; cf. 11:16-24). "Adultery" was frequently used by OT prophets to describe the spiritual prostitution and wanton apostasy of Israel (Isa 50:1; 57:3; Jer 3:8; 13:27; 31:32; Ezek 16:15, 32, 35-42; Hos 2: 1-7; 3:1 et al.). Here Jesus applies it to his contemporaries as did his brother James

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later on (James 4:4). Israel had largely abandoned her idolatry and syncretism after the Exile. But now Jesus insists that she was still adulterous in heart. In the past God had graciously granted "signs" to strengthen the faith of the timid (e.g., Abraham [Gen 15]; Gideon [Judg 6:17-24]; Joshua [Josh 10]). Here, however, Jesus says that signs are denied "this wicked and adulterous generation," because they are never to be performed on demand or as a sop to unbelief (cf. 1Cor 1:22). In Mark 8:11-12, Jesus refuses to give any sign; but in Matthew and Luke (Q) the sign of Jonah is expected. This has led many to conclude that the reference to Jonah is an unauthentic, late addition (Stendahl, Peake; G. Schmitt, "Das Zeichen Jona," ZNW [1978]: 123-29, suggests that the addition was made in the seventh decade A.D. through the influence of *Lives of the Prophets*). On the other hand, Taylor (*Mark* , p. 363), quoted by Hill (*Matthew*), suggests Mark has abbreviated the original in the interests of his messianic-secret theme so as to produce a flat refusal to provide a sign. But the difference between Mark and the other two synoptists may be more subtle. Rightly understood the sign, which is the exception in Matthew and Luke, is not a sign at all as Jesus' opponents understood the word. It becomes a sign only for those with eyes to see. In that sense there is no exception: Jesus offers no miraculous token on demand. That is Mark's point, a point not contradicted by the "exception" the other synoptists record. But what is "the sign of Jonah"? This question is tied to the absence of 12:40 from the parallel in Luke and its being regarded as a late addition. The argument, it is said, must therefore run from 12:39 to 12:41; and the sign of Jonah must be his preaching of repentance, a ministry in which Jesus has likewise been engaged. Verse 40 is, then, a late typological addition. Nevertheless a good case can be made for the authenticity of v. 40 (cf. especially France, *Jesus* , pp. 80-82). Luke does not simply "drop out" Matthew 12:40. Rather, following the reference to the "sign of Jonah," Luke writes (11:30): "For as Jonah was a sign to the Ninevites, so also will the Son of Man be to this generation." He then includes the visit of the queen of the

South before returning to the men of Nineveh, who will rise up and condemn Jesus' contemporaries (cf. Matt 12:41). In other words Luke, for whom Jonah's preaching is not a sign, does not support the alleged continuity between Matthew 12:39 and 12:41. If this is correct, then either Matthew 12:40 is an enlargement of an original but cryptic Luke 11:30, or else Luke 11:30 is an effort to veil the specificity of an original Matthew 12:40. The latter view is more credible, for Luke has an obvious reason for making the saying more cryptic--viz., the reference to three days and three nights, so readily understood in Matthew's Jewish environment (see below), would be problematic to Luke's readers who would see a conflict with the length of time Jesus was actually in the tomb. The same concern doubtless accounts for Justin Martyr's quoting (*Dialogue* 107:1) Matthew 12:39 and saying that Jesus was

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speaking cryptically of the Resurrection, though Justin does not actually quote v. 40.

The rejection of v. 40 is tied to the interpretation of the "sign of Jonah." If v. 40 is removed, the "sign" is most likely the preaching. But this is intrinsically unlikely: in both Matthew and Luke the sign is future to Jesus' utterance (Matt 12:39; Luke 11:

30), which suits Jesus' death and resurrection but not his preaching. Verse 40 therefore becomes an integral part of Matthew's pericope. And the contention of R.A. Edwards

(*The Sign of Jonah* [London: SCM, 1971], pp. 25ff.), that the sayings of this pericope are in the form of a new *Gattung* , a Christian invention after Jesus' time, has been disproved by lists of much older examples of the same form (cf. Daryl Schmidt, The LXX *Gattung* Prophetic Correlative, JBL, 96 [1977]: 517-22). In "the sign of Jonah," then, "of Jonah" must be construed as an epexegetic genitive (Zerwick, par. 45; Turner, *Syntax* , p. 214). It is the sign that Jonah himself was, not the sign given him or presented by him. This interpretation commonly accepts the view that the Ninevites learned what had happened to Jonah and how he got to their city. Jonah himself thus served as a "sign" to the Ninevites, for he appeared to them as one who had been delivered from certain death (cf. J. Jeremias TDNT, 3:409; Eugene H. Merrill, The Sign of Jonah, JETS 23 [1980]: 23-30). As Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the fish, so the Son of Man--seen here in his suffering role (see on 8:20)--will be three days and three nights in the "heart [perhaps an echo of Jonah 2:3; cf. Ps 46:2] of the earth"--a reference to Jesus' burial, not his descent into Hades. That is to say, Jesus' preaching will be attested by a deliverance like Jonah's only still greater; therefore there will be greater condemnation for those who reject the significance of Jonah's deliverance. Some scholars perceive the strength of the argument for the authenticity of this pericope but interpret v. 40 as if it were referring to the "sign" of the coming Son of Man (24:30), or to Jesus' vague awareness that he must die sometime, or that Jesus by his suffering will carry the truth of

God to the Gentiles as Jonah did. But this overlooks the connection between Jonah and Jesus established by the text. Grant the authenticity of v. 40, and the only legitimate conclusion is that Jesus knew long in advance about his death, burial, and resurrection, and saw his life moving toward that climax; and the christological implications must not be avoided. Jonah spent "three days and three nights" in the fish (Jonah 1:17). But if the normal sequence of Passion Week is correct (see on 26:17-30), Jesus was in the tomb only about thirty-six hours. Since they included parts of three days, by Jewish reckoning Jesus was buried "three days" or, to put it another way, he rose "on the third day" (16:21). But this does not cover more than two nights. Some advocate a Wednesday crucifixion date (see on 26:17); but though that allows for "three days and three nights," it runs into difficulty with "on the third day." In rabbinical thought a day and a night make an *onah* , and a part of an *onah* is as the whole (cf. SBK, 1:649, for

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references; cf. further 1Sam 30:12-13; 2 Chronicles 10:5, 12; Esth 4:16; 5:1). Thus according to Jewish tradition, "three days and three nights" need mean no more than "three days" or the combination of any part of three separate days.

41 The first point of comparison between Jonah and Jesus is that they were both delivered from death--a deliverance that attested the trustworthiness of their preaching. The second point of comparison is the different responses of the hearers. The men of Nineveh repented. But even though "something [neuter, as in 11:19; 12:6; NIV, `one'] greater than Jonah is here"--the reference is to Jesus, not his deliverance, because the comparison is with Jonah, not his deliverance--the people of Jesus' day--"this generation" (cf. v. 39)--did not repent. Therefore men of Nineveh (the nouns are anarthrous) "will stand up with" this generation at the final judgment i.e., they will rise to bear witness against them (see on 11:20-24; and on the Semitic legal idiom, cf. Mark 14:57; Black, *Aramaic Approach*, p. 134). Thus Jesus' "sign" does not meet the Jews' demand for a special token (see on v. 38). Yet it is the only one he will provide. For his own followers, his authority will be grounded in his death and resurrection. And as for those who do not believe, they will only prove themselves more wicked than the Ninevites.

42 Jonah and Solomon are linked in other Jewish literature (cf. D. Correns, "Jona und Solomon," in Haubeck and Bachmann, pp. 86-94). The nature of the link--Jonah and the queen with "this generation" rising at the Judgment--strongly supports the view that for Jesus, Jonah was a historical person. The queen of the South (the Arabian peninsula, which for the Jews was "at the ends of the earth"; cf. Jer 6:20; Joel 3:8, NASB) was the queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1-13), who came to Jerusalem because of reports of Solomon's wisdom. But Jesus is "something greater" (see on v. 41) than Solomon; Jesus is the Messiah, who will introduce the promised eschatological age. Therefore the queen of Sheba will rise at the Judgment to join the Ninevites in

condemning the unbelieving generation of Jesus' time.

d. The return of the evil spirit (12:43-45)

The parallel in Luke 11:24-26 is, as here, tied to the Beelzebub controversy, though the preceding verse is different (Luke 11:23 = Matt 12:30). Though many think Luke applies the parable to the individual and Matthew to the nation, this contrast is too facile. Luke omits (according to the best texts) the connective *de* ("and" or "but"). This suggests an independent saying that fits the movement of the chapter but is not meant to be tied too tightly to the verse preceding it. The warning in both Matthew and Luke is not (contra Marshall, *Luke* , p. 479) aimed at "those who exorcise demons

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without giving a positive substitute to their patients." In both Matthew (12:27) and Luke (11:19) the comparison Jesus draws between himself and other exorcists is not meant to prove his superiority but to show that even Jewish exorcists achieve some success in their work by virtue, not of Beelzebub), but of God's power. This story about the unclean spirit who after being driven out returns with seven wicked spirits goes beyond Jesus' comparison; for Luke (11:21-22) has shown Jesus' authority in binding Satan, and Matthew (12:39-42) has insisted that Jesus is greater than Jonah and Solomon. In other words, in both Gospels this pericope is set in a milieu of veiled messianic claims. The point here and in Luke is that those who through the kingdom power of God experience exorcisms must beware of neutrality toward Jesus the Messiah, for neutrality opens the door to seven demons worse than the one driven out. Commitment to Jesus is essential. Thus the pericope supports Luke 11:23, which, like Matthew 12:30, rules out neutrality. Against the broader background in Matthew of the Beelzebub controversy and the sign of Jonah, in sweeping out the house and ridding it of its demons, Jesus has been testifying to the presence of the kingdom (12:28). Yet many of that "wicked and adulterous generation" are so neutral toward him they require signs (12:38) and fail to see that one greater than Jonah and Solomon has come. Luke 11:23 does not mean that Matthew 12:43-45 and Luke 11:24-26 refer to individual demon possession in contrast to the national rejection of Jesus Messiah portrayed in Matthew; on the contrary, both evangelists deal with the same issue, the extreme danger of being neutral toward Jesus (see further on v. 45).

43 When an evil spirit (see on 8:28; 10:1) leaves a man (lit., "the man," but the article presents a typical case), it goes "through arid places" in search of rest. This conforms to the view that demons have an affinity for such places (Tobit 8:3; cf. Rev 18:2). Ultimately, however, they seek another body in

order to do even more harm.

44 Verse 43 implies the possibility of repossession. While v. 44 may be theoretically interpreted as a universal fact of experience, that would make Jesus' exorcisms an invitation to catastrophe. So it is better to take the language of the text as a Semitic paratactic conditional protasis to v. 45 (i.e., "If the demon on his arrival finds the house unoccupied, etc."; cf. H.S. Nyberg, "Zum grammatischen Verstandnis von Matth.12, 44f.," *Coniectanea Neotestamentica* 13 [1949]: 1-11; Jeremiah *Parables* , pp. 197f.) or to take the details of the story as representing a dangerous contingency (Beyer, 1:281-86).

45 Though the seven evil spirits may have been harder to drive out than just one (cf. Mark 5:9; 9:29), the text only mentions their greater wickedness. The man from whom

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the demon had been driven out is now in a far worse condition than before. Jesus' final statement in this pericope "That is how it will be with this wicked generation" (omitted by Luke)--does not change the point of the story from one of demon possession to the nation's failure to recognize Jesus, for both Matthew and Luke understand the story to demand recognition of Jesus Messiah. But what Matthew adds (1) closes off the main part of the pericope by referring again to "this wicked generation" (cf. 12:39)--a common but overlooked Matthean device (see on 15:20)--and (2) makes the warning less cryptic than Luke (cf. v. 40; Luke 11:30). Though Luke knows the danger into which the Jews' rejection of Jesus (Luke 21:20-24) will place them, this is not for him, as it is for Matthew, a major theme.

6. Doing the Father's will (12:46-50)

Here Matthew basically follows Mark 3:31-35 (cf. Luke 8:19-21; John 7:3-5), though he omits the background in Mark 3:20-21. As a result these verses are not so much a confrontation between Jesus and his family as a statement about what it really means to be a disciple of Jesus and to be totally committed to him. The way for us to be as close to Jesus as his nearest and dearest is to do the will of his Father.

46-47 The obvious implication is that Jesus is inside the house (cf. Mark 3:20, 31). Though v. 47 is omitted in many MSS, probably by homoeoteleuton (words, clauses, or sentences with similar endings being dropped by oversight: both v. 46 and v. 47 end in *lalesai* ["to speak"]), it was likely in the original text and clearly helps the sense of the pericope. While the verse might represent assimilation to Mark 3:32, this would not explain *to legonti auto* ("to the one who had spoken to him," omitted from v. 48 in NIV), which presupposes v. 47. The most natural way to understand "brothers" (v. 46) is that the term refers to sons of Mary and Joseph and thus to brothers of Jesus

on his mother's side. To support the dogma of Mary's perpetual virginity, a notion foreign to the NT and to the earliest church fathers, Roman Catholic scholars have suggested that "brothers" refers either to Joseph's sons by an earlier marriage or to sons of Mary's sister, who had the same name (cf. Lagrange; McHugh, pp. 200ff.). Certainly "brothers" can have a wider meaning than male relatives (Acts 22:1). Yet it is very doubtful whether such a meaning is valid here for it raises insuperable problems. For instance, if "brothers" refers to Joseph's sons by an earlier marriage, not Jesus but Joseph's firstborn would have been legal heir to David's throne. The second theory--that "brothers" refers to sons of a sister of Mary also named "Mary"--faces the unlikelihood of two sisters having the same name. All things considered, the attempts to extend the meaning of "brothers" in this pericope, despite McHugh's best efforts, are nothing less than farfetched exegesis

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in support of a dogma that originated much later than the NT (see on 1:25; Luke 2:7; cf. Broadus on 13:55-56).

48-50 Jesus' searching question (v. 48) and its remarkable answer (vv. 49-50) in no way diminish his mother and brothers but simply give the priority to his Father and doing his will. "For, had He not entered into earthly kinship solely for the sake of the higher spiritual relationship which He was about to found ... ? Thus, it was not that Christ set lightly by His Mother, but that He confounded not the means with the end" (LTJM, 1: 577). Henceforth the disciples are the only "family" Jesus recognizes. The metaphorical nature of v. 49 is shown by the "ands" (v. 50): "my brother and sister [Jesus had physical sisters; cf. 13:56] and mother" instead of " ... or ... or." We do not make ourselves Jesus' close relatives by doing the will of his heavenly Father. Rather, doing the Father's will *identifies us* as his mother and sisters and brothers (cf. 7:21). The doing of that will turns on obedience to Jesus and his teaching, according to Matthew, for it was Jesus who preeminently revealed the will of the Father (cf. 11:27). This means that Jesus' words in this pericope are full of christological implications, but they also establish the basic importance of the community now beginning to form around him, God's chosen Servant who, despite rising opposition, will lead justice to victory (12:18, 20).

B. Third Discourse: The Parables of the Kingdom (13:1-53)

1. The setting (13:1-3a)

1 Doubtless *en te hemera ekeine* must be rendered "that same day," but NIV introduces an insurmountable problem by translating *palin* in Mark 4:1 "on another occasion." *Palin* does not mean that; indeed, it can often be

translated "furthermore" or "thereupon" (BAGD, s.v.). At any rate Matthew links the parabolic discourse in chapter 13 to the preceding controversies (either 12:38-50 or 12:22-37) and ends it with a formulaic conclusion (13:53), which implies that all these parables were given on this occasion. The statement "Jesus went out of the house" implies the same thing by setting a specific scene carried forward by 13:36. Jesus "sat by the lake," taking the normal position of a teacher (see on 5:1-2). The explanation that Jesus' posture was a symbol drawn from apocalyptic literature representing God sitting in judgment (cf. Rev 7:12; Kingsbury, *Parables* , pp. 23f.) is not only overly subtle and needlessly anachronistic but misunderstands the parables. Although in some parables Jesus portrayed himself as the Judge coming at the end of the age (esp. vv. 40-43), such a judicial session is future. During his ministry Jesus' chosen role was that of a teacher who taught others about the kingdom so that they

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might teach others (see on vv. 51-52).

2 This is the only one of the five major discourses in Matthew that is addressed, not to the "disciples" (in the broad sense of 5:1-2), but to the crowds. Therefore Matthew includes in it two major digressions (vv. 10-23, 36-43) to explain to his disciples the significance of parables and to interpret two of them. While these digressions doubtless took place after the public discourse, Matthew moves them back as parentheses so that the significance of the parables will not be lost to the reader. Some scholars contend that the crowds, unlike the Jewish leaders, are portrayed favorably, since they are the group Matthew wants immediately to reach. But that is farfetched. In Matthew, Jesus has already criticized "this generation" (11:16-24) and can treat the Jewish leaders as typical of it (12:38-39). Here the crowds are not given "the secrets of the kingdom" (v. 11). Matthew changes Mark's "taught" (4:2) to "told" (v. 3a)--a change that has encouraged many to suppose that he is turning the parables into "proclamation narratives" (e.g., W. Wilkens, "Die Redaktion des Gleichniskapitels Mark.4 durch Matth.," *Theologische Zeitschrift* 20 [1964]: 305-27). On the other hand, Kingsbury (*Parables*, pp. 28-31) holds that the change from "taught" to "told" owes everything to the structure of Matthew's Gospel. After Matthew 12 Jesus never teaches or preaches to the Jews. So Matthew looks on this chapter as a sort of "apology." To base such large theological implications on the change of a single verb is not convincing, because Matthew often shows considerable independence in verbal expression. What he understands Jesus to be doing in the parables must be based on the exegesis of the whole chapter, and especially on that of Matthew 13:10-17, which purports to answer that very question. Kingsbury's view that Jesus does not teach or preach to the crowd after Matthew 12 is in any case manifestly wrong. Little of such teaching occurs before Matthew 12; most references to it are general (e.g., 4:23; 9:35); and after Matthew 12 we find similar remarks (13:54; 15:10; 21:23; cf. 22:16; 26:55; and implicitly 14:13-36; 15:29-31). These and similar

reconstructions attempt to see in the antithesis between the "crowds" and the "disciples" a covert disjunction between the church and the synagogue. J. Dupont ("Point de vue," pp. 221-59) analyzes these efforts in detail and shows that the language is simply not specific enough to draw such far-reaching conclusions. In particular he shows that the disciples-crowds contrast relates to what is just or unjust and with either doing or not doing the will of the Father.

3a Jesus told the crowd "many things in parables." Before we examine them, however, three comments are needed. 1. The history of the interpretation of parables is very complex, and the number of new developments in parable scholarship has accelerated in recent years. This has

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been set forth concisely by J.G. Little ("Parable Research in the Twentieth Century," *ExpT* 87 [1975-76]: 356-60; 88 [1976-77]: 40-44, 71-75) and comprehensively by W.S. Kissinger (*The Parables of Jesus: A History of Interpretation and Bibliography* [Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow, 1979]).

Commentators tended to interpret the parables more or less by appeal to allegory (with notable exceptions such as Augustine and, to a lesser extent, Calvin) till Adolph Julicher's huge study (*Die Gleichnisreden Jesu* , 2 vols. [Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1910]), which contends that Jesus told not allegories but parables--simple stories with a single point. Traces of allegorical interpretation of parables in the Gospels must therefore be assigned to the postapostolic church. Studies by Dodd (*Parables*) and Jeremias (*Parables*) have proceeded along similar lines. Dodd has tried to show that some parables demonstrate the eschatological orientation of Jesus' preaching and the "presentness" of the kingdom, while Jeremias has established "laws" of parable transmission to determine how Jesus' simple stories were progressively changed in the process of oral and written retelling and application. Using these "laws," Jeremias has argued that we can strip off later accretions and discover what the historical Jesus really taught. Two essays challenge Jeremias's view. Both Matthew Black ("The Parables as Allegory," *BJRL* 42 [1959-60]: 273-87) and Raymond E. Brown ("Parable and Allegory Reconsidered," *NovTest* 5 [1962]: 36-45) convincingly demonstrate that the allegory-parable distinction is too facile, that Jesus himself occasionally derived more than one or two points from certain of his parables, and that all "allegorizing" of the parables cannot be automatically assigned to the postapostolic church. Two things follow: (1) what Jeremias calls allegorization does not by itself prove secondary accretion; (2) as McNeile (p. 186) observed long ago, a certain unavoidable ambiguity is built into the parables. For it is not always easy to distinguish illustrative details and details that are merely part of the story structure. While there is room for difference of opinion here, the slight loss in certainty of meaning is more than compensated for by the greater flexibility in understanding the parables. More recent developments in

parable scholarship have moved in different directions. Hans Weder (*Die Gleichnisse Jesu als Metaphern* [Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1978], pp. 69-75) distinguishes parabolic (as opposed to allegorical) elements as those tied to the narrative flow and lacking independent existence both in the narrative and its interpretation. His work largely follows the studies of Eta Linnemann (*Parables of Jesus* [London: SPCK, 1966]), D.O. Via (*The Parables* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967]), and J.D. Crossan (*In Parables* [New York: Harper and Row, 1973]), who say that what distinguishes parable from allegory is not that only the former has one central point but that the former alone ties all its elements to one another within the parable's framework. These interconnections are determined

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not so much by a one-to-one link with the historical or theological situation to which the parable refers but by the demands of the story--viz., the parable itself. Therefore some parabolic elements may have a historical referent, others none. But where such "outside" connections are made, they are subsidiary to the connections "inside" the parable, the point of which is contained within the story's internal movement. These are important insights. Yet those who have developed them unfortunately tend to think deeply on the literary level but naively on the historical one. Many recent interpreters tend to be far less conservative than Jeremias in what they ascribe to the historical Jesus. And it is astonishing how often, once they have finished their interpretations, they exhort their readers to choose authentic existence, trust the benevolence of the universe, or the like. Whatever else Jesus was, he was no twentieth-century existentialist! Coupling these literary studies with insights from "the new hermeneutic," Mary Ann Tolbert (*Perspectives on the Parables: An Approach to Multiple Interpretations* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979]) tries to establish the legitimacy of interpreting the parables in different ways that depend largely on the stance of the interpreter, and argues that the parables' "dynamic indeterminacy" (p. 115) requires such an approach. Questions raised by such studies and the German works on which many of them are based cannot be handled here. For a responsible treatment of the issues involved, see A.C. Thiselton, *The Two Horizons* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980).

Suffice it to say that historical doubts are not always tied as intimately to the genuine literary insights of these writers as they seem to think. Jesus, though he did indeed confront people and demand existential choices, did so within a message that was, and can still be, defined and defended prepositionally. Moreover the criteria for distinguishing between Jesus' parables and church accretions to them are becoming less and less justifiable. Although there are many *kinds* of parables (see below), Thiselton is right in pointing out how many of them are designed to capture the listener and make him a

participant, overturning his world view and leading him to call in question his most basic values (cf. esp. pp. 12-15, 344-47). These convictions undergird the following exposition. 2. Some areas of disagreement might be eliminated if more attention were paid to the word "parable" itself. Behind it stands the Hebrew *masal* (twenty-eight of thirty- three instances in the OT are rendered *parabole* [parable] in the LXX), a word referring to proverbs, maxims, similes, allegories, fables, comparisons, riddles, taunts, stories embodying some truth (Num 23:7, 18; 1Sam 10:12; 24:13; Job 27:1; Pss 49:4; 78:2; Prov 1:6; Eccl 12:9; Isa 14:4; Ezek 12:2; 17:2; 24:3; 13; Mic 2:4; Hab 2:6). And the word "parable" in the NT comes close to duplicating this range (cf. esp. DNTT, 2: 743-60). Thus a parable can be a proverb (Luke 4:23; something John calls a *paroimia* ["figure of speech," John 10:6; 16:25, 29; of Job 27:1 LXX]); a profound or obscure

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saying (Matt 13:35); a nonverbal symbol or image (Heb 9:9; 11:19); an illustrative comparison, whether without the form of a story (Matt 15:15; 24:32) or with (in the most familiar kind of "parable"--e.g., 13:3-9); an illustrative story not involving comparison of unlikes (e.g., the rich fool, Luke 12:16-21); and more. So it becomes obvious that much learned discussion actually focuses on only one or two kinds of NT "parables." Most, though not all, parables are extended metaphors or similes. Yet even so broad a definition as this eliminates some of the material listed above that NT writers label "parable." Most generalized conclusions about parables require painful exceptions; and on the whole it is best to deal inductively with parables, while at the same time being aware of the questions posed by recent studies and the scholarly analyses of some parable material. One of the most responsible of these is Boucher's recent work, some of whose conclusions are adopted later (see on vv. 10-17). But even Boucher narrows down parable to "a *narrative* having two levels of meaning" (p. 23) and confusingly defines allegory as merely "a device of meaning, and not in itself a literary form or genre" (p. 20), while insisting that allegory must extend a metaphor over a whole story, thus tying it inescapably to a form. By this definition some parables are allegories. Yet it is useful, for instance, to be able to distinguish allegories that are types from those that are not. Progress in understanding parables depends, it seems, in greater scholarly agreement over the semantics of the labels and in greater willingness to recognize the diversity of kinds of parables in the NT. (On this point, cf. C.B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible* [London: Duckworth, 1980], pp. 161-67; Robert H. Stein, *The Method and Message of Jesus' Teachings* [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978], pp. 34-39.) 3. The structure of the third discourse (13:3-52) bears directly on its interpretation. Certain things are obvious. Two of the parables are also found in Mark and Luke: viz., the sower and its interpretation (13:3-9, 18:23; Mark 4:3-9, 13:20; Luke 8:5-15) and the mustard seed (13:31-32; Mark 4:30-32; Luke 13:18-19). One is paralleled in Luke but not Mark (the yeast [13:33; Luke 13:20-21]), and the other four (or five; see below) are

found only in Matthew. Mark 4:26-29 adds still another to this discourse; and both Mark 4:33 and Matthew 13:3 suggest there was a great deal more left unreported. These are the agreed facts, but the structure of the discourse as it stands is more disputed (cf. Dupont, "Point de vue," pp. 231f.; Kingsbury, *Parables* , pp. 12-15). The best analysis has been provided by David Wenham ("Structure," pp. 516-22), who argues, with Lohmeyer and Kingsbury (*Parables*), that v. 52 is a parable (note the form "is like [plus dative]" and the opening words of v. 53). The discourse may then be broken down into two parts of four parables each (vv. 3-33, 44-52). The first four are addressed to the crowds, the last four to the disciples. Wenham's distinctive contribution lies in identifying the emergent chiastic structure. Of the first four

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parables, the first stands apart from the other three, separated by discussion about the purpose of parables (vv. 10-17) and the interpretation of the parable (vv. 18-23). It has a formally different introduction (the other three begin "Jesus told them another parable, 'The kingdom of heaven is like ... '"). The matching chiastic four in the second half begin with three parables with the same opening ("The kingdom of heaven is like ... "), separated from the fourth, which has a different beginning by the explanation in vv. 49-50 and the question and answer about the disciples' understanding of parables. The central section separating the two sets of parables (vv. 34-43) divides the chiasm and further explains the function of parables while expounding one of them. (See outline, Introduction, section 14.) The implications are important. 1. Matthew reports two rationales for parables, one related to their function for outsiders and one related to their function for disciples. 2. The detailed structure reveals Matthew's skill as an author; and the alleged dislocations (esp. vv. 12, 34-35), often taken to support Markan priority, turn out to be, not aporias (i.e., a break that demands explanation), but an integral part of the outline (see below). This does not of course disprove Mark's priority here, but if Matthew is indeed prior or independent for all or part of this chapter (as Wenham argues in "The Synoptic Problem Revisited"), it supports an important point--viz., that it is methodologically doubtful to think that the only access to information Matthew has when following Mark is Mark itself. 3. This structure also calls in question the traditional dispensational interpretation of the parables in this chapter. Typical is Walvoord: "Jesus deliberately adopted the parabolic method of teaching at a particular stage in His ministry for the purpose of withholding further truth about Himself and the kingdom of heaven from the crowds, who had proved themselves to be deaf to His claims and irresponsible to His demands.... From now onwards, when addressing the unbelieving multitude, He speaks only in parables which He interprets to His disciples in private." There is insight here: Walvoord rightly detects the note of judgment bound up with some parables. Walvoord's position, however, is too cut and dried. First,

remembering the broad definition of "parables" in the NT, it is doubtful that we are to think that chapter 13 contains Jesus' first use of parables in Matthew (cf. 7:24-27; 9:15-17; 11: 16-19). Second, if Walvoord were to respond that such passages are not labeled "parables," the historical problem recurs when any synoptic harmony is attempted (a procedure he would approve). Historically Jesus does not use parables for the first time at this stage in his ministry (cf. Luke 5:36; 6:39). What does seem likely is that rising opposition to Jesus encouraged his greater and greater use of parables (see on vv. 10-17, 34-35). But there is little ground for the sudden switch in method Walvoord sees. Third, parables are not restricted to Jesus' ministry to outsiders: he also uses

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them positively for his disciples (cf. structure, above). Fourth, there has been no extensive teaching to outsiders before this third discourse and there is none after it to test Walvoord's claim that Jesus' use of parables is a new departure here. We have only the fact that Jesus' preaching to outsiders is repeatedly mentioned but no extended samples of it (see on 13:11).

2. To the crowds (13:3b-33)

a. The parable of the soils (13:3b-9)

3b-7 The focus of the parable is not the sower (the article is used in v. 3 to designate a class; cf. 12:43) but the soils. The farmer scatters the seed (v. 3b), which falls in various places. Paths run through and around the unfenced fields (see on 12:1); and the earth paths are too hard to receive the seed, which is eaten by birds (v. 4). "Rocky places" (v. 5) are those in which the limestone bedrock lies close to the surface: there is little depth of soil. As the rainy season ends and the sun's heat increases, the shallow soil heats up quickly (v. 6). The seeds sprout and promise to be the best of the crop (on the appropriateness of these details to the Palestinian setting, cf. P.B. Payne, "The Order of Sowing and Ploughing in the Parable of the Sower," NTS 25 [1978-79]: 123-

29). But the unrelenting summer heat demands that plants send deep roots down for water, and the bedrock prevents this. Like grass on rooftops, the young plants wither before they can grow (Ps 129:6). Other seed falls into hedges of thorns that deprive the plants of sun and nourishment (v. 7).

8-9 But some seed falls on good soil and produces crops of various yields (v. 8), which, contrary to what many think, are not extremely high, symbolic of the fertility of the Messianic Age, but well within ordinary expectations (cf.

Payne, "Authenticity," pp. 181-86). The same seed produces no crop, some crop, or much crop according to the soil's character. The final exhortation (v. 9; see on 11:15) warns Jesus' hearers and Matthew's readers that the parable needs careful interpretation. At this point many commentators, believing vv. 18-23 to be unauthentic, attempt to interpret vv. 3b-9 without reference to vv. 18-23. Their efforts fail to produce interpretations more believable than the one Matthew ascribes to Jesus. Typical is that of Hill (*Matthew*), who says the parable means that just as every (Palestinian) sower does his work in spite of many frustrations, so the kingdom makes its way in spite of many difficulties. It will be established in time, with a sure and glorious harvest, but only after much loss. The parable has little to do with how to hear the word of God. But Hill's interpretation depends on treating the parable serially--i.e., the sower sows seed in all the bad places first! On the face of it, the differences lie in the soils, not in the

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order of sowing: i.e., the kingdom, while advancing now by the promulgation of the good news about the kingdom (4:23), is meeting many different responses.

b. Interlude (13:10-23)

1) On understanding parables (13:10-17)

Matthew's treatment is not only longer than Mark's (4:10-12) and Luke's (8:9-10; 10:23-24), but it includes more OT Scripture and is structured with great care. The disciples' question (v. 10) evokes Jesus' basic answer (vv. 11-12), which is then applied in greater detail first to "them" (vv. 13-15) and then to the disciples (vv. 16-18). The latter two sections are a well-ordered chiasm whose inversion echoes OT form (e.g., Ps 89:28-37) and emphasizes the climax of judgment and mercy (so K.E. Bailey, *Poet and Peasant* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976], pp. 61f.):

Therefore I speak to them in parables,

1 because seeing *they see not* and hearing *they hear not* , nor understand.

2 And *it is fulfilled to them the prophecy* of Isaiah which says,

3 "Hearing you *shall hear* and shall *not understand* ,

4 and seeing you *shall see* and shall *not perceive* .

5 For this peoples *heart is* become dull

6 and the *ears* are dull of hearing

7 and their *eyes* they have closed,

7' lest they should perceive with the *eyes*

6' and hear with the *ear*

5' and understand with the *heart* , and should turn again and I should heal them."

4' But blessed, are *your eyes* , for they see,

3' and your *ears* , for they *hear* .

2' For truly I *say unto you* that many *prophets* and righteous men

1' desired to see what you *see* , and *did not see* , and to hear what you *hear* , and *did*

***not hear* .**

10 "The disciples" (Mark: "the Twelve and the others around him") approached Jesus, apparently in private (cf. Mark 4:10). If this occurred at the end of the discourse, the plural "parables" would be well accounted for. Kingsbury (*Parables* , pp. 40-41) detects in the verb *proselthontes* ("came to him") a "cultic connotation": the disciples approached Jesus "with the same reverence that would be due to a king or deity." He defends this doubtful view with a prejudicial selection of the evidence that

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could in some cases be taken that way, while ignoring contrary evidence regarding Matthew's use of the verb (cf. 4:3; 8:19; 9:14; 15:1, 30; 16:1; 17:24; 22:23 et al.). Recent scholarship rightly sees in this chapter the distinction between the disciples and the crowds, presupposed by the above outline. But there has been a regrettable tendency to think Matthew has absolutized the distinction, idealized the disciples, and played down their lack of understanding (Bornkamm, *Tradition* , pp. 105ff.; Kingsbury, *Parables* , pp. 42ff.; Schmid; Grundmann). This idealization, it is alleged, is very strong in vv. 10-17 and emerges in v. 10. The disciples ask why Jesus speaks to the crowds in parables, not what the parables mean--and this presupposes they already know. But Mark's question is ambiguous (Mark 4:10); Matthew typically has merely clarified the point. The critics' contention is based on an argument from silence. But if the disciples did understand the parable of the sower, why does Jesus proceed in a few verses to give them an explanation (vv. 18-23)? And why do they ask for an explanation to a later parable (v. 36)? The focus of Jesus' reply (vv. 11-17) is not so much on the disciples' understanding as on the fact that the revelation is given to some and not to others and why. (On this recurring question, cf. Trotter.)

11-12 Jesus' answer cannot legitimately be softened: at least one of the functions of parables is to conceal the truth, or at least *to present it in a veiled way*. This point is strengthened if the *hoti* is not "recitative" (equivalent to the quotation marks in NIV) but fully causal, "because." The disciples ask, "Why do you speak, etc.?" and Jesus replies, "Because the secrets of the kingdom have been given to the disciples but not to others." The strength of this translation turns not only on its suitability after "Why?" but also on the fact that *hoti* is nowhere else in the NT "recitative" after the particular formula used: *ho de apokritheis eipen* ("he replied," v. 11; cf. D. Wenham,

"Structure," p. 519, n. 5, and literature there cited). The pronoun *autois* ("to them") does not refer first to the Jews in Matthew's day but to "the people" mentioned by the disciples in the previous verse.

Ta mysteria tes basileias ("the secrets of the kingdom") is not explained; its meaning may be deduced by the context and by the use of *mysterion* ("secret") elsewhere. *Mysterion* has no obvious connections with pagan mystery religions but reflects a thoroughly Semitic background (cf. R.E. Brown, *The Semitic Background of the Term "Mystery" in the New Testament* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1968]). It appears in the OT in Daniel (Aram. *raz*), which refers to some eschatological secret, some portent of what God has decreed will take place in the future. The Greek term can also reflect the Hebrew *sod* ("secret," "confidential speech"), taken from the heavenly council (cf. Brown, *Mystery* , pp. 2-6; DNTT, 3:502). The same range of meanings is found in the DSS. "Mysteries" are divine plans or decrees, often passed on in veiled language, known only to the elect, and usually relating to eschatological events.

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For the "secrets of the kingdom" to be "given" the disciples suggests that to them certain eschatological realities are being revealed. What is revealed is not who Jesus is, the nature of God, or the power of love (all of which have been suggested); rather, the "mystery of the Kingdom is the coming of the Kingdom into history in advance of its apocalyptic manifestation" (Ladd, *Presence* , pp. 219-42, esp. p. 222). That God would bring in his kingdom was no secret. All Jews looked forward to it. "The new truth, now given to men by revelation in the person and mission of Jesus, is that *the Kingdom which is to come finally in apocalyptic power, as foreseen by Daniel, has in fact entered into the world in advance in a hidden form to work secretly within and among men*" (ibid., p. 225, emphasis his). It is unlikely that the plural "secrets," as opposed to Mark's "secret," refers to everything Jesus has taught (so Kingsbury, *Parables* , pp. 44f.). The strongest reason for the latter view is that some of the parables deal with ethical matters, not eschatology, reflecting, it is argued, the full gamut of Jesus' teaching (e.g., parables of the hidden treasure, of the pearl, of the unforgiving servant). But in reality all such parables, as we shall see, necessarily presuppose some form of realized eschatology to make their ethical demands meaningful. The plural "secrets" is best accounted for as a typical Matthean preference for the plural (cf. Matt 4:3 Luke 4:3; Matt 8:26- Mark 4: 39; Matt 26:15- Mark 14:11; and a regular changing of "crowd" to "crowds" at Matt 12:46; 13:2; 14:22; 15:36; 21:46; 23:1; 27:20), or as a reflection of a non-Markan source (there are several Matt-Luke "minor agreements" against Mark here; for details cf. D. Wenham, "Synoptic Problem"), or perhaps as a reference to the multiple elements bound up with the basic eschatological truth that the age to come has already dawned. The antithesis of v. 12 is proverbial and repeated elsewhere (25:29; cf. Mark 4:25; Luke 8:18). It warns against taking spiritual blessings for granted and serves to increase gratitude and a sense of privilege among those who continue to enjoy them. What is lost in the second part of the antithesis is not the law but one's standing as the expected subject of the kingdom (cf. 8:11-12).

13 Jesus now explicitly applies his answer (vv. 11-12) to those who are not disciples. Discussion of this verse turns on Matthew's change of *hina* plus subjunctive in Mark 4:12 ("in order that, etc.")--which implies that the parables' blinding outsiders is a function of divine election--to *hoti* ("because"), which means that Jesus speaks in parables because the people are spiritually insensitive. Though they "see," they do not *really* "see." There are four possible approaches to the above data. 1. Some argue that Matthew's change of *hina* to *hoti* is motivated by his editorial desire to blame the Jews or to establish a moral basis for their being rejected (e.g., Kingsbury, *Parables* , pp. 48-49; Dupont, "Point de vue," pp. 233f.). But this badly

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oversimplifies the matter because of the strong note on election in the best rendering of v. 11 (above). 2. Others suggest a sort of additive harmonization: "because" (*hoti*, Matt) the willful rejectors refused to see and hear, Jesus spoke to them in parables "in order that"

(*hina*, Mark-Luke) they might not (truly) see and hear (Hendriksen). This may be theologically sound, but it is doubtful whether simple addition best explains what Matthew has done. 3. Many attempt to soften the *hina* in Mark to lose its telic force ("in order that") and take on a consecutive force ("with the result that"; cf. NIV's ambiguous "so that"). Mark and Matthew would then be very close in thought in this verse. Certainly *hina* can have consecutive force in Hellenistic Greek, a distinct departure from the classical; but Mark has *hina ... mepote* (lit., "in order that ... lest"; NIV, "otherwise"), and it is very difficult to give such an expression anything else than full telic force. Moule (*Idiom Book*, p. 143) recognizes the strength of this argument; but because he judges the notion of parables told to prevent any who are not predestined for salvation from hearing "too incongruous with any part of the N.T. period to be plausible," he is forced to appeal to Semitic idiom or even the much later linguistic development of causal *hina*. But attempts to ground Mark's *hina* in a Semitic mistranslation (cf. esp. T.W. Manson, *The Teachings of Jesus*, 2d ed. [Cambridge: University Press, 1935], pp. 76ff.) have proved futile (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT*, pp. 34-35, n. 1; Boucher, pp. 43-44; J. Gnilka, *Die Verstockung Israels* [Munich: Kosel-Verlag, 1961]). And appeals to rabbinic parables and their function have turned out to support the telic view, since rabbis did indeed use parables to mask truth: the rabbinic parable "is not a universalistic form" (D. Daube. "Public Pronouncement and Private Explanation in the Gospels," *ExpT* 57 [1945-46]: 177). 4. Though the last two approaches are not convincing, the first can become plausible if presented with greater awareness of the relationship v. 12 enjoys with v. 11 and v.

13. Verse 11 most likely embraces a strictly predestinarian viewpoint, more strongly than Mark 4:11 and doctrinally, though not verbally, like Clark

4:12. The reply to the disciples' question (Matt 13:10) is thus given in terms of election in v. 11, which is further explained in v. 12. Verse 13 recapitulates the reason for speaking in parables but now frames the reason, not in terms of election, but in terms of spiritual dullness. Matthew has already given Jesus' answer in terms of divine election (v. 11); now he gives the human reason. While this brings him into formal conflict with Mark 4:12, he has already sounded the predestinarian note of Mark 4:12. Here Matthew includes much more material than Slark; and in the ordered structure (see parallelisms, above) that results from the inclusion of such new material, verbal parallels are lost in favor of conceptual ones. Three broader reflections help resolve the problem.

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1. Biblical writers in both the OT and the NT have, on the whole, fewer problems about the tension between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility than do many moderns. This is not because they fail to distinguish purpose and consequence, as many affirm (e.g., Moule, *Idiom Book* , p. 142), but because they do not see divine sovereignty and human responsibility as antitheses. In short they are compatibilists and therefore juxtapose the two themes with little self-conscious awareness of any problem (cf. Gen 50:19-20; Judg 14:4; Isa 10:5-7; Hag 1:12-14; John 11:49-52; cf. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty*).

2. Thus, even though he records Jesus' answer in terms of election, Mark does not thereby mean to absolve the outsiders of all responsibility. How could he, in the light of the interpretation of the parable of the sower he records (4:13-20), his record of John's demand for repentance (1:4), and much more? Matthew has taken up these themes in greater detail because he wishes simultaneously to affirm that what is taking place in the ministry of Jesus is, on the one hand, the decreed will of God and the result of biblical prophecy and, on the other hand, a terrible rebellion, gross spiritual dullness, and chronic unbelief. This places the responsibility for the divine rejection of those who fail to become disciples on their own shoulders while guaranteeing that none of what is taking place stands outside God's control and plan. The same sort of pairing has already been expressed in 11:25-30.

3. This sheds much light on the parables. It is naive to say Jesus spoke them so that everyone might more easily grasp the truth, and it is simplistic to say that the sole function of parables to outsiders was to condemn them. If Jesus simply wished to hide the truth from the outsiders, he need never have spoken to them. His concern for mission (9:35-38; 10:1-10; 28:16-20) excludes that idea. So he must preach without casting his pearls before pigs (7:6). He does so in parables: i.e., in such a way as to harden and reject those who are hard of heart and to enlighten--often with further explanation--his disciples. His disciples, it must be remembered, are not just the Twelve but those who were following him (see on 5:1-12) and who, it is hoped, go on to do the will of the Father (12:50) and do not end up blaspheming the Spirit (12:30-32) or being ensnared by evil more thoroughly

than before (12:43-45). Thus the parables spoken to the crowds do not simply convey information, nor mask it, but challenge the hearers. They do not convey esoteric content only the initiated can fathom but present the claims of the inaugurated kingdom and the prospects of its apocalyptic culmination in such a way that its implications are spelled out for those in the audience with eyes to see (overstated but rightly defended by Boucher, pp. 83-84). The parables of the soils not only says that the kingdom advances slowly and with varied responses to the proclamation of that kingdom but implicitly challenges hearers to ask themselves what kinds of soil they are. Those whose hearts are hardened and who lose what little they have do not participate in the messianic kingdom they have

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been looking for, and for them the parable is a sentence of doom. Those who have ears to hear, to whom more is given, perceive and experience the dawning of the Messianic Age; and for them the parable conveys the mysteries of the kingdom. In the varied responses given to the challenge of the parables, God's act of judgment and his self-disclosure in Jesus are both seen to be taking place in exactly the same way that various "soils" respond to the "seed," which is the message about the kingdom. (See further on 15:10-13.)

14-15 Stendahl and others advance several reasons for taking this quotation as a late gloss on the Gospel, including an anomalous introductory formula, and insist that the quotation is tautologous after v. 13. But parallels to this introductory formula are common in the LXX and other Greek-Jewish literature with which Matthew is familiar, and vv. 14-15 are not strictly tautologous since they go on to stress the theme of fulfillment. Moreover, if Matthew follows Mark (4:12) in v. 13, it is unlikely that he abridged his source by omitting the entire last clause of Mark 4:12 ("otherwise they might turn and be forgiven"). The one area where Matthew almost invariably gives more material than the other synoptists is in OT quotations and allusions. "We must rather assume that verse 13 leads up to the formal quotation in verses 14, 15" (Gundry, *Use of OT*, pp. 116-18). These two verses thus become the rough equivalent of Mark 4:12-13. The text form is LXX (as also in Acts 28:26-27), which follows the MT of Isaiah 6:9-10 pretty closely, except that the LXX is a description of the people, whereas MT makes this a command to the prophet ("Be ever hearing, but never understanding.... Make the heart of this people calloused"). But this is not as significant a change as some have thought; for judging by the prophet's later messages, the words in Isaiah 6:9-10 are steeped in bitter irony. After all, Isaiah was not given this charge because the result was desirable but because it inevitably came on people who were calloused. So also in Jesus' day! The Messiah who comes to reveal the Father (11:25-27) succeeds only in dulling

what little spiritual sense many of the people have, for they do not want to turn and be healed. Indeed, the context of Isaiah 6:9-10 reveals that their dullness will continue "until the cities lie ruined ... and the fields ruined and ravaged ... and the land is utterly forsaken. And though a tenth remains in the land, it will again be laid waste" (Isa 6:11-13). The reference is to the Exile; but the events surrounding the Exile are seen as a paradigm, the classic case of rejection of God and resulting judgment, repeated in Jesus' generation on a new level and so fulfilling the words of the prophecy. It is unclear whether any claim that Isaiah 6:9-10 has predictive force is implied (if so, see on 2:15). What is certain is the racial connection (cf. also Acts 28:26-27; cf. John 12:38-40): the failure of most Jews to discern spiritual realities was no new thing. Moreover, if the context of Isaiah 6:9-10 goes with the quotation, a strong hint of

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judgment accompanies the description.

The first two lines Lithe quotation are in the second person plural: the people are directly addressed. But v. 15 gives us God's description of the people in the third person. This makes it at least possible to interpret the "otherwise" clauses (*mepote* , "lest"), not as the people's purpose (they have closed their eyes lest they see and turn and be healed), but as God's judgment (they have closed their eyes as the result of divine judicial action, otherwise they might see and turn, etc.). The thought then becomes similar to 2 Thessalonians 2:11. Again, of course, neither Jesus nor Matthew would see anything incongruous in God's judicial hardening (see on v. 13).

16-17 (For "blessed," see on 5:3; and cf. Luke 10:23-24.) The disciples were blessed by God and privileged above the crowd because they saw and heard (v. 16) what "many prophets and righteous men" (v. 17; see on 10:40-42) longed to see but did not. The reference is to OT prophets and others who were just before God--people who looked forward to the coming of the kingdom. Here one cannot help but include Simeon (Luke 2:25-35) and Anna (Luke 2:36-38). Implicitly there is in Jesus' saying a rich christological and eschatological claim: no mere prophet could say as much as he did. Those who think Matthew idealizes the disciples (see on v. 10) observe that the parallel in Luke 10:23-24 contrasts Jesus' generation with earlier generations but argue that Matthew contrasts the disciples ("your" is emphatic) with the hard people of that same generation (Bornkamm, *Tradition* , p. 107). In fact Matthew does something of both. Verse 16. in connection with the preceding verses, contrasts the disciples with the calloused crowd; but v. 17 contrasts them with prophets and righteous men of past generations. So the crowd in Jesus' day stands in the line of the willfully blind in the OT (vv. 14-15), and Jesus' disciples stand in the line of the prophets (as in 5:11-12). The fulfillment motif is operating, showing that the division taking place in Jesus' time with the coming of the kingdom

stands in succession to the divisions already spelled out in the Scriptures. The disciples are not idealized; they will later have to ask for an explanation (v. 36). But by contrast with the crowds, then really did follow Jesus and gradually grasped the critical turning point in redemption history Jesus was even then introducing.

2) Interpretation of the parable of the soils (13:18-23)

Jeremias (*Parables* , p. 62) thinks the interpretation provided in all three Gospels (cf. Mark 4:14-20; Luke 8:11-15) is a later church creation, but we have already questioned the cogency of some of his criteria. Payne ("Authenticity") has taken up the points in question and offered comprehensive rejoinders, some of which will be noted below. Here it is enough to say that (contra Jeremiah *Parables* , p. 79) not every

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point in the parable is interpreted allegorically: no explanation is given of the sower, the path, the rocky ground, or the diverse yield. What "allegorical" points are scored emerge naturally from the story (even the identification of the birds: see on v. 19), once the main point of the extended metaphor is established. The general point is that the "message about the kingdom" (v. 19) receives a varied reception among various people, and that during this time of difficulty and frustration there is an implied delay while the seed produces in some soils its various yields. The interpretation therefore demands that each person look to himself as to how he "hears" the message. Broadus cites Chrysostom: "Mark this, I pray thee that the way of destruction is not one only, but there are differing ones, and wide apart from one another. Let us not soothe ourselves upon our not perishing in all these ways, but let it be our grief in whichever way we are perishing."

18 The *hymeis* ("you") is probably emphatic: in light of the great privilege extended to you, which prophets and righteous men wanted to enjoy and the calloused spurn, *you* listen.

19 Matthew omits "The farmer sows the word" (Mark 4:14) and plunges right into the significance of the various soils. This does not mean that he is concerned with the ecclesiastical implications at the expense of the christological ones (so Kingsbury, *Parables*, p. 72), since Mark himself does not identify the sower as Jesus. If he here depends on Mark, Matthew simplifies to get to the point. But D. Wenham ("Interpretation") has provided a plausible source reconstruction that would invalidate redaction-critical conclusions in this pericope that depend on Markan priority. Possibly Matthew and Mark share a common source. Neither "word" (Mark) nor "word of the kingdom" (Matt; NIV, "message about the kingdom") indicates later ecclesiastical tradition (cf. Payne, "Authenticity,"

pp. 178-79; contra Jeremias, *Parables* , pp. 77f.; Hill, *Matthew*). On the change from "word" to "word of the kingdom," compare Matthew's "gospel of the kingdom" (4:23; 9:35; 24:14). More difficult is the mixed metaphor: the seed appears to be "the message about the kingdom," but in the last sentence of the verse it is *ho para ten hodon spareis* (lit., "he who was sown along the path"; NIV has smoothed out the difficulty by treating the masculine participle as if it were neuter). A similar problem occurs in Mark's parallel. Several ways for resolving the problem have been suggested. Box and McNeile are among those who take the text literally but think there is a purposeful link between the seed and human character, which grows from the seed. But surely the point of this part of the parable is that the seed is taken away before it has time to grow. Others have suggested some sort of ellipsis: "This is [the situation of] the seed sown along the path," understanding "This" to refer to the

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situation, not the seed or the person, which would also explain vv. 20-23, though the masculine *houtos* ("this"), instead of the neuter, is somewhat surprising. Alexander and Hendriksen therefore opt for a fairly complex ellipsis: "He is the one that [in his reaction to the message resembles the reaction of the ground to the seed that] was sown along the path"--which is possible but rather finely drawn. D. Wenham ("Interpretation") offers a complex but plausible source-critical solution; Payne ("Authenticity," pp. 172-77) proposes an underlying Aramaic too literally translated and observes that the Greek can be understood to mean, not "this is he who was sown along the path," but "this is the man who received the seed along the edge of the path" (JB; cf. NASB), understanding the passive participle *ho spareis* to mean, not "the one [seed] sown," but "the one [soil] sown." C.F.D. Moule ("Mark 4:1-20 Yet Once More," in Ellis and Wilcox, p. 112) has shown that the ambiguity is no indication that the interpretation is secondary; the same thing occurs in Colossians 1:6, 10, where the metaphor of growing and bearing fruit is applied first to the seed sown and then to the ground in which it is sown. Two further features of this verse require explanation.

1. The words "in his heart" make the heart the place of decision, the center of personality (see on 5:8). Kingsbury (*Parables* , p. 55) is wrong to conclude from this that the person in view actually becomes a Christian and church member and then rejects the message. He argues that the words "when anyone hears the message about the kingdom" is "tantamount to saying that he becomes a Christian." The conclusion is untenable if one considers the next words: "and does not understand it" (cf. the same verbs in vv. 13-14). The hunt for anachronisms can distort scholarly judgment. 2. The evil one (cf. 6:13; 12:45; 13:38-39), called "Satan" in Mark 4:15 and "the devil" in Luke 8:12; has been symbolized by the birds, a point Via (*Parables* , p. 8) uses to argue that this interpretation goes beyond the range of the natural and understandable symbolism inherent in the parable and must therefore be judged guilty of falling into allegorizing.. In fact, close study of birds as

symbols in the OT and especially in the literature of later Judaism shows that birds regularly symbolize evil and even demons or Satan (cf. b. *Sanhedrin* 107a; cf. Rev 18:2). Jesus' interpretation is clear. Some people hear the message about the kingdom; but like hardened paths, they do not let the truth penetrate, and before they really understand it the devil has snatched it away.

20-21 The language of these verses is often taken to reflect the apostolic age, not Jesus (cf. Jeremias, *Parables*). But "root" (v. 21) is appropriate to the extended agricultural metaphor, and "persecution" is amply treated by Jesus elsewhere in nonparabolic settings (e.g., 5:10-12, 43:44; 10:16-25; 24:9; see further Payne, "Authenticity," pp. 177-80). Jesus' interpretation is coherent. The person who receives

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"the word" (same Gr. word as "message" in v. 19) in a thoughtless way may show immediate signs of life and promise to be the best of the crop: he receives the truth "with joy" (v. 20). But without real root, there is no fruit; and external pressures, trouble, and persecution (cf. 24:9, 21, 29), like sun beating on a rootless plant, soon reveal the shallowness of this soil. "At once" (*euthys*) he receives the word with joy, and as "quickly" (*euthys*) "falls away" (for *skandalizetai* , see on 5:29). Such temporary disciples are always numerous in times of revival and were so in Jesus' ministry (cf. comments on 12:32).

22 This person does not hear the word "with joy" (as in v. 20) but simply never permits the message about the kingdom to control him: life has too many other commitments that slowly choke the struggling plant, which never matures and bears fruit. The competing "thorns" are summed up under two headings--the worries of this life (lit., this "age," as opposed to the age to come; see on 6:25-34) and "the deceitfulness of wealth." The latter category, *he apate tou ploutou* , may possibly be rendered "the delight in wealth," since in late Greek *apate* , which earlier meant "deceitfulness," came to mean "pleasure" or "delight," usually involving sin (e.g., 2 Peter 2:13; cf. BAGD, s.v.). The idea is clear: worries about worldly things or devotion to wealth (cf. 1Tim 6:9) snuff out spiritual life. If "deceit" is understood, there is an added warning that these "thorns" are so subtle that one may not be aware of the choking that is going on. The warning is timeless. Moreover it is as unconvincing to deduce from this verse that Matthew's church was wealthy (contra Kilpatrick, *Origins* , pp. 124ff.; Kingsbury, *Parables* , p. 61) as to deduce from 6:28-32 that his church was poverty-stricken. What must be avoided is unfruitfulness, for only fruitfulness, not its opposite, indicates spiritual life (cf. John 15:1-8). This person finds "all the seeming good effect is gone, leaving the soul a very thicket of thorns" (Broadus).

23 By contrast with the negative results of the preceding verses, we now come to the person who hears the word and understands it (thus reverting to the categories of Isa 6:9-10 used in vv. 13-15, 19). The use of *synienai* ("to understand") in vv. 19, 23, a verb not found in the Markan parallels, has led some to say that "understanding" is a fundamental characteristic of discipleship in Matthew, and that his disciples have again become idealized (see on v. 10): they are made to "understand" more than the disciples really did at this point in their pilgrimage (cf. Bornkamm, *Tradition* , p. 107; Schniewind; Kingsbury, *Parables* , pp. 61f.). But this may be premature. Certainly *synienai* with its nine occurrences is an important part of Matthew's vocabulary. But Mark uses *synienai* six times, in a book about two-thirds the length of Matthew. David Wenham has shown that granted Matthew's syntax in v. 19, he could not very well have omitted *synienai* ("to understand") there ("Interpretation," pp. 308f. n. 5).

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Its use in v. 23 picks up the Isaiah quotation given more briefly in Mark. Moreover v. 23 does not apply the verb directly to the disciples but interprets the parable aphoristically; and in so doing it is merely in line with Mark's "hear the word, *accept it*" (4:20). In this chapter the disciples are distinguished from the crowd; but their understanding is only relatively better (v. 36), and they are not idealized. Misunderstanding of this point springs from too ready a willingness to read the later church into every phrase of the parable and from a failure to recognize the absolute categories that any competent preacher, including Jesus, uses (see on 6:5-8). The interpretation, like the parable itself, ends positively. And we must not fail to notice that the soil that produces only a small crop is nevertheless called "good" (cf. 25:22-23).

c. The parable of the weeds (13:24-30)

This parable occurs only in Matthew. For the reasons why its interpretation (vv. 36-43) is separated from it, see above on 13:3a regarding the structure of the chapter. A few (e.g., Manson, *Sayings* , p. 143) have argued that this parable is not authentic but a creation of Matthew, constructed out of the parable of the seed growing quietly (Mark 4:26-29). But the similar language on which this theory is based owes more to the common agricultural setting than to borrowing. Though many affirm the authenticity of the parable but deny the authenticity of the interpretation (Dodd, *Parables* , pp. 183-84; Jeremias, *Parables* , pp. 81ff.; Kingsbury, *Parables* , pp. 65-66), the criteria for such distinctions are faulty (see on v. 3a); and specific arguments can be advanced to defend their joint integrity in this case (see on vv. 36-43). David R. Catchpole ("John the Baptist, Jesus and the Parable of the Tares," SJT 31 [1978]: 557-70) unwittingly supports the view that the parable and its interpretation stand or fall together when, in the course of defending his reconstruction of a much shorter parable (vv. 24b, 26b, 30b) that Matthew

allegedly expanded, he expresses dissatisfaction with this parable because it includes elements that invite the "allegorizing" interpretations of vv. 36-43. The parable of the sower shows that though the kingdom will now make its way amid hard hearts, competing pressures, and even failure, it will produce an abundant crop. But one might ask whether Messiah's people should immediately separate the crop from the weeds; and this next parable answers the question negatively: there will be a delay in separation until the harvest.

24 Jesus *paretheken* ("told") the people another parable (lit., "he set another before them"). This verb is used in the NT only here and in v. 31 in the sense of teaching though that meaning is attested elsewhere. "Them" must be the crowd, not the disciples (cf. vv. 34, 36).

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The kingdom of heaven is not "like a man" but "like the situation of a man who ... ": the "is like" formula reflects an Aramaic idiom meaning "It is the case with X as with Y" (cf. *Jeremiah Parables* , pp. 100f.; Zerwick, par. 65). But the peculiar tense used here (cf. Notes) also implies that the kingdom *has become* like the situation of a man who, etc. The thought is intriguing; for whereas Judaism was accustomed to delays in waiting for the coming of Messiah (cf. R.J. Bauckham, "The Delay of the Parousia," *Tyndale Bulletin* 31 [1980]: 3-36), what Jesus argues is both that the kingdom has come (see 4:17; 12:28) and that the Parousia is still delayed (i.e., the kingdom has become like ... a parable dealing with the *delay* of the kingdom's arrival).

25-26 "Sleeping" (v. 25) does not imply that the servants were neglectful but that the enemy was stealthy and malicious. What he sowed was *zizania* ("weeds"--almost certainly bearded darnel (*lolium temulentum*), which is botanically close to wheat and difficult to distinguish from it when the plants are young. The roots of the two plants entangle themselves around each other; but when the heads of grain appear on the wheat, there is no doubt which plant is which (v. 26). This weed the enemy sowed "among the wheat"; the Greek suggests thorough distribution. The growing plants gradually become identifiable, and the servants tell their master about the weeds.

27 For *oikodespotes* ("owner"), see on 10:25; 13:52. The servants are not identified their function in the parable is to elicit information from the owner. In v. 27 *kyrios* ("sir") has no special significance; but later Christian readers doubtless saw in it further evidence that the owner is the "Lord" Jesus. The interrogative pronoun *pothen* ("where") can refer to a person as well as to a location (cf. use in 13:54, 56; 21:25), as Jesus answer (v. 28) presupposes.

28-30 The owner blames (v. 28) an enemy (lit., "a man [who is] an enemy":

the construction occurs again in v. 52). But the owner forbids his servants from attempting to separate weed from wheat till the harvest (v. 29). Then, as the workers reap the field, only the wheat will be gathered; the weeds, apparently so plentiful they must first be gathered up and burned (v. 30--though nothing is made of this point in vv. 40-42), contaminate the wheat no longer. "Harvest" is a common metaphor for the final judgment (see on 9:37-38). In this light the "good seed" (v. 24) cannot be the "word" or "message" of vv. 19-23 but people who must face final judgment. An astonishing number of scholars treat this parable as if there were behind it a Matthean church riddled with problem people, perhaps even apostates. So Jesus' answer in Matthew becomes, in effect, advice not to try to have a pure church, because the Lord will make the right distinctions at the end (most recently G. Barth, "Auseinandersetzungen urn die Kirchenzucht im Umkreis des Matthauevangelium,"

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ZNW 69 [1978]: 158-77). But this is a major error in category Nowhere in Matthew does "kingdom" (or "reign"--see on 3:2) become "church" (see on 16:18; and esp. 13: 37-39). The parable does not address the church situation at all but explains how the kingdom can be present in the world while not yet wiping out all opposition. That must await the harvest. The parable deals with eschatological expectation, not ecclesiological deterioration.

d. The parable of the mustard seed (13:31-32)

31-32 Close comparison with Mark 4:30-32 and Luke 13:18 suggests that Matthew may have slightly modified the Q form of this parable under Mark's influence. Yet it is easy to exaggerate the differences. (See discussion and chart at 19:1-2.) Many have held that in Mark the contrast in size is of greatest importance, in Luke the process of growth, and that Matthew has conflated the two ideas. Such distinctions are too finely drawn: if size were for Mark the most important factor, one wonders why Mark's Jesus would choose a plant that reaches a height of only ten to twelve feet. There is a better interpretation. In all three Gospels the parable begins with a mustard seed (for the introductory formula and the verb *paretheken* ["he told"], see on

v. 24). This seed is designated "the smallest of all your seeds," but it becomes "the largest of garden plants" (*meizon ton lachanon* , v. 32; cf. Notes). In rabbinical thought the mustard seed was proverbial for smallness (cf. M *Niddah* 5:2; cf. SBK, 1:669). It becomes a tree, large in comparison with the tiny seed, large enough for birds to perch in its branches (Matt; Luke) or in its shade (Mark). The image recalls OT passages that picture a great kingdom as a large tree with birds flocking to its branches (Judg 9: 15; Ezek 17:22-24; 31:3-14; Dan 4:7-23). But if the greatness of the kingdom is in view, why a mustard plant? The contrast in size between seed and plant does not itself establish the greatness of the kingdom; and, contrary to Kingsbury (

***Parables* , p. 81) and Huffmann (p. 211), it is doubtful whether Jesus' point is that the kingdom grows supernaturally. Instead, the point is the organic unity of small beginning and mature end (cf. Dahl, *Jesus in Memory* , pp. 155-56). No pious Jew doubted that the kingdom would come and that it would be vast and glorious. What Jesus is teaching goes beyond that: he is saying that there is a basic connection between the small beginnings taking place under his ministry and the kingdom in its future glory. Though the initial appearance of the kingdom may seem inconsequential, the tiny seed leads to the mature plant. We can now see why Jesus chose the mustard seed. For him it was not essential to stress the greatness of the future kingdom; few would dispute that. It was more important for him to find a metaphor emphasizing the kingdom's tiny beginning. Jacques Dupont ('Le couple parabolique du seneve et du levain: Mt 13, 31-33, Le 13,**

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18-21," in Strecker, *Jesus Christus* , pp. 331-45) has suggested another reason for this metaphor. He convincingly shows that the parables of the mustard seed and of the yeast, linked in Matthew and Luke but only the first occurring in Mark, actually belonged together from the beginning. He argues that Mark has structural reasons for dropping the parable of the yeast, and so his silence is scarcely determinative. But one of the links he finds between the two parables is the incongruity of both metaphors. He quotes authors who find the mustard plant an incongruous or even bizarre symbol for the kingdom, while everyone knows that yeast normally symbolizes evil (see further on v. 33). But that, Dupont says (pp. 344-45), is just the point. In both parables the strange choice of images evokes surprise, encourages the reader to penetrate the parable's meaning, and accords with other parables designed to jar the unthinking (e.g., the coming of the kingdom is like the coming of a thief in the night [24:43]).

e. The parable of the yeast (13:33)

33 The general thrust of this parable is the same as that of the mustard seed. The kingdom produces ultimate consequences out of all proportion to its insignificant beginnings. Efforts by most dispensationalists (e.g., Walvoord) to interpret the yeast as a symbol for evil are not very convincing in this setting because they require the introduction of anachronistic ideas like "the professing church." Moreover, though yeast is *normally* associated with evil in the OT, this is *not always* so (cf. Lev 7:13; 23: 15-18). Metaphors may have diverse uses: the lion at different times symbolizes both Satan and Jesus. In any case the anomalous metaphor is here best explained along the lines suggested by Dupont (on vv. 31-32). If there is a distinction between this parable and the last one, it is that the mustard seed suggests extensive growth and the yeast intensive transformation. The yeast doesn't grow, it

permeates; and its inevitable effect, despite the small quantity used, recalls Jesus' words in 5:13. In both parables it is clear that at present the kingdom of heaven operates, not apocalyptically, but quietly and from small beginnings. There seems little merit in trying to identify the woman, any more than the man in v.

31. Some have thought that *enekrypsen* ("hid," RSV) resonates with "hidden" (*kekrymmai*) in vv. 35, 44: "The Kingdom was inaugurated without display or pomp; its silent, secret character must have surprised those who were zealously impatient for its expected manifestation in power and glory" (Hill, *Matthew*). These comments, while relevant to the parable as a whole, read too much into the verb itself. It simply means "put something into something," even in nonbiblical Greek (cf. BAGD, p. 216); NIV's mixed is therefore not bad. Usage of *enekrypsen* in later verses of this chapter (vv. 35, 44) is best interpreted in other ways.

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3. *Pause* (13:34-43)

***a. Parables as fulfillment of prophecy* (13:34-35)**

Mark 4:33-34 concludes Mark's report of Jesus' parables on this occasion. But Matthew has already departed from Mark at 13:16-17 and 13:24-30 and by omitting Mark 4:21-29. Now he continues on his own. To believe that he has simply modified Mark in this section is difficult because of the great differences between the two accounts. Speculating about Matthew's dependence on an earlier form of Mark (Schniewind) seems too uncontrolled. It is better to assume that Matthew had independent information (Lohmeyer).

34 The Greek's chiasm puts the emphasis on parables: Jesus did not speak to the crowds without using them. The first verb is aorist (*elalesen* , "spoke"), referring to the situation at hand; the second is imperfect (*elalei* , "used to say"), implying that this was Jesus' constant custom. But *choris paraboles* ("without a parable") does not mean that he told nothing but parables to the crowd but that he said nothing to them without using parables. In short parables were an essential part of his spoken ministry.

35 The quotation is from Psalm 78:2 (LXX 77), a psalm of Asaph. In addition to two difficult textual variants (cf. Notes), the text form is notoriously difficult to resolve. The first line follows the LXX exactly; hence it uses the plural *en parabolais* ("in parables") to translate the Hebrew *bemasal* ("in a parable" or "in a wise saying"; for the meaning of these words, see on 13:3a). But the singular is probably generic; so LXX has caught the main point. The second line means roughly the same thing as both LXX and MT but is quite independent. The verb *ereuxomai* (lit., "I belch

forth," "I utter") is an etymological rendering of the MT and may have been chosen above the LXX's *phthenxomai* ("I will utter") simply because it is stronger (Goulder, *Midrash* , p.

371) and may indicate the richness of the revelation: "I will pour forth things hidden" (as in Ps 19:2 [LXX 18:3]). Matthew's *kekrymmena* ("things hidden") is likewise closer to the Hebrew *hidot* ("enigmas," "dark sayings") than LXX's *problemata* ("tasks," "problems"). But in what sense can Jesus' ministry in parables be said to be a fulfillment of Asaph's psalm? The problem does not arise just because the quotation is from a psalm: in 22:43-44 another psalm is quoted as prophecy. Matthew 11:11-13 has already established that the entire OT is in some sense prophetic (see on 2:15, 17-18; 5:17-20); and 2 Chronicles 29:30 attests that Asaph is a "seer." The problem arises rather in the way Psalm 78:2 is applied to Jesus. Contemporary NT scholars almost universally agree that Matthew has taken Psalm 78:2 badly out of context. Psalm 78 repeats

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Israel's well-known history, none of which is "mysterious" or "hidden." But Matthew presents Jesus as uttering hidden things. He speaks to the people in parables, in a hidden way, whereas his disciples are enlightened and understand all things. Thus, though Mark 4:33 presents Jesus using the parables to communicate as much truth to the crowds as they could understand, Matthew sees parables as a means of hiding the truth from the outsiders (so, more or less, Lindars, *Apologetic* , pp. 156-57; Kingsbury, *Parables* , pp. 88-90; Rothfuchs, pp. 78-80; Hill, *Matthew* ; and others). Despite its popularity, this approach misunderstands both Psalm 78 and Matthew 13. It is true that Psalm 78 recounts the known history of Israel, but there is no escaping the fact that Psalm 78:2 nevertheless finds the psalmist declaring that he will open his mouth "in parables, wise sayings," and pour forth *hidot* ("enigmas," "dark sayings"). The point is that though the history of the Jews, which Asaph relates, is well known, the psalmist selects the historical events he treats and brings them together in such a way as to bring out things that have been riddles and enigmas "from of old." The pattern of history is not self-evident; but the psalmist will show what it is really all about. He enlarges on God's might at the time of the Exodus and at other major turning points, a might exercised on behalf of his people. With these events the psalmist juxtaposes the people's persistent rebellion, the result being a vivid portrayal of God's justice and mercy and the people's obtuseness, need, and privilege. The psalmist teaches all this by opening his mouth "in parables" (i.e., by comparing various things) and in so doing utters "things hidden from of old" (NIV)--"things we have heard and known, things our fathers have told us" (v. 3), yet enigmatic and hidden. They are "deep and hidden teachings, which the events of the past embrace" (Louis Jacquet, *Les Psaumes* , 3 vols. [Bruxelles: Duculot, 1975-81], 2:522). Thus the psalmist makes his deep points, as does Stephen in Acts 7, by comparing events in redemptive history. We turn to Matthew 13:35 and discover a similar pattern. If Jesus pours forth things hidden from the beginning, does this mean that those things remain hidden, i.e., that Jesus pours forth teaching in so hidden a form that outsiders cannot understand

them? That is what the popular interpretation of the passage requires; but its death knell is the final phrase: "from the beginning." Whatever that phrase means--NIV has "since the creation of the world" (cf. Notes)--it modifies *kekrymmena* ("things hidden"), the unavoidable implication being that those hidden things are no longer hidden since Jesus has revealed them. Otherwise Jesus is saying no more than this: "I will reveal things that have always been hidden so that they will remain hidden"--an unnatural way to take the sentence. Apparently, then, as applied to Jesus the second line of the quotation pictures him as revealing things formerly hidden. This does not necessarily mean that he is teaching entirely new things any more than the psalmist was teaching such things. In both cases

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the patterns of redemptive history may be so stressed that when rightly interpreted they point toward new revelation--viz., they are fulfilled (see on 2:15; 5:17-20). This admirable suits v. 52: the "teacher of the law ... instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old." But Jesus teaches these hitherto hidden things "in parables," i.e., by comparing various things. The parables of this chapter are not exactly like the comparisons and wise sayings offered in Psalm 78. Yet the term "parable" can embrace both kinds of utterance. So we must be careful not to impose on the text too narrow an understanding of what a parable is. It follows that vv. 34-35 are much closer in thought to Mark 4:33-34 than is commonly believed. Jesus does teach the crowds, in parables, revealing new things. How much they understand is a different matter. Yet we have already seen that even Matthew 13:11-13 must not be taken to mean that in Matthew the parables for nondisciples are designed only to conceal. Actually they have a dual role, and here Matthew, rightly understanding the psalmist and reverting to the Hebrew from the LXX so as not to miss his desired nuance, insists that Jesus reveals new truth to the crowds. But what are these "hidden things" Jesus is now uttering? In Psalm 78 they are "the righteous acts of God in redemption" (Linclars, *Apologetic*, p. 157). Likewise that is what Jesus is now revealing--the righteous acts of God in redemption taking place in his teaching, miracles, death, and resurrection. Matthew insists that the OT Scriptures prophesied these things. They are not novel. If in one sense they have not been known before, it is because they have not all been brought together in the same pattern before. Jesus' kingdom parables to the crowds declare new things secrets (v. 11), hidden things (v. 35). Yet they are secret and new chiefly because they depend on an approach to Scripture not unlike Asaph's--bringing together various pieces of previous revelation into new perspectives. Thus Messiah is Son of David but also Suffering Servant. Jesus is the royal King and Son of David foreseen in Scripture (21:4-11) but also the stricken Shepherd equally foreseen in Scripture (26:31). Who clearly foresaw that both streams would merge in one person? Taken as a whole, Jesus' parables

preserve the expectation of the apocalyptic coming of Messiah. They also introduce a new pattern of an inaugurated kingdom that anticipates the Parousia. Moreover this pattern rests on Jesus' self-understanding as the Messiah who unites in himself streams of revelation from the old covenant that had not been so clearly united before. The connection between Matthew 13:35 and Psalm 78:2 is thus very close. But what does Matthew mean when he says that Jesus' ministry of parables "fulfilled" the word spoken through the prophet? Elsewhere when psalms are treated as prophecies, there is normally--a Davidic typology, but not so here. A number of things probably led

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Matthew to this psalm. The phrase "in parables" may have drawn his attention to Psalm 78 but in itself that does not account for the notion of "fulfillment." But a second connection presents itself: it is possible that, as Psalm 78 recounts Israel's history, so Jesus is presented as the one who is the supreme embodiment of Israel and her history, the one who fulfills all the patterns of the OT regarding Israel. We have noticed this theme before in Matthew, though it is stronger in the fourth Gospel. But there may be a third and more subtle factor. Matthew understands that "prophecy" does not necessarily predict the future; it may reveal hidden things (cf. 26: 68 with parallels in Mark and Luke). This sense of "prophecy" and its predictive sense "converge" in a passage like 11:13, where, as we have seen, the entire OT Scripture, both Law and Prophets "prophecy"--i.e., they comprehend certain patterns, types, predictions, declarations, which cumulatively look forward to him who "fulfills" them. Now in Psalm 78 Asaph claims to be explaining such earlier patterns in redemptive history; but in so doing, from a NT perspective he is also himself becoming a constituent element of the recorded redemptive history the NT explains. As such Psalm 78 becomes part of the "Law and Prophets" that prophecy. If part of this sacred record interprets and brings new truth out of an earlier part, it establishes a pattern that looks to one who will interpret and bring new truth out of the whole. Jesus, Matthew claims, fulfills that role and in exercising it in his own parabolic teaching.

b. Interpretation of the parable of the weeds (13:36-43)

For comments on the authenticity of this interpretation, see on 13:3a, 24. The reasons for separating the parable from its interpretation relate to Matthew's plan for this chapter (see on vv. 3a, 10-17) and on the need for a setting for this explanation to disciples only (cf. Bonnard). Those who see

more of Matthew's church than of Jesus in the Gospel commonly identify the kingdom in vv. 41, 43 with Matthew's church. There is, they argue, a double level of meaning. At one level the passage tells the church not to excommunicate its members because there will be a mixture of "wheat" and "weeds" in the church till the end of the age. For Hill (*Matthew*) this leads to an anomaly: 18:8- 9, which he applies to church government, suggests excommunication. But it is doubtful whether Matthew ever confuses kingdom and church: these are two quite distinct categories (see further on vv. 37-39). Hendriksen recognizes the distinction in principle but then ignores it, arguing (1) if tares are "sown *among* the wheat, not alongside of it or on some other field," then it is "natural to think of the intermingling of true and false members within the church"; (2) that the parables shed light on "mysteries" (13:11), and there is no "mystery" in both kinds of people living on the same earth, but it is "far more of a mystery ... that *within*

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the church visible God allows both the true and the merely nominal Christians to dwell side by side"; and (3) that the gathering "out of his kingdom" (v. 41) assumes the weeds were inside, "in this case inside the church visible" (emphasis his). We make this reply.

1. Jesus explicitly says the "field is the world" (v. 38), not the church; so how could there be "some other field"? The intermingling is adequately explained if it takes place on the field of the world. See further on v. 38. 2. The "mysteries" of 13:11 are bound up, not with the intermingling of good and evil per se, in church or world, but in a preliminary or inaugurated form of the kingdom that is not yet the apocalyptic and totally transforming kingdom belonging to the end of the age. 3. The gathering "out of his kingdom" (v. 41) is perfectly clear on a synoptic understanding of "kingdom" (see on 3:2; 5:3; 13:41). But to say that "in this case" the expression refers to the church visible is to assume the very thing that must be proved (see esp. Bonnard).

36 The Greek *apheis tous ochlous* could mean either that Jesus sent the crowds away (KJV) or that he left them (NIV). The house referred to is the one Jesus left in order to preach to the crowds (13:1) and was located, presumably, in Capernaum. In Matthew's narrative the house provides the setting both for Jesus' private explanations (vv. 37- 43, cf. vv. 10-23) and for the parables aimed at his disciples (vv. 44-52). Whether the verb "explain" is *diasapheson* (used elsewhere in the NT only in 18:31) or *phrason* (used elsewhere in the NT only in 15:15) is uncertain but of little consequence. More important is the fact that the disciples need explanations (cf. also 15:15-16). They are not distinguished from the crowds by their instant and intuitive understanding but by their persistence in seeking explanations. Jesus' disciples come to him and ask, and therefore a full explanation is given them (see on vv. 10-13).

37-39 On "Son of Man," see on 8:20. The title recurs at v. 41: Jesus is the one who both sows the good seed (v. 37) and directs the harvest. One of the most significant details in Jesus' parables is the way key images that in the OT apply exclusively to God, or occasionally to God's Messiah, now stand for Jesus himself. These images include sower, director of the harvest, rock, shepherd, bridegroom, father, giver of forgiveness, vineyard owner, lord, and king (cf. Philip B. Payne, "Jesus' Implicit Claim to Deity in His Parables," *Trinity Journal* [1981]: 3-23). "The field is the world" (v. 38). This brief statement presupposes a mission beyond Israel (cf. 10:16-18; 28:18-20) and confirms that the narrower command of 10:5-6 is related exclusively to the mission of the Twelve during the period of Jesus' earthly ministry. Of greater importance in the history of the church has been the view that this

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actually means that the field is the church. The view was largely assumed by the early church fathers, and the tendency to interpret the parable that way was reinforced by the Constantinian settlement. Augustine made the interpretation official: struggling against the Donatists, who were overzealous in their excommunication practices, he went so far as to say that a mixture of good and evil in the church is a necessary "sign" of the church (cf. esp. his *Breviculus Collationis cum Donatistis* and his *Ad Donatistas post Collationem*). Most Reformers followed the same line: Calvin went so far as to say that the "world" here represents the church by synecdoche. Ironically some modern redaction criticism has returned to this interpretation because it sees more of Matthew's church than of Jesus in this Gospel. Nevertheless this interpretation is without exegetical foundation. The kingdom is a category flexible enough to be used simultaneously for the saving reign of God (so that "sons of the kingdom" can refer to those who are truly God's people, v. 38) and for his reign more broadly considered (so that the kingdom in this sense might well embrace wheat and tares; see on 3:2; 5:3; 28:18); but it is not demonstrable that "church" ever has such semantic flexibility, or that "church" is ever confused with "kingdom" (cf. Ladd, *NT Theology*, pp. 105ff.; Guthrie, *NT Theology*, pp. 702-6). In this parable and its interpretation, unlike the parable of the sower, the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom--a healthy reminder that images can symbolize different things in different contexts (see on v. 33). But "sons of the kingdom" has also changed its meaning from its use in 8:12. There it refers to those who by birth into the Jewish race have a covenant right to look forward to the messianic kingdom but who, by and large, are forfeiting that right. Here it refers to those who truly are the objects of messianic favor and participants in the messianic kingdom. For their sake the "weeds" are now preserved, and at the "harvest" for their sake the "weeds" will be destroyed. These weeds are "the sons of the evil one." (On "sons of," see on 5:9; and with the entire expression compare John 8:44; 1John 5:19). The devil himself is the enemy (v. 39); the harvest is the end of the age (see on 9:37; cf. Jer 51:33; Hos 6:11; Joel 3:13; 4Ezra 4:28-29; 2Bar 70:2); and the harvesters are

angels (24:30-31; 25:31; cf. 18:10; Luke 15:7; Heb 1:14; 1 Peter 1:12; also cf. 1 Enoch 63:1). What must also be pointed out is how many features in the parable are not given nonsymbolic equivalents. These include the conversation between the man and his servants, the servants' sleep, and the fact that the wheat was sown before the tares. This selective use of elements in the story is not atypical of parables (see on v. 3a) and the other elements should not be allegorized.

40-42 The identification of the actors is over, and the description of the action begins. As the weeds are "pulled up" (v. 40; same verb as "collect" in v. 30b) and burned, so it is at the end. The kingdom we have known as the kingdom of heaven or the kingdom of

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God is also seen as the kingdom of the Son of Man, Jesus' kingdom (cf. 20:21; 25:31; cf. Dan 2:35; Rev 11:15). This is not the church (contra Bornkamm, *Tradition* , p. 44: see above), for Jesus' reign after the Resurrection extends to the farthest reaches of the universe (28:18). In that sense "everything that causes sin and all who do evil" may be weeded out of his kingdom (v. 41). For the meaning of *panta ta skandala* ("everything that causes sin"), see on 5:29; with "all who do evil" (lit., "those who do lawlessness") compare 7:23. The entire expression "everything that causes sin and all who do evil" appears to be a periphrastic rendering of the Hebrew of Zeph 1:3; *hammakselot et hares acim* (lit., "the stumbling blocks with the wicked"), a phrase so difficult in its context that emendations have been suggested and the best MSS of LXX omit it. The first of the two Hebrew words occurs elsewhere only at Isaiah 3:6, where it means "ruins." Hence NIV translates the phrase in Zeph 1:3 as "The wicked will have only heaps of rubble." If this is, correct, Matthew is either not referring to Zeph 1:3 or else is freely adapting it. But the Hebrew word may well mean "stumbling-blocks," "offenses." For what it is worth, etymology supports it; and the Targum understands it that way. Thus in Zeph 1: 3 the word may refer to idols, or, better yet, in a figurative manner to people seen as "things that cause offense." If so, Matthew's rendering is appropriate. The "sons of the evil one" (v. 38) may be metaphorically considered as "everything that causes sin," or, without any metaphor, "all who do evil." They, like the weeds are thrown into the fiery furnace (v. 42; see on 3:11; 5:22; cf. Jer 29:22; Dan 3:6; Rev 20:15), where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth (see on 8:12, cf. 4Ezra 7:36)-- viz., eschatological doom. Nothing is made of the word "first" in v. 30, and here the order is reversed. What is clear is that Jesus ascribes to himself the role of eschatological Judge that Yahweh assigns himself in the OT, including Zeph 1:3 (cf. France, *Jesus* , pp. 156f.; Payne, "Jesus' Claim").

43 In contrast to the evil-doers, "the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." The allusion is to Daniel 12:3 LXX, somewhat shortened by omitting *hoi synientes* (= Heb. *hammaskilim* those who are wise" or "those who understand"), further evidence that Matthew has not idealized the disciples as those who have understanding (see on 13:10-13, 19, 23, 36). Hill (*Matthew*) remarks that early in the tradition there may have been a word-play on *maskilim* (Aram. *maskiltin*) ("wise" or "understanding") in v. 43 and *makselot* (Aram. *makselan*) ("stumbling blocks" or "things that cause offense") in v. 41. These righteous people (see on 5:20, 45; 9:13; 10:41; 13:17; 25:37, 46), once the light of the world (5:13-16), now radiate perfections and experience bliss in the consummation of their hopes. The "kingdom of their Father" must not, as is commonly done, be set over against the kingdom of the Son of Man (v. 41) on the supposed ground that the former alone is

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eternal, or that the Son of Man hands over the elect to him (1Cor 15:24). The Son's postascension reign is a mediated reign. All God's kingly authority is given Jesus (28:

18) and mediated through him; and for all that time the kingdom can be called the kingdom of God or the kingdom of the Son of Man or, more generally, the kingdom of heaven. But even when that mediation ceases, halted by the destruction of the last enemy (1Cor 15:24-26), in Matthew's terminology it is still appropriate to call Jesus Messiah the King (20:31; 25:34; cf. 26:64), for the kingdom remains no less his.

4. To the disciples (13:44-52)

a. The parable of the hidden treasure (13:44)

For the way these parables relate to the structure of the chapter, see on vv. 10-17. The parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl are a pair; and pairing is not uncommon in Matthew (e.g., 5:14b-16; 6:26-30; 7:6; 9:16-17; 10:24-25; 12:25; 13:31-33; 24:43-51), an excellent way of reinforcing a point. Like the paired parables with which these two are chiastically coordinated (mustard seed and yeast, vv. 31-33), these two make the same general point but have significant individual emphases. Unlike the parables earlier in the chapter, these two do not deal so much with the hidden, inaugurated form of the kingdom and the concomitant delay of the Parousia as with the superlative worth of the kingdom of heaven. Yet even here the previous eschatological structure underlies them; for in traditional Jewish apocalyptic, one could scarcely liken the kingdom to a man finding a treasure or buying a pearl: the kingdom was to come apocalyptically at the end of the age by an act of God alone. In contrast to this, some kind of realized or inaugurated eschatology is here presupposed.

44 On the "is like" language, see on v. 24. The kingdom is not simply like a treasure, but its situation is like the situation of a treasure hidden in a field. The Greek articles are generic (cf. Turner, *Syntax* , p. 179). Finding the treasure appears to be by chance. In a land as frequently ravaged as Palestine, many people doubtless buried their treasures; but, as Huffman (p. 213) points out, actually to find a treasure would happen once in a thousand lifetimes. Thus the extravagance of the parable dramatizes the supreme importance of the kingdom. Derrett (*Law* , pp. 1-16) has pointed out that under rabbinic law if a workman came on a treasure in a field and lifted it out, it would belong to his master, the field's owner; but here the man is careful not to lift the treasure out till he has bought the field. So the parable deals with neither the legality nor the morality of the situation (as with the parable of the thief in the night) but with the value of the treasure, which is worth every sacrifice. When the man buys the field at such sacrifice, he possesses far more than the

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price paid (cf. 10:39). The kingdom of heaven is worth infinitely more than the cost of discipleship, and those who know where the treasure lies joyfully abandon everything else to secure it. Two alternative interpretations must be dismissed.

1. The first, represented by Walvoord, understands the treasure to represent Israel and Jesus as the man who sold everything to purchase her. He rejects the above view by making the parable mean that "a believer in Christ has nothing to offer and the treasure is not for sale" and proposes his own interpretation by noting that in Exodus 19:5 Israel is called God's treasure. But any view, including Walvoord's, can be made to look foolish by pressing a parable into a detailed allegory: for instance one could rebut his view by showing that it entails Israel's being worth far more than the price paid. But would Walvoord be comfortable with this implicit depreciation of Christ's sacrifice? He must come to grips with the nature of parables (see on 13:3a). And treasure has a vast range of associations in the OT and NT; on what basis does he select Exodus 19:5? Above all, his interpretation does not adequately handle the opening clause. 2. J.D. Crossan (*Finding Is the First Act* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1979], esp. pp. 93ff.) argues that "sold all he had" must be taken so absolutely that "all" includes the parable itself. One must give up the parable itself and, in abandoning all, abandon even abandonment. The parable is therefore a paradox, like the sign that reads "Do not read this sign." Crossan's interpretation is unacceptable for exegetical, literary, historical, and theological reasons: exegetical, in that this parable does not speak of "abandoning" or "giving up" things but of "selling," and one cannot imagine giving the parable away by selling it; literary, in that Crossan, like Walvoord, fastens on one word and rides it so hard that the nature of parables is overlooked; historical, in that ascription of such existentialist results to Jesus or to Matthew is so anachronistic as to make a historian wince; theological, in that his interpretation of "paradox" is defective and is used in undifferentiated ways. Crossan oscillates between paradox construed as a merely formal contradiction and paradox construed

as antinomy or even incoherence.

b. The parable of the expensive pearl (13:45-46)

45-46 The word *palin* ("again") ties this parable fairly closely to the preceding one (cf. 5:33). Walvoord recognizes that this parable is roughly equivalent to the last. But here, he says, the pearl represents not Israel but the church. The church, like the pearl, is formed organically; and "there is a sense in which the church was formed out of the wounds of Christ." This does not take us much beyond patristic allegorizing. The real connection with the last parable is the supreme worth of the kingdom. But here we deal with a merchant whose business it is to seek pearls, and who chances on one of

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supreme value. Derrett (*Law* , p. 15) sees a rabbinic parallel: "One wins eternal life after a struggle of years, another finds it in one hour" (b *Abodah Zarah* 17a): contrast the conversions of Saul and the Ethiopian eunuch. Unlike the man in the last parable, the merchant, though he sells everything he has to purchase the pearl, apparently pays a full price. Although he is an expert in pearls, this single find so far surpasses any other pearl the merchant has ever seen that he considers it a fair exchange for everything else he owns. Thus Jesus is not interested in religious efforts or in affirming that one can "buy" the kingdom; on the contrary, he is saying that the person whose whole life has been bound up with "pearls"--the entire religious heritage of the Jews?-will, on comprehending the true value of the kingdom as Jesus presents it, gladly exchange all else to follow him.

c. The parable of the net (13:47-48)

47-48 This parable, like the last two, is peculiar to Matthew. In the chiastic structure of the chapter (see on v. 3b), it is parallel to the parable of the weeds and has a somewhat similar meaning. But whereas the parable of the weeds focuses on the long period of the reign of God during which tares coexist with wheat and the enemy has large powers, the parable of the net simply describes the situation that exists when the Last Judgment takes place: the kingdom embraces "good" fish and "bad" fish, and only the final sweep of the net sorts them out. That is why the introductory formula uses the present tense (cf. further on v. 24; Carson, "Word-Group"). The chief concern of the parable is neither the consummated kingdom (which in Matthew would call forth a future tense-"the kingdom of heaven will become like") nor the inaugurated kingdom ("the kingdom of heaven has become like") but the situation that exists at the End. And, once again, kingdom and church must not be equated. A *sagene* (lit., "drag net," used only here in the

NT) was drawn along between two boats or tied on shore at one end and put out by a boat at the other end, which was then drawn to land by ropes. "All kinds of fish" (v. 47) might hint at the multiracial character of the subjects of the kingdom, but more probably this refers to "good" and "bad" fish (v. 48). In the parable itself, "good" and "bad" fish have no moral overtones but refer simply to fish ceremonially suitable and large enough for eating and those for some reason unacceptable, respectively. The word *sapron* ("bad") can mean "decayed," but here it simply means "worthless."

d. Interlude (13:49-51)

1) Interpretation of the parable of the net (13:49-50)

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49-50 Many separate the parable (vv. 47-48), supposedly about the disciples on mission as "fishers of men," and the interpretation (vv. 49-50), which transforms the parable into a last judgment scene. Hill (*Matthew*) insists that this is "not a suitable ending, for the furnace is hardly the place for bad fish." But that is to confuse symbol with what is symbolized; the furnace is not for the fish but for the wicked. To be consistent, Hill (and many others; e.g., Jeremias, *Parables* , p. 85; Strecker, *Weg* , pp. 160f.) would also have to object that the tares, when burned (v. 42), do not weep and gnash their teeth (Kingsbury, *Parables* , pp. 165f., n. 143). The parable itself cannot easily be made to refer to the missionary activity of the church; for it describes a separation *when the net is full* , not a continuous separation. Nor may one attach some deep significance to the distinction between catching all the fish (v. 47) and separating them (v. 48)--as if the original parable referred to both the church's witness in catching men and the final separation (so Kingsbury, *Parables* , p. 120)--any more than it is legitimate in interpreting the tares to divide the harvesting from the final separation of weeds and wheat. Both the parable and its interpretation point to the Last Judgment. On the angels and the image of the fiery furnace, see on vv. 41-42. But this does not mean that the parable and its interpretation are about the Last Judgment in the same way 25:1-13 (the ten virgins) and 25:31-46 (the sheep and the goats) are, the one warning of the need for readiness and the other establishing a basis for judgment. The focus here is on the state of the kingdom when the Judgment occurs. Though it includes both the righteous and the wicked, a thorough sorting out will certainly take place.

2) *On understanding parables* (13:51)

51 Both "Jesus says to them" and "Lord" (KJV) are late additions to the text; it is difficult to explain why they were dropped if part of the original

text. Jesus' question picks up the disciples' request for an explanation (v. 36) but goes beyond it, since the question is introduced, not after v. 43, but after three additional parables. The words "all these things" have been taken to refer to what Jesus means by his parables (Filson, Plummer, Schweizer, Schmid) or to the unexplained parables (Robinson) or to the "secrets of the kingdom" in v. 11 (Grundmann, Bonnard, Hill, Fenton). In fact, all these are so tightly linked that it is hard to imagine how one could understand one of these areas and not the other two. This is the only place in this chapter where the disciples themselves are explicitly said to understand, and they say it by themselves. It is as wrong to say that Matthew has portrayed them as understanding everything as it is to say that they understood nothing. The truth lies between the extremes. The disciples certainly understood more than the crowds; on the other hand, they are shortly to be rebuked for their dullness

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(15:16). Like another positive response in this Gospel (see on 20:22-23), this one cannot be simply dismissed as presumptuous enthusiasm (as if they think they know everything when in fact they know nothing) nor taken at face value (as if their understanding were in fact mature). In any event the disciples' *claim* is not as important as the last parable to which it leads (for the structure of this section, see on v. 3a).

e. The parable of the teacher of the law (13:52)

52 Interpretations of this difficult verse are legion. It has been variously held that it refers to scribes who become disciples of the kingdom (Jeremias, *Parables* , p. 216) or join the Christian community (Hummel, pp. 17ff.); that Matthew here refers to the way he himself functions within the community (C.F.D. Moule, "St. Matthew's Gospel," *Studia Evangelica* 2 [1964]: 98f.); that the verse demonstrates the existence of Christian "scribes" or "teachers of the law" in Matthew's church, men who exercise much the same role as scribes in Judaism (Kilpatrick, *Origins* , p. 111; Strecker, *Weg* , pp. 37-38; Grundmann), or even that disciples within Christianity are more important than scribes within Judaism (Manson, *Sayings* , pp. 198f.); that each disciple who is able to qualify may present himself as a "teacher of the law" (Lagrange); that any scribe who understands what has been taught about the kingdom is like the lord of a house "who handles everything in a carefree manner, who does not save anything and even uses what is old" (van Tilborg, p. 132; R. Walker, pp. 27-29). The verse's parabolic structure must be noted and a number of exegetical details explored before its meaning can be grasped or the significance of the introductory "therefore" rightly perceived. The "is like" formula (see on v. 24) means "it is with a teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom as it is with the owner of a house." The problem is to discern the point of the comparison. The

***oikodespotes* ("owner of a house") is a frequent figure in Jesus' parables and can stand for God (21:33), Jesus (10:25), or disciples (24:43). Very often he is a figure who dispenses wealth in some way (20:1-16; 21:33-43). So here he brings out of his "storeroom" (same word as "treasure" in 2:11; 6:19-21; 12:35 [*bis*]; 13:44, 19:21) new things and old things. Why would an owner of a house do this? Presumably it is not simply to ogle his wealth but for some useful purpose. The point is that his treasure *includes* both the new and the old, and that he can use both. The point of comparison becomes clearer when we remember that a *grammateus* ("scribe") in Jesus' day was not simply a theological interpreter of the Scriptures capable of rendering Halakic decisions (rules for conduct) but a teacher (hence NIV's "teacher of the law"; see on 2:4; 8:19). From this he derived much of his prestige and power (HJP, 2:332-34; Trotter); indeed, he was seen as having esoteric knowledge that**

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could only be passed on to committed initiates (cf. Jeremiah *Jerusalem* , pp. 237-40). But Jesus adds a qualifying factor: the scribe with whom he is concerned *matheteutheis te basileia ton ouranon* ("has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven"). Whether the verbal form is construed as deponent ("has become a disciple") or strictly passive ("has been made a disciple"), it is not at all clear that the dative expression means "about the kingdom of heaven"; and in the one NT passage with similar construction (27:57), Joseph of Arimathea had become a disciple *of* Jesus, not *about* Jesus. By analogy the scribes in this verse have become disciples *of the kingdom of heaven* . If the preceding exegetical observations are correct, the points of comparison in the parable are two. The emphasis in the first part of the verse rests, not on the supposition that the scribe has been instructed *about* the kingdom and therefore understands, but that he has become a disciple *of* the kingdom and therefore his allegiance has been transformed. It is with such a person as with "the owner of a house"--a disciplined scribe brings out of his storeroom new things and old. The *thesauros* ("storeroom") so regularly stands for a man's "heart," its wealth and cherished values (see above; esp. on 12:35), that we must understand the disciplined scribe to be bringing things out of his heart out of his understanding, personality, and very being. What he brings out are *kaina kai palaia* , not "new things as well as old" (NIV), which suggests the new things have been added to the old, but "new things and old things"--a subtle touch that reminds the alert reader that in Matthew the gospel of the kingdom, though new, takes precedence over the old revelation and is its fulfillment (cf. 5:17-20). The new is not added to the old; there is but one revelation, and its focus is the "new" that has fulfilled and thereby renewed the old, which has thereby become new (Bonnard). Thus the OT promises of Messiah and kingdom, as well as OT law and piety, have found their fulfillment in Jesus' person, teaching, and kingdom; and the scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom now brings out of himself deep understanding of these things and their transformed perspective affecting all life. But the order is of great importance. The parable shows that a disciplined scribe has this

understanding, *not* that understanding generates discipleship. This conforms perfectly to the chapter's structure: the disciples are not defined as having understanding but are described as having been given revelation and understanding

(vv. 11-12). When the disciples ask for an explanation, they are given it (vv. 36-43) and thus claim some measure of understanding (v. 51). "Therefore" (v. 52) a *discipled* scribe is like, etc. Discipleship to Jesus, recognition of the revelation he is and brings, and submission to the reign he inaugurates and promises are necessary prerequisites to understanding and bringing out from oneself the rich treasures of the kingdom (see further on 25:31-46). But there is a second point of comparison in the parable. The last one could have been made by stressing discipleship but omitting any reference to scribes. Scribes were

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"teachers of the Scriptures." If they are likened to the owner of a house who brings treasures out of his storeroom, the further implication is unavoidable--they are not bringing forth things new and old for purely private or personal reasons *but in their capacity as teachers* . Jesus' disciples claim they have understood what he has been teaching. "Therefore," he responds, disciplined teachers of the Scriptures, if they have understood, must themselves bring out of their storeroom the treasures now theirs so as to teach others (cf. Trotter). This interpretation admirably fits in with three other Matthean themes.

1. The disciples have a major responsibility in evangelizing and making disciples, both during Jesus' ministry (ch. 10) and after his departure (28:18-20). 2. In the latter instance they are told to "disciple" the nations and teach them all Jesus has commanded them: i.e., the focus of their mission is Jesus and the revelation--the new "fulfillment" revelation--he has brought. 3. This interpretation, which places some teaching responsibility on the disciples, also fits the purpose of the parables described in the comments on vv. 12-17, 34-35. Indeed, part of the reason for private instruction may again be linked to the place of Jesus' earthly ministry in redemptive history; for what he tells his disciples in secret they are to proclaim from the rooftops (10:27). Jesus explains the parables to his disciples in private; they are to bring out of their treasure rooms "new things and old." If this interpretation of v. 52 is correct, then though "disciples" in this chapter most probably refers to the Twelve, they epitomize the church to come. In that event "disciples" does not refer to a special group of "teachers of the law" within Matthew's community (see further on 23:34) but to those who by Matthew's day were called Christians. Just as they have been aligned with prophets and righteous men from past ages (e.g., 5:11-12; 10:41), so are they aligned with "teachers of the law." In fact, only Jesus' "disciples" are able to bring forth new things and old: the Jewish teachers of the law could bring forth only the old.

