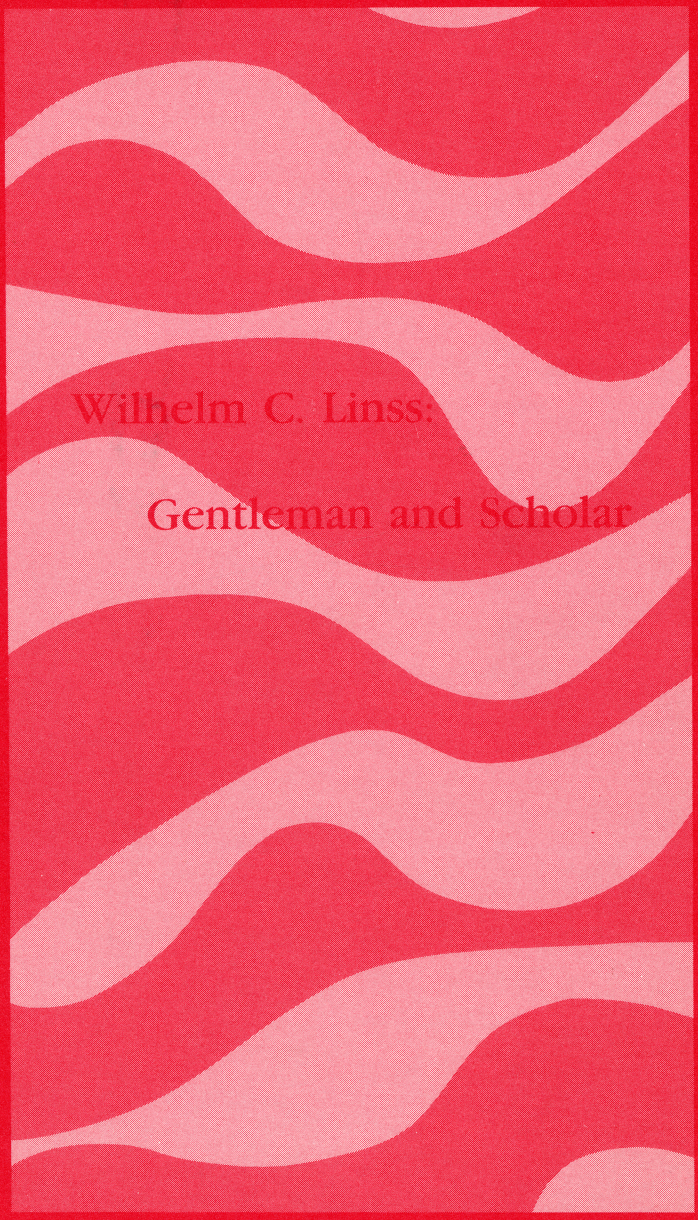
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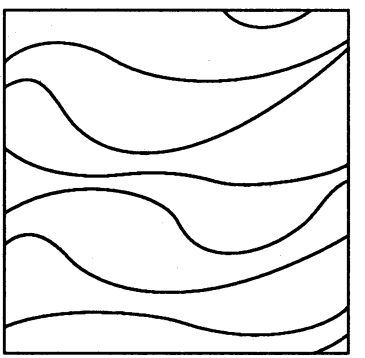
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Wilhelm C. Linss: Gentleman and Scholar

Theological study for Wilhelm Linss began in a prisoner of war camp at the end of World War II. Though seminary has been a kind of prison for many restless souls over the years, for Wilhelm the chance to study and teach the New Testament was an adventure and calling that took him from his native Germany to Boston University for doctoral studies and then to a series of Lutheran educational institutions in America, climaxing with a twenty-five year term at LSTC. His tenure at Chicago earned him a reputation as an "ideal colleague," a careful and meticulous scholar and teacher, a music devotee, and a team player willing to pick up a wide variety of administrative tasks for the good and welfare of the seminary.

The six essays in this issue by friends and colleagues honor Wilhelm Linss on his retirement. The sobriquet "gentleman and scholar" would be a cliche behind anyone else's name. But Wilhelm displays the kind of dignity, grace, and appreciation of high culture to which we all might aspire as Christian women and men. His scholarly attention to detail, his love for textual criticism and the writings of St. Paul, and his leadership in the seminary's biblical division and in the Chicago Society for Biblical Research easily qualify him as scholar. He has now completed translating two volumes of the three-volume commentary on St. Matthew in the Hermeneia Series, written by Ulrich Luz. With the year of Matthew just ahead of us, this jubilee issue will explore the First Gospel for our task of teaching, preaching, and worshipping in the year ahead.

Ulrich Luz believes there was a contest between the Pharisees and the Jesus movement in the late first century to see who would become the dominant factor in Judaism. The Jesus movement lost out in this family conflict and defined itself over against the majority. Hence anti-Judaism became part of the self-definition of the community in Matthew.

Though there is some conflict between the more open words of Jesus and the attitude of Matthew, it is only a small step from the absolute claims which Jesus made for himself to Matthew's theology, which stated that Israel's rejection of Jesus annihilated its election and decided its fate in the last judgment. Luz reminds us that to criticize Matthew's anti-Judaism—as we surely must—forces us to question central tenets, like the relationship between Jesus' proclamation of God's limitless love and his proclamation of judgment.

Donald Senior, C. P., also asks us to ponder the baffling fact that Jesus' ministry and the subsequent mission of the Jewish Christian community were for the most part rejected by God's own people. Still, the opening to the Gentiles came mysteriously in the wake of the failure of the mission to Israel. Both the failure toward Israel and the opening toward the nations are illustrated in Matthew's passion account. Note the tearing of the temple veil and the confession of the centurion. Matthew did not give up on Israel despite his bitter estimate of its response to the gospel. The woes at the end of chapter 23 end in a promise.

Robert H. Smith describes the landscape of Matthean studies today. He cites the best discussions of Matthew as historian, theologian, artist, debater, and man of privilege. Along the way one learns what is at stake in literary, rhetorical, liberationist, and feminist criticisms. Finally, he calls for a new approach: The fundamental shift needed is to stop picturing Matthew as a polemic against the synagogue and to start thinking of Matthew as a piece of Christian self-criticism, issued to stem the influence of certain Christian false prophets inside the community.

Frederick W. Danker asks how a person coming from the Greco-Roman world would have understood the events in Matthew. The ideas of transcendence developed in the infancy narrative (extraordinary conception, impressive genealogy, remarkable portents) prepare for the ultimate recognition of Jesus' kingship beyond the borders of Israel in Mt 28:18-20. While the birth of Jesus indirectly led to the slaughter of the innocent, his own death was the occasion for raising many from the dead. The portents at Jesus' death—earthquake and raising of dead—do not signal God's disfavor, but verify that Jesus the crucified is indeed God with us.

Edgar Krentz calls preachers' attention to the plot of the book of Matthew: 1:1-4:16, the origins of Jesus the Anointed; 4:17-16:20, the proclamation of Jesus the Anointed; 16:21-28:20, the way to the cross, resurrection, and enthronement. Matthew's Jesus is enthroned as kosmokrator and claims total authority over the entire created universe. But his "I am with you" guarantees that he will be eternally involved in the affairs of his people in the world. Matthew's Jesus is also shaped by the Scriptures. He fulfills them as they prefigure him. Matthew draws especially on Isaiah and shows how Jesus relived Israel's history as she should have lived it. For the troubled church in Antioch about 90 C.E. Matthew offered Peter as a patriarch equal to Abraham, just as Jesus paralleled God as the founder of Israel.

David Rhoads notes two different ways to live out the Jewish law in Matthew: life under the law is described as hypocrisy; life in response to the law results in righteousness. Matthew's story shows how the Jews who rejected Jesus' way came to "die by the sword" and how the Jews who accepted Jesus' way are now "inheriting the earth" by spreading the Gospel among Gentile nations. Matthew does not urge his readers to point fingers at the hypocrisy of others, but to discern their own hypocrisy. In Matthew, the key to transformation is that followers come into a relationship with Jesus. Matthew has a theology of character, seeking to create people who do righteous deeds of integrity in relation to a loving God, summarized in the commands to love God and to love your neighbor as yourself. In Matthew, God's activity in Jesus is the grace and power of God which enable one to strive—through the presence and forgiveness of Jesus—to fulfill the Law.

It's a long way from war-torn Germany to a seminary post on the south side of Chicago, though not nearly as far as from the sacred words of Matthew to your attempts to help your congregations define themselves in their contexts and be perfect, with mature and consistent love. For all of us in the year of Matthew this trip from text to context is an adventure, a calling, a holy crisis. Just to renew yourself, think of how Wilhelm C. Linss, gentleman and scholar, negotiated that trip.

With thanksgiving,

Ralph W. Klein
Editor

Matthew's Anti-Judaism: Its Origin and Contemporary Significance

Ulrich Luz
Laupen, Switzerland

William Linss has translated the first two volumes of my commentary on Matthew[1] with great care, skill, and creativity. He also has found a great number of smaller (and even bigger) mistakes in my German manuscript! I am very touched by this and extremely thankful to him. I hope that his retirement will not be the end of his activities. Therefore, it might not be inappropriate to greet him on the occasion of his retirement with a preview of the third volume of *Matthew*, which has not yet been written. What I am going to present here is no more than a sketch of provisional ideas and suggestions. Much of it might be wrong; every point is open to further discussion.

A sketch of Matthew's story

Matthew's story of Jesus is an inclusive story[2] that reflects the experiences and history of the Matthean community. After the prologue (1:1–4:22), which is not only the beginning of the story of Jesus but at the same time the anticipation of the whole story,[3] Matthew narrates the story of Jesus. He preaches and teaches as Israel's Messiah in Israel's synagogues and heals all the diseases of the elect people (4:23; 5-7; 8-9). In Israel he calls his first disciples and the first conflicts arise. To Israel alone he sends his disciples to continue his mission (10:5f.). He predicts the disciples' experiences of persecution, conflict, and suffering, which will not be different from those of the master (10:24-25). The split continues and deepens in chaps. 11ff. The endings of

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[1] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, tr. Wilhelm Linss (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989). The second edition of this volume and the second volume will appear in 1993 as part of the Hermeneia series.

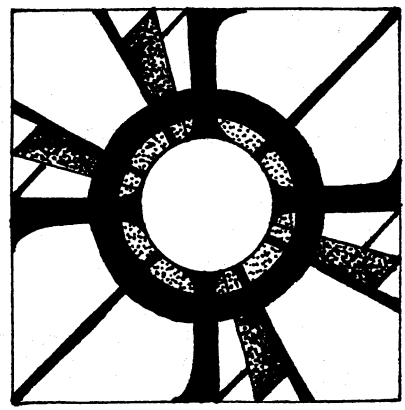
[2] Cf. D. B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story*, JNTSup 42 (1990).

[3] The prologue narrates how Jesus, being born as Israel's Messiah in the city of David, was persecuted by those in power in Jerusalem and had to flee to a Gentile land, Egypt, from where he returns to Galilee, which is interpreted as "Galilee of the Gentiles" (4:15).

chaps. 11 and 12 anticipate the future: on one side are the hostile cities of Galilee (11:20-24) and the hostile leaders of Israel, the scribes and the Pharisees (12:38-45). On the other side are the "simple ones," to whom the Father will reveal the Son (11:25-30), and the true family of Jesus (12:46-50). The section 12:1–16:20 tells several times how Jesus and his disciples have to withdraw from the hostile Jewish leaders, and it ends with the prediction of the new community of Jesus in the midst of Israel, whose rock Peter will be.

In 16:21–20:34 Matthew is preoccupied with this new community, its life, its basic rules, its destiny. It is only after Jesus' entry into Jerusalem that the narration of the hostility of Israel's leaders is resumed. Chapters 21-25 contain the final debate of Jesus with Israel. It has three parts: the three salvation-historical parables of 21:28–22:14, the conflict stories of 22:15ff., and the great sermon against the Pharisees and scribes of 23:1ff. This sermon announces judgment against Israel's leaders, but by its end it has become clear that they represent the whole people of Israel (23:34-39[4]). After this sermon Jesus and his disciples leave the temple. From now on Jesus addresses only the disciples.

The passion and resurrection narratives show the double end of the story of Jesus in Israel. The whole people of Israel takes over the responsibility for the crucifixion of Jesus (27:25); the leaders of Israel can hide God's truth only by means of criminal bribery (28:11-15). On the other hand, Jesus gives to his disciples a new command on the mountain of Galilee: he orders them to go to the Gentiles and make them Jesus' disciples. Thus Matthew's Gospel has a twofold end. Among the Jews there remains the erroneous rumor about the theft of Jesus' body (28:15), whereas the living Lord promises to be with his church



on her way to the Gentiles till the end of the world (28:20).

I understand this story to reflect the experiences of the Matthean church. It is a Jewish-Christian group, originating from the land of Israel but now exiled in Gentile Syria. Its mission to Israel has ended in a catastrophe: not the disciples of Jesus, but the Pharisees became the core of the main stream of Israel. The adherents of Jesus found themselves to be *minim* (dissenters), and outside the synagogues. The great majority of Israel have rejected their call. In this situation Matthew's Gospel wanted to confirm and redefine the identity of the adherents of Jesus and give them a new orientation: the mission to the Gentiles. Matthew's Jewish Christian church is at a point of the parting of the ways. She has to decide whether she should be open to the new task of the mission to the Gentiles and thus make a step towards final integration into the Gentile-Christian church, or whether

[4] Cf. already 12:38-45, where the pericope of the sign of Jonah, addressed to the Pharisees and scribes, ends with a double prediction of judgment against the whole people.

she should continue the mission to Israel and thus finally remain a special group located between the synagogues—whose doors now are closed for the *minim*—and the Gentile-Christian church.

In order to interpret Jesus' great "balance-account" against Israel in chapters 21-28 correctly, two important exegetical questions must be solved: (1) Is the judgment of Jesus directed towards Israel as a whole or towards its leaders only? (2) Is the mission to Israel replaced by the mission to the Gentiles, or is the mission to the Gentiles only an expansion of the mission to Israel?

Rejection of Israel or only its leaders?

The relevant texts of Matthew 21-28 seem to indicate that the leaders of Israel are the primary but not the only addressees of Jesus' predictions of judgment. Note the important redactional addition to the parables of the evil tenants of the vineyard: "The kingdom of God will be taken away from you" (21:43). "You" stands for the chief priests, the elders, and the Pharisees (cf. 23:45). The masses of the people (the ὄχλοι) are treated differently: they believed that Jesus was a prophet (v. 46). Verse 43, however, has a strange "abundance of meaning": the kingdom of God was not promised to the leaders of the people alone, nor is ἄλλον ἔθνος (another people, with the notion: Gentile people) an appropriate opposition to the leaders of Israel. Therefore the readers of this text are not prevented from passing beyond the leaders of Israel, although v. 43 speaks about them only.

The announcement of the destruction of Jerusalem in the parable of the wedding does not distinguish between the people and its leaders (22:7). This verse sees the destruction of Jerusalem as divine punishment for all who rejected the messengers of Jesus. The next action of the king after the destruction of the city is his invitation of the people from the thoroughfares to come to the wedding, that is, the mission to the Gentiles (vv. 8ff.)[5] For Matthew the destruction of Jerusalem is a divine judgment, albeit not the last, eschatological judgment; the history of salvation will continue till the imminent end of the world.[6]

Chapter 23 presents a similar picture to 21:43. Until v. 33 the announcement of the judgment concerns the Pharisees and scribes only. But from v. 34 on the perspective is widened. The Christian prophets, sages, and scribes have been sent to the whole people of Israel and were persecuted; therefore the announcement of the judgment is addressed to "this generation," namely, the present generation of Israel. The following word against Jerusalem confirms this (vv. 37-39). Not only the leaders of Israel but the whole people finally will be judged.