5. Transitional conclusion: movement toward further opposition (13:53)

53 On the Greek preliminary formula, see on 7:28-29. The common view that v. 53 properly introduces the following pericope fits neither that beginning nor the structure of Matthew. Gooding's claim (p. 229) that v. 24 is syntactically tied to v. 53 is incorrect: compare the same openings at 8:14; 9:23, where new pericopes are introduced. This verse, as Hill (*Matthew*) points out, "suggests that Jesus spoke all the preceding parables at once"--though he thinks this "is unlikely" (cf. further on 5:1-12; 13:3a). What is clear is that Jesus' movement from Capernaum to "his home town" (vv. 53-54) turns out to be a further fulfillment of vv. 14-15: these people will be ever hearing but never understanding.

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V. The Glory and the Shadow: Progressive Polarization (13:54-19:2)

A. Narrative (13:54-17:27)

The danger of outlines is oversimplification. Even genuine insight in outline form may eliminate or minimize various themes that occur in sections where the discovered "structure" does not allow for them. Matthew, as we have seen, can use structure most effectively; and several complex structures have been found in, or imposed on, these chapters (cf. J. Murphy-O'Connor, "The Structure of Matthew XIV-XVII," RB 82 [1975]: 360-84; Gooding, pp. 248ff.). No detailed and comprehensive outline of these chapters is quite convincing; so it seems best to deal with them pericope by pericope. The principal themes of these chapters are clear. There is a progressive polarization along several axes. As Jesus extends his ministry, the opposition sharpens (15:1-9; 16: 1-14). When he reveals himself to his disciples, they perceive some truth clearly and entirely reject other truth (16:13-22; 17:1-13). As Jesus is increasingly opposed by Jewish leaders, so his own disciples become increasingly important (18:1-10). Over it all is the contrast between Christ's glory, goodness, and grace, and the blind misunderstanding of the disciples (15:15-16, 33; 16:22; 17:4, 19; 18:21) and Jewish leaders (15:2, 8; 16:6, 12; 17:24) alike. And rising less ambiguously now is the shadow of the Cross (16:21-22; 17:22-23). In the narrative section (13:54-17:27), Matthew follows Mark 6-9 fairly closely until Mark 9:33. Of course Matthew leaves out all the material between Mark's parables and the rejection at Nazareth (viz., Mark 4:35-5:43) because he has presented it earlier (chs. 8-9).

1. Rejected at Nazareth (13:54-58)

Placing this pericope immediately after the discourse on parables extends the hostility and rejection of the scribes and Pharisees even to Jesus' hometown (cf. Mark 6:1-6). It is almost universally assumed that this is the same rejection recorded in Luke 4:16-31, which ties the event to OT prophecy. Though not unlikely this is not certain. Unlike Luke, Mark and Matthew mention no hostility so great as to lead people to kill Jesus. If there were two incidents, the one recorded by the first two evangelists may reflect an abating of instinctive rage as the villagers most famous son has grown in reputation in the area.

54 On the formal connection between this verse and the preceding one, see on v. 53. Jesus' *patris* ('home town') is here understood to be Nazareth, explicitly named only

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by Luke (4:16; cf. Matt 2:23; 4:13). That Jesus taught extensively in the synagogues is certain (cf. 4:23; 12:9); but he did not limit himself to this environment. (On "their" synagogue, see on 4:23; 7:29; 9:35; 10:17; 11:1; 12:9-10.) The imperfect *edidasken* (lit., "he was teaching") could suggest that Jesus taught here on more than one occasion (Filson, Schweizer) but is more probably inceptive (cf. NIV's "began teaching"). The interrogative *pothen* ("Where"; repeated in v. 56) is not so much concerned with location as with source of authority (cf. also v. 27; Bonnard). Do Jesus' wisdom and powers--his teaching and miracles, both evidences of his authority--reflect God's authority or something else (cf. 12:24)?

55-57a Obviously some of the questioners' motivation springs less from a serious desire to know whence Jesus derives his authority than from personal pique that a hometown boy has outstripped them. The questions (vv. 55-56) do not call for answers but merely reveal that there has already been a denial of who Jesus is. Mark 6:3 has "the carpenter," not Matthew's "the carpenter's son" (v. 55); but in a day when most lads followed their father's trade, both are correct. *Tekton* can mean "carpenter"--one who works with wood--or perhaps even "builder," in a time and place when most homes were made of mud brick. Justin Martyr (*Dialogue* 88.8, c. A.D. 150) says Jesus was a maker of plows and yokes. The definite article (" *the* carpenter's son") suggests there was only one in town. On the question of Jesus' brothers and sisters, see on 12:46-50. The four names listed (cf. Notes) are typically Jewish. In one sense, of course, the questions of the people are understandable, if not justifiable. Here was a young artisan from a rough town, with no special breeding or education. Whence, then, his wisdom and miracles? (Incidentally, their questions render impossible the fanciful miracles ascribed to Jesus' childhood by the apocryphal gospels.) But by their questions the people merely condemn themselves: they cannot doubt

the fact of his wisdom and miracles (v. 56) yet reject his claims (v. 57). "They took offense at him" (*eskandalizonto en auto*), i.e., found in him obstacles to faith (see on 5:29; 11:6), even though the biggest obstacles were in their own hearts. It is sad that every time in the NT somebody is "scandalized" by someone, that someone is Jesus (cf. Bonnard, citing G. Stahlen, TDNT, 7:349; cf. Matt 11:6; 26:31, 33; Mark 6:3; Luke 7:23).

57b-58 The proverb in v. 57b recurs at Mark 6:4; Luke 4:24; John 4:44 (cf. Hennecke, 1:109). Most often a person is better received at home than anywhere else; but if he enjoys an elevated position, the reverse is true. Many say that v. 58 softens Mark's "He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. And he was amazed at their lack of

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faith" (Mark 6:5-6). But two factors must be borne in mind: (1) Mark mentions some miracles, and Matthew, typically condensing, may be referring to these rather than commenting on Jesus' ability to do miracles; and (2) it is doubtful whether Mark's "could not" is ontological or absolute, for Mark records other miracles in which the beneficiaries exhibit no faith (feeding the five thousand, stilling the storm, healing the Gadarene demoniac). The "could not" is related to Jesus' mission: just as Jesus could not turn stones to bread without violating his mission (4:14), so he could not do miracles indiscriminately without turning his mission into a sideshow. The "lack of faith"

(*apistia* , used only here in Matthew) of the people was doubtless a source of profound grief and frustration for Jesus (cf. *apistos* , "unbelieving," in 17:17), rather than something that stripped him of power.

2. Herod and Jesus (14:1-12)

a. Herod's understanding of Jesus (14:1-2)

1-2 Of the two parallels (Mark 6:14-16; Luke 9:7-9), only Mark (6:17-29) goes on to give the story of John's death; and Matthew follows this account (vv. 3-12). On the chronological problem raised by a comparison of vv. 1-2 and v. 13, see on v. 13. The phrase "At that time" is very loose (see on 11:25; 12:1) and should not be tied to the previous pericope. Mark sets the scene after the mission of the Twelve; and certainly the multiplication of Jesus' influence through his disciples would upset Herod, one of whose motives in imprisoning the Baptist had been to thwart any threat to political stability (cf. Jos. Antiq. XVIII, 116-19 [v.2]). Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great (see on 2:1), was tetrarch (v. 1; see on 2:22), not king--though doubtless "king" was used popularly (Mark 6:14). His tetrarchy included Galilee

(4:12) and Perea (19:1). Because John the Baptist's ministry had been exercised in Perea (John 1:28), he had come under Herod's power. Herod had been ruling more than thirty years, and at this time he lived primarily at Tiberias on the southwest shore of Galilee. Thus Jesus' ministry was taking place largely within Herod's jurisdiction. How the reports of Jesus' ministry reached Herod is unknown; it may have been through Cuza (Luke 8:3). So extensive a ministry could not have been kept from Herod for long. His conclusion, that this was John the Baptist risen from the dead (v. 2), is of great interest. It reflects an eclectic set of beliefs, one of them the Pharisaic understanding of resurrection. During his ministry John had performed no miracles (John 10:41); therefore Herod ascribes the miracles in Jesus' ministry, not to John, but to John "risen from the dead." Herod's guilty conscience apparently combined with a superstitious view of miracles to generate this theory.

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b. Background: Herod's execution of John the Baptist (14:3-12)

3-5 Both Mark (6:16-29; cf. Luke 3:19-20) and Matthew insert this story as an excursus, a bit of explanatory background (see further on v. 13). Typically Matthew is more condensed than Mark, yet does add one detail (see on v. 12); but in this case it is doubtful whether Matthew is a condensation of Mark. More likely Matthew follows independent information (cf. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* , pp. 114-17). Many scholars have insisted the Gospel reports of John's death and the report of Josephus (Ant. XVIII, 116-19 [v.2]) cannot be reconciled, especially because Josephus assigns a political motive to the execution of the Baptist and the synoptists a moral and religious one. Hoehner (*Herod Antipas* , pp. 124-49) has exhaustively treated these problems and points out that the two motives are not as far apart as some have thought. Herod's first wife was the daughter of Aretas (cf. 2Cor 11:32), Arabian king of the Nabateans, whose land adjoined Perea on the south. To divorce her in favor of Herodias was politically explosive. Indeed, some years later border fighting broke out, and Antipas was defeated, but saved by Roman intervention. John's rebuke would be like a spark on tinder; and his powerful preaching about the nearness of the messianic kingdom fueled the expectations of the populace, not least for the reestablishment of the law lay which John was rebuking Herod. Religious fanaticism with messianic overtones is more politically dangerous than mere political extremism. This Herod well knew. Josephus and the Gospel writers blend together. Herodias was married to Herod Philip (not Philip the tetrarch, Luke 3:1), son of Herod the Great and Mariamne II (for this identification of Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* , pp. 131-36), and therefore half-brother to Herod Antipas. John probably did not denounce Antipas for divorcing his former wife, an action probably judged allowable (cf. b *Ketuboth* 57b; Jeremiah Jerusalem, p. 371, n. 60), but for incestuously marrying his half-brother's wife (Lev 18:16; 20:21); and John probably kept on repeating his rebuke (imperfect *elegen* means "he used to say

[repeatedly]"; so McNeile). John's courage in denouncing Herod distinguishes him from the Essenes (with whom many scholars associate him), for they tended to refuse to meddle in political life, no matter how evil it became (Bonnard). Herodias was not only Antipas's sister-in-law but also his niece, the daughter of his half-brother Aristobulus; but for most Jews there was no bar to marrying a niece (cf. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* , pp. 137-39, n. 4, for the literature). Some think Matthew's statement that "Herod wanted to kill John, but he was afraid of the people" (v. 5) conflicts with Mark's picture of a Herod who wants to spare John but is pushed into killing him by Herodias (cf. esp. Mark 6:19-21). The total situation is psychologically convincing. Like Ahab, Antipas was wicked but weak; and Herodias, like Jezebel, wicked and ruthless. Herod's grief (not mere distress) in v. 9 shows his

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ambivalence. Moreover if he was "afraid of the people" because they held John to be a prophet (cf. 21:26, 46), then Matthew confirms Josephus's view that Herod's actions were largely motivated by politics.

6-8 "On Herod's birthday" or, better, "At Herod's birthday feast" (cf. Notes)-- Herodias's daughter by her former marriage, Salome, a girl between twelve and fourteen years of age (Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* , pp. 151-56), danced before the king and his lords (v. 6). The dance may have been very sensual, but the text does not say so. The outrageous morals of the Herodians suggest it, as does the low status of dancing girls. At any rate, Salome pleased Herod Antipas enough for him to put on the airs of a lavish and powerful emperor; petty ruler though he was, he imitated the grandiloquence of ancient Persian monarchs (Esth 5:3, 6; 7:2)--the story also has certain parallels with a later oath made by the Roman emperor Gaius to Elerod Agrippa (cf. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* , pp. 165-67)--and with drunken dignity made a fool of himself. Salome, still young enough to ask her mother's advice, became the means for accomplishing Herodias's darkest desire--the death of the man whose offense had been telling the truth.

9-11 Though grieving because of his oath (the Greek is plural but refers to the single oath Herod had made: see on 2:20; Turner, *Insights* , p. 27, n.; BDF, par. 142) and his loss of face before his guests if he were to renege on his vow (cf. Notes), Herod gave the order (v. 9). "Like most weak men, Herod feared to be thought weak" (Plumptre). His oath should neither have been made nor kept. Decapitation (v. 10) though sanctioned by Greeks and Romans was contrary to Jewish law, which also forbade execution without trial. The Gospel writers have been charged with fabrication on the ground that the prompt execution of John would have quenched the merriment. But hardened men are unlikely to let a little gore spoil their merriment. While Alexander Jannaeus feasted with his concubines in a public place, he

ordered eight hundred rebels to die by crucifixion, their wives and children being slaughtered before the eyes of the victims (Jos. Antiq. XIII, 380 [xiv. 2]). When Cicero's head was brought to Fulvia, the wife of Antony, she spat on it and pierced its tongue with a pin in spite against the man who had opposed Antony. Jerome says Herodias did the same thing to the head of John. We do not know where Jerome got his information, and it may not be historical; but it would not have been out of character for a cruel and ruthless woman intent on aping the imperial court. So John died, the last of the OT prophets (11:9, 13) who through persecution became models for Jesus' disciples (5:11-12). For the significance of *korasion* ('girl', v. 11), see Hoehner (*Herod Antipas* , pp. 154-56).

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12 Though both Mark and Matthew tell of the burial of John the Baptist's body by his disciples, only Matthew mentions the report to Jesus. This report does not become the reason why Jesus withdraws (see on v. 13) but serves other purposes: (1) it draws John and Jesus together against the opposition; (2) it suggests, though it does not prove, a positive response to Jesus by John and his disciples following 11:2-6; and (3) it supports the view that Matthew often finishes his longer narrative pericopes by returning to the opening theme (see on 12:45; 15:20)--Herod hears reports of Jesus (14:1); Jesus hears reports of Herod (v. 12). The frequency of this device gains importance in interpreting Matthew's later chapters.

3. The feeding of the five thousand (14:13-21)

The feeding of the five thousand is found in all four Gospels (cf. Mark 6:30-44; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-14; cf. further on Matt 15:32-39 = Mark 8:1-10). Comprehensive interpretations are too numerous to list. There is probably an implicit anticipation of the messianic banquet (see on 8:11); but the text focuses more on Jesus' compassion (v. 14), on the responsibility of the disciples to minister to the crowds (v. 16), and on this miracle of creation. Suggestions that what "really happened" was that the people started sharing their lunches have much more in common with late nineteenth-century liberalism than with the text. Those who see Eucharistic significance in the event (Benoit, Gundry) make it meaningless at the time it occurred; the most that can be said is that after the institution of the Lord's Supper and after the Passion and Resurrection, some Christians may have seen parallels to the Eucharist. John 6, often taken to support this, is not as convincing as is commonly thought (cf. Carson, "Historical Tradition," pp. 125-26). Possible OT allusions to Exodus 16 or 2 Kings 4:42-44 cannot be more than allusions, for the differences between this story and those are more significant than the similarities.

Hence, as Davies notes (*Setting* , pp. 48f.), that Matthew here develops a "new Moses" theme based on a manna typology (Exod 16) is unlikely since (1) none of the synoptists stresses the desert setting; (2) in the OT the manna was not to be kept, but here the fragments are to be kept; (3) Jesus ministers to a crowd from which he has tried to escape, and Exodus has no parallel to this. It is far more likely that this pericope shows that Jesus himself cannot be reduced to one of the ready-made categories of the day--prophet, rabbi, teacher of the law (cf. van der Loos, esp. pp. 634-37).

13-14 If "what had happened" (v. 13) refers to John's death, then the chronology is either contradictory (so Bultmann, *Synoptic Tradition* , pp. 351f.) or a return to a much

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earlier time, since the beginning of the chapter presupposes the Baptist's death (v. 2). But vv. 3-12 must be seen as an excursus: the section opens with *gar* ("for"), commonly used to introduce excursuses, and the *de* ("and") in v. 13 is resumptive (cf.

L. Cope, "The Death of John the Baptist in the Gospel of Matthew, or, The Case of

the Confusing Conjunction," CBQ 38 [1976]: 515-19). Therefore v. 13 picks up from

vv. 1-2: when Jesus heard, viz. Herod's response to his preaching and miracles, he decided to withdraw. He had done so previously to escape the animus of the Pharisees (12:15); he now does so to avoid Antipas. But as elsewhere (e.g., Mark 7:24-25), it was often not possible for Jesus to escape the crowds even when it was possible for him to leave a place. Luke (9:10) specifies that the "solitary place" was in the region belonging to Bethsaida--i.e., Bethsaida Julius (see on 11:21) on the northeast shore of Galilee. The crowds ran "on foot" around the top of the lake, presumably crossing the upper Jordan at a ford two miles north of where the river enters Galilee. They "followed" Jesus, seeing where he was going and setting out after him; but arriving first, they were already there when he landed with his tired disciples (v. 14). Lohmeyer (*Matthaus*) finds profound symbolism--Jesus "withdraws" from the presence of God in prayer, like a high priest leaving the Holy of Holies, and presents himself to the people. But this is as uncontrolled a piece of allegorizing as any church father ever thought of. (On Jesus' neverfailing compassion, see 9:36.)

15-17 "Evening" (*opsios*) is a flexible word, referring to any period from mid-afternoon to just after sunset. The later period is in view in v. 23; here (v. 15) the earlier one. On the face of it, the conversation between Jesus and

his disciples is straightforward, though very condensed compared with the other Gospels. The "villages" to which the disciples wished to send the crowds were small, unwalled hamlets. Bread and fish were staples in Galilee, especially for the poor. John 6:9, 13 specifies *barley* loaves--the cheaper, coarser bread. The numbers "five" and "two" (v. 17) are simply accurate details: efforts to explain them (e.g., as referring to the Pentateuch and two tables of the law) are as fanciful as Christian frescoes making them Eucharistic symbols, which would turn fish into wine! But in recent years the influence of Held (Bornkamm, *Tradition* , pp. 181-83) has convinced many that Matthew's changes of Mark (assuming absolute dependence in this pericope) demonstrate two other themes operating: (1) the disciples take part in the miracle, and so discipleship is prominent; (2) the omission of Mark 6:37b shows that though in Mark the disciples do not understand Jesus' words-"You [emphatic] give them something to eat" (v. 16; i.e., they do not understand that they themselves should perform a miracle)--in Matthew they do understand but lack the requisite faith. This will not do.

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1. Held is establishing a great deal on the basis of an omission in a book characterized by condensations and omissions, and he does not even raise the question whether Mark 6:37b was omitted for nontheological reasons. 2. Similarly, would a first-century reader of Matthew perusing this Gospel without critically comparing it with Mark at every turn suspect that Matthew was any easier on the disciples than Mark was at this point? 3. Neither "understanding" nor "faith" is explicitly raised in this pericope.

4. Jesus' words "you give them something to eat" are not easy to understand; but whatever they mean, it is possible that the disciples do not understand them, even in Matthew. If (and this is doubtful, though Held seems to assume it) Jesus means that they should perform such a miracle, then their response (v. 17) betrays their complete misunderstanding; for miracles of creation cannot be thought to require something first. If on the other hand Jesus is simply making them responsible to find out what is needed, buy food, or pray--if they remembered the miracle of the wine in Cana (John 2: 1-11), they should have asked Jesus to meet the need, not send the people away--then their answer not only reveals limited vision but an approach to the problem betraying a lack of both understanding and faith. 5. The disciples' role in the miracle is limited to the organization and distribution needed for a crowd of thousands. This can scarcely mean that the disciples contribute to the miracle. Indeed, the story could more easily be taken as contrasting Jesus with his disciples in this miracle rather than elevating them to major roles.

18-21 Jesus alone multiplies the loaves and fishes. He gives the orders, gives thanks, and breaks the loaves (vv. 18-19). The actions--looking up to heaven, thanking God, and breaking the loaves--are normal for any head of a Jewish household (cf. Moore, *Judaism* , 2:216f.; SBK, 1:685f.; M *Berakoth* 6-8) and have no special Eucharistic significance. A common form of prayer before

eating was "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the Universe, who bringest forth bread from the earth." Matthew omits many details--the green grass, the groups of fifty and one hundred-- but points out that all ate and were satisfied (v. 20), perhaps an anticipation of the messianic banquet, and at least evidence that there was lots to eat! The twelve baskets (*kophinos* , a stiff wicker basket) of leftovers and the size of the crowd (which might have been fifteen or twenty thousand total, if there were five thousand "men," v. 21) also support the latter point. But the "twelve basketfuls" may be significant: that there were twelve tribes and twelve apostles--emphasized in 19:28--cannot be coincidence. Yet the precise significance is uncertain. The best suggestion may be that Messiah's supply is so lavish that even the scraps of his provision are enough to supply the needs of Israel, represented by the Twelve.

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4. The walk on the water (14:22-33)

Many scholars since Bultmann (*Synoptic Tradition* , p. 216) have surmised that two stories are woven together in Mark's account (6:45-52; cf. John 6:16-21)--an account of walking on the water and a later storm-calming miracle. But Scot McKnight ("The Role of the Disciples in Matthew and Mark: A Redactional Study" [Master's thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1980], pp. 153-56) has shown the two to be integrally related. Some of the points arising from the differences between Mark and Matthew are briefly treated below. On the theological thrust of the passage, see John P. Heil, *Jesus Walking on the Sea* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1981), who notes the association in the OT between chaos and sea. The stilling of the sea is therefore not only christological in orientation but also eschatological: Jesus is even now stilling the deep.

22 Why Jesus "made" (the verb is very strong and might be translated "compelled") the disciples go on ahead of him may be deduced from these bits of information: (1) he wanted to be alone to pray (v. 23); (2) he wanted to escape the crowd with his disciples to get some rest (Mark 6:31-32); and (3) he may have dismissed the disciples forcefully to help tame a messianic uproar (John 6:15). The omission of "Bethsaida" (Mark 6:45) in Matthew raises a difficult geographical problem. From the perspective of the site where the feeding took place, "to the other side" means the west shore; and that is where the boat ultimately landed, at Gennesaret (Mark 6:53 = Matt 14:34), a small triangular plain on the northwest shore of the lake (Kinnereth in the OT, 1 Kings 15:20). John 6:17 specifies the town of Capernaum. But Mark (6:45) says Jesus sent his disciples "on ahead of him to the other side [in the best MSS] to Bethsaida, while he dismissed the crowd." This was most likely Bethsaida Julius, just up the coast to the north, on the same side of the lake. The apparent discrepancy has prompted some MSS of Mark to omit "to the other side." The explanation that the boat was blown off course and

landed on the west side does not explain the reference to Bethsaida, if this be Bethsaida Julius. The problem is knotty. The simplest solution is that defended by Westcott and also by Morris on John--viz., Jesus sent the disciples off to cross the lake, with the command to wait for him on the eastern shore near Bethsaida Julius, but not beyond a certain time. The delay in waiting for Jesus would then account for the actual walking on the water not occurring till the fourth watch (v. 25), i.e., after 3:00 A.M. A bit of syntax may support this view. Matthew's *heos hou* plus the aorist subjunctive verb should normally be rendered "until" (as in 13:33; 17:9; 18:34; though cf. 26:36)--i.e., the disciples were "to go on ahead" (*proagein*) of him *until*, not *while* he was free of the crowds, after which he hoped to join them, after some time alone in prayer; and

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they would then cross "to the other side." Mark (6:45) specifies Bethsaida but has *heos* plus the indicative [in the best MSS]: the disciples were to go "to Bethsaida while," not "until," he sent the crowds away.

23-24 If this interpretation is correct, then it is the length of Jesus' prayer time that delays his coming and sends the disciples across the lake on their own. On the phrase "into the hills" (v. 23), see on 5:1-2. The burden of Jesus' prayer is not revealed; but it is possible that the crowd's attempts to make him king (John 6:15) prompted him to seek his Father's face. If so, it is not a Matthean concern here (as is a similar crisis at 26:39).

NIV's "a considerable distance" (v. 24) masks a considerable textual difficulty.. The most likely reading is "many *stadia* [one *stadion* was about two hundred yards] from land" (Metzger, *Textual Commentary* , p. 37). In any event the boat was out towards the middle of the lake. If *enantios* is taken literally to mean "against" and not metaphorically to mean "hostile to," then the clause "the wind was against it," on the basis of the movements suggested above, refers to a strong wind from the west--a regular feature during the rainy season (Mark's "green grass" [6:39] confirms the season). Many eager to find signs of the Matthean church take the boat as a symbol of that church--a community of disciples in stormy times (e.g., Bonnard, Schweizer). But if so, why did Peter want to step "out of the boat"?

25-27 The ancient Hebrew world divided the night from sunset to sunrise into three watches (Judg 7:19; Lam 2:19), but the Romans used four (v. 25); and their influence prevailed in the evangelists' chronologies. Jesus' approach to the boat therefore occurred between 3:00 A.M. and 6:00 A.M. Matthew omits the difficult words "He was about to pass by them" (Mark 6:48), on which see Lane (*Mark* , pp. 235-36). The disciples were terrified (v.

26), thinking they were seeing a *phantasma* ("apparition"; NIV, "ghost"; used in the NT only here and in Mark 6:49). There is no merit in the supposition that this is a transposed resurrection appearance. Jesus' "Take courage!"

(v. 27, as in 9:2, 22) and his "Don't be afraid" bracket the central reason for these calming exhortations: "It is I." Although the Greek *ego eimi* can have no more force than that, any Christian after the Resurrection and Ascension would also detect echoes of "I am," the decisive self-disclosure of God (Exod 3:14; Isa 43:10; 51:12). Once again we find Jesus revealing himself in a veiled way that will prove especially rich to Christians after his resurrection (see on 8:20; cf. Carson, "Christological Ambiguities").

28 Verses 28-32 have no parallel in the other Gospels; and two of the verbs ("to sink"

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and "to doubt") are used elsewhere in this Gospel only in exclusively Matthean sections (18:6 and 28:17 respectively). Perhaps Matthew was the first to commit this part of the story to writing, though the evidence from two verbs each used but once elsewhere is not commanding. This is the first of three scenes in which Peter receives special treatment, all in chapters 14-17 (cf. 16:13-23; 17:24-27). Benoit thinks that already in this story Peter gains primacy over the rest of the Twelve; but "if say it is a primacy which reveals weakness in faith" (Hill, *Matthew* similarly Bonnard). See further on v. 31. Peter's protasis ("if it's you") is a real condition, almost "since it's you." The request is bold, but the disciples had been trained for some time and given power to do exactly the sort of miracles Jesus was doing (10:1). What is more natural than for a fisherman who knew and respected the dangers of Galilee to want to follow Jesus in this new demonstration of supernatural power?

29-31 How far Peter got is unclear (cf. Notes), but at Jesus' command (v. 29) he walked on the water (the plural "waters" in Greek may be in imitation of Hebrew, which uses "water" only in the plural; cf. Mark 9:22; John 3:23). But his outlook changed: when he saw the wind (synecdoche for the storm), he began to sink (v. 30). It was not that he lost faith in himself (so Schniewind), but that his faith in Jesus, strong enough to get him out of the boat and walking on the water, was not strong enough to stand up to the storm. Therefore Jesus calls him a man "of little faith" (v. 31; see on 6:30; 8:26; and esp. on 17:20); and his rhetorical question-"Why [cf. Notes] did you doubt?"--helps both Peter and the reader recognize that doubts and fears quickly disappear before a strict inquire into their cause. Thus Peter in this pericope is both a good example and a bad example (cf. R.E. Brown, K.P. Donfried, and J. Reumann, edd., *Peter in the New Testament* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1973]. p. 83). His cry for help is natural, not a

liturgical creation--Did not liturgy have to choose some formulas on which to build'?- and Jesus' rescuing him is akin to God's salvation in the OT (Pss 18:16; 69:1-3; 144:7).

32-33 The climax of the story is not the stilling of the storm (v. 32) but the confession and worship of the disciples: "Truly you are the Son of God" (v. 33). This is the first time Jesus has been addressed by the disciples with this full title (cf. 16:16; 26:63; 27: 40, 43, 54). But it already harks behind 3:17 ("my Son"), and the devil has used it of Jesus (4:3, 6). It is most likely abbreviated to "the Son" in Jesus' self references in 11: 25-27. In the earlier passage (cf. also 3:17) we have seen how the title would most likely have been understood by the disciples at the time and how it would have been fleshed out in light of the Resurrection. On the absence of the Greek articles, see on 13:39.

The objection that v. 33 so anticipates 16:16 as to make the latter anticlimactic is

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psychologically unconvincing. Similar reasoning would make the rebuke of Peter (16: 21-23) following his grand confession (16:13-20) impossible or preclude defection from Jesus at his passion. The synoptic Gospels shows us that the disciples understand only by degrees. Therefore their confessions of Christ must not be interpreted as if they had postresurrection understanding of him. One of the marks of the evangelists' fidelity to the historical development of the disciples' understanding of Christ lies precisely in this-- that they show the disciples coming around to the same points again and again, each time at a deeper level of comprehension, but always with a mixture of misapprehension. Exactly what the disciples meant by "Son of God" is uncertain. It is very doubtful that at this point they understood the title in a genuine ontological sense (though they would later). It is even less likely that they thought of Jesus as a *theios aner* ("divine man"), allegedly an understood category in Hellenistic Judaism for various miracle workers. Carl Holladay (*Theios Aner* in Hellenistic Judaism: A Critique of the Use of This Category in New Testament Christology [Missoula, Mont.: SP, 1977]) has shown the category was not well defined, that it had no fixed content in our period, and that it was not that common (contra Cullmann, *Christology* , p. 277; E. Lovestam, "Wunder und Symbolhandlung: Eine Studie über Matthäus 14, 29-31," *Kerygma and Dogma* 9 [1962], esp. p. 135; and many others). Probably they used the title in a messianic way (see on 3:17; 11:25-30), but still with superficial comprehension. Many feel that vv. 32-33 decisively alter Mark 6:51-52 (cf. esp. Bornkamm, *Tradition* , pp. 204ff.). Mark, it is alleged, leaves a final impression of confusion: no mention is made of the disciples' worship; instead they are amazed, they do not understand the previous miracle of the loaves, and their hearts are hardened. But Matthew portrays them worshipping, uttering an important christological confession, with no mention of amazement, hard hearts, or failure to understand. These are indeed undeniable differences; but the two evangelists are not so far apart as one might think. 1. Mark says they are "amazed"; but the verb used is often associated, not with fear, but with joyful worship (Lev 9:24 LXX; similarly

the cognate noun, Luke 5:26). When used in Mark, the word usually, but not always, denotes amazement in response to some divine self-disclosure, but without fear. Why should they be afraid? The storm had ceased! 2. The comment in Mark 6:52 that the disciples' hearts were hardened does not refer to their amazement but to an underlying attitude that could allow for amazement after having seen so much of Jesus' work. The same point could be deduced from Matthew, even though it is not spelled out there. 3. Matthew may have omitted the censure in Mark 6:52 because he thought it would be repetitive: he had already shown the fear and lack of faith of the disciples (vv. 26-27). (On these points, cf. Meyer, Gaechter, and esp. Trotter.)

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This is not to deny differences in emphasis between Matthew and Mark but to deny that the historical reality behind the two accounts is too small to sustain both emphases. Mark focuses on the disciples' "hardness" that continued despite another miracle like a previous one (cf. 8:23-27; Mark 4:35-41) by someone who could multiply loaves. Matthew hints at such unbelief through his narrative--he is capable of much more subtle characterization than Mark--and by the example of Peter (if he is a man of little faith, what about the rest of them?) but focuses explicitly on the disciples' confession of Jesus as God's Son. But even there, in view of later developments in Matthew, a reader might think that the disciples' confessions are much greater than their actual comprehension (see on 16:21-28).

5. Transitional summary of constant and unavoidable ministry (14:34-36)

34-36 Gennesaret (v. 34) was the fertile plain on the northwest side of the lake (see on v. 22), vividly described by Josephus (War III, 516-21 [x.8]). The crowds' instant recognition of Jesus (v. 35) showed the extent of his ministry; again, word-of-mouth reports led to crowds (cf. 3:5; 4:24). Like the woman with the hemorrhage (9:20-22), the people were satisfied if only they could touch the edge of his cloak (v. 36); and even that degree of faith brought thorough healing (the preposition compounded with the verb in *diesothesan* ["were healed"] is perfective). This little pericope does three things: (1) it again stresses the sweeping extent of Jesus' public ministry (cf. 4:23-25; 8:16; 9:35-36); (2) it also shows that Jesus' ministry extended to all the people, though his close disciples had special access to him and his more intimate instruction; and (3) because the stricter groups, such as the Pharisees and the Essenes, counted it an abomination to rub shoulders in a crowd--one never knew what ceremonial uncleanness one might contract--Jesus' unconcern about such things neatly sets the stage for the confrontation over clean and unclean (15:1-20). As in 8:1-4; 9:20-22, he himself cannot become unclean: instead, he

makes clean.

6. Jesus and the tradition of the elders (15:1-20)

Controversies become sharper and more theological as Matthew's narrative moves on. This controversy is of great importance in grasping Jesus' understanding of the law. Some have tended to draw radical conclusions as to Matthew's distinctive emphases by comparing this pericope with Mark 7:1-23 (e.g., Bornkamm, *Tradition* , pp. 86-89). The most prominent differences between Matthew and Mark are these: Matthew omits Mark 7:3-4, adds Matthew 15:12-14, omits Mark's interpretation (7:19) that Jesus made all foods clean, and adds Matthew 15:20b to keep the focus on food eaten with washed or unwashed hands. Thus many argue that whereas in Mark Jesus annuls the

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law, in Matthew he does not do more than annul one small bit of Halakah (rabbinic interpretation affecting conduct). These issues must be kept in mind in interpreting the text more closely. (See esp. Bank's balanced study, *Jesus* , pp. 132-46.)

1 "Then" (see on 2:7) certain Pharisees (see on 3:7, and Introduction, section 11.f) and teachers of the law (see on 2:3) came to Jesus "from Jerusalem." These did not belong to the many such leaders scattered throughout the land but came from Jerusalem. They would probably therefore be held in special esteem (cf. SBK, 1:691). But from Matthew's perspective, they were probably a quasi-official deputation (cf. John 1:19) and a source of Jesus' most virulent opposition.

2 As in 9:14, the attack on Jesus comes through the behavior of his disciples, though elsewhere we learn that the disciples reflected his own practices (Luke 11:37-41). Matthew is much more condensed than Mark, for two reasons: (1) unlike Mark Matthew does not need to explain Jewish customs to his readers; and (2) Mark deals with an array of Pharisaic Halakic regulations (Mark 7:1-3), whereas Matthew stresses the one issue of eating food with unwashed hands. It must be emphasized that this distinction says nothing about the sharpness of the Pharisees' attack on Jesus' response but only about the concentration of issues (see on v. 20). (For other differences between Matthew and Mark, cf. Banks, *Jesus* , pp. 132-34.) The "tradition of the elders," the "tradition of men" (Mark 7:8; Col 2:8), "your tradition" (Matt 15:3, 6; Mark 7:9, 13), and the "traditions of the fathers" (Gal i:14) refer to the great corpus of oral teaching that commented on the law and interpreted it in detailed rules of conduct, often recording the diverse opinions of competing rabbis. This tradition in Jesus' time was largely oral and orally transmitted; but the Pharisees, though not the Sadducees, viewed it as having authority very nearly equal to the canon. It was later codified

under Rabbi Judah the Prince (c. A.D. 135-200) to form the Mishnah (cf. SBK, 1:691-95); TDNT, 6:661f.; Moore, *Judaism* , 1:251-62). One entire tractate, *Yadaim* , deals with "hands" (i.e., *yadayim*), specifying such details as how much water must be used for effective ceremonial purification: e.g., "If a man poured water over the one hand with a single rinsing, his hand is clean; but if over both hands with a single rinsing, R. Meir declares them unclean unless he pours over them a quarter-log or more" (M *Yadaim* 2:1).

3-6 Jesus' words, in slightly different order in Mark, are less a response than a counterattack. He made a fundamental distinction between the authority of "the command of God" (as found in Scripture) and the Halakic tradition; and he insisted that the Pharisees and teachers of the law were guilty of breaking the former for the sake of (lit., "on account of") the latter (v. 3). The two texts cited are Exodus 20:12

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and 21:17 (cf. also Deut 27:16; Prov 1:8; 20:20; 30:17; 1Tim 5:3), and their point is clear enough. The English verb "curses" (v. 4) is too narrow: *kakologeo* means "to insult," "to speak evil of," "to revile" (used in the NT only here and at Mark 7:10; 9: 39; Acts 19:9). The one who speaks evil of his parents must surely be put to death (on the construction of the latter clause, cf. Zerwick, par. 60). "But you" (v. 5)--the "you" is emphatic--have evaded through your traditions God's command (v. 6), broadly interpreted by Jesus to lay responsibility on children to take responsibility for their parents. Greed could keep a son from discharging this duty by simply declaring the goods or money that might have gone to support his parents *korban* , a gift devoted to God (cf. Lev 27:9, 16), set aside for the temple treasury (cf. *M Nedarim* , esp. 1, 9, 11; cf. SBK, 1:711-17). Such a vow could be annulled in various ways. It would not mean that one could use the goods or money in question but that he could withhold it from his parents (for legal questions, cf. Derrett, *NT Studies* , 1:112-17). Thus Halakic tradition was nullifying the word of God (the textual variants "law of God" or "command of God" are not critical). A further observation may be important, though it should not be overstressed. For Jesus and the kingdom, a man must be willing to put aside family loyalties and love Jesus supremely (10:37-39). Yet here Jesus accuses the Pharisees and teachers of the law of breaking God's command when they use similar arguments to support vows devoting certain gifts to God. Apparently neither Jesus nor Matthew sees any inconsistency here, because in their view Jewish Halakah cannot take precedence over the law, whereas Jesus and the kingdom may do so because they "fulfill" it. Other factors are also relevant. The Halakic regulations Jesus opposed permitted a son sometimes to act against his parents, whereas 10:37-39 presupposes family opposition against disciples. Not only is the rule different, but the victim is also different.

7-9 This is the first recorded instance of Jesus' calling the Pharisees and teachers of the law hypocrites (v. 7; see on 6:2): Luke 11-12 probably refers to a later time. The charge was that, while they made a show of devotion to God, their religious traditions took precedence over God's will. In referring to Isaiah 29:13, Jesus did not say, Isaiah was right when he said ... and now I make a secondary application, but, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you." Yet Isaiah 29:13 is addressed to men of Isaiah's day. What then did Jesus mean? There are three points of contact: (1) in each case those warned were Jews, (2) from Jerusalem, (3) with a religion characterized by externals that sometimes vitiated principle. Moreover the Jews of Jesus' day thought of themselves as preserving ancient traditions; but Jesus said that what they were actually preserving was the spirit of those whom Isaiah criticized long before. The thought is close to, though different in categories from, 23:29-32. The quotation essentially follows the shorter form of the Septuagint (for details, cf.

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Gundry, *Use of OT* , pp. 14-16). The burden of the Scripture Jesus quotes is that the Pharisees and teachers of the law have displaced the true religion of the heart (v. 8), of the entire personality and will, with a religion of form. Therefore their worship is vain (v. 9) and their teachings their own with nothing of God's authority behind them.

The judgment is so sweeping that it calls in question not only the Jews' Halakah but their entire worship and teaching.

10-11 Jesus' sharpest barb against the Pharisees and teachers of the law had been private. Now he teaches the crowd the same things (v. 10). These two verses also answer the Pharisees' question (v. 2) directly, not just by countercharge (vv. 3-9). What Jesus now says, the disciples call a "parable" (v. 15; so also Clark 7:17; see on 13:3a). In presenting it to the crowd (v. 10), Jesus exhorts them to understand; for the parable was not meant to be cryptic, though only few seemed to have grasped it at the time, and the disciples had trouble with it (vv. 15-16). This confirms our earlier comments on Jesus' parables (13:10-17, 34-35). The verb *koinoi* ('makes [him] `unclean''), here used (v. 11) for the first of thirteen times in the NT, literally means "to render common"; but because participation in what was common was for a practicing Jew to become ceremonially unclean, the customary NT meaning is very similar. Perhaps Mark 7:15 is a shade more generalized than Matthew's form of the "parable" (v. 11), but the differences are slight. "[If] Matthew really wished to exclude the kind of laxity represented by his Markan source, it is hard to see why he kept the potentially dangerous parable around which this whole controversy is constructed" (C.E. Carlston, "The Things That Defile (Mk 7.14) and the Law in Matthew and Mark," NTS 15 [1968-69]: 77). The language is so general it lets in everything Mark allows, even though the final application is to food eaten with unwashed hands (v. 20). The form of the argument is from this

principle to that application, the former being broader than the latter. Thus, though Matthew omits Mark's parenthetical interpretation-"(In saying this, Jesus declared all foods `clean')" (Mark 7:19b)--yet retention of the "parable" and its interpretation (vv. 17-20) lead precisely to that conclusion.

12-14 These verses are peculiar to Matthew and reflect what took place after Jesus and his disciples had retired from the crowd and entered the house (cf. Mark 7:17). The disciples' question shows that the Pharisees understood enough of Jesus' parable to take offense (v. 12). The disciples' request to have the parable explained (v. 15) does not reveal them as being more obtuse than the Pharisees but shows that, in common with most Jews at the time, they held the Pharisees in high regard and therefore wanted to be certain of exactly what Jesus had said that had offended them

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so badly. Therefore vv. 12-14 are not out of place. Jesus must disillusion his disciples as to the reliability of the Pharisees and teachers of the law as spiritual guides, as well as explain the parable. This is not to say that these verses turn the entire section (vv. 1-20) into a personal attack on the Pharisees rather than on their use of the law (so Kilpatrick, *Origins* , p. 180); for the chief point for which they are blamed relates to their misunderstanding of the law. Jesus uses two images. The first (v. 13) predicts the rooting up of any plant the heavenly Father has not planted. Israel often saw herself as a plant God had planted (Ps 1:3; Isa 60:21; cf. 1QS 8:5; CD 1:7; 1 Enoch 10:16; Pss Sol 14:2), and the prophets turned the image against them (Isa 5:1-7). Thus Jesus is not saying that every false doctrine will be rooted up (so Broadus) but that the Pharisees, the leaders of the Jewish people, are not truly part of God's planting. This shocking idea has already been hinted at in Matthew (3:9; 8:11-12) and will recur. The second image (v. 14) may depend on a title some Jewish leaders apparently took on themselves. They had the law, they reasoned, and therefore were fit to serve as "guides of the blind" (Rom 2:19; cf. Luke 6:39). This Jesus disputes. In his view they were "blind guides of the blind" (NIV mg., so the most likely variant, cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary* , p. 39); and "both will fall into a pit" (cf. also Luke 6:39). Though the Pharisees and teachers of the law had the scrolls and interpreted them in the synagogues, this does not mean that they really understood them. On the contrary, they were blind and failed to comprehend the Scriptures they claimed to follow. Jesus' denunciation presupposes that anyone who truly understands the "word of God" (v. 6) will discern who he is and follow him (cf. John 5:39-40). The Pharisees did not follow Jesus; so they did not understand and follow the Scriptures.

15-16 Peter speaks on behalf of the other disciples (v. 15): Jesus' answer shows that the "parable" to which Peter refers is v. 11. The disciples' failure

to understand shocks Jesus. (1) *Kai* ("also")--are you, too, "still so dull?" Dullness might be understandable in others, but in you disciples? (2) *Akmen* ("still," used only here in Matthew) may mean either "Are you *still* without understanding?" (NIV; Hill, McNeile) or "Are you still- *but not for long* -- without understanding?" (Schlatter). The context strongly favors the former; and therefore the question, far from toning down the disciples' failure to grasp Jesus' teaching (so Schweizer), magnifies its enormity.

17-20 Verse 17 explains that "what goes into a man's mouth" (v. 11) is merely food, which passes through the body and is excreted (lit., "is cast into a latrine"). On the sanitary conditions of the time, cf. Edward Neufeld, "Hygiene Conditions in Ancient Israel," *Biblical Archaeologist* 34 (1971): 42-66. Verses 18-20 explain that "what comes out of a man's mouth" (v. 11), and what makes him unclean, comes from his

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heart (see on 12:34-35). Matthew's list of the heart's products (v. 19) is shorter than Mark's. After the first, "evil thoughts," the list follows the same order as the sixth and seventh commandments, followed by *porneia* ("sexual immorality"; see on 19:3-12), the order of the eighth and ninth commandments, and finally "slander," which probably includes blasphemy (cf. 12:31). The list itself negates (as Banks [*Jesus* , pp. 143-44] points out) Kilpatrick's suggestion that Matthew has transformed Mark's principle of morals into a precept of law (*Origins* , p. 38). It would be puerile to ask how every item on the list results directly in defiling speech. The point, as in 12:34-35, is that what a man truly is affects what he says and does. Jesus presupposes that the heart is essentially evil (cf. 7:11). But the burden of this pericope is not to be pure on the inside and forget the externals but that what ultimately defiles a man is what he really is. Jesus is not spiritualizing the OT but insisting that true religion must deal with the nature of man and not with mere externals. Because v. 20b does not occur in Mark, many have thought it to be Matthew's way of limiting the application of the controversy to the single question of eating food with unwashed hands. Two things militate against this view: (1) Jesus deals with a broad principle touching *all* foods and applies it to this situation, but the application can be no more valid than the broader principle on which it is based; and (2) Matthew frequently ends his pericopes by referring back to the questions that precipitate them (see on 12: 45; 14:12; 16:11-12; 17:13); so v. 20b requires no more explanation than that. The way one interprets this pericope relates to a larger understanding of how Matthew deals with Jesus' attitude to the law and the situation in his own church. 1. It goes beyond the evidence to argue, as does Ernst Kasemann (*Essays on New Testament Themes* [London: SCM, 1964], p. 101), that Jesus now abrogates the distinction between the sacred and the profane; or, as Lohmeyer (*Matthaus*) does, that Jesus now distinguishes "word of God" from "word of man" even within Scripture itself; or, as McNeile and R. Walker (p. 142) do, that Jesus now undermines, as in Mark, *all* Mosaic distinctions between clean and unclean. He deals, principally, with the clean-unclean distinctions as to foods and applies this principle to foods eaten with

unwashed hands. 2. On the other hand, it does not go as far as the exegetical evidence to pit Matthew against Mark so that the former, unlike the latter, is seen as absolutely restricting Jesus' words to the single problem of foods eaten with unwashed hands. Verses 3, 7-9, 11, 14, 17-19 cannot be taken so narrowly. 3. The approach that sees a Jewish-Christian church behind this pericope whether still related to the synagogue or recently separated from it is exegetically unsatisfying. Matthew is slightly more cautious than Mark and perhaps a shade less explicit, but that is not solid enough evidence to support Barth's reconstruction of the Matthean

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church (in Bornkamm, *Tradition*). Though Ebionite groups doubtless flourished, Matthew neither belonged to one, nor anything like one; for no Ebionite could write vv. 11, 17-20. 4. Banks (*Jesus* , pp. 140-41) contends that if Jesus explicitly repudiated the food laws contained in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14 (Dan 1:8-16; cf. Judith 10:5; Tobit 1:10-11), then the hesitations of the primitive church on the issue (Acts 10:14-15; 15: 28-29; Rom 14:14; Gal 2:11-13) are inexplicable. But he avoids falling into the trap of thinking that Jesus' original teaching on this matter was no more than Semitic hyperbole, with the meaning that "pollutions from within are more serious than pollutions from without" (Banks, *Jesus* , p. 141; cf. Hos 6:6). Rather, he holds that Jesus' approach neither attacked nor affirmed the law but moved on a different level, expressing "an entirely new understanding of what does and does not constitute defilement" (Banks, *Jesus* , p. 141). Abrogation was latent within the saying, but not more. This is a shade too timid. The hesitations of the early church regarding the food laws are not inexplicable: a great deal of what Jesus taught became *progressively* clear to the church after the Resurrection and did not immediately gain universal assent. The same is true of Jesus' words on Gentile conversion, on the Great Commission, on the delay of the Parousia. What can be said is that Jesus' teaching in this pericope (and in its Markan parallel) opens up an entirely fresh approach to the question of the law. It does not simply subordinate the ritual to the moral (these are not the categories appealed to); instead it discounts the Pharisees' oral tradition while defending the law (vv. 3-6) and yet insists that real "cleanness" is of the heart, so discounting some of the law's formal requirements. The only way to explain these phenomena is the one Matthew has already developed (see esp. 5:21-48): Jesus insists that the true direction in which the OT law points is precisely what he teaches, what he is, and what he inaugurates. He has fulfilled the law; therefore whatever prescriptive force it continues to have is determined by its relationship to him, not vice versa. It is within this framework that Jesus' teaching in this pericope theologically anticipates Romans 14:14-18; 1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Timothy 4:4; Titus 1:15, and that historically it took some time for the

ramifications of Jesus' teaching to be thoroughly grasped, even by his own disciples. Once again it is a mark of Matthew's fidelity to the historical facts that he does not overstate Jesus' teaching, and a mark of his literary skill that he does not find it necessary to draw Mark's parenthetical conclusion (Mark 7:19b), even though he obviously shares it. 5. It follows that Jesus not only rejected the Pharisees and teachers of the law as authentic interpreters of Scripture (esp. vv. 12-14) but assigned that role finally and absolutely to himself (cf. 5:21-48). Historically the conflict between Jesus and the traditional interpreters of Scripture would wax fierce and would ultimately bring him to

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the Cross; theologically the fundamental distinctions between a Christian and a Jewish reading of Scripture must be traced to Jesus himself. 6. What concerned Jesus was not so much the form of religion as human nature. He wanted to see people transformed and their hearts renewed (cf. 6:1-33; 12:34-35; comments on 25:31-46) because he came to save his people from their sins (1:21).

7. More healings (15:21-31)

a. The Canaanite woman (15:21-28)

It is by no means clear which way--if at all--the literary dependency of this pericope on Mark (cf. 7:24-30) runs. (For the most recent analysis, see E.A. Russell, "The Canaanite Woman and the Gospels," in Livingston, 2:263ff) Of greater interest is the placing of this pericope in both Gospels. It not only records Jesus' withdrawal from the opposition of the Pharisees and teachers of the law (cf. 14:13) but contrasts their approach to the Messiah with that of this woman. They belong to the covenant people but take offense at the conduct of Jesus' disciples, challenge his authority, and are so defective in understanding the Scriptures that they show themselves not to be plants the heavenly Father has planted. But this woman is a pagan, a descendant of ancient enemies, and with no claim on the God of the covenant. Yet in the end she approaches the Jewish Messiah and with great faith asks only for grace; and her request is granted (cf. 8:5-13). This essentially christological approach to the pericope is more defensible than the one that sees in these verses guidance for Matthew's Jewish church in its relations to Gentiles: they could not claim immediate access to salvation, but exceptions would be made where there was deep faith (Hill, *Matthew*). This begs too many issues.

Would they, or would they not, then have to conform to all Jewish law? How do we know so much of Matthew's church (cf. Introduction, section 2)'? What this explains to Matthew's readers (Matthew's "church," though this designation may give the wrong impression of a group hermetically sealed off from other churches) is not what attitude they ought to adopt toward Gentile evangelism, whether opposition or occasional acquiescence, but rather "how we got from there to here"--i.e., how the development of redemptive history changed the position of God's people from late OT concepts to the full Christian concept. This story is a step along the way, focused on the self-disclosure of the Messiah and his attitudes to his own mission, his pivotal role in salvation history. But if Matthew's Jewish-Christian readers want to learn more about what their attitude should be toward Gentile evangelism, they must also read the words of the resurrected and glorified Jesus after the climax of his self-disclosure (28:18-20). The worst feature of many redaction-critical attempts to reconstruct Matthew's

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church and its problems is the implicit elimination of the salvation history insisted on by the Gospels themselves, a persistent refusal to believe that the evangelists are interested in writing about Jesus to explain him, and therefore "how we got from there to here," rather than to address their "churches" from the perspective of a theology infinitely flexible and shaped by contemporary problems alone. Once the perspective of redemptive history is granted, we may cheerfully acknowledge that the evangelists include material and write it down in such a way that it will prove of interest and/or use (not necessarily both) to their readers. But the loss of the historical perspective from which the evangelists claim to write leads to an unnecessary and basic distortion of their Gospels.

21 Jesus "withdraws" (as in 2:12, 22; 4:12; 12:15; 14:13) to the region of Tyre and Sidon, cities on the Mediterranean coast lying about thirty and fifty miles respectively from Galilee. Kilpatrick (*Origins* , pp. 130ff.) notes Matthew's interest in them (cf. 11: 21-24) and suggests that Matthew and his church were there--a possibility, but without much supporting evidence. "The vicinity of Tyre" (Mark 7:24) leads us to ask whether Jesus actually entered the region of Tyre and Sidon or went only to the border--which would mean the woman came out to meet him. But v. 21 and Mark 7:31 make it clear that Jesus left Galilee and entered pagan territory. According to Mark 3:8 and Luke 6: 17, some crowds had come from Tyre and Sidon to be helped by him; but there he would hardly be known.

22 The introductory *idou* (lit., "behold," untranslated in NIV) probably points to the extraordinary nature of the story. Mark (7:26) calls the woman "a Greek [i.e., a non- Jewess], born in Syrian Phoenicia." Matthew's use of the old term "Canaanite" shows that he cannot forget her ancestry: now a descendant of Israel's ancient enemies comes to the Jewish Messiah for blessing. *Exelthousa* (lit., "coming out") does not mean that she came out of

that pagan region to meet Jesus (see on v. 21) but either that her ancestry was there or that she had left her home (Lohmeyer, Bonnard). Her calling Jesus "Son of David" shows some recognition of Jesus as the Messiah who would heal the people (see discussion at 9:77; 12:23); "Lord" is ambiguous (see on 8:

2). For other instances of demon possession in this Gospel, see on 4:24; 8:16, 28, 33; 9: 32; 12:22.

23-24 That these verses are peculiar to Matthew is not surprising. Matthew's Jewish readers would be intensely interested in Jesus' doing a miracle to aid a Gentile, on Gentile territory. Mark's Gentile readers would, however, have needed much explanation had this saying been included in his Gospel. Jesus had healed Gentiles before (4:24-25; 8:5-13), but always in Jewish territory.

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Jesus' silence does not quiet the woman; so his disciples beg him to stop her persistent cries (v. 23). If they mean "Send her away without helping her," either they suppose she is annoying him or they themselves are being annoyed. But their words could also be taken to mean "Send her away with her request granted" (so Meyer, Benoit). Indeed only this interpretation makes sense, because v. 24 gives a reason for Jesus' not helping her rather than for not sending her away. Bultmann (*Synoptic Tradition*, p. 155), Arens (pp. 315-19), and others judge Jesus' answer (v. 24) to be inauthentic, largely on the grounds that "I was sent" sounds Johannine and thus for them is late and inauthentic. Regardless of this similarity the particularism of the thought supports its authenticity, since the church, even before Paul, engaged in Gentile evangelism and could therefore hardly be thought to have created the saying (cf. *Jeremias Promise*, pp. 26-28; Bonnard; Hill). The thought echoes 10:6, where the same language is used (lit., "the lost sheep of the house of Israel"). But even chapter 10 recognizes that one day the mission of the disciples will take them to Gentiles (10:18). But that time was not yet. Meanwhile Jesus, doing the Father's will (cf. 11:27), recognized that his own mission was to Israel; and he delighted to do the will of him who sent him. Either "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" means "the lost sheep *among* the house of Israel"--i.e., some in the house of Israel are not lost--or "the lost sheep *who are* the house of Israel"--i.e., all Israel, regarded as lost sheep. The latter is correct, for in the identical expression at 10:6 the contrast is, not between these lost sheep and others in Israel who are not lost, but between these lost sheep and Gentiles or Samaritans. Flender (pp. 23ff.) errs in the opposite direction, holding that Jesus sees himself gathering *all* Israel, not just a remnant. But Jesus is not so naive (cf. 7:13-14; 10:17-22, 34-37), for there is a categorical distinction between a target people and a converted people. It appears, then, that Jesus wanted his disciples and the Canaanite woman to recognize "that His activities were circumscribed not only by the inevitable limitations of His manhood, but by the specific part that He had been called to play during His brief earthly life" (Tasker). True, he was "Son of David," as the woman said; but that did not give her the

right to enjoy the benefits covenanted to the Jews. The kingdom must first be offered to them. The thought is like John 4:22: "Salvation is from the Jews." The Samaritan woman, like this Canaanite woman, had to recognize this-- even if a time was coming when true worship would transcend such categories (John 4:23-26).

25 The woman knelt (see on 2:2; 8:2) before Jesus (probably the imperfect is used to make the action more vivid) and cried, as only the mother of an afflicted child could, "Lord, help me!"

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26 Still Jesus made certain that she grasped the historic distinction between Jew and Gentile. Jesus' short aphorism supposes that the "children" are the people of Israel and the "dogs" are Gentiles. The "crumbs" (v. 27) do not designate the quantity of blessing bestowed; and still less does the table refer to the Eucharist (rightly Bonnard). The question is one of precedence: the children get fed *first* .

27 The woman's answer is masterly. "Yes, Lord," she agrees, "for even [not `but even,' NIV; cf. Notes] the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." Those two words "for even" reveal immense wisdom and faith. She does not phrase her answer as a counterstroke but as a profound acquiescence with the further implications of "dogs." She does not argue that her needs make her an exception, or that she has a right to Israel's covenanted mercies, or that the mysterious ways of divine election and justice are unfair. She abandons mention of Jesus as "Son of David" and simply asks for help; "and she is confident that even if she is not entitled to sit down as a guest at Messiah's table, Gentile `dog' that she is, yet at least she may be allowed to receive a crumb of the uncovenanted mercies of God" (Tasker; cf. Schlatter). There may be no significance to the use of the diminutive "dogs" (*kynaria*) in vv. 26-27, because in Hellenistic Greek the diminutive force is often entirely lacking; but if there is such force here, it does not make the dogs more acceptable--i.e., "pet dogs" or "house dogs" as opposed to "wild dogs"--but more dependent: i.e., little, helpless dogs eat little scraps of food (*psichion* equally diminutive in form). As does Paul in Romans 9-11, the woman preserves Israel's historical privilege over against all radical idealization or spiritualization of Christ's work, yet perceives that grace is freely given to the Gentiles.

28 The faith that simply seeks mercy is honored. Again Jesus speaks, this time with emotion (cf. Notes); and the woman's daughter is healed "from

that very hour" (cf. 8: 13; 9:22). The Clementine homilies (end of the second century) call the woman Justa and her daughter Berenice, but the names may have been invented.

b. The many (15:29-31)

Mark 7:31-37 here tells of the healing of a deaf mute; Matthew provides a summary of more extensive healings (cf. T.J. Ryan, "Matthew 15:29-31: An Overlooked Summary," *Horizons* 5 [1978]: 31-42; for other summaries, cf. 4:23-25; 9:35-38; 12:15- 21; 14:14-36). Ryan points out the echoes of Isaiah 29:18-19; 35:5-6. Of greater consequence is the geographical location. Contrary to Bonnard, these healings and the subsequent feeding of the four thousand take place in Gentile territory--viz., in the

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Decapolis (see below). Jesus had already displayed the power of the kingdom here (8: 28-34). His reluctance to respond to the request of the Canaanite woman (vv. 21-28) must therefore turn not just on her being a Gentile, or on this being Gentile territory (cf. 8:28-34), but more on her appealing to him as Son of David and on his being conscious of his primary aims during his earthly ministry. Because of her faith, making appeal to his mercy, the woman receives the "crumbs." Then lest anyone think the crumbs betray a restricted blessing for Gentiles, Matthew immediately tells us of the feeding of four thousand Gentiles. If Jesus' aphorism about the children and the dogs merely reveals *priority* in feeding, then it is hard to resist the conclusion that in the feeding of the four thousand Jesus is showing that blessing for the Gentiles is beginning to dawn.

29-31 "Jesus left there" (v. 29) refers to the region of Tyre and Sidon (v. 21). But to which (not "along" which, as in NIV; cf. Moule, *Idiom Book* , pp. 50f.) side of the Sea of Galilee did he go? If to the west, he was in Jewish Galilee; if to the east, in predominantly Gentile Decapolis (on which see on 4:25). Mark 7:31 has Jesus traveling north from the vicinity of Tyre to Sidon, and then south and east to the Decapolis on the southeastern side of the lake, still outside Herod's jurisdiction (cf. Matt 14:13). This places him not far from where he had healed the demoniacs and may account for the growing crowds. But all this depends on reading Mark into Matthew. Could it be that Matthew simply does not care about where Jesus was at this point? No; the evidence suggests rather that he assumes it: (1) the clause "they praised the God of Israel" (v. 31) could be naturally said only by Gentiles; (2) the remoteness of the place (v. 33) suggests the eastern side of the lake; and (3) the number of "basketfuls of broken pieces" (v. 37) left over avoids the symbolic "twelve" (cf. 14:20). More incidental bits of information point in the same direction (see below). Jesus did many miracles over the course of several days (cf. vv. 30-32). The order of the ailments varies in the MSS, possibly owing in part to homoeoteleuton (cf. further Metzger, *Textual*

***Commentary* , p. 40). (For into the hills [v. 29], see on 5:1-2.)**

8. The feeding of the four thousand (15:32-39)

Many scholars hold that this miracle, reported here and in Mark 8:1-10, is a doublet of the feeding of the five thousand, though there is little agreement about why Matthew should include a doublet here. A few have thought the requirements of a liturgical calendar led him to do this--a theory lacking in substantial evidence. More common is the view that Mark put in the doublet to affirm that Gentiles as well as Jews will enjoy the messianic banquet. "The repetition of the story therefore serves theology, not

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history" (Hill, *Matthew*).

This is not very satisfactory for if even one of Mark's or Matthew's readers knew there was only one miraculous feeding, *and that of Jews* , the point about the Gentiles would be lost and the credibility of the two evangelists impugned. The events were within the lifetime of many of Matthew's readers: we are dealing with a few decades, not centuries. Thus the validity of the theological point depends here on the credibility of the historical record. Moreover both Mark 8:17-19 and Matthew 16:9-11 report that Jesus referred to the two feedings as separate occasions. Even if one rejects the authenticity of what Jesus said, it argues that the evangelists themselves believed in two miraculous feedings. Close comparison of the two miracles shows similarities only where there could scarcely be anything else: (1) they both take place in the country; (2) bread and fish appear in both, but this was the common food of the area; (3) Jesus gives thanks and breaks the bread, as one would expect him to (see on 14:19); (4) both portray the disciples distributing the food, a necessity because of the many thousands, and (5) both end in a boat trip, but so do many other stories located near Galilee, especially when Jesus desires to escape the crowds. On the other hand, the differences between the two miracles are impressive (cf. esp. Maier): (1) the different numbers, five thousand and four thousand; (2) the different locales, northeast shore and southeast shore of Galilee (clearest in Mark); (3) no mention of grass in the second story, implying a different season of the year; (4) a different supply of food at the beginning; (5) a different number of basketfuls of leftovers and even different words for "basket"; and (6) the longer stay of the people in the second miracle (15:32). It might be wise to remember that two feeding miracles by Moses (Exod 16; Num 11) and Elisha are reported (2 Kings 4:1-7, 38-44). The only impressive reason for taking this account as a doublet is the disciples' response in v. 33, and this is best accounted for in other ways (below).

32-33 On Jesus' compassion, see on 9:36. It appears that Jesus' preaching and miracles so captivated the people (cf. their exuberant praise, v. 31) that they refused to leave him till he hesitated to dismiss them, fearing that many of them would collapse for hunger on their way home (v. 32). Some had come a long distance (Mark 8:3). The response of the disciples is not surprising and not sufficient to prove this pericope a doublet of the feeding of the five thousand, for: 1. The disciples may have understood the feeding of the five thousand Jews as anticipating the messianic banquet. But, though they might have been prepared for Jesus to perform miracles of healing and exorcism on Gentiles as expressions of his mercy and compassion, they might still have been a long way from admitting that

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Gentiles could share in any anticipation of the messianic banquet.

2. According to John 6:26, after the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus rebuked the crowds for just wanting food; and the disciples may therefore have thought better of bringing the subject up again. 3. More important, we must never lose sight of a human being's vast capacity for unbelief. After this healing, whether a doublet of the feeding of the five thousand or not, Jesus' disciples completely misinterpreted one of his enigmatic sayings because even then they did not understand that those with Jesus could never starve (16:5-12).

34-39 Here in v. 36 the verb *eucharisteo* ("I give thanks") is used, not *eulogeo* (lit., "I bless"), as in 14:19, though there is no substantial difference in meaning. The *spyridas* ("baskets") were woven of rushes and used for fish or other food (cf. *kophinous* ["baskets"] in 14:20). A.E.J. Rawlinson (*The Gospel According to St. Mark* , 5th ed. [London: Methuen, 1942], p. 87) cites Juvenal to the effect that, at least in Rome, Jews commonly used *kophinous* to carry kosher food. If so, the use of *spyridas* in this setting may imply that the locale and its people were non-Jewish. If the number of baskets of leftovers in 14:20 is symbolic, it is hard to see why the seven baskets here (v. 37) are not symbolic (see on vv. 29-31). The number seven may be significant because it is not twelve and therefore not allusive to the twelve apostles or twelve tribes. This seems more sensible than seeing an allusion to the seven deacons (Acts 6:1-6; so Lohmeyer)--an anachronistic view that ignores that: (1) the seven in Acts 6 are not explicitly called deacons; (2) the church was then entirely Jewish; and (3) the twelve apostles exercised general oversight. It is barely possible that the seven baskets represent the fullness of the people of God now being touched by Jesus' power, as the twelve baskets bore an allusion to Israel; but what is surprising on this view is that the audience

here was not apparently comprised of both Jew and Gentile but only the latter. As before, *hoi esthiontes* ("those who ate," v. 38; on the tense, cf. Zerwick, par. 291) are all satisfied, and the men only are numbered. The whole crowd may have exceeded ten thousand. The site of Magadan (v. 39; cf. Notes) is unknown. Both Mark and Matthew now speak of a conflict with the Pharisees and Sadducees (16:1-4). If this occurred when Jesus and the disciples landed, it must have been on Jewish territory, probably on the western shores of Galilee.

9. Another demand for a sign (16:1-4)

Doubtless there were many requests for signs (see on 12:38-40), as there continued to be after Jesus' resurrection and ascension (1Cor 1:22-24). Moreover itinerant

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preachers develop standard responses to standard questions. But this pericope (cf. Mark 8:11-13) has a crucial place in the narrative. Jesus has barely returned to Jewish territory when the opposition of Jewish leaders again surfaces, prompting him to leave the area once more, cross the lake, and head far north to Caesarea Philippi (v. 13), where in God's providence and in the heart of Gentile territory, Peter makes the great confession that Jesus is the Messiah (v. 16).

1 The single article in *hoi Pharisaioi kai Saddoukaioi* ("the Pharisees and Sadducees") implies that they acted together. Because the two groups were so frequently at odds theologically and politically, many think such united action improbable. Moreover critical orthodoxy dates this Gospel at about A.D. 85, a time when the Sadducees, closely connected with Jerusalem and the temple, destroyed in

A.D. 70, no longer existed as a coherent force. Therefore many feel that since only Pharisaism was dominant in Judaism at that time, this reference to the Sadducees implies no more than that Matthew vaguely remembered all official Judaism being opposed to Jesus. A better approach is possible.

1. It is precarious to identify, without remainder, the Pharisees of Jesus' day and the rabbis of A.D. 85 (cf. Introduction section 11.f); and the Sadducees did not continue as a group with genuine influence after A.D. 70. Matthew's use of these terms might therefore be taken as evidence for historical accuracy in the pre-A.D. 70 setting and not as an anachronism. 2. The Introduction has already questioned critical orthodoxy regarding the date and setting of Matthew's Gospel. A date in the ninth decade should not be lightly assumed. Overcoming that barrier, references to the Sadducees in the synoptic Gospels can be taken to support the evangelists' accuracy. Would not failure to mention the Sadducees have raised questions about how close the evangelists were to what they were writing about? Why then should mention of them not argue for the evangelists' fidelity? If the Sadducees do

not appear more often than they do, it is because they were a small group, and closely tied to Jerusalem--a long way from Galilee where Jesus exercised so much of his ministry. Indeed the controversy between Jesus and the Sadducees, recorded in 22:23-34; Mark 12:18; Luke 20:27, occurs in the south, where, too, there is much more frequent mention of "priests" and "chief priests," exactly as one would expect from an accurate historian. 3. The other references to the Sadducees in the Gospels are all in Matthew (3:7; 16: 1, 6, 11, 12), exactly as might be expected of a writer who often relies on the understanding of his Jewish readers. 4. Pharisees and Sadducees may here be lumped together because they represent the Sanhedrin, which included both groups (cf. Acts 23:6), or because a common

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opponent transforms enemies into friends (cf. Luke 23:12; cf. Ps 2:2). Also Matthew elsewhere distinguishes between the two groups (22:33-34; see Introduction, section 11.f).

These men came to Jesus to "test" him (see on 4:1, 7; cf. 19:3; 22:18, 35), asking for "a sign from heaven" (see on 12:38).

2-3 Jesus' words in vv. 2-3 are omitted by a small but important group of witnesses. Jerome reports that most MSS known to him omit the words; and many scholars consider them an assimilation to Luke 12:54-56. But if that were so, one wonders why the wording is not closer. Lagrange, Metzger (*Textual Commentary* , p. 41), and others have postulated that the words are original but were dropped from some MSS by scribes living in climates such as Egypt, where a red sky in the morning (v. 3) does not presage rain. The evidence is rather finely balanced, and it is probably best to include the words. If so, Jesus' point is clear enough: the Pharisees and Sadducees can read the "signs" that predict weather, but they remain oblivious to the "signs of the times" already happening. Here these "signs of the times" neither point to the future, nor (contra Hoekema, p. 133) to what God has done in the past. Instead, they testify to Jesus and the kingdom now dawning (cf. 11:4-6; 12:28). The proof that they cannot discern the "signs" is that they ask for a sign (v. 1)! For those with eyes to see, the "signs of the times," if not the kind of "sign" the Pharisees and Sadducees demanded, were already abundant.

4 But if a definitive sign is demanded, none but the sign of Jonah will be given (see on 12:39). Mark 8:12 is no exception. In one sense both evangelists are right, for the Jews would not have recognized Jonah as the kind of sign they were after (so there was no exception, Mark), even though that was the

only definitive sign Jesus would allow (so there was an exception, Matthew). For exposition, see on 12:38-42. Mark also says that Jesus sighed: the controversies were wearying. Jesus leaves his opponents and withdraws by boat to the other side of the lake (v. 5) and points north (v. 13). But his withdrawal is emotional and judicial as well as geographical.

10. The yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees (16:5-12)

This is Jesus' last and most important withdrawal from Galilee before his final trip south (19:1), and it continues to 17:20. Close comparison of these verses with Mark 8: 13-21 shows significant differences. In particular, (1) Matthew omits Mark 8:17b-18; (2) Matthew 16:9-11a shortens and rearranges Mark 8:19-21; (3) Matthew adds 16: 11b-12; and (4) Matthew refers to the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees, but Mark to the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod.

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What do we make of these differences? Some writers (Barth, in Bornkamm [*Tradition* , pp. 114-16]; Streaker [*Weg* , p. 193]; Zumstein [p. 203]) argue that Matthew minimizes the disciples' lack of understanding, so pronounced in Marks and separates understanding from faith (see on 13:10-15). Though the differences must not be minimized, the question is, What prompts them'? The single-strand theological motivation advanced by many is reductionistic, when on the face of it numerous factors must be weighed. 1. Commentators on Mark complain that Mark 8:13-21 lacks cohesion or is verbose. In part Matthew, as usual, is simply tightening things up and condensing his source. 2. Matthew 16:9 is still very negative: the disciples do not understand (a verb no weaker than the one used in Mark 8:17-18). 3. When they finally do understand (v. 12), it is as a result of Jesus' explanation--as in the case of the parables (13:36-43; 15:15-16). The disciples are *beginning* to understand (Trotter), exactly as we might expect from their position in salvation history. 4. Far from driving a wedge between faith and understanding, the charge in vv. 8-9a links them. Yet faith in Christ is made the prerequisite to understanding Jesus' remark (cf. comments on 13:34-35). This makes explicit what is merely implicit in Mark. 5. Matthew's distinctive emphases, as compared with Mark, are two: first, he takes the story to the point where the disciples do achieve some understanding whereas Mark leaves the outcome hanging. This rounded-off conclusion is typical of Matthew (see on 15:20). Second, in Matthew Jesus specifies that the "yeast" metaphor refers to the "teaching" of the Pharisees and Sadducees, whereas in Mark it extends to Herod but is not explained. From the context of Mark we may deduce that yeast refers to "the disposition to believe only if signs which compel faith are produced" (Lane, *Mark* , p. 281), evidenced by the Pharisees in the preceding pericope and by Herod a short while before (Matt 14:1-2; Mark 6:14). Matthew may not be very different. Jesus is surely not telling his disciples to beware of *all* the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees. These two groups did not always agree; and Jesus can stand with the Sadducees against the Pharisees on the authority of Halakah (rules of conduct derived from interpretations of Scripture, preserved in oral tradition) and with the

Pharisees against the Sadducees on the Resurrection (22:23-33). The "teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees" to which Jesus refers (vv. 5-12), therefore, is an attitude of unbelief toward divine revelation that could not perceive Jesus to be the Messiah (vv. 1-4) but that tried to control and tame the Messiah they claimed to await. The disciples are to avoid that. That is why the next pericope (vv. 13-20) is so important: Peter makes the confession that Jesus is the Messiah, not on the basis of manipulative signs, but by revelation from the Father.

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5-7 The setting may be the boat in which Jesus and his disciples cross the lake (v. 5; Notes). The conversation reveals the contrasting attitudes of Jesus and his disciples: he is still thinking about the malignity of the Pharisees and Sadducees (vv. 1-4), and the disciples are thinking about food (15:29-38), which they forgot to bring. Mark 8:14 says they were down to one loaf. (For "Pharisees and Sadducees" governed by one article, see on v. 1.) "Yeast" (v. 6) was a common symbol for evil (see on 13:33) and could therefore be applied to different kinds of wickedness (e.g., Luke 12:1; cf. Exod 34:25; Lev 2:11; 1Cor 5:6-8), but always with the idea that a little of it could have a far-reaching and insidious effect. The disciples do not understand what Jesus is saying but find his words enigmatic and discuss them (v. 7).

8-12 Because they were men of little faith (v. 8; cf. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31), they came to an unimaginative conclusion (v. 7; cf. Notes). Jesus could not have been talking about bread because he had already shown his power to provide all the bread they needed (vv. 9-10; cf. 14:13-21; 15:32-39). He had performed two "food" miracles, and there had been basketfuls of leftovers each time. Jesus' charge (v. 11) against the disciples ran deep. Jesus had already denounced the Pharisees and Sadducees for their particular "teaching" that demanded manipulative signs instead of believing in the bountiful evidence already supplied. And now the disciples are perilously close to the same unbelief in Jesus' person and miracles. The miracles Jesus performs unlike the signs the Pharisees demand, do not compel faith; but those with faith will perceive their significance. Moreover, it is just possible that Jesus was asking his disciples to recognize symbolic meaning in the numbers of leftover baskets, here reiterated (see on 14:20; 15:37). Jesus is the Messiah who spreads bounty and invites both the twelve tribes of Israel and the Gentiles to his messianic banquet. But whether or not this thought is valid, Jesus' criticism of his

disciples was sharp. Instead of explaining the meaning of his metaphor of the yeast, Jesus repeats it in both Matthew and Mark. This suggests that, great teacher that he is, he is trying to train his disciples to think deeply about the revelation he is giving and is not content to keep on spoonfeeding them. Only Matthew provides the interpretation (v. 12); Mark leaves it to the reader to discern (but cf. Matt 15:19-20 and Mark 7:19).

11. Peter's confession of Jesus and its aftermath (16:13-23)

a. The confession (16:13-20)

Broadly speaking Matthew and Mark treat Peter's confession similarly. All three

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Synoptics (cf. Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:19-21) immediately follow it by Jesus' prediction of his sufferings, a theme Matthew develops (17:12, 22-23; 20:17-19). (For questions of structure, see on v. 21 and Introduction, section 14.) The connections between this key passage and the rest of Matthew are intricate. Some have already been dealt with (cf. on vv. 5-12). Peter recognizes Jesus as the Messiah by revelation, not by signs Peter dictates and thus uses to manipulate the Messiah. That Jesus is the Messiah leads inexorably to his self-disclosure as the suffering Messiah (vv. 21-23) a theme anticipated earlier (see on 8:17; 10:24-25; 12: 15-21). Moreover the suffering of the Servant is not only redemptive (20:28) but exemplary (16:24-26). Therefore the fourth discourse (18:3-35) is grounded in christology. Peter's role in this passage has been analyzed hundreds of times and is further discussed below. At the risk of oversimplification, we may classify the positions defended in this century into two classes. The first thinks of Peter as a "typical" disciple who speaks for the other disciples, who in turn represent all believers. Thus everything said about Peter becomes a lesson for all Christians (e.g., R. Walker, p. 118; Strecker, *Weg* , p. 205). The second sees Peter as in some way unique: he becomes a kind of supreme rabbi on whom Jesus builds his church, a rabbi who guarantees and transmits the traditions of Jesus in Matthew's church (cf. esp. Hummel, pp. 59ff.; Paul Hoffmann, "Der Petrus-Primat im Matthauevangelium" in Gnllka, *Neues Testament* , pp. 94-114; C. Kahler, "Zur Form-und Traditions-geschichte von Matth. xvi. 17-19," NTS 23 [1977]: 36-58). In a balanced essay J.D. Kingsbury ("The Figure of Peter in Matthew's Gospel as a Theological Problem," JBL 98 [1979]: 67-83) has shown how both alternatives distort the text. The second will not stand: Matthew's Gospel insists that only Jesus is to be called rabbi (23:8, 10) and that after his resurrection he himself will remain with his disciples to the end of the age (28:20; cf. 18:20). Moreover, if Peter is given power to bind and loose, so also is the church (18:18); and all of Jesus' followers are to be involved in discipling and teaching the nations (28:18-19). Yet the first view is also simplistic. Matthew 16:16-17 is intensely personal, not merely representative. Whatever the precise meaning of these

verses, Matthew presents Peter as the "first" disciple to be called (4:18-20; 10:2-4) and now the first one truly to understand that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the Son of God. So these passages honor his "salvation-historical primacy" (Kingsbury's expression), and we must not do less. For brief comments on problems connected with the authenticity of vv. 17-19, see below.

13 Caesarea Philippi was built by Herod Philip the tetrarch (cf. 2:20, 22), who enlarged a small town on a plane 1150 feet above sea level at the base of Mount Hermon,

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renaming it in honor of Caesar, "Philippi" being added to distinguish it from the coastal city of the same name. It lies twenty-five miles north of Galilee snow-capped Mount Hermon can be seen on a clear day from as far away as Nazareth, where Jesus grew up. The inhabitants were largely Gentile. Though Jesus exercised some broader ministry here (17:14; cf: Mark 8:34), primarily he gave himself to the Twelve. Matthew omits Mark's casual details (Mark 8:27). In Mark and Luke, Jesus' question leaves out the "Son of Man": "Who do people say I am?" (For the title, see excursus on 8:20.) This clear self-designation must have been somewhat ambiguous or else Jesus' question would have been fatuous. Which form of the question is original is not certain. But that only Jesus uses the title in the Gospels, and that it can serve as a self-designation with some ambiguous messianic significance, favors the view that Matthew is original, while Mark and Luke preserve the self-designation ("I") but delete the title for fear that their non-Jewish readers, who have learned to see messianic significance in it but not Jesus' self-designation, might think the question odd.

14 Opinion on Jesus' identity was divided. Some thought he was John the Baptist risen from the dead--Herod Antipas's view (14:2). Those who thought he was Elijah saw him as forerunner to a Messiah still to come (see on 3:1-3; 11:9-10; 17:10-13; Mal 4:5-6). Only Matthew mentions Jeremiah, the first of the so-called latter prophets in the Hebrew canon (cf. on 27:9). There may have been late Jewish traditions about Jeremiah's death that supported this identification (cf. 2Macc 2:1-12; 15:14-15); and it is possible that some onlookers had been struck by the mixture of authority and suffering characteristic of Jesus' ministry and well exemplified by Jeremiah (Bonnard).

J. Carmignac ("Pourquoi Jeremie est-il mentionne en Matthieu 16,14?" *Tradition und Glaube* , edd. G. Jeremias et al. [Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und

Ruprecht, 1971], pp. 283-98) suggests that Jesus, like Jeremiah, must have seemed to many like a prophet of doom because of his negative prognosis for Israel. "One of the prophets" testifies to the diversity of eschatological expectations in Jesus' day, some of the people expecting a long series of prophetic forerunners. But no group was openly and thoughtfully confessing Jesus as Messiah. Probably aberrations such as 9:27; 15:22 were considered extravagant devices used by desperate people, not maliciously, but in deep hope that their own needs might be met. What we must recognize is that christological confession was not cut and dried, black or white. It was possible to address Jesus with some messianic title without complete conviction, or while still holding some major misconceptions about the nature of his messiahship, and therefore stopping short of unqualified allegiance or outright confession. If Peter had some misconception (vv. 21-23), how much more misconception would there be in disciples outside the Twelve'? Thus confessions like those in 9:27; 15:22 may not be so

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surprising.

15-16 The "you" is emphatic and plural (v. 15). Therefore, at least in part, Peter serves as spokesman for the Twelve (as he often does: cf. 15:15-16, 19:25-28, 26:40 Mark 11:20-22, Luke 12:41; John 6:67-70; cf. Acts 2:37-38, 5:29). Peter's confession

(v. 16) is direct "You are the Christ" (Mark); "The Christ of God" (Luke); "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew). (For comments regarding Messiah = Christ, see on 1:1.) Majority opinion assigns "the Son of the living God" to Matthean redaction, a sort of explanatory gloss. Yet this may be premature. Ben F. Meyer (pp. 189-91) has given good reason for accepting Matthew's form as authentic: (1) it better explains the genesis of the other forms, not only in Mark and Luke, but also "the Holy One of God" in John 6:69, than does Mark's "You are the Christ"; (2) "Son of God" may well have had purely messianic significance in Peter's mind (see on 3:17; 11:27; 14:33), even though it came to indicate divinity (Bonnard; cf. excursus on "Son of Man" at 8:

20); and (3) other details in this pericope support Matthew's priority (see on vv. 17-19). Guthrie (*NT Theology* , pp. 305f.) reminds us that since the other synoptists record the application of "Son of God" to Jesus in other contexts, it is not intrinsically unlikely here.

17-19 Many scholars doubt the authenticity of these verses because they are missing in Mark and Luke. We may note that in addition to positions that simply deny that these words are authentic (e.g., Bultmann, *NT Theology* , 1:45; J. Kahmann, "Die Verheissung an Petrus," in Didier, pp. 261-80), there are more sophisticated options.

O. Cullmann (Peter: *Disciple-Apostle-Martyr* [London: SCM, 1953], pp. 158-70) holds that the *saying* is authentic, but not the *setting* , which originally lay during the passion period, in some such place as Luke 22:31-38. R.E. Brown

et al. (*Peter* , pp. 85ff.) argue that the origin of this saying lies in some tradition on the Resurrection. And recently Max Wilcox ("Peter and the Rock: A Fresh Look at Matthew xvi.17-19," NTS 22 [1976]: 73-88) has held that these verses spring from some ecclesiastical linking of Jesus as the Son with the "rejected stone" and related testimonia (Ps 118:22-23; Isa 8: 14; 28:16), and that the possibility of linking "stone" with Peter's name prompted the transfer of this category from Jesus to Peter. Critical orthodoxy largely concurs that "church" is an anachronism; that the omission of the word "this" in the Greek text of v. 17 suggests that the words did not originally stand here (Cullmann); and that words such as "blessed," "my Father," and "in heaven" are characteristically Matthean and are therefore probably inauthentic. But B.F. Meyer (pp. 185-97) has recently mounted a detailed defense of the authenticity of vv. 17-19. Some of his points, plus one or two others, are included below.

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1. "Blessed" is not exclusively Matthean; and "my Father in heaven" no more vitiates the authenticity of this saying than it does of the opening line of the Lord's prayer (6:9). This is so of any view of the relation between 6:9-13 and Luke 11:2-4 since a redactional formulation says nothing about authenticity unless we are thinking in terms only of *ipsissima verba* , not *ipsissima vox* . 2. The omission of "this" from the Greek in v. 17 does not prove the saying was moved from some other place. Greek transitive verbs often omit the direct object where it is obvious. The verb in question, *apokalypto* ("I reveal"), is used transitively seven other times in the NT. Three of these require for clarity inclusion of the direct object. Of the remaining four (11:27; Luke 10:22; 1Cor 2:10; Philippians 3:15), where the meaning is so clear that no direct object must be included, only one of the four has it (viz., Philippians 3:15). Matthew 16:17 fits the majority usage. 3. The use of "church" is not anachronistic: see on v. 18.

4. B.F. Meyer (pp. 189f.) advances good reasons for doubting Mark's priority in this pericope but rightly points out that even if Matthew depends on Mark, this says nothing at all about the historical value of Matthew's redaction (pp. 71f.; cf. Introduction, sections 1-3). 5. The verb "reveal" has its closest links, not with any resurrection text, but with 11: 25, where, as in 16:17, "the Father's revealing is correlative to the insight of faith, and the correlation `revelation/faith' is placed in the present of the ministry" (B.F. Meyer, p. 192). Similar things can be said for the next closest parallel, viz., 11:27.

Though the history of the interpretation of these verses is even more tortuous than the recent history of critical opinion about them, part of it has been well chronicled by Joseph A. Burgess (*A History of the Exegesis of Matthew 16:17-19 from 1781 to 1965* [Ann Arbor: Edwards Brothers, 1976]).

17 For "Blessed," see on 5:3. Jesus is the "Son of the living God" (v. 16); Peter is the "son of Jonah" (cf. Notes). Yet Jesus' Father has revealed to

Peter the truth he has just confessed. Indeed, no one knows the Son except the Father (11:27; cf. John 6:44), who has now graciously revealed his identity to Peter. Such knowledge could not have originated in "flesh and blood"--a common Jewish expression referring to man as a mortal being (cf. 1Cor 15:50; Gal 1:16; Eph 6:12; Heb 2:14; cf. Ecclesiasticus 14:18; 17:31.) We must neither minimize nor exaggerate this revelation of the Father to Peter. Similar confessions by others do not necessarily evoke similar theological conclusions (e.g., 21:9; 27:54); so Peter's confession assumes a God-given insight deeper than these.

On the other hand we need not suppose that the idea that Jesus was Messiah was here entering the apostles' minds for the first time. If so, Jesus' closest disciples were remarkably obtuse (e.g., see on 5:17-48; 7:21-23; 11:2-6). John's witness is surely

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sound: the disciples began following Jesus in the hope that he was the Messiah (John 1:41, 45, 49). But their understanding of the nature of Jesus' messiahship was hindered by their own expectations (see on 16:21-23); and they did not come into a full "Christian" understanding till after Easter. This verse marks a crucial stage along that growth in understanding and faith. Partial as it was (16:21-23), Peter's firm grasp of the fact that Jesus is the Messiah set him apart from the uncertainty and confusion of the crowd and could only be the result of the Father's disclosure. Indeed, the depth of Peter's conviction was the very thing that simultaneously made talk of Jesus' suffering and death difficult to integrate and prevented more serious defection when the one confessed as Messiah went to his death on a Roman cross.

18 *And I tell you ...* : Weiss sees a contrast between Jesus and his Father, as if Jesus were saying, "Just as the *Father* revealed something to you and thereby honored you, so now I do the same." But the formula is common enough in places without such a contrast, and this may be an unwarranted refinement. The words simply point to what is coming.

***that you are Peter ...* : The underlying Aramaic *kepa* ("Cephas" in John 1:42; 1Cor 15:5; Gal 1:18 et al.) was an accepted name in Jesus' day (see on 4:18). Though B.F. Meyer (pp. 186-87) insists that Jesus gave the name Cephas to Simon at this point, Jesus merely made a pun on the name (4:18; 10:2; Mark 3:16; John 1:42). Yet Meyer is right to draw attention to the "rock" motifs on which the name Cephas is based (pp. 185-86, 194-95), motifs related to the netherworld and the temple (and so connoting images of "gates of Hades" and "church": see below.) The Greek *Kephas* (Eng. "Cephas") transliterates the Aramaic, and *Petros* ("Peter") is the closest Greek translation. P. Lampe's argument ("Das Spiel mit dem Petrusnamen--Matt. xvi.18," NTS 25 [1979]: 227-45) that both *kepa* and *petros* originally referred to a small "stone," but not a "rock" (on which something could be built), until Christians extended the term to explain the riddle of Simon's name is**

baseless. True, the Greek *petros* commonly means "stone" in pre-Christian literature; but the Aramaic *kepa*, which underlies the Greek, means "(massive) rock" (cf. H. Clavier, "Petros kai petra," *Neutestamentliche Studien*, ed. W. Eltester [Berlin: Alfred Topelmann, 1957], pp. 101-3). *and on this rock ...* "Rock" now becomes *petra* (feminine), and on the basis of the distinction between *petros* (above) and *petra* (here), many have attempted to avoid identifying Peter as the rock on which Jesus builds his church. Peter is a mere "stone," it is alleged; but Jesus himself is the "rock," as Peter himself attests (1 Peter 2:98) (so, among others, Lenski, Gander, Walvoord). Others adopt some other distinction: e.g., "upon this rock of revealed truth--the truth you have just confessed--I will build my church" (Allen). Yet if it were not for Protestant reactions against extremes of

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Roman Catholic interpretation, it is doubtful whether many would have taken "rock" to be anything or anyone other than Peter. 1. Although it is true that *petros* and *petra* can mean "stone" and "rock" respectively in earlier Greek, the distinction is largely confined to poetry. Moreover the underlying Aramaic is in this case unquestionable; and most probably *kepa* was used in both clauses ("you are *kepa* and on this *kepa* "), since the word was used both for a name and for a "rock." The Peshitta (written in Syriac, a language cognate with Aramaic) makes no distinction between the words in the two clauses. The Greek makes the distinction between *petros* and *petra* simply because it is trying to preserve the pun, and in Greek the feminine *petra* could not very well serve as a masculine name. 2. Paronomasia of various kinds is very common in the Bible and should not be belittled (cf. Barry J. Beitzel, "Exodus 3:14 and the Divine Name: A Case of Biblical Paronomasia," *Trinity Journal* [1980]: 5-20; BDF, par. 488). 3. Had Matthew wanted to say no more than that Peter was a stone in contrast with Jesus the Rock, the more common word would have been *lithos* ("stone" of almost any size). Then there would have been no pun--and that is just the point! 4. The objection that Peter considers Jesus the rock is insubstantial because metaphors are commonly used variously, till they become stereotyped, and sometimes even then. Here Jesus builds his church; in 1 Corinthians 3:10, Paul is "an expert builder." In 1 Corinthians 3:11, Jesus is the church's foundation; in Ephesians 2:19-20, the apostles and prophets are the foundation (cf. also Rev 21:14), and Jesus is the "cornerstone." Here Peter has the keys; in Revelation 1:18; 3:7, Jesus has the keys. In John 9:5, Jesus is "the light of the world"; in Matthew 5:14, his disciples are. None of these pairs threatens Jesus' uniqueness. They simply show how metaphors must be interpreted primarily with reference to their immediate contexts. 5. In this passage Jesus is the builder of the church and it would be a strange mixture of metaphors that also sees him within the same clauses as its foundation. None of this requires that conservative Roman Catholic views be endorsed (for examples of such views, cf. Lagrange, Sabourin). The text says nothing about Peter's successors, infallibility, or exclusive authority. These late

interpretations entail insuperable exegetical and historical problems--e.g., after Peter's death, his "successor" would have authority over a surviving apostle, John. What the NT does show is that Peter is the first to make this formal confession and that his prominence continues in the earliest years of the church (Acts 1-12). But he, along with John, can be sent by other apostles (Acts 8:14); and he is held accountable for his actions by the Jerusalem church (Acts 11:1-18) and rebuked by Paul (Gal 2:11-14). He is, in short, *primus inter pares* ("first among equals"); and on the foundation of such men (Eph 2:

20), Jesus built his church. That is precisely why Jesus, toward the close of his earthly ministry spent so much time with them. The honor was not earned but stemmed from

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divine revelation (v. 17) and Jesus' building work (v. 18).

I will build my church ... : Ekklesia ("church") occurs only here and at 18:17 in the Gospels. Etymologically it springs from the verb *ekkaleo* ("call out from") and refers to those who are "called out"; but usage is far more important than etymology in determining meaning. In the NT *ekklesia* can refer to assemblies of people in a nonreligious setting (Acts 19:39); and once it refers to God's OT people, the "church" in the desert at the giving of the law (Acts 7:38; of Heb 2:12). But in Acts and in the Epistles it usually refers to Christian congregations or to all God's people redeemed by Christ. Therefore R. Bultmann ("Die Frage nach der Echtheit von Mt 16, 17-19," *Theologische Blätter* 20 [1941]: col. 265-79) argues that the use of *ekklesia* in Matthew 16:18; 18:17 cannot be authentic. It refers to a practicing group of Christians, a separate community, or a Christian synagogue in contrast to the Jewish synagogues, and is presided over by Peter. K.L. Schmidt (TDNT, 3:525) suggests that the Aramaic term behind *ekklesia* in Matthew is a late term, *kenista*, which could mean either "the people [of God]" or "a [separate] synagogue." In fact the strongest linguistic evidence runs in another direction. Whenever *ekklesia* in the LXX is translating Hebrew, the Hebrew word is *qahal* ("assembly," "meeting," "gathering"), with reference to various kinds of "assemblies" (cf. E. Jenni and C. Westermann, eds., *Theologisches Handwörterbuch zum Alten Testament*, 2 vols., 3d ed. [München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1978-79], 2:610-19), but increasingly used to refer to God's people, the assembly of Yahweh.

The Hebrew *qahal* has a broad semantic range and is not always rendered *ekklesia*; sometimes in the LXX it is translated "synagogue" or "crowd." "Synagogue" customarily translates an entirely different Hebrew word (*edah*, "corporate congregation"), which the LXX never translates *ekklesia* (on these words, see DNTT, 1:291ff.). Thus *ekklesia* ("church") is entirely appropriate in Matthew 16:18; 18:17, where there is no emphasis on institution, organization, form of worship, or separate synagogue. Even the

idea of "building" a people springs from the OT (Ruth 4:11; 2Sam 7:13-14; 1 Chronicles 17:12-13; Pss 28:5; 118:22; Jer 1:10; 24:6; 31:4; 33:7; Amos 9:11). "Jesus' announcement of his purpose to build his *ekklesia* suggests ... that the fellowship established by Jesus stands in direct continuity with the Old Testament Israel" (Ladd, *NT Theology* , p. 110), construed as the faithful remnant with the eyes of faith to come to terms with the new revelation. Acknowledged as Messiah, Jesus responds that he will build his *ekklesia* , his people, his church--which is classic messianism. "It is hard to know what kind of thinking, other than confessional presupposition, justifies the tendency of some commentators to dismiss this verse as not authentic. A Messiah without a Messianic Community would have been unthinkable to any Jew" (Albright and Mann). Implicitly, then, the verse also embraces a claim to messiahship. The "people of

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Yahweh" become the people of Messiah (cf. also 13:41). If the Qumran community thinks of itself as the "people of the covenant," Jesus speaks of his followers as *his* people--his church--who come in time to see themselves as people of the new covenant established by Messiah's blood (26:28). Jesus' "church" is not the same as his "kingdom" (contra Hill, *Matthew*): the two words belong to different concepts, the one to "people" and the other to "rule" or "reign" (see on 13:28-30, 36-43). But neither must they be opposed to each other, as if both cannot occupy the same place in time (contra Walvoord). The messianic reign is calling out the messianic people. The kingdom has been inaugurated; the people are being gathered. So far as the kingdom has been inaugurated in advance of its consummation, so far also is Jesus' church an outpost in history of the final eschatological community. "The implication is inescapable that, in the establishment of the church, there was to be a manifestation of the kingdom or rule of God" (Stonehouse, *Witness of Matthew* , p. 235). When the kingdom is consummated, then Messiah's "assembly" shall also attain the richest blessings Messiah's reign can give. Nothing, therefore, can eliminate Messiah's church or prevent it from reaching that consummation.

***The gates of Hades will not overcome it* (On Hades, see DNTT, 2:206-8; SBK, 4: 1016-29; comments on 5:22; 11:23.): The "gates of Hades" have been taken to represent the strength of Satan and his cohorts (since "gates" can refer to "fortifications," Gen 22:17; Ps 127:5): the church, because Jesus is building it, cannot be defeated by the hosts of darkness. Other scholars focus, not on "gates," but on "Hades" and, turning to Revelation 1:18, think this means that death will not prevent Messiah's people from rising at the last day. But "gates of Hades" or very similar expressions are found in canonical literature (Job 17:16; 38:17; Pss 9:13; 107:18; Isa 38:10), noncanonical Jewish literature (Wisdom 16:13; 3Macc 5:51; Pss Sol 16:2), and pagan literature (Homer *Iliad* 9. 312; *Odyssey* 11.277; Aeschylus *Agam* . 1291; Euripedes *Hecuba* 1), and seem to refer to death and dying. Hence RSV: "The powers of death shall not prevail against it." Because the church**

is the assembly of people Jesus Messiah is building, it cannot die. This claim is ridiculous if Jesus is nothing but an overconfident popular preacher in an unimportant vassal state of first-century Rome. It is the basis of all hope for those who see Jesus as the Messiah who builds his people.

19 *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven* : As in v. 18, the promise goes beyond the days of Jesus' earthly ministry. What Jesus' disciples thought this meant at the time is uncertain. Perhaps they hoped that when Jesus established his earthly reign and defeated the Romans, they would hold major posts under his reign (cf. Bonnard). In the postresurrection period, the nature of this inaugurated kingdom became

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progressively clearer.

Here, as in 7:21, the "kingdom" (see on 3:2; 5:3) is to be entered. The metaphor therefore changes: from being the rock-foundation of the church, Peter now becomes the one who wields the keys of the kingdom (as Alexander points out, the metaphor would be equally mixed if Jesus-rock-foundation "gives" the keys). The person with the keys has power to exclude or permit entrance (cf. Rev 9:1-6; 20:1-3). There may be an allusion here to the chief stewards of monarchs (Isa 22:15, 22). But we cannot go on without understanding the binding and loosing (v. 19b) to which the keys are related. *whatever you bind ... loosed in heaven ...* : Five separate and difficult questions must be considered to understand the force of this verse, and some answers must be tentative. 1. How are the future periphrastic perfects to be translated? In 1938, J.R. Mantey ("The Mistranslation of the Perfect Tense in John 20:23, Matthew 16:19, and Matthew 18:18," JBL 58 [1939]: 243-49) argued that the perfects in all three instances must have their normal force. The finite perfect in John 20:23 must be rendered "If you forgive anyone his sins, they have already been forgiven"; and when the perfect participle is given its full force in the Matthean passages, the periphrastic future perfect in 16:19 becomes "whatever you bind on earth *shall have been* bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth *shall have been loosed* in heaven" (similarly for 18:18). Thus, as Mantey insisted, there is no evidence for "sacerdotalism or priestly absolution" in the NT. In the same issue of JBL, H.J. Cadbury ("The Meaning of John 20:23, Matthew 16: 19, and Matthew 18:18," pp. 251-54) noted that the six perfects or future perfects in the three passages all occur in the apodosis of a general condition. The question, then, is "whether a perfect in the apodosis indicates an action or condition prior to the time of the apodosis" (p. 251); and, citing 1John 2:5; James 2:10; Romans 13:8; 14:23, along with certain grammarians (BDF, par. 344; Moulton, *Prolegomena*, p. 271; RHG, pp. 897-98, 908), he denied that this must be so. Although he thought the future an acceptable translation here, he suggested that in Matthew the perfects have the force "shall be once for

all" (cf. Allen's "Whatsoever thou bindest *shall remain bound* , etc."). The matter was picked up by W.T. Dayton ("The Greek Perfect Tense in Relation to John 20:23, Matthew 16:19, and Matthew 18:18" [Th.D. dissertation, Northern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1945]) and once more by J.R. Mantey ("Evidence that the Perfect Tense in John 20:23 and Matthew 16:19 is Mistranslated," JETS 16 [1973]: 129-38). Both works are marred by the tendency to cite quotations from grammarians in their favor without a fair handling of counterarguments. Of more use are Dayton's short lists of periphrastic future perfects in Strabo, Lucian, and some papyri; for all these retain perfect force, even when used in the apodosis of a general

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condition. This is valuable comparative material, since periphrastic future perfects in the NT are very rare; and there are no finite future perfects at all. While the question is partly grammatical, it must be noted that, regardless of whether v. 19 is translated as an English future perfect or as an English future, there are difficulties in interpretation. If the tense is translated as a future ("shall be bound"), the passage can be taken to justify some form of extreme sacerdotalism without unambiguous defense elsewhere in the NT. But if it is translated as a future perfect ("shall have been bound"), it can be taken to support the notion that the disciple must therefore enjoy infallible communication from God in every question of "binding and loosing," a communication that is the role of the so-called charismatic gifts. Paul Elbert ("The Perfect Tense in Matthew 16:19 and Three Charismata," JETS 17 [1974]: 149-55) introduces them here with no sensitivity to broader questions of context, awareness of anachronism, or consciousness that the gifts do not provide infallible guidance (cf. 1Cor 14:29). But in neither case do these conclusions *necessarily* follow. More moderate interpretations of both grammatical options are possible. But the extremes must be noted, especially because some give the impression that if the Greek is rendered as an English future perfect, we have eliminated sacerdotalism. The truth is that sacerdotalism will neither stand nor fall by these texts alone, though it may be helped or hindered by them. Meanwhile a future perfect rendering is itself not without theological problems. Recent commentators and grammarians are divided on this question. Hendriksen, who finds Mantey's way of taking the perfects "artificial," opts for "shall be and shall definitely remain bound/loosed," a variation of Allen; and Hendriksen can scarcely be called a sacerdotalist. Many grammarians treat the perfect participle in this construction as little more than an adjective, with little perfect sense remaining (K.L. McKay, "On the Perfect and Other Aspects in New Testament Greek," unpublished, graciously sent me by the author; Moule, *Idiom Book* , p. 18; cf. esp. Luke 12:52, where it is very difficult to find any perfect force at all ["there will be ... divided": the parallel future passive in the next verse makes this clear]). But Turner (*Insights* , pp. 80-82; id.,

***Syntax* , p. 82) challenges these views. In disagreeing with Allen and Hendriksen, he points out that the future force is restricted to the auxiliary verb *estai* ("will be") and is not found in the participle, which must retain its perfect sense, thereby agreeing with Mantey. Turner further argues that this is even clearer in John 20:23, where the finite perfect, not the periphrastic future perfect, is used. Similarly Albright and Mann say, "The church on earth carries out heaven's decisions, not heaven ratifying the church's decisions," which is something of a caricature of the options. What Turner (*Syntax* , pp. 82-83) and Zerwick (pars. 288f.) point out, however, is that where finite perfects have some force other than the normal perfect in the NT, they**

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tend to be in well-known stereotyped forms: *oida* ("I know," not "I have known"); *pepoitha* ("I am persuaded"); *hesteka* ("I stand"). Similar is the periphrastic future perfect in Hebrews 2:13: although *esomai pepoithos* means "I will put my trust" (NIV), not I will have put my trust, this participle commonly takes on perfect form with present meaning. Likewise, when the perfect has an aorist force (Zerwick, pars. 288-89; as at 13:46), there are normally good reasons for it, as when the verb is defective and has no aorist form (cf. further discussion in BDF, pars. 340ff) This leads us to the following conclusion: Where questions dealing strictly with Greek syntax are asked, it seems impossible to reach a firm decision, because there are too many clear instances where perfects, whether finite or participial, have something other than perfect force. But where paradigmatic questions are asked--Why was this word or syntax used instead of something else)--we can make some progress. In John 20:23 the Greek perfects must be taken as retaining their normal force as perfects, because both verbs have acceptable present and future tenses used elsewhere: neither verb exhibits a preferential pattern for the perfect. The perfect participles in the periphrastic constructions of Matthew 16:19; 18:18 are based on the two verbs *lyo* ("I loose") and *deo* ("I bind"). Evidence regarding the latter is ambiguous; it often occurs as a perfect participle in the NT, sometimes as an aorist participle, never as a present participle; so one might hold that its perfect-participle form has purely adjectival or present force in some instances--a debatable point. But the former is unambiguous. *Lyo* has a full range of forms, and it is difficult to see why Matthew did not use either the future or the present participle in a periphrastic future if that was all he meant. This result spills over onto *deo* ("I bind"), since the two verbs are so tightly linked in these verses. But though they must therefore be rendered "shall have been bound/loosed," what that means here awaits the rest of the argument. 2. Does the "whatever" (*ho*) refer to things or people? Formally *ho* is neuter, and "things" might be expected. Moreover the rabbis spoke of "binding" and "loosing" in terms of laying down Halakah (rules of conduct): Shammai is strict and "binds" many things on the people, while Hillel allows greater

laxity and "looses" them. It might be argued, then, that in Acts 15:10 Peter looses what certain Judaizers want to bind. Yet despite this, it is better to take the binding and loosing in Matthew 16:19 to refer to persons, not rules. The neuter *hosa* ("whatever") occurs in 18:18, where the context demands that persons are meant. Indeed, Greek often uses the neuter of people for classes or categories rather than for individuals. The context of v. 19 supports this; for the keys in the preceding clause speak of permission for entering the kingdom or being excluded from it, not rules of conduct under heaven's rule. Acts 15:10 is scarcely an example of the opposite viewpoint, for there Peter does not proceed by legislative fiat. The church in Acts 15 seeks spiritually minded consensus, not imposed Halakoth; and James is more prominent than Peter.

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3. But exactly what is meant by this "binding and loosing" of persons, and is it absolute? And how is it related to the power of the keys? Substantial help comes from comparing Jesus' denunciation of the teachers of the law in Luke 11:52. There they are told that they "have taken away the key to knowledge" and have not only failed to enter [the kingdom] themselves but have "hindered those who were entering." Clearly, then, by their approach to the Scriptures, Jesus save they are making it impossible for those who fall under the malign influences of their teaching to accept the new revelation in Jesus and enter the kingdom. They take away "the key to knowledge." In contrast, Peter, on confessing Jesus as Messiah, is told he has received this confession by the Father's revelation and will be given the keys of the kingdom: i.e., by proclaiming "the good news of the kingdom" (4:23), which, by revelation he is increasingly understanding, he will open the kingdom to many and shut it against many. Fulfillments of this in Acts are not found in passages like 15:10 but in those like 2:14- 39; 3:11-26, so that by this means the Lord added to the church those who were being saved (2:45), or, otherwise put, Jesus was building his church (Matt 16:18). But the same gospel proclamation alienates and excludes men; so we also find Peter shutting up the kingdom from men (Acts 4:11-12; 8:20-23). The periphrastic future perfects are then perfectly natural: Peter accomplishes this binding and loosing by proclaiming a gospel that has already been given and by making personal application on that basis (Simon Magus). Whatever he binds or looses will have been bound or loosed, so long as he adheres to that divinely disclosed gospel. He has no direct pipeline to heaven, still less do his decisions force heaven to comply; but he may be authoritative in binding and loosing because heaven has acted first (cf. Acts 18:9-10). Those he ushers in or excludes have already been bound or loosed by God according to the gospel already revealed and which Peter, by confessing Jesus as the Messiah) has most clearly grasped. 4. Does this promise apply to Peter only, to the apostolic band, or to the church at large? The interpretation given so far broadly fits a major theme of Matthew's Gospel: the disciples were called to be fishers of men (4:19), to be salt (5:13) and light (5:14-

16), to preach the good news of the kingdom (10:6-42), and, after the Resurrection, to disciple the nations and teach them all that Jesus commanded (28:18-20). Within this framework Matthew 16:18-19 fits very well. Unlike the messianic kingdom expected by so many Jews, which would come climactically without any agreement or action taken by men, Jesus announces something different. In full Christian perspective the kingdom will be consummated in sudden, apocalyptic fashion at the Parousia, when God's actions are final and quite independent of human means. But now the keys of the kingdom are confided to men. They must proclaim the Good News, forbid entrance, urge conversion. They constitute a small minority in a big world; their mission will be to function as the eschatological *ekklesia* , the people of God Jesus is building within this

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world. Inevitably the assignment involves them in using the keys to bind and loose. These verses are therefore the result of the partially realized--and one day to be consummated--eschatology implicit in the NT. Understanding the text thus largely answers the question as to how far the promise applies; for the focus is no longer on the individual and what he does or does not represent but on his place in salvation-history. In one sense Peter stands with the other disciples as fishers of men, as recipients of the Great Commission (notice in v. 20 that Jesus warns *all* his disciples, not just Peter, to tell no one). In that sense the disciples stand as paradigms for all believers during this period of redemptive history. But this does not exclude a special role for Peter or the apostles (see on v. 18). Peter was the foundation, the first stone laid: he enjoys this "salvation historical primacy," and on him others are laid. This results in certain special roles in the earliest years of the Christian church. But notions of hierarchy or sacerdotalism are simply irrelevant to the text. Confirmation that this is the way 16:19 is to be taken comes at 18:18. If the church, Messiah's eschatological people already gathered now, has to exercise the ministry of the keys, if it must bind and loose, then clearly one aspect of that will be the discipline of those who profess to constitute it. Thus tie two passages are tightly joined: 18:18 is a special application of 16:19. Again, if we may judge from Paul's ministry, this discipline is a special function of apostles, but also of elders and even of the whole church (1Cor 5:1-13; 2Cor 13:10; Titus 2:15; 3:10-11)--an inescapable part of following Jesus during this age of the inaugurated kingdom and of the proleptic gathering of Messiah's people. The church of Jesus the Christ is more than an audience. It is a group with confessional standards, one of which (viz., "Jesus is the Christ") here precipitates Jesus' remarks regarding the keys. The continuity of the church depends as much on discipline as on truth. Indeed, faithful promulgation of the latter both entails and presupposes the former. It appears, then, that the text is not interested in whether Peter's (or the church's) decisions are infallible. Its concern is with the role Jesus' disciples must play within this new phase of redemptive history. To press the "whatever" absolutely not only misunderstands the

context but fails to reckon with Jesus' tendency to use absolutist language even when he cannot possibly mean to be taken that way (see on 5:33-37). 5. How is the contrast between "heaven" and "earth" to be understood? Our exegesis determines the answer. Some have understood the contrast temporally: what is bound or loosed now on earth will be bound or loosed then in heaven. But if our remarks on the periphrastic future perfect are correct, then such an interpretation is impossible. Rather, "heaven" (= "God," as in "kingdom of heaven") has revealed the gospel in the person of Jesus the Messiah, and heaven's rule has thereby broken in. Thus Jesus' disciples, in accordance with his gospel of the kingdom, take up the

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ministry of the keys and bind and loose on earth what has with the coming of the kingdom been bound and loosed in heaven. The thought is akin to, though more comprehensive than, Acts 18:9-10.

20 Jesus' warning his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ does not stem from personal reluctance to accept the title, nor from merely qualified acceptance subject to teaching that he was a suffering Messiah (vv. 21-26), still less because all the commands to keep silence are church constructions designed to create a "messianic secret" to explain why Jesus failed openly to present himself to the people as Messiah. The categories are wrong. "Contrary to common misappropriation of the messianic secret, it was not Jesus' purpose to conceal his messianic identity. It was his purpose to set before Israel symbol-charged acts and words implying a persistent question: Who do you say that I am?" (B.F. Meyer, p. 305, n. 59, see also pp. 250; 309-10, nn. 119-20). Jesus steadily refuses to make an explicit messianic claim, refusing to bow to demands for a definitive sign (12:38-39; 16:4) and insisting that the "step into messianic faith would be taken only under the combined impact of his densely symbolic career and of a divine illumination disclosing its sense" (ibid., p. 250; cf. 11:4, 25-26; 16:17). The disciples are now charged with the same reticence. Having come to faith, they must not go beyond the Master himself in the means and limitations of his self-disclosure. The aim must not be to hide Jesus' identity from Israel or to keep it an esoteric secret but to guarantee (1) that the decisive factors in the conversion of men are not nationalistic fervor and impenitent messianic expectation but faith, obedience, and submission to Jesus; and (2) that the events leading to the Cross are not to be short-circuited by premature disclosure. After the Resurrection there could be unqualified proclamation (cf. 10:27), but not yet. The disciples were beginning to comprehend the first of these two aims; but the second, as the next pericope shows, completely eluded them (cf. comments on 13:10-17, 34-35, 51-52).

b. The first passion prediction (16:21-23)

21 Kingsbury (Matthew, pp. 7ff.), following Lohmeyer (*Matthaus*) and Stonehouse (*Witness of Matthew* , pp. 129-31), argues strongly that *apo tote* ("From that time"), both here and at 4:17, marks a major turning point in Matthew. Turning point there is, but it is not at all clear that the structure of the entire Gospel is dominated by these twin foci. The same expression is found in 26:16, which marks a turning point in Judas Iscariot's pilgrimage but scarcely a major turning point in the book. On the contrary, the very nature of the expression links what follows with what precedes (cf. Introduction, section 14).

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For the meaning of "began," see on 11:7, 20, and compare 16:22. At the very least the verb implies that Jesus gave this explanation again and again. This is not the first time he alludes to his death (cf. 9:15; 10:38; 12:40; cf. also John 2:19; 3:14), but it is the first time he discusses it openly with his disciples. The time for symbols and veiled language was largely over now that they had recognized him as Messiah. That is probably the significance of the change from Mark's *didasko* ("I teach") to Matthew's *deiknyo* ("I point out," "I show"--not, as in NIV, "I explain"). Jesus had taught the Passion earlier but in symbolic language. Now he shows these things to his disciples clearly. Matthew's verb (*deiknyo*) is equivalent to Mark's clause: "He spoke plainly about this" (8:32). The prediction is remarkably detailed. Jesus must go to Jerusalem (cf. Luke 13:33); but the "must" of Jesus' suffering lies, not in unqualified determinism, nor in heroic determination (though some of both is present), but in willing submission to his Father's will. At Jerusalem, the killer of prophets (23:37), he will suffer many things (more details specified in 20:19) at the hands of the elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law--the three groups that largely constituted the Sanhedrin (see on 3:7; 26:59; one governing article, as in 16:1, 6; Pharisees would overlap with the first and third groups). There he would be killed and rise again the third day (see on 12:40). The parallel in Mark 8:31 uses Son of Man language (see on 8:20; 16:13). The authenticity of this and other passion predictions has been widely discussed. Bultmann (*Synoptic Tradition* , p. 151) flatly denies it. Jeremias and Zimmerli (pp. 57ff.) approach the question by examining whether there are any Jewish antecedents to the notion of a suffering Messiah. Hill (*Matthew*) thinks Jesus foresaw confrontation in Jerusalem, typical of the prophets, and the possibility of suffering and death, but doubts that he could have spoken so explicitly. C.F.D. Moule ("From Defendant to Judge and Deliverer: An Inquiry into the Use and Limitations of the Theme of Vindication in the New Testament," NTS 3 [1952-53]: 40-53) argues that the "Son of Man" (Mark 8:31), related to the "saints of the Most High" in Daniel 7, is vindicated after trial and suffering; so if Jesus takes this title and role to himself, he might well perceive the need to suffer before being exalted

(cf. 26:64). Lindars (*Apologetic* , pp. 60ff.) turns to Hosea 6:2 and suggests that historically Jesus spoke of resurrection, of being "raised to life," in a metaphor, as referring to the restoration of God's people. If so, what is surprising, especially in a book as studded with OT quotations as Matthew, is that Hosea is not mentioned nor his words clearly referred to, even allusively. On the face of it, our texts speak of Jesus' resurrection after being killed, not of Jesus' death followed by the restoration of God's people. Others have suggested that Jesus is thinking of Isaiah 53. These approaches seek to make some part of Jesus' passion predictions historically credible through some historical antecedent on which Jesus allegedly based his

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predictions. While this is not wrong, it is too restrictive for dealing with one who claims exclusive and intimate knowledge of the Father (11:27). Is it reasonable to think that Jesus could have predicted the details of his passion only if he read about them somewhere'? This is not to question the applicability of some of the OT allusions to him; it is rather to question the historical reductionism of some Gospel research. How much of Jesus' sayings about his death did the disciples understand before the events? The Gospel evidence points in two complementary directions. On the one hand the disciples understand perfectly well: otherwise, for instance, Peter could not possibly have rebuked Jesus (v. 22). On the other hand they cannot believe that Messiah will really be killed because their conceptions of the Messiah do not allow for a Suffering Servant. Therefore Peter dares to rebuke Jesus, and the disciples begin to think Jesus' predictions of his sufferings must be in some way nonliteral (Mark 9:10; Luke 9:45;. see on Matt 17:4).

22 Peter's rebuke reveals how little he understands the kind of messiahship Jesus has in mind. "Began" (cf. v. 21) suggests that Peter gets only so far before Jesus cuts him off (v. 23). Peter uses very strong language. "Never, Lord!" (cf. Notes) is a vehement Septuagintalism. "This shall never happen to you!" renders *ou me* ("never") plus a future indicative, instead of the expected aorist subjunctive. The future indicative after *ou me* , which makes a strong expression even stronger, is comparatively rare in the NT (only here and in 15:6; 26:35; Mark 13:31; 14:31; Luke 21:33; John 4:14; 6:35; 10: 5; Heb 10:17; Rev 9:6; 18:14), and most of these occurrences have textual variants. Peter's strong will and warm heart linked to his ignorance produce a shocking bit of arrogance. He confesses that Jesus is the Messiah and then speaks in a way implying that he knows more of God's will than the Messiah himself:

23 That "Jesus turned" means "Jesus turned away from Peter" or "turned his back on Peter" (B.F. Meyer) is doubtful: the connection with what follows is too awkward. If Jesus told Peter to get out of his way, even metaphorically, it must have been that Jesus was confronting him face to face, not turning away from him. It is better to assume that Jesus turned toward Peter to speak to him, the detail implying an indelible historical reminiscence. The sharp rebuke is made up of three parts. 1. *Hypage opiso mou* , *Satana* (lit., "Go behind me, Satan") could, by itself, be a call to discipleship (cf. the same adverb in Mark 1:17, 20; 8:34) and therefore be a sharp reminder for Peter to remember that as a disciple he must follow, not lead. But this ill suits the vocative "Satan." The verb *hypago* is therefore best taken in the way it is used in Matthew 4:10 ("Away from me, Satan"). It is not simply that Peter should get out of Jesus' sight (so NIV) but, as a stumbling block, out of Jesus' way. 2. A few moments earlier Jesus had called Peter a rock. Now he calls him a different

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kind of "rock," a *skandalon* ("a stumbling block"; see on 5:29). This is one of several striking parallels between vv. 13-20 and vv. 21-23 (cf. A. Vogtle, "Messiasbekenntnis und Petrusverheissung: Zur Komposition Mt 16,13-23 Par.," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 1 [1957]: 269). As Satan offered Jesus kingship without suffering (4:8-9), so Peter does the same, adopting current expectations of victorious messianic conquest (Pss Sol 17; cf. HJP, 2:517-25, and bibliography, pp. 488-92). Jesus recognizes the same diabolical source behind the same temptation. For him to acquiesce would be to rebel against the will of his Father. The notion of a suffering Messiah, misunderstood by Peter so that he became a stumbling block to Jesus, itself becomes, after the Resurrection, a stumbling block to other Jews (1Cor 1:23). 3. Peter was not thinking (the verb *phroneo* ["have in mind," NIV], common in Paul, is used elsewhere in the NT only here, in Mark 8:33, and in Acts 28:22) God's thoughts (viz., that Jesus must go to Jerusalem and die, v. 21), but men's thoughts (viz., that he must *not* go). In vv. 13-17 Peter, unlike other men, did think God's thoughts because divine revelation was given him. Here, however, he has switched sides, aligning himself not only with men but with Satan. Many scholars have thought the contrast between Peter in vv. 13-20 and vv. 21-23 so remarkable that they have worked out elaborate explanations of it. The most common view is that Peter is a stumbling block during Jesus' earthly ministry but becomes a foundation stone after the Resurrection (Brown et al., *Peter*, p. 94). There is an element of truth in this because Jesus' promise to Peter (vv. 17-19) does look to the future. But it looks to the future on the basis of the revelation Peter has *already* grasped (vv. 16-17). This means that historically Peter did and did not understand. Along with the other disciples, he understood much more than the crowds; yet even so he did not reach full understanding till after the Resurrection. The juxtaposition of vv. 13-20 and vv. 21-23 clearly shows the (at best) qualified understanding of Jesus' disciples at this point in salvation history (Trotter).

12. The way of discipleship (16:24-28)

Matthew omits mention of the crowds (cf. Mark 8:34) and omits Mark 8:38 because he has provided a parallel thought elsewhere (10:33). In v. 27 Matthew adds some words from Psalm 62:12. This pericope does two things: (1) after the passion prediction in vv. 21-23, it demands the disciples' willingness to deny themselves absolutely, a kind of death to self; (2) yet it assures us that the consummated kingdom will at last come. For the pericope's structure, see on v. 28.

24 Though addressed to Jesus' "disciples" (see on 5:1-2), the thought is expressed in widest terms-"if anyone." As in 10:33, Jesus speaks of "disowning" or "renouncing"

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oneself. The Jews renounced the Messiah (Acts 3:14); his followers renounce themselves (cf. Rom 14:7-9; 15:2-3). They "take up their cross" (cf. 10:38): any Jew in Palestine would know that the man condemned to crucifixion was often forced to carry part of his own cross (see on 27:32)--a burden and a sign of death. Though Jesus does not explicitly mention the mode of his death till a few days before it takes place (20:19), the impact of this saying must have multiplied after Golgotha. Death to self is not so much a prerequisite of discipleship to Jesus as a continuing characteristic of it (see on 4:19; cf. John 12:23-26). (On the differences between discipleship to Jesus and discipleship to first-century rabbis, see Bornkamm, *Jesus* , pp. 144f:)

25-26 The logic is relentless: *gar* ("for") begins vv. 25, 26, 27. For the sense of v. 25, see on 10:39. The orientation is eschatological: saving one's *psyche* ("life," NIV; see on 10:28) *now* will result in losing it *at the end* , and losing it now will result in finding it at the end. Verse 26 (compare 2Bar 51:15) furthers the argument by asking twin rhetorical questions, showing the folly of possessing all created abundance and wealth at the expense of one's *psyche* . NIV here changes its rendering "life" (v. 25) to "soul" (v. 26). This is not necessarily wrong. The abrupt change from the physical to the spiritual is amply attested elsewhere (cf. 8:22; John 4:10; 6:27); but the change in English is perhaps too sharp (cf. Luke 9:25: "his very self"). The focus is still eschatological, and the loss is the eternal loss of one's soul = life = self (on the afterlife, see on 22:23-33). Terminology aside, the bargain is a bad one.

27 Not only Jesus' example (v. 24; cf. 10:24-25), but the judgment he will exercise is an incentive to take up one's cross and follow him. The Son of Man (see on 8:20; 16:13) will come "in his Father's glory"--the same glory God his Father enjoys (cf. 26:64; John 17:1-5), another implicit claim to the status of deity--along with his angels, who both enhance his glory and serve

as his agents for the eschatological ingathering (13: 41; 24:31; 25:31-32; Luke 9:26). They are his angels: he stands so far above them that he owns them and uses them. At that time he will reward each person *kata ten praxin auton* ("according to what he has done"). The language is that of Psalm 62:12, where Yahweh rewards his people, and the Yahweh-Jesus exchange is not uncommon. The use of *praxis* ("conduct," "deeds") is Matthew's rendering of the Hebrew collective singular by a corresponding singular in Greek (Gundry, *Use of OT* , p. 138). For the concept of rewards, see on 5:12.

28 Many of the possible interpretations and difficult issues bound up with this verse have been treated at 10:23 and need not be repeated. Martin Kunzi (*Das Naheruyartungslogion Markus 9, 1 par: Geschichte seiner Auslegung* [Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1977]) has an excellent history of interpretation.

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The parallel in Mark 9:1 has a somewhat different "before" clause: "before they see the kingdom of God come with power." But this and Matthew's "before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom" may mean much the same thing, when it is remembered that "kingdom" is a dynamic concept (see on 3:2), and that "the coming of the Son of Man" also has a wide range of possible meanings (see on 10:23). The principal explanations of this verse may be briefly listed. 1. C.H. Dodd (*Parables* , pp. 53-54) interprets Mark's form of the saying as meaning "there are some who stand here who will never taste death until they have seen that the kingdom of God has come with power." In other words, the kingdom had come when Jesus was speaking (perfect participle *elelythuian*) and the disciples "see"--i.e., perceive that this is so. But, as many have shown, this is an unnatural way of taking the verb "to see"; and it introduces an insurmountable problem in Matthew, where the participle is *eschomenon* ("the kingdom of God coming"). 2. Many have held that this verse refers to the Transfiguration, the very next pericope in both Matthew and Mark. The problem is twofold. First, "some who are standing here will not taste death before they see" is an extraordinary way to refer to Peter, James, and John, who witness the Transfiguration a mere six days later (17:1). Second, as magnificent as the Transfiguration was, it is not entirely clear how the Son of Man comes in his kingdom (Matt) or the kingdom comes in power (Mark) through this event. 3. Others take this to refer to the Resurrection or to Pentecost. This view has been strenuously defended, but again it faces the difficulty that even these events are not far enough off to warrant the phrasing "some standing here who will not taste death." 4. Still others (Plummer, Gaechter) think the saying refers to the Fall of Jerusalem (a view this commentary defends for 10:23). The chief problem is that the context does not encourage this interpretation here, as it does in 10:23: there is no mention of the cities of Israel, of persecution in synagogue settings, etc. Indeed, the preceding verse (16:27) appears to refer to the Parousia. 5. Others interpret this verse as referring to the Parousia but draw divergent conclusions. Some think the saying shows that Jesus expected history to end within a few years but was

clearly wrong; others that "some who are standing here" refers not to those then standing there, but to the final generation, prophetically foreseen. If Matthew believed that the former was what Jesus meant, we would expect a Gospel full of the Thessalonian heresy, loaded with expectation of the Second Coming because few of the first generation would still be alive. Instead, the disciples' mission is to continue to the end of the age (28:20). The second alternative means that the words were calculated to be misunderstood by "those who [were] standing here." 6. Recently Bruce Chilton has offered a novel interpretation (*God in Strength* , pp. 251-74; id., "An Evangelical and Critical Approach to the Sayings of Jesus,"

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Themelios 3 [1977-78]: 78-85). He argues that "those not tasting death" is a technical reference to "immortals" like Elijah and Enoch (cf. Gen R 9:6; 4Ezra 6:26); that what Jesus actually said was that the immortals, like Elijah and Moses in the Transfiguration scene that immediately follows, do indeed witness the reality of the kingdom, understood as God's revelation on behalf of his people. If this is correct, then the problem of trying to find a suitable period to explain Jesus' prediction in Matthew 16:28 and Mark 9:1 is resolved: there is no prediction left. But Chilton's argument depends on adopting a doubtful reading in Mark 9:1 (cf. Brower, pp. 30-31) and on reasoning that maintains that both Mark and Matthew so completely misinterpreted Jesus that they make him say something quite different from what he really said. The word "here," despite Chilton's contention that it contrasts those not tasting death with Jesus' hearers, is most naturally understood to refer to them. Moreover, most of Chilton's sources for nailing down "those not tasting death" ("taste death" itself simply means "die"; cf. Heb 2:9) as a special phrase for "immortals" are either certainly or probably late. Whereas some elements of Jewish tradition did treat Moses, along with Elijah, as a "deathless figure," the OT firmly insists that "Moses the servant of the LORD died" (Deut 34:5). Furthermore, what "those who are standing here" will see is, in Mark, the kingdom "coming with power" or "having come with power"--i.e., they see evidence of the kingdom's powerful operation. This is interpreted by Matthew to be the equivalent of "the Son of Man coming in [or perhaps `with'; cf. BDF, par. 198 (2)] his reign"--i.e., they see evidence of the Son of Man's reigning authority. But Chilton's interpretation allows for none of this. In his view the "deathless figures" merely perceive the reality of God's reign; and thus Chilton confuses the kingdom with evidence for the coming of the kingdom. Jesus refers to those who "will not taste death," but Chilton treats them as if they are generically "those not tasting death." He does this by rightly pointing out that the words do not necessarily mean that those "standing" there will necessarily taste death after they have seen the kingdom coming in power. The words *ou me ... heos an* ("not

... until") reflect a Semitic construction, used in Genesis 28:15, where God says to Jacob, "I will not leave you until I have done what I have promised you," which does not mean God will leave him afterwards. From this Chilton deduces that "will not taste death until ['before,' NIV]" refers to "immortals," or "deathless figures," because the "until" does not necessarily mark the end of something. But this, though correct, misses two crucial points. First, whether "those standing" must one day die or not, With this expression the part of the sentence before the "until" clause always expresses something new or the ending or changing of something. The main clause always demands sequence and change. For example, in the Genesis passage just quoted, "until" may not mean that God will then leave Jacob; but the main clause does mean that God will keep every

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word of his promises and remain with Jacob, at least "until" all the promises have been fulfilled. Likewise in Mark 9:1 and Matthew 16:28, the "until" clause ("before," NIV) does not necessarily mean those "standing" must die; but the verse as a whole does mean they will at some future time witness the powerful operation of the reign of God (Mark), the coming of the Son of Man with his reign (Matthew), and that *at least* until then they will not die. Thus even Chilton's reconstruction does not eliminate the difficulty of determining what time period within salvation is in view. He has sidestepped the problem but not resolved it. Second, the *ou me ... heos an* ("not ... until") construction can mean that at the "until" the action or state of the first clause will cease (as in 23:39). There are numerous NT occurrences of this construction (5:18, 26; 10:23; 16:28; 23:39; 24:34; Mark 9:1; 14:25; Luke 9:27; 12:59; 13:35; 21:32); and in addition there are important variations with the same meaning, none more so than Luke 2:26, where it had been revealed to Simeon that he would not see death *until* (*prin an* or *prin e an* or *heos an*) he saw the Lord's Christ, after which, apparently he died. Many of these references give evidence of the termination of the action of the first clause when the time of the "until" clause has passed. Along with comments on the natural force of "here," these data suggest that the best way to take "some who are standing *here* will not taste death *until* they see the Son of Man coming with his reign" therefore depends solely on the meaning of "the Son of Man coming with his reign." If this is a reference to the Parousia, then the "some who are standing here" will not die even then; but in that case Jesus' chronology would be very wrong. If it is a reference to the demonstrable evidences of powerful kingship, then "some who are standing here" will die at some point after seeing those evidences. Moreover it must be said that Chilton's redaction- critical methods, though done with rigor, are so procrustean in distinguishing between the "traditional" and the "redactional" that they can only produce suspect results. 7. It seems best to take 16:28 as having a more general reference--viz., not referring simply to the Resurrection, to Pentecost, or the like, but to the manifestation of Christ's kingly reign exhibited after the Resurrection in a host of ways, not

the least of them being the rapid multiplication of disciples and the mission to the Gentiles. Some of those standing there would live to see Jesus' Gospel proclaimed throughout the Roman Empire and a rich "harvest" (cf. 9:37-38) of converts reaped for Jesus Messiah. This best suits the flexibility of the "kingdom" concept in the synoptic Gospels (see on 3:2; 10:23; 12:28) and the present context. Thus 16:28 does not refer to the same thing as 10:23. But the distinction is made, not on the basis that consistency is "the hobgoblin of little minds," but on the basis of context. This pericope contains an important chiasm:

v. 24: challenge to take up the cross and follow Christ in the immediate future

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v. 25: incentive reward and punishment at the Parousia

v. 26: central weighing of values

v. 27: incentive reward and punishment at the Parousia

v. 28: promise of witnessing the kingdom power of Jesus in the immediate future

The setting is quite different from that in 10:23. But if the evidence of the kingdom is seen in the church, this does not mean that the church and the kingdom are to be identified. Rather, at this point in salvation history it is the power of the kingdom working through Jesus' disciples that calls the church into being (see further on 13:36-43). Moreover, as Brower (pp. 32ff.) points out, the larger context also offers important insights. Though the Transfiguration is not the fulfillment of v. 28, it is related to it in an important way. Sections that stress suffering and the Cross (16:21-28; 17:9-13) envelop the Transfiguration and bracket this clearest manifestation of divine glory by suffering. The way to glory is the way of the Cross; and the reign of the Son of Man, which "some standing here" will see before they "taste death," will be inaugurated by the Cross.

13. The Transfiguration (17:1-13)

a. Jesus transfigured (17:1-8)

This passage raises difficult literary, historical, and theological questions. The *literary* questions arise largely from the several important "minor agreements" of Matthew and Luke (9:28-36) against Mark (9:2-8), raising

doubts about the adequacy of the two-source hypothesis (cf. Introduction, section 3). These have recently been scrutinized by F. Neirynck ("Minor Agreements of Matthew-Luke in the Transfiguration Story," in Hoffmann et al., pp. 253-66) and judged to be of greater relevance to the tendencies of Matthew and Luke than to source-critical relationships. The *historical* questions arise because there have been numerous attempts to explain the origin of this story in some setting other than what the evangelists present. Schweitzer (pp. 380ff) holds that when Jesus' dreams were shattered following the mission of the Twelve (he thought that mission would usher in the kingdom), he experienced an ecstatic, perhaps glossolalic, vision later reinterpreted by his disciples. This historical reconstruction depends on Schweitzer's broader theories, now long discredited (see on 10:23). More influential is Bultmann's view that this story is a misplaced resurrection narrative (*Synoptic Tradition* , p. 259). But this has been decisively rebutted by Robert H. Stein ("Is the Transfiguration [Mark 9:2-8] a Misplaced, Resurrection Account?" JBL 95 [1976]: 79-96), who shows that in language and form the theory of Bultmann and many others will not work.

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More recently B.D. Chilton ("The Transfiguration: Dominical Assurance and Apostolic Vision," NTS 27 [1980]: 115-24) has followed up his interpretation of v. 28 (details above) by positing that the genesis of the transfiguration narrative is his reconstruction of Jesus' saying behind v. 28--viz., Jesus swears by "deathless witnesses" that the "kingdom," the revelation of "God in strength," continues in forceful operation. These "deathless witnesses" were understood by the disciples to be Moses and Elijah, a step not dominical but consistent with it. Then Peter, James, and John, who saw themselves as Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu with reference to the new Moses (i.e., Jesus), emphasized the continuity of Jesus' disclosure with the prophetic revelation of old in this "visio-literary fashion." Chilton's first and essential step we have seriously questioned (see on v. 28), and the rest is little more than mere assertion without further supporting evidence. Even if his understanding of v. 28 were correct, it is difficult to see on what evidential grounds he holds that 17:1-8 is meant by the evangelist to be nonhistorical. The *theological* questions arise because the story has so many nuances--allusions to Moses, his experience of glory and his role in redemptive history, Elijah and his role as eschatological forerunner, Jesus' baptism (the Voice from heaven saying much the same thing, cf. 3:17), the Parousia, perhaps the shekinah glory, and others. The narrative is clearly a major turning point in Jesus' self-disclosure, and some attempt must be made to weave these themes together without merely allegorizing the passage. The best recent exposition is that of Liefeld. Also, G.H. Boobyer (*St. Mark and the Transfiguration Story* [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1942], pp. 1-47) provides a useful survey of theological options.

1 Precise time indicators like "after six days" are rare in the Synoptics apart from in the passion narrative. Luke's "about eight days after Jesus said this" (9:28) is based on a Greek way of speaking and means "about a week later."

Numerous suggestions have been made as to why "six days" should be mentioned. Bonnard, following H. Baltensweiler (*Die Verklarung Jesu* [Zurich: Zwingli, 1959]), sees an allusion to the six days separating the Day of Atonement from the Feast of Tabernacles. In this view the first explicit mention of Jesus' passion (16:21-23) occurs on the former day and the Transfiguration, with its "shelters" (v. 4) or "tabernacles," on the latter. But it seems highly unlikely that Jesus and his disciples would travel from Caesarea Philippi to this mountain during the feast. Nor is there any direct evidence of its being that time of year. Others see a reference to Exodus 24:16 ("For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the LORD called to Moses from within the cloud"). Such views are probably too subtle especially for Luke! The "six days" may simply indicate the time it took to travel from one place (16:13) to another (17:1) and thus establish the fact, noted by all three synoptists, that the Transfiguration took place

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within a few days of the prediction that Jesus must go to Jerusalem and be killed. The two passages must therefore be read together. Mount Tabor, the traditional "high mountain," lies south of Galilee; but it is not at all "high" (about 1,900 feet), and going to it would have been a roundabout way of traveling from Caesarea Philippi to Capernaum (vv. 22, 24; Mark 9:30, 33). Moreover, according to Josephus it had a walled fortress at its summit (War II, 573 [xx.6]; IV, 54- 55 [i.8]). Mount Hermon, rising above Caesarea Philippi, is the most popular alternative (9,232 feet); but it is so high and cold at its summit--if indeed they went to the top--it seems a strange place to pass the night (Luke specifies they descended the next day). Immediately after their descent Jesus and the inner three faced crowds that included "teachers of the law" (Mark 9:14). This is almost inconceivable at Mount Hermon in Gentile territory. Liefeld (p. 167, n. 27) has plausibly suggested Mount Miron (3,926 feet), the highest mountain within Israel and on the way from Caesarea Philippi to Capernaum. The "mountain" calls to mind Moses and Elijah, both of whom received revelation on a mountain (Exod 19; 24; 1 Kings 19), though here part of the purpose was to ensure privacy ("by themselves," Matt 17:1; all alone, Mark 9:2). Those Jesus "took with him" (the verb, contrary to some recent expositions, has no obvious connection with master-disciple relations; cf. its use in 2:13; 4:5, 12:45) were Peter, James, and John, the inner circle of the Twelve (see on 10:2, 20:20; 26:37; cf: Mark 5:37, and the continued friendship of Peter and John, Acts 8:14; Gal 2:9 [with a different James]).

2 Moses' face shone because it reflected something of God's glory (Exod 34:29-30). But as for Jesus, he himself was transfigured. The verb *metamorphoo* ("transfigure," "transform," "change in form") suggests a change of inmost nature that may be outwardly visible (as here; cf. Exod 34:29; 2Bar 51:3, 5) or quite invisible (Rom 12:2; 2Cor 3:18). That Jesus was transfigured "before them" implies that it was largely for their sakes: whatever confirmation the

experience may have given Jesus, for the disciples it was revelatory. As they would come to realize, they were being privileged to glimpse something of his preincarnate glory (John 1:14; 17:5; Philippians 2:6-7) and anticipate his coming exaltation (2 Peter 1:16-18; Rev 1:16). Their confession of Jesus as Messiah and his insistence that he would be a suffering Messiah (16:13-21; 17:9) were confirmed. Therefore they had reason to hope that they would yet see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom (16:28). The contrast between what Jesus had just predicted would be his fate (16:21) and this glorious sight would one day prompt Jesus' disciples to marvel at the self-humiliation that brought him to the cross and to glimpse a little of the height to which he had been raised by his vindicating resurrection and ascension.

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3 The word *idou* should not be pressed to mean "Just then" (NIV): it is used twice more in v. 5 where it stresses the marvel of the experience (see on 1:20). Unlike Mark, Matthew puts Moses before Elijah, giving him slightly greater status; and only Matthew mentions the brightness of the cloud (v. 5), reminiscent of the shekinah glory (cf. Davies, *Setting* , pp. 50-56). Both Moses and Elijah had eschatological roles: Moses was the model for the eschatological Prophet (Deut 18:18) and Elijah for the forerunner (Mal 4:5-6; Matt 3:1-3; 11:7-10; 17:9-13). Both had strange ends; both were men of God in times of transition, the first to introduce the covenant and the second to work for renewed adherence to it. Both experienced a vision of God's glory, one at Sinai (Exod 31:18) and the other at Horeb (1 Kings 19:8). Now, however, the glory is Jesus' glory, for it is he who is transfigured and who radiates the glory of Deity. Both suffered rejection of various kinds (for Moses, cf. Stephen's summary, Acts 7:35, 37; and for Elijah, cf. 1 Kings 19:1-9; Matt 17:12). Together they may well summarize the Law and the Prophets. This is the more plausible when we recall that these two figures very rarely appear together in Judaism or in the NT (possibly Rev 11:3; cf. Zech 4:14; J. Jeremias, TDNT, 4:863-64). All these associations gain importance as the narrative moves on and Jesus is perceived to be superior to Moses and Elijah and, indeed, to supersede them (vv. 5, 8). The verb *ophthe* ("appeared"), sometimes used in connection with Jesus' resurrection, does not in itself suggest a resurrection setting, since Moses and Elijah are the ones who "appear," not Jesus.

4 Peter "answered" Jesus (NIV, "said"): the peculiar verb form (*apokritheis*) may mean that his suggestion was called forth by the circumstances, but more likely it has no force of "response" (see on 11:25). Peter, speaking for the three ("it is good for us to be here"), sensing something of the greatness of what he, James, and John are seeing, suggests building three *skenas*

("tabernacles"; NIV, "shelters"). While the word looks back to the tabernacle in the wilderness, forerunner of the temple, the idea of building "tabernacles" also reflects the Feast of Tabernacles, when Jews built shelters for themselves and lived in them for seven days (cf. Lev 23:42-43). The feast had eschatological overtones. So Peter may have been saying that in gratitude for witnessing Jesus' transfiguration and recognizing the imminent dawn of the Messianic Age, he would build three "tabernacles" one for Jesus, one for Moses, and one for Elijah. The rebuke that follows does not offer criticism of Peter's eschatology, nor even of its timing, but is administered solely because what Peter blurted out compromised Jesus' uniqueness. *Jesus* was transfigured; they must bear witness concerning him (v.

5). Mark says Peter spoke out of fear; Luke that he made his suggestion as Moses and Elijah were about to leave. Mark and Luke point out the foolishness of Peter's

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remark. Matthew simplifies and so highlights the christological error of Peter.

Mark (9:5) has "Rabbi," Luke (9:33) "Master," and Matthew "Lord." Mark is probably original; Luke translates "Rabbi" by "Master" for his non-Jewish readers; and Matthew probably uses Lordly in its general sense (see on 7:21), connoting no more respect than "rabbi." But why Matthew's different form of address? Perhaps it is to stress what Peter is doing. Earlier Peter confessed Jesus as Christ and yet rebuked him because Peter did not understand the full meaning of "Christ." Here he again treats Jesus with respect ("Lord") but suggests something that compromises his identity. Matthew's readers know very well that "Christ" means more than messianic political conqueror and that "Lord" would in time include unqualified supremacy. But Peter does not yet know these things.

5 The "cloud" is associated, in both the OT and intertestamental Judaism, with eschatology (Ps 97:2; Isa 4:5; Ezek 30:3, Dan 7:13; Zeph 1:15; cf. 2 Baruch 53:1-12; 4Ezra 13:3; 2Macc 2:8; b *Sanhedrin* 98a; cf. Luke 21:27; 1Thess 4:17) and with the Exodus (Exod 13:21-22; 16:10; 19:16; 24:15-18; 40:34-38). Of the synoptists only Matthew says that the cloud was "bright," a detail that recalls the shekinah glory. The latter eschatological associations (Luke 21:27; 1Thess 4:17) show Jesus in his role as the one who succeeds Moses the eschatological prophet; the former associations (Ps 97:2 et al.) assure us that Jesus is the messianic King whose kingdom is dawning. But as Liefeld (p. 170) points out, common to both sets of passages and to others as well is the more fundamental idea of the presence of God. It is uncertain whether *epeskiasen* means "enveloped" (NIV) or "overshadowed" (cf. Exod 40:35). What the Voice from the cloud says is largely a repetition of 3:17, an apparent mingling of Psalm 2:7 and Isaiah 42:1, stressing that Jesus is both Son and Suffering Servant. This is the high point of the narrative (cf. S. Pedersen, "Die Proklamation Jesu als des eschatologischen

Offenbarungstragers," NovTest 17

[1975]: 241-64). (Mark omits the allusion to Isa 42:1; but both Matthew and Luke, not to mention 2 Peter 1:17, attest the connection in different ways: cf. Gundry, *Use of OT* , pp. 36-37.) But if Matthew 3:17 identifies Jesus, this verse in its context goes further and places him above Moses and Elijah. The additional words "Listen to him,"--an allusion to Deuteronomy 18:15--confirm Jesus is the Prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15-18; cf. Acts 3:22-23; 7:37). This does not mean Jesus is another prophet of Moses' stature but the eschatological Prophet patterned on Moses as a type; for, as Liefeld has suggested (p. 173), Moses' primary role here is typological, whereas Elijah's, not explained till vv. 9-13, is eschatological. As Moses' antitype, Jesus so far outstrips him that when Moses is put next to him, men must "listen" to Jesus, as Moses himself said. The climax of biblical revelation is Jesus, the Son and Servant God loves and with whom God is well pleased. Even Moses

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and Elijah (the Law and the Prophets) assume supporting roles where he is concerned. This confirms our interpretation of 5:17-48; 11:11-15.

6-8 The effect of the Transfiguration on the disciples reminds us of Daniel (Dan 10:7-9 cf. also Deut 5:25-26; Heb 12:19). The visible glory of Deity brings terror, but Jesus calms his disciples' fears (cf. 14:26-27; cf. Dan 8:18; 10:18). Mark relates fear to Peter's foolish words; Matthew, to the disciples' response to the Voice from the cloud. Both are psychologically convincing; both make different points in the narrative. In Mark fear helps explain Peter's folly. In Matthew it magnifies the greatness of the Transfiguration. Matthew alone tells us that at the divine splendor the disciples "fell facedown to the ground" (v. 6), a prelude to their seeing no one "except Jesus" (v. 8). These words are pregnant with meaning. Compared with God's revelation through him, all other revelations pale. Supporting, pointing, prophetic roles such revelation may enjoy; but that Jesus is God's Son (and here Matthew's readers must have remembered chs. 1-2) is primary. Therefore all must "listen to him!" (v. 7). The Transfiguration was largely for the disciples (Jesus brought the inner three to it; he was transfigured before "them"; the Voice spoke to "them": cf. Allison A. Trites, "The Transfiguration of Jesus: The Gospel in Microcosm," EQ 51 [1979]: 77f.). This does not mean that they understood it fully; but it was a crucial step in the symbol- charged self-disclosure of Jesus that would be much better understood (2 Peter 1:16-19) following the Resurrection. For the present, it indelibly confirmed the disciples' conviction that Jesus was the Messiah.

b. The place of Elijah (17:9-13)

Luke has no parallel, but see Mark 9:9-13. Matthew omits Mark 9:10; and his handling of Mark 9:12-13 in 17:11-13 is so independent, though complementary, that some scholars think Matthew here draws on an

independent source (e.g., Schlatter, Lohmeyer).

9 In Matthew this is Jesus' fifth and last command for the disciples to be silent (see on 8:4). This time Jesus permits his disciples to tell everything after the Son of Man (see excursus on 8:20) 'has been raised from the dead.' Jesus could scarcely have attached this permission to earlier warnings to keep silent (16:20), since he had not yet spoken clearly about his sufferings and death. Nevertheless the same salvation- historical change--first silence, then proclamation--occurs as early as 10:27. The command must have been in some ways disappointing and its lifting a delight. Why did Jesus impose it'? Probably for two principal and complementary reasons: 1. The story would only stir up superficial political messianism, already a menace. If

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Jesus' closest disciples found it hard to understand a suffering and dying Messiah, how would the crowds fare till after the Resurrection? 2. The strongest evidence for Jesus' messiahship would be his resurrection, by which he "was declared with power to be the Son of God" (Rom 1:4). Premature self- disclosure in a direct fashion, without the supreme "sign of Jonah," the Resurrection (see on 12:40), would not only foster false expectations but would also quickly disillusion those who held them. Thus with his prospective converts in mind, Jesus knew it was better for their sakes to wait till after the Resurrection before allowing Peter, James, and John to tell what they had seen. This does not mean that Jesus' full glory could be known only through the Resurrection. On the contrary it means that though his true glory antedated the Resurrection and was revealed to three intimates before the Passion, it could be made known to others only after the Resurrection.

10 Why did the disciples ask this question, connecting it (in Matthew) with *oun* (normally a logical connective, "therefore," "then")? There are two false solutions: 1. If Jesus was the Messiah, how were the disciples to answer the objection of the scribes that Elijah must *precede* Messiah's coming (Mal 4:5-6; see on 11:7-15; M *Edayoth* 8:7; M *Baba Metzia* 3:5; SBK, 4:764-98)? In this view the *oun* follows the fact of Jesus' messiahship and the disciples' acceptance of Jesus' reiteration of his death and resurrection: *because* the disciples understand who Jesus is, they ask why, therefore, the scribes insist Elijah precedes Messiah, since apparently Elijah has not yet appeared. This interpretation is intrinsically unlikely, as Mark's account shows: the disciples are there pictured "discussing what `rising from the dead' meant" (Mark 9:10), thereby showing they did *not* truly understand what Jesus was talking about; and as a result of this discussion, they ask the question in Mark 9:11

and Matthew 17:10. Commentators on Mark assume this is a second relevant question but do not show how it ties in with the disciples' discussion. Trench (*Studies* , p. 222) goes so far as to say that the disciples do not venture to raise the first subject and so move on to this one; Lagrange says Matthew omits Mark 9:10 because that text leads nowhere. Yet a tight connection can be established. 2. A few scholars have suggested that the disciples' question was prompted by an assumption that Elijah's appearance during the Transfiguration was itself the fulfillment of Malachi 4:5; and then the question becomes, Why did Messiah (Jesus) appear before Elijah did, when the scribes say the order should be reversed (B.F. Meyer; Robertson, 1:141)? But this interpretation suffers from the weakness of the former view (viz., that the disciples properly understand Jesus' teaching of 17:9 and par.), while resting on the dubious assumption that the disciples would interpret this brief vision of Elijah as the fulfillment of a prophecy that promised that Elijah would

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"turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers" (Mal 4:6). The real connection is deeper. Elijah was expected to restore all things--to bring about a state of justice and true worship. If that were so, how could it be that Messiah would be killed in such a restored environment--killed, Jesus had told them only a week before, by elders, chief priests, and teachers of the law (16:21)? This interpretation makes sense both of Matthew's *oun* ("therefore") and of Mark 9:10. If Jesus as Messiah Whose messiahship the disciples do not now doubt) must *suffer*, then how could it be said that Elijah must first come *to restore all things*? Their confusion is not merely chronological, though that may be involved; it is their inability to find a framework in which they can believe that the Messiah could die.

11-12 Jesus' answer confirms this interpretation. He approves the teaching of the scribes but insists that another fact must be taken into account. NIV's "To be sure, ... But" structure accurately reflects this duality (Gr. *men*, ... *de*). On the one hand, Elijah comes "first" (*proton*, in some MSS) and "will restore all things" (v. 11; the combination of present and future tenses is less consistent than Mark 9:12 but reflects the OT prophecy: see Zerwick, par. 281). John's mission was a success (3:5-6; 14:5); but, on the other hand, "restore all things" must not be taken absolutely. The Baptist stood in succession of the OT prophets who were persecuted and even killed. The unrecognized fact is that although the scribes' *interpretation* is right--Elijah must precede the Messiah--their grasp of recent *history* is wrong, for Elijah has already come (v. 12; cf. 11:14; Luke 1:17); but the people in general and the scribes and leaders in particular did not recognize him and did to him "everything they wished"--a vague expression hinting at John's rejection by most Jewish leaders (cf. 21:24-27) and his death, for which the Jewish leaders were not directly responsible. Jesus' point is general: the Baptist

(Elijah) did fulfill his mission, but he was killed doing it. In the same way the Son of Man is going to suffer [cf. BDF, par. 315] "at their hands" (v. 12b). If the Baptist's restoration of "all things" did not prevent his own death, why should Messiah be any better received?

13 Matthew's conclusion, not found in Mark, has provoked much speculation. G. Barth (Bornkamm, *Tradition* , p. 106) takes it as further evidence for his idea that in Matthew "understanding" is essential to discipleship. Others think it a turning point in Matthew's narrative--the disciples now arrive at true understanding (Klostermann; Trilling, p. 92). Still others hold that this introduces a split between what the disciples understand and the teachers of the law don't (McNeile; Schweizer; Frankmolle, p. 151; Meier, *Vision* , p. 123). Though this has some validity, there are two other factors: (1) Matthew again rounds off a pericope by returning to the question first raised (see on

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15:20); and (2) what the disciples understand is that John the Baptist is Elijah. It is not at all clear, however, that they have understood much more about the death and resurrection of the Son of Man, and it becomes very obvious during the passion narrative that they have not understood (cf. esp. 26:50-56). In short, this pericope marks another small step in the understanding of Jesus' disciples.

14. The healing of an epileptic boy (17:14-20 [21])

All three synoptists (cf. Mark 9:14-29; Luke 9:37-43) put this miracle right after the descent from the Mount of Transfiguration. Matthew's account is much shorter than Mark's, which has led some to think Matthew used independent information here. It introduces v. 20 (the thrust of which occurs again at 21:21) and thus makes faith pivotal in the narrative. The contrast between the glory of the Transfiguration and Jesus' disciples' tawdry unbelief (see v. 17) is part of the mounting tension that magnifies Jesus' uniqueness as he moves closer to his passion and resurrection.

14-16 Matthew's account, with its sudden introduction of the crowd (v. 14), clearly presupposes some fuller narrative (cf. Mark). The word for "knelt" (*gonypeteo*), used in the NT only here and at 27:29; Mark 1:40; 10:17) has no overtones of worship but suggests humility and entreaty. For "Lord" (v. 15; Mark has "Teacher"), see on 8:2; 17:4. *Seleniazetai* ("is an epileptic") occurs only twice in the NT (see on 4:24). Mark 9:18-20 describes the boy's symptoms more vividly. "Epilepsy" in this instance is associated with demon possession (see on 8:28). The "disciples" who are unable to heal him are presumably the nine left behind when Jesus took Peter, James, and John with him when he was transfigured. The disciples' failures are a recurring theme throughout this section (14:16-21, 26-27, 28-31; 15:16, 23, 33; 16:5, 22; 17:4, 10-11). This failure in their healing ministry at first seems strange,

since Jesus had clearly given them power to heal and exorcise demons (10:1, 8). Yet it is part of the pattern of the disciples' advance and failure. In other situations they had shown lack of faith (14:26-27, 31; 15:5, 8)--a reminder that their power to do kingdom miracles was not their own but, unlike magic, was entirely derivative and related to their own walk of faith.

17-18 Jesus' response is reminiscent of Deuteronomy 32:5, 20. *Apistos* (v. 17) can mean either "untrustworthy" or "unbelieving." The latter is dominant here (cf. v. 20); yet it does not mean "this generation" has no faith whatsoever but that unbelief is characteristic of "this generation." The perfect passive participle *diestrammene* ("perverse") probably has adjectival force, rather than denoting a state consequent on some previous action (see on 16:19). Juxtaposing "perverse" and "unbelieving"

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implies that the failure to believe stems from moral failure to recognize the truth, not from want of evidence, but from willful neglect or distortion of the evidence. *Diastrepho* ("to pervert") is used seven times in the NT (cf. Luke 9:41; 23:2; Acts 13:8, 10; 20:30; Philippians 2:15). In the last of these, Paul applies to the entire world the same words Jesus uses here. But what does "generation" (*genea*) cover? Assuredly it extends Jesus' exhortation beyond the disciples (cf. also 11:16; 12:39-42; 16:4; 23:36; 24:34). But it goes past the evidence to hold with R. Walker (pp. 35ff.) that the word here means "race," and therefore that the Jews are henceforth excluded from salvation, or to say with Frankmolle (pp. 21ff.) that Israel alone is being addressed. That the disciples' unbelief is central to Jesus' exasperation is made clear by Matthew's omitting Mark 9:23-24; if his description extends beyond them to the entire contemporary generation, it must principally extend also to all guilty of the same unbelief, regardless of their race. The rhetorical questions-- "How long shall I stay with you? How long shall I put up with you?"-- express not only personal disappointment but also Jesus' consciousness of his heavenly origin and destiny. His disciples' perverse unbelief is actually painful to him. He must endure ("put up with," NIV) it, though this theme is stronger in Mark than in Matthew (cf. Mark 8:12 and Matt 16:4; Mark 3:5 and Matt 12:13). As for the miracle, Matthew describes it succinctly, leaving no doubt of Jesus' power to heal and exorcise demons (v. 18). The boy is healed "from that moment" (lit., "from that hour"; cf. 9:22; 15:28).

19-20 [21] The disciples, presumably the nine who had tried and failed (v. 16), ask Jesus, in private (cf. also Mark 9:28), why "we" (emphatic) could not drive out the demon (v. 19). The reason, Jesus says, is because of their *oligopistia* ("little faith," v. 20; cf. Notes). Despite the etymology of the word, it probably does not refer so much to the littleness of their faith as to its poverty (Bonnard). Little faith, like a little mustard seed, can be effectual;

poor faith, like that of the disciples' here, is ineffectual. The noun occurs only here in Matthew, but the cognate adjective occurs at 6:30; 8:26; 14: 31; 16:8, and always refers to disciples. Removal of mountains was proverbial for overcoming great difficulties (cf. Isa 40:4; 49:11; 54:10; Matt 21:21-22; Mark 11:23; Luke 17:6; 1Cor 13:2). Nothing would be impossible for them-- a promise that, like its analogue in Philippians 4:13, is limited by context, not by unbelief. Here it refers to the accomplishment of the works of the kingdom for which they had been given authority. Jesus' answer in Matthew is not the same as the one in Mark 9:29 ("This kind can come out only by prayer"); but if the comment on *oligopistia* ("poverty of faith") is correct, then at least the two answers are complementary, each shedding light on the other. At a superficial level the disciples did have faith: they expected to be able to exorcise the demon. They had long been successful in this work, and now they are

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surprised by their failure. But their faith is poor and shoddy. They are treating the authority given them (10:1, 8) like a gift of magic, a bestowed power that works *ex opere operate*. In Mark, Jesus tells them that this case requires prayer--not a form or an approved rite, but an entire life bathed in prayer and its concomitant faith. In Matthew, Jesus tells his disciples that what they need is not giant faith (tiny faith will do) but true faith--faith that, out of a deep, personal trust, expects God to work.

15. The second major passion prediction (17:22-23)

This is the second major passion prediction (see on 16:21-24), though there are earlier allusions to Jesus' death (9:15; 10:38; 12:40) and one intervening specific reference (17:12b). Jesus not only foresees the inevitability of his death but, precisely because he knows this to be the Father's will (26:39), recognizes it as an essential part of the divine plan. But that death issues in the Resurrection.

22 Thompson (pp. 13ff.) finds here the beginning of a new literary unit, ending at 18:35, based partly on the references to Galilee here and at 19:1. But the departure from Galilee (19:1) not only ends this brief stay but also this entire period of Jesus' northern ministry (4:23-25). From 19:1 on, Jesus moves toward Jerusalem and Judea. "When they came together" (the best reading) does not necessarily suggest new activities but the general time when Jesus and the inner circle of disciples joined the other nine in Galilee (see on vv. 1, 14-20). No sooner are they all together after the Transfiguration than Jesus again takes up the theme he introduced to them earlier (16:21-23). The verb *paradidosthai* ("to be betrayed") is doubly ambiguous. First, it can have either a weak meaning ("to hand over") or a strong meaning ("to betray"), depending on context; second, the passive ("to be handed over") is perhaps a studied ambiguity leaving it unclear whether

God or Judas Iscariot is the one who hands Jesus over or betrays him respectively.

23 Mark and Luke say the disciples do not understand. Matthew, adept at fine characterization, establishes the same point by noting the disciples' grief. They are beginning to absorb the announcement of Jesus' death, but of his resurrection they have no comprehension.

16. The temple tax (17:24-27)

This incident is peculiar to Matthew (cf. Mark 9:33 for geographical detail). Its significance in Matthew depends heavily on its interpretation at several critical points.

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24 Although the point is disputed (see on v. 25), the *didrachma* (lit., "two drachmas") was probably not a civil tax in support of Rome (cf. on 22:15-22) but a Jewish "tax" levied on every male Jew between the ages of twenty and fifty in support of the temple and its services. The *didrachma*, worth one-half a *stater* or shekel, was seldom minted at this time; and probably two people joined to pay a *tetradrachma* ("a four-drachma coin," v. 27) or shekel. Originally half a shekel was levied on each Jew at every census (Exod 30:11-16), the money going to support the tabernacle; after the Exile one-third of a shekel was gathered annually. In Jesus' day the amount was two drachmas (half a shekel) annually. This is well attested in both Josephus (Antiq. III, 193-96 [viii.2]; XVIII, 312 [ix.1]) and Mishnah (*Shekalim*). The imposition of this "tax" lacked the sanction of Roman law, but it was understood that the Jews would pay it.

25-26 Peter's defense of Jesus (v. 25) is misguided. Once they are alone in the house (perhaps Peter's; cf. 4:13; 8:14), Jesus takes the initiative--whether he overheard Peter's response or knew it supernaturally is unclear--and asks Peter a provocative question. The vast literature on this pericope stems largely from Jesus' question being cast in *civil* terms: "kings of the earth," "duty," "taxes." The majority view today (e.g., Kilpatrick, *Origins*, pp. 41f.; Walker, pp. 101-3; Bonnard; Hill, *Matthew*) holds that the original question was recast in the period after A.D. 70 (when Matthew is alleged to have been writing) to address questions faced by Christians about taxes paid to Rome. The effect of the pericope, then, is like that of 22:15-22, though Jesus' reported answer here is anachronistic. Jesus is made to say that the Son of God, and therefore Christians, *need* not pay taxes to Rome because of their allegiance to God but *should* do so in order not to cause offense. This will not do, for in Jesus' reply the "king" who collects the tax is Jesus' "Father." Therefore this cannot refer to Rome. Others (Thompson, pp. 50-68) suggest that this is the tax paid the post-Jamnia patriarchate and that the question Matthew is facing is whether

Christians at his time of writing should bow to Jewish religious authority. This means not only that Jesus' question and Peter's answer are anachronistic but that the redaction here is inept. Would Jews at the end of the first century think of the Jamnia rabbis as kings or of Jesus Messiah as their son'? The suggestion that the tax is the one imposed by Vespasian in support of the temple of *Jupiter Capitolinus* after the Fall of Jerusalem (Jos. War VII, 218 [vi.6]--so H.W. Montefiore [cf. Hill, *Matthew*] and others) is incredible. No Christian willingly advocated direct subsidy of pagan idolatry in order not to offend Rome, and on this reading Jesus' question becomes even more obscure. Because of such difficulties, Richard J. Cassidy ("Matthew 17:24-27--A Word on Civil Taxes," CBQ 41 [1979]: 571-80) argues that the entire pericope deals, not with the temple tax, but with civil taxes. The terminology of v. 25 supports him; but again it is less than clear how sonship to an imperial "king" fits Jesus.

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It is better to allow the most likely interpretations of both v. 24 and v. 25 to stand-- temple tax and civil tax respectively--but to recognize that, whereas v. 24 establishes the topic of the entire pericope, v. 25 is parabolic. This is suggested by the generalized "kings of the earth"--scarcely an adequate way to refer to Caesar. The point is that, just as royal sons are exempt from the taxes imposed by their fathers, so too Jesus is exempt from the "tax" imposed by his Father. In other words Jesus acknowledges the temple tax to be an obligation to God; but since he is uniquely God's Son, therefore he is exempt (v. 26). The focus of the pericope is thus supremely christological and, unlike 22:15-22, says nothing about responsibilities to Caesar.

27 Exempt though he is, Jesus will pay the tax so as not to offend (for the verb, see on 5:29). Thus he sets an example later followed by Paul (1Cor 8:13; 9:12, 22). The plural "we" and the four-drachma coin to pay for Jesus and Peter at first sight makes the above interpretation seem difficult. In what sense are we to suppose that Peter's reason for paying the tax is akin to Jesus'? Part of the explanation may lie in the freedom Jesus extends to his disciples: e.g., he alone is Lord of the Sabbath, and this has implications for his disciples (see on 12:1-8). More important, Jesus here implicitly frees his followers from the temple tax on the grounds that they, too, will belong to the category of "sons," though derivatively. Both the christological implication and the relevance to Peter and the disciples are made clear in the course of the narrative. Jesus has just been declared God's unique Son (v. 5); yet his glory is veiled as he moves toward betrayal and death, thus establishing a pattern of humility for his followers (18:1-5). At the same time Jesus' death and resurrection have again been introduced (vv. 22-23), a foretaste of the lengthy passion and resurrection narratives about to begin and the means by which the Son of Man, in giving his life "a ransom for many" (20:28), completes the redemptive act inaugurating the gathering of his "church" (16:18; 28:18-20). At that point the redemptive-historical significance of the temple will end. Its claims for the two-drachma tax may continue till its

destruction forty years later; the sons of God (cf. 5:9) are exempt. But that time is not yet. Like so many of Jesus' actions at this turning point, the full significance of what Jesus was saving could not be grasped even by Peter till after the Resurrection. The miracle itself has no close canonical parallel. This is the only place in the NT where a fish is caught with a hook (nets were normally used). Extravagant symbolism for "fish" and "lake" (e.g., Neil J. McEleney, "Mt 17:24-27--Who Paid the Temple Tax?" CBQ 38 [1976]: 189-92) is fanciful. This miraculous way of paying the tax is something only Jesus could do; it therefore suggests that though Jesus as the unique Son is free from the law's demands, he not only submits to them but makes provision, as only he can, for the demands on his disciples (cf. Gal 4:4-5)--and this right after a

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passion prediction (17:22-23)! Perhaps, too, we are reminded again of Jesus' humility: he who so controls nature and its powers that he stills storms and multiplies food now reminds Peter of that power by this miracle, while nevertheless remaining so humble that he would not needlessly cause offense (cf. 11:28-30; 12:20). The lesson in humility is for Peter and the other disciples. We have no evidence that the tax collectors witnessed it. (The nonhealing miracles in Matthew are almost always for the sake of the disciples: see Gerhardsson, *Mighty Acts*). But humility is about to be explained to the disciples in some detail (18.1-35).

B. Fourth Discourse: Life Under Kingdom Authority (18:1-19:2)

1. Setting (18:1-2)

This fourth discourse, like the previous three, is bracketed by remarks suggesting that it was delivered on the one occasion specified (see on 5:1; 7:28-29). The chapter parallels Mark 9:33-50 to some extent but omits Mark 9:38-41 (cf. Matt 10:42). The differences between Mark and Matthew are so great that some scholars assume separate sources (Lohmeyer) or wisely advocate cautious agnosticism (Thompson, pp. 147-51).

Many writers compare Matthew 18 with 1QS, the Manual of Discipline at Qumran, and interpret it as regulation for the life of the Christian community. But two major reservations forbid too easy a comparison. 1. There is very little in Matthew 18 that has the flavor of regulation and much that deals with principles. The contrasts with 1QS are far more noticeable than the similarities. Even vv. 15-17, the closest approximation to regulation, is far less concerned with mechanical details than with the importance and means of reconciliation. And the whole chapter shows up the carnality of the opening question (v.

1) and establishes a radical set of values for greatness in the kingdom.

2. The Qumran covenanters had little doubt about their identity or place in God's eschatological scheme. But here we are dealing with disciples at a critical turning-point in salvation history, men of seriously defective understanding who remain such till after the Cross.

1-2 Mark (9:33-38) says that the disciples were disputing along the way, and when challenged they fell silent. Luke (9:46-48) says Jesus discerned their thoughts. It is not difficult or unnatural to suppose that Jesus detected their rivalry (Luke), challenged them, and thereby silenced them (Mark), and that they then blurted out their question (Matthew). Alternatively Matthew uses this brief question to summarize what was truly on their minds.

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"At that time" (lit., "hour," v. 1) may only mean "in that general phase of the ministry" (cf. 10:19; 26:45), but it alerts the reader to the transition from what precedes. "At that time," when Jesus has again spoken of his suffering and death, the disciples' grief (17:23) proves short lived; and they busy themselves with arguing about who is greatest in the kingdom. Jesus has already said that there will be distinctions in the kingdom (5:19; cf. also 1QS 3:19-25; 6:9-13); and recently three of them have been specially favored (17:1-3), while Peter has been repeatedly singled out (14:28-29; 15: 15; 16:16-18, 22-23; 17:4, 24-27)--though sometimes for rebuke! Perhaps these things set off the dispute, which continues in the ambition of James, John, and their mother to the period right before the Cross (20:20-23) and which embraces the jealousy of the other ten (20:24). Substantial misunderstanding of Jesus by his disciples is presupposed throughout Jesus' entire earthly ministry. The "disciples" are probably the Twelve but may include others (cf. Thompson, pp. 83-84; see on 5:1-2). The child (v. 2) may have been Peter's, if the house is his (17:25; Mark 9:33).

2. Humility and greatness (18:3-4)

3-4 With the solemn introductory formula "I tell you the truth" (v. 3; see on 5:18), Jesus warns his disciples that they must "change and become like little children"; for unless they do, they will "never enter the kingdom of heaven." Clearly, the consummated kingdom is in view. The child is held up as an ideal, not of innocence, purity, or faith, but of humility and unconcern for social status. Jesus advocates humility of mind (v. 4), not childishness of thought (cf. 10:16). With such humility comes childlike trust (cf. TDNT, 8:16-17). The disciples must change (lit., "turn," probable not to be taken as a Semitic auxiliary to "become," i.e., "become again a little child"; cf. J. Dupont, "Matthieu 18, 3," in Ellis, and Wilcox, pp. 50-60) from their present

conduct and attitudes and adopt this new norm or be excluded from the kingdom. Conversely, the person who truly humbles himself (cf. Notes) like this child is "the greatest in the kingdom of heaven": the expression completes a link with v. 1, and the present tense may suggest that the disciple's greatness, doubtless made obvious in the consummated kingdom in the futures has already begun here as far as kingdom norms are concerned. The thought is not far removed from 5:3 and vitiates any thought that the kingdom can be gained by personal merit or violent force (see on 11:12). It is to "little children" that the Lord of heaven and earth reveals his truth (11:25).

3. The heinousness of causing believers to sin (18:5-9)

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Although some read v. 5 with vv. 3-4, it is better to link it with vv. 6-9, because (1) v. 4 already rounds off 18:1-4 with a summary and (2) vv. 5-6 taken together constitute a neat promise-warning proverb (cf. esp. Thompson, pp. 101-7). This pericope is held tightly together by its repeated *skandalon* ("stumbling block") language (see on 5:29), what Paul calls a *proskomma* ("obstacle," "cause of stumbling"; cf. Rom 14:13; 1Cor 8:9). Rabbinic literature contains denunciations of the evil of causing others to sin (cf. Bonnard), but never with reference to "little ones."

5-6 This promise-warning couplet (like 12:32 in structure) advances the thought by turning attention from the self-humiliation of the true disciple (vv. 3-4) to the way others receive such "little ones." The opening clauses of v. 5 and v. 6 are roughly parallel. The one who welcomes "a little child like this *in my name* " is not welcoming literal children but "children" defined in the previous verses--those who humble themselves to become like children, i.e., Jesus' true disciples. They are not welcomed because they are great, wise, or mighty, but because they come in Jesus' name (v. 5)-- i.e., they belong to him. "In my name" (v. 5), the parallel clause "who believe in me" (v. 6), and the necessity of becoming childlike even to enter the kingdom (v. 3) all confirm the view that those referred to in vv. 5-6 are simply Jesus' disciples--Christians (to use a later term), not literal children or some smaller group of especially humble disciples (see Warfield, 1:234-52; Trotter). These "little ones" (cf. 25:40, 45) can stumble, even the greatest of them (14:28-31; 26:30-35); but whoever causes them to stumble (NIV, "to sin") stands in grave peril. It is no objection to this identification of "little ones" with believers that Jesus is here addressing his disciples and not the world that is most in need of the warning, for (1) the "whoever" takes in everybody; (2) despite the fact that Jesus is speaking to disciples (v. 1), he utters a woe on the world in v. 7; (3) this suggests that the passage aims at encouraging the disciples who are going to

have to face the world's opprobrium (as also 10:40-42); and (4) the warnings against the world, though not at this moment directed to the world, will in due course become part of the disciples' arsenal in their preaching. The person who welcomes one of these "little ones," these disciples of Jesus, simply because they are his, welcomes Jesus himself (cf. 10:42). Presupposed is the world's animosity. Mere hospitality is not in view but hospitality given because of the "little ones" link with Jesus; and it is probably presupposed that hospitality motivated in this way would be shown only if the benefactor were already well disposed toward Jesus, or at least moving in that direction. The antithetic alternative, causing the "little ones" to stumble, does not mean that the "little ones" are led into apostasy. Rather, they are not welcomed but are rejected, ignored. This causes them to stumble in their discipleship. It may lead to serious sin; but, as in 10:40-42 and 25:31-46, the really

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grave aspect of the rejection is that it signifies rejection of Jesus.

Implicitly, the offense is gravely magnified when with particular perversity some wicked people self-consciously try to entice Christ's "little ones" into sin; but the evil is broader than that. Because it signals a rejection of Jesus as well as damaging his people, drowning at sea before the evil was committed is much preferable to eschatological judgment, the eternal fire of hell (vv. 8-9) that awaits the perpetrators. Drowning was a not uncommon punishment in Greek and Roman society. Though rare in Jewish circles, it was done at least once in Galilee (Jos. Antiq. XIV, 450 [xv.10]). Most millstones were hand tools for domestic use (see on 24:41); here it is the heavy stone pulled around by a donkey. The picture is more graphic than in Mark, the horror of the judgment sharpened.

7 The Greek text proclaims a "woe" (here, clearly, a proclamation of judgment, not of "sympathetic sorrow" [McNeile], since Matthew heightens the judgment language; see further on 23:13-32) on the "world," understood not merely as the neutral "setting for the struggle between belief and unbelief" (Thompson, pp. 109-10), but the source of all stumbling. Jesus pronounces this woe *apo ton skandalon*, which, contrary to NIV, should not be rendered "because of the things that cause *people* to sin," as if the discussion had progressed from Jesus' "little ones" to "people" in general, but "because of stumbling blocks," i.e. of the things that cause the stumbling already referred to in v. 6. Such things must come; but this inevitably does not mitigate the responsibility of those through whom they come (cf. Isa 10:5-12; Acts 4:27-28; see on Matt 13:13). The necessity does not spring from divine compulsion but, like all things, falls nonetheless within the sphere of his sovereignty so that he may use those very things to accomplish his plan and perfect his people (cf. 24:10-13; 1Cor 11:19). Thus on the one hand the disciples are not to think such opposition strange, for Jesus himself has declared it must occur; on the other hand they are assured that justice will

be done in the end (cf. 26:24).

8-9 Jesus now abandons denunciation of the world's causing his disciples to stumble and tells his disciples they may prove to be not only victims but aggressors. The adversative *de* is given its full force: " *But* , beyond all this, if *your* hand" (v. 8). This does not mean that the church, pictured as a body in anticipation of Paul's language (e.g., 1Cor 12:12-27), is here exhorted to excommunicate offending members. The word "body" is not used, and the language is akin to that in 5:29-30 (q.v.). Certain attitudes nurtured by Jesus' disciples toward other believers could also be sinful; thus, instead of being enticed to sin by outsiders, they would cause their own stumbling. Perhaps the particular believer-to-believer attitude that most needs rooting out is pride, so vv. 8-9 prepare for v. 10.

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The argument is clear. Jesus' followers must become like children in humility if they are to enter the kingdom (vv. 34). Those who receive such "little ones" because they belong to him in effect receive Jesus; those who reject them, causing them to stumble, are threatened with condemnation (vv. 5-6). Things causing Jesus' people to stumble are inevitable, yet damning (v. 7). But the disciples themselves must beware: failure to deal radically with similar sin in their own liver betrays their allegiance to the world and threatens them with the eternal fire of hell (vv. 8-9; see on 5:22). Jesus' disciples must deal as radically with pride as they were earlier commanded to deal with lust (5:29-30).

4. The parable of the lost sheep (18:10-14)

Verse 10 clearly follows vv. 5-9; but because it also forms a neat inclusion with v. 14, vv. 10-14 must be read together in the light of the preceding pericope. This link raises important questions concerning the relation between this parable and the parable of the lost sheep in Luke 15:3-7, where it is addressed, not to disciples, but to Pharisees and teachers of the law, in defense of Jesus' attitude to sinners. Almost all scholars hold that one parable stands behind both Gospels, and then they debate over which form and setting are most primitive (for discussion, cf. Jeremias, *Parables* , pp. 38ff.; Marshall, *Luke* , pp. 600-601; Hill, *Matthew*), some arguing in favor of the form in Gospel of Thomas 107 (most recently W.L. Petersen, "The Parable of the Lost Sheep in the Gospel of Thomas and the Synoptics," *NovTest* 23 [1981]: 128-47; but cf. Blomberg, "Tendencies," pp. 29-63, 96-100). All these views presuppose that at least one of the two settings defined by Matthew and Luke is a late creation by the church or by one of the evangelists to apply the parable to some new problem. But if the original parable was "simple enough and rich enough to be applied to more than one situation" (Hill, *Matthew*), why did

not Jesus apply it to more than one situation? What methodological reasons are advanced for distinguishing between multiple usage by Jesus and multiple usage by the church? It is remarkable how different Matthew's and Luke's forms of the parable are when closely compared in the Greek text. Almost every relevant term is not the same as in the parallel, and the few that are the same are well within the bounds of repetition expected in an itinerant ministry (see on 5:1-2). The evidence suggests that these are two similar parables, both taught by Jesus, but with very different aims: see on 19:1-2 for the bearing of the problems of "Luke's central section" on this discussion. Matthew is not concerned with "faithful pastorship in the community" (Hill, *Matthew*) but, following the preceding pericope, with the importance in Messiah's community of harming no member, of sharing the Father's concern that none of "these little ones" be lost.

10 [11] Verse 10 continues the note of humility struck at the discourse's beginning (vv.

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3-4) and the concern for "these little ones" (vv. 5-9). There is no conflict between "you" and "these little ones." At this stage of their pilgrimage, even the disciples must change and become like little children (v. 3). Jesus is discussing what will be normative when his passion and resurrection fully inaugurate the messianic community. Its members will be poor in spirit (5:3), humble (18:3-4), and none will be admitted to it without these graces. If his disciples become like that, they will belong to the "little children"; if they look down on them, they will share in the woes (vv. 8-9). The warning was not irrelevant: at least one disciple left Jesus. Jesus says that the "little ones"--believers in him--must be treated with respect because "their angels in heaven" always see the face of the heavenly Father. Many believe this supports the idea of a guardian for each "little one." That these angels are "in heaven" is thought to mean that they are of highest rank and that their seeing the Father's face means they always have access to his presence. This is based largely on Jewish sources (cf. SBK, 1:781ff.; 3:48ff., 437ff.; TDNT, 1:82, 86; see esp. Tobit 12: 14-15). Yet the idea will not bear close scrutiny. It is true that angels are sent to minister to those who will inherit salvation (Heb 1:

14). But nowhere in Scripture or Jewish tradition of the NT period is there any suggestion that there is one angel for one person. Daniel and Zechariah imply one angel for each nation. Appeal to Acts 12:15 does not help. Why should Peter's supposed guardian angel sound like Peter? And if ministering angels are sent to help believers, what are the angels in Matthew 18:10 doing around the divine throne, instead of guarding those people to whom they are assigned? References in the DSS to angels who share in the community's worship (1QSa 2:9-10) or minister to the Lord (1QH 5:20-22) are even less relevant, for this context does not deal with corporate worship. The most likely explanation is the one Warfield (1:253-66) defends. The "angels" of the "little ones" are their spirits after death, and they always see the heavenly Father's face. Do not despise these little ones, Jesus says, for their destiny is the unshielded glory of the Father's presence. The present tense (they "always see") raises no difficulty because Jesus is dealing with a class, not

individuals. The same interpretation admirably suits Acts 12:15: what the assembled group thinks is standing outside is Peter's "spirit" (angel), which accounts for Rhoda's recognition of his voice. But can the word "angel" be pressed into this interpretation? Certainly Jesus teaches that God's people in the Resurrection "will be like the angels in heaven" as to marriage (22:30) and immortality (Luke 20:36). Similar language is also used in 2 Baruch 51:5, 12 (cf. also 1 Enoch 51:4): the righteous will become angels in heaven, will be transformed into the splendor of angels, and will even surpass the excellency of angels. The evidence, though not overwhelming, is substantial enough to suppose that "their angels" simply refers to their continued existence in the heavenly Father's

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presence.

12-13 Here is another reason not to despise these "little ones": the shepherd--the Father (v. 14)--is concerned for each sheep in his flock and seeks the one who strays

(v. 12). His concern for the one wandering sheep is so great that he rejoices more over its restoration than over the ninety-nine that do not stray (v. 13). With a God like that, how dare anyone cause even one of these sheep to go astray?

14 Jesus drives the lesson home: the heavenly Father is unwilling for any of "these little ones" (see on vv. 3-6) to be lost. If that is his will, it is shocking that anyone else would seek to lead one of "these little ones" astray. This love for the *individual* sheep is not at the expense of the entire flock but so that the flock as a whole may not lose a single one of its members. On God's preservation of his own, see comments on 12:32; 13:3-9, 19-23.

5. Treatment of a sinning brother (18:15-20)

15 Jesus has just spoken to his disciples to warn them not to cause one of these "little ones" to stumble. Now the thought shifts. What the shift is depends on the variant reading chosen. If the words "against you" are included, Jesus is looking at offenses within the messianic community from the opposite perspective from the viewpoint of the brother against whom the sin is committed. If "against you" is omitted (cf. Notes), Jesus is telling the community as a whole how to handle the situation when a brother sins; and in the immediate context, the sin is that of despising another brother. Either way the proper thing is to confront the brother privately and "show him his fault." The verb *elencho* probably suggests "convict" the brother, not by

passing judgment, but by convicting him of his sin. The aim is not to score points over him but to win him over (same verb as in 1Cor 9:19-22; 1 Peter 3:1) because all discipline, even this private kind, must begin with redemptive purposes (cf. Luke 17:3-4; 2Thess 3:14- 15; James 5:19-20; cf. Ecclesiasticus 19:13-17). Jesus assumes that the individual (second person singular) who personally confronts his brother will do so with true humility (vv. 3-4; cf. Gal 6:1): if it is hard to accept a rebuke, even a private one, it is harder still to administer one in loving humility. Behind this verse stands Leviticus 19: 17: "Do not hate your brother in your heart. Rebuke your neighbor frankly so you will not share in his guilt."

16 If private confrontation does not work, the next step (backed by Deut 19:15) is to take two or three witnesses (though the text form of the quotation is much disputed: cf. Gundry, *Use of OT* , p. 139). Doubtless this Deuteronomic law was designed for what we

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would call "secular" cases. But the distinction is artificial and should not be pressed for the Israelite nation understood itself to be not a nation like others but a theocratic nation, God's chosen people. In conformity with his customary interpretation of the Scriptures, Jesus perceives the link joining his messianic community with ancient Israel. It is not at first clear whether the function of the witnesses is to support the one who confronts his erring brother by bringing additional testimony about the sin committed (which would require at least three people to have observed the offense) or to provide witnesses to the confrontation if the case were to go before the whole church. The latter is a bit more likely, because Deuteronomy 19:15 deals with judicial condemnation (a step taken only by the entire assembly), not with attempts to convince a brother of his fault. By the united testimony of two or three witnesses, every matter "may be established" (*stathe*, lit., "may be made to stand"--though the rise of deponents in Hellenistic Greek, including the use of *stathe*, implies that "may stand" is a superior rendering; cf. Zerwick, par. 231; Turner, *Syntax*, p. 57).

17 The same three-step procedure is known elsewhere (1QS 5:25-6:1; cf. CD 9:2-3; cf. Davies, *Setting*, pp. 221ff.). Refusal to submit to the considered judgment of Messiah's people means that they are to treat the offender as "a pagan or a tax collector." It is poor exegesis to turn to 8:1-11; 9:9-13; 15:21-28 and say that such people should be treated compassionately. The argument and the NT parallels (Rom 16:17; 2Thess 3:14) show that Jesus has excommunication in mind. That his words should be preserved in this form, with the mention of "pagan and tax collector," suggests that the people for whom Matthew is writing are predominantly Jewish Christians. NIV's "treat him as you would" catches the idea; but in the Greek expression, "let him be to you as," the "you" is singular. This suggests that each member of the church is to abide by the corporate

judgment and reminds the reader of the individual responsibility each believer has toward the others, already presupposed by the singular "your brother" in v. 15.

18 For comments on the grammar and theology of this verse, see on 16:19.

19-20 These two verses should not in this setting be taken as a promise regarding any prayer on which two or three believers agree (v. 20). Scripture is rich in prayer promises (21:22; John 14:13-14; 15:7-8, 16); but if this passage deals with prayer at all, it is restricted by the context and by the phrase *peri pantos pragmatos* (NIV, "about anything"), which should here be rendered "about any judicial matter": the word *pragma* often has that sense (cf. 1Cor 6:1; BAGD, s.v.), a sense nicely fitting the argument in Matthew 18.

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Recently, however, J. Duncan M. Derrett ("Where two or three are convened in my name ... `: a sad misunderstanding," ExpT 91 [1979-80]: 83-86) has argued that vv. 19- 20 do not deal with prayer at all. The two who agree are the offender and the one against whom the offense has been committed. They come to agreement on earth about any judicial matter they have been pursuing: the verb *aiteisthai* can refer to "pursuing a claim," as well as asking in prayer (cf. F. Preisigke, *Worterbuch der griechischen Papyrusurkunden, mit Einschluss der griechischen Inschriften, Aufschriften, Ostraka, Mumienschilder, usw. aus aegypten*, ed. E. Kiessling, 4 vols. [Berlin: 1927-31], s.v.). The promise, then, is that if two individuals in the church come to agreement concerning any claim they are pursuing (presumably on the basis of the church's judgment, v. 18), "it will be allowed, ratified (literally it shall succeed, come off) on the part of my heavenly Father" (Derrett, "Two or three," p. 84). This is because God's will and purpose stand behind the binding and loosing of v. 18 and also because ("for," v. 20) the presence of Jesus is assured with the two or three who are (lit.) "brought together"--judges solemnly convened before the church and by the church to render a decision (cf. Notes). It is a truism of the biblical revelation that God's presence stands with the judges of his people (Ps 82:1). Here as elsewhere, Jesus takes God's place: Jesus will be with the judges. As he has identified himself with God before (cf. on 2:6; 3:3; 11:4-6, 7-8), so he does again, and thus anticipates the broader promise of 28:20: he will be with his people "to the very end of the age." Jesus thereby implicitly points forward to a time when, as "God with us" (1:23), he will be spiritually present with the "two or three" and with all his followers; and he presupposes that this time will be of considerable duration (see on 24: 1-3).

6. Forgiveness (18:21-35)

a. Repeated forgiveness (18:21-22)

21-22 "Then" (v. 21) is probably to be taken strictly (see on 3:13). The issue is not the adjudication of the church, still less the absolute granting of forgiveness by the church (only God and Jesus can forgive sins in so absolute a fashion), but personal forgiveness (cf. 6:14-15). In rabbinic discussion the consensus was that a brother might be forgiven a repeated sin three times; on the fourth, there is no forgiveness. Peter, thinking himself big-hearted, volunteers "seven times" in answer to his own question--a larger figure often used, among other things, as a "round number" (cf. Lev 26:21; Deut 28: 25; Ps 79:12; Prov 24:16; Luke 17:4). Jesus' response (v. 22) alludes to Genesis 4:24 (cf. Notes): Lamech's revenge is transformed into a principle of forgiveness. In this context Jesus is not saying that

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seventy-seven times is the upper limit, nor that the forgiveness is so unqualified it vitiates the discipline and procedural steps just taught (vv. 15-20). Rather he teaches that forgiveness of fellow members in his community of "little ones" (brothers) cannot possibly be limited by frequency or quantity; for, as the ensuing parable shows (vv. 23-35), all of them have been forgiven far more than they will ever forgive.

b. The parable of the unmerciful servant (18:23-35)

23 "Therefore," since Jesus requires his followers to forgive, the kingdom of heaven has become like (not "is like"; see on 13:24) a king who ... : the reference is to the kingdom already being inaugurated. The reign of God establishes certain kinds of personal relationships, portrayed by this parable, whose point is spelled out in v. 35. It quite misses the point to identify kingdom and church and argue that just as the king, though merciful, must be severe in judging the unforgiving, so the church must follow a similar pattern (so Hill, *Matthew*). "Kingdom" and "church" are distinct categories (see esp. on 13:37-39), and the immediate context has returned to the question of *repeated, personal* forgiveness (vv. 21-22) and the reasons for it. Those in the kingdom serve a great king who has invariably forgiven far more than they can ever forgive one another. Therefore failure to forgive excludes one from the kingdom, whose pattern is to forgive. The "servants" (*douloi* , lit., "slaves") may include high-ranking civil servants in a huge colonial empire, for the amount of indebtedness is astronomical (v. 24). Yet Jesus may simply be using hyperbole to make clear how much the heirs of the kingdom have really been forgiven.

24-27 We glimpse some idea of the size of the indebtedness when we recall

that David donated three thousand talents of gold and seven thousand talents of silver for the construction of the temple, and the princes provided five thousand talents of gold and ten thousand talents of silver (1 Chronicles 29:4, 7). Some recent estimates suggest a dollar value of twelve million; but with inflation and fluctuating precious metal prices, this could be over a billion dollars in today's currency. (For "talent," see on 25:15.) Such indebtedness could not possibly be covered by selling the family into slavery (v. 25): top price for a slave fetched about one talent, and one-tenth that amount or less was more common. The practice of being sold for debt was sanctioned by the OT (Lev 25:39; 2 Kings 4:1), but such slaves had to be freed in the year of Jubilee (every fiftieth year). (For Jewish and Gentile slavery in Jesus' day, cf. EBC, 1:489 SBK, 4: 697-716; Jeremias, *Jerusalem* , pp. 312ff., 345ff.) In this parable selling the slave and his family does not mean the debt is canceled but rather highlights the servant's desperate plight. With neither resources nor hope,

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he begs for time and promises to pay everything back (v. 26)--an impossibility. So the master takes pity on him and cancels the indebtedness (v. 27). The word *daneion* ("loan," a *hapax legomenon*) suggests that the king mercifully decides to look on the loss as a bad loan rather than embezzlement; but by v. 32 he abandons that terminology and calls it a "debt."

28-31 The servant's attitude is appalling. The amount owed him is not insignificant: though worth but a few dollars in terms of metal currency, a hundred denarii (v. 28) represented a hundred days' wages for a foot soldier or common laborer. Yet the amount is utterly trivial compared with what has already been forgiven him. The similarity of his fellow servant's plea (v. 29) to his own (v. 26) does not move this unforgiving man. He has him thrown into a debtor's prison (v. 30). Even an inexpensive slave sold for five hundred denarii, and it was illegal to sell a man for a sum greater than his debt. But the other servants (v. 31), deeply distressed by the inequity, tell the master everything (*diesaphesan* is a strong verb meaning "explained in detail," not merely "told" [NIV]; it occurs in the NT only here and at 13:36).

32-34 When the servant owes ten thousand talents, the king forgives him; but when the servant shows himself unforgiving toward a fellow servant, the king calls him wicked (v.

32) and, foregoing selling him, turns him over to the "torturers" (*basanistais* , not merely "jailers," NIV); the word reminds us of earlier warnings in this chapter (18:6, 8-

9). The servant is to be tortured till he pays back all he owes (v. 34), which he can never do.

35 Jesus sees no incongruity in the actions of a heavenly Father who forgives so bountifully and punishes so ruthlessly, and neither should we. Indeed, it is

precisely because he is a God of such compassion and mercy that he cannot possibly accept as his those devoid of compassion and mercy. This is not to say that the king's compassion can be earned: far from it, the servant is granted freedom only by virtue of the king's forgiveness. As in 6:12, 14-15, those who are forgiven must forgive, lest they show themselves incapable of receiving forgiveness.

7. Transitional conclusion: introduction to the Judean ministry (19:1-2)

1-2 For the formula used in this transition and the manner in which it points ahead, see on 7:28-29. Jesus "left" (*metairo* ; for the verb, see on 13:53) Galilee and began to make his way toward Jerusalem, traveling by way of Perea, on the east side of the Jordan, thus avoiding Samaria--at least that is the customary explanation (v. 1). But it is possible that *peran tou Iordanou* (lit., "across the Jordan") modifies "Judea" on the

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west bank. This implies that the writer describes the movements from a stance on the east bank (so Slingerland; see on 4:15). The parallel in Mark 10:1 is difficult because of the textual uncertainty concerning *kai* ("and [across the Jordan]"): if the *kai* is original, Mark is thinking of *two* areas-- Judea *and* Perea ("across the Jordan"). But Matthew's expression "the other side of Jordan" could be taken as an awkward adverbial modifier of "went": Jesus "went across the Jordan [by that route] into the region of Judea." The large crowds (v. 2) and the many healings show that Jesus did in Judea what he had already done in Galilee. But the many summaries of Jesus' ministry in this Gospel (cf. 4:23; 9:35; 14:14; 16:30), along with showing how busy Jesus was, have another function. Because this Gospel contains so many discourses, "the picture of Jesus might easily become that of a *prophet* , attended by certain signs and wonders but with one single main task: to speak." These summaries help maintain balance and declare the full-orbed ministry of the Messiah (Gerhardsson, *Mighty Acts* , p. 36, emphasis his). Behind these two verses lurks a very complex problem in synoptic harmony. Although Matthew and Mark are roughly parallel from Matthew 14 to the end, here Luke goes his own way. He pictures Jesus going through Samaria (Luke 9:51-56) and then begins a lengthy series of accounts, some having no synoptic parallel and others appearing to be parallel to earlier material in Mark and Matthew, material Matthew has omitted (e.g., cf. Luke 11:14-36 with Matt 12:22-45; Mark 3:19-30; and Luke 12: 22-31 with Matt 6:25-34). Not till 18:15 does Luke rejoin Matthew (19:13) and Mark (10:13), thereafter running roughly parallel with them. The long section, Luke 9:51-18: 14 (though the precise ending is disputed), formerly called Luke's "travel narrative" but now commonly referred to as his "central section," is a problem for commentators on Luke, not Matthew; but it cannot be ignored by any synoptic commentator, because the way we perceive Luke's "central section" bears directly on the question of how many of the pericopes in Luke 9:51-18:14 are taken as real parallels to similar ones in the other Synoptics. Because in Luke's "central section" Jesus is regularly portrayed as heading for Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-53; 13:22; 17:11), some have argued that there is a

direct route to Jerusalem, with various side trips; but the chronology and topography become so tortuous as to render this unbelievable. Others see the three chief references to Jerusalem as parallels to (1) Jesus journey to Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:2-10), (2) Jesus' journey south at the time of the raising of Lazarus (John 11: 17-18), and (3) the journey terminating in the final Passover and the Cross. Therefore the entire "travel narrative" stands under the shadow of the Cross. This is possible, but it raises more questions of Gospel chronology and harmony than can be discussed here; and, in particular, it means that none of the apparent parallels to similar synoptic material can possibly spring from the same historical event. That too is just possible

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and is defended by many older commentators (e.g., Broadus). But it is unlikely that an evangelist like Luke--whose "orderly account" (1:3) clearly organizes much material in topical, not chronological or geographical, order--abandons this in 9:51-18:14. Therefore even if (as I am willing to assume) Luke's central section is framed by certain historical journeys to Jerusalem, used theologically to point to the final journey, it is only to be expected that topical material is also incorporated, because many of Luke's transitions between pericopes (when he uses them at all) are chronologically imprecise. What this means for a commentator on Matthew is that each apparent parallel between a pericope in Matthew and one in Luke's "central section" must be assessed on its own merits. In some cases they probably refer to the same event, in others not; and in some instances the evidence may be such that a convincing decision is impossible. Craig Blomberg ("Tradition-history") has made some of the careful comparisons that are necessary. In the following chart of parables found in Luke's central section, prepared by Blomberg, column a lists the total number of words in Luke's account that appear in identical form in the synoptic parallel, b lists the number of words common to both texts but in different lexical or grammatical forms, and c the number of words in Luke that are clear synonyms for corresponding words in the other text. Column d provides the percentage of words in Luke falling into category a, and column e the percentage falling into a, b, or c.

No. of words

Lukan Parable Synoptic parallel in Luke a b c d e

12:39-40 Matt 24:43-44 34 29 2 3 85.3 100.0

13:20-21 Matt 13:33 21 15 4 1 71.4 95.2

12:42-46 Matt 24:45-51 102 83 5 4 81.4 90.2

8:5-8 Matt 4:3-9 76 44 11 7 57.9 81.5

7:31-35 Matt 11:16-19 76 45 14 2 59.2 80.3

11:11-13 Matt 7:9-11 48 34 2 2 70.8 79.2

13:18-19 Matt 13:31-32 38 19 5 4 50.0 73.7

20:9a-16a Matt 12:1-9 120 64 11 6 53.3 67.5

14:5 Matt 12:11 17 2 6 1 11.7 52.9

6:47-49 Matt 7:24-27 83 21 16 3 25.3 48.2

19:12-27 Matt 25:14-30 253 54 23 28 21.3 41.5

15:4-7 Matt 18:12-14 81 15 12 2 18.5 35.8

14:16-24 Matt 22:2-10 159 10 14 4 6.3 17.6

12:35-38 Matt 13:33-37 67 2 4 3 3.0 13.4

The chart reveals three groups of parables: (1) those with considerable verbal similarity, 53.3%-85.3% in column *d* , and 67.5%-100% in column *e* ; (2) those with very little verbal similarity, 3.0%-6.3% in column *d* , and 13.4%-17.6% in column *e* ; and, bunched between these two extremes, (3) those with a significant but not high verbal similarity 18.5%-25.3% in column *d* , and 35.8%-52.9% in column *e* . As far as these statistics alone are concerned, one might be tempted to think that parables in group (1)

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probably have a common source, parables in group (2) are distinct, and parables in group (3) have to be handled one by one. This is largely the way they have worked out in this commentary. Yet other mitigating factors must be kept in mind. For instance, if a parable is brief and aphoristic, then high verbal similarity is less likely to indicate a common source: the parable may have been repeated many times. Again, contrary to Jeremias (*Parables*, pp. 33ff.), P.B. Payne ("Metaphor as a Model for Interpretation of the Parable of the Sower" [Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University, 1975], pp. 308-11) has shown in detail that in almost all instances the audience claimed by the evangelist for any parable found in two or more synoptic Gospels does not contradict the audience claimed by another synoptic evangelist for what appears to be the same parable. If the Gospel writers are careful to preserve the correct audience in all but two cases, one suspects that, if there is independent reason in those two cases to think the parallels may not be parallels but *independent* parables, that is reasonable evidence to believe the alleged parables were separate stories with similar plot lines and vocabularies from the beginning. One such case is the parable of the lost sheep (see on Matt 18:10-14), which falls at the bottom of the intermediate group on the accompanying chart (cf. further Blomberg, "Tradition-history," ch. 2). While the work of Blomberg and Payne is largely restricted to the parables in Luke's central section (or in Payne's case to synoptic parables), their methods and general observations are applicable to other materials in that section that are paralleled in Matthew. (See comments on 18:10-14; 22:2-10; 24:43-44; 25:14-30.)

VI. Opposition and Eschatology: The Triumph of Grace (19:3-26:5)

A. Narrative (19:3-23:39)

1. Marriage and divorce (19:3-12)

On the dangers and difficulties of constructing detailed outlines, see on 13:54-58. Yet certain themes in these chapters (19:3-26:5) are crystalized. The opposition to Jesus becomes more heated and focused: the stances of Jesus and the Jewish leaders become more irreconcilable. Jesus not only reveals more of himself and his mission to his disciples but centers more attention on the End, the ultimate eschatological hope, the consummation of the kingdom. Within these two poles, opposition and eschatology, the grace of God toward those under the kingdom becomes an increasingly dominant theme. Without ever using the word "grace," Matthew returns to this theme repeatedly (e.g., 19:21-22; 20:1-16). But grace does not mean there is no judgment (23: 1-39). Rather, it means that despite the gross rejection of Jesus, the chronic unbelief of

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opponents, crowds, and disciples alike, and the judgment that threatens both within history and at the End, grace triumphs and calls out a messianic people who bow to Jesus' lordship and eagerly await his return. By and large 19:3-26:5 follows the structure of Mark; but there are substantial additions (20:1-16; 21:28-32; 22:1-14), expansions (esp. 23:1-39; cf. Mark 12:38-44), alterations (esp. 21:10-17), and additional parables after the Olivet Discourse (ch. 25). For three reasons the first pericope in this section of Matthew has called forth an enormous quantity of comment and exposition: (1) it deals with a perennially burning pastoral issue in society and in the church; (2) it includes some notoriously difficult words and phrases (see esp. v. 9); and (3) its relation to the parallel in Mark 10:2-12 is hotly disputed. Only some of these issues can be directly addressed here. (For the cultural background to marriage in the Bible, see Edwin M. Yamauchi, "Cultural Aspects of Marriage in the Ancient World," BS 135 [1978]: 241-52; and for post-Pentateuchal developments on divorce, canonical and other, see Sigal, "Halakah," pp. 130-42.)

3 Pharisees (see on 3:7) are often found in Matthew's Gospel testing or opposing Jesus in some way (12:2, 14, 24, 38; 15:1; 16:1; 19:3; 22:15, 34-35). Their "test," here, is probably delivered in the hope that Jesus would say something to damage his reputation with the people or even seem to contradict Moses. Perhaps, too, they hoped that Jesus would say something that would entangle him in the Herod-Herodias affair so that he might meet the Baptist's fate. Machaerus was not far away (see on 14:3-12). The question whether it is right for a man to divorce his wife "for any and every reason" (NIV has rightly rendered a difficult phrase: cf. Turner, *Insights*, p. 61) hides an enormous diversity of Jewish opinion. Among the Qumran covenanters, divorce was judged illicit under all circumstances (CD 4:21; and esp. 11QTemple 57:17-19; on which see J.R. Mueller, "The Temple Scroll and the Gospel Divorce Texts," *Revue de Qumran* 38 [1980]: 247ff.). In mainstream Palestinian Judaism, opinion was divided roughly into two opposing camps: both the school of Hillel and the school of Shammai

permitted divorce (of the woman by the man: the reverse was not considered) on the grounds of *erwat dabar* ("something indecent," Deut 24:1), but they disagreed on what "indecent" might include. Shammai and his followers interpreted the expression to refer to gross indecency, though not necessarily adultery; Hillel extended the meaning beyond sin to all kinds of real or imagined offenses, including an improperly cooked meal. The Hillelite R. Akiba permitted divorce in the case of a roving eye for prettier women (M *Gittin* 9:10). On any understanding of what Jesus says in the following verses, he agrees with neither Shammai nor Hillel; for even though the school of Shammai was stricter than

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Hillel, it permitted remarriage when the divorce was not in accordance with its own Halakah (rules of conduct) (M *Edoyoth* 4:7-10); and if Jesus restricts grounds for divorce to sexual indecency (see on v. 9), then he differs fundamentally from Shammai. Jesus cuts his own swath in these verses, as Sigal ("Halakah," pp. 104ff.) rightly points out; and he does so in an age when in many Pharisaic circles "the frequency of divorce was an open scandal" (Hill, *Matthew*). Josephus, for instance, himself a divorcee, was a Pharisee; and in his view divorce was permitted "for any causes whatsoever" (Jos. Antiq. IV, 253 [viii.23]). Thus the setting of the divorce question in this pericope is different from 5:31-32. There divorce is set in a discourse that gives the norms of the kingdom and the sanctity of marriage; here it is set in a theological disputation that raises the question of what divorces are allowed.