This perspective is confirmed by the passion narrative; the important verses are 27:25,51-53 and 28:15. In 27:24f., probably a pure redactional addition by the evangelist, the whole holy people (πας ὁ λαός) takes over the responsibility for Jesus' death. Jesus is innocent, according to the threefold testimony of Judas (27:4), Pilate's wife (27:19), and Pilate himself (27:24). Naturally, Matthew did not think that the self-cursing of Israel would be effective for centuries; he expected the end of the world to come soon. But on the other side the text leaves no doubt about the final character of this curse[7]).

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[5] Cf. PsClem Rec 1,64,2: after the destruction of the temple the mission to the Gentiles will take place.

[6] Similarly syBar 4,1 (cf. 3,2-7); the destruction of Jerusalem is not the end of this world.

[7] 27:25 alludes to 23:35f., where the last judgment upon this generation is prophesied.

The appearances of the dead in 27:51-53 point in the same direction. I cannot see for these verses an interpretation other than the one given in the second century by a Christian redactor of the Testament of Levi: "Know then, that the Lord will effect judgment on the sons of men, for when the stones are split, when the sun is extinguished, ...all creation is distraught, invisible spirits are vanishing, and hell is snatching its spoils by the sufferance of the Most High, the disobedient people will persist in their wrongdoing, therefore they shall be condemned with punishment" (4:1). Mt 27:51ff. is a signal of the final judgment. The high priest has judged the Judge of the World, the Son of Man (26:64ff.), and now the situation will be reversed.

In 28:11-15, where the last action of the enemies of Jesus is narrated, Matthew speaks about the leaders of the people, the chief priests and the elders. After the clear and evident events of Easter morning, bribery is the only possibility left to them. Their power is the power of money, not for the first time in the passion narrative. The consequences of their last fraud will rest with the people: "This story (about the theft of Jesus' body) was spread among Jews till this day" (28:15). The corruption of the leaders therefore had the consequence that Jews "till this day" could not open themselves to the salvific truth of the resurrection of Jesus. Matthew does not generalize here; he does not use the definite article and speak about "the Jews," thus leaving open the possibility that at least some of them found the truth. On the other side, he uses the word "Jew" for the first time in the Gospel and indicates that the adherents of the false teaching of the high priests—the majority of Israel in his own days—were no longer God's holy people but had excluded themselves from the presence of God in his Immanuel, Jesus.

Does the mission to the Gentiles replace the mission to Israel?

Is the mission to the Gentiles an expansion or a replacement of the mission to Israel? Much depends on the signification of *πάντα τὰ ἔθνη* (all the people or all the Gentiles) in 28:19. The universal mission, towards which the paths are opened by the risen Jesus in the last scene of the Gospel (28:16-20), has been alluded to and predicted many times in earlier parts of the Gospel. The prologue, a prefiguration of the whole story of Jesus, narrates how the infant Jesus traveled from the city of David to the Galilee of the Gentiles. It is full of "signals" which point to the Gentiles.[8] Likewise in the main narrative of the Gospel there are prefigurations (such as 8:5-13, 15:21-28) and predictions (such as 24:9-14, 26:13) of the mission to the Gentiles. 28:19 therefore is a real point of culmination of the Gospel.

After the absolute prohibition of Jesus to the disciples, ordering them not to go the path to the Gentiles or into a town of the Samaritans (10:5f.), the universal missionary command in 28:19 must be interpreted as a correction and reversal of this earlier commandment, not as a simple expansion. This seems clear to me because 10:5f. is alluded to in 28:19.[9] Therefore it is likely that *πάντα τὰ ἔθνη* has to be interpreted as an opposition to "the lost sheep of the house

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[8] E.g., Jesus as son of Abraham, the father of the proselytes, 1:1; the four Gentile women in the genealogy, 1:2-17; the magi as representatives of pagan wisdom; the flight to pagan Egypt; the fulfillment-quotions, 2:15 and 2:23 (*Ναζωραῖος* is a self-designation of the Christians in Syria); the word about the children of Abraham out of the stones, 3:8; the universal perspective of 4:8 (which points to 28:18) and Galilee of the Gentiles, 4:15.

[9] Catchwords: *πορευεσθαι, εθνη.*

of Israel," i.e. as "all the Gentiles" and not as "all the people" (including Israel). "Gentiles" forms an opposition to "Jews" in the preceding pericope (28:15) as well.

The translation of ἔθνη with "Gentiles" harmonizes well with the prevailing use of the word in the Greek Bible, with which Matthew was very familiar, and with his own normal use of the word (4:15, 6:32, 10:5, 20:19). In no reference is it indicated positively that the Israelites could be one ἔθνος among others.

I therefore think that Matthew is propagating a mission to the Gentiles at the end of the Gospel as a replacement for the mission to Israel commanded by Jesus in 10:5f. The mission to Israel has come to an end, because Israel has rejected the missionaries of Jesus.[10] 25:16-20 therefore indicates a major turning point in the course of salvation history. Naturally Matthew does not mean that no Israelite is allowed to become Christian from now on, but he means that Israel as a whole finally has chosen the way of the Pharisees and the high priests and that this decision is the irreversible result of Israel's rejection of Jesus and Israel's rejection of his church. Matthew is convinced that the rejection of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of God and the son of man, who finally will judge the world, has catastrophic consequences.

I want to formulate some exegetical assumptions:

1. In the end of Matthew's story of Jesus it is not only the Jewish leaders but the whole people together with them who reject Jesus (23:29-39, 27:24f.). This rejection leads them to contradict their own scripture (cf. 22:46) and to lies and fraud.

2. For Matthew the unbelieving Israel ceases to have God's promise (21:43). The church replaces Israel as chosen people, insofar as she is keeping Jesus' commandments.

3. For Matthew Israel as a collective body has followed the way of its false leaders, the Pharisees, the high priests, and the scribes. Therefore the mission to Israel has come to an end; Israel's No to Jesus has a final character. Jesus himself and his disciples have left the holy place (23:37-24:2).

4. Israel is guilty, because it has rejected Jesus and his missionaries (11:20-24, 12:22ff., 21:33–22:7, 23:29-39) and killed Jesus (cf. 27:24f.). Further, its leaders and representatives do not keep the will of God (23 passim; cf. 26:63, 28:11-15).

5. Jesus announces to Israel the coming judgment with words (11:20-24, 23 passim) and signs (24:1f, cf. 27:51-53). "This generation" will not escape the judgment. He interprets the destruction of Jerusalem as an act of divine punishment, but not as eschatological judgment (22:7, cf. 12:45, 24:15-18).

Thus, Matthew's theology is thoroughly anti-Jewish. His accusations against the Pharisees and the scribes do not only violate the commandment of love, as he himself has proclaimed it in the Sermon on the Mount, but sometimes even the commandment of truth. Over the whole of chapter 23 one would like to write Mt 7:1: "Pass no judgment, and you will not be judged"—with an exclamation mark! This anti-Jewish theology poses serious theological problems to the church. But before we discuss these problems, some further historical and psychological reflections are necessary.

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[10] 10:23 is an obstacle for this interpretation. I think it is a prophecy which has been surpassed by the course of the events, in the same way as the whole of the so-called missionary sermon of chapter 10 is no more applicable to the people which were originally in mind, namely the lost sheep of Israel.

What lies behind Matthew's rejection of Israel?

My basic assumption is that Matthew and his Jewish Christian church had to work through traumatic experiences. What is this trauma? Matthew mentions persecutions (5:11f, 10:23, 23:34) in Israel, even martyrdoms of the messengers of Jesus (10:21:28, 22:6, 23:34,37). Most of these references are part of the Logia source, which mirrors experiences of the Matthean church in its history in Israel. Different from the fourth Gospel, no formal exclusion from the synagogues is reflected in the Gospel of Matthew. But it is clear that the Matthean church does not live any more within the Jewish synagogues.[11]

These experiences of Jewish persecution and occasional martyrdom did not mean that the existence of his church was really in danger on account of some hostile Jewish acts.[12] Rather I think that these experiences, which finally led to the separation of the church from the synagogues, were traumatic because they provoked a deep crisis of identity in the Matthean church.

A historical reflection. The situation of the Jewish Christian communities belongs to the context of the development of normative Judaism, which took place in the late first and early second centuries after Christ. The time between the Maccabean revolt and the second century C.E. has aptly been characterized as a time of rivaling Jewish groups with sectarian structure,[13] whereby "sect" can be defined as a group of qualified people who realize their own self-definition visibly through their own conventions and requirements.[14] Most of the rival Jewish sects of that time claimed to represent the true Israel or to be the elite of Israel. The polemics between rival Jewish sects of this time was extremely tough; Matthew's polemics against the Pharisees and other Jewish leaders are no exception.[15] Both had many things in common. Sociologically they were not exclusive but open to the situation of the average people. The Pharisees tried to adapt the Torah to the everyday life; therefore they were close to the people and their needs. Jesus too did not retire from the people but lived among them, calling every Israelite to the kingdom of God, especially the disprivileged; he and his ethics were close to daily life. I think that this proximity between the adherents of Jesus and the Pharisees, compared with the elite Sadducees, the segregated Essenes, and the different groups of pietistic Apocalypticists, was the reason why the conflict between them was particularly hard. Both groups tried to define themselves as Israel. Both had an open, "missionary" attitude towards the whole people of Israel. For various reasons, the Pharisees finally won

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[11] Cf. Luz, *Matthew 1-7*, 87-89.

[12] For instance, the global statement that Christian missionaries were killed, crucified, flogged, and persecuted (23:34) is partly an unjustified generalization of single and not normal experiences, partly (in the case of crucifixion) probably entirely untrue, as D. Hare has shown in *The Theme of Jewish Persecution in the Gospel according to St. Matthew*, MSNTS 6 (Cambridge: University Press, 1967), 19-79.

[13] Cf. J. Blenkinsopp, "Interpretation and Sectarian Tendencies: An Aspect of Second Temple History," in *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition II*, ed. E. P. Sanders (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981), 1ff.

[14] Cf. M. Weber, *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Nachdruck 1980 (Tübingen: Mohr), 721f.

[15] Cf. G. Stanton, "Matthew's Gospel and the Damascus Document in Sociological Perspective," in *A Gospel for a New People* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1992), 85ff. Similar observations as in CDC can be made e.g. in polemical sections of the Psalms of Solomon or the Assumption of Moses.

Most of the rival Jewish sects of that time claimed to represent the true Israel or to be the elite of Israel.

the struggle. They and their Rabbinic successors could shape Israel according to their self-definition. The Jewish Christians did not succeed. They could not define Israel, but only themselves as Israel. The deepest reason behind their crisis after their separation from the synagogues was that their own self-definition contradicted reality: they defined themselves as Israel by means of the Law and the Prophets according to the teaching of Jesus, but in reality they were no longer part of Israel but separated from its majority.

If we look at Matthew's church as a sect (in the Weberian sense), which attempts to realize its own self-definition by means of defined requirements and rules which had to be taken over by the members (i.e., the "better righteousness" according to the teaching of Jesus), and if we take seriously that Matthew's church became a perfectionist sect vis à vis a more and more normative Judaism with the sociological structure of a "church" (again in the sociological sense of Max Weber[16]) then it is astonishing that the Matthean Christians did not claim for themselves to represent the elect people. Towards the majority of Israel outside their own community they advocated a strict theology of judgment and condemnation as it is to be expected from a sect vis à vis a dominant, main-stream "church." But for themselves they did not have the typically sectarian consciousness of being "chosen" and of being sure of their own salvation (cf. Mt 22:14). They themselves had to face the judgment of the Son of Man, and their enemies—the Pharisees and the scribes—are a negative paradigm of what they themselves could become.[17] This is quite remarkable.

Social-psychological reflections. We have to interpret the conflict between the Matthean church and the emerging normative Judaism dominated by the Pharisees according to the model of a family conflict, not so much between parents and a child but between rival sisters and brothers.[18] Lewis Coser has shown in a brilliant essay that conflicts between groups are stronger when the relation between them is close.[19] Numerous examples in ancient and modern history show how hard conflicts between sects of the same "family" can be, namely between sects that share the same self-definition but realize it in a different way.[20] They are forced to define themselves against each other.

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[16] Weber, *Wirtschaft*, 719: Judaism is formally a "church," because it is not a community of qualified people with specific requirements of membership, but an institution ("Anstalt") into which people are born.

[17] Cf. D. Garland, *The Intention of Matthew* 23, NT.S 52 (Leiden: Brill, 1979), passim, esp. 117ff., 212ff.

[18] A. Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), speaks about the "tension of a family falling apart" (4).

[19] L. Coser, *Theorie sozialer Konflikte* (Neuwied/Berlin: Luchterhand, 1972), 78ff.

[20] Cf. the rivalries between different neo-Marxist sects in European and Japanese universities in the 60s and 70s as a modern analogy.

In such a case very often the self-definition of the losing group, which becomes a minority and is not able to impose its own self-definition on the whole community, is quite different from the self-definition of the majority. The minority group has to define itself explicitly in relation to the majority; the majority group can pass over the minority and deny its existence. This can be observed in the case of many ethnic and religious minorities today: the Kurdish minority in Turkey, for example, has to define itself explicitly as non-Turkish, while the Turkish majority tends to pass in silence over the Kurdish minority and to deny its existence. The Catholic majority in Poland tends to identify Polish and Catholic, whereas the minorities of Protestant, Jews, or Orthodox have to emphasize that they are not Catholic but Polish. Did the minority of Jewish Christians, who defined themselves in the name of Jesus as the true heirs of the Law and the Prophets, have to say explicitly who were *not* the true heirs of the Law and the Prophets, namely the Pharisees and their adherents? Because the Jewish Christians became a minority of dissenters in Israel, "anti-Judaism" became part of their self-definition. On the other side, the Rabbinic sources can be silent to a large extent about the Christian "minim" (dissenters).

Another reflection which might help us understand the Matthean anti-Judaism is the theory of *aggression*. Aggression usually is the result of frustration. The frustration of the Matthean church was mainly an inner, mental frustration: its claim to be the center of the new, eschatological Israel could not be realized. Their aggression did not take the form of aggressive actions but was replaced by verbal aggression. The agent of aggression is no longer the Matthean church but the risen Lord in the last judgment. The announcements of judgment over Israel, particularly in Matthew 23, can be seen as a "replacement" for aggression[21] or a sublimation of direct, external aggression into the religious sphere. Is it also possible to interpret the mission to the Gentiles as a transformation of aggression into a new and positive activity by the intervention of the risen Lord?

Further it seems to me possible to interpret Matthean anti-Judaism in the light of social-psychological concepts of *stereotyping*.[22] Clearly definable groups have a tendency towards stronger accentuation of their own homogeneity and towards stereotyping of their enemies or out-group people in general. The latter is clearly visible in Matthew's treatment of the Jewish leaders: the differences between the different groups disappear; they all are part of the "front" which is hostile towards Jesus.[23] In Matthew 23 negative characteristics of *some* Pharisees and scribes, which are attested also in Jewish sources,[24] are attributed to *the* Pharisees and scribes—an obviously unjust generalization and stereotypization of out-group people. On the other hand, I cannot observe very much of the corresponding tendency of homogenization of the in-group in Matthew's Gospel. Matthew makes clear distinctions between "the called" and the chosen people in the church

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[21] Cf. A. Mummendey, "Aggressives Verhalten" in *Sozialpsychologie*, ed. W. Stroebe, M. Hewstone, J. P. Codol, G. M. Stephenson, (Berlin etc.: Springer, 1990), 280f. (English original: *Introduction to Social Psychology* [Oxford: Blackwell, 1988].)

[22] Cf. R. Brown, "Beziehungen zwischen Gruppen" in Stroebe et al., *Sozialpsychologie*, 419f.

[23] Cf. R. Walker, *Die Heilsgeschichte im ersten Evangelium*, FRLANT 91 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck, 1967), 11-33.

[24] Cf. the seven classes of Pharisees in bSota 22b (= Billerb. IV 338f.).