4-6 Jesus aligns himself with the prophet Malachi, who quotes Yahweh as saying, "I hate divorce" (2:16), and also refers to creation (2:14-15). Jesus cites first Genesis 1: 27 and then Genesis 2:24. The Creator made the race "male and female" (v. 4): the implication is that the two sexes should be united in marriage. But lest the implication be missed, the Creator then said that "for this reason" (v. 5)--because God made them so--a man will leave father and mother, be united to his wife, and become one flesh (cf. Ecclesiasticus 25:26; Eph 5:28-31). The words "for this reason" in Genesis 2:24 refer to Adam's perception that the woman was "bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh" because she had been made from him and for him--i.e., the man and the woman were in the deepest sense "related." The same thing is implied by Genesis 1:27--i.e., the "one flesh" in every marriage between a man and a woman is a reenactment of and testimony to the very structure of humanity as God created it. "So" (*hoste* here is "simply an inferential particle" [Moule, *Idiom Book* , p. 144]), Jesus concludes, the husband and

wife are no longer two but one, and that by God's doing (v. 6). If God has joined them together, according to the structure of his own creation, divorce is not only "unnatural" but rebellion against God. God and man are so far apart on this issue that what God unites, man divides. Jesus' response cuts through a great deal of casuistry and sets forth a dominant perspective that must not be lost in the exegetical tangles of v. 9. Two profound insights must be grasped. 1. Although Jewish leaders tended to analyze adultery in terms, not of infidelity to one's spouse, but of taking someone else's wife (cf. M *Ketuboth* and M *Kiddushin*) , Jesus dealt with the sanctity of marriage by focusing on the God-ordained unity of the couple. 2. Jesus essentially appealed to the principle, "The more original, the weightier," an

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accepted form of argument in Jewish exegesis (cf. Paul in Gal 3:15-18); and it is impossible to go further back than creation for the responsibilities of mankind. If marriage is grounded in *creation*, in the way God has made us, then it cannot be reduced to a merely covenantal relationship that breaks down when the covenantal promises are broken (contra David Atkinson, *To Have and to Hold: The Marriage Covenant and the Discipline of Divorce* [London: Collins, 1979], esp. pp. 114ff.). But the argument in this instance leaves unanswered the question of how the Mosaic law is to be taken; and therefore the stage is set for the Pharisees' next question.

7-8 The Pharisees refer to Deuteronomy 24:1-4, which they interpret to mean something like this: "If a man takes a wife ... and she does not find favor in his eyes ... he shall write a bill of divorce ... and shall send her away from his house" (so also Vul.). But the Hebrew more naturally means something like this: "If a man takes a wife ... and she does not find favor in his eyes ... and he writes a bill of divorce ... and he sends her away from his house ... and her second husband does the same thing, then her first husband must not marry her again" (presumably because that would be a kind of incest; cf. Zerwick, par. 458; G.J. Wenham, "The Restoration of Marriage Reconsidered," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 30 [1979]: 36-40). In other words Moses did not command divorce but permitted it for *erwat dabar* ("something indecent"); and the text is less concerned with explaining the nature of that indecency (the precise expression is found in only one other place in the OT-- Deut 23:14, with reference to human excrement) than with prohibiting remarriage of the twice-divorced woman to her first husband. Divorce and remarriage are therefore presupposed by Moses: i.e., he "permitted" them (v. 8). The general thrust of Mark 10:2-9 is the same as in Matthew 19:3-8. But there (1) the Pharisees ask their test question without "for any and every reason"; (2) Jesus mentions Moses' command; (3) the Pharisees reply in terms of what Moses permitted; and (4) only then does Jesus offer his basic perspective in terms of the creation ordinance. The net effect of the two passages this far is

the same. But it is not easy to reconstruct the historical details. Matthew seems more concerned about the thrust of the exchange than about who said what first. Both Matthew and Mark show that Jesus taught that Moses' concession reflected not the true creation ordinance but the hardness of men's hearts. Divorce is not part of the Creator's perfect design. If Moses permitted it, he did so because sin can be so vile that divorce is to be preferred to continued "indecency." This is not to say that the person who, according to what Moses said, divorced his spouse was actually committing sin in so doing; but that divorce could even be considered testified that there had already been sin in the marriage. Therefore any view of divorce and remarriage (taught in either Testament) that sees the problem only in terms of what

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may or may not be done has already overlooked a basic fact--divorce is never to be thought of as a God-ordained, morally neutral option but as evidence of sin, of hardness of heart. The fundamental attitude of the Pharisees to the question was wrong. It should be noted also that Jesus, when speaking of the sin of the people, invariably refers to their sin, your sin, never our sin (cf. 6:14-15). But what was the "indecent" in Moses' day that allowed for divorce? "Something indecent" could not be equated with adultery, for the normal punishment for that was death, not divorce (Deut 22:22)--though it is not at all clear that the death penalty was in fact regularly imposed for adultery (cf. Henry McKeating, "Sanctions Against Adultery in Ancient Israelite Society," JSOT 11 [1979]: 57-72). Nor could the indecent be suspicion of adultery, for which the prescribed procedure was the bitter-water rite (Num 5:5-31). Yet the indecent must have been shocking: ancient Israel took marriage seriously. The best assumption is that the indecent was any lewd, immoral behavior, sometimes including, but not restricted to, adultery--e.g. lesbianism or sexual misconduct that fell short of intercourse.

9 Four problems contribute to the difficulty of understanding this verse. The first is textual. The "except" clause appears in several forms, doubtless owing to assimilation to 5:32, but there can be no doubt that an except clause is original. Though some MSS add a few more words (e.g., "and the divorcee who marries another commits adultery"), the diversity of the MS additions and the likelihood of assimilation to 5:32, not to mention the weight of external evidence, support the shorter text (cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, pp. 47-48). The second problem concerns the meaning of *porneia* ("marital unfaithfulness," NIV; "fornication," KJV). H. Baltensweiler (*Die Ehe im Neuen Testament* [Zurich: Zwingli, 1967], p. 93) thinks that it refers to marriage within prohibited degrees (Lev 18), i.e., to incest. Many others, especially Roman Catholic scholars, have

defended that view in some detail (cf. J.A. Fitzmyer, "The Matthean Divorce Texts and Some New Palestinian Evidence," *Theological Studies* , 37 [1976]: 208-11). Appeal is often made to 1 Corinthians 5:1, where "a man has his father's wife" (his stepmother). But it should be noted that even here Paul gives no indication he is dealing with an incestuous marriage but only an incestuous affair. It is very doubtful whether Paul or any other Jew would have regarded an incestuous relationship as marriage: Paul would not have told the couple to get a divorce but to stop what they were doing. And in the next chapter Paul uses the same word (*porneia*) to describe prostitution (1Cor 6:13, 16). Others have argued that *porneia* refers to premarital unchastity (Isaksson, pp. 135ff.; Mark Geldard, "Jesus' Teaching on Divorce," *Churchman* 92 [1978]: 134-43): if a man discovers his bride is not a virgin, he may divorce her. This has the advantage

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(it is argued) of being no *real* exception to Jesus' prohibition of divorce, making it easier to reconcile Matthew and Mark, who omits the "except" clause. Moreover it provides a neat background for the disciples' shock (v. 10); for if *porneia* refers to every sexual sin, Jesus is saying no more than what many rabbis taught. The latter objection is best treated at v. 10. The former is a possible way of reconciling Matthew and Mark, but there are many other possibilities; and there is no reason to adopt this one if *porneia* is being squeezed into too narrow a semantic range. Still others hold that *porneia* here means "adultery," no more and no less (e.g., T.V. Fleming, "Christ and Divorce," *Theological Studies* 24 [1963]: 109; Sigal, "Halakah," pp. 116ff.). Certainly the word can include that meaning (Jer 3:8-9; cf. MT and LXX; cf. Ecclesiasticus 23:23). Yet in Greek the normal word for adultery is *moicheia*. Matthew has already used *moicheia* and *porneia* in the same context (15:19), suggesting some distinction between the words, even if there is considerable overlap.

A. Mahoney ("A New Look at the Divorce Clauses in Mt 5, 32 and 19:9," CBQ 30

[1968]: 29:38) suggests *porneia* refers to spiritual harlotry, a metaphor often adopted by the OT prophets. Jesus then prohibits divorce except where one spouse is not a Christian. But it is almost impossible to conceive how such a response, couched in such language, could have any relevance (let alone intelligibility) to the disputants here. Moreover Paul knows no dominical word on the subject of mixed marriages (1Cor 7:12), and the answer he provides (1Cor 7:12-16) seems somewhat stricter.

The reason these and many other creative suggestions have been advanced lies in the difficulty of the verse as a whole, both in its immediate context and as a parallel to Mark-Luke. But it must be admitted that the word *porneia* itself is very broad. In unambiguous contexts it can on occasion refer to a specific kind of sexual sin. Yet even then this is possible only because the specific sexual sin belongs to the larger category of sexual immorality. *Porneia* covers the entire range of such sins (cf. TDNT, 6:579- 95; BAGD,

s.v.; Joseph Jensen, "Does *porneia* Mean Fornication? A Critique of Bruce Malina," NovTest 20 [1978]: 161-84) and should not be restricted unless the context requires it. The third problem is why Matthew alone of the synoptic Gospels includes the except clause; and the fourth is just what that clause means. These may be handled together. Proposed solutions are legion; but there are seven important ones. 1. Some hold that the except clause here and in 5:32 is really no exception at all. The preposition *epi* plus the dative can have the sense of addition: "in addition to" or even "apart from" (cf. Luke 3:20; Col 3:14; Zerwick, par. 128). In this verse the words should be rendered "not apart from sexual promiscuity" in v. 9; and similar reasoning applies to the slightly different construction in 5:31 "whoever repudiates his wife, in addition to the *porneia* [for which he repudiates her], causes her to be defiled by adultery." There is then no exception to Jesus' prohibition of divorce as reported in

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Mark-Luke. But all this requires almost impossible Greek. When *epi* has this "additive" force, it is nowhere preceded by *me* ("not"), which most naturally introduces an exception. Dupont (*Mariage et divorce* , pp. 102-6) has clearly shown that a real exception is meant. 2. The majority of recent commentators hold that Matthew has simply taken over Mark's pericope but liberalized it. The absolute prohibition was no longer possible in the Matthean church, and so the except clause was introduced (so David R. Catchpole, "The Synoptic Divorce Material as a Traditio-Historical Problem," BJRL 57 [1974-75]: 92-127; R.H. Stein, "Is It Harmful for a Man to Divorce His Wife?" JETS 22 [1979]: 115-21; H. Reisser, DNTT, 1:500). The particular reason for adding the exception is variously put: (1) Jesus' absolute prohibition was only meant to be a guideline, which the evangelists felt free to adapt--after all, "Jesus was not a legalist" (Stein); (2) Matthew felt it necessary to align Jesus with the school of Shammai in the context of rabbinic debates in his day (Bornkamm, *Tradition* , pp. 25-26); and (3) *porneia* refers to incestuous marriages, not uncommon among Gentiles; so Matthew added the except clause because an increasing number of Gentile converts were entering his predominantly Jewish church, and Jesus' prohibition of divorce must not be thought to apply to their illicit marriages (Mahoney, "New Looks"; cf. also Benoit, Bonnard). But all these views have serious problems.

a. There is serious debate about whether Matthew has actually *added* something to the tradition or whether he is independent of Mark at this point. b. To stigmatize an absolute prohibition by suggesting it would make Jesus a "legalist" is to beg a number of questions. Could not any absolute prohibition be subjected to the same cavalier labeling? The word "legalist" is a loaded word that can refer either to someone who sets up absolutes or to someone who thinks he is accepted by God on the basis of his obedience. In the first sense Jesus is a "legalist" (e.g., 22: 37-38); in the second sense he is not. But only the first sense is relevant to this verse. c. It is not clear, why

Matthew would feel it necessary to align his Gospel with a particular rabbinic school that, as he knew, already existed in Jesus' day. There is no new situation, in this respect, in A.D. 85. d. The new situation suggested by Mahoney ("New Look") is not very plausible because it requires an unnatural reading of *porneia* , it assumes that Matthew would see an incestuous "marriage" as a genuine marriage subject to divorce (instead of a sinful affair that must be terminated), and it introduces an unsupported major anachronism. e. Moreover simple alignment with the school of Shammai is implausible in a book demanding a righteousness surpassing that of the Pharisees (5:20) and in a context where Jesus' teaching on divorce evokes a cynical response from the disciples (19:10).

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3. Hill, Sigal, and others argue that *porneia* simply means "adultery" in this context and that Jesus is interpreting the *erwat dabar* ("something indecent") of Deuteronomy 24:1 in this way. This does not necessarily mean that Matthew softens Mark: as Hill (*Matthew*) points out, in Jewish circles of the first century, Jewish law *required* a man to divorce an adulterous wife (M *Sotah* 5:1); and this may well be assumed by the other Gospels "as an understood and accepted part of any teaching on the subject of divorce" but spelled out only in Matthew. This interpretation probably narrows down the meaning of *porneia* too far; but apart from that, the objections against it can be satisfactorily answered (cf. below on 7).

4. Bruce Vawter, in two articles ("The Divorce Clauses in Mt 5, 32 and 19, 9," CBQ 16 [1954]: 155-67; and "Divorce and the New Testament," CBQ 39 [1977]: 528-48), argues strongly that the except clauses have been misunderstood: they are preteritions, i.e., exceptions to the proposition itself, not simply to the verb. The except clause in 19:9 therefore "means that *porneia* [which he takes to be equivalent to the 'something indecent' of Deut 24:1] is not involved"--i.e., "I say to you, whoever dismisses his wife--the permission in Deut 24:1 notwithstanding--and marries another, commits adultery." Similarly, in 5:32 he understands the crucial phrase to mean "quite apart from the matter of *porneia* ." Vawter is followed by Banks (*Jesus*, pp. 156-57). The effect of this interpretation is similar to 1: Matthew allows no more of an exception than Mark, and Jesus specifically abrogates the Mosaic permission. It makes good sense of the disciples' next remarks (v. 10)--though Jesus' rejoinder (vv. 11-12) seems a bit of a letdown, in a book in which the redactional pattern is *not* to have Jesus agree with his misunderstanding disciples but to reemphasize the point just made (cf. Q. Quesnell, "Made Themselves Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt 19:12), CBQ 30 [1968]: 340ff.). Moreover it is not at all obvious that the except clauses are preteritions: certainly the earliest Greek commentators did not take them that way, as Quesnell (p. 348) points out.

5. What Quesnell himself argues is that Jesus by using the verb *apollyo* (v. 9) permits, in the case of the wife's marital infidelity, separation but not divorce (similarly

G.J. Wenham, "May Divorced Christians Remarry?" Churchman 95 [1981]: 150-61; Dupont, *Mariage et divorce* , pp. 93-157), and therefore no remarriage under any circumstances. Such separation without possibility of remarriage was unheard of in Jewish circles and, of course, would have been much stricter than the school of Shammai; and this prompts the disciples' reaction (v. 10). But two considerations stand against this view. First, *apolyo* has already been used in v. 3 with the undoubted meaning "to divorce." It is unwarranted to understand the same verb a few verses later in some other way, unless there is some compelling contextual reason for the change. Again, though it is formally true that the except clause is syntactically linked to the divorce clause, not the remarriage clause, this is scarcely decisive.

Locating the

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except clause anywhere else would breed even more ambiguity. For instance, if it is placed before the verb *moichatai* ("commits adultery"), the verse might be paraphrased as follows: "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another, if it is not for fornication that he divorces one and marries another, commits adultery." But this wording suggests that fornication is being advanced as the actual *reason* for marrying another, and not only for the divorce--an interpretation that borders on the ridiculous. Moreover, if the remarriage clause is excluded, the thought becomes nonsensical: "Anyone who divorces his wife, except for *porneia* , commits adultery"--surely untrue unless he remarries. The except clause must therefore be understood to govern the entire protasis. We may paraphrase as follows: "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery--though this principle does not hold in the case of *porneia* ." 6. John J. Kilgallen ("To What Are the Matthean Exception-Texts [5, 32 and 19, 9] an Exception?" *Biblica* 61 [1980]: 102-5) suggests that the except clauses need only mean that in some cases divorce is not adulterous, rather than that in some cases divorce is not morally wrong. He renders 5:32: "Everyone who divorces his wife (except in the case of *porneia*) makes her adulterous." But in the case of *porneia* , he does not *make* her adulterous; she is *already* adulterous (similarly Westerholm [pp. 118f.] and the literature he cites). This is not convincing; for the Greek does not read "makes her adulterous" or "makes her an adulteress," but "makes her commit adultery" (the passive infinitive does not mean "to become an adulter[ess]" but "to commit adultery"; cf. BAGD, s.v., 2.b). If the woman has already committed *porneia* , doubtless divorce (and the remarriage that would ensue) could scarcely be said to make her an adulteress; but such divorce and remarriage would make her commit adultery. And this approach does not work in v. 9, where the result is not that the man makes his wife commit adultery but that he commits adultery. 7. It seems best, then, to permit both *porneia* and the except clause to retain their normal force. Jesus is then saying that divorce and remarriage always involve evil; but as Moses permitted it because of the hardness of men's hearts, so also does he--but now on the sole grounds of *porneia* (sexual

sin of any sort). The principal exegetical difficulties surrounding this view may be treated as follows: a. Formally Jesus is abrogating something of the Mosaic prescription; for whatever the *erwsat dabar* ("something indecent") refers to (Deut 24:1), it cannot easily be thought to refer to adultery, for which the prescribed punishment was death. That this was rarely carried out (McKeating, "Sanctions Against Adultery"; cf. Joseph in 1:19-20) is beside the point: as a legal system, irrespective of whether it was enforced, the Deuteronomic permission for divorce and remarriage could scarcely have adultery primarily in view. But *porneia* includes adultery even if not restricted to it. Jesus' judgments on the matter are therefore both lighter (no capital punishment for adultery)

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and heavier (the sole exception being sexual sin).

b. This exception is not in contradiction with Jesus' strong words in vv. 4-8, despite frequent insistence on the contrary. In vv. 4-8 Jesus lays out the true direction in which Scripture points (cf. Jesus' treatment of oaths, 5:33-37, where there is also formal abrogation of a Mosaic command). Even here Jesus acknowledges that the Mosaic concession springs not from divine desire but human hardheartedness. Would Jesus say human hearts were any less hard in his own day? Might there not therefore be some exception to the principle he lays out, precisely because *porneia* was not on the Creator's mind in Genesis 1-2? More importantly sexual sin has a peculiar relation to Jesus treatment of Genesis 1:27; 2:24 (in Matt 19:4-6), because the indissolubility of marriage he defends by appealing to those verses from the creation accounts is predicated on sexual union ("one flesh"). Sexual promiscuity is therefore a de facto exception. It may not necessitate divorce; but permission for divorce and remarriage under such circumstances, far from being inconsistent with Jesus' thought, is in perfect harmony with it.

c. Although it is commonly held that the except clauses are secondary and bring Matthew into a clash with Mark, the issue is not so simple. Not a few scholars hold that, at least on this point, Matthew 19:9 is authentic and that Mark omits the obvious exception (e.g., Schlatter; Isaksson, pp. 75-92; D.L. Dungan, *The Sayings of Jesus in the Churches of Paul* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971], pp. 122-25). Catchpole ("Synoptic Material"), on the other hand, argues for Markan priority on the ground that the aporias he finds in Matthew 19:3-12 can all be explained by recognizing that they have been introduced precisely where Matthew has changed Mark. His argument has some weight only if the aporias are real; but the four he mentions are either imagined or explainable in other ways. For instance, Catchpole holds that v. 9 does not cohere with vv. 4-8, and this problem can be remedied only by the removal of the except clause in v. 9 which is precisely the new bit Matthew has added. But we have shown above at b that v. 9 *does* cohere with vv. 4-8. This does not prove Matthew did not depend on Mark, but it forbids

claiming he *did*. And even if Mark's priority prevails in this pericope, Matthew's redactional additions cannot be assumed to be nonhistorical unless we have evidence that Matthew had access to no other information (cf. Introduction, sections 1-3). We conclude, therefore, that there is no decisive evidence for literary dependence either way, and that there is no overwhelming reason why the except clauses, both here and in 5:32, should not be authentic. Certainly, on the interpretation adopted here, Matthew and Mark-Luke have this in common--they abrogate any permission for divorce in Deuteronomy 24:1 if that permission extends, or is thought to extend, beyond sexual sin. If Mark has priority, the except clause in Matthew seems best explained along the line suggested by Hill

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above at 3; if the reverse, or if the two Gospels preserve independent accounts of the same incident, Mark may think the exception so obvious (because it concerns sexual infidelity, the heart of the union according to Genesis) as not worth mentioning. Moreover the exception is particularly appropriate to Jesus' day and to Matthew's Jewish readers; for though Jesus had formally dismissed the Mosaic divorce provisions and substituted marital unfaithfulness as the sole basis of a rupture of the "one flesh," this exception collided with the Mosaic sentence of stoning in such cases-- a fact of which Jewish audiences were doubtlessly aware. With the death penalty for marital *porneia* effectively abolished, "the termination of the relationship might appropriately be effected by divorce" (James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective* [Leicester: IVP, 1981], p. 104; cf. further John Murray, *Divorce* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1953], pp. 51ff.). d. The final problem is whether this interpretation adequately accounts for the disciples' reaction (v. 10). Before turning to this, we may observe that Mark 10:12 makes the same responsibilities and privileges concerning divorce and remarriage extend to the woman as well as the man-- probably a pointed rebuke of Herodias (cf. Lane, *Mark* , p. 358). Mark omits the except clause and retains the remark about women, Matthew the reverse. (The related question of the so-called Pauline privilege [1Cor 7:15] must be left to commentaries on 1 Corinthians.)

10-12 Dupont (*Mariage et divorce* , pp. 161-222) argues that these verses deal, not with celibacy, but with continence after divorce. Believing that no remarriage is legitimate, Dupont argues that the divorced believer must remain continent "for the sake of the kingdom"--i.e., in order to enter it-- because remarriage would be adulterous. Somewhat similar is Francis J. Moloney's position ("Matthew 19, 3-12 and Celibacy. A Redactional and Form-Critical Study." *Journal of the Study of the New Testament* 2

(1979): 42-60, esp. 47ff.). But in addition to the difficulties entailed by holding that no remarriage is permitted (see on v. 9), "eunuch" is a strange figure for continence after marriage, especially since if the divorced spouse died, the survivor could remarry (Dupont's view). There is a better way to look at these verses. First, the disciples' reaction (v. 10) must not be exaggerated. Unlike v. 25, there is no mention of astonishment. Jesus, though not forbidding *all* divorce and remarriage, has come close to the school of Shammai on the grounds for exceptions, while taking a far more conservative stance than Shammai on who may remarry. In the light of the position, tacitly adopted by most Jews, that marriage was a duty, the disciples rather cynically conclude that such strictures surely make marriage unattractive. This virtually makes the appeal of marriage contingent on liberal divorce and remarriage rights--a stance that fails miserably to understand what Jesus has said about the creation ordinance.

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Verse 11 can then be understood in one of two ways. Either *ton logon touton* (lit. "this word"--regardless of whether *touton* is original, since *ton* can be a mild demonstrative) refers to Jesus' teaching in vv. 4-9 or to the disciples' misguided remark in v. 10. NIV's "this teaching" (v. 11) favors the former; but this is unlikely, for it makes Jesus contradict himself. After a strong prohibition, it is highly unlikely that Jesus' moral teaching dwindles into a pathetic "But of course, not everyone can accept this." It helps little to say with Bonnard that those to whom the teaching is given are Christians who must follow Jesus' moral standards but that others cannot accept what he says, for Jesus' appeal has been to the creation ordinance, not to kingdom morality. It is better to take "this word" to refer to the disciples' conclusion in v. 10: "it is better not to marry." Jesus responds that not everyone can live by such a verdict, such abstinence from marriage. But some do, namely those to whom it is given--those born eunuchs, those made eunuchs by men (possibly in groups like the Essenes, but more likely a reflection of the rabbinic distinction between two types of eunuch: the impotent and the castrated--the latter very often for some high court position where there were royal women (cf. Acts 8:26-39; SBK, 1:805-7)--and those who have made themselves eunuchs because of the kingdom of God. The latter is not a commendation of self-castration but of renunciation of marriage in light of the disciples' remark, "it is better not to marry." Jesus, like Paul after him (1Cor 7:7-9), is prepared to commend celibacy "because of the kingdom" (not "for the sake of attaining it," but "because of its claims and interests": cf. J. Blinzler, "Eisin eunouchoi: Zur Auslegung von Mt 19, 12," ZNW 28 [1957]: 254-70). Thus, far from backing down at the disciples' surliness, Jesus freely concedes that for those to whom it is given "it is better not to marry"; and "The one who can accept this should accept it." But it is important to recognize that neither Jesus nor the apostles see celibacy as an intrinsically holier state than marriage (cf. 1Tim 4:1-3; Heb 13:4), nor as a condition for the top levels of ministry (Matt 8:14; 1Cor 9:5), but as a special calling granted for greater usefulness in the kingdom. Those who impose this discipline on themselves must remember Paul's conclusion: it is better to

marry than to burn with passion (1Cor 7:9). Two final observations: (1) The authenticity of v. 12 has been admirably defended by T. Matura ("Le celibat dans le Nouveau Testament," *Nouvelle Revue Theologique* 107 [1975]: 481-500); and (2) Jesus' remarks betray a certain self-conscious independence of the OT law, which excluded eunuchs from the assembly of Yahweh (Deut 23:1; cf. Lev 22:24; SBK, 1:806-7; Schweizer). One cannot forget the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-40) who, though he would have been excluded from the assembly of Yahweh, was joyfully welcomed to the assembly of Messiah.

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2. Blessing little children (19:13-15)

13 "Then" is ambiguous (see on 2:7). Children in Jesus' day were often brought to rabbis and elders to be blessed, customarily by placing hands on them (cf. Gen 48:14; Num 27:18; Acts 6:6; 13:3; cf. Matt 9:18, 20; Mark 10:16). The disciples "rebuked them" (lit.): both the context and the synoptic parallels show that "them" refers, not to the children, but to "those who brought them" (NIV). Why did the disciples stoop to this rebuke? Perhaps they were annoyed that Jesus was being delayed on his journey to Jerusalem; perhaps they felt they were being interrupted in their important discussion. Although children in Judaism of the time were deeply cherished, they were thought in some ways to be negligible members of society: their place was to learn, to be respectful, to listen. But two deeper insights suggest themselves: (1) the preceding pericope (vv. 3-12) implicitly stresses the sanctity of the family, and vv. 13-15 continue by saying something important about children; and (2) in 18:1-9 children serve as models for humility, patterns for Jesus' "little ones"; yet Jesus' disciples, his "little ones," show little humility here.

14-15 Jesus does not want the little children prevented from coming to him (v. 14), not because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them, but because the kingdom of heaven belongs to those like them (so also Mark and Luke, stressing childlike faith): Jesus receives them because they are an excellent object lesson in the kind of humility and faith he finds acceptable.

3. Wealth and the kingdom (19:16-30)

a. The rich young man (19:16-22)

Some of the differences between Matthew and Mark-Luke (cf. Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30) are so sharp (cf. vv. 16-17) that they have frequently served as tests for redaction criticism. Many, of course, are of little significance. Matthew introduces the central figure as "a man" and later says he was "young" (v. 20). Mark (10:17) says nothing about his age but provides more details of the initial meeting: it was "as Jesus started on his way" that a man "ran up" to him and "fell on his knees before him." These and many similar differences have been treated elsewhere (cf. Carson, "Redaction Criticism"). The nub of the problem turns on vv. 16-17 and parallels.

16-17 A certain man--identified by all three evangelists as rich, by Matthew (v. 20) as young, and by Luke (18:18) as a ruler--asks Jesus what he must do to inherit "eternal life" (v. 16). The latter expression refers to a life "approved by God and to which

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access to the kingdom (present and eschatological) is promised (cf. the rabbinic 'life of the age to come')" (Hill, *Matthew* ; cf. 7:14; 25:46; Hill, *Greek Words* , pp. 163-201). The problem arises when Matthew is compared with Mark and Luke. In the latter, the questioner asks, "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 18:18). Jesus replies, "Why do you call me good? No one is good--except God alone" (v. 19). In Matthew, however, the questioner asks, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life?" (v. 16). "Good" no longer modifies "teacher"; and therefore Jesus' response is correspondingly adapted: "Why do you ask me about what is good"? There is only One who is good" (v. 17). A majority of modern scholars hold that Matthew has transformed the exchange because, at his later time of writing, the church can no longer live with the suggestion that Jesus himself is not sinless. It is logically possible to achieve harmonization by mere addition (" *Good* teacher what *good* thing?" followed by Jesus giving both answers); indeed, later copyists of NT MSS sometimes opted for such an approach (hence KJV). But the procedure is notoriously implausible. The evangelists, as we have often witnessed, are far more concerned with Jesus' *ipsissima vox* than his *ipsissima verba* (see note on 3:17); and we do the Scriptures disservice when we fail to consider the implications. Nevertheless the christological explanation ventured by many is equally implausible. A better understanding of the text is gained from the following observations. 1. Stonehouse (*Origins* , pp. 93-112) has convincingly demonstrated that christological concerns do not stand at the heart of *any* of the three synoptic accounts. The argument of G.M. Styler ("Stages in Christology in the Synoptic Gospels," NTS 10 [1963-64]: esp. pp. 404-6), that Matthew reflects a growing interest in ontology, is especially weak. Styler argues that, unlike Mark, Matthew believes Jesus is divine. But Hill (*Matthew*) rightly points out that Matthew still preserves the words "There is only One who is good," a clear reference to God; and the alteration says nothing about Jesus' status in relation to God. Moreover Styler has adopted a historical reconstruction of the development of doctrine that not all find

convincing (cf. D.A. Carson, "Unity and Diversity: On the Possibility of Systematic Theology," in Carson and Woodbridge), especially here where Luke, probably writing after Matthew or at least very close to him, senses no embarrassment in Mark's words but records them verbatim--and this despite the fact that Luke elsewhere feels free to drop bits that could be taken as detrimental to Jesus. We must therefore look for nonchristological explanations for Matthew's alteration. 2. The thrust of the passage in both Mark and Matthew must be grasped. Irrespective of what "good" refers to, the man approaches Jesus with a question showing how far he is from the humble faith that, as Jesus has just finished saying, characterizes all who belong to the kingdom (vv. 13-15). He wants to earn eternal life, and in the light of v. 20, he apparently thinks there are good things he can do, beyond

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the demands of the law, by which he can assure his salvation. Many Jews believed that a specific act of goodness could win eternal life (SBK, 1:808ff.); and this young man, assuming this opinion is correct, seeks Jesus' view as to what that act might be. Whatever differences exist between Matthew and Luke, Jesus' response is not designed either to confess personal sin (Mark) nor to call in question his own competence to discuss what is good (Matthew), for such topics are not in view (see esp. B.B. Warfield, "Jesus Alleged Confession of Sin," PTR 12 [1914]: 127-228). Instead Jesus calls in question his interlocutor's inadequate understanding of goodness. In the absolute sense of goodness required to gain eternal life, only God is good (cf. Ps 106:1; 118:1, 29; 1 Chronicles 16:34; 2 Chronicles 5:13; and there is no discussion of whether Jesus shares that goodness). Jesus will not allow anything other than God's will to determine what is good. By approaching Jesus in this way (esp. vv. 16, 20), the young man reveals simultaneously that he wants something beyond God's will (v. 20) and that he misconstrues the absoluteness of God's goodness. 3. In this light Matthew's phrasing of the initial exchange between Jesus and the young man focuses on the issue central for both Matthew and Mark more clearly than Mark does. To that extent it also ties this pericope more closely to the preceding one than Mark does. This young man stands in stunning contrast to those to whom, according to Jesus, the kingdom belongs. This may help explain Matthew's wording. 4. Within this framework Mark 10:18 no more calls in question Jesus' sinlessness than Matthew 19:17 calls in question Jesus' competence to judge what is good. Apart from the assumption of Mark's priority without either evangelist having access to other traditions, it is difficult to see why, if we charge Matthew with eliminating the possibility that readers might think Jesus could sin, we should not charge Mark with eliminating the possibility that some readers might think Jesus could not pronounce on what was good. Both charges would miss the central point of both Matthew and Mark. 5. "If you want to enter life, obey the commandments" (v. 17) does not mean that Matthew, unlike Mark, thinks eternal life is *earned* by keeping the commandments. After all, Mark himself

is about to report Jesus' exhortation to keep specific commandments. The entire debate has been bedevilled by a false split between grace and obedience to the will of God. No less staunch a supporter of grace than Paul can insist that without certain purity a man cannot inherit the kingdom (1Cor 6:9-10). Jesus tells this young man, in similar vein, what good things he must do if he is to gain eternal life, precisely because he perceives his questioner has little understanding of such things. But that is still far from telling him that by doing these things he will *earn* eternal life. 6. But why, then, has either Matthew or Mark edited the exchange? Or, if the two reports are independent, or if Matthew depends on Mark but has eyewitness knowledge of the events, how is it possible that both accounts can be accepted as

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trustworthy representations of the same incident? Lohmeyer (*Matthaus*) suggests that the variations stem from different translations of an Aramaic report of the incident. Better yet is a reconstruction of the incident that, though not simple additive harmonization, provides a historical basis broad enough to support reports of both Matthew and Mark-Luke and fits well within the normal latitude the evangelists show in their reportage. This reconstruction is worked out in more detail elsewhere (Carson, "Redaction Criticism"). Briefly, it suggests the young ruler's question was "Good teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" and that Jesus' reply was "Why do you ask *me* questions regarding the good? There is only one who is good, namely God."

18-20 Jesus lists the sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, and fifth commandments of Exodus 20 in that order. He omits "do not defraud" (Mark 10:19, apparently an application of the eighth and ninth) and adds "love your neighbor as yourself" (Lev 19:18; cf. Matt 22:34-40). On the text form, compare Gundry (*Use of OT* , pp. 17-19) and K.J. Thomas ("Liturgical Citations in the Synoptics," NTS 22 [1975-76]: 205-14). The man's impulsive reply is reflected by Paul (Philippians 3:6; cf. SBK, 1:814) on a certain understanding of the law; but the man's further words, "What do I still lack?" show his uncertainty and lack of assurance of ever being good enough for salvation, as well as his notion that certain "good works" are over and above the law (cf. SBK, 4:536ff., 559ff.). Wealth he enjoyed (v. 22), while suffering barrenness of soul.

21-22 Many have taken these verses to indicate a two-tier ethic: some disciples find eternal life, and others go further and become perfect by adopting a more compassionate stance (e.g., Klostermann; DNTT, 2:63). But G. Barth (Bornkamm, *Tradition* pp. 95ff.) convincingly disproves this exegesis. In particular the young man's question in v. 20, "What do I still

lack?" clearly refers to gaining eternal life (v. 17); and Jesus' answer in v. 21 must be understood as answering the question. A two-tier Christianity is implicitly contradicted by 23:8-12; and the same word "perfect" is applied to all of Jesus' disciples in 5:48. Matthew shows no strong tendency toward asceticism. Therefore the basic thrust of v. 21 is not "Sell your possessions and give to the poor" but "Come, follow me." What the word "perfection" suggests here is what it commonly means in the OT: undivided loyalty and full-hearted obedience. This young man could not face that. He was willing to discipline himself to observe all the outward stipulations and even perform supererogatory works; but because of his wealth, he had a divided heart. His money was competing with God; and what Jesus everywhere demands as a condition for eternal life is absolute, radical discipleship. This entails the surrender of *self*. "Keeping the individual commandments is no substitute for the readiness for self-surrender to the absolute claim of God imposed through the call of the gospel. Jesus'

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summons in this context means that true obedience to the Law is rendered ultimately in discipleship" (Lane, *Mark* , p. 367). Formally, of course, Jesus' demand goes beyond anything in OT law (cf. Banks, *Jesus* , p. 163): no OT passage stipulates v. 21. Equally remarkable is the fact that the focus on *God's will* (vv. 17-19) should culminate in following *Jesus* . The explanation of this is that Jesus is prophesied by the OT. The will of God, as revealed in Scripture, looks forward to the coming of Messiah (see on 2:15; 5:17-20; 11:11-13). Absolute allegiance to him, with the humility of a child, is essential to salvation. The condition Jesus now imposes not only reveals the man's attachment to money but shows that all his formal compliance with the law is worthless because none of it entails absolute self-surrender. What the man needs is the triumph of grace; for as the next verses show, for his entering the kingdom of heaven is impossible (v. 26). God, with whom all things are possible, must work. The parable in 20:1-16 directly speaks to this issue. But the young man is deaf to it: he leaves because, if a choice must be made between money and Jesus, money wins (cf. 6:24).

b. Grace and reward in the kingdom (19:23-30)

23-24 Jesus is not saying that all poor people and none of the wealthy enter the kingdom of heaven (v. 23; see on 3:2). That would exclude Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to say nothing of David, Solomon, and Joseph of Arimathea. The point of Jesus' teaching lies elsewhere. Most Jews expected the rich to inherit eternal life, not because their wealth could buy their way in, but because their wealth testified to the blessing of the Lord on their lives. Jesus' view is a different and more sober one. (On "I tell you the truth," see on 5:18). The proverbial saying of v. 24 refers to the absolutely impossible. The camel was the biggest animal in Palestine (a similar proverb in BT [B *Berakoth* 55b] prefers "elephant" to "camel" because elephants were not

uncommon in Babylon). Attempts to weaken this hyperbole by taking "needle," not as a sewing needle, but as a small gate through which an unladen camel could just squeeze and only on his knees are misguided. This conjecture may come from some of Jerome's allegorizing (cf. Broadus).

25-26 "Saved" (v. 25) is equivalent to entering the kingdom of God (v. 24) or obtaining eternal life (v. 16). The disciples, reflecting the common Jewish view of the rich, are astonished and ask that if rich men, blessed of God, cannot be saved, then who *can* be? Jesus agrees: "With man this [the salvation of anyone] is impossible, but with God all things are possible" (v. 26; cf. Gen 18:14; Job 42:2; Luke 1:37).

27-28 Peter, impressed by "impossible" and speaking for his fellow disciples, thinks

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Jesus' words are unfair to the Twelve (v. 27). Peter emphatically replies, "We have left everything to follow you" (cf. 4:20). Even here he and the others are thinking in terms of deserving or earning God's favor. Yet Jesus does not castigate his disciples for being mercenary: they have made sacrifices and deserve an answer. But what he says--that the blessing to come, whether belonging exclusively to the Twelve at the renewal (v. 28) or to all believers now (vv. 29-30), far surpasses any sacrifice they might make implies that it is a gentle rebuke. Verse 28 has no parallel in Mark and only a loose one in Luke 22:28-30. The solemn "I tell you the truth" points to something important. Jesus looks forward to the session of the Son of Man (see on 8:20). He will sit on his "glorious throne" (lit., "throne of glory"; cf. Zerwick, par. 41; Turner, *Syntax*, p. 214; cf. 7:22, 16:27, 25:31-34) at the *palingenesia* ("renewal" of all things), a word used only twice in the NT, the other occurrence dealing with "rebirth ... by the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5). Here it has to do with the consummation of the kingdom (RSV, "in the new world"). (For its use elsewhere, cf. TDNT, 1:686-89; DNTT, 1:184-85; and cf. 13:32; Acts 3:21; Rom 8:18-23, 2 Peter 3:13; Rev 21:1, 5; 1QS 4:25.) Contrary to Schweizer (*Matthew*), there is no allusion to the endless Stoic cycles of conflagration and "renewal": the idea moves strictly within Jewish teleological and apocalyptic expectation. But the remarkable feature of this verse is that the Twelve will "sit on twelve thrones," sharing judgment with the Son of Man. The idea that believers will at the consummation have a part in judging is not uncommon in the NT (Luke 22:30; 1Cor 6:2). What is less clear is whether (1) the twelve apostles exercise judgment over the twelve tribes of Israel physically and racially conceived, or whether (2) the twelve apostles will exercise some kind of judgment over the entire church, symbolized by "Israel" (cf. Rev 21:12-14), or whether (3) the Twelve represent the entire assembly of Messiah, who will exercise a juridical role over racial Israel. The third supposition has no scriptural parallel; the second is possible but an unnatural way of taking "Israel" in a book that, though applying OT promises to Gentiles and Jews alike--viz., the "church" of Messiah--distinguishes between the two. The most plausible interpretation

is the first one. At the consummation the Twelve will judge the nation of Israel, presumable for its general rejection of Jesus Messiah. (On the symbolism, cf. Joseph M. Baumgarten, "The Duodecimal Courts of Qumran, Revelation, and the Sanhedrin," JBL, 95 [1976]: 59-78, esp. pp. 70-72; France, *Jesus* , pp. 65f.)

29-30 Jesus now extends his encouragement to all his self-sacrificing disciples (cf. Mark 10:30). The promise is not literal (one cannot have one hundred mothers). God is no man's debtor: if one of Jesus' disciples has, for Jesus' sake, left, say, a father, he will find within the messianic community a hundred who will be as a father to him--in

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addition to inheriting eternal life (v. 29).

The proverbial saying (v. 30) is one Jesus repeats on various occasions. Here he immediately illustrates it by a parable (20:1-16), climaxed by the proverb in reverse form (20:16) as a closing bracket. It indicates something of the reversals under the king's reign. Attempts to restrict the application of this parable to one setting are not successful. 1. Some say the rich become poor at the consummation and the poor rich (cf. vv. 16-29), as in Luke 16:19-31: the story of Lazarus and the beggar. But such reversals are not absolute: Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10) was a rich man to whose house salvation came; and Abraham, to whose "bosom" the beggar went, had great wealth. 2. Many of the Fathers hold that the first-last idea refers to Jews and Gentiles respectively. Doubtless it may, but this theme is not dominant in these chapters. 3. Some think the proverb assumes that the disciples had been arguing about priority on the basis of who was first called, to which Jesus responds that "the last will be first, etc." But this better suits the situation in Matthew 18 than in Matthew 19. 4. It seems preferable, therefore, to take the proverb as a way of setting forth God's grace over against *all* notions that the rich, powerful, great, and prominent will continue so in the kingdom. Those who approach God in childlike trust (vv. 13-15) will be received and advanced in the kingdom beyond those who, from the world's perspective, enjoy prominence now.

4. The parable of the workers (20:1-16)

On parables generally, see on 13:3a. From this one, found only in Matthew, we learn how "the last" person can become "first" (19:30)--by free grace (Schlatter; see esp. v.

15). The point is not that those who work just an hour do as much as those

who work all day (unlike a Jewish parable c. A.D. 325 that tells of a man who on those grounds is paid a month's wages for a few hours' discussion), nor that the willingness of the latecomers matches that of the all-day workers (contra Preisker, TDNT, 4:717 and n.

91), nor that Gentiles are the latecomers in contrast to the Jews (the context knows no such distinctions), nor that all men are equal before God or that all kingdom work is equal. Still less acceptable is Derrett's lengthy explanation (*NT Studies* , 1:48-75). He rightly holds that the entire parable portrays working conditions in the first century; but the eleventh-hour men, entitled to a certain minimum wage, actually get more. But Derrett's view depends on late sources for minimum wage laws; and he assumes that the grapes were urgently in need of harvesting and that, it must have been Friday afternoon--none of which the text implies. Huffmann (pp. 209-10) is right. The parable begins with a topical scene and introduces atypical elements to surprise the reader and make a powerful point. "Jesus

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deliberately and cleverly led the listeners along by degrees until they understood that if God's generosity was to be represented by a man, such a man would be different from any man ever encountered" (p. 209).

1-2 On "the kingdom of heaven is like" formula (v. 1), see on 13:24. The normal working day was ten hours or so, not counting breaks. The landowner in the parable finds his first set of men at about 6 A.M. (*hama proi* means "at dawn"; NIV, "early in the morning": on the construction, see Moule, *Idiom Book* , p. 82) and agrees to pay each worker a denarius (v. 2)--the normal wage for a foot soldier or day laborer (Tobit 5:14; Tacitus *Annales* , 1.17; Pliny 33.3).

3-7 There were twelve "hours" from dawn to sundown. The third hour (v. 3) would be about 9:00 A.M., the sixth about 12:00 P.M., and the eleventh about 5:00 P.M. The marketplace would be the central square, where all kinds of business was done and casual labor hired. Why the landowner kept returning to hire more men--lack of foresight, not finding enough workers earlier in the day at the marketplace, the poor work of the first laborers--is not spelled out and therefore cannot be the key to the parable. The third-hour men are promised "whatever is right" (v. 4); and, trusting the landowner's integrity, they work on that basis (v. 5). The last group (v. 6) were standing around ("idle" [KJV] is a late addition) because no one had hired them (v. 7).

8-12 Some take "when evening came" (v. 8) as an allusion to the judgment, but this is doubtful. It is essential to the story in a time when laborers were customarily paid at the end of each day (cf. Lev 19:13). The foreman is told to pay each man (lit.) "the wage"--the standard day-laborer's wage. Who gets paid first is crucial: it is only because the last hired receive a day's wage (v. 9) that those first hired expect to get more than they bargained for (v. 10).

They "grumble against" (v. 11) the owner because he has been generous to others and merely just to them. They have borne "the heat of the day" (v. 12) either direct sunlight or hot wind [BAGD, s.v. *kauson*], which could drive workers from the field; and, though fairly paid, they feel unfairly treated because others who worked much less received what they did. Nothing in the parable implies that Jews have borne the burden of the law and now Gentile outcasts are made equal to them.

13-15 "Friend" (v. 13) suggests that this rebuke is only a mild one. "I am not being unfair to you"--I am not cheating you, defrauding you (cf. M. Black, "Some Greek Words with Hebrew Meanings in the Epistles and Apocalypse," in McKay and Miller, pp. 142ff.). The owner has paid the agreed wage (v. 14). Should he want to pay others more, that is his business. Provided he has been just in all his dealings, does he not

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have the right to do what he wants with his money (v. 15)? NIV translates "is your eye evil" (lit. Gk.) by "are you envious," because the "evil eye" was an idiom used to refer to jealousy (cf. Deut 15:9; 1Sam 18:9; see on Matt 6:22-23). These rhetorical questions (vv. 13b-15) show that God's great gifts, simply because they *are* God's, are distributed, not because they are earned, but because he is gracious (cf. W. Haubeck, "Zum Verstandnis der Parabel von den Arbeitern im Weinberg [Mt. 20, 1-15]," in Haubeck and Bachmann, pp. 95-107, esp. pp. 106f.). Jesus is not laying down principles for resolving union-management disputes. On the contrary, "the principle in the world is that he who works the longest receives the most pay. That is just. But in the kingdom of God the principles of merit and ability may be set aside so that grace can prevail" (Kistemaker, pp. 77f.). (See note on 5:12 and G. de Ru's article "The Conception of Reward in the Teaching of Jesus," NovTest 8 [1966]: 202-22.)

16 God's grace makes some who are last first. The point of the parable is not that all in the kingdom will receive the same reward but that kingdom rewards depend on God's sovereign grace (cf. v. 23). For the inclusion around the parable, see on 19:30.

5. Third major passion prediction (20:17-19)

See on 16:21-23; 17:9, 22-23; and for the synoptic parallels, see Clark 10:32-34; Luke 18:31-34. Here there is the first mention of the mode of Jesus' death and of the Gentiles' part in it (only the Romans could crucify people). These three verses may look back to the preceding parable by implying the grounds of God's grace--viz., what his Son did on the cross. Also, just as 19:13-15 sets the stage for 19:16-30, so 20:17-19 sets it for 20:20-28. While Jesus faces crucifixion, his disciples, still blind to the nature of his messiahship, squabble over their places in the kingdom.

17 "Going up" does not necessarily mean that Jesus has left Perea, crossed the Jordan, passed through Jericho, and begun the ascent to Jerusalem; for it had become customary to speak of "going up" to Jerusalem regardless of where one was in Palestine, as in England one "goes up" to London from every place except Oxford or Cambridge. We should therefore not be surprised to find Jesus still in Jericho (20:29). Before setting out for Jerusalem, doubtless to attend the festival, Jesus took the Twelve aside from the throngs of pilgrims choking the roads to Jerusalem at such times (see on 21:9). Only the Twelve were even remotely ready to hear this passion prediction.

18-19 Jerusalem was the focal point of Jewish worship. We are going there, Jesus says,

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because there the Son of Man will be betrayed and crucified. He will be "condemned"--his death will result from legal proceedings (v. 18). Mention of the Resurrection is brief (v. 19) and apparently not understood (cf. Luke 18:34)--though in Matthew the disciples' misunderstanding is not spelled out as in Luke but exemplified by the succeeding story (vv. 20-28) which Luke omits.

6. Suffering and service (20:20-28)

Luke parallels Matthew both before and after this pericope but omits it (cf. Mark 10:35-45). He has a somewhat similar account (Luke 22:24-30), but it is probably a different occasion. Again the question of rank returns (cf. 18:1-5). Despite Jesus' repeated predictions of his passion, two disciples and their mother are still thinking about privilege, status, and power. S. Legasse ("Approche de l'episode preevangelique des Fils de Zebedee [Mark x. 35-40 par.]," NTS 20 [1974]: pp. 161-77) represents those who discount the historicity of this narrative largely on the hypothesis that "cup" and "baptism" are theological symbols around which a fictional episode was woven to convey certain theological truths. Bultmann (*Synoptic Traditions*, p. 24) goes farther and says that even the "prospect" of James's and John's death could not have been implied till after their martyrdom. The grounds for such theorizing are slender indeed. Why cannot theologically loaded terms be used in a historical narrative? Bultmann's critique reflects presuppositional antisupernaturalism in its most naive form. Jesus predicts his death (vv. 17-19); and, when two of his disciples ask for preferential treatment, it is entirely natural that he should ask them if they are prepared to face similar suffering and death (cf. 5:10-12; 10:37-39). Moreover it is highly unlikely the church would invent a story so damaging to two of its leading apostles.

20 In Mark, John and James approach Jesus themselves; here, it is through *their mother* . Many find this historically improbable because in v. 22 Jesus responds to her sons only. But the following points make the obvious synthesis plausible: 1. According to v. 20, the mother *and her sons* approach Jesus, the implication being that all three are asking this favor, with the mother as the speaker. 2. This is confirmed by the other apostles' indignation (v. 24), showing that James and John as well as their mother were involved. 3. That the mother should be the one to approach Jesus becomes the more plausible if she is Jesus' aunt on his mother's side--not certain, but not unlikely (see on 10:2; 27:56).

4. By adding the mother, Matthew cannot be shielding James and John: they still get

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the same response as in Mark. Matthew has no obvious theological motive for introducing their mother; he is simply recording a historical detail. 5. That the request should come from James and John, whether through their mother or not, accords with what we know of their aggressiveness (cf. Mark 9:38; Luke 9:54). The "kneeling down" is not "worship" of Deity but may imply homage to the one increasingly recognized as King Messiah (see on 2:2).

21 The "right hand" and "left hand" suggest proximity to the King's person and so a share in his prestige and power. Such positions increase as the King is esteemed and has absolute power (cf. Pss 16:11; 45:9; 110:1; Matt 27:64; Acts 7:55-56; cf. Jos. Antiq. VI, 235 [xi. 9]). Mark has "in your glory," Matthew "in your kingdom." Mark's phrase clearly points to the Parousia, "when Jesus is enthroned as eschatological judge" (Lane, *Mark*, p. 379). Hill (*Matthew*) proposes that the "kingdom" in Matthew is the kingdom of Christ (13:41-43; 25:31-46), identified as the church; and the change from "glory" to "kingdom" therefore means that the original story is now being applied to competition for leadership in the church. But we have already seen that "kingdom" is never identified with "church" in Matthew (see on 13:37-39); and Christ's kingdom is equivalent to the kingdom of heaven (13:41; 20:21; 25:31). Because the "kingdom" comes in stages, there is no substantial difference between Matthew and Mark: the kingdom here is the reign of Messiah at the consummation. The link with 19:28--a verse that speaks (cf. Gk.) of both "throne" and "glory"--is unmistakable. What the sons of Zebedee want and their mother asks for is that they might share in the authority and preeminence of Jesus Messiah when his kingdom is fully consummated--something they think to be near at hand without the Cross or any interadvent period.

22 The additional words "or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with" (cf. KJV)--and similarly in v. 23 are almost certainly an assimilation to Mark 10:38-39. Jesus' answer is not severe but mingles firmness with probing. It is often ignorance that seeks leadership, power, and glory: the brothers do not know what they are asking. To ask to reign with Jesus is to ask to suffer with him; and not only do they not know what they are asking for (cf. 10:37-39; Rom 8:17; 2Tim 2:12; Rev 3:21), they have as yet no clear perceptions of *Jesus'* sufferings. To ask for worldly wealth and much honor is often to ask for anxiety, temptation, disappointment, and envy; and in the spiritual arena to ask for great usefulness and reward is often to ask for great suffering (cf. 2Cor 11:23-33; Col 1:24; Rev 1:9). "We know not what we ask, when we ask for the glory of wearing the crown, and ask not for grace to bear the cross in our way to it" (Henry). The "cup" (cf. 26:39) characteristically refers, in OT imagery, to judgment or

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retribution (cf. Ps 75:8; Isa 51:17-18; Jer 25:15-28). If the disciples grasped anything of Jesus' passion predictions, they probably thought the language partly hyperbolic Jesus did use hyperbole elsewhere [e.g., 19:24]) and referred to the eschatological conflict during which Messiah's side would suffer losses; but these could scarcely be too severe for one who could still storms and raise the dead. Thus by their bold response, James and John betray their misunderstandings of the timing of the dawn of the kingdom in all its glory (cf. Luke 19:11), and equally of the uniqueness and redemptive significance of Jesus' sufferings (cf. v. 28) now imminent

23 Jesus answers them first on their own terms before speaking of his own death as a ransom (v. 28). In a sense they can and will drink from his cup of suffering. James would become the first apostolic martyr (Acts 12:2); and John (if it is the same one) would suffer exile (Rev 1:9). But it is not Jesus' role to determine who sits on his right hand and his left. Here, as elsewhere (see on 11:27; 24:36; 28:18; cf. John 14:28), Jesus makes it clear that his authority is a derived authority. These positions have already been assigned by the Father: Jesus cannot assign them at a mother's request.

24-27 The indignation of the ten (v. 24) doubtless sprang less from humility than jealousy plus the fear that they might lose out. If these verses scarcely support egalitarianism--choice positions, after all, will be allotted--they demonstrate that interest in egalitarianism may mask a jealousy whose deepest wellsprings are not concern for justice but "enlightened self-interest." The disciples revert to the squabbling of an earlier period (Mark 9:33-37; cf. Matt 18:1). Jesus calls them together and draws a contrast between greatness among *ta ethne* ("pagans" or "Gentiles," v. 25) and greatness among heirs of the kingdom. The "pagans" or "Gentiles" who would spring to mind were Romans: power and authority characterized their empire. NIV's lord it over gives a false impression. Jesus is not

criticizing abuse of power in political structures--the verb never has that meaning (cf. K.W. Clark "The Meaning of [kata] kurieuein in Elliott," pp. 100-105) and should be translated "exercise lordship over," parallel to "exercise authority over" in the next line--but insists that the very structures themselves cannot be transferred to relationships among his followers. Greatness among Jesus' disciples is based on service. Anyone who wants to be great must become the *diakonos* ("servant," v. 26) of all. Here *diakonos* does not mean "deacon" or "minister" (KJV) in the modern church use. One of the ironies of language is that a word like "minister," which in its roots refers to a helper, one who "ministers," has become a badge of honor and power in religion and politics. But lest the full force of his teaching be lost, Jesus repeats it in v. 27 with the stronger word *doulos* ("slave"; cf. 1Cor 9:19; 2Cor 4:5; 1 Peter 1:22; 5:1-3). In the pagan world

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humility was regarded, not so much as a virtue, but as a vice. Imagine a slave being given leadership! Jesus' ethics of the leadership and power in his community of disciples are revolutionary.

28 At this point Jesus presents himself--the Son of Man (see on 8:20)--as the supreme example of service to others. The verse is clearly important to our understanding of Jesus' view of his death. Three related questions call for discussion. 1. *Authenticity* Many reject the authenticity of v. 28, or at least of v. 28a (and, correspondingly, Mark 10:45), on the grounds that it ill suits the context, since Jesus' atoning death cannot be imitated by his disciples, that nowhere else is he reported as speaking of his death in this way, and that the language reflects the influence of the Hellenistic church. On the contrary, the language has been shown to be Palestinian (Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words* , pp. 179-82); and Jesus speaks of his death in not dissimilar terms when instituting the Lord's Supper (26:26-29) and also in Luke 22:37, assuming that it relates to a different occasion. It is quite common in the NT, both in words ascribed to Jesus and elsewhere, to begin with the disciples' need to die to self and end up with Jesus' unique, atoning death as an ethical example--or, conversely to begin with Jesus' unique death and find it applied as an example to the disciples (John 12:23-25; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Peter 2:18-25). There are no substantial reasons for denying the authenticity of this saying (cf. esp. S.H.T. Page, "The Authenticity of the Ransom Logion [Mark 10:45b]," in France and Wenham, 1:137-61); and its nuances seem much more in keeping with the way Jesus progressively revealed himself (cf. Carson, "Christological Ambiguities") than with a clear-cut, postresurrection, apostolic confession. 2. *Meaning*. It is natural to take "did not come" as presupposing at least a hint of Jesus' preexistence, though the language does not absolutely require it. He came not to be served, like a king dependent on countless courtiers and attendants, but to serve others. Stonehouse (*Witness of Matthew* , pp. 251ff.; id. *Origins* , p. 187) rightly points out that the verse assumes that the Son of Man had every right to

expect to be served but served instead. Implicit is a self-conscious awareness that the Son of Man who, because of his heavenly origin, possessed divine authority was the one who humbled himself even to the point of undergoing an atoning death. The tripartite breakdown of the Son of Man references (see excursus on 8:20) is to this extent artificial. The display of divine glory shines most brightly when it is set aside for the sake of redeeming man by a shameful death. This stands at the very heart of Jesus' self- disclosure and of the primitive gospel (1Cor 1:23: "We preach Christ [Messiah] crucified"). The Son of Man came to give his life a ransom for many. Deissmann (LAE, pp. 331f.) points out that *lytron* ("ransom") was most commonly used as the purchase price

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for freeing slaves; and there is good evidence that the notion of "purchase price" is always implied in the NT use of *lytron* (cf. esp. Morris, *Apostolic Preaching* , pp. 11ff.). Others, however, by examining the word in the LXX conclude that, especially when the subject is God, the word means "deliverance" and the cognate verb "to deliver," without reference to a "price paid" (see esp. Hill, *Greek Words* , pp. 58-80). The matter may be difficult to decide in a passage like Titus 2:14. Is wickedness a chain from which Jesus by his death *delivers* us or a slave owner from whom Jesus by his death *ransoms* us? The parallel in 1 Peter 1:18 suggests the latter, even though (as Turner, *Christian Words* , pp. 105-7, insists) there is never any mention in the NT of the one to whom the price is paid; and in Matthew 20:28 this meaning is virtually assured by the use of *anti* ("for"). The normal force of this preposition denotes substitution, equivalence, exchange (cf. esp. M.J. Harris, DNTT, 3:1179f.). "The life of Jesus, surrendered in a sacrificial death, brought about the release of forfeited lives. He acted on behalf of the many by taking their place" (ibid., p. 1180). "The many" underlines the immeasurable effects of Jesus' solitary death: the one dies, the many find their lives "ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven," a great host no man can number (cf. J. Jeremias, "Das Losegeld fur Viele," *Judaica* 3 [1948]: 263). But it should be remembered that "the many" can refer, in the DSS and the rabbinic literature, to the elect community (cf. Ralph Marcus, "'Mebaqquer' and Rabbim in the Manual of Discipline vi, 11-13," *JBL* 75 [1956]: 298-302). This suggests Jesus' substitutionary death is payment for and results in the eschatological people of God. This well suits "the many" of Isaiah 52:13-53:12.

3. *Dependence on Isaiah 53*. C.K. Barrett ("The Background of Mark 10.45," *New Testament Essays* , ed. A.J.B. Higgins [Manchester: University Press, 1959], pp. 1-18; id., "Mark 10.45: A Ransom for Many," *New Testament Essays* [London: SPCK, 1972], pp. 20-26), Hooker (*Son of Man* , pp. 140-47), and others have argued that there is no allusion to Isaiah in Mark 10:45 and Matthew 20:28. They argue this on two grounds: linguistic and conceptual. Linguistically, they point out that the Greek verb *diakonein* ("to serve," v. 28) and its cognates

are never used in the LXX to render *ebed* ("servant" of Isaiah's "Servant Songs") and its cognates. But the evidence is slight and the conceptual parallels close Isaiah's Servant benefits men by his suffering, and so does Jesus. Hooker is certainly incorrect in restricting *diakonein* to *domestic* service (cf. France, "Servant of the Lord," p. 34). Both France and Moo ("Use of OT," pp. 122ff.) have also shown that "to give his life" springs from Isaiah 53:10, 12, and that *lytron* ("ransom") is not as impossible a rendering of *asam* ("a guilt offering") as some allege. The Hebrew word *asam* includes the notion of substitution, at least of an equivalent. The guilty sinner offers an *asam* to remove his own guilt; and in Leviticus 5 *asam* refers to compensatory payment. Thus, though *asam* has more sacrificial overtones than *lytron*, both include the idea of payment or compensation. Most

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scholars have also recognized in "the many" a clear reference to Isaiah (cf. esp. Dalman, pp. 171-72). The implication of the cumulative evidence is that Jesus explicitly referred to himself as Isaiah's Suffering Servant (see on 26:17-30) and interpreted his own death in that light--an interpretation in which Matthew has followed his Lord (see on 3:17; 12:15-21).

7. Healing two blind men (20:29-34)

Mark (10:44-52) and Luke (18:35-43) mention only one blind man, and Mark names him (Bartimaeus, Mark 10:46); but Matthew habitually gives fuller details on numbers of persons (cf. 8:28). This story is not a doublet of 9:27-31, which stresses faith and ends with a command to be silent. It lacks those twin foci but has other purposes. It pictures Jesus still serving and again links his healing ministry with his death (v. 28; see on 8:17). Moreover it reminds us that the one going up to Jerusalem to give his life a ransom for many is the Messiah, the Son of David, whose great power, used mercifully (v. 30) and compassionately (v. 34), is not used to save himself.

29 Matthew and Mark say that Jesus was "leaving," Luke that he was "entering" Jericho. While there are several possible reasons for this, none is certain. Many "explanations" are inadequate: that Jesus healed one blind man on entering the town and two on leaving; that the healings occurred while Jesus was going "in and out"; that Jesus went through Jericho (Luke 19:1) without finding lodging and on his way out healed the blind men, met Zacchaeus, and returned to his place--so that Jesus' "leaving" was really his "entering." Calvin's "conjecture," followed by many, is that Jesus on his way into the city did not respond to the petitions of the blind men (perhaps in order to increase their faith: cf. 15:21-28) but healed them on his way out. Marshall

(*Luke* , pp. 692f.) offers a literary explanation--viz., Luke made the change

to accommodate the ensuing Zacchaeus story that takes place in Jericho and which Luke wants to place as a climax. One might have thought that Luke's simpler course would have been to drop any mention of Jericho in this healing, since he gains nothing by it and his alteration brings him into conflict with Mark. Many avoid geographical contradiction by noting that in this period there were *two* Jerichos--an older town on the hill, largely in ruins, and the new Herodian town about one mile away (cf. Jos. War IV, 459 [viii. 3]). In this view Matthew and Mark, under Jewish influence, mention the old town Jesus was leaving; Luke the Hellenist refers to the new one, which Jesus is entering. This may well be the explanation. But there is no certain evidence that the old town was still inhabited at this time, and we do not know the local names of the two sites. Jericho was not only the home of Jesus' ancestor Rahab (1:5) but was also a day's

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journey from Jerusalem. The "large crowd" implies more than messianic excitement; it also reflects the multitudes of pilgrims from Galilee and elsewhere heading to Jerusalem for the feast.

30 The rather common suggestion that Matthew increases the number of blind men to two because two was the minimum number of witnesses for attesting Jesus' messiahship is misguided. To *experience* the healings would not prove Jesus was the Messiah. He might simply be a prophet. On the other hand, if the miracle confirmed or promoted belief in Jesus' messiahship, it might do so as easily for *those who witnessed the miracle* as for those who experienced it. The "large crowd" would have provided witnesses aplenty. The "two" therefore has no theological motivation, but shows personal knowledge of the events. There may have been many blind people in the Jericho area; for the region produced large quantities of balsam, believed to be very beneficial for many eye defects (cf. Strabo 16.2.41). These two were sitting by the roadside, doubtless begging (Mark-Luke), and, hearing that Jesus was passing, cried out, "Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!" (in the most likely text; cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary*, pp. 53-54). On the title "Son of David" in relation to healing, see on 9:27.

31-34 Matthew's account is simple but stresses that Jesus mercifully healed the men despite the opposition of the crowds (v. 31) that, like the disciples (cf. 19:13-15), wanted to bask in his glory but not practice his compassion. After this healing, unlike 9: 30, there is no command to be silent. That point in Jesus' ministry has been reached when more public self-disclosure could not change the course of events. The two healed men joined the crowds following Jesus (v. 34), pressing on to the Passover they expected and the Cross they did not.

8. Opening events of Passion Week (21:1-23:39)

a. The Triumphal Entry (21:1-11)

T.W. Manson ("The Cleansing of the Temple," BJRL 33 [1951] 271-82) suggests the feast in question is Tabernacles (autumn), not Dedication (winter) or Passover (spring). Because Jesus died at Passover, Manson spreads Matthew 21-28 (and parallels) over six months, instead of six days. His view rests largely on the observation that figs do not usually appear on the trees around Jerusalem till June and September, which seems to rule out Passover (usually April) as the right period for 21: 18-21 But figs are regularly found in Jericho much earlier--and sometimes also in Jerusalem--and Manson's view introduces some difficult problems in the passion

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chronology.

For the moment we shall assume that this trip to Jerusalem occurred a few days before the Passover on which Jesus was crucified. Matthew does not mention the stay at Bethany John 12:1-10) where Jesus arrived "six days before Passover," probably Friday evening (at the beginning of the Sabbath) before the Passion Week, and stayed there for Sabbath, entering Jerusalem on Sunday. Apparently Jesus went back and forth to Bethany throughout the week (21:17). (For the most recent detailed chronology of Passion Week, cf. Hoehner, *Chronological Aspects* ; for close study of the question of authenticity, cf. Dhyanchand Carr, "Jesus, the king of Zion: A Tradition-Historical Enquiry into the So-called 'Triumphal' Entry of Jesus" [Ph. D. diss., University of London, 1980] pp. 128-218, 350-92.

1-2 The Roman military road from Jericho to Jerusalem was about seventeen miles long and climbed three thousand feet. It passed through Bethany and nearby Bethphage ("house of figs"), which lay on the southeast slope of the Mount of Olives, then crossed over the mount and the Kidron Valley and entered Jerusalem (v. 1). The mount itself stands about three hundred feet higher than the temple hill and about one hundred feet higher than the hill of Zion, affording a spectacular, panoramic view of the city. Jesus sent two disciples (unnamed, but cf. Luke 22:8) ahead to Bethphage (for the grammar, cf. RHG, pp. 643-44) to fetch the animals (v. 2). The distinguishing feature of the synoptic accounts, as opposed to John 12, is that Jesus arranged for the ride. The applause and the crowds were not manipulated; they would have occurred in any case. But the ride on a colt, because it was planned, could only be an acted parable, a deliberate act of symbolic self-disclosure for those with eyes to see or after the Resurrection, with memories by which to remember and integrate the events of the preceding weeks and years. Secrecy was being lifted.

3 "Lord" (also Mark-Luke) might mean "owner"; but then the disciples' response would be untrue, unless Jesus owned the animals, which is extremely unlikely. The title might refer to Yahweh--the animals are needed in Yahweh's service. But the most natural way to take "Lord" is Jesus' way of referring to himself. This step is not out of keeping with the authority he has already claimed for himself and fits this late period of his ministry, when he revealed himself with increasing clarity. J. Gresham Machen (*The Origin of Paul's Religion* [New York: Macmillan, 1928, 1947], pp. 296-97) notes that even the church's ascription of "Lord" to Jesus in a full christological sense finds its roots in Jesus' self-references.

4-5 It is possible that Matthew presents these verses as having been spoken by Jesus.

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The perfect *gegonen* should then be translated "This has taken place" (v. 4) spoken somewhat proleptically because the order had been given (see discussion on 1:22). The alternative is to take the verses as Matthew's comment. This requires taking the perfect as either having aoristic force or meaning "This stands as something that happened." John's statement that the disciples did not understand all this at the time (12:16) does not necessarily support the alternative, since Jesus said many things they did not understand at the time (cf. John 2:20-22). A few MSS add "Zechariah" or "Isaiah" to "prophet," doubtless because the quotation comes from both. The introductory words of the quotation are from Isaiah 62: 11 and the rest from Zechariah 9:9. The omitted words "righteous and having salvation" (Zech 9:9) may be understood as implicitly included, or omitted because the chief stress is on Jesus' humility (Stendahl, *School* , pp. 118-20). The text form of the quotation (v. 5) is disputed, but at least the latter parts depend directly on the MT (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT* , pp. 120-21, Moo, " *Use of OT* ," pp. 178f.). The last word, *hypozygion* , means a "beast of burden," which in Palestine was usually a donkey. Such an animal was sometimes ridden by rulers in times of peace (Judg 5:10; 1 Kings 1:33; cf. Rev 19:11). Jews certainly understood Zechariah 9:9 to refer to the Messiah, often in terms of the Son of David (SBK, 1:842-44). Therefore for those with eyes to see, Jesus was not only proclaiming his messiahship and his fulfillment of Scripture but showing the kind of peace-loving approach he was now making to the city. Many scholars find difficulty with the fact that Matthew alone of the four evangelists mentions *two* animals: a donkey and her colt (vv. 2, 7); and only he cites the Hebrew text so fully that the unwary might think there *were* two animals. The Hebrew, of course, refers to only one beast: the last line is in parallelism with the next-to-the-last line and merely identifies the "donkey" (line 3) as a colt (a young, male donkey). But it is quite unreasonable to suggest that Matthew, who demonstrably had a good command of Hebrew (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT* , p. 198), added the extra animal to fit a text he radically misunderstood (contra McNeile, Schniewind). Nor is it more reasonable to assume that Matthew knows there actually were two animals

and quotes Zechariah because the prophet's words might barely refer to two; for his Jewish readers would not likely be convinced. Still less likely is the appeal to unassimilated sources (cf. R. Bartnicki, "Das Zitat von Zach IX, 9-10 und die Tiere im Bericht von Matthaus uber dem Einzug Jesu in Jerusalem (Mt XXI, 1-11)," *NovTest* 18 [1976]: 161-66). The most reasonable suggestion is that Mark's "which no one has ever ridden" prompted Matthew to mention both animals (cf: Stendahl, *School* , pp. 118-20; Lindars, *Apologetic*, p. 114; Longenecker, *Biblical Exegesis* , pp. 148-49). Gundry (*Use of OT* , pp. 198-99) holds that Matthew witnessed the scene. Matthew's reference to both animals is his way of highlighting what the other synoptists affirm--the animal Jesus rode on *was* "a colt." If we assume that Matthew understood Hebrew, the full

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quotation affirms that Jesus rode on the "colt," not its mother. Mark and Luke say the animal was so young that it had never been ridden. In the midst, then, of this excited crowd, an unbroken animal remains calm under the hands of the Messiah who controls nature (8:23-27; 14:22-32). Thus the event points to the peace of the consummated kingdom (cf. Isa 11:1-10). Though Matthew may have something of the same thing in mind, in addition he stresses that Jesus fulfills Scripture even in this detail--that the animal he rode was a colt. Without warrant is the appeal to Midrash, at least in its technical, fourth-century sense (cf. Introduction, section 12.b). Although Jewish midrashic writers occasionally give a separate meaning to each part of Hebrew parallelism (cf. examples in Carr), the continuity of the Midrash lies in the passage being expounded, not in the narrative explanations. But here the continuity lies in the narrative. Still less credible is the allegorizing of many of the Fathers, and even of Lange: the donkey symbolizes Jews accustomed to the yoke of the law and the colt hitherto untamed Gentiles ("The old theocracy runs idly and instinctively by the side of the young Church, which has become the true bearer of the divinity of Christ," CHS).

6-8 The two disciples returned from their errand (v. 6) and put their cloaks (their outer garments; see on 5:40) on the beasts--both animals were in the procession (v. 7). Jesus sat "on them." Not a few critics take the antecedent of "them" to be the animals and ridicule the statement. But as Plummer remarks, "The Evangelist credits his readers with common sense." The antecedent of "them" may be the cloaks; or the plural may be a "plural of category" (cf. "He sprang from the horses"; cf. Turner, *Insights*, p. 41; see on 2:20). Less convincing is appeal to very weak textual traditions: he sat on *it* or they sat him on *it* (thereon, KJV; cf. Broadus; BDF, par. 141). A "very large crowd" (v. 8, the Gr. superlative is merely elative; cf. Moule, *Idiom Book*, p. 98) spread their cloaks on the road, acknowledging Jesus' kingship (cf. 2 Kings 9:13). Still others "cut branches" and "spread them" (the Gr. imperfects make the action vivid) on the road. It has been argued that

cutting down tree branches well suits the activities of the Feast of Tabernacles, when the people built "booths" to live in for the week (cf. Lev 23:41-42). But those "branches" were substantial boughs, big enough to support a lean-to; these "branches," thrown before the animals, were not more than twigs. The somewhat parallel entrance of Simon Maccabaeus into Jerusalem (1Macc 13:51; 2Macc 10:7) does not depend on the season of the year but on the man.

9 Crowds ahead and behind may be incidental confirmation of two other details. First, John 12:12 speaks of crowds coming out of Jerusalem to meet Jesus. Apparently the Galilean pilgrims accompanying Jesus and the Jerusalem crowd coming out to greet him formed a procession of praise. Second, that the Jerusalem crowds knew he was approaching supports the stopover in Bethany, which allows time for the news to

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spread. Messianic fervor was high, and perhaps this contributed to Jesus' desire to present himself as Prince of Peace. The words of praise come primarily from Psalm 118:25-26. "Hosanna" transliterates the Hebrew expression that originally was a cry for help: "Save!" (cf. 2Sam 14:4; 2 Kings 6:26). In time it became an invocation of blessing and even an acclamation, the latter being the meaning here (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT*, pp. 41-43). "Son of David" is messianic and stresses the kingly role Messiah was to play (cf. Mark, Luke, and John for explicit references to "kingdom" or "king"). "He who comes in the name of the Lord" is cited by Jesus himself a little later (23:39; cf. 3:11; 11:3), but some scholars object that if this phrase had been a messianic acclamation by the people, the authorities would have stepped in. The words, they say, must be a formula of greeting to pilgrims on the way to the temple. Such an assessment betrays too stark an "either-or" mentality to weigh the evidence plausibly. "Son of David" in the previous line is unavoidably messianic, and the authorities *do* raise objections (v. 16). But crowd sentiments are fickle. On the one hand, acclamation can rapidly dissipate; so instant action by the authorities was scarcely necessary. On the other hand, it is foolish to antagonize the crowd at the height of excitement (cf. 26:4-5:16). "Hosanna in the highest" is probably equivalent to "Glory to God in the highest" (Luke 2:14). The people praise God in the highest heavens for sending the Messiah and, if "Hosanna" retains some of its original force, also cry to him for deliverance. Two final reflections on this verse are necessary: first, Psalm 118 was not only used at the Feast of Tabernacles (M *Succoth* 4:5) but also at the other two major feasts, Dedication and Passover--at the latter as part of "the great Hallel" (Pss 113-18). The use of Psalm 118 is therefore no support for Manson's suggestion. Second, Walvoord's interpretation stumbles badly: "They recognized that He was in the kingly line, although they do not seem to have entered into the concept that He was coming into Jerusalem as its King." On the contrary, it is hard to think of the crowd's making fine distinctions between "kingly line" and "king." Moreover one growing thrust of this Gospel is, as we have seen, that even where Jesus was perceived, however dimly, as King Messiah,

he was not perceived as Suffering Servant. In the expectations of the day, it was fairly easy for the crowd, after hearing Jesus' preaching and seeing his miracles, to ascribe messiahship to him as much in their hope as in conviction. But it was far harder for them to grasp the inevitability of his suffering and death and the expansion of the "people of God" beyond the Jewish race.

10-11 Only Luke (19:41-44) pictures Jesus weeping over the city as he approaches it. Mark 11:11 establishes chronology; Matthew's information stands alone. Jesus probably entered Jerusalem through what some now call Saint Stephen's gate, near the

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north entrance to the outer court of the temple. As the city was stirred earlier (2:3), so here (v. 10): news of Jesus' presence is inevitably disturbing. "Who is this?" does not mean that Jesus was virtually unknown in Jerusalem, and so needed to be identified (Bonnard), but "Who really is this about whom there is so much excitement?" The answer of the crowds accurately reflects the historical setting: many of his contemporaries saw him as a prophet (cf. 16:14; 21:46) "from Nazareth in Galilee"--his hometown and primary field of ministry respectively. The phrase probably also connotes surprise that a prophet should come from so unlikely a place (see on 2:23). In the light of the messianic acclamation (v. 9), some may well have seen Jesus as the eschatological Prophet (Deut 18:15-18; cf. John 7:40, 52; Acts 3:22; 7:37), though there is no more than a hint of that here. Yet there is also no evidence that Matthew deprecates the people's understanding as faulty, preferring "Son of God" (contra Kingsbury, *Matthew* , pp. 22, 88-89).

b. Jesus at the temple (21:12-17)

Matthew is considerably more condensed than Mark (11:11-19; cf. Luke 19:45-48; John 2:13-22). Matthew omits, among other things, Mark's more precise chronology, all mention of the habit of carrying merchandise through the temple courts, and reference to the Gentiles in the quotation from Isaiah 56:7. It is doubtful whether Matthew's silence in any of these things reflects major theological motivation, but see on v. 13. Matthew focuses on the cleansing of the temple as the work of the Son of David (vv. 9, 15) and as of as much messianic significance as any of Jesus' miracles. The great majority of contemporary scholars believe there was only one cleansing of the temple and debate about whether the synoptists or John put it at the right time in Jesus' ministry. Although some argue that the event occurred early in Jesus' ministry (John), more side with the Synoptics in placing it late. Certainly we

have ample evidence that the evangelists arranged some materials topically; yet there are, in this instance, numerous reasons for the possibility, indeed the likelihood, of two separate cleansings--something most commentators never seriously consider. 1. Leon Morris (*John* , pp. 288ff.) has shown the striking differences between the details John provides and those the Synoptics provide. If there was but one cleansing, some of these differences became surprising; if two cleansings, they became quite reasonable. 2. Those who hold that John's placing of the cleansing is topical usually assume that he does so to lead up to the saying, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days" John 2:19), part of his "replacement" theme--viz., that Jesus himself replaces much of the Jewish cultic milieu. But this view fails to provide any reason for shifting the temple's cleansing so as to make it an *early* theme in Jesus' ministry.

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Moreover in this particular case the temple-replacement theme is reflected in the trial of Jesus in two of the Synoptics (Matt 26:61; Mark 14:58). 3. If the Synoptics fail to mention the earlier cleansing, this may go back to their omission of Jesus' entire early Judean ministry. 4. Some hold that if Jesus had inaugurated his ministry by cleansing the temple, the authorities would not have let him do it a second time. But two or three years have elapsed. The money changers and merchants, protected by the temple police doubtless returned the day after the first cleansing. But it is doubtful that tight security would have been kept up for months and years. This second cleansing took a few dramatic minutes and could not have been prevented, and its prophetic symbolism quickly spread throughout Jerusalem. 5. It is difficult to tell from the Gospels how much the cleansing(s) of the temple contributed to official action against Jesus, and to overstate the evidence is easy (cf. E. Troeme, "L'expulsion des marchands du Temple," NTS 15 [1968-69]: 1-22). But a second cleansing as Passover drew near was far more likely to have led to the authorities' violent reaction than the first one.

12 Jesus entered the *hieron* ("temple area"). Temple service required provision to be made for getting what was needed for the sacrifices--animals, wood, oil, etc.--especially for pilgrims from afar. The money changers converted the standard Greek and Roman currency into temple currency, in which the half-shekel temple tax had to be paid (cf. 17:24-27). (For some of the customs and regulations, cf. M *Shekalim* ; LTJM, 1:367-74.) But letting these things go on at the temple site transformed a place of solemn worship into a market where the hum of trade mingled with the bleating and cooing of animals and birds. Moreover, especially on the great feasts opportunities for extortion abounded. Jesus drove the lot out.

13 Jesus here refers to Scripture, much as he did when confronted by the

devil (4:1-10). His first words are from Isaiah 56:7. Isaiah looked forward to a time when the temple would be called a house of prayer. But now, at the dawn of the Messianic Age, Jesus finds a "den of robbers." The words come from Jeremiah 7:11, which warns against the futility of superstitious reverence for the temple compounded with wickedness that dishonors it. This suggests that the Greek *lestai* ("robbers") should be given its normal meaning of "nationalist rebel" (see on 27:16). The temple was meant to be a house of prayer, but they had made it "a nationalist stronghold" (cf. C.K. Barrett, "The House of Prayer and the Den of Thieves," in Ellis and Grasser, p. 16). The point is even clearer in Mark, who retains "house of prayer for all nations" (Isa 56:7 uses the longer form once and the shorter one once). The temple was not fulfilling its God-ordained role as witness to the nations but had become, like the first temple,

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the premier symbol of a superstitious belief that God would protect and rally his people irrespective of their conformity to his will. The temple would therefore be destroyed (vv. 18-22; 24:2). Matthew does not omit "for all nations" because he writes after the temple has been destroyed and therefore recognizes the promise in Isaiah no longer capable of fulfillment. Even Mark knows the temple cannot stand and that this temple could never become a rallying place "for all nations." The omission may simply be for conciseness, but it shifts the contrast from "temple mission-nationalist stronghold" (Mark) to "house of prayer-nationalist stronghold" (Matthew)--a shift that focuses attention more on spiritual neglect and mistaken political priorities than on neglect of what the temple was really for. These are the things Jesus denounces. The Lord whom the people see now comes to his temple (Mal 3:1). Purification of Jerusalem and the temple was part of Jewish expectation (cf. Pss Sol 17:30). So for those with eyes to see, Jesus' action was one of self-disclosure and an implicit claim to eschatological authority over the Holy Place. That the purification would entail destruction and building a new temple (John 2:19-22) none but Jesus could yet foresee.

14 Verses 14-15 are found only in Matthew. Not only is v. 14 the last mention of Jesus' healing ministry, but it takes place *en to hiero* ("at the temple [site]") and probably within the temple precincts in the Court of the Gentiles. It was not uncommon for the chronically ill to beg at the approaches to the temple (Acts 3:2); but where the lame, blind, deaf, or otherwise handicapped could go in the temple area was restricted. The Court of the Gentiles was open to them all, and there were even crippled priests. But restrictions were imposed when the handicap required certain kinds of cushions, pads, or supports that might introduce "uncleanness" (cf. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, pp. 117f.). Most Jewish authorities forbade any person

lame, blind, deaf, or mute from offering a sacrifice, from "appearing before Yahweh in his temple." The Qumran covenanters wanted to go further and exclude all cripples from the congregation, the messianic battle, and the messianic banquet (1QSa 2:5-22; 1QM 7:4-5). But Jesus heals them, thus showing that "one greater than the temple is here" (12:6). He himself cannot be contaminated, and he heals and makes clean those who come into contact with him. These two actions--cleansing the temple and the healing miracles--jointly declare his superiority over the temple (Heil, "Healing Miracles," pp. 283f.) and raise the question of the source of his authority (v. 23).

15-16 The "chief priests and teachers of the law" (v. 15; see on 2:4; 26:59) express indignation, not so much at what he has done, as at the acclamation he is receiving for it. The children cry out, "Hosanna to the Son of David" (see on v. 9); and if Jesus is prepared to accept such praise, then "the wonderful things" he is doing must have messianic significance. When challenged, Jesus supports the children by quoting Psalm

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8:2, introducing it with his "have you never read" (v. 16), which exposes the theological ignorance of the Scripture experts (cf. 12:3; 19:4; 21:42; 22:31). God *has* ordained praise for himself from "children and infants" (lit., "infants and sucklings"--nursing sometimes continued among the Jews to the age of three: cf. 2Macc 7:27). Jesus' answer is a masterstroke and simultaneously accomplishes three things. 1. It provides some kind of biblical basis for letting the children go on with their exuberant praise and thus stifles, for the moment, the objections of the temple leaders. 2. At the same time thoughtful persons, reflecting on the incident later (especially after the Resurrection), perceive that Jesus was saying much more. The children's "Hosannas" are not being directed to God but to the Son of David, the Messiah. Jesus is therefore not only acknowledging his messiahship but justifying the praise of the children by applying to himself a passage of Scripture applicable only to God (cf. Notes). 3. The quotation confirms that the humble perceive spiritual truths more readily than the sophisticated (cf. 19:13-15). The children have picked up the cry of the earlier procession and, lacking inhibitions and skepticism, enthusiastically repeat the chant, arriving at the truth more quickly than those who think themselves wise and knowledgeable.

17 During the festivals Jerusalem was crowded. So Jesus spent his last nights at Bethany, on a spur of the eastern slopes of the Mount of Olives (cf. Mark 11:19; Luke 21:37). The home where he stayed was probably that of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus.

c. The fig tree (21:18-22)

This story is found only here and in Mark, where it is split into two parts

(11:12-14, 20:26), with the temple's cleansing in between. Chronologically Mark is more detailed. If the Triumphal Entry was on Sunday, then, according to Mark, the cursing of the fig tree was on Monday; and the disciples' surprise at the tree's quick withering, along with Jesus' words about faith, were on Tuesday. Matthew has simply put the two parts together in a typical topical arrangement. He leaves indistinct (v. 20) the time when the disciples see the withered fig tree, though he implies it was the same day. Compare the condensation in 9:18-25. The most recent major study on this passage is by William R. Telford (*The Barren Temple and the Withered Tree* [Sheffield: JSOT, 1980]). Though he admirably surveys earlier studies, his own is less convincing (cf. review by D. Wenham, EQ 72 [1980] 245-48). The idea that "this mountain" (v. 21) refers to the temple, thus making the cursing of the fig tree a sign of the temple's doom, is unlikely. More probably it refers to the Mount of Olives as a sample of any mountain. Telford's exhaustive examination of the

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uses of "fig tree" as a metaphor does no more than show that "fig tree" could be applied metaphorically to many different things; but only the context of the metaphor is determinative. Still less convincing is the view that this story is a mere dramatization of the parable in Luke 13:6-9 (so van der Loos, pp. 692-96); for, apart from the question of whether such "historicization" of parabolic material ever occurs, the latter treats *delay* in judgment, whereas the present passage is concerned with *imminent* judgment. It is commonly held that 21:20-22 and the corresponding Markan material is a separate tradition unrelated to the original. Preferable is the view that the awkward transition reflects the historical chronology, which Mark preserved. Cursing the fig tree is, then, an acted parable related to cleansing the temple and conveying a message about Israel. But when the next day the disciples see how quickly the fig tree has withered, their initial--and shallow--response is to wonder how it was done; and this leads to Jesus' remarks on faith. So this single historical event teaches two theological lessons.

18-19 Somewhere on the road between Bethany and Jerusalem, Jesus approached a fig tree in the hope of staunching his hunger (v. 18). Mark tells us that though it was not the season for figs, the tree was in leaf. Fig leaves appear about the same time as the fruit or a little after. The green figs are edible, though sufficiently disagreeable as not usually to be eaten till June. Thus the leaves normally point to every prospect of fruit, even if not fully ripe. Sometimes, however, the green figs fall off and leave nothing but leaves. All this Matthew's succinct remark-"He ... found nothing on it except leaves" (v. 19)--implies; his Jewish readers would infer the rest. This understanding of the text confirms the chronology established at 21:1-11. If these events took place at Dedication, when figs were plentiful, not only would Mark's explicit statement be incorrect (11:13), but in both Matthew and Mark Jesus'

cursing of the tree would be harder to understand, for if he was hungry, he could simply go to the next tree. Many commentators think otherwise and suppose that by omitting Mark's statement "it was not the season for figs," Matthew has eliminated a moral difficulty. Why should Jesus curse a tree for not bearing fruit when it was not the season for fruit? But this theory misses the point. That it was not the season for figs explains why Jesus went to this particular tree, which stood out because it was in leaf. Its leaves advertised that it was bearing, but the advertisement was false. Jesus, unable to satisfy his hunger, saw the opportunity of teaching a memorable object lesson and cursed the tree, not because it was not bearing fruit, whether in season or out, but because it made a show of life that promised fruit yet was bearing none. Most scholars interpret the cursing of the fig tree as a symbolic cursing of the people of Israel for failing to produce faith and righteousness, as evidenced primarily in their attitude to Jesus. The fig tree then becomes akin to the imagery of the vine in

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Isaiah 5:1-7 or the figs in Jeremiah 8:13; 24:1-8 sterility, the absence of fruit, or bad fruit--all lead to judgment. Walvoord objects, insisting that there is no place in the Bible where a fig tree serves as a type of Israel (Jer 24:1-8 is dismissed because the good and bad figs refer to captives versus those who remain in the land). The Gospel pericope is a lesson on faith and the miraculous, no more. But if the common interpretation will not stand, Walvoord's reductionism will not withstand close scrutiny either. 1. Mark's arrangement of the material, with the temple's cleansing sandwiched between the two parts, must be taken into account. Even Matthew, who condenses Mark's arrangement and eliminates the division of the pericope into two, places this immediately after the cleansing of the temple and right before the questioning of Jesus' authority. We have learned to respect Matthew's arrangement of pericopes enough to see them linked; and therefore to read vv. 18-22 as nothing more than a lesson on faith forfeits the obvious links. 2. Jeremiah 24:1-8 may provide a closer parallel than Walvoord thinks, for even in the Gospels Jesus is not saying that all Jews fall under whatever curse this may be; after all, his disciples at this point in history were all Jews. In the Synoptics, as in Jeremiah, there is a division between Jew and Jew. 3. Yet even if Jeremiah 24:1-8 is not too close a parallel, one cannot make too much of the fig tree's not being a type of Israel; for one could similarly argue that there is no other example in the Bible of Jesus' performing a miracle *simply* to teach faith, without there being some organic connection with the narrative. This does not mean the common interpretation--that the fig tree represents Israel, cursed for not bearing fruit--is correct. In light of the discussion on the relation between leaves and fruit, Jesus is cursing those who make a show of bearing much fruit but are spiritually barren. This has four advantages. 1. It deftly handles both Mark and Matthew on the fig tree and its leaves.

2. It directs the attack against the hypocrites among the Jewish people, a constant target in all four Gospels, but especially in Matthew (e.g., 6:2, 5, 16; 7:5; 15:7; 22:18; and we now approach 23:1-39!). 3. It is compatible with the

cleansing of the temple, which criticizes, not the Jewish children and their praise, or the Jewish blind and lame who came to be healed (vv. 14-15), but those who used the temple to make a large profit, and those who stifled the children's praises of Messiah. These, like this leafy fig tree, Jesus finds full of advertised piety without any fruit; and them he curses. 4. Unlike other passages (3:9; 8:11-12), there is no mention of something being taken from the Jews and given to Gentiles. The cursing of the fig tree is an acted parable cursing hypocrites, not Jews or Judaism. The cursing of the fig tree is not so far out of character for Jesus as some would

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have us believe. The same Jesus exorcised demons so that two thousand pigs were drowned (8:28-34), drove the animals and money changers out of the temple precincts with a whip, and says not a little about the torments of hell. Perhaps the fact that the two punitive miracles--the swine and the fig tree--are not directed against men should teach us something of Jesus' compassion. He who is to save his people from their sin and its consequences resorts to prophetic actions not directed against his people, in order to warn them of the binding power of the devil (the destruction of the swine) and of God's enmity against all hypocritical piety (the cursing of the fig tree).

20-22 Though it is uncertain whether v. 20 is a question or an exclamation (cf. Moule, *Idiom Book* , p. 207), the effect is the same. The substance of Jesus' response has already been given in 17:20, which implies that the figure of a mountain cast into the sea was common in Jesus' teaching. Here, however, attention shifts "from the smallest effective amount of faith to the opposition of faith to doubt" (Hill *Matthew*). The miracle Jesus selects to teach the power of faith--throwing a mountain into the sea (v. 21)--is no more than a hyperbolic example of a miracle. But because the Dead Sea can be seen from the Mount of Olives, some have suggested an allusion to Zechariah 14:4 (Lane, *Mark* , p. 410)--viz., what the disciples must pray for is the coming eschatological reign. This seems unlikely, for Zechariah speaks of the splitting of the Mount of Olives rather than its removal into the sea. Jesus used the fig tree to teach the power of *believing* prayer, an extrapolation on the theme of faith, the lesson just taught by the immediate withering of the fig tree. But belief in the NT is never reduced to forcing oneself to "believe" what he does not really believe. Instead it is related to genuine trust in God and obedience to and discernment of his will (see on 19:20; cf. Carson, *Farewell Discourse* , pp. 43, 108-11). Though exercised by the believer, such faith reposes on the will of God who acts.

d. Controversies in the temple court (21:23-22:46)

1) The question of authority (21:23-27)

This long section (21:23-22:46) is characterized by a number of controversies with various Jewish leaders, along with several parables that must be interpreted in the light of such controversies. In Mark's chronology these controversies apparently took place on Tuesday, the third day of Passion Week. It was customary to stop well-known teachers and ask them questions (cf. 22:16, 23, 35), and the crowds delighted in these exchanges. Eventually Jesus turned primarily to the crowds and addressed them without excluding the Pharisees and teachers of the law (ch. 23); and then, as evening fell, he retired to the Mount of Olives and gave his last "discourse" to his disciples

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(chs. 24-25).

In the first exchange (vv. 23-27), Matthew follows Mark (11:27-33) fairly closely (cf. Luke 20:1-8).

23 Jesus' teaching takes place in the "temple courts," probably in one of the porticos surrounding the Court of the Gentiles. The chief priests were high temple functionaries, elevated members of the priestly aristocracy who were part of the Sanhedrin (see on 2:

4); the elders were in this case probably nonpriestly members of the Sanhedrin, heads of the most influential lay families (cf. Jeremias, *Jerusalem*, pp. 222ff.). In other words, representative members of the Sanhedrin, described in terms of their clerical status rather than their theological positions (e.g., Sadducees and Pharisees), approached Jesus and challenged his authority to do "these things"--viz., the cleansing of the temple, the miraculous healings, and perhaps also his teaching (v. 23). Their first question was therefore not narrowly theological but concerned Jesus' authority; yet their concern in asking who gave him this authority (cf. Acts 4:7) sprang less from a desire to identify him than from a desire to stifle and perhaps ensnare him.

24-26 Jesus' reply is masterful. He responds to their question with a question of his own (v. 24), a common enough procedure in rabbinic debate. "John's baptism" (v. 25) is a way of referring to the Baptist's entire ministry (cf. v. 25b and the reference to *believing* John, not simply being *baptized* by him). Jesus asks whether that ministry was from heaven or from men. He does not raise this question as a simple rebuke--as if to say that if the authorities cannot make up their minds about John, neither will they be able to do so about him. His question is far more profound. If the religious authorities rightly answer it, they will already have the correct answer to their own

question. If they respond, "From heaven," then they are morally bound to believe John--and John pointed to Jesus (see on 11:7-10; cf. John 1:19, 26-27; 3:25-30). They would therefore have their answer about Jesus and his authority. If they respond, "From men" (v. 26), they offer the wrong answer; but they will not dare utter it for fear of the people. The religious authorities share Herod's timidity (14:5). Far from avoiding the religious leaders' question, Jesus answers it so that the honest seeker of truth, unswayed by public opinion, will not fail to see who he is, while those interested only in snaring him with a captious question are blocked by a hurdle their own shallow pragmatism forbids them to cross. At the same time Jesus' question rather strongly hints to the rulers that their false step goes back to broader issues than Jesus' identity. If they cannot discern Jesus' authority, it is because their previous unbelief has blinded their minds to God's revelation.

27 "We don't know," they said--which is not so much a lie as a misrepresentation of

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the categories that bound them in public indecision. Their equivocation gave Jesus a reason for refusing to answer their question. Rejection of revelation already given is indeed a slender basis on which to ask for more. In one sense the Sanhedrin enjoyed not only the right but the duty to check the credentials of those who claimed to be spokesmen for God. But because they misunderstood the revelation already given in the Scriptures and rejected the witness of the Baptist, the leaders proved unequal to their responsibility. They raised the question of Jesus' authority; he raised the question of their competence to judge such an issue.

2) The parable of the two sons (21:28-32)

This is the first of three parables by which Jesus rebukes the Jewish leaders (vv. 28- 32, 33-46; 22:1-14). The first and third of these are peculiar to Matthew. There is no convincing evidence that this first parable is only a variation of Luke 15:11-32. Helmut Merkel ("Das Gleichnis von den `ungleichen Söhnen' [Matth. xxi.28-32]," NTS 20 [1974]: 254-61) argues that the entire parable is inauthentic; but his approach-- isolating, sometimes on doubtful grounds, Matthew's redaction and wondering in enough of the parable is left for us to posit an authentic core--is so one-sided that few follow it. It is much more common to deny the authenticity of v. 32 (e.g., Streaker, *Weg* , p. 153; Ogawa, pp. 121ff.), or of the last clause of v. 32 (van Tilborg, pp. 52-54). Jeremias (*Parables* , pp. 80f.) argues for the authenticity of the whole. That the verb *metamelomai* ("I change my mind") occurs in the Synoptics only in Matthew (21:29, 32; 27:3) is scarcely evidence against authenticity (so Streaker) because (1) the figures are so low (three occurrences) as to be statistically useless--one might as cogently argue that the verse is Pauline since Paul uses the verb once; (2) its use in this parable (v. 29) might as easily suggest the entire parable is traditional; and

(3) even if the language is Matthean--and the evidence is not conclusive either way-- such considerations are not themselves conclusive concerning content (cf. Introduction, section 2). As we shall see, the entire parable makes excellent sense in context; indeed, van Tilborg (pp. 47-52) has convincingly argued that all three parables belong together as a block, even if Matthew has tightened the connections. This supports the view that 21:23-22:46 constitutes a block of confrontations and warnings that took place on the one occasion (see on 21:23).

28 The particular wording "What do you think?" is distinctively Matthean (17:25-18: 12; 22:17). The parable is introduced without any preamble other than the question. The normal way to take *proteros* ("first") and *deuteros* ("second") in this context is "older" and "younger" son respectively (Derrett, *NT Studies* , 1-78).

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29-31 The last point has a useful bearing on the complex textual problem in these verses. The evidence is neatly set out by Metzger (*Textual Commentary* , pp. 55-56 along with some useful bibliography (cf. also Derrett, *NT Studies* , 1:76ff.). When the textual evidence is sifted, three choices remain. 1. The older son says no, but repents and goes; the second son says yes, but does nothing. Who performs the Father's will? The first. 2. The older son says yes, but does nothing; the second son says no, but repents and goes. Who performs the Father's will? The younger, or the last, or the second. 3. The older son says no, but repents and goes; the second son says yes, but does nothing. Who performs the Father's will? The last. Clearly 3 is the hardest reading; and from the time of Jerome, some have defended it for precisely that reason (Merx, Wellhausen). But not only is this reading weakly attested (Jerome knew of some Greek MSS supporting it, but only versional evidence remains today), it is either nonsensical, or else we must say the Jews are represented as perversely giving a farcical answer to avoid the application to themselves. This is not very convincing. If we do not adopt the position of WH, who suggest that a primitive textual error lies behind all extant copies, we must choose between 1 and 2. Many choose 1-as NIV--largely on the grounds that it has somewhat better external attestation than 2 and that the change from 1 to 2 can easily be envisaged. For one thing, if the first son actually went, the second might not be necessary. Also, it was natural to identify the older son with the disobedient one and the younger son with the obedient one, once the interpretation of the Fathers was widely adopted--viz., that the disobedient son stands for the Jew (who chronologically came first) and the obedient son stands for Gentile sinners. The first of these two arguments is irrelevant: there is nothing whatsoever to suggest that only one son was needed in the vineyard. The second argument is, by itself, more convincing; but it needs to face another possibility. Derrett (*NT Studies* , 1:76ff.) has shown that in the world of Jesus' day option 2 is psychologically far more natural. The older son is somewhat pampered and favored because he is the heir, whereas the younger son is sullen and resentful but has to go out of his way to prove himself to his father. The change from 2 to 1 may

have occurred if copyists supposed that in this context the father stands for John the Baptist (so, for instance, Julicher, Jeremias), whom tax-gatherers and prostitutes, open sinners, first denied and then believed. The evidence does not admit of certain resolution, but perhaps the balance of probabilities slightly favors NASB (option 2 rather than NIV. Either way the story is fairly straightforward. *Metamelomai* ("he changed his mind," v. 29) may or may not be followed by change of purpose in the NT, unlike *metanoeo* ("I repent"). For the first time Jesus openly makes a personal application of one of his parables to the Jewish leaders. "I tell you the truth" (v. 31; see on 5:16), he solemnly begins, "the tax collectors and the prostitutes enter the kingdom of God--and you do

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not"--for so the verb *proago* must be translated here, rather than "are entering ... ahead of you" (NIV; cf. Bonnard; Jeremias, *Parables*, p. 101, n. 54; TDNT, 8:105, n. 158; BDF, par. 245a [3]). The shock value of Jesus' statement can only be appreciated when the low esteem in which tax collectors (see on 5:46) were held, not to mention prostitutes, is taken into account. In our day of soft pornography on TV, we are not shocked by "prostitutes." But Jesus is saying that the scum of society, though it says no to God, repents, performs the Father's will, and enters the kingdom, whereas the religious authorities loudly say yes to God but never do what he says, and therefore they fail to enter. Their righteousness is not enough (cf. 5:20). Thus the parable makes no distinction between Jew and Gentile but between religious leader and public sinner.