(22:11-14), and also between the little-ones, the prophets, and the righteous, or between those whose justice is perfect and the other sisters and brothers on the way to the better justice.

Finally I would like to look at the theory of *prejudice*. According to social psychology, prejudices protect against fear and self-criticism. They stabilize the feeling of one's own value (*Selbstwertgefühl*) and enable a form of aggression which is socially accepted[25]). Prejudices towards out-group people or hostile groups stabilize the self-estimation of a group and enable an easy cognitive orientation in a complex and difficult situation. This is important, because the Matthean church was in a situation of crisis and transition. Important parts of its own self-definition had collapsed and needed a transformation. Important decisions had to be taken. In such a situation clear cognitive categories, which enable decisions and new orientation, are necessary. The statement that the kingdom of God had been taken away from Israel's leaders (and the people obedient to them) legitimized the separation which was forced upon the Matthean church (cf. 21:43). The negative image of the Pharisees and the scribes in Matthew 23 enabled the Matthean church an easy ethical orientation: You have to be better than they (5:20, 23:2f.).

Conclusion. Historical and social-psychological considerations help towards a better understanding of the anti-Judaism in Matthew's theology. In a very difficult, even unique historical situation, the theological and ideological answer of the Matthean church is deeply human. The Matthean church reacted as other religious groups in such a situation would have reacted. Its anti-Jewish theology was very important for its own stabilization and new orientation. It helped towards the integration of Matthew's church into the Gentile-Christian church; it helped towards its survival and towards the preservation of its religious identity, and—last but not least—it made it possible historically that Matthew's Gospel could become our Gospel.

The problem of Matthew's Gospel

Matthew's anti-Judaism is understandable, but it causes very serious theological problems for Christian readers, problems which touch the foundations of Christianity. I cannot solve them here. Maybe the best contribution towards a solution is not to conceal these problems but to formulate them as openly and clearly as possible.

The first problem lies in the history of the effects of the Matthean anti-Jewish texts. The investigation of the history of exegesis and the history of application of individual Matthean texts in my commentary will have to show the details—but it is clear from the beginning that these Matthean texts became cornerstones in a Christian system of reading Scriptures from a point of view of fundamental opposition between church and synagogue, the latter being the negative antitype of the former. And it is clear that the Matthean texts did not prevent but rather strengthened the tendencies of the church to "support" God's expected judgment by means of her own condemnations and her discriminatory and pernicious activities. Naturally, Matthew, who lived in a situation of imminent expectation of the parousia and who did not expect his church and the synagogues to exist for another two thousand years, did not intend this type of

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[25] Cf. U. Six, "Vorurteile" in *Sozialpsychologie*, ed. D. Frey, S. Greif (München-Weinheim: Psychologie Verlags Union, 1987), 366f.

Matthew's anti-Judaism is not his own invention. Most of his anti-Jewish texts are... sayings of Jesus.

effect. The question where legitimate use of such texts ends and illegitimate abuse begins is very difficult to decide in this case. What is the truth of texts, even biblical texts, whose effects were predominantly persecution, suffering, murder, and false self-absolutization?

The second problem is that of the canonization of biblical texts, such as Matthew's Gospel. We interpreted Matthew's anti-Judaism in a strictly historical way: it became possible and in some sense even unavoidable in a specific historical situation. In this historical situation it was important for the stabilization and the survival of Matthew's church. We interpreted the Matthean anti-Judaism as a self-definition by a losing minority vis à vis a victorious majority that had successfully imposed its own self-definition on Israel, whose true representative the church claimed to be. In this situation of crisis and transition, Matthew's contribution to the self-definition of his church had to be contextual, and that meant: anti-Jewish. But what if this anti-Jewish self-definition became the normative tradition of a church which was far from being a losing minority in a critical situation? What if this anti-Jewish self-definition became a basic part of the identity of a community which now was "church" in the sociological sense of the word also, i.e. majority, dominant, hierarchical in its structure? What if the context of this self-definition had disappeared and the now canonical self-definition created its own new historical context, namely a discrimination against the synagogue, its persecution and even its destruction? The canonization of Matthew's Gospel transformed the contextual and historical anti-Jewish self-definition of *his* church into a constitutive and lasting self-definition of *the* church. The general problem of canonization of New Testament writings becomes particularly urgent in the case of the anti-Judaism of Matthew. What does the contextual character of these texts mean for their truth, and what kind of significance does the new —and entirely different—context of present interpreters have for the task of a new actualization or of a fundamental criticism of such texts?

The third problem is the most difficult and fundamental one. Matthew's anti-Judaism is not his own invention. Most of his anti-Jewish texts are not his own texts but sayings of the Lord Jesus—words of the earthly Jesus, sayings attributed to him in the tradition, or sayings of Jesus created by the evangelist himself, or part of the narrated history of Jesus. Matthew would reject our reproach of his being anti-Jewish because he would say that his book is nothing else but the story and the voice of the living Lord, and it is *he* who condemns Israel. He would claim to have been a faithful servant of the Lord and his words and commandments, of the Lord, who is living and accompanying his church till the end of the world and who is the same as the earthly Jesus, the Immanuel (1:24, 28:19f.).

When we take this claim seriously today, we have to compare Matthew with his master, the earthly Jesus, before judging

him. Doing so, my impression is quite ambiguous and intriguing. On one side, Matthew's anti-Jewish theology forms a clear contradiction to central parts of the mission and the preaching of Jesus. His commandment to love one's enemies (even the Pharisees!) or his commandment not to judge (5:43-48, 7:1f.) is irreconcilable with the woes against the Pharisees and the scribes and the rejection of the election of Israel. Matthew himself knows quite well that the Lord's commandment to be in mission to the Gentiles and to abandon the mission to Israel as a whole, is a new commandment, contradicting not only the saying in 10:5f., but the whole of Jesus' mission to no one else than to God's people Israel, in which no one was excluded—not the poor, not women, not Samaritans, not sinners, not even Pharisees and scribes. There is a deep contradiction between the limitless love of God for the people on the eve of God's kingdom and the seemingly definitive limits of this love for that same Israel, which Matthew sees as consequence of Israel's rejection of Jesus.

On the other side, Jesus was also a preacher of God's coming judgment towards Israel. He speaks about the coming catastrophe when the son of man comes (24:37ff.). He threatens the possibility that the children of the kingdom will remain excluded when the Gentiles from east and west join with Israel's patriarchs for the eschatological meal (8:11f.). And particularly, he links God's Yes or No in the final judgment with the acceptance or rejection of his words or his person: Who does not hear these words *of mine* and does not act upon them resembles the man who builds his house upon sand which the rains will destroy (7:26f.). Whoever disowns me before others will be disowned before God when the son of man comes (10:33). It is he whose interpretation of the will of God is equal or even superior to the biblical command (5:21). It is not of primary importance whether Jesus thought he would be enthroned as son of the man himself or not: the absolute claim which Jesus made for himself cannot be denied. From here it is only a small step to Matthew's theology, which stated that Israel's rejection of Jesus has annihilated its election and ultimately decided its fate in the last judgment. The only difference is that Jesus—probably—has left open a door of repentance even in his most radical utterances. Here, and here only, Matthew has made a step beyond Jesus.

But we have to admit that it was Jesus who enabled Matthew to make this step. Matthew's anti-Judaism is not without roots in the proclamation and self-understanding of Jesus, even if it brings him into contradiction with other central parts of the message and the mission of Jesus. It is not only that anti-Judaism is the backside of Christology, as R. Ruether thinks rightly,[26] but even more: it is Jesus himself who necessitated this type of christological interpretation. At this point Matthew's anti-Judaism leads us right into the center of theological reflections. To criticize his anti-Judaism does not mean to question a peripheral and "only" contextual part of his theology. Rather it means to question Jesus himself: What is the relation between his proclamation of God's limitless love and his proclamation of judgment, combined with the limitless claim for his own person that he made? Is Jesus' claim for absolute authority of his person finally the reason why his disciple Matthew *had* to condemn Israel for its rejection of Jesus? Is the absoluteness of Jesus the root of all these our problems?

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[26] Cf. R. Ruether, *Faith and Fratricide* (New York: Seabury, 1974), Part V, sections 3 and 4.

The Death of Jesus and the Birth of a New World

Matthew's Theology of History in the Passion Narrative

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It is a special pleasure to honor Prof. Wilhelm Linss, a revered colleague of mine for more than twenty years, by turning to a Gospel whose attraction we have both shared. The passion narrative of Matthew holds a commanding position in the Gospel narrative and proclaims some of Matthew's most important theological motifs. I would like to focus on one that may have particular significance at this turbulent stage in our world history, namely Matthew's affirmation that through the death and tragedy of the passion a new age and a new people are born.

Much recent scholarship has concentrated on deciphering the relationship of Matthew's community to Judaism. A generation ago, W. D. Davies' magisterial work on the Sermon on the Mount understood Matthew as a Christian response to the Jewish reform movement of Jamnia as Judaism attempted to redefine itself in the wake of the Jewish revolt and the destruction of Jerusalem in C.E. 70.[1] More recent interpreters have added nuance to this thesis, suggesting that the evidence for a clearly defined "reform movement" at Jamnia is less compelling than once thought. Yet few scholars would deny that Matthew is concerned to understand the vital relationship between his Christian community and its roots in Judaism. That concern was undoubtedly intensified by growing tension and bitter disputes between Matthew's Jewish Christian community and at least some important groups within Judaism. Matthew, indeed, may have thought of his community and its emerging Christian heritage as the truly faithful way of Israel—thus the Gospel's perspective is not that of an "outsider" looking in (i.e., between distinct

[1] W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1964).

"Christian" and "Jewish" perspectives) but of an internecine struggle for identity within Judaism itself.[2] Only later would a decisive rupture occur.

What is clear in all of this is that Jesus' rejection by a significant portion of the Jewish religious leadership and the subsequent apparent failure of the Christian movement to persuade the majority of Jews about the validity of Christian faith in Christ became for Matthew's Christians not simply a difficult historical experience but a profound religious issue. Ulrich Luz (whose important commentary on Matthew is being translated by Professor Linss) states that Matthew's Gospel is best understood "not (as) a Christian answer to 'Jamnia' but a Christian answer to Israel's rejection of Jesus, an attempt to understand this 'no' from a fundamental perspective."[3] Precisely because of their adherence to the sacred heritage of Judaism, Matthew's Christians found rejection and censure by the teachers of Israel difficult, and that experience gives the Gospel's portrayal of the Jewish leaders its bitter edge.

At the same time, Matthew's Jewish Christians had to grapple with another unexpected turn in history. A growing number of Gentiles were attracted to the gospel and entering the community. As we know from Paul's letters and the traditions in Acts this influx was a source of consternation for some Jewish Christians. On what terms were the Gentiles to be accepted, and how much of the Jewish law would be required? The overall thrust of Matthew's narrative with its affirmation that Jesus' ministry was initially confined to Israel (10:5; 15:24) and yet in the final resurrection appearance open to the nations (28:16-20) evidently intends to provide some perspective on this issue.

Thus the challenge for Matthew's community was to establish its own self-identity, not in the serenity of peaceful discussion but in the crucible of rejection, suffering, and unexpected change. As Gregory Stanton writes, Matthew's Gospel is a "foundation document" for his readers, attempting in part to assist his Jewish Christian community grasp their self-identity in a time of profound change.[4]

The passion story plays a capital role in all of this. It is obviously the end result and climax of the opposition that Jesus meets in his ministry. Yet precisely at the same time that one dream appears to die, a new people and a new age are born. As Jesus breathes his last breath in crucifixion, the old world is torn asunder and the dead rise again while a Gentile soldier and his company acclaim Jesus as God's Son (27:51-55).

A study of Matthew's passion narrative clearly shows that these are the major and characteristic concerns of the evangelist.[5] The Gospel of Matthew and its passion narrative contain a rich and varied message, not reducible to a single dominant motif. Yet an analysis of Matthew's literary activity in the passion story demonstrates

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[2]See, for example, J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990). Recent major commentaries such as D. Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Sacra Pagina; Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1991) and W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *Matthew* Vol. 1 (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1988) also strongly emphasize the Jewish background of Matthew's Gospel.

[3]Ulrich Luz, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (Mt 1-7) (EKK Zurich/Einsiedeln/Köln: Benzinger, 1985), 71.

[4]Graham N. Stanton, *A Gospel for a New People: Studies in Matthew* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992).

[5]For a more detailed study, see Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (Passion Series 1; Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1985).

that the rejection of Jesus by Israel and the death of Jesus as marking a new moment in history are his trademarks.

Both redaction criticism with its attention to sources and the evangelist's editorial characteristics and more recent literary critical methods, which emphasize the narrative unity of the Gospel, help at this point. The passion stories of Mark and Matthew are strikingly similar. Most scholars contend that Matthew used Mark's Gospel as one of his major sources. Assuming this to be the case, the vast majority of Matthew's "interventions" in the Markan narrative are precisely around the issues we have noted. And the themes that dominate in the passion story find their root and development throughout the "plot" of Matthew's Gospel.

The rejection of Jesus by Israel

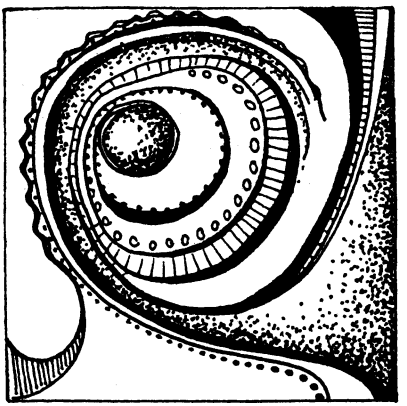
Opposition to Jesus begins long before the passion narrative. In Matthew's infancy narrative "all of Jerusalem" is frightened by the Magi's report of the star (2:3), and while "all the chief priests and scribes" are able to brief Herod on the location of Jesus' birth in Bethlehem they do not offer homage to the new king as the foreigners are determined to do (2:4-6).

Opposition breaks out in the open during Jesus' public ministry. The leaders take offence at some of his healings (9:3) and his association with sinners (9:11). Hostility seems to increase as Jesus' ministry continues; Jesus is branded as being in league with the prince of demons (12:24), and validating signs are demanded of him (12:38; 16:1). He and his disciples are accused of "breaking the tradition of the elders" (15:1). The Pharisees begin a plot to destroy him (12:14).

On his part, Jesus denounces the leaders as "hypocrites" whose piety is a sham (6:1-18). They are part of an "evil and adulterous generation" (12:39) and are filled with "evil spirits" (12:45).

By the time Jesus reaches Jerusalem and encounters the "chief priests and elders of the people" this opposition has reached the boiling point. The discourse in chapter 23 of Matthew's Gospel is a scorching indictment of the leaders, acknowledging the teaching authority of the scribes and Pharisees "who sit on Moses' seat" (23:2) but bitterly attacking their hypocrisy and abuse of their teaching authority, accusing them of being "blind guides" who make their converts "twice as much a child of hell as yourselves" (23:15).

With this type of preparation in the Gospel the bitter harvest of the passion comes as no real surprise. In Matthew's Gospel the leaders are one dimensional—representative of implacable opposition to Jesus and his mission. The passion story of Mark had already stressed the active role of the religious leaders in securing the death of Jesus; Matthew intensifies this motif. He expands the opening verses of the passion story, having the leaders gather in assembly to launch their conspiracy against Jesus (26:1-5). Judas the betrayer plays an important role in Matthew's narrative because he becomes the tool of the religious leaders. They pay Judas "thirty pieces of silver" (26:15), a vivid detail unique to Matthew, one that both recalls Zechariah 11:12 where the shepherd is paid the wages of a slave and, at the same time, prepares for the tragic story of Judas' death (Mt 27:3-10). Driven by remorse (but not repentance), Judas returns the pieces of silver to the leaders. They refuse this "blood money," but Judas casts the pieces of silver into the temple where the leaders must retrieve them and then decide to buy the potter's field as a place to bury strangers (27:3-10). Matthew's macabre tale is full of irony: the



blood money ultimately returns to condemn the priests who paid it to the traitor in the first place. All of this is in accord with God's word in Scripture, as Matthew evokes through a citation that combines Zechariah 11:13 about the blood money and Jeremiah 19 concerning the potter's field.