32 This verse links the parable to the preceding pericope, where the importance of believing John has already been established (vv. 23-27). John pointed the way to the kingdom (11:12), which sinners are now entering (21:31). NIV interprets 21:32 in much the same way; but strictly speaking the Greek text says, "John came to you in the way of righteousness," not "John came to show you the way of righteousness." This probably means that John came preaching God's will about what was right (cf. "the way of God" in 22:16; cf. Przybylski, pp. 94-96). But in Matthew's thought John's preaching includes the demand for ethical reformation in light of the imminent coming of the kingdom (cf. 3:2-3). In this way John pointed to Jesus and the kingdom's superior righteousness (5:20). But the religious leaders did not believe John's witness, even after seeing society's vilest sinners repenting and believing him and his message.

3) The parable of the tenants (21:33-46)

This parable has long been a battleground for complex debate. It is marginally easier to account for synoptic differences (cf. Mark 12:1-12; Luke 20:9-19) postulating both a Markan and a Q recension; but this is by no means certain (cf. chart and discussion at 19:1-2).

On the face of it, the parable continues to make a statement against the Jewish religious authorities. The metaphorical equivalences are obvious: the landowner is God, the vineyard Israel, the tenants the leaders of the nation, the servants the prophets, and the son is Jesus Messiah. Such obvious metaphors have troubled many scholars, who detect late "allegorizing," which, they judge, could not have been part of the original parable but belongs only to the church's interpretation of it. The reconstructed parable is therefore given other interpretations (cf. Jeremias, *Parables* , p. 76; Dodd, *Parables* , pp. 124-32) so far removed from the texts as we have them that others have despaired of reconstructing the original. W.G. Kummel ("Das

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Gleichnis von den bosen Weingartnern [Mark.12.1-9]," *Aux Sources de la Tradition Chretienne* , edd. O. Cullmann and P. Menoud [Neuchatel: Delachaux et Niestle, 1950], pp. 120-38) argues that the creative milieu from which this parable springs is neither Galilee, nor the ministry of Jesus, but the first-century church influenced by its own interpretation of Isaiah 5. The following observations, however, point in a different direction. 1. We have already noted (see on 13:3a) that to draw a rigid line between "parable" and "allegory" or "parable" and "interpretation" has no methodological base. 2. Certainly Jesus himself faced opposition from the religious leaders of his people and day. There is no historical reason to think he could not himself have referred to Isaiah 5 in this connection and substantial formal literary reason for thinking that the parable, as the Synoptics preserve it, fits in with some of Jesus' established patterns of teaching (cf. E.E. Ellis, "New Directions," in Streaker, *Jesus Christus* , pp. 299-315, esp. pp. 312-14). 3. Recognizing these things, some scholars have argued that the "son" motif in the parable itself depends on the logic of the story and therefore must not be judged inauthentic (Hill, *Matthew* ; cf. J. Blank, "Die Sendung des Sohnes," in Gnllka, *Neues Testament* , pp. 11-413). This is surely right. But to assign the identification of this "son" as Jesus only to the church seems a rather artificial expedient. Even the most skeptical approach to the Gospels acknowledges that Jesus enjoyed a sense of special sonship to the Father. It is almost inconceivable, therefore that Jesus could use this "son" language in defending his mission and not be thinking of himself. It is far more natural to read the "son" language of the parable as yet another veiled messianic self-reference, especially in light of the use of "Son of God" as a messianic title in 4QFlor (see on 2:15; 3:17; 11:27). 4. As far as source criticism is concerned, it will no longer do to postulate that the Gospel of Thomas 65-66 preserves the original form of the parable. K.R. Snodgrass ("The Parable of the Wicked Husbandmen: Is the Gospel of Thomas Version the Original?" NTS 21 [1975]: 142-44), along with reviewing the evidence that argues that the omissions in Thomas owe something to Gnostic influence, shows the dependence of this version on the Syrian Gospels.

33-34 This parable is probably addressed not only to Jewish rulers (v. 23) but to the crowds in the temple courts, not excluding the rulers (cf. Luke 20:9). "Another" (v. 33) links this parable with the last one (cf. pl. "parables" in v. 45). Verses 33-34 clearly allude to Isaiah 5:1-7 and Psalm 80:6-16: Jesus' parable is an old theme with new variations. The pains the landowner takes show his care for the vineyard. He builds a wall to keep out animals, a watchtower to guard against thieves and fire, and digs a winepress to squeeze the grapes right there. All this shows his confidence that his

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vineyard will bear fruit. The tenant farmers take care of the vineyard during the owner's absence and pay rent in kind. The "servants" are the owner's agents sent "to collect his fruit." Mark stipulates merely "some of the fruit of the vineyard"; and some over-zealous critics think *tous karpous autou* ("his quit," NIV; but possibly "its fruit" [i.e., the vineyard's] as in v. 43, where the "its" refers to the kingdom) in Matthew represents the *whole* crop. That any first-century reader would take words referring to rent this way is very doubtful (v.

33). Mark mentions one servant at a time but says that many others were sent (cf. v.

36); again, it is very doubtful that any profound theological issue hangs on the differences.

35-37 The verb *dero* ("beat," v. 35) can also mean "flay" or "flog" and stands for general bodily ill-treatment (cf. Jer 20:1-2; 37:15; for Micaiah, cf. 1 Kings 22:24). Killing the prophets is attested in the OT (1 Kings 18:4, 13; Jer 26:20-23), as is stoning (2 Chronicles 24:21-22; cf. Matt 23:37; Heb 11:37). The landowner sends more servants (some commentators detect an allusion to the Jewish distinction between "former" and "latter" prophets) who are treated in the same brutal way (v. 36). "Last of all" (v. 37) he sends his son--there is a note of pathos here--hoping the tenants will respect him. This is not as implausible as it might seem to a Western reader (cf. Derrett, *NT Studies* , 2:97-98); here it shows the landowner's forbearance with his wicked tenant farmers (cf. Rom 2:4) and motivates the ultimate implacability of his wrath.

38-41 The action of the tenants is consistently callous. Precisely how it applies to Jesus is not entirely clear. Many object that the Jewish leaders did not recognize Jesus and did not desire to kill Messiah and usurp his place (v. 38). But these objections miss the mark; they run into the danger of making

the details of the parable run on all fours. Matthew does not take so tolerant a view as some modern scholars do of the way the Jewish leaders discharged their responsibility. Elsewhere he shows (23:37) their fundamental unwillingness to come to terms with Jesus' identity and claims (see also on 21:23-27) because they did not want to bow to his authority. True, their attitude was not, according to the synoptic record, "This is the Messiah: come, let us kill him"; yet, in the light of the Scriptures, their rejection of him was no less culpable than if it had been that. Therefore, though all the parable's details may not be pressed, rejection of the son (v. 39) by the leaders *is* the final straw that brings divine wrath on them. For six months Jesus has been telling his disciples that the rulers at Jerusalem would kill him (16:21; 17:23; 20:18). Now he tells the rulers themselves, albeit in a parable form, which, at some level, the leaders understand (vv. 45-46). Undoubtedly some who heard Peter a few weeks later (Acts 2:23-37; 3:14-15) were the more convicted when

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they remembered these words of Jesus.

Many take the order of events-"threw him out of the vineyard and killed him" (Matthew and Luke in the best texts), the reverse of Mark (12:8)--as the result of an attempt to align the parable a little more closely with Jesus' passion: he was taken outside the city wall and then crucified (a point made by all four Gospels). This is possible. But if Matthew and Luke here depend on Q. it is at least equally possible that they preserve the original order; and Mark has a climactic arrangement: the tenants kill the son and throw him out of the vineyard. Nothing in the parable suggests that the vineyard stands for Jerusalem. In Matthew alone Jesus elicits the self-condemning response (vv. 40-41) of the hearers of the parable, thus concluding his teaching in this parable, instead of simply presenting it. Of course the conclusion remains his, regardless of how he gets it across. NIV nicely preserves the verbal assonance in the Greek ("wretches ... wretched end").

42 In the NT, only Jesus asks, "Have you never read?" (12:3; 19:4; 21:16; Mark 12:

10); and in each case he is saying, in effect, that the Scriptures point to him (John 5:39-

40). The quotation is from Psalm 118:22-23 (LXX, which faithfully renders MT; cf. Notes). Luke adds a free translation of Isaiah 8:14 (cf. Isa 28:16), which appears in Matthew 21:44. "Stone" symbolism was important in the early church (Acts 4:11, Rom 9:33; 1 Peter 2:6) to help Christians understand why Jesus was rejected by so many of his own people; and doubtless its effectiveness was enhanced by Jesus' use of it. Jesus now turns to the image of a building. The "capstone" (lit., "head of the corner") is most probably the top stone of roof parapets, exterior staircases, and city walls (cf. Derrett, *NT Studies* , 1:61). Psalm 118 may have been written about David,

the type of his greater Son. All the "builders"--Goliath, David's own family, even Samuel--overlooked or rejected David, but God chose him. So in Jesus' day the builders (leaders of the people) rejected David's antitype, Jesus. But God makes him the Capstone. Alternatively, and more probably, the psalm concerns Israel. The nation was despised and threatened on all sides, but God made it the capstone. Jesus, who recapitulates Israel (see on 2:15) and is the true center of Israel, receives similar treatment from his opponents, but God vindicates him (cf. 23:39). The building metaphor makes no explicit allusion to the church: the point is christological, not ecclesiastical. The reversal of what man holds dear, the elevation of what he rejects, can only be the Lord's doing; "and it is marvelous in our eyes."

43 This verse, found only in Matthew (cf. van Tilborg, pp. 54-58) further explains the parable. Up to this time the Jewish religious leaders were the principal means by which God exercised his reign over his people. But the leaders failed so badly in handling God's "vineyard" and rejecting God's Son that God gave the responsibility to another

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people who would produce the kingdom's fruit (cf. 7:16-20). For a somewhat similar explanation, see Stonehouse (*Witness of Matthew* , p. 230). Strictly speaking, then, v. 43 does not speak of transferring the locus of the people of God from Jews to Gentiles, though it may hint at this insofar as that locus now extends far beyond the authority of the Jewish rulers (cf. Acts 13:46; 18:5-6; 1 Peter 2:9); instead, it speaks of the ending of the role the Jewish religious leaders played in mediating God's authority (see further on 23:2-3; so also Ogawa, pp. 127-39 though he unsuccessfully questions the authenticity of v. 43).

44-46 Jesus' words are confirmed by what "the chief priests [mostly Sadducees] and the Pharisees" (v. 45)--the two principal voices of authority in the Judaism of Jesus' day--understood this parable to mean: "they knew he was talking about them." Verse 44 is inserted in many MSS. It is certainly dominical but may be an assimilation to Luke 20:18. A "capstone," if too low, could be tripped over by an unwary person, sending him over the parapet; if too light or insecurely fastened, leaning against it could dislodge it and send it crashing onto the head of some passerby (v. 44). There is probably an allusion to both Isaiah 8:14-15 and Daniel 2:35. This despised stone (v. 42) is not only chosen by God and promoted to the premier place, it is also dangerous. The pericope ends with magnificent yet tragic irony (v. 46). The religious leaders are told they will reject Jesus and be crushed. But instead of taking the warning, they hunt for ways to arrest him, hindered only by fear of the people who accept Jesus as a prophet (see on v. 11), and so trigger the very situation they have been warned about-- a dramatic example of God's poetic justice. God in the Scriptures foretells this very event; and these men, prompted by hatred, rush to bring it to pass.

4) The parable of the wedding banquet (22:1-14)

The similarities between this parable and the one in Luke 14:16-24 lead most commentators to take them as separate developments of the same tradition, found also in the Gospel of Thomas (64). This almost inevitably leads to the view that Matthew is later on the grounds that it is more "allegorizing" (but cf. discussion on 13:3a) and that vv. 6-7, 11-13 are secondary (e.g., Ogawa, p. 140), vv. 11-13 perhaps representing another parable. Some go so far as to argue that the Thomas version is the most primitive of the three (but cf. Blomberg, "Tendencies of Tradition," esp. pp. 81ff.). Even when there is perfunctory recognition that Jesus may have repeated the same parable on many different occasions and applied it in quite different ways, the text is subjected to ingenious theories that "explain" all the differences without any attempt to explain the methodological grounds on which one may distinguish two historical accounts of the same or similar parables from one account considerably modified in the

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tradition and placed in an entirely different setting. (To cite one of many examples, cf. Robert W. Funk, *Language, Hermeneutic, and the Word of God* [New York: Harper and Row, 1966], pp. 163-87. For more recent literature, see van Tilborg, pp. 58-63; Ogawa, pp. 139-49; and for discussion on the general problem, see Introduction, section 6, and comments on 5:1-12.) Until we have unambiguous criteria, it seems wiser to accept Matthew's setting and report and Luke's setting and report (for detailed discussion, cf. Stonehouse, *Origins* , pp. 35-42). This is especially so here because of the very small degree of verbal similarity between Matthew and Luke (see chart and discussion at 19:1-2). In this instance the differences between Matthew and Luke are striking. In Luke the story concerns "a certain man," in Matthew "a king"; in Luke a great supper, in Matthew a wedding banquet for the king's son; in Luke one invitation, in Matthew two; in Luke the invited guests make excuses, in Matthew they refuse and turn violent; in Luke the invited guests are passed by, in Matthew they are destroyed. Each parable makes admirable sense in its own setting; and whereas the skeptical may judge such suitability to be due to editorial tampering, one might equally conclude from the evidence itself that the suitability of the two parables in their respective settings stems from two historical situations. Moreover the alleged evidence for later "allegorizing" in Matthew, in addition to being of doubtful worth as an index of later editorial activity, since more and more scholars recognize that parables and allegorizing are not mutually exclusive, must be set against the view that Luke's very simplicity may argue for the lateness of his account. Both criteria--allegorizing and simplicity--are well-nigh useless for determining historical settings. And if Matthew's parable is much harsher than Luke's, may this not owe something to the historical situation--open confrontation with the Jewish leaders during Passion Week, which sets it considerably later than in Luke? If the parable of the tenants exposes Israel's leaders' neglect of their covenanted duty, this one condemns the contempt with which Israel as a whole treats God's grace. The parable of the wedding banquet is therefore not redundant.

1 *Apokritheis* ("answered," NASB; untr. in NIV) may reflect Jesus response to the Jewish leaders' desires (21:45-46) but it is probably merely formulaic (see on 11:25).

2-3 For "kingdom of heaven," see on 3:2. This kingdom has become like the following story (cf. Carson, "Word-Group"). The kingdom has already dawned; invitations to the banquet have gone out and are being refused. The son's wedding banquet doubtless hints at the messianic banquet; but this must not be pressed too hard, for when that banquet comes, there is no possibility of acceptance or refusal. The king's son is clearly Messiah, not uncommonly represented as a bridegroom (9:

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15; 25:1; John 3:29; Eph 5:25-32; Rev 21:2-9). Prospective guests to a major feast were invited in advance and then notified when the feast was ready, but these guests persistently refuse (imperfect tense).

4-5 The king not only graciously repeats his invitation but describes the feast's greatness in order to provide an incentive to attend it (v. 4). *Ariston* ("dinner") properly means "breakfast." It refers to the first of two meals, usually taken about mid-morning (unlike Luke 14:16, where the word *deipnon* refers to the evening meal). But large wedding feasts went on for days in the ancient world. This *ariston* is therefore just the beginning of prolonged festivity. By v. 13 the celebration is continuing at night. Those invited stay away for mundane and selfish reasons (v. 5). They slight the king, whose invitation is both an honor and a command, and the marriage of whose son is a time for special joy.

6-7 The scene turns violent. Some of those invited treat the king's messengers outrageously (*hybrizo* is stronger than "mistreat," v. 6). Enraged, the king sends his army (cf. Notes), destroys the murderers, and burns their city (v. 7). Many object that vv. 6-7 introduce an unexpectedly violent tone; but it is unexpected *only* if Luke 14:16-24 is presupposed to be the more primitive form of the story. Matthew's readers, who have just finished 21:38-41, would not find 22:6-7 out of place. Nor is there a veiled allusion to A.D. 70 (contra Hummel, pp. 85f., and many others): Reicke ("Synoptic Prophecies," p. 123) has shown how implausible this is because the language belongs to the general OT categories of judgment (cf. Introduction, section 6).

8-10 The situation having gone beyond that at normal wedding banquets, these shocking developments make their points that much more effectively. The king sends his servants to *tas diexodous ton hodon* ("street corners," v.

9)--probably the forks of the roads, where they would find many people. They extend the king's invitation to all and succeed in drawing in all kinds of people, "both good and bad" (v. 10). That Jesus is reported as saying this in Matthew clearly shows that the superior righteousness (5:20) believers must attain to enter the kingdom is not merely rigorous obedience to law. After all, this Gospel promises a Messiah who saves his people from their sins (1:21; 20:28).

11-13 Whether one is good or bad, there is an appropriate attire for this wedding feast (v. 11). Evidence that the host in first-century Palestinian weddings furnished appropriate attire is inadequate and probably irrelevant to what Matthew is saying. The guest's speechlessness proves he knows he is guilty, even though the king gently calls him "friend" (v. 12; cf. 20:13). In view of "good or bad" (v. 10), it is difficult to

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believe that the wedding clothes symbolize righteousness, unless we construe it as a righteousness essential not to enter but to remain there. It is better to leave the symbolism a little vague and say no more than that the man, though invited, did not prepare acceptably for the feast. Thus, though the invitation is very broad, it does not follow that all who respond positively actually remain for the banquets. Some are tied (presumably so they can't get back in) and thrown outside into the darkness, where final judgment awaits (v. 13).

14 The *gar* ("for") introduces a general, pithy conclusion explaining the parable (see on 18:7; Zerwick, pars. 474-75). Many are invited; but some refuse to come, and others who do come refuse to submit to the norms of the kingdom and are therefore rejected. Those who remain are called "chosen" (*eklektōi*), a word implicitly denying that the reversals in the parable in any way catch God unawares or remove sovereign grace from his control. At the same time it is clear from all three parables (21:28-22:14) that not the beginning but the end is crucial.

5) Paying taxes to Caesar (22:15-22)

Matthew now rejoins Mark (12:13-17) and Luke (20:20-26) in a series of confrontations, the third of which Luke omits. In each one Jesus is confronted in an attempt to show he is no better than any other rabbi, or even to ensnare him in serious difficulties. Not only does Jesus respond with superlative wisdom, but he ends the exchanges by challenging his opponents with a question of his own they cannot answer (vv. 41-46)--another bit of veiled self-disclosure. All this probably takes place in the temple courts on Tuesday of Passion Week.

15-16a "Then" (*tote*, v. 15) may have purely temporal force (Mark and Luke

have "and"), but there is probably a logical connection as well: "then"--after Jesus' further self-disclosure and ample warning to the Jewish leaders--the Pharisees went out from the temple courts where Jesus was preaching (21:23) and "laid plans to trap him in his words." Mark (12:13) says that "they" (presumably "the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders," 11:27) sent "some of the Pharisees and Herodians" to ensnare Jesus. Matthew says the Pharisees laid the plan and sent their disciples along with Herodians (v. 16). Many think this difference reflects Matthew's "anti-Pharisaic bias." But several cautions must be sounded. 1. If Mark's "they" includes "the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders," we must remember that most of the latter two groups were Pharisees. Both Gospels therefore recognize the Pharisees' part in this confrontation. 2. Matthew's motive for making the Pharisees instigators need not be "anti-

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Pharisaic bias," any more than mention of the Sadducees in v. 23 and synoptic parallels reflects "anti-Sadducean bias." It may owe something to literary balance--an explicit party in v. 23, an explicit party in v. 15. Or it may even reflect historical awareness since the Sadducees, most of whom got along with the Roman overlord better than the Pharisees, would be less likely to think up this first confrontation. 3. Both Matthew and Mark specify that Pharisees and Herodians approached Jesus, and the reason for this is obvious. Unlike most of the Jews, the Herodians openly supported the reigning family of Herod and its pro-Roman sympathies. Clearly both Pharisees and Herodians are more than mere envoys: they are active participants, seeking to put Jesus between a rock and a hard place. A common enemy makes strange bedfellows; and common animus against Jesus erupts in plans to trip him up by fair means or foul. The verb *pagideuo* ("ensnare," "entrap," used only here [v. 15] in the NT) reveals the motive: this is no dispassionate inquiry into a proper attitude to the Roman overlord. Paying the poll tax was the most obvious sign of submission to Rome. In A.D. 6 Judas of Galilee led a revolt against the first procurator because he took a census for tax purposes (Jos. Antiq. XVIII, 3 [i.1]). Zealots claimed the poll tax was a God-dishonoring badge of slavery to the pagans. The trap, then, put Jesus into the position where he would either alienate a major part of the population or else lay himself open to a charge of treason.

16-17 The title "Teacher" and the long preamble (v. 16) reflect flattery and pressure for Jesus to speak. If he does not reply after such an introduction, then he is not a man of integrity and is swayed by men. The question "Is it right?" is theological, as all legal questions inevitably were to a first-century Jew. The question raised here, and others like it, exercised the rabbis (e.g., b *Pesahim* 112b, b *Baba Kamma* 113a). By NT times "Caesar," the family name of Julius Caesar, had become a title (cf. Luke 2:1, of Augustus; 3:1, of

Tiberius; Acts 17:7, of Claudius; 25:8-12; Philippians 4: 22, of Nero). The reference here is to Tiberius. The wording of the question, with its deft "or not," demands a yes or a no.

18-20 But Jesus will not be forced into a reductionistic reply. He recognizes the duplicity of his opponents. "Trap" (v. 18) is not *pagideuo* (as in v. 15) but *peirazo* ("test" or "tempt," as in 4:1; 16:1). Jesus chooses to answer them on his own terms and asks for the coin (*nomisma* , a NT *hapax legomenon*) used for paying this tax (v.

19). That he has to ask may reflect his own poverty or the fact that he and his disciples had a common purse. It was customary, though not absolutely essential, to pay the tax in Roman currency; and that such coins bore an image of the emperor's head along with an offensive inscription ("Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus" on one side and " *pontifex maximus* "--which Jesus would understand as "high priest"--on the

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other) would offend most Palestinian Jews. They hand Jesus a denarius (v. 19); and, as in 21:23-27, he asks his questioners a question--this time one they have to answer (v. 20).

21-22 Superficially Jesus' answer accords with Jewish teaching that men ought to pay taxes to their foreign overlords, since the great, even the pagan great, owe their position to God (cf. Prov 8:15; Dan 2:21, 37-38). But Jesus answer (v. 21) is more profound than that and can be fully understood only in the light of religion-state relations in first-century Rome. The Jews, with their theocratic heritage, were ill- equipped to formulate a theological rationale for paying tribute to foreign and pagan overlords, unless, like the Jews of the Exile, they interpreted their situation as one of divine judgment. But it was not only Jewish monotheism that linked religion and state. Paganism customarily insisted even more strongly on the unity of what we distinguish as civil and religious obligations. Indeed, some decades later Christians faced the wrath of Rome because they refused to participate in emperor worship--a refusal the state judged to be treason.

Seen in this light, Jesus' response is not some witty way of getting out of a predicament; rather, it shows his full awareness of a major development in redemption history. Jesus does *not* side with the Zealots or with any who expect his messiahship to bring instant political independence from Rome. The messianic community he determines to build (16:18) must render to whatever Caesar who is in power whatever belongs to that Caesar, while never turning from its obligations to God. The lesson was learned by both Paul and Peter (Rom 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17). Of course, Jesus' reply is not a legal statute resolving every issue. Where Caesar claims what is God's, the claims of God have priority (Acts 4:19; 5:29; much of Rev). Nevertheless Jesus' pithy words not only answer his enemies but also lay down the basis for the proper relationship of his people to government. The profundity of his reply is amazing (v. 22); but some of his enemies, no doubt disappointed

at their failure to ensnare him, later on lie to pretend that their snare had worked (Luke 23:2).

6) Marriage at the Resurrection (22:23-33)

The questioners' intent is as malicious as in the last pericope. They hope to embroil Jesus in a theological debate where he must choose sides; but instead the exchange again demonstrates his wisdom and authority (cf. Mark 12:18-27; Luke 20:27-40).

23 "That same day" (lit., "in that hour") places this confrontation in the same situation as the former one. Pharisees believed in a resurrection from the dead, basing their belief in part on Isaiah 26:19 and Daniel 12:2. But Sadducees did not believe in a

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resurrection: both body and soul, they held, perish at death (cf. Acts 23:8; Jos. Antiq. XVIII, 12-17 [i.3-4]; Wars II, 162-66 [viii.14]). At Jesus time Judaism as a whole held

surprisingly diverse views of death and what lies beyond it (cf. G.W.E. Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972]). In support of his view that Matthew was written so late that it retains only vague and inaccurate impressions of Sadducees (who largely died out after A.D. 70), Hummer (pp. 18-20), followed by Bonnard, argues that this verse says that only *some of* the Sadducees say there is no resurrection; but the Greek text knows no such restriction, whatever variant is chosen (cf. Notes).

24-28 Like the Pharisees and Herodians, the Sadducees approach Jesus with insincere respect ("Teacher," v. 24; cf. v. 16). They begin by citing the Mosaic levirate law (Deut 25:5-6). The text form in Matthew is either a little closer to the Hebrew than in Mark and Luke, or else it assimilates more closely to Genesis 38:8 (LXX). According to biblical law, if a man dies without children (the pl. is generalizing: Zerwick, par. 7; and see on 2:20), his younger brother is to marry the widow and "have children for him," i.e., sire children who would legally be heirs of the deceased brother. Levirate marriage antedates Moses in the canon (Gen 38:8); i.e., Moses regulated the practice but did not initiate it. The OT gives us no case of it, though levirate law stands behind Ruth 1:11-13; 4:1-22. Probably in Jesus' day the law was little observed, the younger brother's right to decline taking precedence over his obligation. Though the case brought by the Sadducees (vv. 25-27) *could* have happened, it is probably hypothetical, fabricated to confound Pharisees and others who believed in resurrection. Their question presupposes that resurrection life is an exact counterpart to earthly life; and if so, the resurrected woman (v. 28) must be guilty of incestuous marriages (see on 19:9) or arbitrarily designated the wife of one of the brothers. And if so,

which one? Or--and this is the answer the Sadducees pressed for--the whole notion of resurrection is absurd.

29-30 In Jesus' mind the Sadducees were denying Scripture (v. 29) because they approached its clear teaching on the subject (Isa 26:19; Dan 12:2; cf. Job 19:25-27), assuming that if God raises the dead he must bring them back to an existence just like this one. Jesus' response was acute. The Sadducees, Jesus insists, betray their ignorance of the Scriptures, which *do* teach resurrection, and of the power of God, who is capable of raising the dead to an existence quite unlike this present one. For (*gar* , untr. in NIV)--introducing an explanation as to how the power of God will manifest itself--in (*en* , not at [NIV], viewing the Resurrection, not as a single event, but as a state inaugurated by the event) "the resurrection" there will be a change in sexual relationships (v. 30). In this way we shall be "like the angels in heaven," and marriage

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as we know it will be no more. In fact Jesus' use of angels contains a double thrust since the Sadducees denied their existence (cf. Acts 23:8). Some have concluded from Jesus' answer that in heaven there will be no memory of earlier existence and its relationships, but this is a gratuitous assumption. The greatness of the changes at the Resurrection (cf. 1Cor 15:44; Philippians 3:21; 1John 3:1-2) will doubtless make the wife of even seven brothers (vv. 24-27) capable of loving all and the object of the love of all--as a good mother today loves all her children and is loved by them.

31-32 Jesus now turns from the power of God to the word of Scripture (cf. v. 29). He may have drawn the passage to which he appeals (Exod 3:6) from the Pentateuch, because the Sadducees prized the Pentateuch more highly than the rest of Scripture. "Have you not read?" (v. 31) is a rebuke (see on 21:42). If God is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob even when addressing Moses, hundreds of years after the first three patriarchs died, then they must be alive to him

(v. 32), "for to him all are alive" (Luke 20:38). God is the eternal God of the covenant, a fact especially stressed wherever reference is made to the patriarchs (e.g., Gen 24: 12, 27, 48; 26:24; 28:13; 32:9; 46:1, 3-4; 48:15-16; 49:25). He always loves and blesses his people; therefore it is inconceivable that his blessings cease when his people die (cf. Pss 16:10-11; 17:15; 49:14-15; 73:23-26). Yet at first glance the text Jesus cites is sufficient, along the lines of this argument, to prove immortality but not resurrection. Two observations largely alleviate the problem. 1. The Sadducees denied the existence of spirits as thoroughly as they denied the existence of angels (Acts 23:8). Their concern was therefore not to choose between immortality and resurrection but between death as finality and life beyond death, whatever its mode. 2. The mode that was the principal (though certainly not exclusive) option in Palestinian piety was a rather shadowy existence in Sheol followed by final resurrection. Our problem is that we force on the text a neoplatonic dualism

and demand a choice between immortality and resurrection (cf. Warfield, *Shorter Writings* , 1:339-47). The point is simply "that God will raise the dead because he cannot fail to keep his promises to them that he will be their God" (Marshall, *Luke* , p. 743), read against the background of biblical anthropology and eschatology (cf. also F. Dreyfus, "L'argument scripturaire de Jesus in faveur de la resurrection des morts [Mark, XII, 26-27]," RB 66 [1959]: 213-24 though he handles Luke 20:37-38 rather disappointingly).

33 Matthew does not tell us that the Sadducees are convinced but that the crowds are astonished at Jesus' teaching. The cause of the astonishment is probably Jesus'

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authority and incisive insight into biblical truth (cf. 7:28-29; 13:54; 22:22). Luke (20:39) remarks that some teachers of the law, almost certainly of Pharisaic persuasion, responded, "Well said, teacher!"

7) The greatest commandments (22:34-40)

The account as we have it is not in Luke (cf. Mark 12:28-34), though Luke 10:25-28 has something similar introducing the parable of the Good Samaritan. Because there are several verbal agreements between Matthew and Luke against Mark, it is usually held that the "double commandment" came down separately in Mark and Q (for recent discussion, cf. R.H. Fuller in Schottroff et al., pp. 41-56). This is quite possible; and the Lukan pericope (10:25-37) is so loosely connected to its setting that it could have come from almost any period in Jesus' ministry. On the other hand, the rabbis of Jesus' day were much exercised to find summary statements of OT laws and establish their relative importance; and in all probability the question arose enough times in Jesus' ministry that he developed a fairly standard response to the question. In Luke, Jesus elicits the correct answer from the expert in the law, rather than providing it himself; but we have already seen this kind of diversity when the synoptists recount the same event (e.g., Mark 12:9 and Matt 21:40-41; cf. Mark 12:35-36 and Matt 22:42-44); so the distinction may not be significant. More telling is the fact that the pericope in Luke focuses primarily, not on the question of the greatest commandment, but on the question of how to inherit eternal life. While this is scarcely conclusive, it may suggest quite separate occasions (cf. E.E. Ellis, "New Directions," in Strecker, *Jesus Christus* , pp. 310-12).

34 Mark says that a teacher of the law--most of whom were Pharisees--posed

the question (12:28) and gives a rather positive picture of the man. But Matthew maintains the polemical tone and portrays this confrontation as owing something to the machinations of the Pharisees, who saw how Jesus had silenced the Sadducees. Historically the Pharisees' leaders sent one of their "disciples" (cf. v. 16)--himself a Pharisee--who turned out to be more sympathetic than his seniors. Mark focuses on the confrontation; Matthew looks at its core from the perspective of the Pharisees who plotted it. (For similar dissension among high Jewish authorities when assessing Jesus, see John 7:45-52; Acts 5:33-39.)

35-36 The *nomikos* ("expert in the law," assuming this is the correct reading and not an interpolation from Luke) is here a Pharisee, a "scribe" or "teacher of the law" considered particularly learned (v. 35). The "law," of course, is Scripture, perhaps especially the Pentateuch. But because Scripture was applied to every area of life--

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including all civil matters--by means of certain interpretive rules and a vast complex of tradition, such an expert was, by modern standards, both a learned theologian and a legal expert. He "tested" Jesus, asking which is the greatest commandment (v. 36; the positive is used for the superlative, a not uncommon way to speak of a group or class: Moulton, *Accidence* , p. 442; BDF, par. 245 [2]; Zerwick, par. 146). The Jews quite commonly drew distinctions among the laws of Scripture--great and small, light and heavy. Jesus does something similar in 23:23. Testament of Issachar 6 gives certain Scriptures as the epitome of the law; and Akiba's "negative golden rule" (see on 7:12) is proclaimed as "the whole law. The rest is commentary" (cf. b *Shabbath* 31a). Yet the Jewish evidence is not univocal. *Mekilta* Exodus 6 and *Sifre* Deuteronomy 12:8; 19:11 speak of the equal importance of all commandments (cf. further SBK, 1:902ff.). We must allow not only for diversity of opinion among Jewish authorities but also for various opinions with different aims. Moreover, equality of various laws can refer to equality of reward for keeping them; Akiba's dictum was a response to a Gentile challenge to explain the whole law during the time he could stand on one leg. Verse 36 shows that the question of the expert was probably a hotly debated one (cf. Urbach, 1:345-65). The scene is like an ordination council where the candidate is doing so well that some of the most learned ministers ask him questions they themselves have been unable to answer--in the hope of tripping him up or of finding answers.

37-39 Jesus first quotes Deuteronomy 6:5 (part of the Shema [Deut 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num 15:38-41]) and then Leviticus 19:18. The first is from the MT; the second from the LXX (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT* , pp. 22-25). From the viewpoint of biblical anthropology, "heart," "soul," and "mind" (v. 37) are not mutually exclusive but overlapping categories, together demanding our love for God to come from our whole person, our every faculty and capacity.

"First and greatest" (v. 38) refers to one, not two, qualities: the "and" is explicative, i.e., this command is primary because it is the greatest. The second (v. 39) also concerns love, this time toward one's "neighbor," which in Leviticus 19:18 applies to a fellow Israelite or resident alien, but which Luke 10:29-37 expands to anyone who needs our help. Bringing these two texts together does not originate with Jesus, as Luke's parallel suggests (confirmed also by T Issachar 5:2, 7:6; T Dan 5:3, if these texts are pre-Christian).

40 This verse is distinctive though enigmatic. "All the Law and the Prophets hang on [lit., `are suspended from'] these two commandments." The following observations bring out the principal points of this summary. 1. The two commandments, Jesus says, stand together. The first without the second

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is intrinsically impossible (cf. 1John 4:20), and the second cannot stand without the first--even theoretically--because disciplined altruism is not love. Love in the truest sense demands abandonment of self to God, and God alone is the adequate incentive for such abandonment. 2. But in what sense do the Law and the Prophets "hang" on these two commandments? It is unlikely that the verb implies "derivation"--that the Law and the Prophets can be deduced from these two commandments (so Berger, *Gesetzesauslegung* , pp. 227-32). Jesus has expanded the initial category ("the greatest commandment in the Law," v. 36) to include all Scripture ("all the Law and the Prophets"). So even if "all the Law" could be derived from these two commandments, how could the same be said of "all the Prophets"? 3. It is equally unlikely that Jesus is appealing to these two commandments to abolish the necessity of formal adherence to all other law, thus entirely abandoning the rabbinical approach to the law and perhaps even making the love commandments a kind of hermeneutical canon for interpreting all OT law. This view, in one form or another, is very popular (Bornkamm, *Tradition* , pp. 76-78; id., "Das Doppelgebot der Liebe," *Geschichte* , pp. 37-45; Hummel, pp. 51ff; and esp. B. Gerhardsson, "The Hermeneutic Program in Matthew 22:37-40," *Jesus, Greeks, and Christians* , edd. R. Hamerton-Kelly and R. Scroggs [Leiden: Brill, 1976], pp. 129-50). This radical interpretation of Jesus' answer is said to be necessary to make sense of the fact this confrontation is a test (Bornkamm, *Tradition* , p. 78). But the test can be understood in other ways (see on v. 36); and the fact that Jesus' opponents are testing him does not require his answer to be radical, any more than in vv. 23-33. There is no positive evidence in the text to support this view, if a better one can be found; and Moo ("Jesus") has rightly pointed out that in no case in the Gospels does love serve as grounds for abrogating any commandment (the Sabbath controversies are no exception, since there concern for fellow human beings is recognized as one important factor within the Sabbath law itself; see on 12:1-13). Indeed, G. Barth (Bornkamm, *Tradition* , p. 78) is reduced to pitting the love commands against the "jot and tittle" of 5:18, though both are taught by Jesus. 4.

Kaiser rightly points out that this passage is in keeping With the prophetic tradition of the OT, which equally demands a heart relationship with God (Deut 10:12; 1Sam 15:22; Isa 1:11-18; 43:22-24; Hos 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Mic 6:6-8; cf. Prov 15:8; 21:27; 28:9). Sterile religion, no matter how disciplined, was never regarded as adequate. Unfortunately Kaiser then arbitrarily links this pericope too closely with passages like 23:23-24 and argues that Jesus is saying that "the meticulous Scribes and punctilious Pharisees ... *must penetrate to the more significant and abiding aspects of the law* " (p. 185; emphasis mine). But that is just what Jesus does not say at this point. The relative "greatness" of this command or some other one has no connection

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whatever in synoptic pericopes to continuity or discontinuity between the Testaments.

5. Nevertheless Kaiser's initial linking of 22:34-40 with the OT tradition demanding heart religion is valid. This matter is well treated by Moo ("Jesus"). There is no question here of the priority of love over law--i.e., one system over another-but of the priority of love within the law. These two commandments are the greatest because all Scripture "hangs" on them; i.e., nothing in Scripture can cohere or be truly obeyed unless these two are observed. The entire biblical revelation demands heart religion marked by total allegiance to God, loving him and loving one's neighbor. Without these two commandments the Bible is sterile. This pericope prepares the way for the denunciations of 23:1-36 and conforms fully to Jesus' teaching elsewhere. "Love is the greatest commandment, but it is not the *only* one; and the validity and applicability of other commandments cannot be decided by appeal to its paramount demand" (Moo, "Jesus," p. 12). The question of the continuity or discontinuity of OT law within the teaching of Jesus is determined not with reference to the love commands but by a salvation-historical perspective focusing on prophecy and fulfillment (see on 5:17-48).

8) The son of David (22:41-46)

After silencing the Jewish leaders, Jesus in turn asks them a question. His purpose is not to win a debate but to elicit from them what the Scriptures themselves teach about the Messiah, thus helping people to recognize who he really is. The passage speaks to crucial christological and hermeneutical issues (see esp. on vv. 43-44). The synoptic parallels (Mark 12:35-37; Luke 20:41-44) do not show that Jesus' questions were addressed to the Pharisees, or that they replied (see on 22:34-40). The historical setting is the temple courts, where crowds and leaders mingled together and alternately listened

to the teacher from Nazareth and fired questions at him (21:23-23:36). Matthew's--details probably stem from his memory of the events. That he mentions the Pharisees may reveal his desire to show his readers where the Pharisees were wrong. But one cannot be dogmatic about this, since Matthew omits Mark's gentle snub: "The large crowd listened to him with delight" (12:37) which shows that Mark, too, knows that Jesus aimed his exegesis of Psalm 110 against the biblical experts of his day.

41-42 Jesus' question (v. 41) focuses on the real issue--christology, not resurrection or taxes--that turned the authorities into his enemies. The Messiah's identity according to the Scriptures must be determined. One way to do that is to ask whose son he is (v. 42). The Pharisees gave the accepted reply: "The son of David"--based on passages like 2 Samuel 7:13-14; Isaiah 11:1, 10; Jeremiah 23:5 (see on 1:1; 9:27-28; cf. Moore, *Judaism* , 2:328-29; Guthrie, *NT Theology* , pp. 253-56; Fitzmyer, *Semitic Background* ,

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pp. 113-26; Longenecker, *Christology* , pp. 109-105.

43-45 But this view, though not wrong, is too simple because, as Jesus points out, David called the Messiah his Lord (v. 43). How then could Messiah be David's son? The force of Jesus' argument depends on his use of Psalm 110, the most frequently quoted OT chapter in the NT. The Davidic authorship of the psalm, affirmed by the psalm's superscription, is not only assumed by Jesus but is essential to his argument. If the psalm was written by anyone else, then *David* did not call Messiah his Lord. The phrase "speaking by the Spirit" not only assumes that all Scripture is Spirit-inspired (cf. Acts 4:25; Heb 3:7; 9:8; 10:15; 2 Peter 1:21) but here reinforces the truth of what David said so it may be integrated into the beliefs of the hearers (cf. "and the Scripture cannot be broken," John 10:35). The text of Psalm 110:1 quoted by all three Synoptics is essentially Septuagintal (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT* , p. 25; on the variants, cf. Fee, pp. 163-64). The "right hand" (v. 44) is the position of highest honor and authority (cf. Ps 45:9; Matt 19:28). Many but not all Jews in Jesus' day regarded Psalm 110 as messianic (cf. SBK, 4: 452-65; LTJM, app. 9; David M. Hay, *Glory at the Right Hand: Psalm 110 in Early Christianity* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1973], pp. 11-33). Most modern scholars say that Psalm 110 was not Davidic but was written *about* David or some other king, making "my Lord" a monarchical reference by an unknown psalmist. Because Psalm 110 is so frequently quoted in the NT, some scholars try to establish the "entry" of the psalm into Christian tradition, associating it with, say, "the pre-Pauline formula in Rom 1:3f." (D.C. Duling, "The Promises to David and Their Entrance into Christianity," NTS 20 [1974]: 55-77) or Pentecost (M. Gourgues, "Lecture christologique du Psaume cx et Fete de la Pentecote," RB 83 [1976]: 1-24). A pattern is then plotted for the score of NT uses of Psalm 110, on which Matthew 22:41-46 plus parallels appear too late to be authentic words of Jesus. Nevertheless there are many arguments for an interpretation more in conformity with the

texts as we have them. 1. That Psalm 110 is about the king makes sense only if the superscription is ignored. If David is indeed the author, as both the psalm's superscription and Jesus insist, then either the psalm deals with some figure other than David or else David, caught up in high prophetic vision, is writing about himself in the third person. 2. The latter is by no means implausible. But we have already seen that much prophecy and fulfillment is in OT, paradigms pointing forward, sometimes with the understanding of the OT writers, sometimes not (see on 2:15, 5:17; 8:16-17). David is regularly portrayed, even in the OT, as the model for the coming Anointed One; and David himself understood at least something of the messianic promise (2Sam 7:13-14). 3. Psalm 110 uses language so reckless and extravagant ("forever," v. 4; the

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mysterious Melchizedek reference, v. 4; the scope of the king's victory, v. 6) that one must either say the psalm is using hyperbole or that it points beyond David. That is exactly the sort of argument Peter uses in Acts 2:25-31 concerning another Davidic psalm (Ps 16). 4. Psalm 110 contains no allusion to the much later Maccabeans, who were priest kings, for they were priests who became "kings," whereas the figure in Psalm 110 is a king who becomes a priest. 5. As the text stands, this pericope has important christological implications. The widely held, if not dominant, view was that the coming Messiah would be the son of David (cf. Pss Sol 17). Jesus not only declares that view inadequate, but he insists that the OT itself tells us it is inadequate. If Messiah is not David's son, *whose son is he* The solution is given by the prologue to Matthew (chs. 1-2) and by the voice of God himself (3:17; 17:5): Jesus is the Son of God. Even the title "Son of Man" (see on 8:20) offers a transcendent conception of messiahship.

6. However, in spite of Bultmann (*Synoptic Tradition* , pp. 136-37) and many others, this does not mean that Jesus or Matthew is *denying* that the Messiah is David's son, replacing this notion with a more transcendent perspective. This Gospel repeatedly recognizes that Jesus the Messiah is Son of David, not only by title (1:1; 9:27; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; cf. 12:23) and by the genealogy (1:2-16) but also by its portrayal of Jesus as King of the Jews (2:2; 21:5; 27:11, 29, 37, 42: cf. Hay, *Glory* , pp. 116-17). What Jesus does is synthesize the concept of a human Messiah in David's line with the concept of a divine Messiah who transcends human limitations (e.g., Ps 45:6-7; Isa 9:6; Jer 23:5-6; 33:15-16; Zech 12:10 [MT]; 13:7 [NASB]), even as Matthew elsewhere synthesizes kingship and the Suffering Servant. The OT itself looked forward to one who would be both the offshoot and the root of David (Isa 11:1, 10, cf. Rev 22:16). 7. Even the fact that Jesus' use of Psalm 110:1 was susceptible to an interpretation denying that the Messiah must be of Davidic descent argues strongly for the authenticity of this exegesis of the psalm, for it is unlikely that Christians would have placed this psalm on Jesus' lips when his Davidic sonship is taught throughout the NT (in addition

to Matthew, cf. Mark 10:47-48; 11:10; Luke 1:32; 18:38-39; Rom 1:3; 2Tim 2:8; Rev 3:7; 5:5; 22:16). Jesus question (v. 45) is not a denial of Messiah's Davidic sonship but a demand for recognizing how Scripture itself teaches that Messiah is more than David's son. 8. Against those who hold that this transcendent sonship could only have arisen as an issue after the Passion (e.g., Lindars, *Apologetic* , pp. 46f.), we must ask why Jesus himself could not have expressed the paradox of Messiah's dual paternity since he certainly knew God as uniquely his "Father" (see esp. 11:27) and applies the transcendent title "Son of Man" to himself as well. 9. If this approach is substantially correct, then the entrance of Psalm 110 into

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Christian theology is traceable to Jesus himself. Moreover it can be credibly argued that *his* approach to the OT is adopted by the NT writers, even when they do not focus on the same OT texts to which he gave his primary attention. 10. Finally, the text has some eschatological implications, even though they are not of primary interest. Messiah is pictured at God's right hand of authority during a period of hostility from God's enemies, a hostility to be crushed at the end (cf. 28:18-20).

46 In Mark the opponents' silence (12:34) concludes the pericope of the greatest commandment. Matthew uses this comment to finish the entire section of confrontations (21:23-22:46). Many who were silenced were not saved; so Jesus' enemies went underground for a short time before the Crucifixion. Yet even their silence was a tribute. The teacher who never attended the right schools (John 7:15-18) confounds the greatest theologians in the land. And if his question (v. 45) was unanswerable at this time, a young Pharisee, who may have been in Jerusalem at the time, was to answer it in due course (Rom 1:1-4; 9:5).

e. Seven woes on the teachers of the law and the Pharisees (23:1-36)

1) Warming the crowds and the disciples (23:1-12)

Structurally, it is difficult to decide just where Matthew 23 belongs. Because it is essentially discourse, some have held that it either belongs to Matthew 24-25 or else is a separate discourse and must be treated as such. But the different audiences (23:1; 24:3) separate chapter 23 from chapters 24-25, as do their distinct, though related, themes. Nor is Matthew 23 a discourse on a par with the five major discourses of Matthew: it lacks the characteristic discourse ending (see on 7:28-29). Moreover, from a thematic viewpoint

Matthew 23 is best perceived as the climax of the preceding confrontations.

Solutions to many of the important questions raised by Matthew 23 gradual emerge from exegesis of the whole; but several preliminary considerations will point the way ahead.

1. The literary origins of this chapter are disputed. Some see vv. 1-12 as free expansion--by Matthew of Mark 12:38-39, and vv. 13-36 of Mark 12:40. Others hold that Mark has reduced material in Matthew because he is not interested in this debate; and still others that the two Gospels spring at this juncture from separate traditions. There is no way of proving the rightness of one of these options. Yet it must be said that Matthew's material is remarkably coherent and, when viewed dispassionately (see below), believably dominical. Even the changes of addressees (23:

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1, 13, 37) admirably suit the larger context (21:23-22:46), with crowds and authorities milling around and coming and going, and the preacher addressing first this part of his audience, then that. The chapter *may* be a montage of sayings: there is ample evidence that Luke often compiled sayings in that way, without pretense of doing otherwise. On the other hand, there is no good reason for thinking 23:2-36 cannot be a report of what Jesus said on this occasion. 2. Attempts to define the situation in Matthew's church on the basis of this chapter are precarious. These turn on attitude toward the law (act vv. 2-3 and v. 23) or toward the Jewish religious leaders and lead to extended debate as to whether Matthew's church has broken from the synagogue and is therefore appealing to it, denouncing it from without, or still trying to win it over from within. Objections to the contrary, there is no real anachronism to warrant such discussion, which is scarcely more than fanciful though learned speculation. Obviously Matthew is telling us what Jesus says, not what the church says. Even if we assume that Matthew's choice of what he includes largely reflects the situation at the time he wrote, it is naive to think twentieth-century scholars can reconstruct the situation in detail (cf. Introduction, section 2). A certain amount of personal interest or a need to show his readers "how we got from there to here" may have led Matthew to many of his choices. The space he allots to it implies that he is interested in the continuity between the OT people of God and the church, the people of the Messiah, and how it happened that so many Jews, including the religious authorities, rejected Jesus. But Paul had similar aims in writing Romans, and no one thinks the church at Rome is theologically akin to Matthew's church in this respect. 3. The literary context of the chapter is extremely important. Not only does Matthew 23 climax a series of controversies with the Jewish religious authorities (21:23-22:46), but it immediately follows the christologically crucial confrontation of 22:41-46. The question "What do you think about Christ?" raised by Jesus (v. 42) "was not simply a theological curiosity which could be thrashed out in the seminar room," as Garland (p. 24) puts it; it stands at the heart of the gospel. The failure of the Pharisees to

recognize Jesus as the Messiah prophesied in Scripture is itself already an indictment, the more so since they "sit in Moses' seat" (see on v. 2); and the woes that follow are therefore judicial and go some way toward explaining the prophesied destruction of Jerusalem in the Olivet Discourse (24:4-25:46). 4. Thus Jesus' strong language in this chapter ("fools," "hypocrites," "blind guides," "son of hell") is not the language of personal irritation at religious competition, nor the language of a suffering church tired of the restrictions and unbelief of the synagogue in the ninth decade A.D., but the language of divine warning (cf. vv. 37-39) and condemnation. Those who see Matthew 23 as inconsistent with the Sermon on the Mount (esp. 5:43-48) neglect two things. First, they overlook the limitations inherent to the sermon itself: the love Jesus demands of his followers is more radical

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and more discriminating than modern liberal sentimentality usually allows. Second, the Sermon on the Mount, not less than Matthew 23, also presents Jesus as eschatological Judge who pronounces solemn malediction on those he does not recognize and who fail to do his word (7:21-23). To read Matthew 23 as little more than Matthew's pique about A.D. 85 is not only without adequate historical and literary justification but fails dismally to understand the historical Jesus, who not only taught his followers to love their enemies and gave his OWED life in supreme self-sacrifice, but proclaimed that he came not to bring peace but a sword (10:34) and presented himself as eschatological Judge (e.g., 7:21-23; 25:31-46).

1 Perhaps a year earlier Jesus had begun to denounce the Pharisees (15:7). Subsequently he warned his disciples of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees (16:5-12). Now his warnings and denunciations are public. Current scholarship tends to see "crowds" and "his disciples" either as unhistorical, perhaps an invented transition (Walker, pp. 68-70), or else as an ambiguous pastiche of historical reminiscence and contemporizing, the "crowds" referring to Jews in Matthew's day and "disciples" to Christians in his day. All this is groundless. In the setting--the temple courts a few days before Passover (21:23) crowds along with "disciples" and some religious authorities are to be expected. Matthew mentions both groups because he sees that the essential thrust of Jesus' warnings is to compel men to follow him, the Messiah as defined in 22: 41-46, or the religious leaders. And those who do the latter will share their leaders' condemnation. The scene is therefore set for Jesus' lament over Jerusalem (vv. 37-39) and the judgment that follows (chs. 24-25; cf. Garland, pp. 34-41).

2 Only here in Matthew do the Greek words behind "teachers of the law" and "Pharisees" take separate articles, implying two separate groups (cf. RHG, pp. 758f.). Therein lies a problem, for whereas "scribes" (NIV,

"teachers of the law") had teaching authority, the Pharisees as such did not. Many were laymen without authority or responsibility to teach. Grundmann suggests that *kai* ("and") is epexegetical ("scribes, that is, the Pharisees"); Gaechter, that the phrase is a hendiadys ("scribes of the Pharisees"). But both views are unnatural and do not account for the use of Pharisees in ch. 23. On the other hand, some hold that the "Pharisees" represent Matthew's opponents in A.D. 85 and are therefore anachronistically inserted into the Gospel (Kilpatrick, *Origins* , p. 113; Hummel, p. 31; Bonnard; and many others). Garland (p. 44, n. 32, and pp. 218-21), however, has pointed out that Luke attacks the Pharisees as vigorously as Matthew; yet no one holds that Pharisaic Judaism was a major concern for Luke's church. Walker (p. 20), van Tilborg (p. 106), and Garland (pp. 43-46) conclude that all categories of Jewish leaders (Pharisee, scribe, Sadducee, chief priest, etc.) in Matthew

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lose all historical distinction and become synonymous, ciphers for Jewish leadership in general that failed to recognize Jesus as Messiah. But some passages preserve fine historical distinctions (e.g., 21:23); and it is intrinsically unlikely that a writer as sensitive to Jewish background as Matthew would use words so clumsily. The problem is one of demanding too narrow definition of certain categories and, when they don't fit, charging the writer with anachronism. A better approach is possible (cf. Carson, "Jewish Leaders"). The "teachers of the law," most of them Pharisees in Matthew's time, were primarily responsible for teaching. "Pharisee" defines a loose theological position, not a profession like "teacher." The two terms are distinct, even if there is much overlap on the personal level. An analogy might be the Puritan John Owen's denouncing "the prelates and Roman Catholics" and then continuing his discourse with epithets like "you prelates, you Catholics," "you prelates, Catholics." "Prelates" defines roles but does not mean that the only prelates are Catholics (some were Anglicans), the other--"Catholics"--- defines theological position but does not require all Catholics to be prelates. This is how Jesus was attacking a theological position and those who promulgated it. These leaders "sit in Moses' seat." E.L. Sukenik (*Ancient Synagogues in Palestine and Greece* [London: OUP, 1934], pp. 57-61) has shown that synagogues had a stone seat at the front where the authoritative teacher, usually a *grammateus* ("teacher of the law"), sat. Moreover, "to sit on X's seat" often means "to succeed X" (Exod 11:5; 12:29; 1 Kings 1:35, 46; 2:12; 16:11; 2 Kings 15:12; Ps 132:12; cf. Jos. Antiq. VII, 353f xiv.5]; XVIII, 2 [i. 1]. This would imply that the "teachers of the law" are Moses' legal

successors, possessing all his authority--a view the scribes themselves held (M *Sanhedrin* 11:3; cf. Ecclesiasticus 45:15-17; M *Aboth* 1:1; M *Yebamoth* 2:4; 9:3).

3 The astounding authority conceded "the teachers of the law and the Pharisees" in v. 2 becomes explicit in v. 3. Even if the emphasis in v. 3 falls at the end, where Jesus denounces the Jewish readers' hypocrisy, the beginning of the verse gives them full authority in all they teach, even if they do not live up to it. *Panta hosa* ("everything") is a strong expression and cannot be limited to "that teaching of the law that is in Jesus' view a faithful interpretation of it"; they cover *everything* the leaders teach, including the oral tradition as well (Garland, pp. 48f.; contra Allen; Plummer; Schlatter; Stonehouse, *Witness of Matthew*, pp. 196f.; and others). Nor does the text say their authority rests in their roles but not in their doctrine: on the contrary, v. 3 affirms their doctrine but condemns their practice. Meier (*Law*, pp. 106, 119, 156) argues that this pertains only to Jesus' earlier ministry but not to the church from the Resurrection on. But this settles nothing, because Jesus has during his ministry repeatedly criticized the scribes and Pharisees for their teaching, not least their oral tradition (5:21-48; 15:3-14; 16:12), will do so again (23:16-36), and has just finished exposing their ignorance of the

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Scriptures (22:41-46).

Many scholars hold that vv. 2-3 reflect an earlier tradition, reflecting a time when Matthew's church was still part of and under the authority of the Jewish leaders and that somehow that early tradition was awkwardly preserved in a book that, on the whole, reflects later theological developments. But it is doubtful whether there ever was such a time (cf. Acts 3-4); and in any case the theory makes Matthew an extraordinarily incompetent editor. The way around this thorny point, according to Hummel, van Tilborg, and Schweizer, is to recognize that Matthew preserves vv. 2-3 because the rupture between synagogue and church has not yet taken place. So Matthew incorporates vv. 2-3 to mollify and if possible win Jewish opponents, while at the same time giving a qualified interpretation of the statement in line with 5:17-20 (Schweizer). The remarkable thing, however, is that vv. 2-3 are not in themselves qualified but are about as strong as can be imagined. If Matthew was interested in preventing a threatening rupture in the alleged union between synagogue and church, why does he not elsewhere mitigate his strong denunciation of the Jewish leaders' teaching and include the praise of the scribe (Mark 12:34)? First-century readers were no less alert than we. Could they not see that the Gospel repeatedly criticizes the Pharisees' doctrine, making the assurance of vv. 2-3 empty and mocking? Before proposing a solution, we must consider the force of v. 4.

4 The Qumran covenanters called the Pharisees "the expounders of smooth things," because their casuistry made life easier than the covenanters themselves approved. To reconcile this DSS evidence with v. 4, some have held that though the Pharisees made things easier for themselves, proving the covenanters right, they made it harder for everyone else; so v. 4 is correct (cf. Hill, Matthew). The distinction is doubtful. Most Pharisees, including

rabbis, worked in some full-time trade: they were not secluded scholars but active members of society. It is hard therefore to see how their rulings could benefit only themselves. We must not forget that the DSS came out of a monastic community, which would negatively judge all rules less rigorous than their own. The real question about v. 4 is whether (1) it contrasts in some way with vv. 2-3 or (2) it merely illustrates v. 3b. The latter will not stand close scrutiny (cf. Garland, pp. 50ff.). Verse 4 speaks of the leaders' putting "heavy loads on men's shoulders"--laying down irksome rules--and then refusing "to lift a finger" to help. This does not mean they were unwilling to obey burdensome rules themselves (contra Josef Schmid, in loc.; Bornkamm, *Tradition* , p. 24; Schweizer, *Matthew* ; Sand, p. 89) but that they refused to help those who collapsed under their rules (Manson, *Sayings* , p. 101; McNeile; Filson; Garland, p. 51). This is the natural interpretation of *kinesai* ("to move", cf. BAGD, s.v.) and fits the allusion to 11:28-30. Thus the Pharisees are unlike Jesus, whose

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burden is light and who promises rest. But this means that v. 4 does more than illustrate v. 3b: it shows how the Pharisees are by their teaching doing more harm than good. Thus vv. 2-3 stand alone in their emphasis: their contexts flatly contradict them. It will not do to treat vv. 2-3 as a concession to the leaders that Matthew then modifies, a "rhetorical preparation" drawn from conservative tradition that the evangelist proceeds to modify (Banks, *Jesus* , p. 176; Garland, pp. 54f.), for the tension is too sharp. The only way to make sense of the text is to follow Jeremias (*Theology* , p. 210) and see in vv. 2-3 an instance of biting irony, bordering on sarcasm. This position is self-consistent and does not weaken the strong statements in vv. 2-3. Moreover it is strengthened by the verb *ekathisan* ("sit") in v. 2. The aorist is not normally translated as a present. In response many point out that the same aorist verb is used in Mark 16: 19; Hebrews 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; Revelation 3:21--all of which refer to Jesus as still sitting. But that misses the point. The emphasis in each of these instances is not that Jesus is still sitting, though that is doubtless presupposed, but on the fact that as a result of his triumph he *sat down* . The aorist does not *require* that the action be at one point in time; it is the context that in each of these instances presupposes it. Moreover the gnomic aorist in the indicative mood (which is how NIV's "sit" takes the Greek in v. 2) is so rare in the NT that it should not be our first option. But if vv. 2-3a are ironic, then the aorist can have its natural force: the teachers of the law and the Pharisees *sat down* in Moses' seat (cf. NASB's "have seated themselves," which may be overtranslated but has the right idea). The Jewish religious leaders have "presumed" to sit in Moses' seat (so Adalbert Merx, *Das Evangelium Matthaeus* [Berlin: Georg Reimer, 1902]; Moulton, *Prolegomena* , p. 458; Zahn). It is, of course, of no help to say that such a translation must be followed in v. 3a by "therefore, pay no attention to what they say" (contra Plummer; Banks, *Jesus* , p. 175; Garland, p. 48); for v. 3a continues the irony. This generates a neat chiasm:

A: v.2--the leaders have taken on Moses' teaching authority -- irony

B: v.3a--do what they say -- irony

B:' v.3b--do not what they do -- nonironical advice

A:' v.4--their teaching merely binds men -- nonironical advice

Thus the first two elements are ironic, and the last two reveal in reverse order the painful futility of following the teachers of the law. Jesus warns the crowds and his disciples in the sharpest way possible. The reluctance of many scholars to admit that vv. 2-3 are biting irony overlooks the tone of much of this chapter (e.g., vv. 23-28) and superb parallels elsewhere in the NT (e.g., 1Cor 4:8a, 10).

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5-7 These verses illustrate some of the leaders' practices not to be copied (v. 3b; cf. Mark 12:38-39; Luke 20:46). Jesus accuses them of being time-servers and applause-seekers (6:1-18). "Phylacteries" (v. 5) were small leather or parchment boxes containing a piece of vellum inscribed with four texts from the law (Exod 13:2-10, 11-16; Deut 6:4-9; 11:13-21). They were worn on the arm or tied to the forehead according to Exodus 13:9, 16; Deuteronomy 6:8; 11:18 (though originally these passages were probably metaphorical). The peculiar term used here only in the NT has pagan associations ("amulet") and may insinuate that the *totapot* ("frontlets," as they were called, though they are now referred to by Jews as *tepillin* [lit., "prayers"]) had become like pagan charms (cf. ZPEB, 4:786-87; SBK, 4:250-76; Urbach, 1:130, 366f.). To show their piety to the world, these leaders made large, showy phylacteries. The same ostentation affected the length of tassels, worn by all Jews (including Jesus, 9:20; 14:36) on the corners of the outer garment, in obedience to Numbers 15:37-41; Deuteronomy 22:12. (The view that *ta kraspeda* ["tassels"] means "borders" [KJV] of garments is unlikely in this context: cf. BAGD, rev.; on the details of Jewish ritualism, HJP, 2:479ff.) Seeking a reputation for piety goes with seeking places of honor at great dinners or the most important seats--as close as possible to the law scrolls--in the synagogues (v.

6). "Rabbi" (v. 7), the transliteration of the Hebrew word meaning "my master" or "my teacher," was used in Hillel's time, a generation before Jesus; but it probably did not signify official ordination till after the Fall of Jerusalem. The title, originally merely a mark of respect, was applied to Jesus (26:25, 49; John 1:38; 3:26). But like other common terms, it became inflated. By Talmudic times a rabbi's status was immense: his disciple had to obey him without question, never walk beside or in front of him, never greet him first, and so forth (cf. Moses Abelbach, "The Relations Between Master and Disciple in the Talmudic Age," *Essays Presented to Chief Rabbi Brodie*, 2 vols., ed. H.J. Zimmels [London: Soncino, 1966-67]. 1:1-24; cf. Albright and Mann). The situation had not developed so far in Jesus' day; but if the process had begun, one can well imagine Jesus' exposing it (esp. in light of

18:1-5; 20:25-28; cf. also Introduction, section 11.f).

8-10 The "you" (v. 8) is emphatic, but this does not mean that vv. 8-10 are out of place in an address before a mixed audience. It is not implausible that out of the crowd Jesus is here speaking primarily to his disciples, just as he later addresses the Pharisees directly (vv. 13-36). A good preacher knows that forthright words about what is required of believers can be at the same time a powerful incentive to decision on the part of the sympathetic but uncommitted. These verses could therefore serve as warning not to follow the "teachers of the law and the Pharisees" while laying down normative patterns for relationships among Jesus' disciples.

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Unlike the religious authorities, Jesus says, his disciples are not to be called "Rabbi" (v. 8), for they have but one *didaskalos* (better rendered "Teacher" than "Master"). The "one Teacher" is not God but Jesus himself (cf. v. 10); but either way, in view of 22:41-46; 23:4, 13:36, this verse not only proscribes self-exaltation in teaching divine things but rejects the authority of the religious teachers of Jesus' day. Such authority has been taken from them (see on 21:43). Among those who follow Jesus, a brotherly relationship (see on 5:22-24, 47; 18:15, 21, 35; 25:40; 28:10) is required. Verse 9 moves from "Rabbi" or "Teacher" to "Father." To the best of our knowledge, rabbis were not directly addressed as "Fathers." Some have therefore argued that the text is referring to the patriarchs ("fathers") and is saying, "Do not rely on your racial tie to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (cf. 3:9; so J.T. Townsend, "Matthew xxiii.9," JTS 12 [1961]: 56-59; Schweizer *Matthew* ; and others). Nothing in the context supports this, still less the suggestion that Greek Stoicism stands in the background (van Tilborg, p. 138). But K. Kohler ("Abba, Father: Title of Spiritual Leader and Saint," JQR 13 [1900-1901]: 567-80) showed long ago that "the fathers" became a very common way of referring to earlier teachers of the law, especially the great masters (cf. also Urbach, 1:186; 2:906, n. 38). The practice may have stretched back to the days of the prophets (cf. 2 Kings 2:12). "On earth" does not mean the "fathers" were alive in Jesus' time but simply contrasts them with the Father in heaven: their domain is not exalted enough to warrant the latter title. This explains the change from the passive ("do not be called," vv. 8, 10) to the active ("do not call [i.e., someone else," v. 9): "do not be called" would be inappropriate since the title was not bestowed till after the teachers of law died and were memorialized. There may be an allusion to Malachi 2:7-10: like the priests of Malachi's day whose teaching caused many to stumble, so the revered Jewish fathers have so misinterpreted Scripture that they must not be called "fathers." There is but one Father, God. But where, then, is the voice of authoritative teaching? Jesus returns to that theme in v. 10, completing an A-B-A chiasm. Thus v. 10 largely repeats v. 8, using a different word for "Teacher" (cf. Notes); but it is not

repetitious, still less anticlimactic, because it ends by identifying the sole Teacher as the Christ, the Messiah (Kingsbury, *Matthew* , p. 93). This not only picks up the theme of 1:1 and 16:16 but echoes the confrontation in 22:41-46 regarding Messiahs Jesus' enemies, the certified teachers of Israel, could not answer basic biblical questions about the Messiah. Now he, Jesus the Messiah, declares in the wake of that travesty that he himself is the only one qualified to sit in Moses' seat--to succeed him as authoritative Teacher of God's will and mind. Two further observations need to be made. First, it is untrue to Jesus' teaching to deduce from this passage that no Jewish leader was sympathetic to his cause, nor that

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there is no place for distinctions in roles or respect for leaders in his church, any more than his prohibition of oaths (5:33-37) means it is unchristian to swear on oath in court. Certainly Jesus was not justifying that particularly perverse pride that cloaks itself in discourtesy. Yet once this has been noted, we must say that the risen Christ is as displeased with those in his church who demand unquestioning submission to themselves and their opinions and confuse a reputation for showy piety with godly surrender to his teaching as he ever was with any Pharisee. Second, the continuing modern discussion as to what these verses show about the structure of Matthew's church finds no valid source here. For instance, Hummel (pp. 27f.) holds that vv. 8-10 show that there must have been a sort of Christian rabbinate in Matthew's day, which Matthew was combatting or attempting to guide. That may be so, but the text does not say so. In any case other reasons for Matthew's including this material spring readily to mind. If Matthew *is* concerned to show Christian-Jewish readers of his own day "how we got from there to here," and if this material is basically authentic, no further reason is needed. The truth is that we know about Matthew's situation only from what he chose to write about Jesus, not a late first-century church.

11-12 The substance of v. 11 is in 20:26: Matthew repeatedly emphasizes humility. For instances of exalting oneself, see on 20:20-28; of humbling oneself, on 18:4 (cf. Prov 15:33; 22:4; James 4:6; 1 Peter 5:5-6). "Will be your servant," "will be humbled," and "will be exalted" are pure futures without imperatival force (contra Zerwick, par. 280). The latter two could not be otherwise; so v. 11 should be read the same way. The principle enunciated in these verses reflects not natural law but kingdom law: the eschatological reward will humble the self-exalted and exalt the self-humbled, after the pattern in Ezekiel 21:26. What is commended is humility, not humbug; service, not servility. The supreme example--the Messiah

himself--makes this clear (20:26-28); for his astonishing humility and service to others was untainted by servility and was perfectly compatible with exercising the highest authority. Having done the greatest service, he has been most highly exalted.

2) The seven woes (23:13-36)

Compare the six woes of Luke 11:37-54. The overlaps are considerable but the differences in order and wording no less remarkable. The three chief options are (1) Luke preserves the correct setting, and Matthew adds the woes to the end of vv. 1-12;

(2) Matthew preserves the correct setting, and Luke inserts some of the woes into his narrative; and (3) Jesus pronounced such woes on the Pharisees fairly frequently, perhaps following the pattern of the six woes of Isaiah 5:8-23 or the five woes of Habakkuk 2:6-20. (For discussion, cf. Marshall, *Luke* , pp. 491-93.)

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The seven woes Matthew records fit into a neat chiastic pattern:

A: First woe (v. 13)--failing to recognize Jesus as the Messiah

B: Second woe (v. 15)--superficially zealous, yet doing more harm than good

C: Third woe (vv. 16-22)--misguided use of the scripture

**D: Fourth woe (vv. 23-24)--fundamental failure to discern the thrust of
Scripture**

C': Fifth woe (vv. 25-26)--misguided use of the Scripture

**B': Sixth woe (vv. 27-28)--superficially zealous, yet doing more harm than
good**

**A': Seventh woe (vv. 29-32)--heirs of those who failed to recognize the
prophets.**

**What stands out is the centrality of rightly understanding the Scriptures--a
theme that is reflected in all the preceding controversies and is no less related
to Jesus' rejection of the claims of the teachers of the law.**

a) First woe (23:13 [14])

**13 [14] Verse 14 must be taken as an interpolation, derived from Mark
12:40; Luke 20:47. This is made clear, not only by its absence from the best
and earliest Matthew MSS, but from the fact that the MSS that do include it
divide on where to place it-- before or after v. 13. (For the meaning of v. 14,**

cf. Derrett, *NT Studies* , 8-27.) Verse 13 begins the first of seven "woes." A "woe" can be a compassionate "alas!" (24:19), a strong condemnation (vv. 11-21) or a combination of the two (18:17; 26:24). In Matthew 23 condemnation predominates; but it is neither vindictive nor spiteful so much as judicial. Jesus the Messiah pronounces judgment. "Teachers of the Law" and "Pharisees" are anathorous from here on throughout the chapter (see on 2:4; 3:7; 23:2; Introduction, section 11.f). (For "hypocrites," see on 1: 2, for "kingdom of heaven," on 3:2.) The syntax of v. 13 (cf. Notes) assumes that the messianic reign has begun. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees are "hypocrites" since they claim to teach God's way but refuse to enter the messianic kingdom and hinder those who try to do so. This does not refer to their casuistry that obscured fundamental questions of conduct and made it difficult for people to obey God's law fully, though this is the dominant interpretation (e.g., Hill, *Matthew*). Conduct is not mentioned here, only entrance into the kingdom. Though proper conduct is essential, it admits no one into the kingdom. The last controversy (22:41-46) reveals the real failure--the teachers of the law and the Pharisees do not enter the kingdom because they refuse to recognize who Jesus is. When the crowds begin to marvel at Jesus and suggest he may be the Messiah, the authorities do all they can to dissuade them (cf. 9:33-34, 11:19; 12:23-24; 21:15). The

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sheep of Israel are "lost" (10:6; 15:24) because the shepherds have led them astray. The "woe" pronounced on the authorities is therefore of a piece with 18:6-7.

b) Second woe (23:15)

15 External sources for assessing the Pharisees' zeal to win converts are not easy to interpret, though a sizable body of scholarship convincingly argues that the first century A.D. till the Fall of Jerusalem marks the most remarkable period of Jewish missionary zeal and corresponding success (see esp. B.J. Bamberger, *Proselytism in the Talmudic Period* [Cincinnati: Hebrew Union, 1939]; W.G. Braude, *Jewish Proselytizing in the First Five Centuries of the Common Era* [Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1940]; F.M. Derwacter, *Preparing the Way for Paul: The Proselyte Movement in Later Judaism* [New York: Macmillan, 1930]; D. Georgi, *Die Gegner des Paulus im 2. Korintherbrief* [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1964], pp. 83-187; Jeremias, *Promise*, pp. 11ff.; cf. Rom 2:24). Not the least important fact, as W. Paul Bowers observed ("Studies in Paul's Understanding of His Mission," Ph.D. dissertation, Cambridge, 1976) is that there is no evidence that Jews in any way opposed Paul's or anyone else's Christian Gentile mission: rather, what they disputed was the basis of admission to the people of God. How much of the Pharisees' activity was aimed at converting to their views those who had already become loose adherents of Judaism (cf. Jos. Antiq. XX, 34-48 [ii.3-4]), we cannot know for certain. But whether the scribes and Pharisees were winning raw pagans or sympathizers of Judaism, they were winning them to their own position. The converts in view, therefore, are not converts to Judaism but to Pharisaism. Pharisees and teachers of the law would travel extensively to make one "proselyte"--a word used in the NT only here and in Acts 2:11; 6:5, 13:43 and one that at this time probably refers to those who have been circumcised and have pledged

to submit to the full rigors of Jewish law, including the oral tradition for which the Pharisees were so zealous. Jesus did not criticize the *fact* of the Pharisees' extensive missionary effort but its *results* : the "converts" became twice as much a "son of hell" (*gehenna* ; see on 5:32) as the scribes and Pharisees who won them. This means that the Pharisees' interpretations and the rules deduced from Scripture became so fully those of their converts that they "out-Phariseed" the Pharisees. Psychologically this is entirely possible, as every teacher of converts knows. As for the converts of whom Jesus was speaking, the Pharisees' teaching locked them into a theological frame that left no room for Jesus the Messiah and therefore no possibility of entering the messianic kingdom.

c) Third woe (23:16-22)

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16-22 See on 5:33-37 for the background and thrust of these verses. The striking designation "blind guides" (v. 16) was introduced at 15:14. The "temple" here is *naos* (see on 4:5). Because of the references to the temple--its gold, altar, and offerings--a surprising number of scholars focus on Matthew's attitude toward the cultic aspects of the temple (Hummel, pp. 78-82; van Tilborg, p. 105). This quite misses the point (Gaston, *No Stone*, p. 94). The pericope simply uses the language of the cultus in discussing the kinds of distinctions in oaths often favored in Jewish circles. Saul Lieberman (*Greek in Jewish Palestine* [New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1942], pp. 115-43), after studying the difficult and conflicting Jewish evidence, argues that the rabbis fought the abuses of oaths and vows among the unlearned masses. This is doubtless so. But the way they fought them was by differentiating between what was binding and what was not. In that sense, wittingly or unwittingly they encouraged evasive oaths and therefore lying. Jesus cut through these complexities by insisting that men must tell the truth. Some writers have supposed that 5:33-37--which, formally at least, abolishes oaths--contradicts 23:20-22, which maintains that all oaths are binding but does not abolish them. In fact, however, vv. 20-22 provide the rationale for 5:33-37. All oaths are in some way related to God. All are therefore binding, and thus evasive oaths are disallowed. On the other hand, the heart of the issue is telling the truth; and it is probably a new kind of casuistry that, failing to see this, insists that Jesus in 5:33-37 abolishes all oaths of every kind. In the context of Matthew 23, Jesus charges the teachers of the law and the Pharisees with mishandling the Scriptures they claimed to defend and promulgate.

d) Fourth woe (23:23-24)

23-24 The OT law on tithing (Deut 14:22-29) specifies grain, wine, and oil,

though Leviticus 27:30 is more comprehensive. Certainly in the first century there was debate about how far the law of tithing should extend. The consensus was to include greens and garden herbs (v. 23; SBK, 1:932). Jesus does not condemn scrupulous observance in these things ("without neglecting the former"), but insists that to fuss over them while neglecting the "more important matters of the law" (cf. 22:34-40)--justice, mercy, and *pistis* (here rightly translated "faithfulness")--is to strain out a gnat but swallow a camel (v. 24) both unclean creatures. Several points deserve notice.

1. The "weightier" matters do not refer to the "more difficult" or "harder" but to the "more central," "most decisive" (Ridderbos, p. 302) or (as in NIV) "more important" versus "peripheral" or trifling ones (cf. TDNT, 1:554, 558; Kaiser, p. 184).

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2. Yet it goes much too far to interpret vv. 23-24 as expanding the love command into the central feature of the law (see on 22:34-40 and literature cited there; also Garland, p. 139).

3. In essence what Jesus accuses the teachers of the law and the Pharisees of is a massive distortion of God's will as revealed in Scripture. At a fundamental level, they fail to focus on the thrust of Scripture, a point made with equal force in the two references to Hosea 6:6 in this Gospel (see on 9:9-13; 12:1-14). 4. The chiasmic structure of the "woes" centers on this fourth one, where the basic failure of the Pharisaic teachers is laid bare. Moving out from this center, it becomes clear that where Scripture is interpreted by the Pharisees, there is danger of misappropriation of truth (woes 3 and 5) and of corrupting other people (woes 2 and 6), coupled with blindness to true revelation when it comes supremely in the person of Jesus the Messiah (woes 1 and 7). 5. All this presupposes that Jesus holds readers of the OT responsible for discerning its purpose and recognizing its most important emphases (see on 22:40). Only those who do this please God and recognize the Messiah (cf. Luke 24:44-46; John 5:39-40) 6. The current debate over the words "without neglecting the former"--viz., whether they show Jesus or Matthew as a very conservative interpreter of the law, or whether they can possibly come from the historical Jesus (cf. Garland, p. 140, n. 66; Westerholm, pp. 58f.)--badly misses the point. For neither Jesus nor Matthew do these verses focus on the problem of continuity-discontinuity between the OT and the reign of Jesus Messiah but on the relative importance of material within the OT. Jesus describes what the Pharisees should have done; he is not here questioning how the "former" will relate to the reign he now inaugurates (12:28) or the church he will build (16:19), any more than in vv. 16-22 he discusses what role the temple altar plays under the new covenant.

e) Fifth woe (23:25-26)

25-26 The most common interpretation of these verses is that Jesus begins with the metaphor of the cup and dish (v. 25a), reveals his nonmetaphorical concerns in the last words of v. 25, then returns to his metaphor in v. 26 now that its real purpose has been exposed. The Pharisees have been occupied with external religion instead of that of the inner person. Within themselves they remain "full of greed and self-indulgence [*akrasia* , found in the NT only here and in 1Cor 7:5]." In the metaphor, cleaning the inside is basic and guarantees cleanliness of the outside. Jacob Neusner ("First Cleanse the Inside," NTS 22 [1976]: 486-95) holds, largely on form-critical grounds, that pre-A.D. 70 Judaism was divided on the issue of clean vessels. The Hillelites thought that cleaning the inside of a vessel declared it "clean."

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The Shammaites, predominant before A.D. 70, held it was necessary to cleanse both inside and outside; the one did not affect the status of the other (cf. esp. *M Kelim* 2:1; 25:1, 7-9; *j Berakoth* 8:2). Consequently Jesus could not be refuting the Hillelites (who did not become predominant until after A.D. 70), telling them *first* to cleanse the inside, since they would have cleaned *only* the inside. Rather, the admonition was for the Shammaites. From this debate about cleansing, it is argued, the saying was variously interpreted and applied (cf. Luke 11:41) in metaphorical ways. Garland (pp. 148-50) thinks the first part of v. 25 is literal but was taken over by Matthew to make his point. In his view the *ex* clause should not be rendered "full of greed and self-indulgence" but "full *because* of greed and self-indulgence" (Turner, *Syntax*, p. 260; Schweizer, McNeile, and others think this is possible). In other words Matthew turns the original saying into one that says the inside is most important but then draws "attention to the fact that the vessels were filled with food and drink which was [sic] obtained unjustly and consumed intemperately--a circumstance which cultic washing could not cleanse--and ultimately made the entire issue moot" (Garland, p. 149). This interpretation will not do. The Pharisees were not as a class intemperate in food and drink but abstemious (cf. Luke 18:11-12). Moreover, if they were full *because* of greed and self-indulgence, the preceding "but" is nonsensical: the first clause should read "you empty the cup and dish," not "you clean the outside." Rather, the kind of historical background envisaged by Neusner is being used by Jesus to point away from the ceremonial question altogether. The Pharisees (here Shammaites) debate about what must be cleansed for a cup to be clean, without seeing that they themselves need to become inwardly clean. This approach is very close to the traditional interpretation of these verses (above; cf. Westerholm, pp. 85-90). Yet it also hints that Jesus holds that OT ceremonial distinctions have moral implications the avoiding of which betrays deep misunderstanding. "Blind Pharisee!" (v. 26, the singular has generic force), says the one who came to save his people from their sin (1:21), "first clean the inside ... and then the outside also will be clean." "Inside" does not here encourage privatized

pietism but total moral renewal in terms of "justice, mercy, and faithfulness." The "outside," the bits of religious observance easily seen by men, will then take care of itself.

f) Sixth woe (23:27-28)

27-28 During the month of Adar, just before Passover, it was customary to whitewash with lime graves or grave-sites that might not be instantly identified as such v. 27), in order to warn pilgrims to steer clear of the area and avoid ritual uncleanness from contact with corpses (cf. M *Shekalim* 1:1; M *Kelim* 1:4; M *Moed Katan* 1:2 M *Masser*

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Sheni 5:1). Such uncleanness would prevent participation in the Passover (M *Kelim* 1: 4; for similar concerns, cf. John 11:55; 18:28). But in that case whitewashed tombs would not have been objects of beauty ("which look beautiful on the outside") but of disgust: they were places to be shunned (cf. Luke 11:44, which mentions neither whitewash nor beauty). Various solutions have been put forward (for a list, cf. S.T. Lachs, "On Matthew 23: 27-28," HTR 68 [1975] 385-88). Perhaps the best proposal is Garland's (pp. 150-57), who suggests that the graves were beautiful because of their structure (cf. v. 29), not their whitewash. Monuments were normally considered pure unless marked with whitewash; so if the memorial was built right over a grave, it would probably be whitewashed. Thus Jesus' mention of whitewashing has nothing to do with the beauty of sepulchers but is a further thrust at the Pharisees based on their distinctive preoccupation with avoiding defilement from corpses (cf. b *Baba Kamma* 57a; b *Baba Metzia* 85b). Jesus is saying that the scribes and Pharisees are sources of uncleanness just as much as the whitewashed graves are. There may also be an allusion to the white linen clothes that some men, impressed with their own eminence, used to wear (cf. b *Kiddushin* 72a; b *Shabbath* 25b; b *Nedarim* 20b; Jos. War II, 123 [viii.3]). In the context of Matthew 23, the point Jesus is making is not that the scribes and Pharisees were deliberate and self-conscious hypocrites, but that in their scrupulous regulations they appeared magnificently virtuous but were actually contaminating the people. This woe parallels the second (v. 15). The supreme irony is that their preoccupation with their law (*nomos*) left them steeped in *anomia* --a general term for "wickedness" (v. 28; cf. 13:41; TDNT, 4:1085-86), but which may here suggest that their fundamental approach to the law was in fact, from the perspective of Jesus' hermeneutic, plain "lawlessness."

g) Seventh woe (23:29-32)

29-30 Derrett (*NT Studies* , 2:68ff.) denies that Pharisees in Jesus' day would have been involved in building memorial tombs, but his evidence is late and may well represent reaction against earlier excesses (cf. Garland, p. 164). Herod led the way in tomb building (cf. Jos. Antiq. XVI, 179-82 [vii.1]; XVIII, 108 [iv.6]; XX, 95 [iv.3])--to atone for his attempts to plunder them! Jewish building was more likely to be commemorative; by erecting monuments the religious leaders thought themselves morally and spiritually above their forebears who had persecuted the prophets whose monuments they were building (v. 29). They believed that they would not have joined their forebears in murdering the prophets (v. 30)--just as many Christians today naively think they would have responded better to Jesus than the disciples or the crowds that cried, "Crucify him!"

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31 But the distinction the Jews draw in v. 30 Jesus now denies. Their own saying (not the tomb-building) testifies against them. They speak of their forefathers and so acknowledge themselves to be the sons (NIV, "descendants") of those who shed the blood of the prophets. But Jesus sees further irony here, based on the ambiguity of "fathers" and "sons" (see on 5:9). The Jews think in terms of their physical descent. Jesus responds by saying in effect that they are sons all right--more than they realize. They show their paternity by resembling their fathers. While piously claiming to be different, they are already plotting ways to put an end to Jesus (21:38-39, 46).

32 The conclusion is defiant and ironical. The idea behind "the measure of the sin" is that God can only tolerate so much sin; and then, when the measure is "full," he must respond in wrath (cf. Gen 15:16; 1Thess 2:14-16). The idea is common in the intertestamental literature (e.g., Jub 14:16; 1 Enoch 50:2; 2Esd 4:36-37; 4Q185 2:9-10), but never before was the concept applied to Israel.

3) *Conclusion* (23:33-36)

33 See on 3:7 and 12:34 for the epithets. The transition from the preceding verse is clear: if the teachers of the law and Pharisees are filling up the measure of the sin of their forefathers, how can they possibly escape the condemnation of hell (see on 5:22; 23:15)?

34 If this verse shares a common source (Q?) with Luke 11:49 (see above on 23:1-12), the differences between Matthew and Luke are noteworthy, though perhaps not quite so problematic as many think. The most noteworthy feature is the change from "the wisdom of God" (NIV, "God in his wisdom") as the sender of the emissaries to an emphatic "I." Not only is there little

doubt that Christians identified Jesus with God's wisdom, but he who assigned to himself messianic titles and even OT texts referring exclusively to Yahweh would not have hesitated to make the same identification. Matthew's interpretation is therefore not necessarily wrong, even if a single saying stands behind both Luke and Matthew. Hare (pp. 87-88) thinks the introductory *dia touto* ("Because of this," Luke 11:49; "Therefore," Matt 23:34) is drastically altered. In Luke it refers to 11:47-48 a tacit admission of blood-guiltiness for the prophets' death and for which reason "the wisdom of God" sends more prophets so that "this generation" (Luke 11:50) will be accountable. In Matthew, however, vv. 32-33 separate the tacit admission from *dia touto* ("Therefore," v. 34) so that the connective no longer explains God's wisdom in the past but an act Jesus performed in the present. But Hare's contrast is exaggerated.

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It is formally correct that *dia touto* in Luke 11:49 explains a statement made in the past by the wisdom of God. But that explains only that a statement was made, not the statement's content--which refers to an act done in the present, viz., Jesus' sending emissaries. Thus the two renderings of *dia touto* are very close and share the same function: they point out that because of the Jewish leaders' wicked reception of God's messengers, more messengers will "therefore" be sent; and they will be treated the same way. This will fill up the full measure of iniquity, and judgment will fall. Luke (11:49) has "prophets and apostles," Matthew "prophets and wise men and teachers." The "wise man" and the "teacher" were "materially identical" (Garland, p. 175; TDNT, 8:505-7) at this time. Both Matthew and Luke here look forward to the sending out of Christian missionaries--disciples of Jesus (cf. 5:10-12; 9:37-38; 28:18-20). The terms used do not reflect post-A.D. 70 terminology (cf. van Tilborg, pp. 140f.)

Matthew adds "crucify." There is no evidence Jews used crucifixion as a mode of capital punishment after 63 B.C. "Crucify" may mean "cause to be crucified" (as in Acts 2:36; 4:10), surely a better possibility than Hare's suggestion (pp. 89-92) that the words "and crucify" are a gloss on what Matthew wrote. Garland (p. 177) holds that "and crucify" refers to Jesus' death. But this, too, requires a causative sense and seems strange when it is Jesus who is sending the emissaries to their deaths and Jesus who is (in this view) among those sent and killed. Perhaps v. 34 echoes 10:24-25: the servant is not above his master. If Jesus is to be crucified, his servants may expect the same.

35 The very messengers who were beaten and killed for calling the people to repentance in the mystery of providence fill up the measure of the peoples' sin (v. 32)-- viz., shedding righteous blood of God's emissaries from Abel to Zechariah (cf. Notes). Verse 35 anticipates 27:24-25: Pilate tries to evade

responsibility for crucifying Jesus, and the Jews clamor for that same dreadful responsibility because of their skepticism about who Jesus is. On the question of alleged anti-Semitism, see on 26:57-68.

36 All along in this chapter, the teachers of the law and the Pharisees have been Jesus' primary target. Now the reference is to "this generation," because the leaders represent the people (see on 21:43); and the people, despite Jesus' warnings, do not abandon their leaders for Jesus Messiah. This sets the stage for the concluding lament over Jerusalem (vv. 37-39).

f. Lament over Jerusalem (23:37-39)

Almost exact verbal equivalence between these verses and Luke 13:34-35 makes it nearly certain that both Matthew and Luke are following the same written source (Q?)

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and therefore that at least one of the two evangelists displaced this prayer from its setting in the life of Jesus. Certainly the lament is more integral to the setting in Matthew than in Luke (cf. Suggs, pp. 64-66; Garland, pp. 187-97). Jesus undoubtedly lamented over the city on other occasions (Luke 19:4-44]), and the broad compassion of his words is characteristic (Matt 9:35-38). The effect of the lament is twofold. First, it tinges all the preceding woes with compassion (note the doubling of "Jerusalem" [cf. 2Sam 18:33; 1 Kings 13:2; Jer 22: 29; Luke 10:41; 22:31]). There is also a change of number from Jerusalem to people of Jerusalem: "you [sing.] who kill ... sent to you [sing.] ... your [sing.] children ... your [pl.] house ... you [pl.] will not see." The effect is to move from the abstraction of the city to the concrete reality of people. Jesus' woes in Matthew 23 therefore go far beyond personal frustrations: they are divine judgments that, though wrathful, never call in question the reality of divine love (see discussion on 5:44-45) Second, the christological implications are unavoidable, for Jesus, whether identifying himself with God or with wisdom, claims to be the one who has longed to gather and protect this rebellious nation. Phrased in such terms, Jesus' longing can only belong to Israel's Savior,-not to one of her prophets. The authenticity of the lament is frequently denied on the ground that the historical Jesus could not possibly have said it (e.g., Suggs, p. 66). But it is a strange criticism that a priori obliterates any possibility of listening to the text in such a way as to hear a historical Jesus who was not only conscious of his transcendent origins but who in many ways laid claims to his origins as part of his compassionate and redemptive self-disclosure.

37 Verses 37-39 preserve Jesus' last recorded public words to Israel. Jerusalem, the city of David, the city where God revealed himself in his temple, had become known as the city that killed the prophets and stoned those sent to her. Stoning to death, prescribed in the law of Moses for

idolatry (Deut 17:5, 7), sorcery (Lev 20:27), and several other crimes, is also laid down in the Mishnah (M *Sanhedrin* 7:4) for false prophets. It could also be the outcome of mob violence (21:35; Acts 7:57-58) or conspiracy, which apparently is how Zechariah died (2 Chronicles 24:21). "How often" may look back over Israel's history--viz., Jesus' identifying himself with God's transcendent, historical perspective (John 8:58); but more probably "how often" refers to the duration of Jesus' ministry. During it he "often" longed to gather and shelter Jerusalem (by metonymy including all Jews) as a hen her chicks (cf. Deut 32:11; Pss 17:8; 36:7; 91:4; Jer 48:40); for despite the woes, Jesus, like the "Sovereign LORD" in Ezekiel 18:32, took "no pleasure in the death of anyone."

38 This verse may allude to both Jeremiah 12:7 and 22:5 (cf. Notes). "Your house" in this context could refer to Jerusalem, since the lament is first addressed to her

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(Klostermann; McNeile; Trilling [p. 86]), to Israel (Schniewind; Green; cf. Gal 4:25-26 for a similar use of "Jerusalem"), or to the temple in whose precincts Jesus was preaching (21:23; 24:1) and whose destruction was about to be predicted (24:2; cf. Manson [*Sayings* , p. 127]; Davies [*Setting* , p. 298]). There seems to be no need to choose only one of these options; all three are closely allied and rise and fall together. If "desolate" (*eremos*) is not part of the text (cf. Notes), the verse means "your house is abandoned to the consequences of your misdeeds" (Plummer). More probably *eremos* is original and makes the implied destruction explicit. Your "house" is left to you (i.e., abandoned), whether by God (as in Jer 12:7) or Jesus (cf. 24:1), who is "Immanuel," "God with us" (1:23; cf. Garland, pp. 202-3). The verb "left" (*aphietai*) can mean "abandoned to enemies," not just "abandoned." But since the ideas are related, a choice is unnecessary.

39 E. Haenchen ("Matthaus 23," *Zeitschrift fur Katholische Theologie* 48 [1951]: 56) holds that in vv. 33-36 "Wisdom" (cf. Luke 11:49) looks *forward* prophetically to sending the prophets but in vv. 37-39 looks back on the sending of prophets. The latter passage must therefore be anachronistic. But the temporal relation between the two passages is not so sharp. If vv. 33-36 look forward to the sending of the prophets, they also speak of judgment on "this generation." If vv. 37-39 look backward on prophets already killed, the reference is to the way Jerusalem has acted in the *past* (v. 37), a past that is even now bringing judgment (v. 38), and that looks *forward* to future consummation (v. 39). The quotation is from Psalm 118:26 (also in 21:9; cf. 21:42 for another quotation from this psalm). The words may have been used by the priests in greeting the worshipers at the temple. Jesus, too, the true locus of Israel, must come, victorious and exalted, and receive greetings and homage from the religious authorities (cf. France, *Jesus* , pp. 58f.). Because of its location in Luke, "until" could refer to Palm Sunday, when people cried such words (Luke 19:38; cf. Matt 21:9); but as Marshall (*Luke* , pp. 576-77) points out, if Palm Sunday is in view in Luke, the cries of the

people are but an ironic fulfillment that still looks forward to the consummation. What Matthew refers to is perfectly clear. The Greek literally translated reads "You will not see me from now [*aparti*] until you say", and *aparti* is tied to the consummation (cf. 26:29, 64). Thus v. 39 looks, not to Jesus' resurrection appearances, but to his parousia. When he returns, all will acknowledge him. The context strongly implies that the Parousia spells judgment (cf. 24:30-31; Philippians 2:9-11; Rev 1:7); but the quotation of Psalm 118 keeps open the way Jesus will be received as consuming Judge or welcomed King (cf. Benoit; Schlatter; Goulder, pp. 429-30; Bonnard; contra Garland, pp. 207-9 and the literature there cited). But whatever the outcome, the immediate prospect is disaster: "for I tell you, you will not see me, etc."; i.e., the proof

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that judgment is imminent is that Jesus turns away and will not be seen again till the End.

So Jesus leaves the temple and goes away (24:1); and his words, which have dealt with judgment on Israel and with the consummation, evoke his disciples' twopronged question (24:3) and lead to the Olivet Discourse (chs. 24-25).

B. Fifth Discourse: The Olivet Discourse (24:1-25:46)

Few chapters of the Bible have called forth more disagreement among interpreters than Matthew 24 and its parallels in Mark 13 and Luke 21. The history of the interpretation of this chapter is immensely complex. G.R. Beasley-Murray's *Jesus and the Future* (London: Macmillan, 1954) is an admirable guide for works up to 1954; and David Wenham's "Recent Study of Mark 13" (TSF Bulletin 71 [Spring, 1975]: 615; 72 [Summer, 1975]: 19) succinctly summarizes and critiques several more recent works up to 1975, including A.L. Moore, *The Parousia in the New Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1966); Lars Hartman, *Prophecy Interpreted: The Function of Some Jewish Apocalyptic Texts and of the Eschatological Discourse, Mark 13 Par.* (Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1966); J. Lambrecht, *Die Redaktion der Markus-Apokalypse: Literarische Analyse und Strokturuntersuchung* (Rome: PBI, 1967); R. Pesch, *Naherwartungen: Tradition end Redaktion in Markus 13* (Dusseldorf: Patmos, 1968); Gaston; and France (*Jesus*). In addition, there are major commentaries on each of the synoptic Gospels, as well as several important articles on these chapters, and some popular works on eschatology, not a few of them by conservatives (cf. the bibliography in Hoekema). Some of the difficulties and exegetical turning points must be cursorily introduced: 1. The literary nature of chapters 24-25 and of the parallels in Mark and Luke has occupied much scholarly attention. For a century or two before and after

Jesus, writings now described as "apocalyptic literature" flourished in Jewish and Christian circles. At best the label is not precise, and the genre's various forms tend to fray around the edges. G.E. Ladd ("Why Not Prophetic-Apocalyptic?" JBL 76 [1957]: 192-200) has wisely suggested that the NT apocalypses, especially this chapter and most of Revelation, read like a merging of apocalyptic and prophetic literature. The symbolism is not so sharp as in works indisputably apocalyptic, and the "above-below" dualism typical of apocalyptic is here rather muted. Other features of this discourse are often noted, especially the frequent imperatives, whether in the second person ("Watch out that no one deceives you," v. 4; "See to it that you are not alarmed," v. 6) or the third person ("Let no one in the field go back," v. 18). 2. As for the sources, first there is the question of whether the synoptists have simply put together a pastiche of Jesus' sayings (some of which may represent an

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"Olivet Discourse"), mingled with other traditions, or have selected and shaped material deriving from a single historical utterance. They undoubtedly give the latter impression. Matthew, with his framing formulas (see on 5:12; 7:28-29), is especially clear about this. Though this view is a minority one, nevertheless it can be strenuously argued that each evangelist felt his report of the discourse to be coherent. And if this is so, it seems too much to postulate, on the basis of disputable conceptual and grammatical discrepancies, unambiguous sources stemming from various traditions. Second, the relation among the three synoptic accounts is still disputed. Some have argued that Luke 21 is sufficiently distinctive to spring from a separate tradition. Touching on both these questions, David Wenham, in some unpublished papers soon to appear in book form, argues for a source-critical solution, not only tying together all the synoptic Gospel records of this discourse, but also uniting them into a single comprehensive record. While Wenham's reconstruction is far from certain, the fact that he is able to develop his view so rigorously shows the dangers of the facile historical and literary disjunctions of which many critics are so fond. Third, the Olivet Discourse is studded with OT quotations and allusions that add to the complexity. Fourth, the discourse itself is undoubtedly a source for the Thessalonian Epistles (cf.

G. Henry Waterman, "The Sources of Paul's Teaching on the 2nd Coming of Christ in 1 and 2 Thessalonians," JETS 18 [1975]: 105-13; David Wenham, "Paul and the Synoptic Apocalypse," France and Wenham, 2:345-75) and Revelation (cf. Gregory Kimball Beale, "The Use of Daniel in Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and in the Revelation of St. John" [Ph.D. diss., Cambridge University, 1980], pp. 260-64, and the literature cited there). If so, then we may say that Jesus himself sets the pattern for the church's eschatology. 3. This last statement presupposes, of course, the authenticity of the discourse material in the Gospels. However, this is frequently denied on the grounds that the "prophecy" of the Fall of Jerusalem must in reality be *ex eventu* , based on the event itself. This will not do because, apart from antsupernatural presuppositions, Reicke ("Synoptic Prophecies") has

shown the language in the Olivet Discourse prophesying the Fall of Jerusalem to be largely in OT categories. Not only is it general, it does not describe any detail peculiar to the known history of the Jewish War (A.D. 66-73). Reicke goes so far as to conclude that the Olivet Discourse as found in any of the Synoptics *could not* have been composed after A.D. 70, and that therefore the Synoptics themselves have earlier dates (cf. Introduction, section 6). 4. Numerous details in the text are much disputed and hard to understand: the meaning of "the abomination that causes desolation" (24:15), the significance of "let the reader understand" (v. 15), whether the "coming of the Son of Man" (vv. 27, 30) refers to his return at the consummation or to something else (the Resurrection,

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Pentecost, the Fall of Jerusalem, and the growth of the church have all been suggested), the extent of "this generation" (v. 34). The ideal solution is the one that treats all of these in the most natural way possible. 5. A disputed term, not in the text but in the forefront of interpretive theory, is "imminent," which has two related but distinct problems. One concerns the expectations of the historical Jesus and is linked to the way the various parts of the discourse relate to one another and to v. 34: "I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened." How "imminent" did Jesus think the coming of the Son of Man was? (See below, under 6.) The other problem concerns the meaning of the word "imminent" itself as used in theological--especially evangelical--discussion. A dictionary defines it as "impending": as applied to Christ's return, an "imminent return of Christ" would then mean Christ's return was near, impending. Hardly anyone uses "imminent" that way but understands it in a specialized, theological sense to mean "at any time": "the imminent return of Christ" then means Christ may return at any time. But the evangelical writers who use the word divide on whether "imminent" in the sense of "at any time" should be pressed to mean "at any second" or something looser such as "at any period" or "in any generation." Resolution turns on two issues. First, how are the various "signs" presaging Christ's return to be related to an "imminent" return? The classic dispensational response is to postulate two returns (or, as they hold, one return in two stages): one before any of the "signs" appear, a "Rapture" that removes the church alone and which could take place at any second; the other after the signs appear, a return that consummates history as we know it. Most will agree that no passage in the Bible unambiguously teaches a two-stage return. The theory is in the best sense a theological harmonization--certainly not a wrong approach in itself--of disparate texts. Other theories clamor for attention, including that of J. Barton Payne (*The Imminent Appearing of Christ* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1962]), who proposes that with the events of A.D. 70 now behind us, all the remaining "signs" are so general that they may be "fulfilled" in any generation. Distinctions regarding "imminency"

therefore become moot. Other theories are not lacking. Unfortunately the meaning of "imminent" is so comprehensive a question that each theory is in fact an entire eschatological scheme, complete with detailed exegesis and sweeping synthesis. While the approach of this commentary is inductive and limited primarily to the text of Matthew, some implications for the debate will be spelled out in due course. Second, on what is the "any second" view of imminency based and how well does it withstand close scrutiny? The truth is that the biblical evidence nowhere unambiguously endorses the "any second" view and frequently militates against it, as R.H. Gundry (*The Church and the Tribulation* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1973], esp.

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pp. 29ff.) has demonstrated. Not only do all the relevant NT verbs for "looking forward to" or "expecting" or "waiting for" have a semantic range including necessary delay, but many NT passages also implicitly rule out an "any second" imminency (24:45-51 [see below]; 25:5, 19; Luke 19:11-27; John 21:18-19 [cf. 2 Peter 1:14]; Acts 9:15; 22: 21; 23:11; 27:24). Yet the terms "imminent" and "imminency" retain theological usefulness if they focus attention on the eager expectancy of the Lord's return characteristic of many NT passages, a return that could take place soon, i.e. within a fairly brief period of time, without specifying that the period must be one second or less! This is not so rigid as the "any second" view, and it more fairly represents the exegetical evidence. 6. But the most difficult interpretive questions concern the structure of the discourse--how the parts relate to each other, to the initial questions of the disciples, and to the whole. On the face of it, the disciples' questions and the tenor of the discourse argue that Jesus is dealing with at least two issues--the Fall of Jerusalem and the return of the Son of Man. But these two issues appear to be so tightly intertwined that it is impossible to separate them, and therefore Jesus or Matthew wrongly (as it turned out) tied them together. Many modern scholars adopt this view, and it has recently been given a new twist by Desmond Ford (*The Abomination of Desolation in Biblical Eschatology* [Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1979], p. 76). He argues that Jesus meant to say that the Parousia would immediately succeed the Fall of Jerusalem, all within the generation of his hearers, but that this was in reality a contingent promise, like Jonah's "Forty more days and Nineveh will be destroyed" (Jonah 3:4). Hence "it is possible that he [Jesus] believed that if the early church proved faithful to its missionary commission, and if the chastened Jewish nation repented, the end would transpire in the same Age." But the parallel with Jonah is not very close, if only because the Parousia is invariably treated in the NT as qualitatively unlike all other divine visitations. It alone marks the end of history, the final outpouring of judgment and blessing, and thus is not an event that can be postponed. More important, v. 22 seems to say that God will hasten the consummation, not

postpone it; for the days of tribulation are shortened. And nowhere in the NT is there any clear suggestion that the delay of the Parousia was the result of the church's sin (2 Peter 3:12 is not a genuine exception). Yet Ford's view highlights the problem of the relation between the Fall of Jerusalem and the Parousia. At the risk of oversimplification, we may lump together some other major interpretations of the Olivet Discourse according to their treatment of this problem. a. In 1864, T. Colani published his "little apocalypse" theory. According to him the historical Jesus exhibited no interest in any future kingdom: as far as Jesus was concerned, the kingdom was exclusively present. The genesis of Mark 13 and parallels

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therefore must be accounted for as a tract by first-century Jewish Christians facing persecution just before A.D. 70. The answer of the historical Jesus to the disciples questions was simply Mark 13:32 (Matt 24:36). Few follow Colani now, though some have tried to find in the Olivet Discourse not one "little apocalypse" but a number of different sources. Taken together, such theories follow a unifying method: the material in the discourse is assumed to be so disparate that it can only be accounted for by appealing to distinct sources not very well integrated by the evangelist-redactor. But too many details in the various theories seem unconvincing and fail to deal adequately with how each synoptist thought of the material he was editing. If he detected some unity, it must be found; and if found, then what methodological principle distinguishes between the unity imposed by a synoptist-redactor and a unity latent in a discourse delivered by Jesus? Indeed, one could make an a priori case for the apparent textual discrepancies based, not on the synoptist's failure to integrate separate sources, but on its condensed and selective reporting of much longer unified material in terms understandable to the first readers but more susceptible to misunderstanding today.

b. Among commentators who find comprehensive theological cohesion in the Olivet Discourse, the most common approach--and that of most evangelicals today is exemplified by Broadus and Lane (*Mark*). Broadus holds that vv. 15-21, 34 foretell the destruction of Jerusalem, and at least vv. 29-31 foretell the Lord's return; but "every attempt to assign a definite point of division between the two topics has proved a failure." If Christ's return is placed between v. 28 and v. 29, then v. 34 is difficult; if after v. 34, v. 36, or v. 42, how are we to interpret vv. 30-31, 36? The solution is that the two are purposely intertwined, perhaps under some kind of "prophetic foreshortening." The near event, the destruction of Jerusalem, serves as a symbol for the far event. (In addition to the commentaries, cf. also Hoekema; Ridderbos, *Kingdom* , pp. 477-510.) This approach is possible but has two weaknesses. It has to skate gingerly around the time references in the discourse (e.g., "immediately after those days," v. 29; "this generation," v. 34), and it leads some of its adherents to the view that on the *timing* of the

Parousia Jesus was in error (e.g., Beasley-Murray). Verse 36 is scarcely sufficient to support all this, since it is one thing to admit ignorance and another to be quite mistaken. c. A number of scholars have denied that any part of the Olivet Discourse deals with the Fall of Jerusalem: all of it concerns the Parousia. One form or another of this theory is held by Lagrange, Schlatter, Schniewind, and Zahn. Lagrange thinks the "abomination of desolation" deals with Jerusalem but not the "great distress" (v. 21). Almost all who hold this view are forced to say that Luke 21:20-24, which is unavoidably historical, stems from another discourse or has been consciously modified by Luke. The latter suggestion seems a desperate expedient in support of a weak theory. It is very difficult to imagine that a Christian reader of any of the Synoptics at

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any period during the first one hundred years of the existence of these documents would fail to see a reference to the destruction of Jerusalem. Methodologically this approach belongs with those who flatten the discourse in other ways--e.g., by claiming that it represents a continuous account of Christian history. d. An older view (e.g., Alexander), now again popular (Tasker; J.M. Kik, *Matthew Twenty-Four* [Swengel: Bible Truth Depot, 1948]) and newly given exegetical support (France, *Jesus*, pp. 231ff.), holds that the Fall of Jerusalem is in view in the discourse till the end of v. 35. Only with the opening of v. 36 does the second advent come into view. This interpretation has the advantage of being neat: there is a clear division between the two parts of the discourse and eliminates flipping back and forth or appealing to "prophetic foreshortening" or the like. Its proponents point out that this interpretation answers both questions put by the disciples. The first, concerning the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, elicits the anticipation of an answer in v. 15 ("When you see ... ") but finds an explicit answer only in vv. 29-31. The verses before v. 29 tell of great anguish *preceding* the events of A.D. 70. But unless vv. 29-35 deal with the Fall of Jerusalem itself, it is held, the disciples' first question is never satisfactorily answered. If someone objects that vv. 29-35 more naturally read as a prophecy foretelling the Second Advent than the destruction of Jerusalem, this, we are told, would not be so obvious to the first readers. The celestial disturbances (v. 29) are figurative, symbolic of political and national disasters (as in Isa 13:10; 34:4). The coming of the Son of Man in glory and power (v. 30) is not Jesus' return to earth but, as in Daniel 7, a heavenly coming for vindication, a reference either to Jesus' vindication after the Resurrection or to the Fall of Jerusalem itself (26:64 is then commonly interpreted the same way). The sending of the "angels" is the commissioning of "messengers" or "missionaries" to gather the elect in the church (v. 31); for despite the Lord's judgment on the Jews, the gathering in of the elect continues through the preaching of the gospel. Casey (pp. 172ff.) has raised some criticisms, a few of them cogent. Detailed rebuttal is impossible, but the following difficulties in this interpretation must be faced.

1) Even if v. 15 speaks only of the beginning of the Jerusalem distress (and this is debated), if France's view is right, it is hard to explain how vv. 21-22 could describe the mere preliminaries to Jerusalem's fall. Verse 22 speaks of those days being cut short: surely this does not mean the preliminaries to the Fall of Jerusalem were cut short for the elect's sake, for that would entail the conclusion that the fall itself was a mercy on the elect. 2) Although vv. 14-22 do not explicitly mention the Fall of Jerusalem, the same can be said with even greater vigor of vv. 29-35. Similarly, if vv. 29-35 do not mention the coming of the Son of Man *to the earth* , the same can be said of 1 Thessalonians 4:16, where in my opinion that is implied. In any case there may be other reasons for Jesus

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not mentioning the Fall of Jerusalem explicitly in vv. 15-22. The cryptic "let the reader understand" (v. 15) may be thought hint enough of the true import of Jesus' reference to Daniel's "abomination that causes desolation"; or it may even be that the synoptists thought the Jerusalem reference obvious. Apparently Luke thought so (cf. Luke 21:20-24; and comments on v. 15, below). 3) Although there can be no objection to coming-of-the-Son-of-Man language occasionally referring to something other than the Parousia (see on 10:23; 16:28), yet when that occurs the interpretive problems are invariably notoriously complex. This is because the *regular* way of taking this expression and related language is as a reference to the Parousia. Compare closely 13:40-41; 16:27; 25:31; 1 Corinthians 11:26; 15:52; 16:22; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-17; 2 Thessalonians 1:7; 2:18; 2 Peter 3:10-12; Revelation 1:7 (cf. *Didache* 16). Here are references to the Son of Man's coming, angels gathering the elect, trumpet call, clouds, glory, tribes of the earth mourning, celestial disturbances--all unambiguously related to the Second Advent. It seems very doubtful, to say the least, that the natural way to understand vv. 29-35 is as a reference to the Fall of Jerusalem. 4) This approach to vv. 29-35 is psychologically unconvincing for two reasons. First, it demands a close connection between the Fall of Jerusalem and the Gentile mission (v. 31), when in fact the Gentile mission had been prospering, first informally and then formally, for several decades. The fall of the temple doubtless helped support Christian theology about Jesus as the true sacrifice, priest, and temple; but it did not clearly motivate Gentile mission *per se*. Why, then, should the link be tendered here, almost as the climax of the pericope? Second, even on the basis of the interpretation under review, Christians saw the destruction of Jerusalem as a terrible thing and the onslaught by the pagan Romans as an abomination. If they also saw it as Jesus' vindication and as judgment on the Jewish nation, that is comprehensible enough; but could they see it as fulfillment of Daniel 7? Daniel 7 portrays something glorious and wonderful, the end of the pagan emperor's reign; but A.D. 70 marks success by the pagan emperor. Even if one supposes that the

Synoptics are operating under a reverse typology--the OT pagans being now equated with the Jews--is it psychologically convincing to hold that antipathy between Jews and Christians was running so high that the latter could be told the sack of Jerusalem was their "redemption" (Luke 21:28)? 5) The interpretation France (*Jesus* , pp. 236-38) offers of v. 30, though plausible, is not convincing. He says that all the (Jewish) tribes of the land (*ge* ; NIV, "earth"; see on 5:5) shall mourn. The word "tribe" (*phyle* ; NIV, "nation"), used with certainty of Gentiles elsewhere in the NT only in Revelation, is not determinative (Rev 1:7; 5:9; 7: 9; 11:9; 13:7; 14:6), though it must be admitted that all the other NT references either refer to a specific Jewish tribe or make a specifically Jewish connection unambiguous More importantly, however, v. 30 contains an allusion to Zechariah 12:10-12; and other

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similar NT use of this passage supports the view that the verse refers to the Parousia. This appears to be sufficient evidence to set against the ambiguous meaning of *phyle* proposed by France. 6) There are already hints, early in the discourse (esp. in Matt), that the reader is to bear in mind that there are at least two topics under discussion, not one: the Fall of Jerusalem and the Second Advent (cf. vv. 3, 5, 14, 23-27). Thus, since the reader is already primed to expect mention of the Second Advent, it would be difficult for him to take vv. 29-31 in any other way. e. A strong minority of evangelicals adopts one form or another of the dispensationalist interpretation of the discourse (S.E. English; A.C. Gaebelin; Walvoord; cf. John F. Walvoord, "Christ's Olivet Discourse on the End of the Age," BS 128 [1971]: 109-16; 129 [1972]: 2032, 99-105, 206-10, 307-15). Perhaps the most common view along these lines takes vv. 36-40 to refer to a secret "Rapture of the church," which could take place at any second, and vv. 4-28 (or vv. 15-28) to refer to the Great Tribulation, lasting seven years and culminating in the Second Advent (vv. 29-35). Walvoord adds refinements. He holds that v. 2 refers to the destruction at A.D.

70. The disciples question of v. 3 is in *three* parts, the first of which, dealing with the Fall of Jerusalem, Jesus does not answer. At this point there is a curious intersection of views with writers like Hare (pp. 177-79), who argues that Matthew, writing after the events of A.D. 70, eliminates all reference to the destruction of Jerusalem and "eschatologizes" even vv. 15-28, and so does not answer the disciples first question. Under Hares view of Matthew's editorial activity, the strange thing is that Matthew retains that first question. The entire discourse, in Walvoord's view, deals with the general characteristics of the age (vv. 4-14), the Great Tribulation (vv. 15-25), and the Second Advent (vv. 26-31), because the "Rapture" is not revealed till Paul. Thus "taken" in vv. 40-41 means "taken in judgment." "This generation" (v. 34) Walvoord takes to mean either "this race" or something like "the generation that is alive when the great tribulation starts." This interpretation is difficult to discuss adequately without delving into dispensationalism, including its

"parenthesis" view of the church, something beyond the range of this commentary. If dispensationalism were unambiguously defined elsewhere in Scripture, then the least to be said for its interpretation of chapter 24 is that it is self-consistent and makes sense of the time indicators (e.g., "Immediately after the distress of those days," v. 29, etc.). Even then, however, this interpretation faces several difficulties, one or two of them well-nigh insuperable. 1) It is forced to adopt a possible but extraordinarily unlikely meaning for "this generation" (v. 34; see below). 2) It rests heavily on Matthew's report of the Olivet Discourse and makes less sense of the parallels in Mark and Luke. One of many examples of problems it

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involves is Matthew's recording the disciples' question differently from Mark and Luke; and Walvoord's interpretation of the discourse depends almost entirely on Matthew. Even if through harmonizing Walvoord can show that v. 3 best preserves the tripartite nature of the disciples' historical question, one must still ask why Mark and Luke have it as they do. If the discourse as they present it can only be adequately explained by reference to the disciples' question as Matthew preserves it, then Mark and Luke cannot be intelligently read without referring to Matthew. 3) Much dispensationalism, especially the older kind, holds that the "Rapture" is not mentioned in this chapter and justifies this view on the ground that Jesus is not talking to the church but to Jews. Dispensationalists use this disjunction to justify a number of theological points, but they are insensitive to historical realities. Even after Pentecost the earliest church was entirely Jewish. Here, before the Passion, Jesus is not addressing the church, in its post-Pentecost sense; but he is addressing, not his Jewish opponents, but his Jewish disciples who will constitute the church. Rigid application of this doubtful disjunction between Jews and church likewise banishes the church from the Sermon on the Mount; but it fails to observe that 18:15-20, dealing with the church, is also addressed, before the Passion, to Jewish disciples. 4) Granted the dispensational interpretation, Jesus' answer must have not only been opaque to his auditors but almost deceptive. Their first question concerns Jerusalem's judgment. But since a substantial part of Jesus answer is couched in terms dealing with Jerusalem's destruction, how could the disciples think Jesus was *not* answering their question but describing a *second* destruction of the city, unless Jesus explicitly disavowed their understanding? But he does nothing of the kind. So perhaps it is not surprising that the dispensational identification of vv. 15-28 *exclusively* with the Great Tribulation after the Rapture of the church, whether revealed or unrevealed, finds no exponent till the nineteenth century. The dispensational approach to the Olivet Discourse must be judged historically implausible in reference to both the history of Jesus and the history of interpretation. f. The view of Matthew 24 this commentary advocates finds clear breaks in the

Olivet Discourse, thus differing from the second option, but deals with the location and significance of these breaks in a novel way. David Wenham and the writer, to our mutual surprise, came to independent but similar conclusions about the Olivet Discourse. Sustained discussion has benefited us both and enabled us to develop the original ideas with the result that I cannot say exactly what each of us contributed to the thinking of the other. Wenham will doubtless publish his own view of the discourse. But here I acknowledge indebtedness to him. In my understanding of the Olivet Discourse, the *disciples* think of Jerusalem's destruction and the eschatological end as a single complex web of events. This accounts for the form of their questions. Jesus warns that there will be delay *before* the

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End--a delay characterized by persecution and tribulation for his followers (vv. 42-8), but with one particularly violent display of judgment in the Fall of Jerusalem (vv. 15-21; Mark 13:14-20; Luke 21:20-24). Immediately after the days of that sustained persecution characterizing the interadvent period comes the Second Advent (vv. 29-31; cf. Guthrie, *NT Theology* , pp. 795-96). The warning in vv. 32-35 describes the whole tribulation period, from the Ascension to the Second Advent. The tribulation period will certainly come, and the generation to which Jesus is speaking will experience all its features that point to the Lords return. But the exact time of that return no one but the Father knows (vv. 36-44). This structure works out in all three Synoptics (though with significant differences is emphasis), and the main themes developed have important ties with other NT books. The disciples questions are answered, and the reader is exhorted to look forward to the Lords return and meanwhile to live responsibly, faithfully, compassionately, and courageously while the Master is away (24:45-25:46).

1. Setting (24:1-3)

Unlike Mark (12:41-44) and Luke (21:1-4), Matthew omits the story of the widow's offering, thus linking the Olivet Discourse more closely to the "woes" in chapter 23. This does not mean that chapters 24-25 continue a single discourse the setting, audience, and principal themes all change. But Matthew does tie the prediction of desolation (23:37-39) to the destruction of the temple (24:12; for discussion, cf. Hummel, pp. 85-86; J. Lambrecht, *The Parousia Discourse* , in Didier, pp. 314-18).

1 Jesus' departure from the *hieron* ("temple complex") may be symbolic (see on 23:

39). It also gives the disciples a chance to call Jesus' attention to its various structures. In Mark and Luke the disciples call Jesus' attention to the beauty

of the temple buildings and the great stones on which it rests (cf. Jos. Antiq. XV, 391-402 [xi.3]; Wars V, 184-226 [v.16]; Tacitus *Histories* 5.8.12).

Whether or not the disciples thought they were speaking piously, they show that they have underestimated or even misunderstood the force of Jesus' denunciations in chapter 23 and Luke 11. They still focus on the temple, on which Jesus has pronounced doom, since the true center of the relation between God and man has shifted to himself. In chapter 23 Jesus has already insisted that what Israel does with him, not the temple determines the fate of the temple and of Israel nationally.

2 Because *tauta panta* ("all these things") is neuter and "buildings" (v. 1) feminine, some have suggested that Jesus question refers, not to the buildings, but to the discourse in chapter 23, especially v. 36, and should be rendered "You do understand [metaphorically `see'] these things, don't you?" the positive answer being suggested by

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the presence of the particle *ou* ("not," untr. in NIV). This may be oversubtle: the Greek demonstrative pronoun may have an irregular antecedent for various reasons (RHG, p. 704). Moreover, the particle *ou* , anticipating a positive response, detracts from this novel interpretation; for if Jesus thinks his disciples have understood, why then does he go on immediately to answer their question unequivocally? But if the sentence is taken in the usual way (NIV), then the expectation of a positive response is most natural: of course the disciples see the buildings! (Moule is nevertheless right in saying that English idiom prefers an open question here, cf. *Idiom Book* , p. 159.) Jesus' forecast of the destruction of the temple complex is unambiguous, cast in OT language (cf. Jer 26:6, 18; Mic 3:12) and repeated variously elsewhere (23:38; 26:61; Luke 23:28-31).

3 The Mount of Olives (see on 21:1, 17) is an appropriate site for a discourse dealing with the Parousia (cf. Zech 14:4). Mark specifies that Peter, James, John, and Andrew (the first four in Matt 10:2) asked the question privately. Whether this means that they were the only disciples present or that they were the ones who raised the question is uncertain, since "privately" in both Matthew and Mark sets the disciples apart from the crowds, not some disciples from others. The form of the question varies from Gospel to Gospel, with Matthew showing the greatest independence. Yet if we make the reasonable assumption that in the disciples mind their question as to the temples destruction and the signs that will presage it are linked to the end of the age and Jesus return (cf. 16:27-28; 23:39; Luke 19:11-27), there is little problem. Matthew makes explicit what was implicit and what Jesus recognized as implicit in their question. "The end of the age" is used six times in the NT (13:39, 40, 49; 24:3; 28:20; Heb 9:26), five of which are in Matthew and look to final judgment and the consummation of all things. (Hebrews 9:26 sees the Cross as introducing the

coming age and thereby marking out "the end of the ages" [NIV].) *Parousia* ("coming") is found twenty-four times in the NT, four of which are in Matthew 24 (vv. 3, 27, 37, 39). The term can refer to "presence," "arrival," or "coming"--the first stage of "presence"--and need not have eschatological overtones (2Cor 7:6; 10:10). Yet *parousia* is closely tied with Jesus' glorious "appearing" or "coming" at the end of human history. (For views of its relation to NT eschatology, cf. Turner, *Christian Words* , pp. 40-48; DNTT, 2:898-935.)

2. The birth pains (24:4-28)

a. General description of the birth pains (24:4-14)

Alexander goes too far in saying that Jesus' purpose in these verses "is not to tell what are but what are not the premonitions of the great catastrophe to which he

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refers." Instead, all things (vv. 5-7) are signs that Jesus is coming back, and they all will be manifest before the generation Jesus was addressing had died. But though these things show that the End is near, none of them stipulates how near; and the tenor of the warning is that the delay will be substantial and that during this period Jesus' disciples must not be deceived by false messiahs.

4-5 One of the greatest temptations in times of difficulty is to follow blindly any self-proclaimed savior who promises help. It is the temptation to repose confidence (v. 4) in false Christs. Those who "come in my name" (v. 5) may refer to those who come as Jesus representatives; but because of the words that follow, we must assume that their claim goes farther. They claim to be Messiah, Christ himself. They come "in his name," as if they were he. Would-be deliverers have appeared in every age, not least the first century (Acts 5:36; Jos. Antiq. XX, 97-99 [v.1], 160-72 [viii.56], 188 [viii.10]; Wars II, 259 [xiii.5], 433-56 [xvii.910]; VI, 285-87 [v.2]). That this governs vv. 4-28 is made clear by the second half of the literary inclusion (vv. 26-28) that brackets the section. (On Marks parallel "I am he," see Lane, *Mark*, p 457, n. 43.)

6-8 "Birth pains" (v. 8) in this context (elsewhere in the NT in Acts 2:24 ["agony"]; 1Thess 5:3) stems from such OT passages as Isaiah 13:8; 26:17; Jeremiah 4:31; 6:24; Micah 4:9-10. By this time it was almost a special term for "the birthpangs of the Messiah," the period of distress preceding the Messianic Age (cf. SBK, 1:905; 4:977-78; TDNT, 9:667-74; cf. 2 Baruch 27:1-30:1; b *Shabbath* 118a; b *Sanhedrin* 98b). But the "wars and rumors of war, famines and earthquakes" (vv. 67, of which there were not a few in the first century; cf. Alford) do not so point to the End as to validate the false Christs' claims. Jesus' followers are not to be alarmed by these events. "Such things must happen"; yet the End is still to come (v. 6). These are only "the beginning of [the] birth pains" that stretch over the

period between the advents. Why "must [they] happen"? The reason may be hidden in God's providence, which can provide a haven for faith (cf. 26:54). But it may also be that during this time of inaugurated reign before the Messianic Age attains its splendor, conflict is inevitable, precisely because the kingdom is only inaugurated. The conflict extends not only to families (10:34-37), but to nations and even nature (cf. Rom 8:20-21; Col 1:16, 20). The effect of these verses, then, is not to curb enthusiasm for the Lord's return but to warn against false claimants and an expectation of a premature return based on misconstrued signs.

9-13 *Tote* ("then," v. 9) is an elusive word (see on 2:7). In this chapter alone it occurs in vv. 9, 10, 14, 16, 21, 23, 30, 40. Translated "then" in v. 9, it occurs as "At that time" in v. 10. Certainly there is no suggestion of sequence between v. 8 and v. 9; it is *during*

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the "birth pains" that Jesus' disciples will be persecuted and killed. "You" quite clearly extends beyond the immediate disciples and includes all the followers Jesus will have. Persecution would break out early (cf. Acts 4:1-30; 7:59-8:3; 12:15; Rev 2:10, 12) and keep on during the "birth pains," against a background of hatred by the whole world (cf. Acts 28:22).

Thlipsis ("persecution," "tribulation," "distress") occurs four times in Matthew, three in this chapter (13:21; 24:9, 21, 29), and relates significantly to the chapter's structure (see on vv. 21, 29). Jesus establishes *thlipsis* as characteristic of this age (cf. 10:16-39)--a time when many will "turn away" (*skandalisthesontas*) from the faith (for the verb, see on 5:29; 13:21, 57) and hate each other (v. 10). In this chapter there are several allusions to Daniel (cf. Dan 11:35; linguistically some LXX MSS of Dan 11:41; cf. D. Wenham, "A Note on Matthew 24:10-12," *Tyndale Bulletin* 31 [1980]: 155-62, and esp. Trotter? and a certain parallelism between v. 10 and vv. 11-12. Those who turn away from the faith are deceived by false prophets, and those who hate each other do so because wickedness abounds and the love of most grows cold (cf. Trotter). Professing believers are either included in this description or are the focus of interest; but only those who endure--in love (v. 12) and despite persecution (vv. 9-11); cf. Rev 2:10)--will be saved (v. 13). They must "stand firm" [endure] to the end: individual responsibility persists to the end of life, but corporate responsibility to the final consummation. Part of the effect of this "tribulation," therefore, is to purify the body of professed disciples: those who endure are saved, as in Daniel 11:32, 34-35, and elsewhere in Matthew (see on 12:32; 13:21, 41; cf. 2Tim 2:3, 10-13; 3:11; Heb 10:32; 11:27; 12:2-3; James 1:12; 5:11). The reasons for falling away may differ. In 13:21 the cause is *thlipsis* ("persecution" or "tribulation"), and in 24:10-12 it is false prophets (see on 7:15-23). But even here the false prophecy finds some of its appeal in the matrix of trouble and persecution (vv. 49) from which it emerges; and Matthew cares little whether faith is lost

owing to fear of physical violence or to deception effected by false prophets. The result is the same and is to be expected throughout this age (cf. 7:15-23; 24:24; Acts 20:29-30; 2 Peter 2: 1; 1John 4:1).

14 But none of this means that the gospel of the kingdom (see on 4:23) is not preached or that its saving message does not spread throughout the world. Despite persecution-- and often because of it (Acts 8:1, 4)--the Good News is "preached" (*kerychthesetai* , see on 4:17) "as a testimony to all nations." The expression is itself neutral (see on 8: 4), and the gospel will bring either salvation or a curse, depending on how it is received. Thus the theme of Gentile mission is again made explicit (see on 1:1; 2:1-12; 3:9; 4:15- 16; 8:11-12; 21:43; 28:18-20).

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b. The sharp pain: the Fall of Jerusalem (24:15-21)

Although many commentators hold that Matthew (but probably not Mark and certainly not Luke) here portrays not just the Fall of Jerusalem but also the Great tribulation before Antichrist comes (e.g., Hill, *Matthew*), the details in vv. 16-21 are too limited geographically and culturally to justify that view. For other interpretations, see comments at the beginning of this chapter. For justification of a pericope termination at v. 21 instead of the more common v. 22, see below (on vv. 21-22).

15 *Oun* ("so") can serve as either an inferential or merely a transitional conjunction (cf. BAGD, pp. 592-93; BDF, par. 451.1 plus app.; RHG, pp. 119-192; Turner, *Syntax* , pp. 337-38), which can sometimes be left untranslated; it does not introduce something *temporally* new. If it retains any inferential force in this passage, it is very light--" accordingly, when you see then flee." Having characterized the entire age during which the gospel of the kingdom is preached as a time of *thlipsis* ("distress"), Jesus goes on to talk about one part of it when there will be particularly "great distress."

To bdelygma tes eremoseos means "the abomination characterized by desolation," leaving it unclear whether the abomination "causes" desolation (NIV; cf. McNeile, "the abominable thing that layeth waste"; RSV, "the desolating sacrilege") or is simply a token of it. The former is more likely. The expression occurs four times in Daniel (8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11). Daniel 11:31 clearly refers to the desecration under Antiochus Epiphanes (168 B.C. ; cf. 1Macc 1:54-61), who erected an altar to Zeus over the altar of burned offering, sacrificed a swine on it, and made the practice of Judaism a capital offense. The other references in Daniel are more disputed. Matthew and Mark agree with the LXX of Daniel 12:11 only; and, "[despite] the primary

importance of Dan 9:27 for the meaning of the expression, 12:11 is contextually the more suitable reference so far as the gospels are concerned, because allusions to Dan 11:40-12:13 surround this reference to the abomination of desolation" (Gundry, *Use of OT* , p. 48). Jesus, then, is identifying Daniel 9:27 and 12:11 with certain events about to take place; and the parenthetical "let the reader understand" is designed to draw the attention of the *reader of Daniel* to the passages' true meaning. This parenthetical aside is not a Matthean addition (unless one holds to Matthew's priority), for it is already in Mark. Matthew clearly understood it, not as an aside by Mark to draw the attention of his readers to the importance of this Gospel text, but as an aside by Jesus to draw the attention of his hearers who read Daniel to the importance of Daniel's words; hence Jesus' mention of "the prophet Daniel." Whether the identification Jesus makes is a prediction fulfillment or a typological fulfillment largely depends on how one understands the various "abomination of desolation" passages in Daniel. But to what event does Jesus make this text from Daniel refer? Some have

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suggested Caligula's plan to set up a pagan altar and standards in the temple precincts

(A.D. 40), a plan never carried out; but the description in the following verses cannot apply to that. The obvious occasion, in general terms, is A.D. 70, though certain difficulties must be faced. Although *topos* ("place") can refer to the city of Jerusalem (cf. BAGD, p. 822), the normal meaning of *hagios topos* ("holy place") is the temple complex (cf. BAGD; Isa 60:13; 2Macc 1:29; 2:18; Acts 6:13; 21:28). But by the time the Romans had actually desecrated the temple in A.D. 70, it was too late for anyone in the city to flee. Mark's language is less explicit: "standing where it does not belong" (Mark 13:14), instead of "standing in the holy place." Luke resolves the matter: "When you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near" (Luke 21:

20)--but now there is no explicit mention of "the abomination of desolation." Possibly Jesus said something ambiguous, such as Mark reports. Luke, writing for a Gentile audience less concerned with Daniel, emphasizes the aspect of warning. Matthew, believing the allusions to Daniel important for his Jewish audience because Jesus drew attention to them, makes explicit reference to "the abomination of desolation" and to "the holy place," since the setting up of the abomination in the holy place is the inevitable result of the pagan attack. By the time the Roman military standards (an eagle in silver or bronze over the imperial bust, to which soldiers paid homage not far removed from worship) surrounded Jerusalem, the city was defiled. Some have held that though Luke refers to the approaching armies, Matthew and Mark refer to the Zealot excesses that polluted the temple before A.D. 70 (including murder and the installation of a false high priest; cf. Jos. War IV, 147-57 [iii.6-8], 162-92 [iii.10], 334-44 [v.4]), when there was still time to flee (e.g., Lane, Mark, p. 469; Gaston, *No Stone*, pp. 458ff.). In any case, there is reasonably good tradition that Christians abandoned the city, perhaps in A.D. 68, about halfway through the siege.

16-19 The instructions Jesus gives his disciples about what to do in view of v. 15 are so specific that they must be related to the Jewish War. The devastation would stretch far beyond the city; people throughout Judea should flee to the mountains, where the Maccabeans had hidden in caves. Most roofs were flat (cf. Deut 22:8; Mark 2:4; Acts 10:9) pleasant places in the cool of the day. Verse 17 implies such haste that fugitives will not take time to run downstairs for anything to take with them but will run from roof to roof to evacuate the city as quickly as possible (cf. Jos. Antiq. XIII, 140 [v.3]). People in the fields will not have time to go home for their cloaks (see on 5:40). It will be especially dreadful (lit., "woe," here like a compassionate "alas!") for pregnant women and nursing mothers.

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20 Flight is obviously harder in winter. As for fleeing on the Sabbath, travel would become more difficult because few would help, and many would try to prevent traveling farther than a Sabbath day's journey. Jesus clearly expects these events to take place while the strict Sabbath law is in effect.

21 "For" introduces the reason for flight in vv. 17-20: *thlipsis* ("distress," "tribulation") and unprecedented suffering (cf. Dan 12:1; 1Macc 9:27; Rev 7:14; Gundry, *Use of OT*, pp. 49f.). The savagery, slaughter, disease, and famine (mothers eating their own children) were monstrous (cf. Jos. War V, 424-38 [x.2-3]), "unequaled from the beginning of the world until now," and, according to Jesus, "never to be equaled again." There have been greater numbers of deaths--six million in the Nazi death camps, mostly Jews, and an estimated twenty million under Stalin--but never so high a percentage of a great city's population so thoroughly and painfully exterminated and enslaved as during the Fall of Jerusalem. From this "great distress" Jesus' followers were to flee. Eusebius (*Ecclesiastical History* 3.5.2-3) says that during the siege under Titus (who did not replace his father Vespasian as commanding officer till A.D. 69, after the death of Galba), many were permitted to leave (cf. Jos. War V, 420-23 [x.1]). Others hold that the Christians left in 66 or 68. That Jesus in v. 21 promises that such "great distress" is never to be equaled implies that it cannot refer to the Tribulation at the end of the age; for if what happens next is the Millennium or the new heaven and the new earth, it seems inane to say that such "great distress" will not take place again. At the same time, by these remarks Jesus finishes his description of Jerusalem in Matthew and Mark (Luke goes to 21: 24). (For the way Luke's version of the discourse fits this framework, see the forthcoming monograph by Wenham.)

c. Warnings against false messiahs during the birth pains (24:22-28)

22 Many problems in interpreting the Olivet Discourse relate to the assumption that "those days" refers to the period described in vv. 15-21 and also to v. 29. But there are excellent reasons for concluding that vv. 22-28 refer to the general period of distress introduced by vv. 4-14 and that therefore "those days" refers to the entire period of which vv. 15-21 are only one part--the "great distress" (v. 21). 1. The term "elect" (in Matthew only at 22:14; 24:22, 24, 31; plus the variant at 20:16) most naturally refers to all true believers, chosen by God; so it is reasonable to assume that it does so here. 2. Similarly, *pasa sarx* (lit., all flesh; NIV, no one; cf. Notes) normally refers to all mankind and is more sweeping than "no one in Jerusalem."

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3. The themes of the ensuing verses have already been taken up as characteristics of the entire age (vv. 4-14), especially the warning against false Christs (cf. vv. 4-5). 4. It has already been shown that v. 21 makes a suitable ending to vv. 15-21.

5. Wenham, in his forthcoming work (see at v. 21), posits a neat presynoptic tradition that embraces the content of all three Gospels and suggests reasons for individual selection of materials. That tradition (slightly modified from Wenham) runs approximately as follows: Matthew 24:15-20 = Mark 13:14-18 = Luke 21:20-23a; Luke 21:23b-24; Matthew 24:20 = Mark 13:19; Matthew 24:22-28 = Mark 13:20-23; Matthew 24:29-42 = Mark 13:24-37 = Luke 21:25-36. Right or wrong as to source- critical details, this reconstruction at least makes sense of the relationship among the Synoptics at this point and supports a logical break between v. 21 and v. 22 of Matthew 24.

6. Further literary and structural arguments suggest that vv. 4-28 must be taken as one time period, with vv. 15-21 a critical part of it (see on v. 29).

While none of these arguments is decisive, all are reasonable and help us understand the whole discourse. If they are correct, then v. 22 tells us that this age of evangelism and distress--wars, famines, persecution, hatred, false prophets--will become so bad that, if not checked, no one would survive. In a century that has seen two world wars, now lives under the threat of extinction by nuclear holocaust, and has had more Christian martyrs than in all the previous nineteen centuries put together, Jesus' prediction does not seem farfetched. But the age will not run its course; it will be cut shorts (For a somewhat similar idea, see the Jewish apocalypse 2 Baruch 20:12; 83: 1.) This promise enables believers to look for God's sovereign, climactic intervention without predicting dates.

23-25 Empty-headed credulity is as great an enemy of true faith as chronic skepticism. Christian faith involves the sober responsibility of neither believing lies nor trusting imposters. As false Christs and false prophets proliferate (v. 24), so will their heralds (v. 23). Jesus' disciples are not to be deceived, even by spectacular signs and miracles (see on 7:21-23; 16:1; for the terms, 12:38; 18:12-13; cf. 24:4-5, 11). The importer is perennial (Deut 13:14; Rev 13:13).

Ei dynaton ("if that were possible") no more calls in question the security of the elect (contra I.H. Marshall, *Kept by the Power of God*, rev. ed.

[Minneapolis: Bethany, 1975], pp. 72-73) than it calls in question the inevitability of Jesus' cup (26:39). If "deceive" is telic (i.e., "in order to deceive"; cf. Notes), the "if possible" refers to the intent of the deceivers: they intend to deceive, if possible, even the elect--without any comment on how ultimately successful such attacks will be. "If that were possible" clearly suggests that "deceive" is not ecabatic (i.e., "with the result that"). That Jesus tells these things in advance (v. 25) not only warns and strengthens his followers (cf.

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John 16:4) but also authenticates him (cf. Deut 13:14; John 14:29).

26-27 It is pointless to look for Messiah's return in the desert (v. 26; cf. 4:1) or in inner rooms (cf. 6:6)--whether in some desert monastic community or in some hidden, unrecognized enclave for insiders (cf. Stendahl, Peake). Far from it! The coming of the Son of Man (see on 8:20; here his coming is clearly identified as "your [Jesus'] coming," v. 3, and Messiah's coming, vv. 23-24) will be public, unquestionable, and not confined to some little group of initiates. As the lightning (cf. Ps 97:4; Zech 9:14) comes out of the east but is everywhere visible, as far away as the west (Weiss, Broadus), so also the coming of the Son of Man will be visible to all people everywhere (TDNT, 8: 433-34).

28 Here Jesus quotes a proverb (cf. Job 39:30; Luke 17:37). "Eagle" (KJV) is wrong: "vulture" (NIV) is correct. *Aetos* can mean eagle, kite, or vulture; but eagles are not normally carrion eaters. The proverb itself is a difficult one. 1. Calvin, following some of the Fathers, sees it portraying God's children, gathering to feed on Christ. But identifying carrion with Christ is strange indeed! 2. Others see an allusion to Roman military eagles, with the Roman forces swarming over corrupt Jerusalem. But eagles are not vultures; and the preceding verse relates to the Parousia, not the Fall of Jerusalem. 3. Hill and others think that the vultures' gathering indicates that the Parousia is near. But there must be carrion before the vultures gather; so the symbolism breaks down, because the "signs" attest the reality only after the fact. 4. Manson (*Sayings* , p. 147) emphasizes the swiftness of the coming of the Son of Man: the carrion is no sooner there than the vultures swoop down (Ezek 17:3, 7; Rev 4:7; 8:13; 12:4). But in passages where the *aetos* ("eagle" or "vulture") symbolizes speed, it is understood to mean an "eagle." Why then assign it to a setting where it must be taken as a vulture? 5. The proverb may be a colorful way of saying that things come to pass at just the right time (Broadus); so the proverb applies here and in Luke 17:37

to the Parousia of the Son of Man. Concluding this broader section (vv. 4-28) is this thought: Do not be too eager for Christ's coming, or you will be deceived by false claimants (vv. 23-26). When he comes, his coming will be unmistakable (v. 27), in God's own time (v. 28)--a time when the world will be ripe for judgment (Zahn; see on v. 6). 6. Or this enigmatic proverb may simply mean that it will be as impossible for humanity not to see the coming of the Son of Man (cf. v. 27) as it is for vultures to miss seeing carrion (Klostermann).

3. The coming of the Son of Man (24:29-31)

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Matthew essentially follows Mark (13:24-27; cf. Luke 21:25-28) but adds the allusion to Zechariah about mourning (v. 30) and the trumpet call (v. 31).

29 For general arguments that vv. 29-31 refer to the Parousia, not the coming of the Son of Man in the events of A.D. 70, see on vv. 13. Mark brackets the last section (Mark 13:5-23 parallels Matt 24:4-28) with *blepete* ("watch out") in Mark 13:5, 23. Matthew has nothing similar, but the effect is the same because v. 29 begins the new stage with "Immediately after the distress [*thlipsis*] of those days," a clear reference back to the *thlipsis* of vv. 9, 22, not to the "great distress" of vv. 15-21. Thus the celestial signs and the coming of the Son of Man do not immediately follow "the abomination that causes desolation" but "the distress of those days"--i.e., of the entire interadvent period of *thlipsis* . The cosmic portents (cf. esp. Isa 13:9-10; 34:4; but also Ezek 32:7; Joel 2:31; 3:15; Amos 8:9; Rev 6:12) are probably meant to be taken literally, because of the climactic nature of the Son of Man's final self-disclosure. Yet this is not certain, since in some political contexts similar expressions are used metaphorically (see on 24:1-13).

30 "The sign of the Son of Man" has been interpreted in three principal ways.

1. Some of the Fathers after the Constantinian settlement thought it referred to Constantine's vision of a cross in the sky, with the words "In this sign, conquer"--an interpretation both anachronistic and fanciful. 2. More commonly "the sign" is assumed to be Jesus' coming, with "of the Son of Man in the sky" being taken as standing in epexegetical relation to "the sign." The

Jews had repeatedly asked for a sign (12:38; 16:1; cf. John 2:18), and the disciples had just asked for the sign of his coming (v. 3). The supreme "sign"

is his parousia at the end of the age. This interpretation is possible, though perhaps a bit forced. When the Jews asked for a sign, Jesus referred them to "the sign of Jonah" (12:39-41), not to his parousia. His disciples' more specific question (v. 3) was partially answered by vv. 4- 28, with a fuller answer in vv. 32-35. 3. T.F. Glasson (*The Ensign of the Son of Man* (Matt. xxiv, 30), JTS [1964]: 299f.) offers the best explanation. He points out that careful comparison of vv. 30-31 with the synoptic parallels shows Matthew has added mention of both "sign" and "trumpet." But *semeion* ("sign") commonly meant "ensign" or "standard," both in pagan Greek literature and in the LXX; and "standard" and "trumpet" are both regularly associated with the eschatological gathering of the people of God (cf. v. 31; Isa 11:12; 18:3; 27:13; 49:22; Jer 4:21; 6:1; 51:27; 1QM 3:14:2). Therefore *semeion* has two different meanings in this chapter (vv. 3, 30)--a phenomenon common enough in the NT. Theologically this means that the kingdom is being consummated. The standard,

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the banner of the Son of Man, unfurls in the heavens, as he himself returns in splendor and power.

The event will prompt "all the nations of the earth" to mourn, an allusion to Zechariah 12:10-12, probably directly from the MT (cf. Gundry, *Use of OT*, p. 53; cf. John 19:37; Rev 1:7). In Zechariah the reference is to the tribes of Israel in the land, and the mourning is that of repentance. Those who follow Kik and France want to keep the first link with the OT (the tribes of Israel) but not the second (the mourning; see on 24:13). Most scholars see the mourning (v. 30) as that of despair, not repentance (Rev 1:7, 6:15-17); and we have already argued for the translation "all the nations of the earth" (NIV) over "all the tribes of the land." So it seems that neither link with the OT is simple, and we must probe for a deeper link. What we discover is an implicit *a fortiori* argument. In Zechariah 12, Yahweh enables the house of David and Judah to crush its enemies; and as a result the Jews weep, apparently in contrition for their past sins in light of Yahweh's merciful deliverance and salvation (cf. also Zech 13:12). But it is the Gentile enemies who are crushed. If, then, the Jews face judgment and mourning (vv. 15-21), even though not only Jerusalem but also *all nations* (v. 9) have hated Jesus' disciples, *how much more* will all the nations of the earth, to whom the gospel has been preached (v. 14), also mourn at the Parousia, when the lost opportunities and the persecution of Jesus through persecuting his disciples are seen as they truly are? The next allusion in v. 30 is to Daniel 7:13-14. Some have objected that since in Daniel's vision "one like a son of man" approaches the throne of "the Ancient of Days" and does not descend to earth, v. 30 and parallels cannot be speaking about the Parousia, which requires the descent to earth. The objection misses the point. In Daniel "one like a son of man" approaches God to receive all authority, glory, sovereign power--"an everlasting dominion that will not pass away." In the framework of NT eschatology, we may imagine Jesus the Son of Man receiving the kingdom through his resurrection and ascension, his divine vindication, so that now all authority is his (28:

18). Yet it is equally possible to think of him receiving the kingdom at the consummation, when his reign or kingdom becomes direct and immediate, uncontested and universal. Unless one thinks of the location of the Ancient of Days in some physical and spatial sense, it is hard to imagine why Christ's approaching God the Father to receive the kingdom might not be combined with his returning to earth to set up the consummated kingdom. This interpretation goes well with its vivid context. The Son of Man, whose standard has been unfurled, comes "on [*epi*] the clouds of heaven" (cf. 26:64; Rev 14:14-16); it is doubtful whether sharp distinctions are to be drawn between this expression and "in [*en*] the clouds of heaven" (Mark 13:26; Luke 21:27) or "with [meta] the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62 [NIV, "on"]; Rev 1:7). The clouds symbolize God's presence (see on 17:5): Immanuel ("God with us") comes

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"with power and great glory." The latter phrase not only ensures that the coming is universally witnessed and unmistakably plain (cf. vv. 26-28, 30) but may allude to Isaiah 11:10: the nations will rally to "the Root of Jesse," and his place of rest will be (lit.) "the Glory" (cf. M.G. Kline, "Primal Parousia", WTJ 40 [1977-78]: 274).

31 The sound of a loud trumpet (cf. Isa 27:13; 1Cor 15:52; 1Thess 4:16) is an eschatological figure (see on v. 30). Only with considerable difficulty can v. 31 be interpreted as referring to Christian missions: its natural linguistic relations are in 13:

41. For comments on "his elect," see on 22:14; 24:22. The "four winds" represent the four points of the compass (Ezek 37:9; Dan 8:8; 11:4): the elect are gathered from all over (cf. 8:11), "from one end of the heavens to the other" (from every place under the sky), since that is how far the gospel of the kingdom will have been preached (v. 14). Although all nations of the earth will mourn, nevertheless the elect are drawn from them.

4. The significance of the birth pains (24:32-35)

32-33 This "lesson" (*parabole*, lit., "parable"; see on 13:3a; 15:15) of the fig tree (cf. 21:18-22) is based on the common observation that the twigs get tender before summer and arouse expectations of summer (v. 32). Although the Greek is ambiguous, NIV's "you know" is preferable to KJV's imperative ("know"). The "parable" points to the relation between "all these things" and "it is near" (v. 33). It is uncertain whether the antecedent of "it" is the Parousia or Jesus, the Son of Man. Jesus sometimes spoke of himself in the third person (v. 31) and may be doing so here. But whatever "it" refers to, it is certainly the nearness of the Second Advent that is in view. "All these things" is more problematic. If the words include the celestial signs and *the Parousia itself* (vv. 29-31), then vv. 32-33 are illogical,

because any distinction between "all these things" and "it is near" would be destroyed. Thus many have suggested that vv. 32-33 constitute a displaced parable once again making the synoptists out to be less intelligent than their critics two millennia later. The more natural way to take "all these things" is to see them as referring to the distress of vv. 4-28, the tribulation that comes on believers throughout the period between Jesus' ascension and the Parousia. Having warned his disciples of the course of this age (vv. 4-28) and told them of its climax in the Parousia (vv. 29-31), Jesus in these verses answers the part of his disciples' questions (v. 3) dealing with timing. He makes two points. First, "all these things" (vv. 4-28) must happen; and then the Parousia is "near, right at the door" "imminent." In other words the Parousia is the next major step in God's redemptive purposes. Second, this does not mean that the period of distress pinpoints the Parousia,

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for "no one knows about that day or hour" (vv. 36-42).

34 "I tell you the truth" emphasizes the importance of what it introduces. "This generation" (see on 11:16; 12:41-42; 23:36; cf. 10:23; 16:28) can only with the greatest difficulty be made to mean anything other than the generation living when Jesus spoke. Even if "generation" by itself can have a slightly larger semantic range, to make " *this* generation" refer to all believers in every age, or the generation of believers alive when eschatological events start to happen, is highly artificial. Yet it does not follow that Jesus mistakenly thought the Parousia would occur within his hearers' lifetime. If our interpretation of this chapter is right, all that v. 34 demands is that the distress of vv. 4-28, including Jerusalem's fall, happen within the lifetime of the generation then living. This does *not* mean that the distress must end within that time but only that "all these things" must happen within it. Therefore v. 34 sets a *terminus a quo* for the Parousia: it cannot happen till the events in vv. 4-28 take place, all within a generation of A.D. 30. But there is no *terminus ad quem* to this distress other than the Parousia itself, and "only the Father" knows when it will happen (v. 36).

35 The authority and eternal validity of Jesus' words are nothing less than the authority and eternal validity of God's words (Ps 119:89-90; Isa 40:6-8).

5. *The day and hour unknown: the need to be prepared* (24:36-42)

a. *The principle* (24:36)

36 Many commentators read v. 36 with the preceding paragraph; but it goes

much better with the following verses, which constitute an exhortation to vigilance precisely because, the day and the hour being unknown to humanity, life goes on as it always has. The *gar* ("for") at the beginning of v. 37 must not be overlooked, as in NIV. The gist of v. 36 is clear enough. Jesus' disciples are morally bound to repress all desires to know what no one knows but the Father--not even angels (cf. 18:10; 4Ezra 4:52) or the Son (cf. Notes). If the Son himself does not know the time of the Parousia, "how cheerfully should we his followers rest in ignorance that cannot be removed, trusting in all things to our Heavenly Father's wisdom and goodness, striving to obey his clearly revealed will, and leaning on his goodness for support" (Broadus). Moreover it is ridiculous quibbling divorced from the context to say that though the day and hour remain unknown, we ascertain the year or month. Jesus' self-confessed ignorance on this point has generated not a little debate. In fact, it is part of the NT pattern of his humiliation and incarnation (e.g., 20:23; Luke 2: 52; Acts 1:7; Philippians 2:7). John's Gospel, the one of the four Gospels most clearly

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insisting on Jesus' deity, also insists with equal vigor on Jesus' dependence on and obedience to his Father--a dependence reaching even to his knowledge of the divine. How NT insistence on Jesus' deity is to be combined with NT insistence on his ignorance and dependence is a matter of profound importance to the church; and attempts to jettison one truth for the sake of preserving the other must be avoided. (For an attempt to work some of these things out, cf. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty* , pp. 146-60.)

b. Analogy of the days of Noah (24:37-39)

37-39 (See also Mark 13:33 and Luke 17:28-32, though the latter is in a different context and has quite different structure and wording.) The *gar* ("for") in the best MSS further elucidates v. 36: that the coming of the Son of Man takes place at an unknown time can only be true if in fact life seems to be going on pretty much as usual--just as in the days before the Flood (v. 37). People follow their ordinary pursuits (v. 38). Despite the distress, persecutions, and upheavals (vv. 4-28), life goes on: people eat, drink, and marry. There is no overt typological usage of the Flood as judgment here, nor any mention of the sin of that generation. Yet Jesus' warning may well have given rise to 1 Peter 3:20-21. Jesus expects ceaseless vigilance of his followers, for the final climax of human history will suddenly come on ordinary life. In the human condition massive distress and normal life patterns coexist. For the believer the former point to the end; the latter warn of its unexpectedness.

c. Two in the field; two with a mill (24:40-41)

40-41 These two vignettes do not "stress the sharp cleavage caused by the coming of the Son of Man, *rather than* the unexpectedness of the event" (Hill, *Matthew* , emphasis mine), but the unexpectedness of the event by means of

the sudden cleavage. Two men are working in a field; one is taken, the other left (v. 40). Two women work their hand mill (v. 41)--one normally operated by two women squatting opposite each other with the mill between them, each woman in turn pulling the stone around 180 degrees. The two are apt to be sisters, mother and daughter, or two household slaves. Yet no matter how close their relationship, one is taken, the other left (cf. 10:35-36). It is neither clear nor particularly important whether "taken" means "taken in judgment" (cf. v. 39, though the verb "took away" differs from "taken" in vv. 40-41) or "taken to be gathered with the elect" (v. 31).

6. Parabolic teaching: variations on watchfulness (24:42-25:46)

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a. The homeowner and the thief (24:42-44)

The exact relation between vv. 42-51 and Mark 13:33-37 is obscure and has not been satisfactorily explained. On the nature of parables, see on 13:3a; on comparison with Luke 12:39-40, see discussion and chart at 19:12. Each of the five parables in 24: 42-25:46 deal with some aspect of watchfulness. But watchfulness is not always passive: duties and responsibilities must be discharged (24:45-51), and foresight and wisdom are important (25:1-13). Responsible living under Jesus' directives is rewarded in the end (vv. 14-46).

42-44 The first parable teaches both the unexpectedness of the return of "your Lord" (*kyrios*, v. 42)--an expression that is not only identical to "the master" in the next parable (v. 45), but lays the foundation for the church's cry, "Come, O Lord!" (1Cor 16:22)--and her willingness to call Jesus *ho kyrios* ("the Lord"), a title hitherto reserved in its religious use by the Jews for God himself (1Cor 12:3; Philippians 4:5; 2Thess 2:2; James 5:7; see on 8:2; 17:4, 14-16; 21:3; 22:41-46). It might be better to take *ginoskete* not as an imperative ("understand," NIV, v. 43) but as an indicative ("you know"): the disciples know the owner of a house would watch if he knew when the thief was coming (on the tenses of the verb, cf. Zerwick, par. 317), so the thief could not break in (on the verb, see on 6:19). Since no one knows at what time, or during what "watch," the thief might strike, constant vigilance is required. "So you also must be ready" (v. 44), because in this one respect--the unexpectedness of his coming--the Son of Man (see on vv. 37, 39; 8:20) resembles a thief.

b. The two servants (24:45-51)

The good servant is prepared for his Lord at any time, is faithful throughout

his delay, and in the end is highly rewarded. The wicked servant is faithless in his responsibilities, abusive to fellow servants, lax in waiting for his master's return, and ultimately earns the punishment that is his due (see chart and discussion at 19:12; cf. 21:34-36; cf. also Mark 13:34-37; Luke 12:35-38, 42-46).

45-47 The *doulos* ("servant") in this parable is the head over all the domestics (v. 45). This, however, does not so much limit the application of the parable to leaders as establish that their responsibilities entail good personal relationships (v. 49), requiring exemplary conduct and precluding harshness and lording it over others. The good servant is faithful and "wise" (i.e., prudent, judicious cf. 7:24; 10:16), doing what is assigned him. When his master returns (v. 46), he is *makarios* ("blessed"; NIV, "will be good"; see on 5:3) and promoted (v. 47; cf. 25:21). In Mark 13:37 Jesus applies the

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necessity of watching to "everyone."

48-51 If the servant is wicked (v. 48) and lacking faithfulness and wisdom (v. 45), he may convince himself that the master "is staying away a long time"--perhaps a subtle hint that the Parousia could be considerably delayed (cf. 25:19). The wicked servant uses the delay to abuse his fellow servants and carouse (v. 49). (For "begins to beat," cf. 11:7, 20.) But the wicked servant, surprised and unprepared for his master's return (v. 50), is put with the "hypocrites" (v. 51): his lot is with the punishment given those most constantly held up as vile in this Gospel (6:2, 5, 16; 16:3; 23:13-29). The master "will cut him to pieces" (cf. 1Sam 15:33; Heb 11:37; Sus 55; on the punishments accorded Jewish slaves, cf. SBK, 4:698-744). *Dichotomeo* literally is "I cut in two" (found in the NT only here and Luke 12:46). Alleged parallels in 1QS 1:10-11; 2:16-17; 6:24-25; 7:1, 2, 16; 8:21-23 are unconvincing: the Hebrew "cut off from the midst of the sons of light" refers to excommunication. Here, however, the wicked servant is not cut off from anything; he is cut in pieces--a most severe and awful punishment--and joins the hypocrites in weeping and grinding of teeth (cf. 8:12).

c. The ten virgins (25:1-13)

This parable has been widely discussed. Hill (*Matthew*), largely following Jeremias (*Parables* , pp. 51-53), notes the "allegorical" elements (bridegroom's coming = coming of the Son of Man; ten virgins = expectant Christian community; tarrying = delay of the Parousia; rejection of the foolish virgins = final judgment) and claims there is evidence for thinking these to be later additions by the church. This view is strengthened, it is claimed, by the fact that the equation Messiah = bridegroom is virtually unknown in late Judaism (cf. *ibid.*, p. 52) and first appears in 2 Corinthians 11:

2. The story Jesus actually told, stripped of its "allegorical accretions," involved wedding preparations and warned his hearers of the impending eschatological crisis. But this will not do. We have already seen that source criticism of Gospel parables based on theoretical distinctions between "parable" and "allegory" is ill-founded (see on 13:3a). The idea of Messiah as bridegroom springs from such OT passages as Isaiah 54:46; 62:45; Ezekiel 16:7-34; Hosea 2:19. There Yahweh is portrayed as the "husband" of his people. We have noted how readily Jesus in his parables places himself in Yahweh's place (see on 13:37-39). Moreover both John the Baptist (John 3:27-30) and Jesus himself (Matt 9:15; Mark 2:19-20) have already made the equation Jesus = Messiah = bridegroom, unless we deny the historicity of these passages. But the parable makes sense in its own setting and as it stands. While dispensationalists divide on whether this parable relates to the "Rapture" of the church (A.C. Gaebelain) or the Second Advent, following the Tribulation

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(Walvoord), both views introduce eschatological structures that do not emerge naturally from the text (see above on 24:13). W. Schenk ("Auferweckung der Toten oder Gericht nach den Werken: Tradition und Redaktion in Matthäus xxv 13," *NovTest* 20 [1978]: 278-99) reconstructs a very simple "original" parable in which all the virgins have enough oil but only five of them sleep. When the bridegroom comes they all enter and enjoy the feast. The point is that when the bridegroom comes, some are asleep and some are awake; but all enjoy the festivities (as in 1Thess 4:15-17). But Matthew has allegorized this parable and required a store of good works (oil) as qualification for entry. It is hard to decide which of Schenk's options is more wrong--his reconstruction of the alleged original or his interpretation of the parable as it stands in Matthew. Scarcely less idiosyncratic is J.M. Ford ("The Parable of the Foolish Scholars," *NovTest* 9 [1967]: 107-23), who, arguing largely from late rabbinic sources, claims the virgins represent Jewish scholars, the lamps Torah, and the oil good deeds. The foolish virgins are Jewish scholars who study Torah but who fail to practice good deeds. They are therefore excluded from the Chamber of Instruction. Such ingenuity ignores both the narrative and the context, as J.M. Sherriff ("Matthew 25:1-13. A Summary of Matthean Eschatology?" in Livingstone, 2:301-5) has pointed out. The plot turns on the bridegroom's delay. The foolish virgins do not *forget* to bring oil; rather the delay of the bridegroom shows they did not bring enough. The oil cannot easily apply to "good works" or "Holy Spirit." It is merely an element in the narrative showing that the foolish virgins were unprepared for the delay and so shut out in the end. In a real sense it is the bridegroom's delay that distinguishes the wise from the foolish virgins. Any interpretation that ignores this central element in the story is bound to go astray (cf. also G. Bornkamm, "Die Verzögerung der Parusie," *Geschichte*, pp. 49f.). The context similarly shows that the overriding theme is preparedness for the coming of the Son of Man. Even when this involves certain forms of behavior (24:45-51; 25:14-30), that behavior is called forth by the unexpectedness of the master's return. From this perspective vv. 1-13 fit well into this sequence of parables and agree with

what we know Jesus taught. There is no good reason for doubting its authenticity or retreating to one of several reconstructed cores. The first parable (24:42-44) warns of the unexpectedness of Messiah's coming. The second (24:45-51) shows that more than passive watchfulness is required: there must be behavior acceptable to the master, the discharge of allotted responsibilities. This third parable (25:1-13) stresses the need for preparedness in the face of an unexpectedly long delay.

1 *Tote* ("At that time") is sufficiently vague in Matthew's usage (see on 2:7; 24:9) that not much can be built on it. The most natural way to take it here is as a reference to the

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coming of the Son of Man (cf. 24:29-31, 36-44). "At that time" the kingdom of heaven will become like the story of the ten virgins (so the Gr.; cf. Carson, "Word-Group")--
i.e., the parable deals with the onset of the consummated kingdom.

The setting is fairly clear from what we know of the marriage customs of the day (cf. Broadus; Jeremias, *Parables*, pp. 173-74; TDNT, 4:1100; and esp. H. Granquist, *Marriage Conditions in a Palestinian Village*, 2 vols [Helsingfors: Central-tryckeriet, 1931, 1935]). Normally the bridegroom with some close friends left his home to go to the bride's home, where there were various ceremonies, followed by a procession through the streets--after nightfall--to his home. The ten virgins may be bridesmaids who have been assisting the bride; and they expect to meet the groom as he comes from the bride's house (cf. Kistemaker, p. 130), though this is uncertain. Everyone in the procession was expected to carry his or her own torch. Those without a torch would be assumed to be party crashers or even brigands. The festivities, which might last several days, would formally get under way at the groom's house. That the bride is not mentioned in the best MSS (cf. Notes) has been variously interpreted. Some have thought this is the trip to the bride's house or that this is one of those rare occasions when all the festivities took place at her home, because the groom lived at a considerable distance. But then the bride's father, not the groom, would have refused entrance to the foolish virgins. To demand the presence of the bride is to demand that the parable walk on all fours: mention of her is not essential to the story. For the meaning of *parthenos* ("virgin"), see on 1:23. The point is not these girls' virginity, which is assumed, but simply that they are ten (a favorite round number; e.g., Ruth 4:2; Luke 19:13; Jos. War VI, 423-24 [ix.3]) maidens invited to the wedding. The "lamps" (not the same word as in 5:15) are here either small oil-fed lamps or, more plausibly, torches whose rags would need periodic dowsing with oil to keep them burning. In either case the prudent would bring along a flask with an additional oil supply.

2-5 The "wise" (v. 2) are called such because they are prepared (v. 4) for the bridegroom's delayed coming. Both wise and foolish wait and doze (v. 5); no praise or blame attaches to either group for this. There is no point in seeing hidden meanings in the oil or sleep. The sole distinction between the two groups is this: the wise bring not only oil in their lamps but an extra supply in separate jars, while the foolish bring no oil (either no extra oil or no oil at all [cf. Robertson, 1:196; Hendriksen; Lenski]: if the latter, then the lamps going out [v. 8] is the sputtering of wicks or rags that burn brightly but don't last). The wise are prepared for delay; the foolish expect to meet the groom, but are either utterly unprepared or unprepared if he is delayed. And the bridegroom is a long time coming (24:48; 25:19).

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6-9 At midnight (v. 6), symbol of eschatological climax, "the cry rang out"--an admirable paraphrase of *krauge gegonen* (lit., "a cry has arisen": the perfect is unusual and probably dramatic; cf. Moule, *Idiom Book* , pp. 14, 202; BDF, par. 343 [3]). All the virgins wake up and trim their lamps (v. 7); but the lamps of the foolish virgins quickly go out (present tense, "are going out," contra KJVs "are gone out"). Apart from the identification of "oil" with "grace," Matthew Henry's observation is pertinent: "They will see their need of grace hereafter, when it should save them, who will not see their need of grace now, when it should sanctify and rule them." The wise virgins cannot help them. Whether the text reads "there may not be enough" or "there will certainly not be enough" (cf. Notes), the effect is the same: the foresight and preparedness of the wise virgins cannot benefit the foolish virgins when the eschatological crisis dawns (vv. 8-9). Preparedness can neither be transferred nor shared.

10-12 The bridegroom comes, the wise virgins enter, and the door is shut (v. 10; cf. 7: 22-23; Luke 13:25). The intense cries of the ill-prepared and foolish latecomers--"Sir! Sir!" (on the doubling, cf. BDF, par. 493 [1]; 7:21-23; 23:37)--are of no avail (v. 11). Because this parable concerns the consummation, the refusal to recognize or admit the foolish virgins (v. 12) must not be construed as calloused rejection of their lifelong desire to enter the kingdom. Far from it: it is the rejection of those who, despite appearances, never made preparation for the coming of the kingdom.

13 The theme is reiterated once more (cf. 24:36, 42, 44, 50). Jeremias (*Parables* , p. 52) and others suggest this verse is a late addition to the parable, since it is at variance with the fact that both the wise and the foolish virgins fell asleep. But this misses the purpose of v. 13. "Keep watch" does not mean "keep awake," as if an ability to fight off sleep were relevant to the story. Rather, in the light of the entire parable, the dominant exhortation of

this discourse is repeated: Be prepared! Keep watching!

d. The talents (25:14-30)

This parable goes beyond the first three (24:42-25:13) in that it expects the watchfulness of the servants to manifest itself during the master's absence, not only in preparedness and performance of duty, even if there is a long delay, but in an improvement of the allotted "talents" till the day of reckoning. The parable is frequently compared with Luke 19:11-27, the parable of the ten minas. The majority opinion today is that there is only one original and that most likely Luke has borrowed from Matthew's version or from a precursor of it (cf. Marshall, *Luke* , pp. 700-703; chart and discussion at 19:12). Borrowing the other way is scarcely

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conceivable. Would Matthew, for instance, be likely to eliminate the "king" theme found in Luke? The language of the two pericopes is rather different, and most of the differing details cannot be reconciled on normal grounds. The few parallels are well within the bounds of the speech variation of any itinerant preacher. Moreover the emphasis in each of the two parables is somewhat different, and Luke's is tightly tied to the Zacchaeus episode. The somewhat similar parable in the later noncanonical Gospel of the Nazaraeans (Hennecke, 1:149) is undoubtedly secondary and dependent on Matthew. On the whole it seems best to side with certain older commentators (Plummer, Zahn) who discern two separate parables.

14 The introduction to this parable in the Greek is somewhat abrupt (lit., "for as," without mention of the kingdom, "it" [NIV]; or a verb [NIV, "will be"]: the closest parallel is Mark 13:34). Probably this parable is so tightly associated with the last one as to share its introduction (see on v. 1). Slaves in the ancient world could enjoy considerable responsibility and authority. The man going on a journey entrusts his cash assets to three of his slaves who are understood to be almost partners in his affairs and who may share some of his profits (cf. Derrett, *Laws*, p. 18). The departure and the property are integral parts of the story and should not be allegorized (to refer to the Ascension and the gifts of the Spirit), though doubtless some early readers after Pentecost read these into the text.

15 Modern English uses the word "talent" for skills and mental powers God has entrusted to men; but in NT times the *talanton* ("talent") was a unit of exchange. Estimates of its value vary enormously for four reasons. 1. A talent could be of gold, silver, or copper, each with its own value. *Argyrion* in v. 18, a word that can mean either "money" or "silver," may hint at the second option. 2. The talent was first a measure according to weight, between

fifty-eight and eighty pounds (twenty-six to thirty-six kg), and then a unit of coinage, one common value assigned it being six thousand denarii. 3. Although it is possible to calculate by weight or metallic value, another problem remains. For instance, eighty pounds of silver at fifteen dollars an ounce would mean that a talent was worth about nineteen thousand dollars. But modern inflation changes silver values so quickly that prices are soon obsolete. Yet such equivalences are passed on from generation to generation of reference texts (e.g., BAG [1957] and BAGD [1979] have the same figures!). 4. It may be more sensible to compare the talent with modern currency in terms of earning power. If a talent was worth six thousand denarii, then it would take a day laborer twenty years to earn so much--perhaps three hundred-thousand dollars. On any reckoning NIV's footnote ("more than a thousand dollars") is much too low.

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So the sums are vast--much larger than in Luke 19:11-27, where a "mina" (one hundred drachmas) is very close to one hundred denarii, or one-third of a year's wages (perhaps five thousand dollars). Moreover in Matthew's parable the talents are distributed according to the master's evaluation of his servants' capacities, whereas in Luke each servant is given the same amount. In Matthews therefore, the parable lays intrinsic emphasis on the principle "to whom much is given, from him also shall much be required." Attempts to identify the talents with spiritual gifts, the law, natural endowments, the gospel, or whatever else, lead to a narrowing of the parable with which Jesus would have been uncomfortable. Perhaps he chose the talent or mina symbolism because of its capacity for varied application.

16-18 "At once" (v. 16) relates to the servant's promptness to put the money to work (NIV), not with the owners departure (KJV; cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentarty* , p. 63). The point is that the good servants felt the responsibility of their assignment and went to work without delay. NIV's "put his money to work" does not mean the servant invested the money in some lending agency. Rather he set up some business and worked with the capital to make it grow. But one servant, unwilling to work or take risks, merely dug a hole and buried the money (v. 18). This was safer than the deposit systems of the time. (In Luke's parable the money of the last servant is hidden in a piece of cloth.)

19-23 The accounting begins "after a long time" (v. 19), the implication being that the consummation of the kingdom will be long delayed (24:48; 25:5). "Settled accounts"

(*synairei logon*) is a standard commercial term (Deiss LAE, pp. 118-19). The first servant, who doubled his five talents (v. 20), is praised, especially for his

faithfulness, and given two things (vv. 21, 23): increased responsibility and a share in his master's *chara* ("joy," as in John 15:11). But we should not conclude that the sole reward of fulfilled responsibility is increased responsibility. The eschatological setting, coupled with the promise of joy that bursts the natural limits of the story, guarantees that the consummated kingdom provides glorious new responsibilities and holy delight (cf. Rom 8:17).

The parallelism of vv. 22-23 with vv. 20-21 is not exact but close (cf. 7:26-27 with 7: 24-25) and reflects a Semitic cast. The second servant has been faithful with what has been given him (v. 22) and hears the same words as his more able fellow servant (v. 23). Probably the "many things" assigned the two men are not exactly the same. The point is not egalitarianism, whether here (cf. 13:23) or in the consummated kingdom, but increased responsibility and a share in the master's joy to the limits of each faithful servant's capacity.

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24-25 The third servant accuses his master of being a "hard" (*skleros*) man (v. 24). The word, both in Greek and English, can mean various things (elsewhere in the NT it is found only in John 6:60; Acts 26:14; James 3:4; Jude 15). The servant is saying that the master is grasping, exploiting the labor of others ("harvesting where you have not sown"), and putting the servant in an invidious position. Should he take the risk of trying to increase the one talent entrusted to him, he would see little of the profit. If he failed and lost everything, he would incur the master's wrath. Perhaps, too, he is piqued at having been given much less than the other two (cf. Derrett, *Law* , p. 26); so, in a rather spiteful act, he returns to his master what belongs to him, no more and no less (v. 25).

What this servant overlooks is his responsibility to his master and his obligation to discharge his assigned duties. His failure betrays his lack of love for his master, which he masks by blaming his master and excusing himself. Only the wicked servant blames his master. "The foolish virgins failed from thinking their part too easy; the wicked servant fails from thinking his too hard" (Alf). Grace never condones irresponsibility; even those given less are obligated to use and develop what they have.

26-27 The master condemns the servant on the basis of the servant's own words, which prove his guilt (v. 26). If the master was so hard and grasping, should not the servant have put the money where it would have been relatively safe, earn interest, and require no work (v. 27)? The OT forbade Israelites from charging interest against one another (Exod 22:25; Lev 25:35-37; Deut 23:19; cf. Ps 15:5; usury is from Lat. *usura* , use, and came to refer to the interest charged for the use of money); but interest on money loaned to Gentiles was permitted (Deut 23:20). Doubtless the law was frequently broken (e.g., Neh 5:10-12). By NT times Jewish scholars already distinguished between "lending at

interest" and "usury" (in the modern sense). According to Roman law the maximum rate of interest was 12 percent (cf. W.W. Buckland, *A Textbook of Roman Law* , 3d ed. [Cambridge: University Press, 1963], p. 465). It is wrong to assume that Jesus is here either supporting or setting aside the OT law. The question does not arise, for Jesus' parables are so flexible that he sometimes uses examples of evil to make a point about good (e.g., Luke 16:19; 18:18).

28-30 The talent entrusted to this wicked servant is taken from him (v. 28); the relationship between master and servant is severed (cf. Derrett, *Law*, p. 28). It is given to the man who now has ten talents, following the kingdom rule (v. 29) Jesus had already taught in 13:12. Moreover, there is OT warrant for this pattern: on this basis the kingdom of Israel was stripped from Saul and given to David (cf. also 21:43). The

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wicked servant is "worthless" (*achreios* , used only here [v. 30] and in Luke 17:10), for to fail to do good and use what God has entrusted to us to use is grievous sin, which issues not only in the loss of neglected resources but in rejection by the master, banishment from his presence, and tears and gnashing of teeth. The parable insists that the watchfulness that must mark all Jesus' disciples does not lead to passivity but to doing one's duty, to growing, to husbanding and developing the resources God entrusts to us, till "after a long time" (v. 19) the master returns and settles accounts. The parable applies widely and cannot be restricted to Christian leaders or Jews who fail to recognize their Messiah.

e. The sheep and the goats (25:31-46)

Strictly speaking, this passage is not a parable. Its only parabolic elements are the shepherd, the sheep, the goats, and the actual separation. Moreover, because the pericope is unique to Matthew, criticism based on close parallels is impossible. It clearly functions in this discourse somewhat as 10:40-42 (with which it has some connections) does in the second discourse. Almost everyone praises the simplicity and power of the passage. Alford remarks, "It will heighten our estimation of the wonderful sublimity of this description, when we recollect that it was spoken by the Lord *only three days before His sufferings* " (emphasis his). But there is disagreement over the meaning and literary history of these eloquent words. 1. The great majority of scholars understand "the least of these brothers of mine" (vv. 40, 45) to refer to all who are hungry, distressed, needy. The basis of acceptance into the kingdom is thus established by deeds of mercy and compassion. This interpretation is often allied with a misunderstanding of 22:34-40 (see comments there). The overall interpretation can take on varying forms as it relies on source-critical conclusions or particular views of

the "Son of Man" (U. Wilekens, "Gottes geringste Bruder--zu Mt 25, 31-46," in Ellis and Grasser, pp. 363-83; David R. Catchpole, "The Poor on Earth and the Son of Man in Heaven: A Reappraisal of Matthew xxv.31-46," BJRL 61 [1978-79]: 355-97). Most authors stress the Jewish parallels relating to compassion and almsgiving. Bornkamm (*Tradition* , pp. 23-24) holds that the parable (as we shall call it) not only eliminates distinction between Jews and Gentiles but also between Jesus' disciples and unbelievers. All will ultimately be judged by their response to human need, and on this basis some from each group will be numbered among the sheep (cf. P. Christian, *Jesus und seine geringsterb Bruder* [Leipzig: St. Benno, 1975], who holds this is a sermon for the Christian church concerning the eschatological significance of human solidarity). J. Friedrich's tome (*Gott im Bruder?* [Stuttgart: Calwer, 1977]) includes much useful information about how this pericope has been interpreted; but its basic point--that

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Matthew narrowed down to Christians Jesus' teaching that the eschatological judgment would decide the fate of all men according to their response to all human need--is unconvincing because it rests on a redaction-critical methodology of dubious worth. The weakness of this general position is the identification of the least of Jesus' brothers with the poor and needy without distinction. There is no parallel for this, but there are one or two excellent alternative interpretations with strong NT parallels. 2. If the first interpretation extends "one of the least of these brothers of mine" too far, the second does not go far enough. Several scholars (e.g., J.R. Michaels, "Apostolic Hardships and Righteous Gentiles," JBL 84 [1965]: 27-37; J. Manek, "Mit wem identifiziert sich Jesus (Matt 25:31-46)?" *Christ and Spirit in the New Testament*, edd. B. Lindars and S.S. Smalley [Cambridge: University Press, 1973], pp. 15-25) argue that Jesus' "least brothers" are apostles and other Christian missionaries, the treatment of whom determines the fate of all men. Those who receive them receive Christ; those who reject them reject Christ (cf. 10:40-42). This interpretation is much closer to the text than the first one. The only hesitation concerns the restriction to apostles and missionaries in any technical sense. Appeal to Matthew 10 cuts two ways: though that mission was first restricted to the Twelve, it is clear that Jesus was looking beyond the Twelve to all true disciples, who without exception must confess him before men (10:32-33). Proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom to all nations (24:14) takes place in obedience to a universal mandate (28:18-20); and the suffering that Jesus envisages for his disciples (24:9-13) is not restricted to missionaries, even if sometimes theirs is a special share of it. Without detracting from the Twelve, Matthew's report of Jesus' words makes it clear that all true disciples are his emissaries. 3. Another restrictive interpretation is that of George Gay ("The Judgment of the Gentiles in Matthew's Theology," *Scripture, Tradition, and Interpretation*, edd. W.W. Gasque and W.S. LaSor [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978], pp. 199-215). Relying on Matthew 18, Gay holds that three mutually exclusive groups are involved: those outside the Christian community who think they are part of it, those inside the community but not the "little ones," and the

"little ones" within the community. The basis for judgment is the attitude of professing believers to the "little ones," Jesus' favorites. The judgment is therefore not the judgment of the nations ("It would be unfair and illogical to judge the unrepentant who have never made any commitment to Jesus and know nothing of the demands of the Kingdom on the same basis" [ibid., p. 210]).

But Matthew 18 does not support Gay's tripartite distinction, and 12:46-50 makes it clear that Jesus' brothers are his disciples. Moreover the language of vv. 31-32, 46, including a reference to "all the nations" gathered before the Son of Man "on his throne in heavenly glory," cannot easily be made to apply to anything as restricted as

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Gay suggests.

4. Dispensational writers see a reference to the Second Coming, after the church has been removed at the Rapture. Jesus' "brothers" are Jews who have been converted during the Tribulation; and the "nations" are converted Gentiles (the "sheep") because they side with the converted Jews during this period. But unconverted Gentiles (the "goats") continue to oppose Jesus' brothers Jews converted during the Tribulation). The sheep enter the millennial kingdom with Jesus' "brothers." "All the nations" (v. 32) therefore excludes Jews--though it is doubtful whether the same interpretation would be pressed in 28:18-20. Some older writers argue that the judgment determines what nations as opposed to individuals are admitted to the millennial kingdom, but see on 28:18-20. One or two non-dispensationalist writers (e.g., Allen) think the "brothers" are Christian Jews. This interpretation fails unless the dispensational interpretation of chapters 24-25 is sustained, something we have rejected on other grounds (see on 24:13). Moreover there is no such pinpointing in the passage itself. Jesus never speaks of Jews as his brothers, though he does speak of his disciples in that way (12:46-50). 5. By far the best interpretation is that Jesus' "brothers" are his disciples (12:48-49; 28:10; cf. 23:8). The fate of the nations will be determined by how they respond to Jesus' followers, who, "missionaries" or not, are charged with spreading the gospel and do so in the face of hunger, thirst, illness, and imprisonment. Good deeds done to Jesus' followers, even the least of them, are not only works of compassion and morality but reflect where people stand in relation to the kingdom and to Jesus himself. Jesus identifies himself with the fate of his followers and makes compassion for them equivalent to compassion for himself (cf. Kistemaker, pp. 146ff.; Manson, *Sayings*, p. 251; J.C. Ingelaere, "La 'Parabole' du jugement dernier [Matthew 25/31-46]," *Revue de l'histoire et de philosophic religieuses* 50 [1970]: 2360; G.E. Ladd, "The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats in Recent Interpretation," in Longenecker and Tenney, pp. 191-99; cf. Matt 10:40-42; Mark 13:13; John 15:5, 18, 20; 17:10, 23, 26;

Acts 9:4; 22: 7; 26:14; 1Cor 12:27; Heb 2:17). To the objection that this interpretation does not preserve an adequate distinction between the "sheep" and "the least of these brothers of mine," the answer is that (1) a similar ambiguity occurs in Matthew 18; (2) this interpretation emphasizes the kind of loving relationships that must exist within the Christian community, a constant theme in the NT; and (3) it prepares the way for the surprise shown by both sheep and goats (vv. 37-39, 44) and for some important theological implications (see below).

31 Nowhere in this discourse does Jesus explicitly identify the "Son of Man" (see on 8:20) with himself (24:27, 30, 37, 39, 44). But since this epithet is used in answer to the question "What will be the sign of your coming?" (24:3), the inference is inescapable.

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There are clear allusions to Zechariah 14:5 (cf. also Dan 7; Joel 3:1-12); but the role of eschatological Judge is, like many other things (see on 13:37-39), transferred without hesitation from Yahweh to Jesus. The Son of Man will come "in his heavenly glory" (cf. 16:27; 24:30; 1Thess 4:16; 2Thess 1:8); for "nothing earthly could furnish the images for an adequate description" (Broadus). He sits on his throne, not only as Judge, but as King (see v. 34); for all of divine authority is mediated through him (28: 18; cf. 1Cor 15:25; Heb 12:2). (On the role of the angels, see 13:41-42; 24:31; 2Thess 1:78; Rev 14:17-20.)

32-33 Presupposed is the fulfillment of 24:14. "All the nations" (*panta ta ethne*, v. 32) means "all peoples" and clearly implies that "all the nations" includes more than Gentiles only (see on 28:18-20). As the gospel of the kingdom is preached to Gentiles as well as Jews (see on 1:1; 2:1-12; 3:15-16; 8:11), so also must all stand before the King. In the countryside sheep and goats mingled during the day. At night they were often separated: sheep tolerate the cool air, but goats have to be herded together for warmth. In sparse grazing areas the animals might be separated during the day as well. But now these well-known, simple, pastoral details are freighted with symbolism. The right hand is the place of power and honor.

34-40 The change from "Son of Man" (see excursus on 8:20) to "King" (vv. 31, 34) is not at all unnatural; for the Son of Man in Daniel 7:13-14 approaches the Ancient of Days to receive "a kingdom," and here that kingdom is consummated (see on 24:30). The kingship motif has long since been hinted at or, on occasion, made fairly explicit to certain persons (see on 3:2; 4:17; 5:35; 16:28; 19:28; 27:42). Yet Jesus still associates his work with his Father, something he loves to do (10:32-33; 11:25-27; 15:13; 16:17, 27; 18:10, 19; 20:23; 26:29, 53; and many references in John). He addresses the

sheep, "Come, you who are blessed *by my Father* " (v. 34). "Blessed" is not *makarioi* (as in 5:3) but *eulogemenoi* (as in 21:9; 23:39). They are "blessed" inasmuch as they now take their inheritance (Rom 8:17; Rev 21:7), which presupposes a relationship with the Father. That inheritance is the kingdom (see on 3:2) prepared for them "since the creation of the world" (John 17:24; Eph 1:4; 1 Peter 1:20). This glorious inheritance; the consummated kingdom, was the Father's plan for them from the beginning. The reason they are welcomed and invited to take their inheritance is that they have served the King's brothers (cf. Isa 58:7). The thought is antithetical to Paul only if we think this is all Matthew says and that all Paul says touches immediately on grace. Both assumptions are false: 2 Corinthians 5:10 is related to the thought of this parable, and Matthew has other things to say about the salvation of men and women (1:21; 11: 25-30; 20:28). The reason for admission to the kingdom in this parable is more

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evidential than causative. This is suggested by the surprise of the righteous (vv. 37-39; see further below). When he is questioned, the King replies that doing the deeds mentioned to the least of his brothers is equivalent to doing it to him (v. 40), and by implication to refuse help to the King's brothers is sacrilege (Calvin). There is no awkwardness in the scene that requires a disjunction between the sheep (the righteous) and "the least of these brothers of mine"; for in pronouncing sentence on each one, the King could point out surrounding brothers who had been compassionately treated.

41-45 The condemnation is even more awful than in 7:23. The "goats" are cursed: they are banished from the King's presence and sent to the eternal fire (v. 41). Hell is here described in categories familiar to Jews (see on 3:12; 5:22; 18:8; cf. Jude 7; Rev 20: 10-15). The kingdom was prepared for the righteous (v. 34). Hell was prepared for the Devil (see on 4:1) and his angels (demons; see on 8:31; cf. Jude 6; Rev 12:7) but now also serves as the doom of those guilty of the sins of omission of which Jesus here speaks: they have refused to show compassion to King Messiah through helping the least of his brothers. There is no significance in the fact that the "goats" address Jesus as "Lord" (v. 44); More important is the surprise of the sheep (vv. 37-39) and the goats (v. 44), a major part of the parable, though rarely discussed. Three things can be said with confidence. 1. Contrary to what some have suggested (e.g., Gay, "Judgment of Gentiles"), neither the sheep nor the goats are surprised at the place the King assigns them but at the reason he gives for this--viz., that they are admitted or excluded on the basis of how they treated Jesus. Thus there is no need to say the goats expected to be welcomed or the sheep expected to be rejected. 2. Zumstein (p. 348) is right to point out that the surprise of the righteous makes it impossible to think that works of righteousness win salvation. How the sheep and the goats treated Jesus' brothers was not for the purpose of being accepted or rejected

by the King. The sheep did not show love to gain an eschatological reward nor did the goats fail to show it to flout eschatological retribution. 3. The parable therefore presents a test eliminating the possibility of hypocrisy. If the goats had thought that their treatment of Jesus' "brothers" would gain them eschatological felicity, they would doubtless have treated them compassionately. But Jesus is interested in a righteousness of the whole person, a righteousness from the heart (see on 5:20; 13:52). As people respond to his disciples, or "Brothers," and align themselves with their distress and afflictions, they align themselves with the Messiah who identifies himself with them (v. 45). True disciples will love one another and serve the least brother with compassion; in so doing they unconsciously serve Christ. Those who have little sympathy for the gospel of the kingdom will remain indifferent and, in so

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doing, reject King Messiah. So Paul learned at his conversion! Determined to persecute Christians, he heard the Voice from the heavenly glory declaring, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting" (Acts 9:5). We must not think that the Bible is unconcerned for the poor and the oppressed (Deut 15:11; Matt 22:37-40; 26:11; Gal 2:10). But that is not the center of interest here.

46 The same word "eternal" (*aionion*) modifies "punishment" as modifies "life." *Aionion* can refer to life or punishment in the age to come, or it can be limited to the duration of the thing to which it refers (as in 21:19). But in apocalyptic and eschatological contexts, the word not only connotes "pertaining to the [messianic] age" but, because that age is always lived in God's presence, also "everlasting" (cf. BAGD, s.v.; and esp. DNTT, 3:826-33). (On penal notions in NT theology, cf. J.I. Packer, "What Did the Cross Achieve? The Logic of Penal Substitution," *Tyndale Bulletin* 25 [1974]: 3-45.)

The final separation of "sheep" and "goats" is a recurring theme in the NT, including Matthew (e.g., 7:21-23; 13:40-43). Some have argued that this doctrine has turned many people into infidels; but so have other Christian doctrines. The question is not how men respond to a doctrine but what Jesus and the NT writers actually teach about it. Human response is a secondary consideration and may reveal as much about us as about the doctrine being rejected. Nevertheless two things should be kept in mind: (1) as there are degrees of felicity and responsibility in the consummated kingdom (e.g., 25:14-30; cf. 1Cor 3:10-15), so also are there degrees of punishment (e.g., Matt 11:22; Luke 12:47-48); and (2) there is no shred of evidence in the NT that hell ever brings about genuine repentance. Sin continues as part of the punishment and the ground for it.

7. Transitional conclusion: fourth major passion prediction and the plot against Jesus (26:1-5)

1-2 For the other major passion predictions, see on 16:21; 17:22-23; 20:18-19. One last time Matthew uses the formula by which he brings all his discourses to a close (v. 1; see on 7:28-29). In the narrative line of Matthew, this pericope is a masterpiece of irony. The Judge of the universe, King Messiah, the glorious Son of Man, is about to be judged. After Jesus' warnings against hypocrisy (23:12-31) and his demand for righteousness that involves the whole person (25:31-46), the plot moves on by stealth and by a morally bankrupt expediency (26:4-5). The Passion begins. The Passover began Thursday afternoon with the slaughter of the lamb. "Two days" (v. 2) must be somewhat under forty-eight hours, or the "two days" would be "three

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days" (see on 12:40). According to the tentative chronology (see on 21:23-22:46; 23:1-36; 24:13), Jesus speaks these words on the Mount of Olives late Tuesday evening, which, by Jewish reckoning, would be the beginning of Wednesday. The "Son of Man" (see on 8:20) is here both glorious and suffering: as often, the themes merge. The Passover is two days away; and it is during that festival, Jesus now reveals for the first time, that the Son of Man will be handed over (for reasons to take the Greek present as a future, cf. Moule, *Idiom Book*, p. 7) to be crucified. Thus Jesus provides a framework for his disciples to interpret his death correctly after it happens--a framework alluded to a little more clearly in the institution of the Lord's Supper (vv. 17-29).

3-5 *Tote* ("then," v. 3) is such a loose connective (see on 2:7) that it does not mean that the Jewish leaders only began to plot after Jesus had delivered his final passion prediction (vv. 1-2). Certainly the opposition had been rising for some time (cf. 12:14; 21:45-46). On the other hand, by placing vv. 3-5 immediately after vv. 1-2, Matthew gives the narrative the flavor of God's sovereign control. The leaders may plot; but if Jesus dies, he dies as a voluntary Passover sacrifice (vv. 53-54; John 10:18). Matthew mentions the chief priests and elders, probably meaning the clerical and lay members of the Sanhedrin (see on 21:23). The word *aule* can mean "courtyard," "farm" or "farmyard," "temple court," or the "prince's court," hence, "palace" (NIV). Caiaphas is called the high priest in Matthew and John (11:49); Luke (3:2; Acts 4:6) specifies Annas. There is no real conflict. Annas was deposed by the secular authorities in A.D. 15 and replaced by Caiaphas, who lived and ruled till his death in

A.D. 36. But since according to the OT the high priest was not to be replaced till after his death, the transfer of power was illegal. Doubtless some continued to call either man "high priest." Certainly Annas, Caiaphas's father-in-law (John 18:13), continued to exercise great authority behind the scenes. This joint high priesthood is presupposed by Luke 3:2 and probably by John 18, where the most natural reading of the passage names Caiaphas

as high priest in v. 13 but Annas as high priest in v. 19 (cf. v. 24). The combination of *synago* ("assembled") and *bouleuomai* ("plotted") in vv. 34 strongly suggests an allusion to Psalm 31:13. Psalm 31 is the lament of a righteous sufferer and the source of Jesus' word from the cross in Luke 23:46 (cf. Moo, "Use of OT," pp. 234-35). Earlier that day the leaders had wanted to arrest Jesus but dared not do so for fear of the people (21:46; apparently earlier attempts had also failed, John 7: 32, 45-52). Now they decide to do away with Jesus (v. 4), recognizing that they must do this by *dolos* ("stealth," "cunning," "guile") so as not to excite the crowds and start a riot (v. 5). The leaders were right in fearing the people. Jerusalem's population swelled perhaps fivefold during the feast; and with religious fervor and national messianism at a high

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pitch, a spark might set off an explosion. They decided to suspend action; but Judas's offer to hand Jesus over at a time and place when the crowds were not present was too good an opportunity to pass up (vv. 14-16). Thus in God's providence the connection between Passover and Jesus' death that he had just predicted (vv. 12) came about.

VII. The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus (26:6-28:20)

A. The Passion (26:6-27:66)

1. Anointed at Bethany (26:6-13)

Because of the structure the five discourses impose on Matthew, some scholars (Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* ; Stendahl, *School* , pp. 20ff.) have thought that the passion and resurrection narratives (26:6-28:20) stand outside the main framework, perhaps as a kind of epilogue to balance the "prologue" (Matt 12). But I have argued (see Introduction, section 14; and on 28:18-20) that the familiar pattern of narrative elements followed by discourse teaching continues here in a *sixth* section. In this case, however, the "teaching" part of the narrative-and-teaching structure is continued by the church after Jesus' ascension (28:18-20). From another viewpoint the Passion and Resurrection must, as in all the Gospels, be seen as the climax toward which a great deal of the earlier narrative has been moving. As often noted, Matthew from now on follows Mark quite closely, though he omits Mark 14:51-52; 15:21b, adds certain bits (e.g., 27:3-10, 51-53), provides a completely independent ending, and offers a number of minor changes (e.g., some third-person reports in Mark are now given in direct speech). Many attempts have been made to identify what is exclusively Matthean in the passion narrative; but not a few such attempts suffer from reductionism. For

instance, Dahl (*Jesus in Memory* , pp. 37-51) holds that Matthew's account is designed to highlight differences between church and synagogue. The former has accepted Jesus as Messiah; the latter has rejected and condemned him (cf. also Trilling, pp. 66-74). Others think Jesus' passion in Matthew has an ethical cast, designed to help young disciples learn obedience (e.g., Strecker, *Weg* , pp. 183-84). Many others see various christological elements in Matthew's account. Barth (Bornkamm, *Tradition*) claims that by his suffering and death, Jesus fulfills God's redemptive plan and establishes the kingdom; and Kingsbury (*Matthew*) stresses the confession of Jesus as "Son of God." (For an excellent survey, cf. D. Senior, "The Passion Narrative in the Gospel of Matthew," in Didier, pp. 343-57; A. Descamps, in Didier, pp. 359-415.) Virtually every theme thought to be particularly strong in Matthew can be shown to be present in one or more of the other Gospels. For instance, that the events are all

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under God's control or that Jesus dies voluntarily is even more strongly attested in John than in Matthew. This is not to deny that Matthew has his own contribution to make. Instead it is to say that what Matthew offers is a great deal of commonly held theology, presented with a rich allusiveness and a complex intertwining of themes, subtly blended to lay stress on one part or another of the narrative, and capped with a few additions unknown in any other source. Thus it is best to examine Matthew's material inductively and trace its unfolding. The first pericope (vv. 6-13) is problematic because of its disputed relation to other Gospel accounts (Mark 14:39; John 12:28; cf. Luke 7:36-50). Some ancient commentators (e.g., Origen) thought there were three anointings: first, Luke 7:36-50, in Galilee; second, John 12:28, a few days earlier than the third, Mark 14:39 and Matthew 26:6-13. Most modern scholars believe that there was only one anointing and that variations in details arose during oral transmission and because of the hortatory use by each evangelist (see esp. R. Holst, "The One Anointing of Jesus: Another Application of the Form-Critical Method," JBL 95 [1976]: 435-46), but there is no consensus among these scholars as to the original setting or purpose of the story. On the whole a third alternative seems preferable: there were two anointings, one in Galilee (recorded by Luke) and the other in Bethany (recorded by Matthew, Mark, and John; so Broadus; McNeile; A. Legault, "An Application of the Form Critique Method to the Anointings in Galilee and Bethany," CBQ 16 [1954]: 131-45). The only real similarities between the two incidents are the anointing by a woman and the name Simon. But "Simon," like "Judas," was a very common name; and the two incidents differ in many details. In Luke the woman is a "sinner"; in the other account there is no mention of this, and John says she is Mary of Bethany. In Luke the host is a Pharisee, in a Galilean home; here the host is "Simon the leper," at a home in Bethany. In Luke the host is critical of the woman's actions; here the disciples criticize her. Small differences among Matthew, Mark, and John are fairly easily reconciled. John may place the incident where he does because he has just spoken of Bethany and will mention that town no more; but his links with the historical setting seem fairly strong and the most

natural interpretation of his account is that the anointing took place before the Triumphal Entry (John 12:2, 12). Mark and Matthew, on the other hand, provide no chronological connection, only a thematic one. Out of Jesus' rebuke to the disciples, Judas Iscariot sets his course of betrayal (cf. John 12:46). To object to this two--incident theory on the grounds that the methodology and many of the presuppositions "are out of date due to the scholarly advances in the disciplines of form and redaction criticism ... [so that there is] no trajectory or *tendency* to explain the complexities of the final editions of the stories" (Holst, "The One Anointing," p. 435, emphasis his) is to make these tools intrinsically incapable of recognizing two

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superficially similar incidents.

6-7 For Bethany (v. 6), see on 21:17. Contrary to common opinion, John does not say this took place at the home of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha; he may only mean that the well-known family was present. That Martha served is quite in keeping with village life at the time. Mark and Matthew set the scene in the home of "Simon the Leper," who was presumably cured--or else all there were violating Mosaic law. The action of the woman was not unprecedented: a distinguished rabbi might have been so honored. The evangelists stress the cost of the "perfume" (v. 7, most likely a fairly viscous fluid, possibly from the nard plant native to India), which was extracted from the thin-necked alabaster flask by snapping off the neck. According to John 12:3, the nard was worth about three hundred denarii--approximately a year's salary for a working man.

8-9 Matthew mentions "the disciples" (v. 8), Mark "some of those present," and John "Judas Iscariot." If the three accounts represent the same incident, it could be that, just as Peter voiced the sentiments of the group (v. 35) and was answered directly by Jesus, so with Judas. Matthew shows the disciples' failure to understand what is taking place, not only in the anointing, but also in who Jesus truly is and in the rush of events toward the Cross (see on 16:21-28; 17:22-23; 20:18-19). Doubtless there were thousands of really poor people within a few miles of this anointing. Whatever Judas's motives (John 12:6), some people at least were motivated by righteous indignation (v. 9); and thus in Jesus' view they revealed their distorted values and blindness as to the unique redemptive event about to take place.

10-11 The Greek *gnous de* ("aware of this") is also behind 16:8 ("Aware of their discussion"). It is possible that Jesus' knowledge is here supernatural; but perhaps the complaints were whispered and came to Jesus' attention

because they troubled the woman. Jesus begins his rebuke by accusing the disciples of "bothering" her (v. 10; the Greek idiom, found in the NT only here and in Luke 11:7; Gal 6:17, is a strong one). What they call waste, Jesus calls "a beautiful thing." Hills claim (*Matthew*) that Jesus' further statement (v. 11) "distinguishes between a good work (i.e., almsgiving) and one done with reference to himself while he is present (with his disciples, and also as the `living Christ' in the Matthean church)" entirely misses the point. Jesus distinguishes between giving to the poor and the extravagance lavished on himself *on the grounds that he will not always be there to receive it* . Far from referring to Jesus' spiritual presence in the church, Matthew distinguishes between Jesus' earthly presence and his postascension spiritual presence (28:20). His followers will always find poor people to help (cf. Deut 15:11); they will not always have the incarnate Jesus with them. Implicitly, the distinction Jesus makes is a high

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christological claim, for it not only shows that he foresees his impending departure but also that he himself, who is truly "gentle and humble in heart" (11:29), *deserves* this lavish outpouring of love and expense. Lane (*Mark* pp. 493-94) follows F.W. Danker, ("The Literary Unity of Mark 14, 125," JBL 85 [1966]: 467-72) in suggesting that Psalm 41 may also be alluded to here-- a psalm that speaks of the poor yet righteous sufferer who is betrayed by his closest friend, yet vindicated by God in the end. Jesus is the poor, righteous Sufferer par excellence; and the opportunity to help him in any way will soon be gone forever.

12 The anointing does not designate Jesus as Messiah but "prepares" him for his burial after dying the death of a criminal, for only in that circumstance would the customary anointing of the body be omitted (cf. D. Daube, "The Anointing at Bethany and Jesus' Burial," *ATHR* 32 [1950]: 187-88). Jesus' defense of the woman does not necessarily mean that the woman understood what she was doing, though it allows this. Jesus may well be using the anointing to intimate again his impending crucifixion (cf. v. 2).

13 Interpretations of this verse, with its solemn promise, differ. Jeremias (*Prayers* , pp. 112-24; *Promise* , p. 22) takes the saying as authentic but says that *hopou* here means not "wherever" (NIV) but "when"--i.e., when the triumphal news of this gospel is proclaimed by God's angel (cf. Rev 14:6-11) at the Parousia, before all the world, then her act will be remembered. Jeremias thus avoids any prediction by Jesus of a worldwide mission. But this uses "gospel" strangely and is too tightly linked with assumptions about what Jesus could or could not have said. Jesus did foresee Gentiles entering the kingdom (8:11), in response to his disciples' preaching, and that the word of God would be preached in the world (13:37; 24:14). Thus the groundwork

has already been laid for this saying and also for the Great Commission (28:18-20).