A key moment of opposition is the "trial" before the Sanhedrin. More explicitly than in Mark's version, Matthew has the assembly take a formal verdict against Jesus: "When morning came, all the chief priests and the elders of the people conferred together against Jesus in order to bring about his death" (27:1).

But for Matthew's narrative the summit of opposition and rejection on the part of Israel is the notorious text of 27:24-25. Matthew's version of the Roman trial prepares for this text by underscoring the clear choice that faces the leaders and now the people as a whole. Over and over, Matthew uses the word "choose" (27:17,20,21). He identifies Barabbas as "Jesus the one called Barabbas" who stands as a clear alternative to "Jesus the one called the Christ."[6] The leaders press the crowd to reject Jesus and to choose Barabbas, while in pointed and ironic contrast the Roman governor Pilate and even his wife (who has a unique cameo appearance in Matthew's passion story, 27:19) plead for his innocence.

The terrible moment of choice comes in 27:24-25. Matthew draws on biblical symbolism and language to dramatize the choice. Evoking the ritual in Deuteronomy 21:7 for declaring oneself innocent of murder, Pilate washes his hands: "I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves" (27:24).[7] In response the "whole people" accept responsibility for Jesus' death: "His blood be on us and on our children" (27:25). Here, too, Matthew draws on some stock biblical language for his characters (see Lev 20:9-16, 2 Sam 1:16, and similarly Josh 2:19-20).

The interpreter of Matthew's Gospel must be attentive here and first read the text as it is, not as later interpretation would have it. There is little question that Matthew intends the phrase *pas ho laos* ("all of the people") to be a collective term for Israel as a whole and not simply as an alternative for the "crowds" (*ho ochloi*) to whom, up to this point, Matthew has given a fairly passive role in the narrative. Matthew uses the term "the people" some 14 times in his Gospel and consistently in a collective sense (see, for example, the repeated phrase the "elders of the people"). The emphatic "*all* the people" simply underscores the comprehensive scope of this phrase.

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[6]A reliable variant reading in 27:17 (now accepted by the New Revised Standard Version) gives Barabbas the name "Jesus," bringing the two prisoners into a haunting similarity and thereby intensifying the drama of the choice between them.

[7]The action also is reminiscent of Isaiah 1:15-16: "...your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from before my eyes."

Every dimension of Jesus' life as presented in Matthew's Gospel falls under the canopy of scriptural fulfillment.

In the context of 27:25 this means that whereas before only the leaders had condemned Jesus (27:1) now the leaders have successfully swayed all the people to join them in rejecting Jesus.

Also problematic is the phrase "on us and on our children." Later anti-Jewish interpretations of the Gospel have taken this as a sign of a perpetual curse upon the Jewish people. The destruction brought about by such an interpretation is incalculable and, at the very least, warns the Christian interpreter to read and proclaim this text with utmost care and prudence. In fact, there is no suggestion in the wording of the text of unlimited temporal responsibility: i.e., that "on our children" means on all of our children forever and ever. If, in fact, the evangelist wanted to express this he could have drawn on a frequent biblical expression, "forever and ever."

At face value, the phrase "on us and on our children" may simply emphasize the comprehensive span of the word "people": i.e., "we, that is adults and our children with us, accept this responsibility which Pilate refuses."[8] If, on the other hand, the term "and on our children" is to be understood generationally, then the text could literally mean: "we, that is this generation, and our children, that is *the next generation,*" accept this responsibility. In this case, responsibility for Jesus' death extends to one generation, the generation in fact that would experience the destruction of Jerusalem.[9]

There is evidence in the Gospel that Matthew—in concert with other New Testament authors—understood the tragedy of Jerusalem's destruction during the Jewish revolt of 66-70 C.E. as a consequence of the rejection of Jesus (texts such as 21:41 and 23:38 may reflect such a perspective). Obviously such a theological interpretation on the part of the evangelist is not without its problems, but at least it does not support a theory of the perpetual guilt of the Jewish people for all ages. For a world sick from genocide any theology of retribution, even a limited one, may be abhorrent. However, some moderating context is put on Matthew's theology when we recall that this theological perspective was not developed by someone outside of Judaism looking in, but by a Jewish Christian swept up in the anguish of the division and suffering within Judaism itself. A great prophet such as Jeremiah did not hesitate to predict in bitter and vindictive tones the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple, and other apocalyptic Jewish traditions would do likewise. Matthew stands in this robust and tormented theological tradition.

For Matthew, therefore, one fundamental historical and theological reality was the baffling fact that Jesus' ministry and the subsequent mission of the Jewish Christian community had been for the most part rejected by God's own people. The passion

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[8]See, for example, the thoughtful treatment of this text by V. Mora, *Le refus de'Israel: Matthieu 27, 25* (Lectio Divina 124; Paris: Cerf, 1986).

[9]See the discussion in Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew,* 392-93.

story and its dramatic choice of the people lays this before the reader. On one level Matthew assigns the cause for this to the moral failures of Jesus' opponents. In the Gospel's view they represent all of the wrong values and the wrong choices: they do not believe in Jesus; they lack integrity; they are failed moral guides. They become, in effect, a negative example for the Christian reader of the Gospel. Here is what a true disciple of Jesus is *not* to be.

But Matthew recognizes a deeper and more mysterious causality at work in Israel's rejection of Jesus and the gospel message. In some strange and impenetrable sense, the rejection of Jesus falls within God's providence; "all of this has taken place so that the scriptures of the prophets may be fulfilled," as the Matthean Jesus notes at the moment of his arrest (26:56). Every dimension of Jesus' life as presented in Matthew's Gospel falls under the canopy of scriptural fulfillment and is therefore God's doing. Even Judas' terrible act of betrayal fulfills God's prophetic word (27:9-10).

A theology of history

The deeper mystery of Israel's rejection of Jesus brings us to another fundamental perspective of Matthew in the passion story, namely his theology of history. It is here that Matthew's Christology comes into play.

Throughout the Gospel Matthew portrays Jesus as the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel, indeed as the Savior of the world. Declared both "Son of David" and "Son of Abraham" in the opening words of the Gospel (1:1), Jesus is conceived by the power of the Spirit (1:20) and God's angel declares that he will "save his people from their sins" (1:21). He is "God with us," the "Emmanuel" promised by Isaiah (1:23).

Every page of Matthew's subsequent narrative reaffirms Jesus' powerful messianic identity and his fulfillment of God's promises. Through his teaching and healing Jesus inaugurates the very rule of God expected for the endtime. Matthew presents Jesus' redemptive mission as having explosive force—at first contained within Israel but ultimately bursting out to engulf the whole world and beginning a new age of history.

Tentative contact with Gentiles early in the Gospel are signs of the ultimate scope of Jesus' mission and its profound historic significance. The Magi come "from the east" to offer homage (2:1-2). A Roman centurion exemplifies startling faith in Jesus (8:5-13), drawing from Jesus a vision of the future when "many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven." The bold faith of a Canaanite woman compels Jesus to heal her daughter despite his protest that his mission is "only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24). These are signs of what direction the Christian mission must ultimately take; Matthew hints at that by portraying Jesus' first entrance into his public ministry as a fulfillment of Isa 9:1-2: "...Galilee of the Gentiles—the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned" (Mt 4:15-16).

Significantly, in Matthew's Gospel these encounters with Gentiles usually take place as a counterpoint to rejection or lack of response on the part of Israel. The Magi offer homage to Jesus while Herod and his Jerusalem court attempt to destroy him. In praising the centurion Jesus laments, "Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith" (8:10), and while many will come from east and west to eat at table in God's kingdom, "the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness" (8:12). Jesus' journey into Tyre and Sidon

and his encounter there with the Canaanite woman follows upon a sharp conflict with the Pharisees and scribes (15:1-20).

For Matthew the opening to the Gentiles comes mysteriously in the wake of the failure of the mission to Israel. Matthew emphasizes this in his version of the parable of the vineyard. Because the tenants of the vineyard reject God's long line of messengers and finally reject and kill the son, the vineyard is taken away and given "to other tenants;" Matthew drives the message home by having Jesus address the chief priests and Pharisees at the conclusion of the parable: "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom" (21:43). Although the genre of the Gospel does not permit the evangelist to reflect on this paradox as Paul can do in Romans 9-11, there is a strong similarity in their theological perspectives here.

This prepares us for the drama of the passion. We have already noted how in his passion narrative Matthew highlights Israel's rejection of Jesus, both on the part of the leaders and ultimately the people themselves. Matthew correspondingly emphasizes the burst of new life that paradoxically is born in the midst of baffling and inexplicable tragedy. The key scene is 27:51-53, another of the rare instances where Matthew has substantially altered Mark's presentation. In Mark's account Jesus' death instantaneously triggers two dramatic events—the tearing of the temple veil signaling the end of the temple "made by hands" (15:38) and the centurion's acclamation, "Truly this man was God's Son!" (15:39).

Matthew builds on Mark's account. Between the tearing of the veil and the centurion's testimony he injects a series of cosmic events. In response to Jesus' death not only does the temple veil tear open but so, too, the earth shakes, the rocks split, and the very tombs of the dead break open. From the abode of the dead come forth the "holy ones" of Israel now alive and ready to enter the holy city of Jerusalem triumphantly (but Matthew adds, only after Jesus' own resurrection). To this extraordinary display the centurion and "those with him" (a Matthean addition) respond: "Truly this man was God's Son" (27:54), and from a distance the women who had remained faithful to Jesus also witness this burst of new life (27:55).

There have been numerous studies about the possible origin of Matthew's material but the overall significance is clear.[10] The evangelist draws on stock apocalyptic motifs found in such texts as Ezek 37:11-14 and Dan 12:1-2—earthquakes, splitting of rocks, opening of tombs—to affirm that the death of Jesus marks the turning point of world history. The new age of salvation promised by God and longed for by Israel begins with the death and resurrection of Jesus. The unlikely community of faithful Jews (the women who stand by Jesus' cross) and converted Gentiles (the centurion and his companions) are the nucleus of a new people.

The finale of Matthew's Gospel is a necessary sequel to all this. The discovery of the empty tomb (where Matthew also refers to an apocalyptic earthquake, 28:2) and the final appearance of the Risen Christ to his disciples confirm Matthew's historical perspective. The age of resurrection has come with Jesus as the first born Son of

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[10]A state of the question can be found in D. Senior, "Matthew's Special Material in the Passion Story: Implications for the Evangelist's Redactional Technique and Theological Perspective," in *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses* 63 (1987), 272-94, esp. 277-85.

God. He returns triumphantly to his community, with "all authority in heaven and on earth... given to me" (28:18). Where earlier in the Gospel the limits of the old age had confined Jesus' mission to Israel, it now breaks out in the new age to embrace all the nations (28:19). The disciples are empowered to proclaim the gospel throughout the world, and the Risen Christ will remain with the community until the final consummation of the world and the return of all things to God (28:20).

Conclusion

As many interpreters have suggested, Matthew writes to give perspective to his community. His Christians stand at a turbulent moment in history. The rejection and death that Jesus experienced in his lifetime seem to have been repeated in the failure of the Jewish Christian mission to Israel. The strength and coherence that Matthew's Jewish Christians drew from their Jewish heritage seemed in peril not only from questions of legitimacy raised by Jewish leaders past and present but also by the influx of Gentile converts who had little or no appreciation of the sacred tradition and practices of Judaism.

It would be understandable if a community such as Matthew's would choose to withdraw from the field, to protect itself from hostility and chaos by erecting a religious and psychological barrier between itself and the rest of the world. But Matthew draws on the deepest well of Christian faith, one whose streams also course through the heart of the Hebrew scriptures. God is faithful and despite—and even more astoundingly, *through*—the experience of suffering and death, new life is born. Jesus' own death and resurrection had proclaimed this fundamental pattern of salvation, and Matthew's community was experiencing it themselves. Instead of withdrawal, Matthew's Gospel urges his community to recognize God's abiding presence within history and to courageously enter into mission to the world.

And what of Israel in all this? Does Matthew consider the leaders and the people who adhere to them as a lost cause? Or does he, like Paul, believe that God's tenacious love for Israel will ultimately prevail? The question is difficult, and interpreters have been divided about the answer. My own view is that Matthew does not give up on Israel despite his bitter estimate of its response to the gospel. He concludes Jesus' denunciation of the scribes and Pharisees in chapter 23 with this telling prophecy: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you, desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord'" (23:37-39). "...you will not see me again *until*...": the words and tone of this prophetic woe end with a promise. If Israel repents, then God's messenger will be seen again.

This is stock biblical theology and one that Matthew espouses. Just as the "holy ones" of Israel are the first fruits of Jesus' redemptive death, so the people of Jerusalem (and by extension, Israel itself) will yet experience the divine visitation. If through the passion of Jesus a new people and a new age are born, through the passion of Israel God will also bring redemption. Undoubtedly Matthew saw this in terms of Jewish acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah, but from our contemporary vantage point who can predict the manner in which God brings life from death—for both Christian and Jew?

Interpreting Matthew Today

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Asking where we are in Matthean studies today is all too much like inquiring about the situation in Yugoslavia. One thing only seems certain: chaos is the order of the day.

We are today witnessing the balkanization of Gospel studies generally, as even a quick glance at the sessions of the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature will indicate. Practitioners of various methods hardly speak with one another, and interest groups proliferate.

The general bibliography at the start of Ulrich Luz' commentary on Matthew* lists 343 items, and special bibliographies at the head of each section of the commentary list countless others. Hundreds of additional articles, essays and books on Matthew's Gospel are published every year. It would take all the space allotted for this essay merely to list the titles produced in a single year together with a one sentence description of their content.

Bringing order into this welter of activity would tax the skill of a seasoned U.N. diplomat. What follows is an attempt, not so much to arbitrate among authors and positions as merely to describe the landscape of Matthean studies today in terms of a review of methods and a few selected issues.

Matthew and methods. In roughly chronological order Matthew has been approached from the following points of view throughout the 20th century:

1. *Matthew as historian*
   (historical criticism)
2. *Matthew as theologian*
   (redaction criticism)
3. *Matthew as artist*
   (literary criticism)
4. *Matthew as debater*
   (rhetorical criticism)
5. *Matthew as a man of privilege*
   (liberation and feminist criticism)

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*We owe a great debt of gratitude to Wilhelm Linss for his faithful rendering of Luz' commentary into English. It is a joy to contribute to this issue in honoring Wilhelm, good colleague and friend, conscientious teacher, careful scholar, servant of Christ and of Christ's church.

Matthew as historian (historical criticism)

For the first 50 years of the 20th century interpreters pored over Matthew's Gospel because of their interest in the Jesus of history. They wanted to know who Jesus really was.

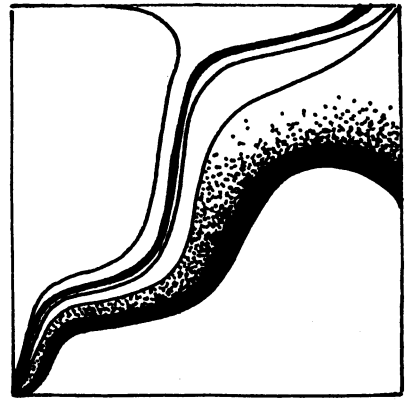
As our century opened, critical scholars were hard at work with the results of 19th century source criticism. That meant relying primarily on Mark (the earliest, the least theological, and so the most trustworthy historical presentation of Jesus). They exhibited caution toward Matthew and Luke (dependent on Mark and offering additional reports regarded as mostly legendary material of dubious historical value). Usually John was set to one side as of minimal help in any historical quest.

The rise of form criticism in the aftermath of the First World War undermined confidence in the historical worth of Mark and put it under the same cloud as the other Gospels. The traditional materials in all our Gospels came to be viewed as decisively shaped or even created by the earliest Christian communities. Form criticism taught us that the traditions about Jesus were not handed on by ancient archivists anxious to preserve the history of the founder but were preserved (or created) because of their pragmatic value in meeting the pressing needs of Christian communities (mission, apologetics, catechetics, worship).

Conservatives, of course, launched attacks on source and form criticism, but they did not notice that they were nevertheless playing the same game as their more critical counterparts: the search for the historical Jesus.

And the game goes on. Conservatives play by addition, defending the historical character of the traditions. Critical scholars play by subtraction, eliminating from their portrait of the historical Jesus anything which fails to meet their ever-changing criteria.

Thus conservatives read Matthew as good history while critical scholars view Matthew as bad history. Both camps are united in focusing their attention on the historical world to which Matthew's Gospel refers. Both use the ancient traditions in an effort to discover who Jesus really was.



Faithful reading. Conservatives, defending the historicity of biblical statements with a kind of ferocity, appear to define Christian faith as trusting whatever the Bible says. Their more liberal counterparts in the historical quest, like the people associated with Robert Funk's Jesus Seminar, cheerfully (but seriously at the same time, of course) cast black tiles on sayings of Jesus deemed to be unhistorical (and gray for the slightly less dubious, pink for those they are inclined to accept, and red for those they accept unequivocally as historical). They imagine that their critical labors support the Christian enterprise by signaling to the larger American culture that it is not necessary to check your brains at the door in order to be a Christian.

Bibliographical note:

Edgar Krentz, *The Historical Critical Method* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), in magisterial fashion traces the history and assumptions of the historical critical method.

In the introduction to *The Parables of Jesus: Red Letter Edition* (Sonoma: Polebridge, 1988) Robert Funk describes the genesis of the Jesus Seminar and notes how he has postponed his writing of a life of Jesus until the Seminar completes its work of deciding which of the words of Jesus are authentic.

Matthew as theologian (redaction criticism)

Around mid-century the interest of many interpreters began to shift from Jesus to Matthew and the other Gospels, from the words and deeds of Jesus to the words and minds of the evangelists.

Instead of viewing Matthew as a bad historian, critical interpreters began to think of him as a sophisticated and intriguing theologian.

Redaction criticism focuses on the process by which the varied forms of Jesus material were gathered, edited, and composed into our Gospels. Redaction refers to editing, and redaction criticism by minute analysis of Matthew's use of his sources attempts to discover Matthew's editorial policy.

Redaction critics speak of a "third life setting" (a third *Sitz im Leben*). A particular saying or story may have (1) originated during the early ministry of Jesus, and then (2) circulated orally in the earliest communities, and finally (3) found its way into writing in one of our gospels to serve the needs of the evangelist and his church late in the first century. Redaction criticism is interested in the odyssey of Jesus material, spanning the years 30-100, crossing boundaries, finding a new lease on life, accruing new meanings, valued for fresh reasons, surviving in spite of changing circumstances.

But the focus is the use made by the evangelists, as the material found a fresh setting in the composition of one of our gospels and in the life of a Christian community of the third generation.

Faithful reading. Redaction criticism views the evangelists as heady theologians and is easily co-opted by those who think that faith means holding correct theological opinions.

Bibliographical note:

The shift from the traditional concerns of historical criticism to the new views of redaction criticism is often dated precisely to 1948 and the publication of Günther Bornkamm's essay, "The Stilling of the Storm" in Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster, Eng. tr., 1963).

A decade earlier, Robert Lightfoot in *History and Interpretation in the Gospels* (New York and London: Harper, 1935) was already approaching the gospels in the way that came to be called redaction criticism. Another influential precursor is George Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946).

The translation of Joachim Rohde, *Rediscovering the Teaching of the Evangelists* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969), publicized the method as practiced by German scholars.

Norman Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969) offers an illuminating introduction.

In 1984 Graham Stanton, reviewing recent Matthean scholarship ("The Origin and Purpose of Matthew's Gospel," in

ANRW II 25/3 (1984): 1889-1951), wrote that we have "an urgent need for several full-scale commentaries" on Matthew. His dreams are coming true in two immense projects: W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison are collaborating to produce a huge (about 2400 pages) three-volume commentary in the International Critical Commentary series (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark). Ulrich Luz is also at work on three volumes (to total about 1500 pages) for the *Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament*, translated for Augsburg Fortress by Wilhelm Linss. Volume 1 of each set offers extensive introductions together with detailed commentary on the first seven chapters of Matthew's Gospel.

These authors are not questing after the historical Jesus but are working in the redaction critical mode, seeking an understanding of Matthew and his community. Davies and Allison will treat the theology of Matthew in volume 3. Luz comments on "the history of influence" of each pericope, noting the effect the passage has had in successive generations, not only in scholarly commentaries but in hymns, sermons, and works of art. That means he is incorporating a kind of reader response criticism, but in every case he uses the results of his redactional studies to critique the varied responses he culls from the long history of the use of the Gospel.

These two multi-volume projects not only fill the gap noted by Stanton but crown the exegetical labors of an entire century in exemplary fashion.

Matthew as artist (literary criticism)

The one book which perhaps more than any other marked the rise of literary criticism currently in vogue within Gospel studies is Norman Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978). The impact of his work can be accounted for in part because it connected directly with the focus of the later stages of redaction criticism, which was sometimes referred to as "composition criticism." Both redaction criticism and literary criticism fix their attention on the text of the gospel rather than the historical life of Jesus behind the text.

> Literary criticism invites readers to step into the narrative world conjured up by the words on the page of Matthew's Gospel...

Part of the power of Petersen's work derives from his critiques of source and form and redaction criticism. On the positive side he laid a theoretical foundation for the use of literary criticism in Gospel studies and offered intriguing examples of literary criticism at work on Mark and Luke-Acts, prompting others to read Matthew in similar fashion.

Faithful reading. While historical criticism uses texts to understand and recreate the history behind the text, literary criticism uses historical information to understand the sentences and paragraphs in the text. Literary criticism invites readers not to enter the historical world behind the text but to step into the narrative world conjured up by

the words on the page of Matthew's Gospel and to experience its unique dynamics by attending to such things as plot, characters, and settings.

Christian faith may even be defined as entering the narrative world constructed by Matthew, accepting its convictions about God and Jesus and discipleship, and then returning from the narrative world to our real world with our outlook altered by our contact with that narrated world.

Bibliographical note:

In his book, *Literary Criticism*, Petersen made accessible for many the critique of historical critical methodology leveled by Hans Frei in his work on *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative* at the same time that he continued the tradition of literary study practiced by Amos Wilder, one of his chief mentors, and applied the theory of communication worked out by Roman Jackobson.

William Beardslee in *Literary Criticism of the New Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969) made important early contributions to the movement and continues to be a leader.

Robert Funk, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Sonoma: Polebridge Press, 1988), inquires into the grammar of whole texts. Linguistics studies smaller units like words, phrases, clauses, and sentences. The concern of poetics or discourse analysis is super-sentential, focusing on paragraphs and larger blocks of text all the way up to the work considered as a whole.

Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Figure of Jesus in Matthew's Story" in *JSNT* 21 (1984):3-36, and in *Matthew as Story* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), works from the perspective of literary criticism (using the categories of Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse*). In Kingsbury's hands literary criticism is friend and ally of redaction-criticism.

Richard Edwards, *Matthew's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) and "Uncertain Faith: Matthew's Portrait of the Disciples" in *Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. F. Segovia (Fortress, 1985), 47-61, approaches Matthew from a reader-response perspective, noting how the episodes in the narrative nudge readers now in one direction, now in another.

Mark Allan Powell, *What is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), offers reliable and welcome orientation to the complex package of methods traveling under the umbrella of literary or narrative criticism.

B. B. Scott, "The Birth of the Reader" (*Semeia* 52 (1990):83-102, shows how Matthew's birth narrative functions as a set of signals bringing into being the reader Matthew desires.

John Paul Heil offers a thoroughgoing narrative-critical reading of Matthew 26-28 in *The Death and Resurrection of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991)

Matthew as debater (rhetorical criticism)

Literary criticism, operating with tools and insights developed by modern scholars as they attempt to understand novels and film and other works of fiction, has been criticized for imposing modern categories on ancient texts. Rhetorical criticism operates with methods of communication taught in the ancient world as reported by such ancients as Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian.

Speaking of the way Northrop Frye reads Scripture in *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature*, George Kennedy comments that literary critics typically view the Bible in terms of language and myth as these are understood in our modern world. Rhetorical critics, says Kennedy, try to read

the Bible as it would have been read by an early Christian. Professor of Classics at the University of North Carolina and an expert on ancient rhetoric, Kennedy in his own work on the Bible first defines rhetorical criticism and then offers a series of applications to New Testament texts.

The Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 serves as one of his examples. Here it is possible only to hint at the richness of his interpretation. Rhetorical critics focus on the strategies of persuasion in a document, asking how Matthew, for example, argues. How do Matthew's words achieve their effect? Kennedy sees the Sermon on the Mount as an instance of deliberative rhetoric, the kind of speech used to move people to specific action. Throughout the Sermon, Jesus seems confrontational, but the Sermon has "a diversity of tone which gives it a sense of movement, from the gentleness and hope of the Beatitudes to the rigor of Jesus' interpretation of the law, softened somewhat in the Lord's Prayer, to the unmitigated severity of the concluding section" (George Kennedy, *New Testament Interpretation through Rhetorical Criticism* [Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1984], 63).

Wilhelm Wuellner, "Where Is Rhetorical Criticism Taking Us?" *CBQ* 49 (1987):448-463, and "Hermeneutics and rhetorics: from 'truth and method' to 'truth and power'" in *Scriptura* 53 (1989):1-54, among many other things shows how rhetorical criticism tries to uncover the original rhetorical situation and the particular interests served by a communication.

Burton Mack, *Rhetoric and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), is a clear introduction to the topic.

Robert Tannehill, *The Sword of His Mouth* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), is a remarkable work which is primarily literary criticism. However, as Tannehill works on a selection of paragraphs in the Sermon on the Mount, he always has in view the concern of rhetorical criticism: what purpose are these words serving and how do they achieve their effect?

Matthew as a man of privilege (liberation and feminist criticism)

Working with anthropological and sociological models, some interpreters have begun to make us aware of the consequences of the fact that Matthew and the other evangelists were not only theologians and thinkers (the focus in redaction, literary, and rhetorical criticism) but were complex human beings living in particular social and economic and political circumstances.

The evangelists had theologies to teach, stories to tell, and truths to defend. But as teachers in their communities, they were also people with a certain amount of power and prestige. How much of their thinking and remembering, composing and arguing served not only the needs of their communities but also their own personal interests? In what ways did their self-interest influence their artistic evangelical retellings? What do the words and phrases and images of Matthew's Gospel reveal about the author and the community from which this Gospel sprang?

George Kilpatrick long ago (1946) commented on the frequency with which Matthew names higher denominations of coins and larger sums of money than the other evangelists and drew conclusions about Matthew's social position.

I have argued that Matthew and his community were not poor, unlettered peasants eking out a marginal living, nor were they wandering charismatics (like some of Jesus' first followers) but were educated,

urban, propertied, and anti-charismatic. See Robert H. Smith, "Were the Early Christians Middle Class: Sociological Analysis of the New Testament," *Currents in Theology and Mission* 7 (1980):260-76, reprinted in N. Gottwald, *The Bible and Liberation* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1983).

Social History of the Matthean Community, edited by David L. Balch (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1991), includes several pertinent essays. Jack Dean Kingsbury in his concluding analysis sums up the points on which the essayists seem to agree. Seven of the eleven points concern the religious environment and constituency of the Matthean community. One draws attention to agreement on the urban environment of Matthew's community, one to the presence of persons "classically or scribally educated," and one to the patriarchal character of the community. Especially helpful in thinking about ancient urban realities is the essay by Rodney Stark, "Antioch as the Social Situation for Matthew's Gospel" (189-210).

J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), consciously works with sociological theory and the best recent views of the Judaism emerging from the disaster of the war with Rome, and he illumines many individual pericopes in Matthew.

Amy-Jill Levine, *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Salvation History* (Lewiston: E. Mellen, 1988), reminds us that we need to pay attention not only to the salvation history axis running from the era of Israel to the era of the church of the gentile mission but also to the social axis, noting what Matthew has to say of women and the marginal on one end and urban social elite on the other.

Bengt Holmberg, *Sociology and the New Testament* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), surveys and critically appraises the use of sociological theories in recent New Testament study. This is perhaps the best introduction to the discussion for pastors and students.

> By committing the Gospel to writing, Matthew took from women and other nonliterates the active roles they once enjoyed of carrying and shaping the gospel.

Matthew as a man

Matthew and his fellow evangelists were males. As men in a patriarchal culture, were they capable of catching the full dimensions of Jesus' daring openness toward women and the marginal? Or did they soft-pedal that daring spirit, even if they did not quench it?

Antoinette Clark Wire, in "Gender Roles in a Scribal Community" (in *Social History*, ed. David Balch, 87-121), traces "the migration of the Jesus tradition from nonliterate and economically dependent culture," where women were actively prophesying and telling stories, heralding Jesus as one who gives power to the weak, "into self-sufficient and classically educated culture." Matthew wrote for male disciples, to train them in knowledge and action. In the process he "makes prominent use of the

stories of marginal people, including women, to exemplify faith and practice." Nevertheless, by committing the Gospel to writing, Matthew took from women and other nonliterates the active roles they once enjoyed of carrying and shaping the gospel (120).

Janice Capel Anderson, "Matthew: Gender and Reading" in *Semeia* 28 (1983): 3-28, from a literary critical perspective, notes how women reading the Gospel of Matthew are invited by Jesus' dealing with men and women to become disciples. In the same issue of *Semeia* Mary Ann Tolbert, in "Defining the Problem: The Bible and Feminist Hermeneutics" (113-26), reports how many women, in spite of experiencing the Bible as the enemy of their freedom and dignity, try to be faithful readers of Scripture.

The Woman's Bible Commentary, edited by Carol A. Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1992), showcases 41 women exegetes. Amy-Jill Levine comments that Matthew notes various structures that cause social oppression and "attempts to eliminate all relationship in which one group exploits or dominates another" (252). Matthew portrays women as models of fidelity and service and not only in traditional roles of serving spouses and children. "Women who appear apart from husband, father, or son assume positive, active roles in the Gospel," even though they are not given roles entirely equal with men (253).

Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her* (New York: Crossroad, 1984), differs from the other authors cited in this section in that she takes as the object of her investigation not the text of Matthew (or any other Gospel) as it stands. As a feminist wielding historical critical tools, she tries to demonstrate that all the evangelists have blurred and distorted this basic truth of the ministry of Jesus: in the name of his Sophia-God he inaugurated a discipleship in which women and men are equals.

Faithful reading. Rhetorical criticism shifts the accent from understanding (grasping the message) to persuasion (being grasped by the message). Liberation and feminist approaches also consciously criticize the notion of an objective reader who hovers somewhere above the fray. They speak less of the meaning of a text and more of its power. Christian faith in rhetorical, liberationist and feminist perspective means being grasped by the power of the text and so not merely informed but reformed and even transformed.

What more could we ask?

Since those big commentaries of Davies-Allison and Luz are in the pipeline, and since so many women and men are at work on aspects of Matthew's Gospel with their varied methods, is the exegetical equivalent of the kingdom of the heavens now at hand? I think not.

I am struck by the way a certain assumption regarding Matthew and his community colors the work of nearly every exegete of whatever gender or method. Most take for granted the view that Matthew's Gospel reflects the clash, ongoing or recently concluded, between the church and "the synagogue across the street." This assumption has been repeated with minor variations for 150 years now and has achieved the status of a law of the universe.