The most natural interpretation of v. 13 is that the woman and her deed would be remembered "wherever" the "gospel of the kingdom" would be preached (cf. Moore, pp. 203f.). Broadus remarks: "This very remarkable promise was already in process of fulfillment when John wrote his Gospel, probably sixty years afterwards; for he distinguishes this Bethany from the one beyond Jordan (John 1:28) by calling it (John 11:1f.) the village of Mary (placed first) and Martha; and then makes all definite and clear by adding, 'It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment', etc. He has not yet in his Gospel told the story of the anointing, but he assumes that it is familiar to all Christian readers."

2. Judas's betrayal agreement (26:14-16)

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All the Gospels speak of Judas's important role in Jesus' death (cf. Mark 14:10-11; Luke 22:34); but none explains what motives prompted his treachery. Like most human motives, his were mixed and doubtless included avarice and jealousy combined with profound disappointment that Jesus was not acting like the Messiah he had expected.

14-16 While *tote* ("then") is generally difficult to translate (see on 2:7), here (v. 14) there is probably a logical connection with the preceding pericope. In Judas's view Jesus was acting less and less regal and more and more like a defeatist on his way to death. If Matthew's anointing (vv. 6-13) is the same as the one in John 12:18, Judas may also have been smarting from Jesus' rebuke. Moreover, *if* his name ties him in with the Zealot movement (see on 10:4), then his disappointment is the more understandable, though not more excusable. He approaches the "chief priests" (see on 21:23). (One may ask in passing why Matthew makes no mention of the Pharisees if his antipathy toward them is as strong as some say.) The chief priests "counted out for him thirty silver coins" (v. 15); but Matthew's language (lit., "they weighed out to him"), unlike Mark's, is the distinctive language of the LXX and calls to mind Zechariah 11:12, to which Matthew will return in 27:3-10 (Moo, "Use of OT," pp. 187-89). In Zechariah 11, thirty pieces of silver is a paltry amount ("the handsome price at which they priced me" [v. 13] is ironic)--the value of a slave accidentally gored to death by an ox (Exod 21:32). That Jesus is lightly esteemed is reflected not only in his betrayal but in the low sum agreed on by Judas and the chief priests.

Excursus

The traditional date of Jesus' death has been A.D. 30. But Hoehner (

Chronological Aspects , pp. 65-93) has made a plausible case for A.D. 33, though the exact year has little effect on the exegesis. More important is the problem of the relationship between the synoptic Gospels and John. The Synoptics seem to indicate that Jesus and his disciples ate the Passover meal the evening before the Crucifixion (see esp. Mark 14: 12-16; 15:1-25, and parallels), whereas John seems to suggest that the Passover lamb was slaughtered at the moment Jesus was being put to death, which would of course mean that he and his disciples did not eat the Passover at the Last Supper (cf. esp. John 18:28; 19:14). The question is of more than chronological interest; for quite apart from harmonization of disparate historical records, the meaning of the Lord's Supper is affected by its connection with Passover. The literature about this question is immense. The aim of this excursus is to list some of the principal options and defend briefly the interpretation adopted here. Essential bibliography includes Hoehner, *Chronological*

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Aspects , pp. 81-90; Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words*, pp. 41ff.; SBK, 2:84752; A. Jaubert, *The Date of the Last Supper* (Staten Island, N.J.: Alba, 1965); E. Rucksalhl, *Chronology of the Last Days of Jesus* (New York: Desclee, 1965); G. Ogg, "The Chronology of the Last Supper," *Historicity and Chronology in the New Testament* ed.

D.E. Ninehain (London: SPCK, 1965), pp. 75-96; J.B. Segal, *The Hebrews Passover from the Earliest Times to A.D. 70* (London: OUP, 1963); S. Dockx, *Chronologies neotestamentaires et Vie de l'Eglise primitive* (Paris/Cembloux: Duculot, 1976), *passim* Marshall, *Last Supper* , esp. pp. 57ff., and Table 4 (pp. 184-85); Moo, "Use of OT," pp. 318-23; and the major commentaries on the Gospels. 1. Many scholars maintain that the discrepancies are not historically reconcilable-- that either the Synoptics are right or John is. There are many indications that the synoptists understand the Last Supper to be a Passover meal (see esp. Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words* , pp. 41-62; Marshall, *Last Supper* , pp. 59-62). Therefore attempts to turn the meal into something else a *Kiddush* (prayer meal), though this was unknown till several centuries later, or an *Habburah* (fellowship meal) eaten just before Passover--are not convincing. That the meal was not Passover supper but that such elements are read back into it is a counsel of despair, especially in light of the Passover associations as early as 1 Corinthians 11. Any theory of this kind depends on its explanation of why the discrepancy was introduced. If the Synoptics are historically correct (Jeremias), perhaps John changed the date to correspond with his Jesus--Passover-lamb typology; if John is historically correct (Ogg), perhaps the synoptists changed the date to make the Last Supper fit the Passover symbolism. Either way it is necessary to trace a theological development; but to date no such work has proved convincing. To argue that John has identified Jesus with the Passover lamb by so flimsy a device as changing two or three chronological references is not very credible in a book abounding with explanatory statements (1:42; 2:21-22; 12:38; 13:18 et al.). In fact, only the Synoptics mention the day the lambs were sacrificed (Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7). Finding theological motivation for a putative change in the Synoptics is even more problematic, because of the highly disputed

question of which evangelist preserves the oldest form of the institution of the lord's Supper (cf. Marshall, *Last Supper* , pp. 30ff.). 2. The second group of options brings together various theories of calendrical disputes in the first century. Jaubert argues that Jesus, as reported by the synoptists, was using a solar calendar known to us from Jubilees and apparently adopted at Qumran. Passover always occurred on *Tuesday* evening (14-15 Nisan); so Jesus and his men ate their Passover that night. But the "official" Pharisaic lunar calendar, followed by the fourth Gospel, places the Cross and the Sacrifice on the *lunar* 14-15 Nisan (Thursday-Friday, from nightfall to nightfall). In a somewhat different scheme some have argued that the Pharisees and Sadducees adopted different calendars

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(SBK), or that Jesus followed a Galilean (i.e., the Pharisees') calendar (Synoptics) and John reports on the basis of the Judean (Sadducees') equivalent (so Hoehner). At least all these theories based on diverse calendars join in affirming that Jesus and his disciples ate a Passover meal, whatever the date. But beyond that all these calendrical solutions have severe drawbacks. Part of Jaubert's view, for instance, turns on a third-century document (the *Didascalia*) concerned with justifying current fasting practices by appeal to Passion Week, rather than giving any useful historical information about that week. There is no evidence that Jesus followed a sectarian calendar; and quite certainly sacrifices were not offered in the temple on any day other than the "official" (lunar calendar) day. Moreover all four evangelists seem to agree that Jesus was arrested the evening before his crucifixion; and, despite objections, there was enough time between his arrest Thursday night and his crucifixion Friday to allow for the various events discussed below. Some of the other theories are highly suspect because of poor attestation in primary sources and are little more than last resorts. 3. The third approach is to attempt historical harmonization between John and the Synoptics as they stand. Of these attempts, one, pursued at various times in church history, is reasonably successful.

Matthew 26:17 speaks of "the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread." According to Leviticus 23:6 and Numbers 28:17, Jews were forbidden to use yeast in their bread for seven days from 15 Nisan. However, Exodus 12:18 says that yeast should be removed from the house on 14 Nisan; and there is some evidence that Jews customarily removed it at noon on 14 Nisan so as to have everything ready in good time. Thus Josephus can in one place speak of the beginning of the feast as occurring on 15 Nisan (Antiq. III, 248-50 [x.5]) and in another as occurring on 14 Nisan (War V, 99 [iii.1]; cf. also Antiq. II, 315-16 [xv.1]). Matthew seems to presuppose Thursday, 14 Nisan. According to Exodus 12:6 and Numbers 9:3, the Jews were directed to kill the paschal lamb "at twilight" (NIV), i.e., "between the two evenings," which in Jesus' day meant middle to late afternoon till sundown (Deut 16:6). Hence Josephus

(War VI, 423

[ix.3]) says the lambs were killed from the ninth to the eleventh hour (3:00 P.M. to 5:00

P.M.) and that on one occasion the number killed was 256,500--almost certainly an inflated figure. It seems, then, that Jesus' disciples entered the city shortly after noon on Thursday, 14 Nisan, procured the room, took a lamb to the temple court and killed it, roasted it with bitter herbs (Exod 12:8-9), and made other arrangements for the meal, including the purchase of wine and unleavened bread. Matthew 26:19 explicitly says that they "prepared the Passover." After nightfall on Thursday evening, when it was 15 Nisan, Jesus joined his disciples and they ate the Passover. On these points the Synoptics agree; and this places Jesus' death on Friday, 15 Nisan, probably about 3:00 P.M.

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The following passages in John are the most difficult to harmonize with this scheme.

John 13:1 "It was just before the Passover Feast" need not set the stage for the meal, which was about to be eaten, but for the footwashing. The footwashing took place before the "Passover Feast." **John 13:2** in the best texts does not contradict this: we should not lead "supper being ended" (KJV) but the "meal was being served" (NIV).

John 13:27 "What you are about to do, do quickly." John adds (13:29) that some of those present thought Jesus was telling Judas to buy what was necessary for the feast, or else give something to the poor. How could they think this, if they were just then *finishing* the feast? But one may also ask why, if the feast was still twenty-four hours away, anyone would think that there would be any rush to buy things. It is more reasonable to think that the disciples thought Judas needed to make some purchases for the *continuing* "Feast of Unleavened Bread"--e.g., some more unleavened bread. Since the next day, still Friday, 15 Nisan, was a high feast day and the day after a Sabbath, it was best to do things immediately. By Jewish reckoning the high feast day (15 Nisan) had begun that Thursday evening; but purchases were more than likely still possible, though inconvenient. After all one could buy necessities even on a Sabbath if it fell before a Passover, provided it was done by leaving something in trust rather than paying cash (M *Sanhedrin* 23:1). Moreover it was customary to give alms to the poor on Passover night. The temple gates were left open from midnight on, and beggars congregated there (cf. Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words* , p. 54; Ruckstuhl, *Last Days* , p. 132). On any other night it is difficult to imagine why the disciples would think Judas was being sent out for this purpose; the next day would have done as well.

John 18:28 Jesus stands before Pilate. "By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted

to be able to eat the Passover." The precise nature of this "ceremonial uncleanness" is highly disputed. Certainly Jews had to purify themselves for Passover (cf. 2 Chronicles 30:18; Ezra 6:19-21; cf. John 11:55; 12:1), and Pilate respected the Jews' scruples (John 18: 28-29). Contamination might come from the road dust brought in by foreign visitors (cf. *M Berakoth* 9:5), or from contact with Gentiles who had eaten or touched something unclean (e.g., a corpse or a menstruous woman). While there are numerous other possibilities, uncleanness from any of these sources could have been eliminated at the end of one day by a purifying wash at sundown (cf. Lev 15:5-11, 16-18; 22:57; cf. *j Peshahim* 36b, 92b); and then the Passover could be eaten. Thus close attention to John's text and the historical background makes it unlikely that John 18:28 can be used to defend the view that Jesus ate a meal the evening before Passover night. Instead, John 18:28 is more plausibly interpreted in one of two other ways. 1. It is possible that the priests had intended to eat the Passover that night; but, pressed by their temple duties and the thousands of sacrifices they had to perform, interrupted by Judas's unexpected offer of instant betrayal and delayed by the

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headlong pace of the ensuing judicial examinations, they still had not yet eaten their own Passover. This view is unlikely if Exodus 12:8-10, forbidding delay of the Passover dinner beyond midnight (M *Peshahim* 10:9; M *Zebahim* 5:8), was strictly interpreted. But these traditions may be late; and *Mekilta* on Exodus says that some rabbis interpreted Exodus 12:8-10 as being satisfied if the Passover were eaten by dawn. Even so, these Jewish leaders were being caught out by at least two or three hours. 2. More plausibly, "to eat the Passover" in John 18:28 may refer, not to the Passover meal itself, but to the continuing feast, and in particular to the *chagigah*, the feast-offering offered on the morning of the first full paschal day (cf. Num 28:18-19). This could explain the Jews' concern: ritual purification could be regained by nightfall, but not by the morning *chagigah*. Of course the *chagigah* could be eaten later in the week; but it is unlikely that the leaders, conscious of their public status, would be eager to delay it unless absolutely unavoidable. Deuteronomy 16:3 speaks of eating the Passover food of unleavened bread seven days. It may be, then, that the leaders wanted to avoid ritual uncleanness in order to continue full participation in the entire feast. Moreover this becomes the more plausible if our treatment of John 19:31 is correct. Morris's objection (*John*, pp. 778-79) that one may concede that "the Passover" can refer to Passover plus the Feast of Unleavened Bread but certainly not to the Feast of Unleavened Bread without the Passover meal may be setting up a straw man, for the interpretation being defended here does not claim that "the Passover" here refers to the Feast of Unleavened Bread *apart from* the Passover meal itself but to *the entire Passover festival*. Ritual uncleanness at this point in the festival would force temporary withdrawal from the festivities, from "eating the Passover."

John 19:14 Referring to the day of Jesus' crucifixion, the verse reads, "It was *paraskeue tou pascha*" (lit., "the Preparation of the Passover"). There is strong evidence to suggest that *paraskeue* ("Preparation [Day]") had already become a technical name for Friday, since Friday was normally the day on which one prepared for the Sabbath (Saturday); and we have no evidence

that the term was used in the evangelist's time to refer to the eve of any festal day other than the Sabbath (cf. C.C. Torrey, "The Date of the Crucifixion according to the Fourth Gospel," JBL 50 [1931]: 241). In this context, then, *tou pascha* means "of Passover Week" or "of the Passover festival." Several diverse strands of evidence support this meaning of *pascha*. Josephus (Antiq. XIV, 21 [ii.1]; cf. XVII, 213 [ix.3], War II, 10 [i.3]) uses "Passover to refer to the entire Feast of Unleavened Bread, unless he is directly dependent on an OT passage, when he tends to keep the two distinct" (Antiq. III, 248-51 [x.5]; cf. BAGD, s.v.). The same extended usage is found not only in M *Peshahim* 9:5 but in the NT (cf. Luke 22:1: "the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover," and probably also such passages as John 2:23, 6:4; 13:1; 19:31, 42). Thus John 19:14 most probably means "Friday in Passover Week" (hence NIV, "the day of Preparation of

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Passover Week"); and this understanding of *pascha* reinforces the comments on 18:28.

John 19:31 "And the next day was to be a special Sabbath." The most plausible view is that this does not refer to the day of the Passover meal but to Saturday, which would be considered a "high" or "special" Sabbath, not only because it fell during the Passover Feast, but because on the second paschal day, in this case a Sabbath (Saturday), the very important sheaf offering fell (cf. SBK, 2:582; Philo *De Specialibus Legibus* 2).

John 19:36 This verse refers to Exodus 12:46 to explain that Jesus, the Passover Lamb, did not have any of his bones broken; and some have thought this suggests that Jesus must have died while the lambs were being slaughtered. But this does not follow. John makes no such temporal connection; and the theological connection could spring either from the tradition regarding the witness of John the Baptist (John 1:29, 36) or from Jesus' words at the institution of the Lord's Supper, reported by the synoptists and Paul. It seems, then, that the fourth Gospel can be fairly harmonized with the Synoptics as far as the chronology of the Last Supper and Jesus' death are concerned. One final question remains. How could conscientious Jews be party to a trial and execution on a feast day, which, in terms of prohibitions and legal procedure, was to be regarded as a Sabbath (cf. Exod 12:16; Lev 23:7; Num 28:18; M *Betzah* 5:2)? But Mishnah (*Sanhedrin* 11:4) insists that the execution of a rebellious teacher *should* take place on one of the three principal feasts so that all the people would hear and fear (cf. also Deut 17:13; SBK, 2:826). Jeremias (*Eucharistic Words*, p. 79) examines other events reported in the Gospels (e.g., Jesus' burial) and alleged to be inconsistent with the sabbatical nature of Passover feast day and concludes that "the passion narratives portray no incident which could not have taken place on Nisan 15." There are numerous irregularities connected with the Sanhedrin trial; these, however, bear only marginally on the chronological problems and are treated in situ (see on 26:57-68).

Therefore we seem to be on safe ground in arguing that the Last Supper was a

Passover meal and that some of its associations must be seen in that light.

3. The Lord's Supper (26:17-30)

a. Preparations for the Passover (26:17-19)

17 Problems of chronology and some of the steps needed to prepare for the Passover are discussed in the preceding excursus. A few more details shed light on the situation. Toward midafternoon of Thursday, 14 Nisan, the lambs (one per "household"--a convenient group of perhaps ten or twelve people) would be brought to the temple court where the priests sacrificed them. The priests took the blood and passed it in basins

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along a line till it was poured out at the foot of the altar. They also burned the lambs' fat on the altar of burnt offerings. The singing of the *Hallel* (Pss 113-18) accompanied these steps. After sunset (i.e., now 15 Nisan), the "household" would gather in a home to eat the Passover lamb, which by this time would have been roasted with bitter herbs. The head of the household began the meal with the thanksgiving for that feast day (the Passover *Kiddush*) and for the wine, praying over the first of four cups. A preliminary course of greens and bitter herbs was, apparently, followed by the Passover *haggadah* --in which a boy would ask the meaning of all this, and the head of the household would explain the symbols in terms of the Exodus (cf. M *Pesahim* 10:4-5)--and the singing of the first part of the *Hallel* (Ps 113 or Pss 113-14). Though the precise order is disputed, apparently a second cup of wine introduced the main course, which was followed by a third cup, known as the "cup of blessing," accompanied by another prayer of thanksgiving. The participants then sang the rest of the *Hallel* (Pss 114-18 or 115-18) and probably drank a fourth cup of wine. Thus the preparations about which the disciples were asking were extensive.

18-19 Matthew's account is much simpler than Mark's. *Pros ton deina* ("to a certain man") refers to somebody one cannot or does not wish to name (v. 18). A case can be made that the home belonged to the father of John Mark (Zahn), but this is far from certain. It is not clear whether Jesus had made previous arrangements or called on supernatural knowledge (cf. 21:13). Either way Jesus was carefully taking charge of this final Passover meal. Jesus' words "My appointed time is near" were probably purposely ambiguous. To the disciples and the owner of the house, they might have implied Jesus' timing for the Passover meal and prior arrangements for it. In the light of Easter, the words must refer to the now impending Crucifixion, the fulfillment of Jesus mission. The disciples do as Jesus has "directed" (v.

19) or "instructed" them (*syntasso* is used in the NT only here and in 21:6; 27:10). *Syntasso* does not relate to discipleship, as many maintain, and still less to Jesus' authority in any abstract sense. Instead, it prepares the way for the Last Supper and Jesus' death and demonstrates that he is quietly and consciously taking the steps to complete his mission of tragedy and glory.

b. Prediction of the betrayal (26:20-25)

Matthew agrees with Mark in placing this scene before the words of institution, whereas Luke's briefer account gives the impression that Judas did not leave till after those words. We cannot be certain which Gospel has preserved the chronological sequence; perhaps the Lukan account betrays greater marks of condensation and

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topical arrangement. Matthew omits the allusion to Psalm 41:9 preserved in Mark 14: 18 but adds the brief exchange between Jesus and Judas in v. 25 (cf. Mark 14:18-21; Luke 22:21-23; John 13:21-30).

20-22 The Passover meal could not be eaten till after sundown; and for those living within Palestine, it had to be eaten inside Jerusalem or not at all. That is why we find Jesus reclining at a table in a room in the city "when evening came" (v. 20). Once the meal began--we do not know at what stage--Jesus solemnly says, "I tell you the truth, one of you will betray me" (v. 21). The disciples respond uniformly: one after another, as the enormity of the charge sinks in, each man asks, "Surely not I, Lord?" (v. 22).

23 NIV's "The one who has dipped his hand into the bowl" attempts to render an aorist participle (*ho embapsas*): contrast the present tense "one who dips" in Mark 14:20 (*ho embaptomenos*). Nevertheless NIV is misleading: it gives the impression that a particular "one" is in view, when in fact most if not all those present would have dipped into the same bowl as Jesus, given the eating styles of the day. Jesus' point is that the betrayer is a friend, someone close, someone sharing the common dish, thus heightening the enormity of the betrayal. The identification in John 13:22-30 probably took place just after this. If the main course, the roast lamb, was being eaten, the "bowl" would contain herbs and a fruit puree, which would be scooped out with bread.

24 For woe, see on 23:13; for Son of Man, see the excursus on 8:20. Here the Son of Man is simultaneously the glorious messianic figure who receives a kingdom and the Suffering Servant; indeed, the former highlights the evil of the person who hands him over to the latter role. No OT quotation explains "as it is written of him"; but one may think of OT passages such as Isaiah 53:79; Daniel 9:26, or else suppose that an entire prophetic typology (see on

2:15; 5:17-20) is in view, such as the Passover lamb, or some combination of the two. The divine necessity for the sacrifice of the Son of Man, grounded in the Word of God, does not excuse or mitigate the crime of betrayal (cf. Acts 1:16-18; 4:27-28). Nor is this an instance of divine "overruling" after the fact. Instead divine sovereignty and human responsibility are both involved in Judas's treason, the one effecting salvation and bringing redemption history to its fulfillment, the other answering the promptings of an evil heart. The one results in salvation from sin for Messiah's people (1:21), the other in personal and eternal ruin (cf. Carson, *Divine Sovereignty* , pp. 130-32).

25 This exchange, preserved only in Matthew, magnifies Judas's effrontery and brackets the words of institution (vv. 26-30) with the deceit of the betrayer (v. 25) and the empty boast of the one who would disown Jesus with oaths (vv. 31-35). Doubtless

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Judas felt he had to speak up; silence at this stage might have given him away to the others. Both here and in v. 49, Judas uses "Rabbi" (see on 8:19; 23:7), which, in the pre-Easter setting, was probably more unambiguously honorific than the versatile *kyrios* ("Lord," v. 22). As in v. 22, the form of the question (using *meti*) anticipates a negative answer; but the expected answer bears no necessary relation to the real answer (BDF, par. 427 [2]). Jesus response is identical in Greek to that in 26:64. It is affirmative but depends somewhat on spoken intonation for its full force. It could be taken to mean "You have said it, not I"; yet in fact it is enough of an affirmative to give Judas a jolt without removing all ambiguity from the ears of the other disciples. See further on v. 64.

c. The words of institution (26:26-30)

John records nothing of the words of institution. Matthew and Mark are fairly close in their formulations as are Luke and Paul; but Luke and Paul are sufficiently distinct to make it better to speak of three accounts instead of two (cf. Mark 14:23-26; Luke 22:19-20; 1Cor 11:23-25). The numerous text-critical variations confirm the tendency toward assimilation, especially in material at the heart of Christian liturgy. The literature attempting to trace Jesus' exact words and to determine which of the synoptic forms is most primitive is immense (cf. Jeremiah *Eucharistic Words* , pp. 96- 105; Marshall, *Last Supper* , pp. 30-56). Marshall's caution is sensible: "It must be emphasized that there is no good reason for supposing that any one of the three versions must necessarily be closer to the original form of the account than any of the others" (p. 38). We may go farther and ask why we must limit ourselves to just one "original account." There were eleven or twelve witnesses. We have repeatedly referred to the evangelists' interest in reporting Jesus' *ipsissima vox* , not his *ipsissima verba* (see note on 3:17). The various criteria for getting behind this (number of Semitisms, redaction-

critical distinctions) are inadequate. A good translation may reduce Semitisms but preserve authentic content; redaction criticism may determine that some statement is traditional but cannot prove authenticity or, conversely, that some formulation is reductional without disproving authenticity. We must be satisfied with the sources we have. (On the question of discerning by critical means Jesus' understanding of his own death, see esp. El. Schurmann, "Wie hat Jesus seinen Tod bestanden und verstanden? Eine methodenkritische Besinnung," in Hoffmann et al., *Orientierung* , pp. 325-63; and cf. Guthrie, *NT Theology* , pp. 436-48). Close comparison of Mark and Matthew reveals few distinctive elements in Matthew. The first evangelist, unlike Mark, has "eat" in v. 26 and replaces "they all drank from it" (Mark 14:23) with "Drink from it, all of you" (26:27). Matthew is

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usually judged more "liturgical" (Lohmeyer, Stendahl, Hill). This, though possible, is no more than a guess; we know almost nothing about first-century liturgy, and the variations are no more revealing in this regard than variations between Mark and Matthew in "nonliturgical sections." Appeal to liturgical influence is commonplace in current NT scholarship, and therefore the frequent assumption of such influence lends credibility to the claim; but it is in urgent need of reexamination. There may have been considerable diversity in the formulations used in church worship even *within each congregation*, as today in many nonliturgical denominations. Once again we must confess that our sources are inadequate for a confident conclusion. What is certain is that Jesus bids us commemorate, not his birth, nor his life, nor his miracles, but his death (cf. 20:28; 26: 26-29).

26 This is the second thing Matthew records that takes place "while they were eating" (cf. v. 21). Jesus takes *artos*, which can refer to "bread" generally (4:4; 6:11; 15:2, 26) but more commonly refers to a loaf or cake (4:3; 12:4; 14:17, 19; 15:33-34; 16:5-12). This loaf was unleavened (cf. Exod 12:15; 13:3, 7; Deut 16:3). He then gives thanks, probably with some such traditional formula as "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, who bringest forth bread from the earth." He breaks it, distributes it (if the imperfect indicative variant is original, it may imply that he personally gave the bread to each of them), and says, "Take and eat; this is my body." Few clauses of four words have evoked more debate than the last one. But three things must be said. 1. The words "this is my body" had no place in the Passover ritual; and as an innovation, they must have had stunning effect, an effect that would grow with the increased understanding gained after Easter. 2. Both the breaking and the distributing are probably significant: the bread (body) is broken, and all must partake of it. The sacrificial overtones are clearer in vv. 27-28, but the unambiguous sacrificial language connected with Jesus' blood requires that v. 26 be interpreted in a similar way. 3. Much of the debate on the force of "is" (In what sense is the bread Jesus' body?) is anachronistic. The verb itself has a wide semantic

range and proves very little. "Take this, it means my body" (Mof) has its attractions, though it is scarcely less ambiguous. But what must be remembered is that this is a Passover meal. The new rite Jesus institutes has links with redemption history. As the bread has just been broken, so will Jesus' body be broken; and just as the people of Israel associated their deliverance from Egypt with eating the paschal meal prescribed as a divine ordinance, so also Messiah's people are to associate Jesus' redemptive death with eating this bread by Jesus' authority.

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27 Assuming this is a Passover meal, this "cup" (with or without the article, by assimilation to Mark 14:23 or Luke 22:17 respectively) is probably the third, the "cup of blessing." Jesus again gives thanks, probably with some such prayer as "Blessed art thou, O Lord our God, King of the universe, Creator of the fruit of the vine." The wine was not grape juice, though it was customary to cut the wine with a double or triple quantity of water. Unlike Mark, Matthew records, not the performance, but the command: "Drink from it, all of you." As in Luke and Paul, this has the effect of describing exclusively what Jesus did, not what the disciples did. It should be noted that the participle *eucharistesas* ("gave thanks"), cognate with *euchariste* ("thanksgiving"), has given us the word "Eucharist." Some Protestants have avoided the term because of its associations with the traditional Roman Catholic mass, but the term itself is surely not objectionable.

28 This verse is rich in allusions; so attempts to narrow down its OT background to but one passage are reductionistic. "Blood" and "covenant" are found together in only two OT passages (Exod 24:8; Zech 9:11). Lindars (*Apologetic*, pp. 132-33) represents those who think the allusion must be to the latter, because allusion to the former would presuppose a typological exegesis not used so early in the tradition. But this fails to reckon with the extensive use of typology at Qumran, and the textual affinities are clearly in favor of Exodus 24:8 (see Gundry, *Use of OT*, pp. 57-58; Moo, "Use of OT," pp. 301ff.). The conclusion seems to be that, once again, we can penetrate near the heart of Jesus' own understanding of his relation to the OT (see on 5:17-20; 9:16-17; 11:9-13; 12:28; 13:52). And it is his understanding that sets a paradigm, not only for Matthew (see on 1:23; 2:15, 23; 8:16-17; 12:15-21; 13:35), but for other NT writers also (e.g., Heb 9:20). Equally without support are those theories that hold the covenant language to be original but not the blood-sacrifice language, making the primary allusion to Jeremiah 31:31-34; or that the sacrifice language is original but not the concept of covenant, making the primary allusion to the OT sacrificial system or to

Isaiah 52:13-53:12. The primary reference is to Exodus 24:8, though other allusions are certainly present. This means that Jesus understands the violent and sacrificial death he is about to undergo (i.e., his "blood"; cf. Morris, *Apostolic Preaching* , pp. 112-28; A.M. Stibbs, *The Meaning of the Word 'Blood' in Scripture* [London: Tyndale, 1954]) as the ratification of the covenant he is inaugurating with his people, even as Moses in Exodus 24:8 ratified the covenant of Sinai by the shedding of blood. "Covenant" is thus a crucial category (cf. DNTT, 1:365-72; Ridderbos, *Kingdom* , pp. 200-201; Morris, *Apostolic Preaching* , pp. 65-111; John J. Hughes, "Hebrews ix 15ff. and Galatians iii 15ff.; a Study in Covenant Practice and Procedure," *NovTest* 21 [1979]:

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27-96; cf. Heb 8:1-13; 9:11-10:18, 29; 13:20). The event through which Messiah saves his people from their sins (1:21) is his sacrificial death, and the resulting relation between God and the messianic community is definable in terms of covenant, an agreement with stipulations--promises of blessing and sustenance and with threats of cursing all brought here into legal force by the shedding of blood. Luke and Paul use the adjective "new" before covenant and thus allude to Jeremiah 31:31-34. Mark almost certainly omits the adjective; and the textual evidence for the word in Matthew is finely divided. But the passage from Jeremiah was almost certainly in Jesus' mind, as Matthew reports him, because "for the forgiveness of sins" reflects Jeremiah 31:34. Matthew has already shown his grasp of the significance of Jesus' allusion to covenant terminology in general and to the "new covenant" in particular; in 2:18 (see comments there) he cites Jeremiah 31 so as to show that he interprets the coming of Jesus as the real end of the Exile and the inauguration of the new covenant. The words *to peri pollon ekchynnomenon* ("which is poured out for many") could not fail to be understood as a reference to the Passover sacrifice in which so much blood had just been "poured out" (see on v. 17). They also connote other sacrificial implications (e.g., Lev 1-7, 16), especially significant since at least Jesus' crucifixion did entail much bloodshed. The Mishnah (*Pesahim* 10:6), which in this instance may well preserve traditions alive in Jesus' day, uses Exodus 24:8 to interpret the Passover wine as a metaphor for blood that seals a covenant between God and his people. Jeremias (*Eucharistic Words* , pp. 222ff.) theorizes that the reason no mention is made of the Passover lamb in our accounts is that Jesus had already identified himself as the Lamb. This is possible because the failure to mention the lamb in any of the Synoptics is startling. But like most arguments from silence, it falls short of proof. Yet the allusions to the Passover--not least being the timing of the Last Supper--are cumulatively compelling. It appears, then, that Jesus understands the covenant he is introducing to be the fulfillment of Jeremiah's prophecies and the antitype of the Sinai covenant. His sacrifice is thus foretold both in redemption history and in the prophetic word. The Exodus becomes a

"type" of a new and greater deliverance; and as the people of God in the OT prospectively celebrated in the first Passover their escape from Egypt, anticipating their arrival in the Promised Land, so the people of God here prospectively celebrate their deliverance from sin and bondage, anticipating the coming kingdom (see on v. 29). Some take the preposition *peri* ("for [many]") to mean "on account of many" or "because of many" (BDF, par. 229 [1]). But it is more likely equivalent in meaning to the *hyper* (NIV, "for [many]") of the parallel in Mark (Moule, *Idiom Book* , p. 63; Zerwick, par. 96) and possibly has the force of *anti* in 20:28 (cf. Morris, *Apostolic Preaching* , pp. 63, 172, 204, 206). As Karl Barth noted, the three prepositions point to

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Christ's "activity as our Representative and Substitute They cannot be understood if--quite apart from the particular view of the atonement made in Him which dominates these passages--we do not see that in general these prepositions speak of a place which ought to be ours, that we ought to have taken this place, that we have been taken from it, that it is occupied by another, that this other acts in this place as only He can, in our cause and interest" (cited in Morris, *Apostolic Preaching* , p. 63). For comments on "many," see on 20:28. "For the forgiveness of sins" (cf. Heb 9:22) occurs in the words of institution only in Matthew and alludes to Jeremiah 31:31-34. Because the identical phrase is found in Mark 1:4 to describe the purpose of John's baptism but is omitted from the parallel in Matthew (3:12, 11), many suggest that Matthew purposely suppressed the phrase there because he wanted to attach it here and connect it exclusively to the work of Jesus Messiah. This is possible: NT writers understand that repentance and forgiveness of sin are tied together as tightly in the OT as in the period following Jesus' death, even though Jesus' death provides the real basis for forgiveness, a basis long promised by revelatory word, cultic act, and redemptive event. In one sense Mark might be willing to speak of John's baptism as a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins," while in another Matthew might be more interested in the ultimate ground of that "forgiveness of sin" and so reserve the phrase for Jesus. But several cautions should be kept in mind. 1. Matthew so regularly condenses Mark that it is usually risky to base too much on an omission. 2. Even in Matthew, John's baptism requires repentance (3:11) that demands confession of sin (3:6). It is hard to believe that Matthew thought that those who thus repented and confessed their sins were not forgiven! 3. Matthew may have slightly abbreviated the report of the Baptist's preaching (3:2) to maintain formal similarity to Jesus' early preaching (4:17). 4. In any case, a more important connection with v. 28 is to be found in 1:21. It is by Jesus' death, by the pouring out of his blood, that he will save his people from their sins. One more OT allusion is worth emphasizing. As in 20:28, it is very probable that Jesus is also portraying

himself as Isaiahs Suffering Servant (cf. Moo, "Use of OT," pp. 127-32; France, "Servant of the Lord," pp. 37-39). This is based on three things: (1) "my blood of the covenant" calls to mind that the servant is twice presented as "a covenant for the people" (Isa 42:6; 49:8)--i.e., he will reestablish the covenant; (2) *ekehynnomēnon* ("poured out") may well reflect Isaiah 53:12; and (3) "for many" again recalls the work of the Servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 (see on 20:28).

29 The "fruit of the vine" is a common Jewish way of referring in prayers to wine (cf.

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M Berakoth 6:1). Contrary to Jeremias (*Eucharistic Words* , pp. 207-18), Jesus' promise does not mean that he is abstaining from the cup of wine in this first "Lord's Supper" (cf. Hill, *Matthew*). Rather, just as the first Passover looks forward not only to deliverance but to settlement in the land, so also the Lord's Supper looks forward to deliverance and life in the consummated kingdom. The disciples will keep this celebration till Jesus comes (cf. 1Cor 11:26); but Jesus will not participate in it with them till the consummation, when he will sit down with them at the messianic banquet (Isa 25:6; 1 Enoch 72:14; see on Matt 8:11; cf. Luke 22:29-30) in his Father's kingdom, which is equally Jesus' kingdom (cf. Luke 22:16, 18, 29-30; see on Matt 16: 28; 25:31, 34). This point is greatly strengthened if we assume that Jesus speaks after drinking the *fourth cup* (see on v. 17). The four cups were meant to correspond to the fourfold promise of Exodus 6:6-7. The third cup, the "cup of blessing" used by Jesus in the words of institution, is thus associated with redemption (Exod 6:6); but the fourth cup corresponds to the promise "I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God" (Exod 6:7; cf. Daube, *New Testament* , pp. 330-31; Lane, *Mark* , pp. 508-9). Thus Jesus is simultaneously pledging that he will drink the "bitter cup" immediately ahead of him and vowing not to drink the cup of consummation, the cup that promises the divine presence, till the kingdom in all its fullness has been ushered in. Then he will drink the cup with his people. This is a veiled farewell and implies a sustained absence (see on 24:14, 25:5, 19). The Lord's Supper therefore points both to the past and to the future, both to Jesus' sacrifice at Calvary and to the messianic banquet.

30 The "hymn" normally sung was the last part of the *Hallel* (Pss 114-18 or 115-18). It was sung antiphonally: Jesus as the leader would sing the lines, and his followers would respond with "Hallelujah!" Parts of it must have been deeply moving to the disciples when after the Resurrection they

remembered that Jesus sang words pledging that he would keep his vows (Ps 116:12-13), ultimately triumph despite rejection (Ps 118), and call all nations to praise Yahweh and his covenant love (Ps 117). It may be that Jewish exegesis had already interpreted Psalm 118:25-26 as a reference to Messiah's parousia (Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words* , pp. 255-62).

4. Prediction of abandonment and denial (26:31-35)

Mark (14:27-31) and Matthew place this pericope after Jesus and his disciples have left the Upper Room. Luke (21:31-38) implies that its contents occur before the departure for the Mount of Olives; John (13:36-38) clearly places it during the supper and before the farewell discourse. The abruptness with which Mark begins this pericope suggests that he displaced it, perhaps to keep intact the theological coherence

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of the preceding pericope. Matthew does the same thing and for the same reason: this use of *tote* ("then") is inconsequential (see on 2:7). It seems likely, therefore, that John gives us the historical sequence at this point, while Matthew and Mark place this pericope where it will emphasize the gravity of the disciples' defection and Peter's denial. Matthew adds some touches, such as the personal pronouns in v. 31 (emphasis mine): " *You* will all fall away *on account of me* " -- *you* , of all people, on account of *me* , your Messiah, by your own confession. Moreover in laying out in advance much of the tragedy of the coming hours, the pericope shows that Jesus is not a blind victim of fate but a voluntary sacrifice; and simultaneously he is preparing his disciples for their dark night of doubt.

31 "This very night" makes clear how very soon the disciples' defection and Peter's denial will happen. The intimacy of the Last Supper is shortly to be replaced by disloyalty and cowardice. The disciples will all "fall away" on account of Jesus: they will find him an obstacle to devotion and will forsake him (for the verb, see on 5:29). As the quotation from Zechariah makes clear, their falling away is related to the "striking" of the Shepherd. Jesus has repeatedly predicted his death and resurrection, but his disciples are still unable to grasp how such things could happen to the Messiah to whom they have been looking (16:21-23; 17:22-23; see on v. 33). Yet Jesus' words "for it is written" show that the disciples' defection, though tragic and irresponsible, does not fall outside God's sovereign plan. The textual questions relating to Zechariah 13:7 are complex (Gundry, *Use of OT* , pp. 25-28; Moo, "Use of OT," pp. 182ff.; cf. John 16:32): apparently the quotation rests on a pre-Christian recension of the LXX or on the MT or on some combination of both. There is no reason to think that Zechariah's words have been altered to fit the events of Jesus' passion and thereby accord with Christian tradition to make the "prophecy" after the event seem to be scriptural (Jeremiah *NT Theology* , pp. 297f.). The change to the future *pataxo* ("I will strike") from the imperative *pataxon* ("Strike") is the only word that provides nominal

support for this theory. However, the grammatical change was probably necessitated by the omission of a definite subject when the Zechariah passage was condensed (France, *Jesus* , pp. 107-8), rather than by the pressure of an *ex eventu* "prophecy" or by a stress on the divine initiative for theological reasons--something already accomplished by "it is written." Even if it is the "sword" that does the striking in MT, it does so at Yahweh's command. Matthew alone (cf. Mark) includes "of the flock" in the second line of the quotation (following LXX); but to what does "the flock" refer? In light of the context of Zechariah 13:16, many have suggested that a wicked prophet is in view there. But this is incompatible with "the man who is close to me [i.e., to Yahweh]" (13:7b). Instead, Yahweh pictures a day when, owing to the prevailing apostasy, the Shepherd who is

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close to him (as opposed to the false shepherd in Zech 11) is cut down and the sheep scattered. In 13:8-9 most of the sheep perish; but one-third are left, after being refined, to become "my people"--those who will say, "Yahweh is our God." If Jesus' quotation of Zechariah in the Gospels presupposes the full context of Zechariah 13:7, then the disciples themselves join Israel, the sheep of God, in being scattered as the result of the "striking" of the Shepherd. Their falling away "this very night" continues to the Cross and beyond and is emblematic of the coming dispersion of the whole nation. But a purified remnant, a "third," will survive the refining and make up the people of God, "my people." Thus at the very instant Jesus' disciples show by their scattering that they temporarily side with the unbelieving and apostate nation, God is taking action to make them his true people.

32 Lohmeyer (*Matthaus*) originated the notion that this verse refers to Jesus' future parousia, not his resurrection appearances. The Parousia is to take place, Lohmeyer thinks, in Galilee. But R.H. Stein (A Short Note on Mark xiv.28 and xvi.7, NTS 20

[1974]: 445-52) has conclusively shown that v. 32 must refer to a resurrection appearance. Others see in the verb *proago* (which may mean either "will go ahead" [NIV] or "will lead" [as does a shepherd]) a continuation of the shepherd imagery. But the most natural way to take the verse, and one that vitiates the frequent insistence that it ill suits its context, is that of Stonehouse (*Witness* , pp. 170-73). The prediction that the shepherd will be stricken and the sheep scattered might suggest, apart from any further word, that the disciples would return disconsolate to their homes in Galilee, leaving Jesus behind in a grave in Judea. But this new word (v. 32) promises that after Jesus has risen, he will arrive in Galilee before they get there: he will "go ahead of [them]."

33 Some have objected that Jesus' prediction of the scattering of *all* the

disciples (v.

31) conflicts with Peter's following Jesus into the high priest's courtyard (e.g., G. Klein, "Die Verleugnung des Petrus: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 58 [1961]: 297; M. Wilcox, "The Denial-Sequence in Mark xiv.26-31, 66-72," NTS 17 [1970-71]: 426-36). But this overlooks the fact that all the

disciples actually fled (v. 56) and that Peter followed only "at a distance" (v. 58) and then denied Jesus. At the end of the day, all the sheep were scattered, all had fallen away. Peter does not respond directly to Jesus' quotation, nor to his promise to meet him in Galilee. But this does not mean that vv. 31b-32 are misplaced redactional additions, for Peter's reply is psychologically convincing. On the one hand, he has learned more about Jesus than he knew at Caesarea Philippi (16:21-28); and as a result he is able to accept the idea of suffering for both Jesus and himself. On the other hand, his notion of

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suffering is bound up with the heroism of men like the Maccabean martyrs, not with voluntary sacrifice hence v. 51 (cf. John 8:10). He is prepared for suffering but is not yet ready for what he thinks of as defeat. More important, he reacts on a primal level to Jesus' prediction in v. 31a: "It would be natural for him to be too taken up with the implied slur on his loyalty to pay much attention to anything else" (Cranfield, *Mark* , p. 429).

34 Jesus' "I tell you the truth" (see on 5:18) introduces another warning about how near Peter's own defection is: "this very night," indeed, "before the rooster crows." If the idea of *two* cock crowings, preserved only in certain MSS of Mark 14:30, 68, 72, is original (and it may not be: cf. John W. Wenham, "How Many Cock-Crowings? The Problem of Harmonistic Text-Variants," NTS 25 [1978-79]: 523-25), then the "difference is the same as that between saying `before the bell rings' and `before the second bell rings' (for church or dinner)" (Alexander). Apparently it was usual for roosters in Palestine to crow about 12:30, 1:30, and 2:30 A.M. (Hans Kosmala, "The Time of the Cock-Crow," *Annual of Swedish Theological Institute* 2 [1963]: 118-20; 6 [1967-68]: 132-34); so the Romans gave the term "cock-crow" to the watch from 12:00 to 3:00 A.M. Despite Peter's claims of undeviating loyalty (v. 33), Jesus says that Peter is within hours of disowning (same verb as in 16:24) him three times.

35 The language of Peter's protest (the rare subjunctive of *dei*) shows that he does not really think that Jesus' death was likely; he still has his visions of heroism. Nor is he alone in his brash protestations of loyalty--only quicker and more vehement than his peers.

5. Gethsemane (26:36-46)

Scholars usually see in this pericope an exhortation to foster vigilance and prayerfulness in the face of temptation (cf. Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:40-46; also, John 12:28-33; 13:21; 16:32). Though this is doubtless present, far more central is the light the pericope sheds on Jesus' perception of what he is about to do. If the exegesis of v. 39 is correct, we must ask why this Jesus who has for so long calmly faced the prospect of death (16:21; 17:22-23; 20:17-19; 26:12) should now seem to be less courageous than the Maccabean martyrs or the many thousands of his disciples who have faced martyrdom with great courage. The anguish in Gethsemane is not lightly to be passed over: three times Jesus prayed in deep emotional distress. The answer is found even in this first Gospel. The pericope must be interpreted in light of 1:21 and 20:28, on the one hand, and, on the other, in light of the reader's recognition that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, "God with us," whose sacrificial death inaugurates the new

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covenant (vv. 26-30) and redeems his people from their sins. Small wonder that NT writers make much of Jesus' unique and redemptive death (Rom 3:21-26; 4:25; 5:6, 9; 1Cor 1:23; 2Cor 5:21; Heb 2:18; 4:15; 5:79; 1 Peter 2:24). Jesus did not suffer martyrdom. Can anyone imagine the words of 26:53 on the lips of a Maccabean martyr? Many of Jesus' followers throughout the centuries willingly suffer martyrdom because of the strength Jesus' death and resurrection give them. But Jesus went to his death knowing that it was his Father's will that he face death completely alone (27:46) as the sacrificial, wrath-averting Passover Lamb. As his death was unique, so also his anguish; and our best response to it is hushed worship (see K. Schilder, *Christ in His Suffering* , tr. H. Zylstra [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1938], pp. 289-309).

36-38 "Gethsemane" (v. 36) means "oil press," and here probably gave the name to the *chorion* ("place"), usually a field or an enclosed piece of ground (cf. John 18:4 "went out") to which it was attached. Jesus and his disciples often frequented this spot (John 18:12) on the western slopes of Mount Olivet, separated from Jerusalem by the Kidron. Eight disciples remain at some distance, perhaps outside the enclosure, and the inner three join him (v. 37). Jesus with stern self-control has so far masked his anguish; now he begins "to be sorrowful [*lypeisthai* , which connotes deep grief] and troubled"

(*ademonein* , found in the NT only here, in the parallel in Mark 14:33, and in Philippians 2:26, and connoting deep distress). Jesus' next words--"My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow" (v. 38)--are almost a quotation from the refrain of Pss 42-43 (LXX). The phrase *heos thanatou* ("to the point of death") is so common in the LXX (e.g., Isa 38:1) that it should not be thought an allusion to Jonah 4:9 (contra Gundry, *Use of OT* , p. 59) but "merely a reflection of the OT-tinged language which Jesus used" (Moo, "Use of OT," p. 241). It suggests a sorrow so deep it almost kills (Taylor, *Mark* , p. 553; Hill, *Matthew* ; and many others), not that Jesus is so

sorrowful he would rather be dead (contra Bultmann, TDNT, 4:323, n. 2). Having revealed his deepest emotions and thus given his disciples the most compelling of reasons to do what he asks, he tells them to stay and "keep watch with me" while he goes a little farther on to pray alone. His words could be taken as no more than a request to protect him from intrusion in his deep anguish (so many older commentaries). But his words "with me" (only in Matthew) imply that he wanted them to keep awake and go on praying.

39 Jesus prays, prostrate in his intense anguish. He addresses God as "My Father" (see on 6:9); and Mark preserves the Aramaic Abba. The "cup" (*poterion*) refers not only to suffering and death but, as often in the OT (Pss 11:6 ["lot," NIV]; 75:78; Isa 51:19, 22; Jer 25:15-16, 27-29; 49:12; 51:57; Lam 4:21; Ezek 23:31-34; Hab 2:16; Zech

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12:2; cf. Job 21:20; Ps 60:3; Isa 63:6; Obad 16), also to God's wrath (cf. C.E.B. Cranfield, "The Cup Metaphor in Mark xiv.36 and Parallels," *ExpT* 59 [1947-48]: 137f.; Goppelt, *TDNT*, 6:153; Blaising, pp. 339-40). The frequent OT allusions in the passion narrative demand an OT meaning for *poterion* instead of "cup of death" in other Jewish literature. Thus the meaning here is fuller than in 20:22-23 and anticipates 27:46. In one sense all things are possible with God (see on 19:26; Mark 14:36), in another some things are impossible. The two passages (Mark 14:36 and Matt 26-39) complement each other: all things are possible with God, and so, if it be morally consistent with the Father's redeeming purpose that this "cup" (Matthew) or "hour" (Mark) be taken from Jesus, that is what he deeply desires. But more deeply still, Jesus desires to do his Father's will. Though the precise wording of the synoptic accounts varies somewhat, if the prayer was of some duration ("one hour," v. 40), and if Jesus after his resurrection told his disciples its contents, or if the disciples were within earshot, some variation in the tradition is not surprising. Jesus' deep commitment to his Father's will cannot be doubted. But in this crisis, the worst since 4: 1-11, Jesus is tempted to seek an alternative to sin-bearing suffering as the route by which to fulfill his Father's redemptive purposes. As with his self-confessed ignorance in 24:36, Jesus may simply not have known whether any other way was possible. He prays in agony; and though he is supernaturally strengthened (Luke 22:43), he learns only that the Cross is unavoidable if he is to obey his Father's will. Blaising has recently proposed an alternative exegesis. He observes that, whatever the wording in the Synoptics, the conditional clause is grammatically "first class," a so-called real condition, which he interprets as follows: "This class of condition assumes the condition to be a reality and the conclusion follows logically and naturally from that assumption" (p. 337, of *RHG*, p. 1007). From this Blaising concludes that what Jesus is asking for is possible with the Father and that Jesus knows it; so he cannot be asking that the cup (i.e., his passion) not come to him, an impossibility, for Jesus has repeatedly spoken of it, but that the cup not *remain* with him. In other words Jesus is tempted to fear that the "Cup" of

God's wrath will not pass away from him after he has drunk it but that it will consume him forever, and there would be no resurrection. He prays with faith, because he knows it is the Father's will: "Father, as you have promised in your Word, take the cup from me after I drink it; yet this is not my will alone, it is your will that this be done" (Blaising, p. 343). This interpretation has certain attractions; yet along with several questionable details, it has two insuperable difficulties. 1. Despite Blaising's appeal to A.T. Robertson (i.e., RHG, p. 1007), a first-class condition in Greek does not necessarily assume the reality of the protasis but only that the protasis is as real as the apodosis. The speaker assumes the reality of the protasis

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for the sake of argument but does not thereby indicate that the condition described in the protasis is in fact real. Were Blaising to apply his understanding of first-class conditional clauses to Matthew 12:26-27; Mark 3:24-26, the result would be theologically incoherent, as Robertson himself recognizes (RHG, p. 1008; cf. Zerwick, pars. 303ff.). 2. Blaising introduces a novel interpretation, but only the traditional view continues the line of temptation Jesus has earlier found most difficult to confront--viz., the temptation to avoid the Cross (see on 4:1-11; 16:21-23).

40-41 Jesus returns to his disciples--i.e., the inner three and finds them sleeping (v. 40; Luke 22:45 adds "exhausted from sorrow"). Jesus' question is addressed to Peter but is in the plural and therefore includes them all (see on 16:16; 26:33-35). Though "one hour" need not be exact, it certainly indicates that Jesus has been praying for some time. "Watch and pray" could be a hendiadys (cf. Notes); alternatively it may suggest two components: spiritual alertness and intercession. It is doubtful that "so that you will not fall into temptation" (v. 41) means only "so that you will stay awake and not fall into the temptation to sleep." Indeed, Jesus' prediction of their spiritual defection that "very night" (v. 31) should have served as an urgent call to prayer. So now he tells them that only urgent prayer will save them from falling into the coming "temptation" (see on 4:1; 6:13). Even in his own extremity, when he needs and seeks his Father's face, Jesus thinks of the impending but much lesser trial his followers will face. He speaks compassionately: "The spirit is willing, but the body [*sarx* `flesh'] is weak." This is not a reference to the Holy Spirit but makes a "distinction between man's physical weakness and the noble desires of his will" (Hill, *Matthew* ; id., *Greek Words* , p. 242; Bonnard). But though compassionate, these words, which doubtless hark back to v. 35, are not an excuse but a warning and incentive (Broadus). Spiritual eagerness is often accompanied by carnal

weakness--a danger amply experienced by successive generations of Christians.

42-44 Some interpreters have seen a certain progression in Jesus' three prayers, but Matthew says that Jesus said "the same thing" (v. 44). The variations between v. 39 and v. 42 must therefore be incidental. "May your will be done" mirrors one of the petitions of the prayer Jesus taught his disciples (6:10). As Jesus learned obedience (Heb 5:79), so he became the supreme model for his own teaching. In the first garden "Not your will but mine" changed Paradise to desert and brought man from Eden to Gethsemane. Now "Not my will but yours" brings anguish to the man who prays it but transforms the desert into the kingdom and brings man from Gethsemane to the gates of glory.

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45-46 The word *loipon* as an adverb does not naturally mean "still" (NIV, v. 45) or "meanwhile" but points to the future ("henceforth") or is inferential ("it follows that"). Therefore Jesus' words should not be taken as a question (NIV) but as a gently ironic command (cf. KJV, "Sleep on now, and take your rest"; cf. the irony in 23:23; cf. Moule, *Idiom Book*, p. 161). The hour of the Passion is near: it is too late to pray and gain strength for the temptations ahead. His disciples may as well sleep. The Son of Man (see on 8:20) is betrayed into the hands of sinners: he who is the resplendent, messianic King takes the path of suffering. Doubtless Jesus could see and hear the party approaching as it crossed the Kidron with torches and climbed up the path to Gethsemane. The sleepers for whom he would die have lost their opportunity to gain strength through prayer. By contrast Jesus has prayed in agony but now rises with poise and advances to meet his betrayer.

6. *The arrest* (26:47-56)

47 Judas Iscariot (see on 10:4; 26:14-16, 25; 27:3-10) arrived with armed men. What he received payment for was probably information as to where Jesus could be arrested in a quiet setting with little danger of mob violence. He may have first led the "large crowd" to the Upper Room and, finding it empty, surmised where Jesus and his disciples had gone (cf. John 18:13). The "large crowd" accompanying Judas had been sent "from the chief priests and the elders of the people"--the clergy and lay members of the Sanhedrin (see on 21:23). Luke 22:52 says some chief priests and elders accompanied the crowd. The military terms in John 18:3, 12 suggest that some Roman soldiers were among the number along with temple police and some others. Although many scholars have argued that no Romans were involved at this time, it is not unlikely that some were present. Especially during the feasts the Romans took extra pains to ensure public order; so a request for a small

detachment from the cohort would not likely be turned down. Thus Pilate might have had some inkling of the plot from the beginning, and if he shared it with his wife, it might help explain her dream (27:19).

48-50 The need for pointing out the right man was especially acute, not only because it was dark, but because, in a time long before photography, the faces of even great celebrities would not be nearly so widely known as today. To identify Jesus, Judas chose the kiss (thereby turning it into a symbol of betrayal. "Greetings, Rabbi!" (v. 49; see on 8:19; 23:8), a tragic mockery, was for the crowd's ears, not Jesus'. "Friend" (v. 50) is an openhearted but not intimate greeting. The next words, *eph ho parei* ("what you came for"), are notoriously ambiguous. If the relative pronoun *ho* functions as a direct interrogative pronoun, the expression means "Why [lit., `for what'] have you come?" (NIV mg.; cf. Zerwick, par. 223; Turner, *Insights* , pp. 6971;

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id., *Syntax* , pp. 49-50; BDF, pars. 495-96), and some verb like "do" must be supplied (NIV text; cf. BDF, par. 300 [2]). If the clause is an imperatival statement its force is like John 13:27 and reflects Jesus' newly regained poise and his sovereignty in these events. If it is a question, it elicits no information but administers a rebuke steeped in the irony of professed ignorance that knows very well why Judas has come.

51-54 "With that" (v. 51) is NIV's acceptable effort to render *idou* in this context (cf. "Look," v. 45; "Here," v. 46; untr., v. 47; see on 1:20). Many are skeptical of the authenticity of this passage, finding it out of keeping with the restrained spirit of the pericope as a whole and wondering why the offending disciple was not arrested. Moreover it is the latest Gospel that names Jesus' sword-wielding disciple (Peter) and his target (Malchus [John 18:10]). This might suggest that the story was growing and gaining accretions. Noteworthy are the following points. 1. The restraint belongs to Jesus, not the pericope. Moreover, we have already seen that earlier protestations of loyalty (vv. 33-35) were probably grounded in some form of nationalistic messianism; so Peter's response is scarcely unexpected. 2. His response is psychologically convincing. After repeated warnings of defection, Peter may have felt that the crucial test of loyalty had arrived. He is magnificent and pathetic-magnificent because he rushes in to defend Jesus with characteristic courage and impetuosity, pathetic because his courage evaporates when Jesus undoes Peter's damage, forbids violence, and faces the Passion without resisting. 3. However one interprets the difficult verses in Luke 22:36-38, they show that the disciples had two swords with them, and if Peter actually wielded the sword other disciples had the same idea (Luke 22:49). 4. There were probably many reasons why Peter was not arrested. Jesus not only quickly cooled the situation but healed the wound (omitted by Matthew). It was one thing to escort a nonresisting prisoner quietly back to the city; it was another to escort twelve men, eleven of them frightened and ready to fight. In any case before decisive action could be taken, the disciples fled in the

darkness (v. 56). 5. Over the centuries pious Christian imaginations have provided names for those not named in the NT (cf. B.M. Metzger, "Names for the Nameless in the New Testament: A Study in the Growth of Christian Tradition," *NT Studies* , pp. 23-43). Within the NT the evidence is mixed. Whatever order the Synoptics were written in, we must note that Matthew may preserve a name omitted by Mark (Matt 26:57; Mark 14:53) or drop a name preserved by Mark (Matt 9:18; Mark 5:22). Matthew and Luke both drop Mark's Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46) and Alexander and Rufus (Mark 15:21). Add to this the fact that many scholars now insist that John does not represent late tradition, and there remains little reason for skepticism concerning this sorry scene. Some take Jesus' response--"for all who draw the sword will die by the sword" (v.

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52)--as a call to pacifism, whereas others observe that Jesus told Peter to put his sword "back in its place," not to throw it away. Both views ask the text to answer questions of no immediate relevance. The least we can say is that violence *in defense of Christ* is completely unjustified: certainly verse 52 separates Jesus from the Zealots. Moreover a simple request to his Father (the aorist infinitive is significant; cf. BDF, par. 471 [2]) would bring twelve legions of angels (a full Roman legion was six thousand; of ZPEB, 3: 907-8) to his assistance perhaps one legion for Jesus and one for each of the Eleven (v.

53). This is more than the eyes of faith seeing help as in 2 Kings 6:17 but the knowledge that help is available, while refusing to use it (cf. John 10:18). In addition, Jesus' stance regarding his own death is grounded on the fact the "Scriptures" (plural, v. 54) must be fulfilled (see on vv. 24, 31; cf. Luke 24:25-26). This divine "must" (*dei*) is not for Jesus sheer inevitability, since he still believes it possible to gain instant aid from his Father. Instead, it is the commingling of divine sovereignty and Jesus' unflagging determination to obey his Father's will. Many commentators note that in 1QM 7:6 the angels are represented as joining forces with the righteous at the End. Jesus himself elsewhere pictures angelic participation at the consummation (e.g., 13:41; 24:30-31). But at this point in redemptive history, the angels are not called on. Jesus faces this battle alone, and the consummation of all things is not yet.

55-56 Every day for the preceding week, and presumably on earlier visits to the Holy City, Jesus had been teaching in the temple courts (v. 55); yet the authorities had not arrested him. Why then do they seize him now as if he were a rebel (*lestes* , see on 27:

16)? The implication is that there is no need to arrest him secretly and violently, except for reasons in their own minds that reveal more about them

than about him. "At that time" (lit., "In that hour") seems a rather heavy-handed transition, but perhaps what follows it was a well-known saying of Jesus among Christians to whom Matthew was writing; and he is pointing out that this was the time when he spoke it. After questioning the display of force by those who arrested him, Jesus said, "This has all taken place [see on 1:22; 21:4] that the writings [or `Scriptures'] of the prophets might be fulfilled." Mark (14:49) simply has "But the Scriptures must be fulfilled." Matthew gives us more, doubtless because he is more interested in the prophetic nature of the Scriptures (see Introduction, section 11.b). "The writings of the prophets" therefore probably does not exclude the Law and the Writings, for elsewhere Moses and David are also considered "prophets." The reference is to the Scriptures (as in v. 54), their human authors being considered primarily as prophets, not lawgivers, wise men, or psalmists. All the disciples then fulfill one specific prophecy (see on v. 31) and flee. Mark 14: 51-52 adds the account of the young man who flees naked. Probably at this time Jesus

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is bound (John 18:12).

7. Jesus before the Sanhedrin (26:57-68)

Few topics have caused more tension between Jews and Christians than the trial of Jesus. Those who have committed abominable atrocities against the Jews have often based their actions on the ground that Jews are the murderers of their Messiah, or Godkillers, and have all too frequently turned to Matthew 27:25 for backing. As a reaction to this reprehensible attitude, more recent study (both Jewish and Christian) has argued that the Jews were very little involved and that most of the blame should be placed on the Romans. An excellent survey of Jewish and Christian exegesis of the trial narratives, from 1770 to the late 1960s, is given by Catchpole (*Trial of Jesus*); and representative modern treatments, in addition to commentaries and articles, are included in our bibliography under Bammel, Blinzler, Brandon, Cohn, Winter, Sherwin- White (ch. 2), and Benoit (*Jesus* , pp. 123-66). Though there is no consensus, the dominant view in current scholarship runs something like this: The four Gospel accounts of the trial before the Sanhedrin cannot readily be reconciled. But the fourth Gospel, though making clear that both Jewish and Roman authorities were involved from the beginning (John 18:3, 12), stresses that the Sanhedrin did not have the power to inflict the death penalty (John 18:31) and places much more emphasis on the Roman trial. By contrast the Synoptics lay more blame on the Jews, and Matthew goes so far as to tell us that Pilate washed his hands of the whole affair, while the Jews called down curses on themselves (27:24-25). On the face of it, John's account is the more historically reliable, whereas the Synoptics are more seriously tainted by later church-synagogue tensions. In short, anti-Semitism has colored their narratives. This is confirmed, it is alleged, when all the illegalities of the Jewish proceedings are noted. The Mishnah (*Sanhedrin*) makes it clear that legal procedure in

capital cases forbade night trials, required at least two consecutive days, and provided for private interrogation of witnesses. The breaches in law are so numerous as to be unbelievable; and one Jewish writer (Cohn) has gone so far in reconstructing the evidence that he concludes the Sanhedrin actually tried to save Jesus from the Roman courts. Any trace of evidence that counters this thesis he ascribes to the polemic of later deteriorating church-synagogue relationships, compounded with the natural desire in Christian writers to avoid blaming the powerful Roman authorities. Yet some things must not be overlooked.

1. The problem of illegalities in Jesus' trial is more complex than is customarily recognized. We have already shown (see excursus at v. 17) that executions under certain circumstances could take place on a major feast day. Other irregularities

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include (1) the proceedings that apparently took place in Caiaphas's home, not the temple precincts; (2) Jesus' not being offered a defense attorney; (3) his being charged with blasphemy without actually blaspheming in the legally defined sense, which required that the accused actually pronounce the name of God, (4) the verdict's being rushed through at night without the minimum two days required in capital cases, which had the effect of banning the new opening of capital trials from the day before Sabbaths or festival days (M *Sanhedrin* 4:1). But quite apart from the difficult problem of dating Mishnaic traditions--for the sake of argument we may agree that they all date back to the beginning of the first century or earlier--five factors challenge the idea that legal considerations invalidate the authenticity of the Gospels on these points. a. Some Mishnaic stipulations, not least in the tractate *Sanhedrin*, are almost certainly theoretical formulations only, which never had the force of obeyed law. Is there any independent historical evidence, for instance, that "burnings" of the sort described in *Sanhedrin* 7:2 ever took place? b. Dalman (pp. 98-100) provides references to other occasions of flagrant breach of judicial regulations on the ground that "the hour demands it." c. Similarly there is evidence that expediency partially motivated the religious authorities (cf. John 11:49-50). This could account for numerous irregularities. If the leaders feared mob violence, haste was required. Moreover it was legitimate to execute certain criminals on feast days, but not on the Sabbath. If Jesus was arrested Thursday night (Friday by Jewish reckoning), things had to move swiftly if he was to be buried by dusk on Friday, the onset of Sabbath. An all-night session of the Jewish authorities was demanded by the fact that Roman officials like Pilate worked very early in the morning and then refused to take on new cases for the rest of the day. If Jesus could not be presented to Pilate early Friday morning, the case would drag on till after Sabbath--along with mounting risks of mob violence. d. The sources are sufficiently difficult that we do not know the precise relationship between the Pharisees of Jesus' day and the rabbis who compiled Mishnah. Even if Sigal (cf. Introduction, section 11.f) has exaggerated the distinctions, we may not always be wise in reading rabbinic

regulations back into Jesus' day. For instance, the narrow and technical definitions of blasphemy in Mishnah may not have been popular with all Pharisees. After all, large parts of the population held to extraordinarily broad notions of blasphemy: Josephus (Antiq. XX, 108 [v.2]) records that an angry crowd accused a Roman soldier of blasphemy because he had exposed his genitals to them. And we have *no* evidence for the way the Sadducees understood blasphemy. e. We may go farther. A strong, if not entirely convincing, case can be made for distinguishing between *Sanhedrin* and *Beth Din* . The NT speaks of the former; the relevant Mishnaic tractate, though traditionally called *Sanhedrin* , in fact speaks almost thirty times of the latter and only three times of the former. From this some

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have deduced that what the Gospels describe is *not* the "Sanhedrin" in the religious, scholarly sense but the "Sanhedrin" that was essentially political and, to some extent, corrupt (most recently, cf. E. Rivkin, "Beth Din, Boule, Sanhedrin: A Tragedy of Errors," HUCA 46 [1975]: 181-99). Even if this distinction does not prove valid, it must be admitted that "a way of removing an undesirable enemy is usually found when the will is there" (S. Rosenblatt, "The Crucifixion of Jesus from the Standpoint of Pharisaic Law," JBL 75 [1956]: 319 [though Rosenblatt does not accept the accounts as we have them in the Gospels]). Catchpole (*Trial of Jesus* , pp. 268f.) has convincingly shown that "the debate about illegalities should be regarded as a dead end, and at most able to make only a minor contribution." 2. More distinction is found between John and the Synoptics and between Matthew and Mark-Luke than is actually there. Although John places more emphasis on the Roman trial, only in John 19:12, and never in the Synoptics, do we find *the Jews* manipulating Pilate in order to secure a guilty verdict and a capital sentence. It is surely false to attribute the lesser prominence of Pilate in the Synoptics to Christian concern to get on with Rome; for long before the evangelists wrote, Pilate was deposed and banished by Rome. Moreover it is not at all clear that Matthew sees 27:24 as an effective absolution for Pilate; Matthew frequently records denunciations of hypocrisy and expects persecution from Gentile "governors and kings" (10:18-19). Equally it is not at all clear that 27:25 should be interpreted to mean that all Jews remain under a continuing curse. The first disciples were Jews to a man; and the fact that Matthew clearly insists the authorities were afraid of mob action (vv. 34) shows he understands that many Jews were enthusiastically if superficially *for* Jesus, even if few of them were committed disciples. 3. But if such sharp distinctions between John's treatment of the trial and that of the Synoptics are scarcely supported by the text, even less defensible are sharp disjunctions. The attempt to blame the Romans and exonerate the Jews finds little support in the fourth Gospel; but even if it were an unquestionable theme there, responsible historiography attempts a synthesis of the sources, not a priori historical disjunctions--one of the classic "historians' fallacies"

(cf. Fischer). And a believable synthesis is indeed possible (see below). 4. John 18:31, frequently cited to absolve the Sanhedrin, is not only historically credible (cf. Sherwin-White, pp. 35-43; Catchpole, *Trial of Jesus* , pp. 247-48) but also provides an important clue to the roles played by Jews and Romans. All the Gospels attest, repeatedly and in highly diverse ways, that many Jewish leaders wanted Jesus' removal because of his claims of messianic authority, coupled with his popularity among the populace at large and the unexpected kind of "messiah" he was proving to be--and especially his failure to show more respect to the religious authorities. When he finally came into their hands, political circumstances forced them to seek the death

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sentence from Pilate. For this purpose it was necessary for the Jewish leaders to tinge the charges against Jesus with political color. Thus he was made to seem less a Messiah than a competitor of Caesar. Only by a very selective handling of the evidence (e.g., S.G.F. Brandon, *The Trial of Jesus of Nazareth* [London: Batsford, 1968] can one conclude that the political charge came first, making Jesus some kind of Zealot rebel. 5. The Holocaust and other atrocities have blinded the eyes of both Jewish and Christian historians. Not a few modern Jews insist that the Holocaust is the result of centuries of bigoted Christian tradition, and that Christian solidarity entails corporate Christian guilt. Yet they would be loathe to assume that Jewish solidarity entails for the Jewish race a corporate Jewish guilt because of the contribution of a few Jews to the death of Jesus. Meanwhile Christian historians, alive to the legacy of Western Christendom's persecution of the Jews, are embarrassed into making irresponsible judgments against the historical evidences as a sort of atonement for past injustices. It is easier to blame the Romans, who are not present to defend themselves, than to face the survivors of the Holocaust with unpleasant historical realities. The wisest scholars of both sides have seen this. The Jewish scholar Samuel Sandmel writes: "Perhaps we might be willing to say to ourselves that it is not at all impossible that some Jews, even leading Jews, recommended the death of Jesus to Pilate. We are averse to saying this to ourselves, for so total has been the charge against us that we have been constrained to make a total denial" (*We Jews and Jesus* [London and New York: OUP, 1965], p. 141).

It is helpful to remember that, whatever Christendom has done, the NT writers, most if not all of whom were Jews, can scarcely or reasonably be labeled "anti-Semitic." Matthew and the other evangelists certainly blame some Jews for Jesus' death. They also blame some Romans. But the reasons for the blame are historical, theological, spiritual--not racial. The Twelve are Jews; and after the Crucifixion a Jew from Arimathea (27:57-60) shows

great concern for Jesus burial. The NT writers assess people by their response to Jesus, whom they have come to know as King Messiah and Son of God, not by their race. 6. From the viewpoint of NT theology, Christians must repeatedly remind themselves of two things. First, from a theological perspective every Christian is as guilty of putting Jesus on the cross as Caiaphas. Thoughtful believers will surely admit that their own guilt is the more basic of the two; for if we believe Matthew's witness, and Jesus could have escaped the clutches of Caiaphas (v. 53), then what drove Jesus to the cross was his commitment to the Father's redemptive purposes. While this does not excuse Caiaphas and his peers, it keeps Christians from supercilious judgment of the Jews. Second, even if first-century Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, rightly saw God's judgment in the destruction of Jerusalem and Judea (A.D. 66-73), that could

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not give them the right to put themselves in God's place and execute his judgment for him. Judgment belongs only to God. Any other view, including that which has often dominated Christendom, fails to recognize essential NT distinctions between the kingdom and the church (see on 13:37-39). At this point we should consider one of several ways in which the complementary accounts of Jesus' passion in our Gospels can be reasonably harmonized so as to show how the proceedings against Jesus could have been completed within the few hours the chronology permits. There were two trials, one Jewish and the other Roman. The Jewish trial began with an informal examination by Annas (John 18:12-14, 19-23), perhaps while members of the Sanhedrin were being hurriedly gathered. A decision by a session of the Sanhedrin (vv. 57-68; Mark 14:53-65) was followed by a formal decision at dawn and a dispatch to Pilate (27:12; Luke 22:66-71). The Roman trial began with a first examination before Pilate (vv. 11-14; John 18:28-38a) and was quickly followed by Herod's interrogation (Luke 23:6-12) and the final appearance before Pilate (27:15-31; John 18:38b 19:16). This reconstruction is merely tentative; but it usefully coordinates the biblical data.

57 For the relationship between Annas and Caiaphas, see on v. 3. If both men concurred in finding Jesus guilty and recommending the death penalty the action would more likely win the acceptance of both the populace and the Romans than if only one agreed. Well-to-do homes were often built in a square shape with an open, central courtyard. If Annas lived in rooms on one wing of the court, then it is possible that he interviewed Jesus (John 18:14-16) in one wing while the Sanhedrin was assembling in another (NIV's "had assembled" is too strong: the Greek verb means no more than "assembled"). Not much time would be required. Matthew mentions the teachers of the law and the elders; Mark 14:53 adds the chief priests, to whom Matthew refers in v. 59. There is probably little significance to such

variations, but they warn us against reading too much into particular details. No Pharisees are mentioned, though doubtless many teachers and lay elders belonged to that party Their absence from Matthew's passion account is important for two reasons. First, it calls in question theories that pit the Matthean church against "Pharisees" of A.D. 85; for if Matthew sees the Pharisees as prime enemies of Jesus, why are they not mentioned in this final confrontation Second, it accurately reflects the little we know of Jerusalem politics at the time. The Pharisees doubtless exercised throughout the land strong theological and social influence and through the synagogues in the towns and villages a great deal of moral persuasion and some political power. But for the Sanhedrin, where the final act of confrontation with Jewish leaders was played out, the shape of power was different. The high priest almost certainly a Sadducee, presided; the priests, primarily if not exclusively Sadducees, enjoyed large and perhaps

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dominant influence; and the Pharisees exercised power only through the decision of the entire assembly.

58 Peter followed Jesus "at a distance," midway between courage (v. 51) and cowardice (v. 70) (Bengel). John 18:15-16 provides additional information on how Peter secured entrance to the high priest's courtyard. Peter joined the "servants" (the term is general but probably includes both household servants and temple police hence NIV's "guards") around the courtyard fire, waiting to see the outcome.

59-63a If there was but one central Sanhedrin (see above), it was composed of three groups: leading priests (see on 21:23), teachers of the law, and elders. It had seventy members plus the high priest, but a mere twenty-three made a quorum. The "whole Sanhedrin" need not mean that everyone was present (cf. Luke 23:50-51) but only that the Sanhedrin as a body was involved. We do not know what proportion of the seventy came from constituent groups or whether the proportion had to be preserved in the quorum. Many equate this meeting of the Sanhedrin with the one at daybreak described by Luke (22:66-71). But Matthew seems to make a distinction between the two (cf. 27:12). Perhaps the later meeting was in the temple precincts (the usual place) and was more fully attended; and if so, Luke may well be conflating the proceedings. Matthew says the Sanhedrin was looking "for false evidence" (*pseudomartyria* v. 59) and obtained it from "false witnesses" (*pseudomartyres* , v. 60). It is unlikely this means that the Sanhedrin sought liars only; if so, why not simply fabricate the evidence? Rather, the Sanhedrin, already convinced of Jesus' guilt, went through the motions of securing evidence against him. When people hate, they readily accept false witness; and tire Sanhedrin eventually heard and believed just about what it wanted. Matthew knew that Jesus was not guilty and could not be; so he describes the evidence as

"false." The two men who came forward (v. 60) may or may not have been suborned (cf. Acts 6:11). At least two witnesses were required in a capital case. In Greek *houtos* does not necessarily carry a sneering tone (NIV, This fellow, v. 61; similarly v. 71) but may serve as an emphatic pronoun or equivalent to the British "this chap." Their witness had some element of truth but was evilly motivated and disregarded what Jesus meant in John 2:19-21 (the reference is not to Matthew 24:2, where only disciples were present, see on 21:12-17). John did not interpret Jesus' saving allegorically (Hill, *Matthew*) but typologically. Though some will insist that even typological exegesis must be traced to the later church, we have already noted enough typological exegesis in Jesus' own teaching (see on v. 28) to acknowledge that Jesus himself led the way in this regard. Interpreted with crass literalism, Jesus' words might be taken as a threat

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to desecrate the temple, one of the pillars of Judaism. Desecration of sacred places was almost universally regarded as a capital offense in the ancient world, and in this Jews were not different from the pagans (e.g., Jer 26:1-19; *Tosephta Sanhedrin* 13:5; b *Rosh ha-Shanah* 17a). But what do Jesus' words in John 2:19-21 mean? If Jesus sees himself as the antitype of the Passover lamb, the true Suffering Servant, the revelation of the Father, and the fulfillment of OT Scriptures (e.g., vv. 27-30, cf. 5:17-20, 11:25-30) it is not at all unlikely he would also see himself as the true temple, the ultimate point of meeting between God and man. In that case John's words accurately reflect Jesus' thought. We have penetrated very close to the heart of the dispute between early Christianity and Judaism as attested elsewhere in the NT--a dispute that may be summarized by a series of questions: What is the nature of the continuity between the old covenant and the new? Must Gentiles become Jews before they can become Christians? In what sense and to what degree does the Mosaic law have binding force on Jesus' followers? The place of the temple is one element in that debate, raised in earliest Christianity (Acts 6:13-14), but traceable back to Jesus himself and a contributing factor to his own condemnation. NIV and NASB are probably correct in translating v. 62 as two questions from the high priest (cf. BDF, pars. 298 [4]; 299 [1]). He probably hoped Jesus would incriminate himself. But, true to Isaiah 53:7, Jesus kept silent (v. 63a; cf. Moo, "Use of OT," pp. 148-51).

63b The high priest, frustrated by Jesus' silence, tried a bold stroke that cut to the central issue: Was Jesus the Messiah or was he not? The question has been raised before in one form or another (see on 12:39-42; 16:14; 21:1-11, 14-16, 23) and may have been prompted in the high priest's mind by Jesus' mention of the temple, since some branches of Judaism anticipated a renewal of the temple's glory when Messiah came (cf. Lane, *Mark*, p. 535). But whether or not this explains his motive, the high priest boldly charges Jesus to answer "under oath by the living God" (cf. McNeile; Benoit, *Jesus*, for justification of this rendering). The form of the question in Mark 14:61 is

slightly different: "Are you the Christ [see on 1:1; 2:4], the Son of the Blessed One?" Instead of the latter, Matthew uses his preferred title, "the Son of God." The two titles are formally equivalent and both may have been used at various points in the trial (cf. John 19:7). "Son of God" in Judaism can be equivalent to Messiah (see on 2:15; 3:17; 11:27; 16:13-20). The outcome is now inevitable. If Jesus refuses to answer, he breaks a legally imposed oath. If he denies he is the Messiah, the crisis is over--but so is his influence. If he affirms it, then, given the commitments of the court, Jesus must be false. After all, how could the true Messiah allow himself to be imprisoned and put in jeopardy? The

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Gospels' evidence suggests that the Sanhedrin was prepared to see Jesus' unequivocal claim to messiahship as meriting the death penalty and their unbelief precluded them from allowing any other possibility.

64 Perhaps this is what is meant by Jesus' "good confession" (1Tim 6:13). There are four points of interest. 1. Unlike the unambiguous "I am" in Mark 14:62, Matthew uses an expression, found also in 26:25, that many have taken to be purposely ambiguous (e.g., Turner, *Insights* , pp. 72-75). But Catchpole has convincingly shown that the expression is "affirmative in content, and reluctant or circumlocutory in formulation" (David R. Catchpole, "The Answer of Jesus to Caiaphas (Matt. xxvi.64)", NTS 17 [1970-71]: 213-26). Certainly Caiaphas understood it as positive (v. 65). The next clause, beginning with *plen lego hymin* ("But I say to all of you"), found also in 11:22, 24, means something like "Indeed I tell you": there is likely no adversative force (Thrall, pp. 72-78). Instead it expresses an expansion or a qualification (Catchpole, "Answer of Jesus," p. 223) of the preceding statement. Jesus speaks in this way, not because Caiaphas has spoken the truth of himself without any revelation (Kingsbury, *Matthew* , p. 64), but because Caiaphas's understanding of "Messiah" and "Son of God" is fundamentally inadequate. Jesus is indeed the Messiah and so must answer affirmatively. But he is not quite the Messiah Caiaphas has in mind; so he must answer cautiously and with some explanation. 2. That explanation comes in allusions to two passages-- Psalm 110:1 (see on 22:41-46) and Daniel 7:13 (see on 8:20; 24:13, 30-31). Jesus is not to be primarily considered a political Messiah but as the one who, in receiving a kingdom, is exalted high above David and at the Mighty One's right hand, the hand of honor and power (cf. 16:27; 23: 39; 24:30-31; 26:29). This is Jesus' climactic self-disclosure to the authorities and it combines revelation with threat. 3. Jesus uses "Son of Man" (see on 8:20) instead of "Christ" or "Son of God" (cf. v. 63). Efforts to interpret Son of Man in terms of Son of God (Kingsbury,

***Matthew* , pp. 113ff.) badly miss the point (cf. Hill, "Son and Servant"). The titles are parallel, and each is messianic. Certainly Caiaphas understands "Son of Man" that way. The most ambiguous title now reveals most about Jesus: it is his self-designation, associated with the glory of the Parousia, but uttered at the culmination of Jesus' ministry and in the face of suffering and death. 4. The Greek phrase *aparti* (lit., "from now"; NIV, "in the future"; see on v. 29) is difficult. Some have found it so difficult that they say v. 64 must refer, not to the Parousia, but to the Resurrection (e.g., L. Hartman, "Scriptural Exegesis," in Didier, p. 145). But if "from now" or "from now on" ill suits the delay till the Parousia, it is equally unsuited to the delay till the Resurrection and the Ascension (see on 28:18-20).**

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Moreover the records show that the high priest and other august leaders were not witnesses of the Resurrection; for according to the NT, no human being saw the actual event happen. The best explanation of v. 64 is that Jesus is telling the members of the Sanhedrin ("you" is pl.) that from then on they would not see him as he now stands before them but only in his capacity as undisputed King Messiah and sovereign Judge. "From now on" (i.e., "in the future," NIV) that is the way they will see him. Matthew does not include the word "only" or the like (e.g., "From now on you will only see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand ") because it would imply a possibility they might not see him at all, which is not true. The phrase "from now on" makes this a forceful warning that at least some Sanhedrin members doubtless remembered after the Resurrection.

65-66 Rending garments (v. 65) was prescribed for blasphemy (M *Sanhedrin* 7:5) but can also express indignation or grief (cf. 2 Kings 18:37; Judith 14:19; 1Macc 11:71; Acts 14:14). It appears that the definition of "blasphemy" varied over the years (see above, on vv. 57-68; cf. John 5:18; 10:33). Whether the Sanhedrin thought Jesus was blaspheming because he claimed to be Messiah, because he put himself on the Mighty One's right hand, or because God had not especially attested who Jesus was (a requirement in certain rabbinic traditions) is uncertain. The decision of the assembled members of the Sanhedrin appears to have been by acclamation. "Worthy" (*enochos* , v. 66) is the same word used in 5:21: Jesus is "liable" to the death penalty, mandated for blasphemy (Lev 24:16).

67-68 Although Luke portrays the examination and condemnation only at the trial that takes place after dawn (parallel to Matt 27:12), even he has this

outrage first (Luke 22:63-65), which, in agreement with Matthew and Mark, suggests that some decisions had already been made. Though "they" (v. 67) might well mean the members of the Sanhedrin, it might also refer to those under their control, their immediate servants (cf. Luke 22:63-65). In any case the messianic claims of the accused do not impress the Sanhedrin; and the indignities to which he is now subjected are probably meant to deride his false pretensions. The true Messiah would vanquish all foes and, according to some Jewish traditions, would be able to judge by smell without the need of sight (see Lane, Mark, pp. 539-40 and references there; cf. also Pss Sol 17:37 ff.). But here is Jesus, spit on, punched, slapped (cf. Isa 50:6; the verb for "slapped" is also used in 5:39 and may mean "clubbed"), blindfolded (Mark 14:65; Matthew does not mention this detail), and taunted, without displaying any power. "Prophecy" (v. 68) does not here imply foretelling the future but revealing hidden knowledge (cf. 11:13): Messiah should be able to tell who hit him, even when

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blindfolded. The easiest way to explain Matthew's not mentioning blindfolding while including "Who hit you?" (not in Mark) is that Matthew and Mark have each kept one part of what Luke has kept intact (Notes). In any case Jesus remains silent, confirming their suspicions while fulfilling Isaiah 53:7.

8. Peter's denial of Jesus (26:69-75)

The four Gospel accounts, though brief (cf. Mark 14:66-72; Luke 22:54-62; John 18: 15-18, 25-27, and see above on v. 34 for comments regarding two cock crowings [Mark]), contain substantial differences, and a variety of solutions have been proposed. Matthew and Mark are in close agreement and list three denials: (1) before a servant girl, in the courtyard; (2) before another girl, but out by the gateway; (3) before bystanders, apparently in the court. Luke also lists three: (1) before a servant girl, apparently near the fire; (2) before another person, place not specified; (3) before yet another person, still in the courtyard (22:60-61). The three denials recorded by John are (1) before a servant girl at the door; then, after a break in the narrative, (2) before some people the verb is plural but may be a generalizing one--(3) before one of the high priest's servants, a relative of Malchus. Several things may be said.

1. Some attempts to harmonize the texts have resulted in Jesus' predicting three denials at each of *two* different times, making six denials (most recently cf. H. Lindsell, *The Battle for the Bible* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976], pp. 174-76). This is not only intrinsically unlikely but introduces major source-critical problems never addressed and handled. 2. It may help us to look at the location of the relevant pericopes in the four Gospels. If our treatment of the trial sequence is correct (see on vv. 57-68), Matthew and Mark do not record the examination before Annas but simply say that Peter

followed Jesus into the courtyard. Then they place Peter's three denials after the preliminary trial before the Sanhedrin. Luke records neither the examination before Annas nor the preliminary trial before the Sanhedrin and therefore places Peter's three denials before recording the Sanhedrin trial at dawn. John has nothing about the Jewish trial (though it may be hinted at in 19:24) except Jesus' examination before Annas. If Peter's first denial took place about the time of that examination, it is understandable that John separates it from the other two, which he describes after Jesus has been led before Caiaphas. 3. The order of the first two denials may be reversed between John and the Synoptics (cf. the order of the temptations; see on 4:1-11), but which Gospel has the historical order cannot easily be determined. John has "the girl at the gate" asking the first question and implies, but does not state, that this occurs on Peter's way in.

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Matthew and Mark have Jesus move back out to the gate as the setting for their second denial. Several possibilities come to mind, but no adequate way of testing them. 4. Remaining differences are minor and are capable of many solutions. Problems arise from the brevity of the accounts. In a setting around a fire, two or three may speak up at once (see below on vv. 69-70); or, more probably, the plural in the second denial (in John's order) is generalizing (as in Matt 2:20). The differences in the reports of the denial cannot adequately be accounted for on redactional grounds.

69-70 The article "a" in "a servant girl" masks an idiomatic use of "one" (*mia* , v. 69; see on 8:19; 21:19; cf. Moule, *Idiom Book* , p. 125). Her remark to Peter reflects both an accusation and her curiosity; and "Jesus of Galilee" (Mark 14:67: "that Nazarene, Jesus") is the kind of derogatory remark one might expect from a Jerusalemite convinced of her geographical and cultural superiority. Peter denies her words "before them all" (v. 70), implying that several people were listening and that some may have joined in the questioning. The form of Peter's denial is akin to a formal, legal oath (cf. M *Shebuoth* 8:3).

71-72 Peter "went out" (v. 71) to the gateway, apparently retiring from the brighter light of the fire into the darkness of the forecourt. Again he denies the accusation, this time with an oath. "Oath" here (v. 72) does not refer to "swearing" as we know it in profanity, rather, Peter invokes a solemn curse on himself if he is lying and professes his "truthfulness" by appealing to something sacred (see on 5:33-34; 23:16-22).

73-75 A little more time elapses (v. 73). Luke says about an hour later (22:59). In any age accent in speaking varies with geography (e.g., Judg

12:56), and Peter's speech shows him to be a Galilean (cf. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* , pp. 61-64). That one of those present at Peter's denial said that his accent proved him to be a disciple of Jesus shows how much Jesus' ministry had been in Galilee and how relatively few of his disciples were from Judea. Having lied twice Peter finds himself forced to lie again, this time with more oaths (v. 74). Immediately the rooster crows, a bitter reminder (v. 75) of Jesus' words (v. 34). He who thought he could stand has fallen terribly (cf. 1Cor 10:12). Luke tells us that Jesus looked at Peter--perhaps through a window or as he was being led across the courtyard. If we cannot credit the legend that after this Peter never heard a cock crow without weeping, we may justifiably assume that Peter's bitter tears led to his being "poorer in spirit" (5:3) the remainder of his days than he had ever been before. Matthew does not mention Peter again.

9. Formal decision of the Sanhedrin (27:1-2)

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Whether this formal decision was reached as a final stage of the first meeting or at a separate meeting held either in Caiaphas's house or the temple precincts, we cannot say with certainty (see on vv. 57-68). But Luke 22:66 implies a meeting in the council chamber (Catchpole, *Trial of Jesus* , pp. 191f.).

1 *Symboulion elabon* ("came to the decision") is a Latinism for *consilium capere* (cf. RHG, p. 109; BDF, par. 5 [3b]) and does not mean hold a council (Hill, *Matthew*). On the other hand, Catchpole (*Trial of Jesus* , p. 191) seems to go too far in denying that it refers to the same event as Luke 22:66-71. The term can refer to a plot (as in 12:14; 22:15) and also to an agreed decision (28:12) as here. *Hoste* plus the infinitive here clearly refers to intention (cf. Zerwick, par. 352; Moule, *Idiom Book* , p. 140). Probably, too, the religious authorities decided just how to present their case to Pilate. If their own concern was Jesus' "blasphemy" (26:65), they were nevertheless more likely to get Pilate to sentence him to death by stressing the royal side of messiahship rather than blasphemy, as to Pilate that would suggest treason (cf. Acts 17:59 for a similar reference to treason).

2 Jesus is led to Pontius Pilate, the "governor" (for the variant, cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary* , p. 65). "Governor" is here a general title (cf. 10:18; 1 Peter 2:14); Pilate was in fact appointed prefect or procurator by Tiberius Caesar in A.D. 26 (cf. IBD, 3: 1229-31; ZPEB, 4:790-93). Prefects governed small, troubled areas; and in judicial matters they possessed powers like those of the far more powerful proconsuls and imperial legates; in short, they held the power of life and death, apart from appeal to Caesar. Following the banishment of Archelaus in A.D. 6, Judea and Samaria were made into one Roman province governed by a prefect or procurator who normally lived at Caesarea but often came to Jerusalem during the feasts to be close to the potential trouble spot. Extrabiblical sources portray Pilate as

a cruel, imperious, and insensitive ruler who hated his Jewish subjects and took few pains to understand them (e.g., Jos. Antiq. XVIII, 35 [ii.2], 55-62 [iii.12], 177-78 [vi.5]; War II, 169-77 [ix.2-4]; Philo, *ad Gaium* 38; cf. Hoehner, *Herod Antipas* , pp. 172-83). He stole korban (see on 15:5) money to build an aqueduct; and when the population of Jerusalem rioted in protest, he sent in soldiers who killed many. He defiled Jerusalem more than once (cf. Luke 13:1). These known facts about Pilate are often thought to render the Gospel accounts incredible, for here Pilate is portrayed as weak, ineffectual, and cowardly, judicially fair enough to want to release Jesus but too cowardly to stand up to the Sanhedrin's browbeating tactics. This transformation of Pilate's character, it is claimed, results from the evangelists' desire to exculpate the Romans and condemn the Jews.

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Hoehner (*Chronological Aspects* , pp. 105-14) responds to these problems with his crucifixion date of A.D. 33, after Pilate had set up the embossed shields in Jerusalem that Tiberius Caesar directly ordered removed, and *after* the execution of Pilate's patron, the anti-Semite Sejanus (d. 19 Oct. A.D. 31), whose death endangered Pilate. At this time the Sanhedrin would have found it easier to make direct and telling application to the emperor. In Hoehner's view Pilate appears weak in the Gospels because he has just been severely rebuked by Caesar and fears that the Jews' threat (John 19:12) could lead to another rebuke. By A.D. 33 Pilate's administration had become so bad that in A.D. 36 he was recalled and finally banished. Even without this chronology, far too wide a historical gap between the Pilate of the Gospels and the Pilate of extrabiblical sources is being assumed. 1. Modern psychology helps us understand that the weak, insecure, selfish man elevated to a position of authority may become despotic and insensitive. Thus the evidence about Pilate may be complementary rather than disjunctive. 2. Pilate hated the Jews and especially the Jewish leaders. In the crisis forced on him by the Sanhedrin, though he may have seemed to be *for* Jesus, in reality he was probably *against* the Sanhedrin. His final decision betrayed no trace of sympathy for the Sanhedrin; rather, the Jews' threat (John 19:12) could well have intimidated so corrupt a man at any point in his career. 3. Jesus was not the criminal or guerrilla fighter with which Pilate was familiar. Jesus' silence and poise, the wisdom of his brief answers, and the dreams of Pilate's wife (v. 19) may have prompted less drastic action than Pilate usually took. 4. Arguably, v. 24 does not exculpate Pilate or reserve exclusive blame for the Jews (see on vv. 24-25). Instead, as in vv. 35, Matthew uses irony to say that no one connected with this crisis could escape personal responsibility. 5. Both the Sanhedrin trial and the trial before Pilate were necessary for capital punishment. Without the Sanhedrin, Pilate would never have taken action against Jesus unless he had become convinced Jesus was a dangerous Zealot leader; without Pilate the Sanhedrin might whip up mob violence against Jesus, but not a legally binding death sentence (cf. John 18:31).

10. The death of Judas (27:3-10)

This account is peculiar to Matthew, though Acts 1:16-19 also records Judas's death. The differences between the two are considerable; and many scholars hold that Acts 1: 16-19 or something like it circulated as a bit of independent tradition Matthew adapted to develop his "fulfillment" theme further. But Benoit (*Jesus* pp. 189-207) finds greater historical accuracy in Matthew than in Acts. Many believe the only historically fixed points are Judas's sudden death and the purchase of a piece of land called "the Field of

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Blood" (cf. Stendahl, *School of Matthew* , pp. 120-27; Lindars, *Apologetic* , pp. 116-22). But if Matthew developed a fulfillment theme by adding to or changing an earlier tradition, numerous difficulties, including even misnaming the prophet (v. 9), show that he botched the job. Hill's suggestion that Matthew placed the story of Judas's suicide here to show that Judas's remorse depends on the Sanhedrin's decision, not Pilate's, is only a possibility. No matter where Matthew located the pericope, it would interrupt the narrative at this point; and other reasons may have led him to place it here. Matthew's prime interest in this pericope is to continue the fulfillment theme--that not only Jesus' death but the major events surrounding it were prophesied in Scripture. Verse 4 again stresses Jesus' innocence and sees the fulfillment of another of Jesus' predictions (26:24), which sets up an apologetic tool (cf. "to this day," v. 8). In any case, neither Peter's tears nor Judas's remorse can remove their guilt.

3 On "the chief priests and elders," here governed by a single article suggesting a single entity (the Sanhedrin), see on 21:23. Verse 3 looks back to 10:4; 26:14-16, 20-

25. Judas's "remorse" is not necessarily repentance, though the two Greek verbs *metamelomai* (here and in 21:29) and *metanoeo* can overlap.

4 Judas recognizes that he is not only guilty of betrayal but that Jesus whom he has betrayed is "innocent" (cf. Metzger, *Textual Commentary* , p. 66). The Jewish leaders' callous response "What is that to us?" is both a Semitic and classical idiom (cf. BDF, pars. 127 [3], 299 [3]). But their own words condemn them, for it *should* have been something to them. Judas has betrayed innocent blood; they have condemned innocent blood. "That's your responsibility" (lit., "you will see [to it]," as in v. 24) they say--a remark correct in content but wrong in implying that they are absolved.

5-8 Exactly where Judas threw the money (v. 5) is uncertain (cf. Notes). He then went out and hanged himself. *Apenxato* ("hanged himself") occurs in 2 Samuel 17:23 LXX. On this basis some have made lengthy comparisons between Judas and Ahithophel--the one a treacherous friend of David, the other a treacherous friend of David's greater Son (e.g., B.F. Meyer, McNeile); but that Matthew intended such a comparison is doubtful (cf. Moo, "Use of OT," pp. 189-91). The chief priests, in accord with Deuteronomy 23:18, refuse to allow the blood money to supplement the funds of the *korbanas* ("treasury," v. 6; used only here in the NT--the place where a consecrated article is deposited and cognate with *korban* ; see on 15:5; Jos. War II, 175 [ix.4]). Many scholars suggest that elements of the OT quotation (vv. 9-10) have generated these "historical" details. They hold that the Hebrew *yoser* ("potter") in Zechariah 11-13 was either confused with *osar* ("treasury"))

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or that the latter was found in Matthew's copy of Zechariah (as in Peshitta). Alternatively *yoser* can mean "smith," i.e., a worker in metals, and is so rendered by

LXX. Does Zechariah therefore throw his money "to the potter" (NIV), to the treasury, or to the temple foundry which made temple vessels and coins? The problem with this alternative to the MT is that if Matthew (or the tradition he used) understood the OT to refer to the treasury, then where did he find his reference to "potter" (vv. 7, 10)? The OT text is indeed difficult, though a better analysis is possible (see below). What is clear is that Matthew is again pointing out the propensity of the Jewish leaders for ceremonial probity even in the face of gross injustice (cf. 12:9-14; 15:19; 23:23; 28: 12-13; cf. John 18:28). With this probity in view, the chief priests decide (same construction as in v. 1) to buy the potter's field to meet a public need (v. 7)--an accepted use of ill-gotten gains (cf. SBK, 1:37; Jeremiah *Jerusalem* , p. 140). The potter's field, used for the burial of foreigners, probably did not belong to "the potter" (surely there was more than one potter in Jerusalem) but was a well-known place, perhaps the place where potters had long obtained their clay. If depleted, it might have been offered for sale. There are no reliable early traditions of its location, though Matthew's "to this day" shows it was well known when he wrote. The best assumption is that it lay in the valley of Hinnom near the juncture with the Kidron. There are three significant differences between these verses and Acts 1:18-19.

1. Matthew says that the chief priests bought the field; Acts, that Judas did. But if the priests bought it with Judas's money, it may well have been regarded as his. More important, the language in Acts is fine spun: "With the reward of unrighteousness, he acquired [*ktaomai* , not necessarily 'bought'] a field" (lit. tr.). "The money bought him a burial-place; that was to him the sole financial outcome of the iniquitous transaction" (Broadus). **2.** Matthew says Judas hanged himself; Acts, that "he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out." This does not imply a disease,

or that Judas tripped, as some have held. If Judas hanged himself; no Jew would want to defile himself during the Feast of Unleavened Bread by burying the corpse; and a hot sun might have brought on rapid decomposition till the body fell to the ground and burst open. Alternatively, one long tradition in the church claims Judas hanged himself from a tree branch that leaned over a ravine (of which there are many in the area); and when the branch broke, whether before or after he died, Judas fell to a messy end. We are not so much beset by contradictory accounts as by paucity of information, making it difficult to decide which of several alternatives we should choose in working out the complementarity of the two accounts. 3. Matthew seems to ascribe the name "Field of Blood" to its being purchased with blood money; Acts, to the fact that Judas's blood was shed there. But again the paucity

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of information faces us with several possibilities. All the circumstances must have become public knowledge; and one reason, far from ruling out the other, actually complements it--provided that Judas died in the field purchased by the priests. Perhaps the priests bought the field (not necessarily the same day--Sunday would have been adequate); and Judas, informed as to what had been done with the blood money and driven to despair by futile remorse, decided to commit suicide in a field for the burial of aliens to Israel's covenants. Moreover we must at least raise the question whether Acts 1:18-19 associates "Field of Blood" with Judas's blood.

"Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this" (Acts 1:19); but does "this" refer to Judas's body splitting open, without mention of blood, or to securing the field with blood money, also without explicit mention of blood? This is not an attempt at forced harmonization. But if it is bad historiography to squeeze two diverse accounts of one incident into a contrived union, it is equally bad historiography to mistake an instance of too little information for contradiction.

9-10 Four aspects of this complex quotation need discussion.