We need a paradigm shift. When we get it, we may begin once more to see surprising things in the text of Matthew's Gospel. The fundamental shift needed is to stop picturing Matthew as a polemic against the synagogue (or as a piece of Christian triumphalism, celebrating the glory of the

church vis à vis the Jewish people) and to start thinking of Matthew as a piece of Christian self-criticism, issued to stem the influence of certain Christian false prophets inside the community (Mt 7:15-23; 24:10-12).

Such a change in assumptions would lead to progress on many issues, including the freighted question of Matthew's alleged anti-Semitism, based in part on Matthew's negative portrayal of Pharisees.

Bibliographical note:

For a fuller description of what such a shift would look like and the grounds for making it, see my article, "Matthew's Message for Insiders" in *Interpretation* 46 (1992): 229-39. On anti-Semitism in Matthew see "The Hardest Verse in Matthew's Gospel, Matthew 27:25" in *Currents* 17 (1990): 421-28.

The ugly language about scribes and Pharisees in Matthew 23 prompted Samuel Sandmel, Professor at the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, to write that here Matthew's "hatred of Jews... boils over into a unique, unparalleled specimen of invective" (*Anti-Semitism in the New Testament* [Philadelphia: Fortress, 1978], 68).

Sjef van Tilborg, *The Jewish Leaders in Matthew* (Leiden: Brill, 1972) and David Garland, *The Intention of Matthew 23* (Leiden: Brill, 1979), have argued that Matthew uses his harsh language not against synagogue leaders but against Christian church leaders. I think they are right.

Benedict Viviano in *The New Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1990) says Matthew 23 "shows us the Matthean community in polemical dialogue with the rival community in Jamnia," but in an article on "Social World and Community Leadership: Matthew 23" In *JSNT* 39 (1990):3-21, he notes that Matthew's criticism of arrogance among religious leaders is directed also against Christian leaders, even though he continues to think it is aimed especially at rabbis.

> Liberation and feminist approaches... speak less of the meaning of a text and more of its power.

The language, style, and ideas of Matthew's Gospel are often said to fit perfectly the notion that Matthew was a "converted rabbi" (Ernst von Dobschütz, 1928). Very welcome is David Balch, "The Greek Political Topos" in *Social History of the Matthean Community*. He shows how much we may learn of Matthew's attitude toward the law (not abolishing and yet loosing) by studying Greek political discussions in Plato, Dio Chrysostom, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Josephus.

Hans Dieter Betz, "The Sermon on the Mount: Its Literary Genre," *Essays on the Sermon on the Mount* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), finds the closest parallels to the form and function of Jesus' sermon in the Enchiridion of Epictetus and the *Kyriai Doxai* (principle doctrines) of Epicurus.

Both Balch and Betz try to integrate their findings into the old picture of a Jewish-Christian Matthew breaking away from the synagogue, but their own works suggest the need for a newer paradigm.

God With Us: Hellenistic Christological Perspectives in Matthew

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It is a special privilege to share in the opportunity to honor Wilhelm Linss, a friend and colleague who has so faithfully served the Lord of the church and dedicated himself with extraordinary zeal to achievement of the goals and objectives of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago.

In this congratulatory study, Matthew's rendering of "Immanuel" as "God with us" (1:23) is the interpretive control point. The fact that Matthew provides a translation of the Hebrew name for Greek-speaking publics suggests the propriety of exploring some of the avenues along which Matthew was able to help such publics make sense of Jesus' person and work. Therefore it should not surprise readers that awareness of Greco-Roman cultural data dominates this study. For "balance" one can turn to the well-plowed field of Hebraic features in a multitude of commentaries and specialized studies. At the same time, I ought to confess that heightening of respect for the resources of Prof. Bauer's Lexicon of the Greek New Testament for comprehension of biblical documents is part of my agenda in this presentation.[1] Most of the data included here owe their citation to his indefatigable labors. What I have done is merely set an example of what any user of this lexicon can do, if only a few questions are asked of the biblical writers.

Given the fact that Matthew's Gospel is written in Greek and that an outreach to the world is envisaged (28:19), one asks what cultural model in the Mediterranean world was most likely to serve as a herme-

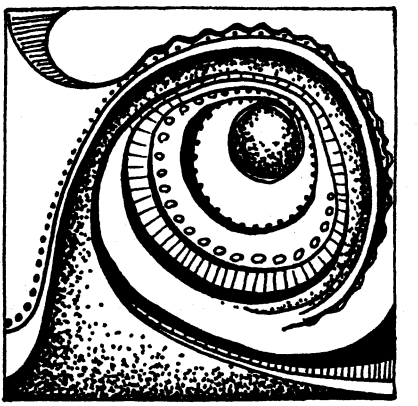
[1]Bauer, Walter. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*: A translation and adaptation of Walter Bauer's fourth revised and augmented ed. by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (1957) (BAG). 2nd ed. rev. and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker from Bauer's 5th ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979 (BAGD).

neutical medium for understanding the significance of Jesus. From every direction come figures of exceptional merit, with many, unless they are deities, readily displayed in movement from human to divine status.

Beyond question, the genealogy recorded by Matthew (1:2-16) derives from a Semitic milieu, but what impression might it have made on hearers or readers outside traditional Israelite experience? Especially Romans, who could not trace their heroes beyond the legendary founding of Rome (753 B.C.) would have been impressed by Matthew's tracing of Jesus' ancestry to Abraham. In addition they would have shared the perspective of most Greco-Romans: this Jesus is bigger than life. The poet Pindar, who used every opportunity to connect the athletes whose praises he sings with notable ancestors, helped fix the Greco-Roman mindset for such perception.

Through his infancy narrative Matthew reveals the ultimate consumers of his proclamation about Jesus. With them in mind, he makes appropriate selection from traditions available to him. Such procedure is, of course, far different from invention of narrative to satisfy a public's interest.[2] Some Greco-Romans might comment on some of the Semitic quaintness of the narrative, but with one voice they would exclaim: This is the world we know.

How fitting that a super-figure should mount the stage of history through an extraordinary conception associated with a remarkable portent. To highlight perceptions of Alexander's impact on history, Plutarch records that the womb of this illustrious general's mother was struck by a thunderbolt before the consummation of her marriage to Philip, who avoided intimate relations with her, either out of fear of magical spells or simply because she was now associated with an exceptional being



(Alexander 2, 1-6). The Mediterranean world was filled with related accounts of superstars.[3]

As in the Semitic world, reference to dreams was a common medium in the Greco-Roman environment for emphasizing involvement of the divine in human affairs. In an inscription about the founding of a shrine dedicated to Sarapis, a devotee named Maiistas receives directions in a dream for its erection, along with assurance that dissidents will receive their just due.[4] In Matthew's recital the dream serves as a portent which prepares readers for the extraordinary pronouncement in v. 20: An angel of

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[2]H. Usener, *Das Weihnachtsfest* (Bonn, 1889): 75 refers to Trypho, who chides the Christians for reciting stories similar to those recorded by Greco-Roman writers about their deities and heroes. Justin rejects the criticism as invalid: *Dialogue with Trypho* 67 (Die ältesten Apologeten, ed. E. J. Goodspeed, [Göttingen, 1911], 174-75).

[3]See BAGD s. v. *parthenos* and Usener, Weihnachtsfest: 70-75; see, e.g., Plutarch. Alcibiades 23: King Agias takes seriously a portent and avoids his wife for ten months.

[4]See *Inscriptiones Graecae* XI. 4. 1299.

the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream; "The child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit." They are to sense the import of God's involvement in the destiny of this extraordinary Child.

To an Israelite the name Jesus would serve as a reminder of the great deliverer Joshua, but Greco-Romans would be impressed by the role of Jesus as intermediary between God and humankind. Gentiles understood well the importance of right relations with deities. Their cultic systems and personal rituals were designed to retain divine favor.[5] That Jesus would "save his people from their sins" (1:21) meant that his God would be readily accessible.[6] Evangelists and catechists could build on that.

As in the Semitic world, Greco-Romans were impressed by prophecies connected with extraordinary events or people of heroic proportions.[7] Through his reference to Isaiah 7:14 in 1:23, which also elicits his publics' respect for ancient tradition, Matthew reinforces the affirmation made in 1:21: Jesus will save his people from their sins, and thus he will be God-with-us. As the rest of the book proclaims, this last pronoun refers to the Christian community. Through it God's invitation into the divine presence is made abundantly audible.

The suggestion of Jesus' greatness and the aura of divine presence find further enunciation, signalled by "Behold!" in the recital of Herod's encounter with the magi. The reference to a star is meaningful for more than one reason. In his Odes (1, 12, 46-48), the Roman poet Horace appealed to popular thinking by connecting a star with Octavian, who, after Alexander, became the brightest light in the political firmament of the Greco-Roman world. And by associating both the star and the magi with the fortunes of Jesus, Matthew further cultivates in his publics a sense of the transcendent significance of this child born in Bethlehem. According to Cicero, magi predicted that Alexander's birth would spell disaster for Asia.[8] Especially striking is the fact that the magi are guided from Jerusalem to Bethlehem by the star. Servius, an ancient commentator on Vergil's Aeneid, similarly reports, on the authority of Terentius Varro, that a star guided Vergil to Laurentum.[9]

Like the sailors in Timoleon's fleet, who rejoiced when a star led them to Italy, the magi were "exceedingly glad" when they saw the star halt over the place where the child was.[10] Herod's response to the message of the magi is in striking contrast and further suggests the cosmic significance of the new-born king. Herod is at a loss in the face of a portent that appears to threaten his reign. So it was with Alexander, who was troubled over Chaldean predictions of his death.[11]

That Jesus is indeed the "King of the Judeans," many in Matthew's publics would agree, and after having heard the whole of it, they would note the remarkable contrast

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[5]See BAGD s. v. *katharos*, and esp. the ref. SIG 983, 5.

[6]The breadth of inclusion is progressively marked by Matthew: see 9:13; 20:28; and 28:19 (all nations).

[7]See BAGD s. v. *prophētēs* and *semeion*. Diodorus Siculus 17, 10 epitomizes the general mood.

[8]Cicero, On Divination 1, 23, 47 (see also 41,90); see BAGD, s.v. *magos* and Usener: 37. Ps.-Callisth. 3, 33, 26 reports that at the death of Alexander a great star plunged into the sea.

[9]Servius on Aeneid 2, 801; Usener: 77, n. 29.

[10]Diodorus Siculus 16, 66,3; BAGD s. v. *astēr*.

[11]Diodorus Siculus 17, 112, 2-4; BAGD s. v. *tarassō*.

in attitude and circumstance involving the affirmation recorded in 2:2 and the one posted on the cross in 27:37. But few could fail to grasp Matthew's main objective, that the aura of transcendence developed in the infancy narrative prepare for the ultimate recognition of Jesus' kingship beyond the borders of Israel (28:18-20). Indeed, the infancy narrative projects Jesus as a royal figure, whose birthday merits extraordinary recognition.[12] Expressions of reverence would be dutifully rendered.[13] "We have come to do homage" (2:2) therefore signals far more to Matthew's publics than a modern reader brought up in democratic institutions can possibly imagine. A potential head of state surrounded by such adulation has the stature of a god.[14] Herod, of course, mockingly adopts the stance of a client king who ordinarily recognizes, as Tiridates III later did, that all power resides in Rome.[15] Ironically, on the other hand, Herod affirms that the new-born child is greater than his own Roman master. Caesar Augustus was considered a god, but this child is "God-with-us."[16] The subsequent gesture of adoration by the magi (2:11) echoes in the recognition of Jesus by the apostles (28:17). Their gifts are appropriate for observance of the birth of a royal personage.[17]

The two portents that follow, both in the nature of a dream (2:12-13), are in harmony with the picture of Jesus' transcendence thus far sketched. As indicated above, warnings are an integral feature of some recitals about superstars. Alexander, who at first was not inclined to heed prophetic warning, ultimately listened to his philosophers and entered Babylon.[18] Jesus, on the other hand, eluded Herod, thanks to a portent that Joseph took seriously.

In response to the magi's change in travel plans, Herod orders the slaughter of all infants two years and under in the environs of Bethlehem. The record of his action, suggesting the presence of a rival to his throne, is the climactic stroke in the portrait of the new-born child as a person with an extraordinary destiny.[19] But the image is blurred. The one who is to spell salvation for "his people" is the ostensible cause of great lamentation, but the calamity will be outweighed by the remarkable raising of many at the time of his own death (27:52-53).

Like the magi, who chose an alternate route after being warned in a dream, Joseph obeys an oracle and takes his family to a place outside the jurisdiction of Archelaus. There will be no further mention of dreams until 27:19 (Pilate's wife).

Transfiguration

It is tempting to sketch the many literary tactics used by Matthew from 3:1-16:28 and fill in the features of the one who is God-with-us, but space permits only a brief halt at 17:1-8, before moving on to Matthew's final two chapters. Numerous features in the transfiguration account would, of course, appeal to readers familiar with

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[12]See the lit. cited in BAGD s. v. *basileus* and *parthenos*.

[13]See BAGD s.v . *proskuneō* and *proskynēsis*.

[14]See BAGD s. v. *theos*.

[15]Dio Cassius 62, 2, 4.

[16]On the adulation accorded Augustus, see, e.g., the well-known inscription of Priene: OGIS 458 (this inscription in honor of the emperor is abbreviated Dit., Or. in BAGD, by others OGI).

[17]See BAGD s. v. *libanon, smyrna, chrysos*.

[18]Diodorus Siculus 17, 112, 4-5.

[19]Usener: 77-78, n. 30, cites other accounts of murder of infants: Pausanias 8, 23, 6-7; Plutarch, Greek Questions 22 (296d).

stories about Moses, but a Greco-Roman public would readily see that Jesus was not to be measured by ordinary standards. From Homer on, gleaming garments were associated with superstars and divine involvement. In the Iliad, Athena causes Dimodes to shine with the brightness of the star Sirius, and Achilles she crowns with a golden cloud from which a bright flame emerges.[20] The transfiguration of Jesus could easily suggest to Greco-Roman publics that Jesus was a divine figure, an inference that would find support in what appear to be cultic interests at 17:4: Peter's offer to build booths for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. The Mediterranean world was dotted with shrines dedicated to an extensive variety of heroes and deities. But it takes the voice from heaven to isolate Jesus from Moses and Elijah. The words "This is my beloved Son" affirm the prophetic pronouncement in 1:23 and echo the voice from heaven at the baptism (3:17).[21] Jesus is, indeed, God-with-us. Yet, we await the message of 28:19—make disciples of all nations—to confirm the fact that Jesus has no interest in a limited cult center.

Dreams and portents

Between the recital of the transfiguration and the end of Matthew's book appears an episode that seems to conflict with the meaning of Immanuel. Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why have you deserted me?" But what are the probabilities respecting Greco-Roman interpretation? Some contemporaries of Matthew, accustomed as they were to stories about arbitrary actions of deities, might well have viewed Jesus as a latter-day Prometheus, who maintains his integrity to the last. But those who recalled the rest of Matthew's narrative, with its accounts of sage words and helpful deeds,

A Greco-Roman public would readily see that Jesus was not to be measured by ordinary standards.

would know that this second-last cry could not be a declaration of defiant impiety. Being Greco-Romans, they would be impressed by the dream that Pilate's wife had (27:19) and by the two descriptions of portents—darkness and earthquake—that surround the recital of Jesus' last moments. These marvels could mean that someone or something had elicited the wrath of heaven, or that nature itself was affirming the greatness of the sufferer, or both.

Whatever people steeped in ancient biblical lore might have thought, many in Matthew's publics would give the benefit of the doubt to Jesus. Before the death of Jesus "darkness covered all the land" (27:45). This is the kind of portent that accompanies the death of a superstar. In a work ascribed to Callisthenes, it is reported that the sun was darkened at the death of Alexander.[22] The rending of the temple

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[20]Iliad 5, 4-6 (Diomedes); 18, 205-6 (Achilles).

[21]For the routes along which a Greco-Roman public would appreciate the reference to the descent of the dove, see BAGD s. v. *peristera*, and the ref. to Usener: (56-69).

[22]Pseudo-Callisthenes 3, 33, 26; s. BAGD s. v. *skotos*.

curtain would have stirred profound emotions: this is one of history's decisive moments.[23] Mention of an earthquake (27:51) was certain to arouse awe and awareness of divine intervention.[24] Also, in the light of the other portents, the disturbance of graves would not sound a jarring note.[25] Nor could the import of the resurrection of unidentified pious people in connection with the death of this crucified man be missed by anyone who followed Matthew's story from the beginning. Once, infants died because of his birth (2:16); now his death spells the opening of graves. It is an instrument of salvation. To impress the saving dimension of the moment of Jesus' death, Matthew modifies the resurrection of the nameless pious with the observation that they appeared to many after the resurrection of Jesus. This reference to the resurrection seems to be intrusive and inelegantly premature. On the other hand, by apparently considering the resurrection as an appendix to his story Matthew maintains the focus on Jesus as saving victor in his death. At the same time, the reference to restoration to life of a notable person surrounded by many portents in the hour of death would further suggest superstar status.

In brief, the portents do not signal God's disfavor, but verify that Jesus the crucified is indeed God-with-us. Lucan wrote of those who fought in the battle of Pharsalia: "How great these men, of whom the world took note: all heaven was attentive to their fate."[26] The centurion knows how to read the signs. He exclaims: "Indeed, this was god's son." Unconverted Gentiles would probably have heard his words in the sense: "This man was more than one of mortal breed." A superstar of superstars. But Matthew will not leave the matter there. Jesus is far more than a cult hero. To proclaim that fact is the burden of his final paragraphs.

God-with-us: continuing presence

The earthquake that is mentioned at 28:2 advances the theme of Jesus as the central figure on the stage of history. The heavenly messenger's visage and extraordinarily white garments (vv. 2-3) constitute a typical motif expressive of divine intervention and presence.[27] Fear is a common response in such contexts.[28] Since deities and divine heroes frequently revealed themselves in manifestations or epiphanies that spelled salvation for their devotees, as in the case of the Dioskouroi during the battle at Lake Regillus, Matthew's Greco-Roman publics would anticipate a fuller recital of what he had briefly alluded to at 27:53, together with an appearance of Jesus. Matthew meets the expectation, but a remarkable

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[23]See, e.g., Polybios 3, 112, 8 for the Roman point of view. On the political significance of a portent in a shrine, see Dio Cassius 53, 1, 3; Plutarch, Demetrius 12, 3 (894).

[24]See BAGD s. v. *seiō*: Dio Chrysostom 80[30], 11; see also references s.v . *kolasis* and *semeion*, and the numerous references on Mt 27:51 in J. Wetstein, *Novum Testamentum Graece* I (*Amsterdam*, 1751-52).

[25]See the passages cited in Wetstein, ad loc., e. g. Tibullus I, 2, 45; Ovid, On Love 1, 8, 17-18; Ovid, Metamorphoses 6, 699: Boreas frightens the spirits of the dead and the entire earth with his shaking: *sollicito manes totumque tremoribus orbem.*

[26]Lucan, Civil War 7, 205-6.

[27]See above on the transfiguration. The term "angel of the Lord" would be no problem for Greco-Romans familiar with the "messenger of Zeus," Iliad 24:169 (BAGD lacks the reference, s. v. *aggelos*).

[28]On the effects of divine manifestation see Iliad 20:129-131; 24, 170; Odyssey 16:172-179; F. Pfister, "Epiphanie," Pauly-Wissowa, Supplement IV (1924): 317-318 (s. BAGD s. v. *epiphaneia*).

feature of his concluding paragraph is the absence of any spectacular aspects of Jesus' person.

Matthew's literary economy contrasts, for example, with the legend about the Dioskouroi, who were said to have been far superior in beauty and stature to any mere mortal.[29] Yet, Matthew's approach is understandable, for he had used epiphany features in the account of the Transfiguration. Here, in chap. 28, he does not permit the reader to forget that the death of Jesus is the high moment of the entire story, a veritable epiphany. The women are looking for the "crucified one" (28:5). But they are looking in the wrong place. In Galilee they will see him. In Galilee Jesus makes still another epiphany. At the transfiguration the disciples "fell to the ground" (17:6). In 28:9, they worshipped him just as the magi did (2:11). And precisely at this point all in Matthew's publics are called to decision. Especially Greco-Romans must know that there are no categories in their experience adequate to assess the significance of Jesus. This is no mere superstar among other superstars. "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me," he proclaims (v. 19). It is the definitive answer to Satan's braggadocio (4:9). He goes on to speak as one who holds title to every person on the face of the earth. Thus only a god can speak. But Jesus is not one among many gods. He is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. How apposite his concluding words: "I am with you always, to the end of the age" (v. 20). They explain why there is no need of an ascension recital in Matthew's Gospel. He does not depart the earth, as was said of certain Greco-Roman heroes who were given divine recognition. Rather, he gives the answer to the question asked in 24:3: What is the sign of your parousia? Through his promise of continuing presence he is indeed God-with-us.

Jesus is not one among many gods. He is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

[29]On the importance of epiphanies of deities and heroes in Greco-Roman culture, see Pfister, Epiphanie, entire article. On the Disokouroi, see BAGD s. v. *Dioskouroi*. On the epiphany of the Dioskouroi, the sons of Zeus, during the battle of Lake Regillus, see Dionysius of Halicarnassus 6, 13; Pfister, Epiphanie: 320.

More Than Many Lessons: On Preaching Matthew

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Matthew is the ecclesiastical Gospel, but it is not often recognized that it is also a model for proclamation. Since this article, a tribute to Wilhelm Linss, appears at the beginning of a church year which draws the majority of the Gospel readings from Matthew, I decided to discuss ways in which Matthew models good proclamation and gives guidance to the form and the content of preaching.[1]

Preaching is not an easy task. Some years ago Eduard Schweizer described the preacher's task as follows:

> Preaching today is one of the most promising, even fascinating, tasks which a man [or woman] may fulfill in his [one's] life. It is at the same time one of the most risky and dangerous things which [she or] he may undertake. Certainly it is one of the most difficult, burdening and humiliating of all enterprises.[2]

The task has not grown easier in the thirty years since Schweizer published his article. Changes in interpretive method have both complicated and enriched biblical interpretation in recent years, as the following pages will show. Classical historical critical interpretation now seems arid to some, contributing nothing to proclamation,[3] since it dissolves the border between canonical Scripture and non-canonical apocryphal or

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[1] Wilhelm Linss is not a scholar whose work smells of the scholar's oil lamp. He is from first to last a churchman concerned with proclamation. For years he has preached monthly to German émigrés in their native tongue so that they might hear the gospel more readily. For that reason I decided to honor my colleague by discussing Matthew as a resource and guide for the pulpit.

[2] Eduard Schweizer, "Two New Testament Creeds Compared. 1 Corinthians 15.3-5 and 1 Timothy 3.16," *Current Issues in New Testament Interpretation,* ed. William Klassen and Graydon F. Snyder (New York: Harper, 1962) 166; reprinted in E. Schweizer, *Neotestamentica* (Zurich, Stuttgart: Zwingli Verlag, 1963) 122.

[3] See Carl E. Braaten, "Historical Criticism, Dogmatics, and Faith," *All Things New. Essays in Honor of Roy A. Harrisville.* Word & World Supplement Series 1 (St. Paul: Luther Northwestern Theological Seminary, 1992) 165-73.

heretical texts in the name of historical research.[4] It appears to devalue the Bible as the foundational text in Christianity. Deconstructionism, a technique of literary interpretation, holds that meaning resides in the reader's interaction with a text, not in the text itself. This approach tends to downgrade the value of the biblical text and make it more difficult to preach.

Preaching is also more difficult because of the growing diversity in the American population. Ethnic pluralism, ideological commitments, and differing evaluations of the American tradition fragment society. Theologically the Christian community is divided in more than denominational fashion. Each church finds within its membership people who identify with what Tex Sample calls the cultural left, middle, and right.[5] Most congregations are not homogenous, but like Joseph's coat: magnificent in their varied hues.

Matthew is a great resource for preaching to divided congregations, since his community faced difficult challenges. Preaching today demands careful, painstaking attention to the biblical text, if preachers aim to reflect more than their personal interests. They must also analyze their own congregations and reflect on how to move from Matthew's day to our own.[6] I hope to contribute to the first of these three goals—attention to the text—with Matthew as my guide.

Preaching as narration

Telling the Story: Narrative Criticism. Our generation is story-oriented. Note how the sitcoms and soaps on television catch people up in the story. Preaching today must tell Matthew's story to involve its hearers. The lectionary fragments the story, rearranges the order because of the church year, and leaves the impression that Matthew is a collection of individual pericopes. But Matthew is more than a collection of Gospel readings for the church year. Matthew tells a dramatic story, and one must know the story well before preaching Matthew. In addition to reading and rereading Matthew (in the best of all worlds in Greek) one should read the works of scholars who use literary criticism.[7]

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[4] Braaten refers specifically to Helmut Koester's address to the Lutheran Professors' breakfast at the AAR/SBL meeting in Atlanta in 1990, now published as "Epilogue: Current Issues in New Testament Scholarship," pp. 467-76 in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester,* ed. Birger A. Pearson (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991). Braaten chronicles his own involvement with Martin Kähler's effort in the nineteenth century to correlate historical inquiry and faith affirmations. He concludes by affirming the need for both historical research and the role of faith in biblical interpretation. I affirm his conclusion, though I do not think he has solved the problem.

[5] Tex Sample, *U.S. Lifestyles and Mainline Churches. A Key to Reaching People in the 90's* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1990). I find his analysis helpful in reflecting on the challenge of preaching today.

[6] The literature on biblical preaching is large. I have found the following helpful: C. K. Barrett, *Biblical Problems and Biblical Preaching* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1964); Leander E. Keck, *The Bible in the Pulpit: The Renewal of Biblical Preaching* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1983); Donald G. Miller, *The Way to Biblical Preaching: How To Communicate the Gospel in Depth* (New York, Nashville: Abingdon, 1957).

[7] See Mark Allan Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990) for a good introduction with excellent bibliography. Richard A. Edwards, *Matthew's Story of Jesus* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985) gives a running analysis of the story, while

Reading the plot. In some respects Matthew is the most carefully written Gospel of the four. One must know the structure[8] and the distinctive features of Matthew well. Scholars debate what the structure is and implies,[9] which means that the preacher needs to read alternative proposals carefully and then decide on the organization of the Gospel on one's own. In my opinion Matthew's Gospel falls into three major sections:

1:1-4:16 The Origins of Jesus the Anointed
4:17-16:20 The Proclamation of Jesus the Anointed
16:21-28:20 The Way to the Cross, Resurrection, and Enthronement[10]

Matthew 1:1, "The book of the origins of Jesus the Anointed One, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (*βίβλος γενέσεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ υἱοῦ Δαυὶδ υἱοῦ Ἀβραάμ*),[11] serves as the introduction to the first section. Mt 4:17 and 16:21 use the same unusual formula (*ἀπὸ τότε ἤρξατο ὁ Ἰησοῦς* plus infinitive [*κηρύσσειν, διδάσκειν*] and indication of content) to introduce major units two and three. Matthew arranges his material for easy remembrance by the use of formulaic expressions, the repetition of key words, the grouping of similar topics, numerical groupings in threes, five or sevens, and the use of liturgically shaped materials (e.g., the Lord's Prayer, 6:9-13, and the triple formula in baptism, 28:19).

Mt 1:1-4:16, the Matthean pre-public ministry material, is almost totally different from Mk 1:1-13.[12] Matthew stresses Jesus' origins (*βίβλος γενέσεως*, 1:1) much more than Mark and ties those origins to Abraham, David, and Israel's royal line (1:2-17). The genealogy also, in quite unusual fashion, introduces five women: Tamar, Rahab,

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Jack D. Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story* (2nd ed., Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988) carefully analyzes aspects of character (Jesus, antagonists, disciples), plot, and community.

[8] Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary,* tr. Wilhelm C Linss (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989) gives the best recent discussion of "Structure and Genre" (33-46) and useful remarks on "Style" (49-73). W. C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to S. Matthew,* ICC (3rd. ed., Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), lxiii-lxv, gives extended lists of materials grouped numerically in threes, fives, and sevens. The best listing of linguistic peculiarities is in J. Hawkins, *Horae Synopticae* (2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1909), 3-10.

[9] Some, impressed by the five great sermons, follow B. W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (New York: Henry Holt, 1990), 80-91, and divide the Gospel into five "books" (with prologue and epilogue). Bacon calls attention to the formula that ends each of the sermons : *καὶ ἐγενέτο ὅτε ἐτέλεσεν* ... (7:28, 11:1, 13:53; 19:1, 26:1). The sermons are significant, but not the dominant structural device.

[10] I presented this basic outline in "The Extent of Matthew's Prologue," *JBL* 83 (1964) 409-14. Jack Kingsbury adopted it and gave more extensive argumentation to support it in *Matthew: Structure, Christology, Kingdom* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975), 7-25.

[11] The NRSV translation, "An account of the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham," is quite misleading. It implies that 1:1 applies only to 1:2-17, translates "book" as "account," and implies that "son of David" is non-titular.

[12] The best tool for such analysis is Kurt Aland, ed., *Synopsis Quattuor Evangeliorum* (13th ed. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1985). Those who prefer to work with the English text will find helpful Aland's *Synopsis of the Four Gospels* (Stuttgart: United Bible Societies, 1979), with Greek and RSV texts on facing pages, and Burton H. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels. A Synopsis of the First Three Gospels* (4th ed., New York: Nelson, 1949).

Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary,[13] and an Old Testament citation shapes each story in the infancy narrative (Mt 1:18-2:23).[14] Matthew 3:1-4:16 continues the theme of fulfillment by showing how Jesus responds to John's demand for Israel to repent (3:2). 4:1-11 shows Jesus' fidelity in temptation in the wilderness: he lives before God as Israel should have, but did not during its wilderness wandering.

Mt 4:17-16:20 shows how Jesus, the teacher of Israel, ratifies the proclamation of the kingdom of God by his actions. Matthew places three of the five great addresses here. 4:17-25 prepares for the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) by giving a summary of Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom of heaven, his call of the first disciples, and briefly describing the effect of his preaching. The Sermon on the Mount describes the life of the disciple as proper response (piety, righteousness, δικαιοσύνη) to God's royal rule (cf. Mt 5:6,10,20; 6:1, 33; 21:32). Mt 8:1-9:34 recounts nine miracles (including a double miracle, 9:18-26) that show the power of the preaching of the kingdom. Two disciple narratives interrupt, dividing the nine into three groups of three. The miracles and the disciple stories prepare for the sending out of the twelve in the second great address (9:35-10:42).[15] His hearers, both the people (11:20-24) and their leaders (chap. 12) reject Jesus' message; only the small number of disciples listen with faith (11:25-30). That prepares for the third discourse (13:1-52), which describes the divided response to the proclamation of seven parables, whose meaning is clear only to the disciples.[16] Reactions to Jesus' proclamation determine relationship to him (13:53-58). Mt 13:53-16:12 prepares for the confession at Caesarea Philippi (16:13-20), where Jesus "founds" the Christian community (ἐκκλησία).