1. The ascription to Jeremiah. On the face of it, the quotation is a rough rendering of Zechariah 11:12-13, with "I took" changed to "they took" and the price interpreted as referring to the sum paid for Jesus. The only obvious allusions to Jeremiah are 18:26; 32:6 Jeremiah did visit a potter and buy a field. But though some of the language of those passages may have influenced Matthew 27:9-10, it is difficult to imagine why Matthew mentioned Jeremiah instead of Zechariah, even though Jeremiah is important in this Gospel (cf. 2:17; 16:14). Highly improbable "solutions" abound. Some have followed the minor textual variant "Zechariah" instead of "Jeremiah"; others have argued for an original text with no mention of the prophet's name,

attributing "Jeremiah" to a copyist's error; many have assumed that Matthew made a minor error; others have appealed to a hypothetical writing of Jeremiah now lost; others have held that Jeremiah wrote Zechariah 9-11-- though it is surely "a critical anachronism" (Morison) to see Matthew as anticipating modern source theories; and still others assume that Matthew is referring to the entire collection of prophetic books grouped under the name of the first book (though it is not at all certain that Jeremiah was first in Matthew's day). The most believable solution comes from Hengstenberg (pp. 1095ff.) and is developed by Gundry (*Use of OT* , pp. 122-27), Senior (*Passion Narrative* , pp. 359ff.), and especially by Moo ("Use of OT," pp. 191-210). They note that no extant version of Zechariah 11 refers to a field; and Matthew's attributing the quotation to Jeremiah suggests we ought to look to that book. Jeremiah 19:1-13 (not Jer 18 or 32) is the obvious candidate. There Jeremiah is told to purchase a potter's jar and take some elders and priests to the Valley of Ben Hinnom, where he is to warn of the destruction

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of Jerusalem for her sin, illustrated by smashing the jar. A further linguistic link is "innocent blood" (Jer 19:4); and thematic links include renaming a locality associated with potters (19:1) with a name ("Valley of Slaughter") denoting violence (19:6). The place will henceforth be used as a burial ground (19:11), as a token of God's judgment. In the last clause in Matthew's quotation, "as the Lord commanded me" (v. 19), Lindars (*Apologetic*, p. 121) sees an allusion to Exodus 9:12; but Moo ("Use of OT," pp. 196f.) has shown this is at best tenuous. We have not yet tried to explain what Matthew understands by these OT texts, or what he means by "fulfillment." But it is fair to say that the quotation appears to refer to Jeremiah 19:1-13 along with phraseology drawn mostly from Zechariah 11:12-13 (MT in both cases), with the concluding clause a traditional "obedience formula" (cf. R. Pesch, "Eine alttestamentliche Ausführungsformel im Matthäusevangelium," *Biblische Zeitschrift* 10 [1966]: 220-45) used to paraphrase the opening words of Zechariah 11:13: "And the LORD said to me." Such fusing of sources under one "quotation" is not unknown elsewhere in Scripture (e.g., Mark 1:23); cf. 2 Chronicles 36:21, verbally drawn from Lev 26:34-35, yet ascribed to Jeremiah [25:12; 29:10; cf. Gundry, *Use of OT*, p. 125]; and see on Matt 3:17). Jeremiah alone is mentioned, perhaps because he is the more important of the two prophets, and perhaps also because, though Jeremiah 19 is the less obvious reference, it is the more important as to prophecy and fulfillment.

2. Prophecy and history . Many scholars hold that Matthew presents as history a number of "fulfillments" that did not happen. Rather he deduces that they must have happened because his chosen OT texts predict, as he understands them, that such events would take place. To this there are two objections. First, the more complex and composite a quotation (as here), the less likely is it that the "fulfillment" was invented. It is far easier to believe that certain historical events led Matthew to look for Scriptures relating to them. We may then ask how he has treated these Scriptures, but that is a separate problem. Second, when we examine Matthew's quotation clause by clause, we can see impressive reasons for holding that the narrative does not grow out of the prophecy (see esp. Moo,

"Use of OT," pp. 198ff.). To give but one instance, the "thirty silver coins" (v. 3) are mentioned in Zechariah 11:13; but Mark speaks of betrayal money without mentioning Zechariah. Even if Mark does not specify the amount, the *fact* that Judas had been paid became well known, independent of any Christian interpretation of Zechariah 11:12-13; and it is not unreasonable to suppose that the *amount* of money also became common knowledge. 3.

***Meaning* . How did Matthew understand the OT texts he was quoting? The question is not easy, because the two OT passages themselves can be variously explained. It appears that in Zechariah 11 the "buyers" (v. 5) and the three shepherds (vv. 5, 8, 17) apparently represent Israel's leaders, who are slaughtering the sheep.**

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God commands Zechariah to shepherd the "flock marked for slaughter" (v. 7), and he tries to clean up the leadership by sacking the false shepherds. But he discovers that not only is the leadership corrupt, but the flock detests him (v. 8). Thus Zechariah comes to understand the Lord's decision to have no more pity on the people of the land (v. 6).

Zechariah decides to resign (11:9-10), exposing the flock to ravages. Because he has broken the contract, Zechariah cannot claim his pay (presumably from the "buyers"); but they pay him off with thirty pieces of silver (v. 12). But now Yahweh tells Zechariah to throw this "handsome price at which they priced me" (probably ironical; cf. Notes) to the potter in the "house of the LORD," i.e., the temple (v. 13). Temple ritual required a constant supply of new vessels (cf. Lev 6:28); so a guild of potters worked somewhere in the temple precincts. Certainly Jeremiah could point to a potter as he preached and could purchase pottery somewhere near the temple (Jer 18:6; 19:1). The purpose of Zechariah's action is uncertain. Because a *yoser* (lit., "shaper") was both a potter and a metal worker, it may be that the money in Zechariah 11:12-13 was thrown to the *yoser* so that it would be melted down and turned into a figurine, a little "god." The people did not want the Lord's shepherd, and so they will be saddled with a silver figurine (cf. Ezek 16:17; Hos 2:8)--betrayal money, in effect, since it pays off the good shepherd who would have kept the people true to the Lord's covenant and who has been rejected by the people. The result can only be catastrophic judgment (11:14-17).

The parallel between Zechariah 11 and Matthew 26-27 is not exact. In Zechariah the money is paid to the good shepherd; in Matthew it is paid to Judas and returned to the Jewish leaders. In Zechariah the money goes directly to the "potter" in the temple; in Matthew, after being thrown into the temple, it purchases "the potter's field"--though at this point the influence of Jeremiah 19 has been introduced (see below). Nevertheless the

central parallel is stunning: in both instances Yahweh's shepherd is rejected by the people of Israel and valued at the price of a slave. And in both instances the money is flung into the temple and ends up purchasing something that pollutes. The reference to Jeremiah 19 (cf. above, under 1) provides equally telling parallels. The rulers have forsaken Yahweh and made Jerusalem a place of foreign gods (19:4); so the day is coming when this valley, where the prophecy is given and the potter's jar smashed, will be called the Valley of Slaughter, symbolic of the ruin of Judah and Jerusalem (19:67). Similarly in Matthew the rejection of Jesus (Yahweh; see on 2:6, 3:3; 13:37-39) leads to a polluted field, a symbol of death and the destruction of the nation about to be buried as "foreigners." 4. *Fulfillment* . In the light of these relationships between the events surrounding Jesus' death and the two key OT passages that make up Matthew's quotation, what

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does the evangelist mean by saying that the prophecy "was fulfilled"? As in 2:17 the form of this introductory formula shrinks from making Judas's horrible crime the immediate result of the Lord's word, while nevertheless insisting that all has taken place in fulfillment of Scripture (cf. 1:22 with 2:17). Beyond that there is a tendency to apply standard Jewish categories to this use of the OT by Matthew. For instance Doeve (pp. 185f.) characterizes Matthew 27:3-10 as "haggadah," a creative story the starting point of which was the link between "innocent blood" in v. 4 and in Jeremiah 26:15, which led on by associations of word and theme to Jeremiah 19:32 and Zechariah 11:13. But "innocent blood" is not an uncommon expression and is therefore an inadequate link between Matthew and Jeremiah. Lindars (*Apologetic*, pp. 116-22) detects an elaborate Midrashic development along somewhat different lines, and Stendahl (*School of Matthew*, pp. 120-26, 196-98) finds a parallel in Midrash Peshar at Qumran. Though these are invaluable studies, several cautions are needed. France (*Jesus*, pp. 206-7) draws attention to two differences between Matthew's use of the OT in this passage and the Pesharim at Qumran, which claimed that various OT texts were in reality referring to certain recent historical events. First, Matthew changes the wording far more than was done at Qumran; second, he respects the central intentions of the OT authors far more than at Qumran. These two points are linked: Matthew does not need to devise farfetched explanations for each word and phrase, because in each case he has truly represented the central theme. The verbal differences he introduces in citing the OT are not an embarrassment to him, because he is not claiming that the OT text is a prophecy to be fulfilled by a simple one-on-one pattern. Peshar claims that what the OT text refers to is the specified historical event; and there are close parallels to this claim elsewhere in the NT (e.g., Acts 2:16). But what we find in Matthew, including vv. 9-10, is not *identification* of the text *with* an event but *fulfillment* of the text in an event, based on a broad typology governing how both Jesus and Matthew read the OT (see on 2:15; 8:17; 13:35; 26:28, 54). Because of this typological model, Matthew introduces the commonly noticed changes: the one on whom a price is set is no longer the

prophet ("me," Zech 11:13) but Jesus ("him," Matt 27:9). Even Matthew's use of the concluding obedience formula--"as the Lord commanded me"--is best accounted for as a hint of the prophecy-fulfillment pattern. Here "me" can only refer to the prophet, yet Matthew keeps it even though he changes other parts of the quotation to "him" because he believes that in obeying the Lord, the prophet--whether Jeremiah or Zechariah--was setting forth typological paradigms that truly did point to Jesus and the greatest rejection of all. "Midrash" and "haggadah" are deceptive categories. We have maintained that Matthew did not make up the events he relates to illustrate Scripture but that they stand as independent historical realities he now relates to Scripture. Normally, late

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Midrash (the only kind that is well defined: cf. Introduction, section 12.b) begins with the text as the point of departure, but in Matthew the narrative is the point of departure. The element of "fulfillment" is not present in Midrash in the way it is everywhere presupposed in the NT. This is not a surreptitious plea to divorce Matthew from his Jewish roots. Doubtless it is correct to say that Matthew uses "midrashic techniques," at least on the level of what Moo calls "appropriation techniques"--i.e., devices by which an OT text is applied to or appropriated by events contemporary with the evangelist. But such procedures are so universally used that the expression "midrashic technique" conceals more than it reveals: it is a little like saying "interpretative techniques." What must not be overlooked is that, unlike any other broad, hermeneutical category used by the Jews, NT approaches to the OT are steeped in a salvation-historical perspective that finds in the sacred text entire patterns of prophetic anticipation (see esp. on 2:15; 5:17-20; 8:17; 11:11-13; 13:34-35). In this sense Matthew sees in Jeremiah 19 and Zechariah 11 not merely a number of verbal and thematic parallels to Jesus' betrayal but a pattern of apostasy and rejection that must find its ultimate fulfillment in the rejection of Jesus, who was cheaply valued, rejected by the Jews, and whose betrayal money was put to a purpose that pointed to the destruction of the nation (see on 15:7-9; 21:42).

11. Jesus before Pilate (27:11-26)

John gives most details of the trial before Pilate; Luke adds the account of the intervening trial before Herod; and Matthew follows Mark rather closely, but vv. 19, 24-25 have no parallel (cf. Mark 15:2-15; Luke 23:2-25; John 18:28-19:26). The setting is uncertain. It might be the Tower of Antonia, on the northwest corner of the temple area; but more probably it is Herod's old palace on the west side of the city near the Jaffa gate (cf. Jos. Antiq. XX, 110; [v.3]; War II, 328 [xv.5]; Philo *ad Gaium* 38). The word "Praetorium" (v. 27) can refer to a princely palace as readily

as to a judicial or military seat. Probably Herod Antipas, tetrarch of Galilee, would also stay in his father's palace whenever he came to Jerusalem, which could explain the ease with which Jesus' brief interview with Herod (Luke 23:8-12) was arranged.

11 For comments regarding Pilate, see on vv. 1-2. Matthew's report, in which Pilate asks, "Are you the king of the Jews?" presupposes the background of Luke 23:2 and John 18:28-33. The Sanhedrin's concern with Jesus' "blasphemy" becomes his claim to kingship, a charge of treason with overtones of Zealot sedition, capped with a claim that Jesus refuses to pay taxes (see on 22:15-22). In Roman trials the magistrate normally heard the charges first, questioned the defendant and listened to his defense,

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sometimes permitted several such exchanges, and then retired with his advisors to decide on a verdict, which was then promptly carried out. The first step, the charge by the Jewish leaders, led to this particular formulation of Pilate's question to Jesus. Jesus answers, as in 26:25, 64, in an affirmative but qualified way. He is indeed the king of the Jews, but not exactly in the sense Pilate might think. The nature of Jesus' kingship is defined in the more detailed exchange John reports (18:34-37). Verse 11 is important theologically as well as historically. It stands behind the inscription on the cross (v. 37) and prepares the way for Christianity, which rests on the conviction that Jesus of Nazareth, who rose from the dead, is indeed the promised Messiah, the King of the Jews--basic themes in Matthew even in the prologue. In other words, the vindicated Lord is the crucified Messiah (cf. N.A. Dahl, *The Crucified Messiah* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1974], pp. 10-36).

12-14 Persistent charges by "the chief priests and the elders" (v. 12) evoke only silence from Jesus. If Jesus had said nothing at all, Pilate would be bound to condemn him (Sherwin-White, pp. 25-26), since in the Roman system the defense depended heavily on the defendant's response. But Jesus *has* spoken (v. 11). Now, surrounded by unbelief and conscious that the hour has come, he makes no reply (v. 13). Thus he continues to fulfill Isaiah 53:7 (see on 26:63). Pilate's "great amazement" (v. 14) appears to be mingled with respect for Jesus and antipathy for the Jewish leaders, and so he takes tentative steps to release the prisoner. Meanwhile Jesus' silence testifies mutely to his willingness (cf. 26:53) to suffer as "a ransom for many" (20:28).

15 In Roman law an imperial magistrate could acquit a prisoner not yet condemned or pardon one already condemned; but the Gospel accounts

makes this a regular custom, apparently associated with Judea alone (on the grammar, cf. Moule, *Idiom Book* , p. 59). Blinzler (pp. 218-21), followed by Lane (Mark, pp. 552f.), has shown that M *Pesahim* 8:6 ("they may slaughter [viz., a Passover lamb] for one whom they have promised to bring out of prison") presupposes some kind of regular paschal amnesty; and the tractate in question is universally recognized as recording very old traditions.

16 "Barabbas" seems a strange name: "bar Abba" means "son of Abba," i.e., "son of the father." But there is evidence that the name or nickname was not unknown in rabbinic families (SBK, 1:1031). Perhaps Barabbas was the son of a famous rabbi (on such a use of "father," see on 23:9). Some MSS preserve his name as "Jesus Barabbas" (cf. Notes); but with what authority we cannot now be certain. Matthew says he was an *episemos* ("notorious," NIV) prisoner. NIV's translation of the word implies Barabbas was universally reprobated, but the Greek is neutral ("notable," "conspicuous"); and in the only other NT occurrence of the word, NIV renders it

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"outstanding" (Rom 16:7). The point is not academic, for Barabbas was no ordinary villain but a *lestes* (cf. Mark 15:7; Luke 23:19; John 18:40). Although *lestes* can refer to a robber (as perhaps in John 10:1), it more probably refers to insurrectionists (cf. 26: 55; John 18:40); and Josephus constantly uses it of the Zealots. Neither theft nor violent robbery was a capital offense, but insurrection was. Revolts and bloodshed fostered by guerrilla action were common (cf. Jos. Antiq. XVIII, 3-10 [i.1], 60-62 [iii.2]; Luke 13:1), and Barabbas had been caught. In the eyes of many of the people he would not be a "notorious" villain but a hero. It may be that the two who were crucified with Jesus were co-rebels with Barabbas, for Matthew 27:38 calls them *lestai* (better "rebels," "guerrillas," or "insurrectionists" than NIV's "robbers"), and their crucifixion indicates they were judged guilty of more than robbery. The fact that three crosses were prepared strongly suggests that Pilate had already ordered that preparations be made for the execution of the three rebels. If so, Jesus the Messiah actually took the place of the rebel [Jesus] Barabbas because the people preferred the political rebel and nationalist hero to the Son of God.

17-18 The "crowd" (v. 17) was not a crowd of Jesus' accusers but of those trying to influence the selection of the prisoner who would receive the paschal amnesty (cf. Mark 15:8). It is possible, though far from certain, that the crowd, knowing little as yet of the arrest and trial of Jesus Christ, was voicing its support for "Jesus" (i.e., Jesus Barabbas--if the variant is supported); and Pilate mistook their pleas as support for Jesus Christ (cf. Lane, *Mark* , p. 554, n. 29). What is certain is that Pilate sized up the real motivation of the Jewish leaders (v.

18). They had no special loyalty to Rome; so if they were accusing Jesus of being a traitor to Rome, he must have been disturbing them for other reasons; and they were simply using Pilate to eliminate Jesus' challenge to

them. Pilate, with his network of spies and informers, would be aware of how much popularity Jesus Christ enjoyed among the people at large. He could hardly have been unaware of the upsurge of acclaim the previous Sunday (21:1-16). He thought to administer a reversal to Sanhedrin policy by using the paschal amnesty to encourage the crowd to free Jesus; and therefore he offered them a choice: Barabbas or Jesus "who is called Christ." The last clause may be contemptuous.

19 In A.D. 21 it had been proposed in the Roman Senate that no provincial magistrate could be accompanied by his wife (cf. Tacitus *Annales* 3.33-35). The proposal was defeated, so Pilate's wife was on hand to speak of her dream. If Roman troops were involved in Jesus' arrest (see on 26:47-56), Pilate and perhaps his wife would have been informed. Her dream calls to mind the five dreams of Matthew 12; but it is quite

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unlike them and may not have been supernatural. God gave the earlier dreams for guidance to be obeyed, but this dream combines suffering with intimations of gloom. In any event the interruption of Pilate's wife while he was sitting "on the judge's seat" (cf. Jos. War 11, 301 [xiv.8]) further stresses Jesus' innocence (NIV rightly renders *dikaios* by "innocent") and gives the chief priests and elders a few moments to influence the crowd. On the idiom "Don't have anything to do with," see Turner (*Insights* , pp. 43-47).

20-23 Matthew and Mark both insist that the leaders ("chief priests," Mark; "chief priests and elders," Matthew) helped persuade the crowd (v. 20). But it is wrong to infer that either Matthew or Mark is whitewashing the crowd (contra Hill et al.), for then "all the people" (v. 25) would make no sense. Historically the description of the crowd's response is comprehensible enough. They have come to demand Barabbas's release (see on v. 17). When they are confronted with the choice of Barabbas or Jesus (v. 21), both of whom were widely popular, their momentary faltering is resolved by their leaders. If the crowd must choose between Pilate's choice and the Sanhedrin's choice, especially if the Sanhedrin members are circulating stories of Jesus' "blasphemy," then there can be little doubt on which side of the issue they will come down. In Judea it was common to confront the Roman authorities with as noisy and large a delegation as possible (cf. Jos. Antiq. XVIII, 269-72 [viii.3]). And now mob mentality begins to take over. Tactically Pilate has blundered. Trying to save face he asks more questions. The first (v. 22) offers the hope of milder sentence (high treason could be punished by crucifixion, facing wild animals in the arena, or banishment); and the second (v. 23) attests Jesus' innocence (on NIV's sensitive rendering of *gar* [lit., for], cf. BDF, par. 423 [1]). But mob psychology prevails (cf. Acts 19:34). The demand for crucifixion also assured that the executed person would be declared accursed (see on vv. 32-44). The people indicate their preference for a murderous, nationalistic guerrilla

leader over their Messiah, who exhorted the people to love their enemies and said he would die as a ransom for many. As Luke points out, it would not be long before Peter would remind the people of Israel at large (not just the leaders): "You handed [Jesus] over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you" (Acts 3:13b-14).

24 It is customary to interpret this verse as Matthew's fictitious attempt to show Pilate's positive response to his wife's advice (v. 19) and place guilt on the Jews (cf. v. 25). But this is not the most natural interpretation.

1. To the best of our knowledge, this hand washing was not a Roman custom. After

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living several years among the Jews he detested, Pilate picked up one of their own customs (Deut 21:6; cf. Ps 26:6) and contemptuously used it against them. 2. There is little reason to think the hand washing incompatible with the proceedings, because, whatever his motives, Pilate tried repeatedly to release Jesus. He sent him to Herod (Luke), suggested that the paschal amnesty be applied to him, proposed a compromise with a scourging (Luke), tried to turn the case back to Jewish authorities (John), remonstrated before pronouncing sentence (John), and here washes his hands. Matthew gives us only two of these steps; so it is difficult to see why he should be charged with exculpating the Romans simply because one of his two is the only one not mentioned by the other evangelists. 3. If Matthew were interested in exculpating Pilate, would he have included the soldiers' savage mockery of Jesus (vv. 27-31)? 4. Pilate's claim to be "innocent of this man's blood" is no stronger than Luke 23:14. Why then should this verse in Matthew be thought to color the first gospel's passion narrative so uniquely? 5. We cannot be certain that Pilate actually thought his action would excuse him; it may have reflected his contempt for the Jews or have been a taunt. And even if he thought he had exculpated himself, he should have known better. Plumptre quotes Ovid's lines: "Too easy souls, who dream the crystal flood/Can wash away the fearful guilt of blood." 6. But regardless of what Pilate thought, Matthew does not think the hand washing exonerated Pilate. We have already seen how Matthew shows that all connected with Jesus' death are guilty (see on vv. 2, 4-5). Now Matthew insists that Pilate's action was not prompted by desire for justice but by political and moral cowardice and fear of a mob. The Romans expected their magistrates to maintain peace. An uproar, especially one tinged with complaint to Caesar (John), would be enough to intimidate a corrupt governor whose past has caught up with him (see on 26:57-68). So when Pilate says, "It is your responsibility" (27:24), Matthew intends his readers to remember the same words spoken by the chief priests and elders to Judas (v. 4). 7. Too much of the debate about v. 24 implies that the text merely reflects church- synagogue relations at the end of the first century, with little connection with the trial of Jesus. This has

led to so many historical disjunctions as to be no longer credible. Is it not remarkable that the fourth Gospel, which in recent literature is also regularly interpreted as a clash between church and synagogue, should contain much more about the Roman trial than the Synoptics?

25 To Pilate's words, "all the people" answer, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!" The idiom is familiar (2Sam 1:16; 3:28; Acts 18:6; 20:26). In the narrative this is a swift retort to Pilate's taunt and mob pressure for him to pronounce the verdict.

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But it clearly is more than that. How much more? Many say that by "all the people" Matthew is saying that *the Jews as a whole* reject Jesus (Frankmolle, pp. 204-11) and therefore have incurred collective guilt. Thus v. 25 becomes a prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem and the nation; and a new people of God, the church, take over. There is some truth in this view, but it needs qualification. 1. Matthew probably means "all the people" to refer to the entire crowd that cries, "Let his blood be upon us," rather than limiting these words to the chief priests and elders (see on v. 20). 2. Even if there is symbolism (as there appears to be) whereby the crowd's response reflects the response of the nation as a whole (cf. 23:37-39), Matthew certainly knows that *all* the first disciples were Jews. Thus the Gospel's denunciations of the Jews are not more severe than those of many OT prophets, and in both instances it is understood that a faithful remnant remains. So what Matthew actually says cannot be judged as anti-Semitic. It is only when Matthew's account is read as a description, not of Jesus' trial, but of later church-synagogue relations, that it begins to bear anti-Semitic nuances fostered, not by the trial itself, but by the expansion of the remnant to include Gentile believers. Thus the anachronism of the church-synagogue conflict, consciously adopted by more liberal critics and unconsciously presupposed by more conservative ones, injects into the passion narratives more "anti-Semitic" bias than was actually present in the events they describe. If v. 25 joins Matthew 25 in anticipating the judgment of A.D. 70, it does so in a way akin to Jeremiah's prophecies of the Exile and not with the often cynical detachment of Gentile believers from the Fathers on.

26 Among the Jews scourging was limited to forty lashes (Deut 25:3; cf. 2Cor 11:24), but the Romans were restricted by nothing but their strength and whim. The whip was the dreaded *flagellum*, made by plaiting pieces of bone or lead into leather thongs. The victim was stripped and tied to a post. Severe

flogging not only reduced the flesh to bloody pulp but could open up the body until the bones were visible and the entrails exposed (cf. TDNT, 4:510-12; Jos. War II, 612 [xxi.5]; VI, 304 [v.3]). Flogging as an independent punishment not infrequently ended in death. It was also used to weaken the prisoner before crucifixion. Jesus' flogging took place before the verdict (cf. Luke 23:16, 22; John 19:15; cf. Blinzler, pp. 222ff.) and so was not repeated after the verdict. Repetition would doubtless have killed him. Pilate, after further entreaty (John 19:1-16), then "handed him over to be crucified" (v. 16); the words recall the Suffering Servant (Isa 53:6, 12 LXX).

12. The soldiers' treatment of Jesus (27:27-31)

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Many think it unlikely that troops (auxiliary soldiers recruited from the non-Jewish population of Palestine and under Pilate's direct control) would mock a prisoner just scourged; but close parallels are not hard to find (Philo *In Flaccum* 6.36-39; Dio Cassius *History* 15.20-21; cf. Luther R. Delbrueck, "Antiquarisches zu den Verspottungen Jesu," ZNW 41 [1942]: 124-45). This pericope is meant to fulfill 17:22- 23; 20:17-19 (cf. Mark 15:16-20; John 19:2-3).

27 That the governor's troops are the ones involved in these shameful actions belies any suggestion that Matthew exculpates Pilate (see on v. 24). The "Praetorium" is probably the old palace of Herod (see on vv. 11-26; cf. Benoit, *Jesus* , pp. 167-88); the soldiers take Jesus into the palace courtyard. The "whole company" would number six hundred if the cohort were at full strength and all were on duty, but more likely the expression simply refers to all the soldiers present.

28-31 Here we have humanity at its worst--a scene of vicious mockery. The Jews have mocked Jesus as Messiah (26:67-68); here the Roman soldiers ridicule him as king. Matthew's readers recognize that the soldiers speak more truly than they know, for Jesus is both King and Suffering Servant. The "robe" (*chlamys* , in the NT only here and in v. 31) is probably the short red cloak worn by Roman military and civilian officials (v. 28). Mark and John describe it as "purple," Matthew as "scarlet." Commentators have speculated that this redactional change serves to symbolize blood and its concomitant suffering. Such efforts are strained. The ancients did not discriminate among colors as closely as we do, and BAGD (p. 694) adduces a reference in which a Roman soldier's cloak is said to be "purple." The "purple" (Mark; John) calls to mind the robes worn by vassal kings (cf. 1Macc 10:20, 62; 11:58; 14:43-44), and the "scarlet" (Matthew) shows what the garment probably was--a trooper's cloak. For a crown (v. 29) the soldiers

plaited a wreath of thorns from palm spines or acanthus and crushed it down on Jesus' head in imitation of the circlet on the coins of Tiberius Caesar (cf. TDNT, 7:619-24, 632f.). The staff they put in his hand stood for a royal scepter; and the mocking "Hail, King of the Jews!" corresponded to the Roman acclamation "Ave, Caesar!" and capped the flamboyant kneeling. Not content with the ridicule and the torture of the thorns, they spat on him (v. 30) and used the staff, the symbol of his kingly authority, to hit him on the head "again and again" (cf. the imperfect tense of the verb). "After they had mocked him" (v. 31, an aorist with pluperfect force; see on v. 8; Moule, *Idiom Book*, p. 16), they dressed him again in his own clothes and led him off to be crucified. Normally a prisoner went naked to his place of execution and was scourged along the route. That this custom was not followed with Jesus may be because he had already been flogged and more flogging might have killed him. Or it may reflect

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an attempt not to offend too many Jewish sensibilities during a feast time. Jesus was led away by the execution squad of four soldiers, dragging the crosspiece to which his hands would be nailed (John 19:17, 23).

13. The Crucifixion and mocking (27:32-44)

Two thousand years of pious Christian tradition have largely domesticated the cross, making it hard for us to realize how it was viewed in Jesus' time. Two excellent recent studies discuss the relevant evidence (M. Hengel, *Crucifixion* [London: SCM, 1977];

J.A. Fitzmyer, "Crucifixion in Ancient Palestine, Qumran Literature and the New Testament," CBQ 40 [1978]: 493-513). Crucifixion was unspeakably painful and degrading. Whether tied or nailed to the cross, the victim endured countless paroxysms as he pulled with his arms and pushed with his legs to keep his chest cavity open for breathing and then collapsed in exhaustion until the demand for oxygen demanded renewed paroxysms. The scourging, the loss of blood, the shock from the pain, all produced agony that could go on for days, ending at last by suffocation, cardiac arrest, or loss of blood. When there was reason to hasten death the execution squad would smash the victim's legs. Death followed almost immediately, either from shock or from collapse that cut off breathing. Beyond the pain was the shame. The later rabbis excluded crucifixion as a form of capital punishment for just this reason, though there is some evidence that the Pharisees, their probable predecessors, did not oppose it in principle (cf. David T. Halperin, "Crucifixion, the Nahum Peshier, and the Rabbinic Penalty of Strangulation," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 32 [1981]: 32-46). In ancient sources crucifixion was universally viewed with horror. In Roman law it was reserved only for the worst criminals and lowest classes. No Roman citizen could be crucified without a direct edict from Caesar. Among Jews the horror of the cross was greater still because of Deuteronomy 21:23: "Anyone

who is hanged on a tree is under God's curse.'" In Israelite law this meant the corpse of a judicially executed criminal was hung up for public exposure that branded him as cursed by God. The words were also applied in Jesus' day to anyone crucified; and therefore the Jews' demand that Jesus be crucified rather than banished was aimed at arousing maximum public revulsion toward him. But in Christian perspective the curse on Jesus at the cross fulfills all OT sacrifices: it is a curse that removes the curse from believers--the fusion of divine, royal prerogative and Suffering Servant, the heart of the gospel, the inauguration of a new humanity, the supreme model for Christian ethics, the ratification of the new covenant, and the power of God (1Cor 1:23- 24; Gal 3:13; Rom 5:12-21; Col 2:14; Hebrews; 1 Peter 2:18-25, cf. Matt 3:17; 8:17; 16:21; 24-25; 20:25-28; 21:38-42; 26:26-29).

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All four Gospels record the Crucifixion. No Gospel says much about the Crucifixion itself, the details were all too well known, and theological interest does not lie so much in crucifixion per se as in the attendant circumstances and their significance. Each evangelist gives his narrative an independent cast by what he includes or omits, though these differences are often exaggerated. Matthew largely follows Mark; but whereas Mark alludes to the OT, Matthew tends to be somewhat more explicit (v. 34, Ps 69:21; v. 35, Ps 22:18; v. 39, Ps 22:7; v. 43, Ps 22:8). The dominant note of the pericope is the continuing mockery (Bonnard); but the mockery by an awful irony reveals more than the mocker thinks, for Jesus is indeed King of the Jews (v. 37), the new meeting place with God (v. 40), the Savior of men (v. 42), the King of Israel (v. 42), and the Son of God (v. 43). The date is 15 Nisan A.D. 30 or 33, and the time fairly early in the morning, as the interchanges with Pilate and Herod and the scourging and the mocking need not have consumed more than two to three hours.

32 "As they were going out" presupposes "of the city," not "from the Praetorium," as Mark says that Simon was coming in "from the country." Executions normally took place outside the city walls (Lev 24:14; Num 15:35-36; 1 Kings 21:13; Acts 7:58), symbolizing still further rejection (cf. Heb 13:13). This suggests that Jesus, weak as he was, managed to carry the crossbeam as far as the city gates (cf. John 19:17). There the soldiers forced Simon to assume the load. His name suggests, but does not prove, that he was a Jew. He came from Cyrene, an old Greek settlement on the coast of North Africa (Acts 2:10; 6:9; 11:20; 13:1). Mark says that he was the father of Alexander and Rufus, who may be referred to in Acts 19:33 and Romans 16:13 and were obviously well-known to Mark's readers; but because the names were common, these passages may refer to other persons. In 1941, N. Avigad ("A Depository of Inscribed Ossuaries in the Kidron Valley," IEJ 12

[1962]: 1-12) published an account of the discovery of a burial cave belonging to Cyrenian Jews, located on the southwest slope of the Kidron and dating from pre-A.D.

70. An ossuary from this find is twice inscribed in Greek: "Alexander son of Simon." But we cannot be certain the same family is in view. The efforts of Christian piety to make Simon's act a deed of sympathetic magnanimity are invalid. Simon had no choice, and the text says nothing about his sympathy for Jesus.

33 The site of Golgotha (transliteration of Aram. *galgalta* ['skull']) is uncertain. Gordon's Calvary is not an option (cf. Parrot, pp. 59-65). The most likely place is one near the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in an area outside the northern wall, on a hill near the city wall (John 19:20), and not far from the road (Matt 27:39). Our English

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"Calvary" comes from the Latin *calva* ("a skull").

34 Mark says they offered Jesus wine mingled with myrrh, and he refused it; Matthew, that they offered him wine mingled with gall, and he tasted it and then refused it. A common explanation is that Mark describes a custom in which women of Jerusalem, responding to Proverbs 31:6-7 (the alleged custom is Jewish, not Roman), prepared a drink of wine and [frank]incense--Mark's mention of myrrh instead of frankincense is variously explained (e.g., Lane, *Mark* , p. 124)--as a narcotic to ease the pain of the sufferers (b *Sanhedrin* 43a). This Jesus refused so as to drink the full draught of suffering with all his senses intact. Matthew then changed "myrrh" (Mark) to "gall" in order to link the event to Psalm 69:21. Though this interpretation remains popular, another one is more convincing (cf. Moo, "Use of OT," pp. 249-52). Neither Mark nor Matthew mentions women, and both imply that the soldiers administered the drink. Moreover that Matthew says Jesus tasted it before refusing it argues against the view that it was a customary narcotic to dull pain; for if customary, he would know what it contained: why should he have tasted it if he would in the end refuse it? It is much better to assume that the gesture in both Matthew and Mark was not one of compassion but of torment. Myrrh may have been used with wine to strengthen the drink (TDNT, 7:458), but it has no effect on pain (cf. John Wilkinson, "The Seven Words from the Cross," SJT 17 [1964]: 77, n. 1). But myrrh tastes bitter; so a large dose of it mingled with wine would make the latter undrinkable. Whether customary or not, the drink was offered to Jesus; but it was so bitter he refused it, and, according to this view, the soldiers were amused. Mark keeps the word "myrrh" to describe the content, and Matthew uses "gall" to describe the taste and to provide a link with Psalm 69:21. In both Hebrew and Greek, the words for "gall" in Psalm 69:21 (*ros* and *chole* respectively) refer to various bitter or poisonous substances. Like David his father, Jesus looked for sympathy but found none (Ps 69:20-21).

35 The victim was either tied or nailed to the crossbeam (in Jesus' case, the latter), which was then hoisted to its place on the upright. The feet were sometimes tied or, as in this instance, nailed to the upright. Crosses were made in various shapes--an X, a T, or the traditional cross. The latter is in view here (v. 37). How high the victim was from the ground varied from a few inches to several feet, in Jesus' case the latter (v. 48; John 19:29). The Romans crucified their victims naked. Whether they permitted a loin cloth to avoid transgressing Jewish stipulations (M *Sanhedrin* 6:3) is unknown. The victim's clothes customarily became the perquisite of the executioners; here they divided them--probably an inner and outer garment, a belt, and a pair of sandals-- among themselves by casting lots, oblivious to the OT lament in Psalm 22:18 that John

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19:23-24 says was now fulfilled. (The variant reading in Matthew, preserved in NIV margin, is an assimilation to John.) Mark says this took place at the third hour, about 9:00 A.M.

36 This verse is peculiar to Matthew. The soldiers kept watch to prevent rescue (men were known to have lived after being taken down from a cross). Perhaps Matthew gives us this detail to eliminate any suggestion that Jesus was removed from the cross without dying.

37 The statement of the crime was often written on a white tablet in red or black letters and displayed on the cross. The charge against Jesus, written in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin (John 19:20), is highly ironic: Pilate, though desiring to offend the Jews (John 19: 19-22), wrote more of the truth than he knew. Pilate rubs the noses of the Jews' in their vassal status. To a Jew, "king of the Jews" meant "Messiah"; so the charge on which Jesus was executed was, according to Pilate, that he was a messianic pretender. Matthew's Christian reader will remember the intertwining strands of royal Son and Suffering Servant and see their climax here.

38 On the two *lestai* ("rebel guerrillas"; NIV, "robbers"), see on v. 16. The King of the Jews is crucified along with rebels. Matthew may be thinking of Isaiah 53:12, but this is uncertain (cf. Moo, "Use of OT," pp. 154-55).

39-40 Crucifixion was always carried out publicly as a warning to others. With the day of the paschal meal behind them (see excursus at 26:17) and the restrictions of Sabbath not to begin till sundown, there was time and opportunity for people to walk by on the nearby road and "hurl insults" (*blasphemeo* v. 39, as in 9:3; 12:31; 26:65) at Jesus. Shaking their heads, and so calling to mind the derision in Pss 22:7; 109:25; Lamentations 2:15, the

passersby threw up the charge in Matthew 26:60-61. The Greek should probably be rendered "You who were trying to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days" (v. 40; cf. 2:20; cf. BDF, par. 339 [3]; Turner, *Syntax*, pp. 80-

81). The derision was palpable and identifies the mockers as those who had witnessed the proceedings of the Sanhedrin or had some report of them. The second taunt, "If you are the Son of God," not only harks back to the trial (26:

63), but for Matthew's readers recalls a dramatic parallel (4:3, 6). Through the passersby Satan was still trying to get Jesus to evade the Father's will and avoid further suffering (Lohmeyer; cf. also 16:21-23).

41-43 The "chief priests, teachers of the law and the elders" (v. 41) represent all the principal groups of the Sanhedrin (see on 21:23; 26:59). They do not address Jesus

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directly but speak of him in the third person, in a stage whisper meant for his ears. "He saved others" (v. 42) is probably an oblique reference to Jesus' supernatural healing ministry. "But he can't save himself" is cutting because it questions that same supernatural power. But there is level on level of meaning. For the Christian reader "save" has full eschatological overtones. And though Jesus *could* have saved himself (26:53), he could not have saved himself if he was to save others. The second of the three taunts, "He's the king of Israel," substitutes the covenant term Israel for "the Jews" in Pilate's words (v. 11) and is in fact the normal Palestinian form of Jesus claim (cf. TDNT, 3:359-62, 375f.). The words "Let him come down from the cross, and we will believe in him" have several levels of meaning. They constitute a malicious barb directed at Jesus' helplessness, while having the effrontery to suggest that the leaders' failure to believe was his fault. The taunt piously promises faith if Jesus will but step down from the cross; but the reader knows that, in the mystery of providence, if Jesus did step down, there would be no "blood of the covenant for the forgiveness of sins" (26:26-29), no ransom (20:28), no salvation from sin (1:21), no theological basis for healing (8:16-17), no gospel of the kingdom to be proclaimed to nations everywhere (28:19-20), no fulfillment of Scripture. In an unconscious allusion to Psalm 22:8 (as Caiaphas uttered an unconscious prophecy in John 11:51-52), the religious leaders launch their third taunt: "He trusts in God" (v. 43). They recognize that Jesus' claim to be the "Son of God" was at least a claim to messiahship and perhaps more. So assuming that God must crown every effort of Messiah with success, they conclude that Jesus' hopeless condition is proof enough of the vanity of his pretensions. Again their malice masks the ironic redemptive purposes of God. On the one hand, as Christian readers know, God will indeed vindicate his Son at the Resurrection: Matthew ends his Gospel, not at 27:56, but at 28:20 (cf. Acts 2:23-24; Rom 1:3-4). On the other hand, the leaders are right: Jesus is now facing his most severe test, the loss of his Father's presence, leading to the heart-rending cry of the following verses (esp. v. 46).

44 The *lestai* ("robbers"; see on v. 16) crucified with him join in the abuse (cf. Luke 23: 39-43; Zerwick, par. 7).

14. The death of Jesus (27:45-50)

45 The darkness that "came over all the land" from noon till 3:00 P.M. (that is what "sixth hour" and "ninth hour" refer to) was a sign of judgment and/or tragedy. The Greek *ge* means "land" rather than "earth," since the darkness was meant to be a sign relating both to Jesus' death and to the Jewish people; and beyond the borders of Israel the darkness would lose this significance. SBK (1:1040-42) gives numerous

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rabbinic parallels, and Wettstein an array of Greek and Latin authors. But the most- telling background is Amos 8:9-10, and to a lesser extent Exodus 10:21-22. Both passages portray darkness as a sign of judgment; but Amos mentions noon, the turning of religious feasts into mourning, and says, "I will make that time like mourning for an only son" (Amos 8:10; see also on Matt 2:15). The judgment is therefore a judgment on the land and its people (cf. Best, pp. 98f.). But it is also a judgment on Jesus; for out of this darkness comes his cry of desolation (v. 46). The cosmic blackness hints at the deep judgment that was taking place (20:28; 26:26-29; Gal 3:13). It is futile to argue whether the darkness was caused by an eclipse of three hours(!) or by atmospheric conditions caused by a sirocco or something else, not because it did not happen, but because we do not know how it happened, anymore than we know how Jesus walked on the water or multiplied the loaves. The evangelists are chiefly interested in the theological implications that rise out of the historical phenomena.

46 The "cry of desolation" raises two important questions.

1. In what language did Jesus utter it? Almost all recognize that the words echo Psalm 22:1 (for a list of exceptions, cf. Moo, "Use of OT," pp. 264f.). But among the variant readings of a confused textual history (cf. Notes), Matthew keeps " *Eli, Eli* " (NIV, " *Eloi, Eloi* "), representing a Hebrew original, and Mark " *Eloi, Eloi* ," representing an Aramaic original. The remaining words, " *lama sabachthani* ," are Aramaic. Many suggest that Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1 in Hebrew, reverting to the ancient language of Scripture in his hour of utmost agony. Only this, it is argued, accounts for the confusion with "Elijah" in v. 47 and provides a plausible explanation for the rendering "my power" (*he dynamis mou* , presupposing Semitic *heli*) in the apocryphal Gospel of Peter. In this view Mark, or an early copyist of

Mark, has turned Jesus' words into Aramaic, recognizing that Jesus more commonly spoke Aramaic than Hebrew. However, though Jesus was probably at least trilingual (Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek-- with perhaps some Latin), the overwhelming textual evidence for the rest of the cry supports an Aramaic original. Even Matthews Hebraic-sounding "Eli" may in fact support an Aramaic original, because the Targum (written in Aramaic) to Psalm 22:1 has *eli* . Apparently some Aramaic speakers preserved the Hebrew name for God in the same way some English speakers sometimes refer to him as Yahweh. The evidence of the Gospel of Peter is not decisive because "my power" may not rest on a Semitic original but may be an independent periphrasis for God, akin to 26:64. Moreover on the lips of a dying man crying out in agony, " *Eloi* " could as easily be mistaken for Elijah as " *Eli* " (cf. discussion by Broadus; Lagrange; Gundry, *Use of OT* , pp. 63-66; Moo, "Use of OT," pp. 264-75). Jesus cry was most probably in Aramaic; and at least some of the variants stem from the difficulty of transliterating a Semitic language into

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Greek and others from the influence of the OT.

2. What does this psalm quotation signify? A large number of recent interpreters have interpreted the cry against the background of the *whole* of Psalm 22, which begins with this sense of desolation but ends with the triumphant vindication of the righteous sufferer. The chief difficulty with this is that though OT texts are frequently cited with their full contexts in mind, they are never cited in such a way that the OT context effectively annuls what the text itself affirms (Bonnard; Moo, "Use of OT," p. 272). If the context of Psalm 22 is carried along with the actual reference to Psalm 22:1, the reader of the Gospel is to understand that the vindication comes with the Resurrection in Matthew 28, not that Jesus' cry reflects full confidence instead of black despair. Equally futile is the suggestion of Schweizer and others that these words constitute a more or less standard cry of a pious man dying with the words of a psalm on his lips. But why *this* psalm when others would be more suitable? Evidence for such a use of Psalm 22 is sparse and late. It is better to take the words at face value: Jesus is conscious of being abandoned by his Father. For one who knew the intimacy of Matthew 11:27, such abandonment must have been agony and for the same reason it is inadequate to hypothesize that Jesus felt abandoned but was not truly abandoned (contra Bonnard; Green; McNeile; Senior, *Passion Narrative*, p. 298), because "it seems difficult to understand how Jesus, who had lived in the closest possible fellowship with the Father, could have been unaware whether he had, in fact, been abandoned" (Moo, "Use of OT," p. 274). If we ask in what ontological sense the Father and the Son are here divided, the answer must be that we do not know because we are not told. If we ask for what purpose they are divided, the ultimate answer must be tied in with Gethsemane, the Last Supper, passion passages such as 1:21; 20:28 (see also 26:26-29, 39-44), and the theological interpretation articulated by Paul (e.g., Rom 3:21-26). In this cry of dereliction, the horror of the world's sin and the cost of our salvation are revealed. In the words of Elizabeth Browning: Yea, once Immanuel's orphaned cry his universe hath shaken.

It went up single, echoless, "My God, I am forsaken!"

It went up from the Holy's lips amid his lost creation

That, of the lost, no son should use those words of desolation.

47 According to 2 Kings 2:1-12, Elijah did not die but was taken alive to heaven in a whirlwind. Some Jewish tradition, perhaps as old as the first century, held that he would come and rescue the righteous in their distress (cf. Jeremiah TDNT, 2:930-31; SBK, 4: 769-771).

48-49 See on v. 34. The allusion is again to Psalm 69:21. What is not clear is whether

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the offer of a drink is meant as a gesture of mercy or as mockery (v. 48). The Gospel parallels are somewhat ambiguous. The best explanation is that of mockery. *Oxos* (lit., "vinegar") probably refers to "wine vinegar" (NIV), sour wine diluted with vinegar drunk by foot soldiers; but this does not make the offer a compassionate act, since its purpose may have been to prolong life and agony, while with false piety the onlookers say they will wait for Elijah to rescue him (v. 49). But if the Father has abandoned Jesus, will Elijah save him? The offer of a drink not only fulfills Scripture but makes the cry of dereliction (v. 46) all the bleaker. In this interpretation NIV's "But" (v. 49) is too adversative a rendering of *de*, and "Leave him alone" should be taken to suggest (as in NIV on Mark 15:36) "Leave him alone now"--i.e., the proffered drink provides the context for more mocking. It is not clear whether Luke 23:36, where mockery is clearly intended, properly parallels Matthew 27:34 or 27:48-49. John's Gospel (19:28-29) is interested only in the fact of Scripture fulfillment, not the question of whether mockery is intended.

50 This loud cry reminds us once more of Jesus' hideous agony. Matthew's "he gave up his spirit" ("spirit" here is equivalent to "life") suggests Jesus' sovereignty over the exact time of his own death. It was at this moment, when he was experiencing the abyss of his alienation from the Father and was being cruelly mocked by those he came to serve, that he chose to yield up his life a "ransom for many" (see on 20:28).

15. Immediate impact of the death (27:51-56)

51a There were two temple curtains, one dividing the Most Holy Place from the Holy Place and the other separating the Holy Place from the court.

Tearing the latter would be more public, but tearing the inner veil could hardly be hushed up. Jewish parallels are interesting (b *Yoma* 39b reports the doors of the temple opened of their own accord during the forty years before the destruction of the temple) but difficult to interpret. The inner veil is presupposed in Hebrews 4:16; 6:19-20; 9:11-28; 10:19-22. Destruction of the outer veil would primarily symbolize the forthcoming destruction of the temple, while destruction of the inner veil would primarily symbolize open access to God (Best, *Temptation* , p. 99); but destruction of either veil could point in both directions. There is more. If the death of Jesus opened up a fresh access to God that made the OT sacrificial system and the Levitical high priesthood obsolete, then an entire change in the Mosaic covenant must follow. It is impossible to grapple with Matthew's fulfillment themes (cf. esp. on 5:17-20; 11:11-13) and see how even the law points prophetically to Messiah and hear Jesus' promise of a new covenant grounded in his death (26:26-29) without seeing that the tearing of the veil signifies the obsolescence of the temple ritual and the law governing it. Jesus himself is the New Temple, the

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meeting place of God and man (see on 26:61); the old is obsolete. The rent veil does indeed serve as a sign of the temple's impending destruction--a destruction conceived not as a brute fact but as a theological necessity.

51b-53 On problems concerning the historicity of this narrative, see D. Wenham, "Resurrection" (esp. pp. 42-46). Only Matthew reports it, but it is of a piece with the tearing of the temple veil. Both are part of the initial impact of Jesus' death, along with the centurion's exclamation (v. 54). Moreover, the earthquake apparently links them: it is possible that Matthew sees the earthquake (v. 51b), itself a symbol of judgment and theophanic glory (cf. 1 Kings 19:11; Isa 29:6; Jer 10:10; Ezek 26:18; and esp. see the background materials gathered by R.J. Bauckham, "The Eschatological Earthquake in the Apocalypse of John," *NovTest* 19 [1977]: 224-33), as the means of tearing the veil as well as opening the tombs. The temple area lies on a geological fault; and the Muslim shrines on the site today have been damaged by tremors from time to time (cf. D. Baly, *The Geography of the Bible* [New York: Harper and Row, 1974], p. 25).

But the resurrection of the *hagioi* ("saints," i.e., "holy people," v. 52) remains extraordinarily difficult for two reasons. First, its extreme brevity and lack of parallels raise many unanswered questions: What kind of bodies do these "holy people" have? Do they die again? How many people saw them? How public were these appearances? Second, a quick reading of the text gives the impression that though the holy people were raised when Jesus died, they did not leave the tombs and appear to the citizens of the "holy city" till after Jesus' resurrection (v. 53). What were they doing in between? The passage has elicited various explanations. Hutton thinks it a displaced resurrection account, originally connected with the earthquake of 28:2. Others have thought it a primitive Christian hymn. D. Senior ("The Death of Jesus and the Resurrection of the Holy Ones [Matthew 27:51-53]," *CBQ* 38

[1976]: 312-29), in addition to criticizing some other views, represents the approach currently most popular: these verses are a midrash, a symbolic representation of certain theological ideas about the triumph of Jesus and the dawning of the new age. But apart from questions of literary genre (cf. Introduction, section 12.b), one wonders why the evangelist, if he had nothing historical to go on, did not invent a midrash with fewer problems. J.W. Wenham ("When Were the Saints Raised?" JTS 32 [1981]: 150-52) offers an alternative view. He has convincingly argued that a full stop should be placed, not after "split" (v. 51), but after "broke open" (v. 52). The tearing of the veil and the opening of the tombs together symbolize the first of twin foci in Jesus' death and resurrection. On the one hand, Jesus' sacrificial death blots out sin, defeats the powers of evil and death, and opens up access to God. On the other, Jesus' victorious resurrection and

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vindication promise the final resurrection of those who die in him.

The resurrection of "the holy people" begins a new sentence and is tied up only with Jesus' resurrection. So Matthew does not intend his readers to think that these "holy people" were resurrected when Jesus died and then waited in their tombs till Easter Sunday before showing themselves. The idea is a trifle absurd anyway: there is no more reason to think they were impeded by material substance than was the resurrected Lord, the covering rock of whose grave was removed to let the witnesses in, not to let him out. The "holy people" were raised, came out of the tombs, and were seen by many after Jesus rose from the dead. There is no need to connect the earthquake and the breaking open of the tombs with the rising of "the holy people": the two foci must be differentiated. On several details we are told little. For instance, it is unclear whether the resurrection of the "holy people" was to natural bodies (cf. Lazarus, John 11) or to supernatural bodies. The latter is perhaps more likely; and in that case they did not return to the tombs, and their rising testifies that the Last Day had dawned. Where they ultimately went Matthew does not say. Were they "translated"? Nor does he tell us who they were; but the language implies, though it does not prove, that they were certain well-known OT and intertestamental Jewish "saints," spiritual heroes and martyrs in Israel's history (cf. the terminology in Isa 4:3; Dan 7:18; Tobit 8:15; 1 Enoch 38:45; T Levi 18:10-11). If so, then Matthew is telling us, among other things, that the resurrection of people who lived before Jesus Messiah is as dependent on Jesus' triumph as the resurrection of those who come after him. The idea is not fanciful, given Matthew's grasp of prophecy and fulfillment (see on 5:17; Introduction, section 11.a). One must still reflect on why the evangelist placed the account here instead of in chapter 28. He probably had at least three reasons. 1. The pericope would disrupt the narrative in Matthew 28.

2. The account is held together by two foci--Jesus' death and resurrection. Therefore Matthew's putting it with the resurrection pericopes would have

possibly been even more awkward than putting it with the passion pericopes. Linking the Cross and the empty tomb in a unified theological application is not without its difficulties, regardless of whether the pericope in question is placed with the story of the Cross or with the account of the Resurrection. 3. More positively the placement of this pericope with other verses dealing with the immediate impact of Jesus' death may be peculiarly appropriate since they too point to the future. No Christian reader who saw in the torn veil a reference to judgment on the temple would fail to see the new means opening up for the meeting of God and man, a means dependent on Jesus' resurrection and continued ministry. Similarly the confession that Jesus was the Son of God (v. 54) would appear to thoughtful readers as

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a deeper truth than the centurion and his men could have known, for Matthew 28 lies just ahead. Furthermore, if the text had ended at "broke open" (v. 52) and resumed with v. 54, the reader would have been given a wholly wrong impression. Jesus' work on the cross is tied to his impending resurrection; together they open up the new age and promise eschatological life.

54 Despite the fact that "Son of God" is one of several major christological titles in Matthew, it also appears in Mark as the climax of the Passion (Mark 15:38-39). What is not certain is exactly what the soldiers meant by "Son of God" (cf. Blair, pp. 60-68). They may have used the term in a Hellenistic sense, "a son of God" referring to a divine being in a pagan sense. But the governor's soldiers were probably non-Jewish natives of the land (see on 27:27). If so, or even if they were Romans who had been assigned to Palestine for some time, they may well have understood "Son of God" in a messianic sense (see on 26:63). Certainly the anarthrous noun "Son" can mean "*the Son*" instead of "a Son" in this construction (cf. Moule, *Idiom Book*, p. 116). The darkness, the earthquake, and the cry of dereliction convinced the soldiers that this was no ordinary execution. The portents terrified them and probably led them to believe that these things testified to heaven's wrath at the perpetration of such a crime, in which the soldiers had participated. But this confession tells us something more: Jesus as the promised Messiah and unique Son of God is seen most clearly in his passion and death; but again the Jewish religious establishment, mistaking the nature of his messiahship, mocked him with the very title (vv. 41-44) by which the pagans now confessed him (see also on 8:5-13; 15:21-28).

55-56 Along with the soldiers, certain women, generally not highly regarded in Jewish society, watched to the bitter end. They kept their distance (v. 55),

whether through timidity or modesty; and last at the cross, they were first at the tomb (28:1). Not only do they provide continuity to the narrative, but they prove that God has chosen the lowly and despised things of the world to shame the wise and strong (cf. 1Cor 1:27-31). These women were Galileans who often traveled with the disciples to care for Jesus' needs out of their own resources (cf. Luke 8:2-3). Comparison of the lists of names in Matthew, Mark, and John (19:25) produces these results:

Matthew Mark John

Mary Magdalene Mary Magdalene Jesus' mother

Mary the mother Mary the mother Jesus' mother

of James and Joses of James the and sister

younger and

Joses

Mother of Zebedee's Salome Mary wife of

sons Clopas

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Mary of Magdala

If we make two assumptions--(1) that John's second entry is distinguished from his third (i.e., they are not in apposition) and (2) that John's list of four includes the list of three in Matthew and Mark--then certain things become probable. First, the mother of Zebedee's sons was called Salome, unless a different woman is here introduced. Second, if Mary the mother of James and Joseph (or Joses) is Jesus' mother (cf. 13:55), then Jesus' mother and Mary Magdalene (of Magdala) appear on all three lists. That would make Salome Jesus' mother's sister--his aunt on his mother's side. Others suppose that Mary the wife of Clopas is the mother of James and Hoses, who are not Jesus' half-brothers. Yet the result still equates Salome and Jesus' aunt on his mother's side. Although none of this is certain, it would help explain 20:20.

16. The burial of Jesus (27:57-61)

Because of Deuteronomy 21:22-23, Jesus body, according to Jewish Customs, could not remain on the cross overnight. The Roman custom was to let bodies of crucified criminals hang in full view till they rotted away. If they were buried at all, it was only by express permission of the imperial magistrate. Such permission was usually granted to friends and relatives of the deceased who made application, but never in the case of high treason.

57 The approaching evening--about 6:00 P.M. at that time of year--would mark the end of Friday and the beginning of Sabbath. Mark and Luke portray Joseph of Arimathea (the place is uncertain, but the best guess is Ramathaim, northwest of Lydda) as a prominent member of the Sanhedrin, and Luke says Joseph had not consented to the Sanhedrin's action. Only

Matthew mentions he was rich. This may direct attention to Isaiah 53:9-12: though Jesus was numbered with the transgressors, yet in his death he was with the rich. To own a new tomb and use the quantity of spices reported by John, Joseph must have been well-to-do. Matthew tells us Joseph had become a disciple (on the verbal form, cf. BDF, par. 148 [3]; Zerwick, par. 66; see on 13:52; 28:19); he learned from Jesus and to some extent was committed to following him, even if his discipleship was secret (John).

58-60 Matthew's account is more condensed than Mark's, who mentions Pilate's checking that Jesus was actually dead and describes Joseph's purchases. Joseph's initiative is remarkable courageous; and Pilate granted his request only because he was convinced that Jesus was not really guilty of high treason (v. 58). Joseph could not have acted alone: removal of the body, washing, the weight of spices, and other preparations would be too much for one man with limited time. John mentions the

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assistance of Nicodemus; probably their servants also helped. Matthew does not mention the seventy-five pounds of spices (John) wrapped up with Jesus in the linen cloth. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is most probable the correct site of the tomb (cf. Parrot). Some centuries earlier the place had been a stone quarry and the resulting rugged face became a place where tombs were cut from the rock. Joseph had prepared this tomb for his own use (v. 60), but now he laid Jesus' body in it. Tombs were of various kinds. Many were sealed with some sort of boulder wedged into place to discourage wild animals and grave robbers. But an expensive tomb consisted of an antechamber hewn out of the rock face, with a low passage (cf. "bent over," John 20:5,

11) leading into the burial chamber that was sealed with a cut disk-shaped stone that rolled in a slot cut into the rock. The slot was on an incline, making the grave easy to seal but difficult to open: several men might be needed to roll the stone back up the incline. This sort of tomb is presupposed in the Gospel records (cf. Parrot, pp. 43ff.).

61 No mourning was permitted for those executed under Roman law. The women followed with broken but silent grief and watched the burial. In addition to Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, the women saw Jesus buried. This can only be factual, since the Jews placed little value on the testimony borne by women (*M Rosh ha- Shanah* 1:8). The witness of the women also prepares the way for 28:1. That Jesus was actually buried became an integral part of gospel proclamation (cf. 1Cor 15:4).

17. The guard at the tomb (27:62-66)

This pericope is peculiar to Matthew; and it is often viewed as a piece of "creative writing" designed to provide "witnesses" to the Resurrection (Schniewind) or to provide "evidence" that Jesus' body had not been stolen.

But there are several things in favor of the pericope's historicity. 1. It must be taken with 28:11-15. Thus the account of the guards at the tomb does less to assure us that the body was not stolen than to provide background for the report that it was. 2. This may be the reason why the other evangelists omit it. In the circles they were writing for, the report circulated by the Jews may not have been current; so no explanation was necessary. In Matthew's Jewish environment, he could not avoid dealing with the subject. 3. Matthew has regularly given information in the passion narrative that the other evangelists omit (e.g., 27:19, 34-35, 62-63); and it is methodologically wrong to doubt the historicity of all details that lack multiple attestation--not least because such "multiple attestation" may sometimes go back to one literary source.

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4. If Matthew were trying to prove Jesus' body was not stolen, why does he not have the guards posted immediately, instead of waiting till the next day (v. 62)? 5. On the other hand, the chief priests and the Pharisees would not necessarily be defiling themselves by approaching Pilate on the Sabbath, provided they did not travel more than a Sabbath day's journey to get there and did not enter his residence (cf. John 18:28). Their action is not implausible if they still saw some potential threat in the remains of the Jesus movement. A few more details are mentioned below. (See further D. Wenham, "Resurrection," esp. pp. 47-51.)

62 This strange way of referring to the Sabbath (for "Preparation Day," see excursus at 26:17) cannot reasonably be taken to spring from Matthew's desire to use the word he omitted at 27:57 (Mark 15:42; so Bonnard, Hill): Matthew is nowhere committed to using all of Mark's words. Rather, this may be a way to avoid using the word "Sabbath," which can be ambiguous during a feast, since it could refer to the last day of the week or to a feast-Sabbath.

63-64 "Sir" (*kyrie* , v. 63) is merely a polite form of address. For comments on the phrase "after three days," see on 12:40. The objection that this scene is implausible because it shows the Jewish leaders believing something the disciples themselves cannot yet believe is insubstantial. They may have heard something of the content of 16:21; 17:9; 20:19 from Judas. Whatever the source of their information, they certainly do not *believe* Jesus prediction, they are merely afraid of fraud--a fear fostered perhaps by the report that Jesus' body, against all judicial custom (see on vv. 57-61), had been taken down from the cross and returned to Jesus' disciples by Joseph and Nicodemus. This could also account for the delay in the request to post a guard (v. 64). The disciples disbelieved Jesus' words about rising again, not because they could not understand the plain words, but because they had no

frame of reference capable of integrating a dying and rising Messiah into their own messianic expectations. Shattered by the demoralizing turn of events, they cowered in fear (John 20:19), unable and even unwilling to trust their judgment and understanding on anything, except for the terrible fact that their Messiah had been crucified. The Jews could take no military action without Roman sanction; so they asked Pilate that a guard be posted against the possibility of the body being Stolen (v. 64). Jesus' "first deception" was his claim to messiahship; his "last deception" was his claim that he would rise from the dead. From their viewpoint, the Jewish leaders are protecting themselves and the people from deception; from Matthew's perspective they are deceiving themselves.

65-66 Greek *echete koustodia* (v. 65) could be imperative ("Take a guard," NIV), but

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it is more likely indicative ("You have a guard of soldiers," RSV; cf. KJV). Pilate refuses to use his troops but tells the Jewish authorities that they have the temple police at their disposal; and he grants the leaders permission to use them. This explains why, after the Resurrection, the guards reported to the chief priests, not to Pilate (28:11). Pilate's answer in v. 65 must therefore be construed as cynical. He is saying, "You were afraid of this man when he was alive; now he is dead, and you are still afraid! By all means secure the tomb as tightly as possible, if you think that will help; but use your own police." So guards are posted and the stone sealed with cord and an official wax seal (v. 66). But "death cannot keep his prey." With the dawn all the efforts to eliminate Jesus Messiah from the stage of redemptive history are held up for heavenly derision (Ps 2:4) in the irresistible triumph of the Resurrection.

B. The Resurrection (28:1-15)

1. The empty tomb (28:1-7)

Because the Resurrection is central to Christian theology, few subjects have received more attention. Paul goes so far as to say that if Christ was not raised from the dead, Christian faith is vain; and we are still dead in our sins. Useful examples of modern redaction-critical approaches to the resurrection narratives are provided by N. Perrin, *The Resurrection Narratives* (London: SCM, 1977), and especially John E. Alsup, *The Post-Resurrection Appearance Stories of the Gospel-Tradition* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1975). Older works like B.F. Westcott's *The Gospel of the Resurrection: Thoughts on Its Relation to Reason and History* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1906) are too readily passed over in the modern debate. Yet more recent treatments are also necessary to answer questions raised from new literary

and philosophical angles. A useful place to begin is with G.E. Ladd, *I Believe in the Resurrection of Jesus* (London: Hodder and Stoughton; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975); Daniel P. Fuller, *Easter Faith and History* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965); and two essays by W.L. Craig, "The Bodily Resurrection of Jesus" (in France and Wenham, 1:47-74) and "The Empty Tomb of Jesus" (France and Wenham, 2:173-200). The textual problems at the end of Mark compound the difficulties in sorting out literary relationships. Most now hold that Mark intended to end his Gospel with 16:8, though some still cling to the authenticity of the "long ending" (Mark 16:9-20); others suggest some such ending as Matthew 28:9-10. What is certain is that, for those who wish to attempt it, the various resurrection appearances can be harmonized in at least three different ways (cf. Broadus; Ladd). But it is more important to come to grips with the distinctive emphasis of each NT writer. The considerable number of "minor agreements" between Matthew and Luke over

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against Mark strongly suggests that Matthew and Luke, if they did not simply follow one account independent of Mark, either shared as one source a written account of some resurrection appearances, or one evangelist borrowed from the other. The theological implications of the Resurrection are not treated at length by the evangelists; but the theme constantly recurs in Paul (e.g., Rom 4:24-25; 6:4; 8:34; 10: 9; 1Cor 15; 2Cor 5:1-10, 15; Philippians 3:10-11; Col 2:12-13; 3:14; 1Thess 4:14). Thought-provoking works in this area include W. Kunneth, *The Theology of the Resurrection* (tr. J.W. Leitch [London: SCM, 1965]); T.F. Torrance, *Space, Time and Resurrection* (Edinburgh: Handset 1976).

1 The Greek *opse de sabbaton* can be understood as meaning "late on the Sabbath"; then the next phrase would mean "as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week." Taken together these two temporal phrases must then mean one of two things:

(1) unlike Mark 16:1, not to mention the consistent witness of the NT, the events described take place on *Saturday* evening, the end of the Sabbath; or

(2) this is evidence for a scheme of counting days from sunrise to sunrise and takes place early Sunday morning. Instead, it is far better to take *apse* as an irregular preposition, meaning "after" (as in NIV; cf. BDF, par. 164 [4]; RHG, pp. 645f.; Moule, *Idiom Book*, p. 86). "After the Sabbath" is then a general time indicator, i.e., the women would not walk far during the Sabbath; so they waited till after the Sabbath. But by then Saturday night was drawing on; so early on the first day of the week (i.e., at dawn: cf. BAGD, p. 304), Mary Magdalene and "the other Mary"--the other one mentioned in 27:56 (still others are mentioned in Mark 16:1; Luke 24:10)--"went to look at the tomb." Mark says they "bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body." It has been argued that Matthew must make the change to "late on the Sabbath" because he alone introduces the account of the posting of the guard (26:62-66), which would make admittance by the women impossible. The women would not have come once the guards were

posted; so they must be presented as slipping in earlier. But if the women stayed home on the Sabbath and the guard was not posted till the Sabbath would the women be likely to learn of it till they arrived on Sunday morning? Matthew's brief "to look at the tomb" preserves the theme of witness (27:56, 61); but in addition it may reflect an ancient Jewish tradition that says Jews visited the tombs of the deceased till the third day to ensure that the party was truly dead (cf. Thomas R.W. Longstaff, "The Women at the Tomb: Matthew 28:1 Re-examined," NTS 27 [1981] 277-82).

2-4 The clause introduced by "for" (v. 2) either suggests that the violent earthquake (see 27:51) came with the "angel of the Lord" (on angels, cf. 1:20-23; 18:10) or was the

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means the angel used to open the tomb. In Matthew and Luke the angel is more clearly portrayed as an angel than in Mark ("a young man dressed in a white robe"). But the distinction should not be pressed, as angelic beings often appear in human form in the OT; and Mark's young man is clearly an angel (cf. Lane, *Mark*, pp. 586-87, compare Jos. Antiq. V, 277 [viii.2]). The guards witnessed the earthquake, saw the angel, and "became like dead men" (v. 4 i.e., "fainted in terror" or the like). There is no implication that the earthquake had anything to do with releasing Jesus: the stone was rolled back, the seal broken, and the soldiers made helpless, not to let the risen Messiah escape, but to let the first witnesses in. Too much speculative "theologizing" has accompanied some modern treatments of these verses. In particular there is nothing to suggest that the soldiers were in any sense pagan witnesses of the Resurrection. They neither heard the angel's words nor saw the risen Jesus; and they would shortly lie about what really had happened (vv. 11-15). Furthermore it is doubtful whether Matthew intended to contrast the soldiers' terror, based on failure to understand, with the women's joy, who received the word of revelation. There is no evidence that the women witnessed the earthquake and the first descent of the angel; moreover their joy was mingled with fear (v. 8), for the angel's "Do not be afraid" (v. 5) is meaningless unless they were afraid. What is stunningly clear is the restrained sobriety of these accounts as compared with the later apocryphal Gospels (e.g., Gospel of Peter, 9:35-11:44).

5-7 The angel speaks (lit., "answered"; see on 11:25) words that allay the women's fears (cf. Mark 16:5-7; Luke 24:4-8). The empty tomb by itself is capable of several explanations (cf. John 20:10-15). This explanatory word of revelation narrows the potential interpretations down to one: Jesus has risen from the dead (v. 6), a truth to be confirmed by personal appearances. In Matthew and Luke, but not in Mark, the fact of Jesus' resurrection, announced by the angel, is also tied into Jesus' promises "as he said" (cf.

16:21; 17:23; 20:18-19). This is one of several significant "minor agreements" of Matthew and Luke against Mark in the resurrection narratives. The women are invited to see the place where Jesus lay and commanded to go "quickly" (v. 7, a happy touch) to give his disciples the joyous message. Unlike Mark, Matthew does not explicitly mention Peter. Jesus had promised to go ahead of his disciples into Galilee (see on 26:32); and the angel now reminds them of this (v. 7). The present tense *proagei* ("is going ahead") cannot mean that Jesus is already on his way, because (1) v. 10 places him still in Jerusalem; and (2) a verb like "go ahead," if pressed to mean Jesus was actually traveling, "would also seem to presuppose that the disciples also were on the way to Galilee" (Stonehouse, *Witness of Matthew* , p. 173). The verb is not a progressive present but a vivid future. As he promised, Jesus will arrive in Galilee before they do

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and meet them there, contrary to their expectation (see on 26:32; 28:10).

2. First encounter with the risen Christ (28:8-10)

8-9 With mingled fear and joy, the women run to tell their news to the disciples (v. 8), when "suddenly" (the probable force of *idou* , "behold," in this context) Jesus meets them (v. 9). "Greetings" (*chairete*) is a normal Greek salutation (cf. 26:49). The women clasp his feet (possibly a generalizing plural: cf. Turner, *Insights* , p. 76; cf. John 20:11-14) and worship him. *Prosekynesan* ("worshiped") can mean simply "knelt before" (see on 8:2). The same verb occurs in the only other resurrection appearance in Matthew (v. 17) and encourages the view that the "kneeling" has instinctively become worship.

10 Like the angel (v. 5), Jesus stills the women's fears and gives them a similar commission. Some have held that "my brothers" raises the status of Jesus' eleven surviving disciples. This ignores the use of the term in Matthew; for apart from the places where "brothers" denotes a natural relationship, the term is employed of spiritual relationship--even before the Passion--explicitly referring to the fellowship of those who acknowledge Jesus as Messiah (18:15; 23:8; cf. 5:22-24; 7:3-5; 18:21, 35). In the two other places where Jesus uses the full expression "my brothers" (12:49-50; 25:40), it refers to all Jesus' disciples and cannot possibly be limited to the apostles (cf. Stonehouse, *Witness of Matthew* , pp. 176-77). Therefore the natural way to interpret "my brothers" in v. 10 is not as a reference to the Eleven but to all those attached to his cause who were then in Jerusalem, most of whom had followed him from Galilee to Jerusalem as his "disciples" (see on 5:12, and esp. 26:32; 28:7). There were many others in addition to the Twelve who had followed Jesus (e.g., 20:17; 21:8-9, 15; 27:55; cf. 20:29; 21:46; 23:1). Apart from the Galileans, Joseph of Arimathea was certainly not Jesus' sole

disciple from the Jerusalem region (19:13-15; 27:57-61). If this interpretation of Jesus' words is reasonable, several interesting conclusions or possibilities are evident. 1. The view that interprets the "some" of v. 17 as a reference to others than the apostles is supported, and the resurrection appearance of vv. 16-20 may well be equivalent to the appearance before five hundred reported by Paul (1Cor 15:6). 2. Obviously Matthew does not tell all he knows or recount every resurrection appearance of which he has information. Therefore it is tendentious to argue that 28: 10, 16-20 means that Matthew thinks Jesus appeared to his disciples only in Galilee and denies any Jerusalem appearances. 3. The interpretation of v. 10 offered here looks back to 26:32; 28:7: Jesus now

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confirms his earlier promise that, far from being left behind as a rotting corpse when his disciples return to Galilee, he will precede them there and meet them there. But now, after the resurrection, he makes the promise a command and includes all his "brothers." Taken this way v. 10 is far from eliminating other appearances to the believers (cf. John 20:3-10; Luke 24:13-49; John 20:11-29) before they return to Galilee. It is simply that Matthew, for his immediate purposes, is not interested in them. 4. But why not? Or why does Matthew record only the resurrection appearance to the women and the appearance in Galilee to his followers? Some have suggested that Galilee is introduced because it is the place of revelation and ministry, whereas Jerusalem is the place of rejection and judgment (see esp. E. Lohmeyer, *Galilaa und Jerusalem* [Gottingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1936], pp. 36ff.; R.H. Lightfoot, *Locality and Doctrine* [London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1938], pp. 66ff., 128ff.). But one must wonder whether enough weight has been assigned to various facts: viz., Jesus' ministry was not only to Galilee but to the whole of Israel (10:6, 23; 15:24); opposition was directed against Jesus in Galilee as well as in Jerusalem, where the plots to kill him were hatched; at Jerusalem Jesus revealed himself as King in fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy (21:17); and Jerusalem, called the "holy city" (4:5; 27:53), peculiarly drew out Jesus' compassion (23:37-39), whereas cities in Galilee were excoriated (11:20-24). Why, then, Matthew's record of a resurrection appearance in Galilee? The answer surely lies in the combination of two themes that have permeated the entire Gospel. First, the Messiah emerges from a despised area (see on 2:23) and first sheds his light on a despised people (see on 4:15-16); for the kingdom of heaven belongs to the poor in spirit (5:3). For this reason, too, the risen Jesus first appears to women whose value as witnesses among Jews is worthless (see on 27:55-56, 61; 28:1, 57). Second, "Galilee of the Gentiles" (4:15) is compatible with the growing theme of Gentile mission in this Gospel (see on 1:1; 2:1-12; 4:15-16; 8:5-13; 10:18; 12:21; 13:37; 15:21-28; 24:14 et al.) and prepares for the Great Commission (28:18-20).

3. First fraudulent denials of Jesus' resurrection (28:11-15)

There is no sure way of dating the writing of *this* pericope by the closing words, "to this very day" (v. 15). To conclude from this pericope that Matthew had in mind a period ten or fifteen years after the Fall of Jerusalem (so Bonnard) stretches the evidence too far. Matthew simply intends this paragraph to be an explanation of the stolen-corpse theory and an apologetic against it. He may also be drawing out a startling contrast: the chief priests use bribe money to commission the soldiers to spread lies, while the resurrected Jesus uses the promise of his presence to

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commission his followers to spread the gospel (vv. 16-20).

11 Some of the guards (presumably the rest waited to be officially relieved) reported, not to Pilate, but to the chief priests; probably they were temple police (see on 27:65-

66). When Matthew says the guards reported "everything that had happened," he is not suggesting that they actually witnessed the Resurrection but the earthquake angel, and empty tomb (Bonnard).

12-14 It is very difficult to believe that the soldiers of Pilate would admit falling asleep

(v. 13): that would be tantamount to suicide. But the temple police could more easily be bribed, even though it took "a large sum of money" (v. 12), and could more easily be protected from Pilate's anger. The plan devised (see on 12:14; 27:1) by the chief priests and elders (v. 12; see on 21:23) proves to Matthew that their pious promises to believe if Jesus would only come down from the cross (27:42) were empty. Once again the instinctive concern of the Jewish leaders relates to expedience and the people's reaction, not to the truth. The story they concoct shows how desperate they are for an explanation, for if the guards were asleep, they could not know of the alleged theft; and if one of them awoke, why was not an alarm sounded and the disciples arrested? Molesting graves was a serious offense in the ancient world, subject at times to the death penalty. The famous "Nazareth Inscription," recording an ordinance of Caesar to thin effect, confirms this, though the relation of this inscription to Jesus' death and burial is uncertain (cf. B.M. Metzger, "The Nazareth Inscription Once Again," in Ellis and Crasser, pp. 221-38). It is equally improbable that the timid and fearful disciples could have mustered up the courage to open Jesus' tomb and run the risk of a capital indictment, or that the Jewish authorities would have failed to prosecute the disciples if they had possessed a scrap of evidence

pointing to the disciples' guilt. Nor was the "large sum of money" an adequate measure of how far the Jewish leaders would go, for to "satisfy" the governor may well have involved further bribery (cf. parallels in Wettstein).

15 And this, Matthew explains, was the origin of the "widely circulated" Jewish explanation for the empty tomb, still common in the days of Justin Martyr (*Dialogue* 108).

C. The Risen Messiah and His Disciples (28:16-20)

1. Jesus in Galilee (28:16-17)

Partly because there is no close Gospel parallel to these verses, and partly because

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as the conclusion to Matthew's Gospel they have great significance, an enormous amount of study has centered on these verses. Much of it has gone into trying to distinguish between tradition and redaction or in establishing the *Gattung* or literary genre (e.g., B.J. Malina, "The Literary Structure and Form of Matthew 28:16-20," NTS 17 [1970-71]: 87-103; J. Lange, *Das Erscheinen des Auferstandenen im Evangelium nach Matthäus* [Wurzburg: Echter, 1973]; B.J. Hubbard, *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning: An Exegesis of Matthew 28:16-20* [SBLDS 19; Missoula: Scholars, 1974]). The most believable opinion is that of Hubbard, who avoids the classifications of his predecessors (enthronement hymn, official decree, covenant renewal manifesto) and opts for a commissioning narrative patterned after similar OT commissionings (e.g., Gen 12:14; Exod 3:1-10; Josh 1:1-11; Isa 6; 49:1-6). After examining twenty-seven such narratives and finding a basic form consisting of seven elements, Hubbard finds five of them in Matthew 28:16-20: introduction (v. 16), confrontation (vv. 17-18a), reaction (v. 17b), the commission (vv. 19-20a), reassurance (v. 20b). Missing are the protest before the reassurance and a conclusion stating the work is being carried out. But several questions persist. Hubbard himself concedes that the form is not monolithic even in the OT; and absence of two of the seven common elements is disconcerting, the more so since Matthew's final clause is a perfectly suitable conclusion to his Gospel. More important, all the OT commissions Hubbard refers to are to individuals, whereas this one is to the disciples as a group. Some of the OT commissions are in reality the establishment of covenants; and if Frankmolle (pp. 42ff.) has somewhat exaggerated this theme in Matthew, it cannot be entirely ignored in a book that promises a new covenant (26:26-29) and seeks to demonstrate the continuity with and fulfillment of the OT covenant people in the messianic community being gathered around Jesus. It seems best to conclude with John P. Meier ("Two Disputed Questions in Matt 28: 16-20," JBL 96 [1977]: 407-24; cf. P.T. O'Brien, pp. 254-67) that this pericope does not easily fit any known literary form and must not be squeezed into a poorly fitting mold. Yet Meier's principal reason for this conclusion could be strengthened. He

argues that these verses constitute a tradition so heavily redacted by the evangelist that conformity to a *Gattung* (or form) shaped primarily by oral transmission is in principal unlikely. That may be so, but this conclusion by no means makes impregnable judgments about the way the material came into Matthew's hands (cf. Introduction, section 2). Above all, the temptation to ascribe authenticity to "tradition" but not to "redaction" must be resisted (cf. Carson, "Redaction Criticism"; cf. G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* [London: Macmillan, 1962], pp. 77ff.). Some have distinguished between "Christepiphanies" (appearances of the resurrected Christ on earth, as in 28:9) and "Christophanies" (appearances of the

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resurrected Christ from heaven, as at Paul's conversion, Acts 9; cf. Dunn, *Jesus* , pp. 116, 123). Those who make this helpful distinction are uncertain how to classify the resurrection appearance of vv. 16-20. The dilemma is a false one. There has been no mention of the Ascension; and Paul seems to put his own experience of the risen Christ into a class of one (1Cor 15:8), the sole "Christophany," which must also be distinguished from John's visionary experiences (e.g., Rev 1:12-16). It is often pointed out that vv. 16-20 recapitulate many of Matthew's themes. The point can be overstressed (e.g., Peter F. Ellis, *Matthew: His Mind and His Message* [Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1974]) but is an important insight that ties up several loose ends.

16 "Then" translates the mildly adversative *de* ("but"), not *tote* (see on 2:7). The fraudulent explanation of the empty tomb was purchased with a bribe and was widely circulated (vv. 11-15), *but* the Eleven (designated as such in the NT only here and four times in Luke and Acts) do what Jesus says and go to Galilee. They go "to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go": the subordinate clause makes the expression *eis to oros* ("to the mountain") specific, though by itself it customarily means "into the hills." We do not know what mountain is meant, but the verse presupposes the arrangements implicit in 26:32; 28:7, 10. Associating the Great Commission (vv. 18-20) with Galilee not only has nuances with Jesus' humble background and the theme of Gentile mission (see on v. 10) but "ensures that the risen Christ and his teaching are not thought of as a substitute for, but as continuous with, Jesus' ministry and teaching in Galilee" (Hill, *Matthew*).

17 Doubt about Jesus' resurrection is expressed elsewhere (Luke 24:10-11; John 20: 24-29), but only by those who have heard reports of Jesus' resurrection without actually seeing him. This verse is therefore unique. Two difficulties must be considered. 1. Does "some" refer to "some of the Eleven"

or to "some others" in addition to the Eleven? The question is partly decided by one's interpretation of v. 10, though more can be said. If *proskyneo* here means not merely "kneel" or "make obeisance to" but "worship" (see on v. 9), then the "eleven disciples" and the "some" probable constitute two groups; for doubt about who Jesus is or about the reality of his resurrection does not seem appropriate for true worship. Especially if Matthew was an eyewitness, it is easy to believe that he describes a scene vivid in his own memory without taking all the precautions that would remove questions from the minds of readers who were not there. As a result, both here and in v. 10 Matthew in an incidental fashion alludes to the larger crowd without providing useful specifics. Moreover *hoi de* , here as in 26:67, means "but some," in contrast with those already

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mentioned, rather than "but they" (cf. Gundry, *Matthew*). While this solution is not certain, the problem is not helped by suggesting that "some" refers to those in Matthew's community who have doubts (Hill, *Matthew*). 2. But why was there doubt at all? The verb used (*edistan* , "[some doubted]") occurs in the NT only here and in 14:31 and does not denote disbelief but hesitation (cf. "though some hesitated," JB; cf. I.P. Ellis, "'But some doubted,'" NTS 14 [1967-68]: 574-80). Even so, why did they hesitate, and why does Matthew include this information here? Even if others than the Eleven are the ones who hesitate, this does not solve the problem; it merely shifts it from the Eleven to other followers of Jesus. Several solutions have been proposed, none of them convincing. There is no evidence of scribal emendation. It is barely possible that some doubted not the fact of the Resurrection but just who this person was (Hendriksen, Grosheide, Filson, Walvoord et al.). The pattern would then be somewhat akin to Luke 24:16; John 21:4-14, where the resurrected Jesus is not instantly recognized. But it must be admitted that this introduces a very subtle distinction into Matthew 28; and the parallels in Luke and John are not all that close, since Luke says the two on the Emmaus road "were kept from recognizing him," and John's narrative has other uncertainties--distance from shore and the aside in 21:12b. The most that can be said for this interpretation is that other passages show that Jesus in his postresurrection appearances was not always instantly recognized. Far less likely is the view of L.G. Parkhurst ("Matthew 28:16-20 Reconsidered," ExpT 90 [1978-79]: 179f.), who says that some doubted, not who Jesus was, nor the facticity of the Resurrection but the propriety of worshiping the resurrected Jesus; and this hesitation Jesus dispels by the words of v. 18: "All authority has been given to me." Somewhat similar is the position of Gundry, who argues that vv. 17-20 are Matthew's way of saying that only Jesus' word quiets doubt, and even the resurrection appearances will not do this. According to Gundry (*Matthew*), we "could hardly ask for better evidence of the authority of Jesus' teaching in Matthew's theology." But thematically v. 18 is tightly

related to v. 19, not v. 17. It is not at all clear that v. 18 alleviates the doubt of v. 17 (cf. Dunn, *Jesus* , p. 124; and to the contrary, Bornkamm, *Tradition* , p. 132). At very least we must admit that the text does not say that all doubts were removed, as is the case in Luke 24 and John 21. More important, Matthew's use of *proskyneo* ("worship") has been sufficiently ambiguous (see on 8:2; 28:9) that he would have needed to use a stronger verb such as *latreuo* ("worship," "serve [God]") if he were trying to make the various points Parkhurst and Gundry suggest. We are left with some uncertainty about what Matthew means, owing primarily to the conciseness of his account. Perhaps it is best to conclude that, especially if the "some" refers not to the Eleven but to other followers, the move from unbelief and fear to faith and joy was for them a "hesitant" one. The Eleven, who according to the

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other Gospels had already seen the risen Jesus at least twice (Peter at least three times, Thomas at least once), respond instantly with worship on the occasion of this new epiphany, but some (others) hesitated--without further specification as to their subsequent belief or doubt. If this is what Matthew means, he may be using this historical reminiscence to stress the fact that Jesus' resurrection was not an anticipated episode that required only enthusiasm and gullibility to win adherents among Jesus' followers. Far from it, they still were hesitant; and their failure to understand his repeated predictions of his resurrection, compounded with their despair after his crucifixion, worked to maintain their hesitancy for some time before they came to full faith. Jesus' resurrection did not instantly transform men of little faith and faltering understanding into spiritual giants. Another thing (not dealt with by Matthew) was necessary, via., the endowment of the Spirit at Pentecost. Matthew's concise account presupposes this--for it is impossible that any evangelist could have been ignorant of that transforming event--but omits it in favor of pressing on to the Great Commission, which ties together some of his own thematic interests.

2. The Great Commission (28:18-20)

18 "All" dominates vv. 18-20 and ties these verses together: *all* authority, *all* nations, *all* things ("everything," NIV), *all* the days ("always," NIV). The authority of Jesus Messiah has already been heavily stressed in this Gospel (e.g., 7:29; 10:1, 78; 11:27; 22:43-44; 24:35; cf. John 17:2). Therefore it is incautious, if not altogether wrong, to claim that the Resurrection conferred on Jesus an authority incomparably greater than what he enjoyed before his crucifixion. The truth is more subtle. It is not that anything he teaches or does during the days of his flesh is *less* authoritative than what he now says and does: even during his ministry his words, like God's, cannot pass away

(24:35); and he, like God, forgives sin (9:6). It is not Jesus' authority per se that becomes more absolute. Rather, the spheres in which he now exercises absolute authority are enlarged to include all heaven and earth, i.e., the universe. This authority has been "given" him by the Father; and so, of course, the Father is exempt from the Son's authority (cf. 1Cor 15:27-28). The Son becomes the one through whom *all* God's authority is mediated. He is, as it were, the mediatorial King. This well-defined exercise of authority is given Jesus as the climactic vindication of his humiliation (cf. Philippians 2:5-11); and it marks a turning point in redemptive history, for Messiah's "kingdom" (i.e., his "king-dominion," the exercise of his divine and saving authority; see on 3:2; 13:37-39) has dawned in new power. This is still clearer if we accept the view that there is a conscious allusion here to Daniel 7:13-14 (see esp. France, *Jesus* , pp. 142-43): the Son of Man, once humiliated and suffering, is given universal authority

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(same word in LXX).

Contrary to France, it does not follow from this that Matthew 26:64 and Mark 14:62 refer to this exaltation and not the Parousia. In the first place, the chief priests in no way witnessed this coming of the Son of Man; and, in the second place, we have repeatedly observed how the coming of the Son of Man to kingly authority cannot be reduced to a single moment in redemptive history.

19 "Therefore" is probably the correct reading; but even if the word is absent, the logical connection is presupposed by the flow of the commission. Two features tie the command to Jesus' universal authority. 1. Because he *now* has this authority, *therefore* his disciples are to go and make disciples--i.e., the dawning of the new age of messianic authority changes the circumstances and impels his disciples forward to a universal ministry he himself never engaged in during the days of his flesh, "except in reluctant anticipation" (Stendahl, Peake, 695k; Hill, *Matthew*). His promotion to universal authority serves as an eschatological marker inaugurating the beginning of his universal mission. 2. Because of that authority, his followers may go in confidence that their Lord is in sovereign control of "everything in heaven and on earth" (cf. Rom 8:28). In the Greek, "go"--like "baptizing" and "teaching"--is a participle. Only the verb "make disciples" (see below) is imperative. Some have deduced from this that Jesus' commission is simply to make disciples "as we go" (i.e., wherever we are) and constitutes no basis for going somewhere special in order to serve as missionaries (e.g., Gaechter, *Matthaus* ; R.D. Culver, "What Is the Church's Commission?" BS 125 [1968]: 243-53). There is something to this view, but it needs three careful qualifications. 1. When a participle functions as a circumstantial participle dependent on an imperative, it normally gains some imperatival force (cf. 2:8, 13; 9:13; 11:4; 17:27; cf.

C. Rogers, "The Great Commission," BS 130 [1973]: 258-67).

2. While it remains true to say that the main imperatival force rests with "make disciples," not with "go," in a context that demands that this ministry extend to "all nations," it is difficult to believe that "go" has lost all imperatival force. 3. From the perspective of mission strategy, it is important to remember that the Great Commission is preserved in several complementary forms that, taken together, can only be circumvented by considerable exegetical ingenuity (e.g., Luke 24:45-49; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; cf. Matt 4:19; 10:16-20; 13:38; 24:14; see further below). The main emphasis, then, is on the command to "make disciples," which in Greek is one word, *matheteusate* , normally an intransitive verb, here used transitively (a not uncommon Hellenization; cf. BDF, par. 148 [3]; Zerwick, par. 66; see on 13:52; 27:57). "To disciple a person to Christ is to bring him into the relation of pupil to teacher,

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`taking his yoke' of authoritative instruction (11:29), accepting what he says as true because he says it, and submitting to his requirements as right because he makes them" (Broadus). Disciples are those who hear, understand, and obey Jesus' teaching (12:46-50). The injunction is given at least to the Eleven, but to the Eleven in their own role as disciples (v. 16). Therefore they are paradigms for *all* disciples. Plausibly the command is given to a larger gathering of disciples (see on vv. 10, 16-17). Either way it is binding on all Jesus' disciples to make others what they themselves are--disciples of Jesus Christ. The words *panta ta ethne* ('all nations') have been understood primarily in two ways.

1. They refer to all Gentiles--i.e., all nations except Israel. Israel has forfeited her place, and now the preaching of the Gospel must be kept from her (so Hare, *Jewish Persecutions* , pp. 147-48; Walker, pp. 111-13; D.R.A. Hare and D.J. Harrington, "'Make Disciples of All the Gentiles' (Mt 28:19)," CBQ 37 [1975]: 359-69). 2. They refer to all people, including Israel (so Trilling, pp. 26-28; Hill, *Matthew* ; Hubbard, *Matthean Reaction* , pp. 84-87; John P. Meier, "Nations or Gentiles in Matthew 28:19?" CBQ 39 [1977]: 94-102; O'Brien, pp. 262-63). Now *ta ethne* in its eight occurrences in Matthew (4:15; 6:32; 10:5, 18; 12:18, 21; 20:19, 25) normally denotes Gentiles, often pagans; but 21:43, where *ethnos* is used anarthrously, is an instance where "people" does not exclude Jews. Moreover, contrary to Hare and Harrington, a good case can be made for saying that the full expression, *panta ta ethne* , used four times in Matthew (24:9, 14; 25:32; here), uses *ethne* in its basic sense of "tribes," "nations," or "peoples" and means "all peoples [without distinction]" or "all nations [without distinction]," thereby including Jews. Could Matthew really be excluding Israel as one source of the hate his followers will have to endure (24:9)? Would he say that any Jewish Christians in any church known to him should not be baptized and taught? More telling yet, Matthew's Gospel is now, in its final verses, returning to the theme introduced in the very first verse (see on 1:1)--that the blessings promised to Abraham and through him to all peoples on earth (Gen 12:3)

are now to be fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah. And when that covenant promise is reiterated in Genesis 18:18; 22:18, the LXX uses the same words found here: *panta ta ethne* . The expression is comprehensive; and, in line with all the anticipatory hints of Gentile witness in Matthew's Gospel (1:1; 2:1-12; 4:15-16; 8:5-13; 10:18; 13:38; 24:14 et al.), it would be as wrong to conclude that only Gentiles are in view as it would be to set up another restriction and see this commission as a command to evangelize only Jewish tribes. Adherents of the "church growth movement" have attempted to justify their entire "people movement" principle on the basis of this phrase, used here and elsewhere, arguing that *ethnos* properly means "tribe" or "people" (most comprehensively,

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perhaps, by H.C. Goerner, *All Nations in God's Purpose* [Nashville: Broadman, 1979]). The latter point is readily conceded, but the conclusion is linguistically illegitimate. Plural collectives may have all-embracing force, whether in Greek or English. Doubtless God may convert people by using a "people movement"; but to deduce such a principle from this text requires a "city movement" principle based on Acts 8:40, where the same construction occurs with the noun "cities." In neither case may missiologists legitimately establish the normativeness of their theories. The aim of Jesus' disciples, therefore, is to make disciples of all men everywhere, without distinction. Hill (*Matthew*) insists that such a command cannot possibly be authentic: "Had Christ given the command to 'make disciples of all nations,' the opposition in Paul's time to the admission of Gentiles to the Church would be inexplicable. It must be assumed that the Church, having learned and experienced the universality of the Christian message, assigned that knowledge to a direct command of the living Lord." But we have already seen how slow the disciples were to grasp what Jesus taught. More important, Acts and the Epistles betray no trace of opposition whatsoever to the *fact* of a Gentile mission. The debate between Paul and his Judaizing opponents was over *the conditions of entrance* into the Christian community (see on 23:15). The many hints throughout Jesus' ministry that show he anticipated a Gentile ministry after some delay (e.g., see on 10:16-20, 13:37-39; 24:14) would make it incongruous for him to have not given some commission about this. The syntax of the Greek participles for "baptizing" and "teaching" forbids the conclusion that baptizing and teaching are to be construed solely as the means of making disciples (cf. also Allen, Klostermann, Lagrange, Schlatter), but their precise relationship to the main verb is not easy to delineate. Neither participle is bound to the other or to the main verb with the conjunction *kai* or a particle, and therefore "they must be viewed as dependent on one another or depending in differing ways on the chief verb" (Beasley-Murray, *Baptism* , p. 89, cf. BDF, par. 421). Most likely some imperative force is present, since the disciples are certainly to baptize

and teach; but computer studies of the Greek NT have shown that although a participle dependent on an imperative normally gains imperatival force when it precedes the imperative, its chief force is not normally imperatival when it follows the imperative. Luke 6:35 has a close syntactic parallel: "And lend [*daneizete*] to them without expecting to get anything back [*apelpizontes*]." Not expecting anything in return is certainly not the *means* of the lending, but it is modal in that it characterizes the lending; and at the same time at least some imperatival force tinges the participle, even if the participle is primarily modal. Similarly baptizing and teaching are not the *means* of making disciples, but they characterize it. Envisaged is that proclamation of the gospel that will result in repentance and faith, for *matheteuo* ("I disciple") entails both preaching and response.

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The response of discipleship is baptism and instruction. Therefore baptism and teaching are not coordinate either grammatically or conceptually--with the action of making disciples. The masculine pronouns *autous* ("them," vv. 19-20) hint at the same thing, since *ethne* ("nations") is neuter: the "them" who are baptized and taught are those who have been made disciples. But this is uncertain, because the case of "them" may be *ad sensum* (i.e., merely according to the general sense). In any case it would certainly misconstrue the text to absolutize the division between discipleship and baptism-instruction. The NT can scarcely conceive of a disciple who is not baptized or is not instructed. Indeed, the force of this command is to make Jesus' disciples responsible for making disciples of others, a task characterized by baptism and instruction. Those who become disciples are to be baptized *eis* ("into," NIV mg.) the name of the Trinity. Matthew, unlike some NT writers, apparently avoids the confusion of *eis* (strictly "into") and *en* (strictly "in"; cf. Zerwick, par. 106) common in Hellenistic Greek; and if so, the preposition "into" strongly suggests a coming-into-relationship- with or a coming-under-the-Lordship-of (cf. Allen; Albright and Mann). For comments about baptism, see on 3:6, 11, 13-17. It is a sign both of entrance into Messiah's covenant community and of pledged submission to his lordship (cf. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism* , pp. 90-92). The triple formula containing Father (or God), Son (or Christ), and Spirit occurs frequently in the NT (cf. 1Cor 12:4-6; 2Cor 13:14; Eph 4:46; 2Thess 2:13-14; 1 Peter 1:2; Rev 1:4-6). Individually these texts do not prove there is any Trinitarian consciousness in the NT, since other threefold phrases occur (e.g., "God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels," 1Tim 5:21). But contributing evidence makes it difficult to deny the presence of Trinitarian thought in the NT documents: (1) the frequency of the God-Christ-Spirit formulas; (2) their context and use: it is impossible, for instance, to imagine baptism into the name of God, Christ, and the elect angels; (3) the recognition by NT writers that the attributes of Yahweh may be comprehensively applied to Jesus and, so far as we have evidence, to the Spirit (cf. C.F.D. Moule, *The Holy Spirit* [London: Mowbrays, 1978], pp. 24-26; Carson, *Farewell Discourse* , esp. pp.

65-66). Many deny the authenticity of this Trinitarian formula, however, not on the basis of doubtful reconstructions of the development of doctrine, but on the basis of the fact that the only evidence we have of actual Christian baptisms indicates a consistent monadic formula baptism in Jesus' name (Acts 2:38; 8:16; 10:48; 19:5; similarly, passages such as Rom 6:3). If Jesus gave the Trinitarian formula, why was it shortened? Is it not easier to believe that the Trinitarian formula was a relatively late development? But certain reflections give us pause. 1. It is possible, though historically improbable, that the full Trinitarian formula was used for pagan converts, and "in the name of Jesus" for Jews and proselytes. But this

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is doubtful, not least because Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles, never uses a Trinitarian formula for baptism. 2. Trinitarian ideas are found in the resurrection accounts of both Luke and John even if these evangelists do not report the Trinitarian baptismal formula. The faith to be proclaimed was in some sense Trinitarian from the beginning. "This conclusion should not come as a great surprise: the Trinitarian tendencies of the early church are most easily explained if they go back to Jesus Himself; but the importance of the point for our study is that it means that Matthew's reference to the Trinity in chapter 28 is not a white elephant thoroughly out of context" (D. Wenham, "Resurrection," p. 53). 3. The term "formula" is tripping us up. There is no evidence we have Jesus' *ipsissima verba* here and still less that the church regarded Jesus' command as a baptismal formula, a liturgical form the ignoring of which was a breach of canon law. The problem has too often been cast in anachronistic terms. E. Riegenbach (*Der Trinitarische Taufbefehl Matt. 28:19* [Gutersloh: C. Bertelsmann, 1901]) points out that as late as the Didache, baptism in the name of Jesus and baptism in the name of the Trinity coexist side by side: the church was not bound by precise "formulas" and felt no embarrassment at a multiplicity of them, precisely because Jesus' instruction, which may not have been in these precise words, was not regarded as a binding formula.

20 Those who are discipled must not only be baptized but also taught. The content of this instruction (see on 3:1 for comments concerning *kerygma* ["preaching"] and *didache* ["teaching"]) is everything Jesus commanded the first disciples. Five things stand out. 1. The focus is on Jesus' commands, not OT law. Jesus' words, like the words of Scripture, are more enduring than heaven and earth (24:35); and the peculiar expression "everything I have commanded you" is, as Trilling (p. 37) has pointed out, reminiscent of the authority of Yahweh (Exod 29:35; Deut 1:3, 41; 7:11; 12:11, 14). This

confirms our exegesis of 5:17-20. The revelation of Jesus Messiah at this late stage in salvation history brings the fulfillment of everything to which the OT Scriptures pointed and constitutes their valid continuity; but this means that the focus is necessarily on Jesus. 2. Remarkably, Jesus does not foresee a time when any part of his teaching will be rightly judged needless, outmoded, superseded, or untrue: *everything* he has commanded must be passed on "to the very end of the age." 3. What the disciples teach is not mere dogma steeped in abstract theorizing but content to be *obeyed* . 4. It then follows that by carefully passing on everything Jesus taught, the first disciples--themselves eyewitnesses--call into being new generations of "ear-witnesses"

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(O'Brien, pp. 264f.). These in turn pass on the truth they received. So a means is provided for successive generations to remain in contact with Jesus' teachings (cf. 2Tim 2:2). 5. Christianity must spread by an internal necessity or it has already decayed; for one of Jesus' commands is to teach all he commands. Failure to disciple, baptize and teach the peoples of the world is already itself one of the failures of our own discipleship. But the Gospel ends, not with command, but with the promise of Jesus' comforting presence, which, if not made explicitly conditional on the disciples' obedience to the Great Commission, is at least closely tied to it. "Surely" captures the force of *idou* here (see on 1:20): he who is introduced to us in the prologue as Immanuel, "God with us" (1:23; cf. also 18:20), is still God with us, "to the very end of the age." The English adverb "always" renders an expression found in the NT only here--viz., *pasas tes hemeras*, strictly "the whole of every day" (Moule, *Idiom Book*, p. 34). Not just the horizon is in view, but each day as we live it. This continues to the end of the age (for this expression, see on 13:39-40, 49; 24:3; cf. Heb 9:26)--the end of history as we know it, when the kingdom will be consummated. Perhaps there is a small hint of judgment: the church dare not drift, because it, too, rushes to the consummation. The period between the commission and the consummation is of indefinite length; but whatever its duration, it is the time of the church's mission and of preliminary enjoyment of her Lord's presence. Matthew's Gospel ends with the expectation of continued mission and teaching. The five preceding sections always conclude with a block of *Jesus'* teaching (3:1-26:5); but the passion and resurrection of Jesus end with a commission *to his disciples* to carry on that same ministry (see Introduction, section 14), in the light of the Cross, the empty tomb, and the triumphant vindication and exaltation of the risen Lord. In this sense the Gospel of Matthew is not a closed book till the consummation. The final chapter is being written in the mission and teaching of Jesus' disciples.