Mt 16:21-28:20 stresses the growing shadow of the passion and the continued instruction of the disciples. Three great passion predictions (16:21; 17:22; 20:18-19),[17] all borrowed from Mark, dominate chapters 16-20, while chapters 21-28 recount the events in Jerusalem that culminate in crucifixion, resurrection, and the royal commissioning decree. A great discourse is found in each subsection. 18:1-35 (how the community of the forgiven must forgive) and chapter 23 are the major pas-

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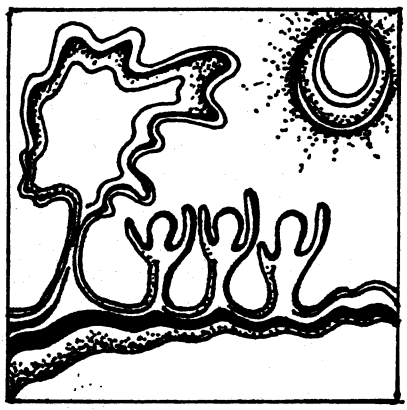
[13] A careful reading of the account of each of the four OT women shows how Matthew places Jesus into a very earthy history and foreshadows his concern for non-Israelite disciples. Herman Waetjen, "The Genealogy as the Key to the Gospel According to St. Matthew," *JBL* 95 (1976): 205-30 argues that these aspects of the genealogy provide the clue for understanding the entire Gospel. The women in this genealogy could serve as the text for the entire Advent season in the year of Matthew.

[14] See Krister Stendahl, "Quis et Unde? An Analysis of Matthew 1-2," 94-105 in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche*, ed. W. Eltester. BZNW 26 (Berlin: A. Topelmann, 1960; reprinted in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, ed. Graham Stanton (Philadelphia: Fortress; London: SPCK, 1983), 56-66.

[15] Matthew does not narrate the actual going or return of the disciples, as do Mk 6:12-13, 30-31 and Lk 9:6, 10; 10:17-20. Instead he recounts how hearers reject the proclamation of Jesus. Matthew 10 summarizes the conditions for disciple proclamation after Easter, as 10:17-23 makes clear.

[16] Jack Kingsbury, *The Parables of Jesus in Matthew 13: A Study in Redaction-Criticism* (London: SPCK, 1969), 25-52, correctly calls attention to the distinction between the disciples and the crowd in this chapter.

[17] Matthew also foreshadows the passion elsewhere: cf. 17:9-13; 26:2.



sages that describe the life of the disciple community. Matthew 24-25 sets the Jerusalem events into apocalyptic, cosmic significance.

Geography is more than a series of place names in Matthew. Where events take place is important, since geography has symbolic significance for Matthew. Stendahl has shown that the infancy narratives (1:18-2:23) are dominated by geographic concerns. Matthew discloses how a Jew from Nazareth is the Son of David from Bethlehem, the city of David.[18] The ministry opens in Galilee, described as "Galilee of the Gentiles" in Mt 4:15 (a citation of Isaiah 9:1 MT, 8:23 LXX). Galilee is the site of Jesus' teaching of the crowds (4:17-16:12), his gathering of disciples (4:18-22; 8:9; 10:1-4), and, as opposition begins to grow, his ministry to non-Jews (8:28-34, the Gadarene demoniac; 15:21-28, Tyre, Sidon, and the Canaanite woman). The angel's annunciation of Jesus' resurrection ends with the command to the disciples to go to Galilee, where they would see Jesus (28:7). And in Galilee he gives them the royal command to "make disciples of all the nations by baptizing and teaching" (28:19).

Judaea and Jerusalem, by contrast, are painted in dark colors. Because Archelaus, Herod's son, rules in Judaea, Joseph and Mary emigrate to Nazareth (2:22-23).[19] The wilderness in which John preaches is the "wilderness of Judaea" (3:1). The "Little Apocalypse" warns the inhabitants of Judaea to flee when the eschatological trials come (24:16). Jerusalem fares even worse. Jesus' only speech to the crowds [and disciples] in Jerusalem is Matthew 23, the sevenfold woes on "scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," which concludes with his lament over Jerusalem (23:37-41). In Lk 13:34-35 Jesus speaks these words on the trip to Jerusalem, a completely different context. In Luke these words forecast the entry into Jerusalem that begins the passion; in Matthew they foreshadow the eschatological judgment by the Son of Man (cf. 13:41-43, 49-50; 16:27; 21:33-44, especially 43; 25:31-46). Jesus' cleansing of the temple in 21:12-13 is interpreted by the immediate withering of the cursed fig tree in 21:18-22. Jesus does no positive miracle in Jerusalem. Jesus disputes with Jewish opponents in the temple (21:23-46), which incites their wish to arrest him 21:45). Matthew does not record the story of the widow's mite found in both Mk 12:41-44 and Lk 21:1-4. Jesus leaves the temple with the prediction of its destruction (24:2) to go to the Mount of Olives, where he speaks his last great sermon only to his disciples (24:1), just as his opening sermon was addressed only to them (5:1-2). In the trial before Pilate the Jerusalem citizenry (λάος) accept responsibility for his death (27:24-26). All spectators at his cru-

[18] Luke accomplishes the same purpose by the census and Mary and Joseph's trip to Bethlehem.

[19] Matthew "conveniently" does not mention that another son of Herod rules in Galilee!

cifixion, outside of the crucifixion detail and women who observed from a distance (27:55-56), mock him: bypassers (27:39) and chief priests (41-43) with a mocking reflection of Satan's words in the temptation story ("If you are the Son of God..."), even the crucified robbers (27:44). Joseph of Arimathea alone is a positive figure—and he is carefully described as a disciple (27:57-60). Jerusalem is painted in unrelieved somber tones.

Lectionary Errors. The lectionary invites you to think of an entire year's preaching on Matthew as the telling of Matthew's story. That implies that you plan the entire year's preaching at one time, if at all possible. Note what the lectionary omits and insert it at appropriate places.[20] We have already mentioned the importance of the genealogy (1:2-17). Matthew 8 and 9, almost totally left out, are vital to understanding Matthew 10. The omission of 17:9-13 from the Gospel for Transfiguration risks turning the day into a celebration of a *theologia gloriae* rather than the *theologia crucis* that those verses support. Mt 17:10-18:14 contains the major passage on disciples' freedom (17:24-27, (an "embarrassing passage"?) and the theological basis (18:1-10) for understanding 18:15-20 (not church discipline, but the growing witness to an errant member of the community). Read all the omitted sections and use them to interpret what is left in the lectionary. That way you will preach the story Matthew wrote, and you will find that Matthew leads you into narrative preaching.[21]

Preaching the Matthean Christ

Matthew models how to present Jesus in proclamation. His Christology is rich, using the Old Testament and contemporary Jewish and Greek modes of thought as resources. This richness suggests major motifs for proclamation.

Jesus enthroned as kosmokrator. Modern society is often uncomfortable with ideas of authority, even while following

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[20] 1:1-17 (genealogy); 4:24-25; 6:7-15, 22-23; 7:1-20; 8:1-34; 9:1-34; 10:1-25 (11:1); 11:12-24; 12:1-50; 13:10-17, 31-35;14:1-12, 34-36; 15:1-20, 29-39; 16:1-12, 27-28; 17:10-27; 18:1-14; 19:1-30; 20:29-34; 21:12-27, 44-46; 22:22-33; 23:13-33; 24:13-36; [27:1-66]; 28:11-15. I drew this list from the "Index to the Three-Year Lectionary," *Lutheran Book of Worship: Ministers Desk Edition* (Minneapolis: Augsburg; Philadelphia: Board of Publication, Lutheran Church in America, 1978), 507-11.

Matthew provides the assigned Gospel on 42-45 Sundays in the Lectionary A. In addition one reads lessons from Matthew on 2nd Christmas Day (December 26), Holy Innocents (December 28), Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, Wednesday of Holy Week, The Confession of Peter (January 18), The Day of St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist (September 21), All Saints Day (November 1), and for Harvest Festival. The Lectionary does not use Matthew as the Gospel for Christmas Eve or Christmas Day, for Epiphany 2, for 3 of the Sundays in Lent, for the entire Easter cycle, or for Ascension and Pentecost. This summary is based on *The Lutheran Book of Worship. Ministers Desk Edition*, 121-91.

[21] Narrative preaching has come into its own. The lectionary use of Matthew suggests that one should use the narratives in Matthew as the basis for narrative preaching and the texts from the great discourses for more traditional non-narrative sermons. Two helpful books on narrative preaching are Richard A. Jenson, *Telling the Story: Variety and Imagination in Preaching* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1980) and Eugene L. Lowry, *How to Preach a Parable: Designs for Narrative Sermons* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1989). Lowry provides models for four types of narrative sermons and prints sermons by Fred B. Craddock, Leander E. Keck, and Dennis M. Willis to illustrate them.

authority figures of dubious value. Matthew presents Jesus as the Lord of the Universe, the *κοσμοκράτωρ*. Jesus is royal in lineage, the "Son of David" (1:1; cf. the king list of Judah in 1:6-11).[22] Suppliants appeal to him with that title (9:27, two blind men; 15:22, the Canaanite woman; 20:30, 31, two blind men at Jericho). The crowds, fascinated by his healing deeds, ask: "This fellow could not be the Son of David, could he?" (12:23) Only in Matthew do the crowds acclaim him "Son of David" at the entry into Jerusalem (21:9), and he immediately goes into the temple to cleanse it (21:10-13). When the authorities, seeing his deeds and recalling the acclamation, complain and ask whether he heard their cries, he responds, "Yes. Have you never read 'Out of the mouths of infants and nursing babies you have prepared praise for yourself'?" (21:15-16),[23] thus implicitly accepting the acclamation. He does much the same in the fourth question in the temple, Mt 22:42-45. Matthew casts the *titulus* on the cross, "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews," in revelatory language that parallels the voice from heaven at the baptism (Mt 3:17).

But the strongest affirmation of Jesus as the kosmokrator is found in the conclusion of the Gospel, the so-called Great Commission. Matthew casts it in the form of a royal decree, as Malina has argued.[24] Several facts underscore the cosmic significance of the resurrected Jesus.[25] There is a striking stress on the word *πᾶς* ("all"), *πάντα* ("everything"): "all authority" (*ἐξουσία*, v. 18),[26] "all the nations" (*πάντα τὰ ἔθνη*, v. 19), "observe all things I commanded you" and "all the days" (v. 20). Jesus claims total authority over the entire created universe. Matthew also uses the literary device of inclusion to underscore that Jesus' rule as kosmokrator is not a form of absentee lordship through viceroys, like that of Parthian (Persian) kings or Roman imperators, the two absolute rulers of the

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[22] The title Son of David goes back to 2 Sam 7:12-14. Jer 30:9 speaks of the future in the words "They shall serve the Lord their God and David their King (*τὸν Δαυὶδ βασιλέα αὐτῶν ἀναστήσω αὐτοῖς*), whom I will raise up for them" (*NRSV*; cf. Ezek 34:23-24; 37:24-25; Amos 9:11). The title occurs in Pss Sol 17:20 in a clearly futuristic sense: "See, Lord, and raise up for them their king, the son of David (*τὸν βασιλέα αὐτῶν, υἱὸν Δαυίδ*), to rule over your servant Israel in the time known to you, O God." Translation by R. B. Wright in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. J. H. Charlesworth (Garden City: Doubleday, 1983-85), 2.667. There are valuable notes on this term in H. E. Ryle and M. R. James, *Psalms of the Pharisees, commonly called The Psalms of Solomon* (Cambridge: University Press, 1891), 137, and J. Viteau, *Les Psaumes de Salomon* (Paris: Letouzey et Ane, 1911), 350-51.

[23] A citation of Ps 8:3 according to the Septuagint text. The Massoretic Text is quite different in the conclusion.

[24] B. Malina, "The Literary Form and Structure of Matt. 28:16-20," *NTS* 17 (1970): 87-103. See Robert H. Smith, *Easter Gospels: The Resurrection of Jesus According to the Four Evangelists* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1983), 76-86, for an extensive discussion of this passage, and Otto Michel, "The Conclusion of Matthew's Gospel," 30-41 in Stanton (n. 14 above), for the view that it is an enthronement scene. Smith points to 2 Chr 36:23 as a formal parallel (78).

[25] Robert Smith, *Matthew*. ANTC (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), points out that the opening words (Mt 3:15) and closing words of Jesus in Matthew are unique, unparalleled in the other Gospels (15).

[26] The phrase *ἐν οὐράνῳ καὶ ἐπὶ [τῆς] γῆς* parallels the third petition (6:10). Cf. his earlier teaching with authority (5:28), authority to forgive sins (8:9), giving authority (10:1), and the thanksgiving of 11:27: "All things were given to me by my father," which refers to knowledge of the Father. 28:18 claims absolute authority, which commissions disciples.

Matthew places Jesus into the history of the people of God, not romantically, but realistically.

first century. Jesus' last words in Matthew are "And remember, I am with you always (ἐγὼ μεθ' ὑμῶν εἰμι), to the end of the age" (29:20, *NRSV*). They recall the interpretation of Immanuel as "God with us" (μεθ' ἡμῶν ὁ θεός, 1:23). Matthew's Jesus is involved in the affairs of his people in this world till the end of history and beyond.

Jesus is anchored in history. Matthew places Jesus into the history of the people of God, not romantically, but realistically. Jesus is the outcome of what began with Abraham. He is a Jew who lives within the framework of first century Galilean Judaism.[27] Matthew's Jesus is not an abstraction, an idea, or a symbolic figure. He lives in the real world of dusty roads, fishermen on the Sea of Galilee, and the polyglot cities of the Decapolis. Matthew tells the story of this Galilean Jewish teacher to empower an urban church of Jewish Christians in a Syrian community. To preach this Jesus means to place him also into our world, as Matthew did in the first century. Preaching demands contemporizing Jesus.

Shaped by the Scriptures. Hans Walter Wolff summarized the utility of the Hebrew Scriptures for the church some years ago in four significant statements.[28] He argued that the Old Testament prevented "false isolation and historization," prevented Christian witness to Christ from becoming "philosophy about Christ," and protected against "false individualizing" and spiritualizing "transcendentalism." While one might dispute whether his view adequately allows for the full historical reading of the Hebrew Scriptures by making them only a sort of "prelude" to the New Testament, his words apply fully to Matthew's interpretation of Christ out of the Old Testament.

A. Matthew finds Jesus both prefigured in the Old Testament and the fulfiller of the Old Testament. Matthew's formula citations from the Old Testament are his key to understanding Jesus.[29] They occur in 1:23 (Isa 7:14), 2:6 (Mic 5:1), 2:15 (Hos 11:1), 2:18 (Jer 31:15), 2:23 (where? Isa 11:1? Judg 13:3?); 3:3 (Isa 40:3 LXX), 4:25-26 (Isa 8:23-9:1 = 9:1-2LXX), 8:17 (Isa 53:4), 12:18-21 (Isa 42:1-4), 13:35 (Ps 79:2), 21:5 (Is 62:11, Zech 9:9), 27:9-10 (Zech 11:12-13; cf. Jer 18:1-2; 32:6-9). These quotations are like footnotes in a

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[27] For background see John P. Meier, *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus* The Anchor Bible Reference Library (New York: Doubleday, 1992), vol. 1: *The Roots of the Problem and the Person*; Sean Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); and Everett Ferguson, *Backgrounds of Early Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 315-496.

[28] Hans Walter Wolff, "The Hermeneutics of the Old Testament," in *Essays on Old Testament Hermeneutics*, ed. Claus Westermann (Richmond: John Knox, 1964), 190-99.

[29] The basic books to consult are Krister Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew and Its Use of the Old Testament* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969 = 1954 with a new introduction); Robert H. Gundry, *The Use of the Old Testament in St. Matthew's Gospel.* NovTSupp 19 (Leiden: Brill, 1975).

modern work in which the writer provides authorities for what is said. The list repays careful study, since Matthew does surprising things to his citations. Matthew depends on Greek vocabulary (1:23), completely reverses the sense by inserting a negative (2:6), applies an historical reference to the future (2:15), cites a non-existent passage (2:23), omits a key phrase ("just and bringing salvation is he," δίκαιος καὶ σώζων, 21:5), and cites Zechariah Jeremiah (27:9). Fulfillment by Jesus illuminates the sense of the Hebrew Scriptures for Matthew as much as the prophetic Scriptures illuminate the significance of Jesus. One must also pay close attention to the occasions or events where Matthew introduces these formal citations. Each illuminates a highly significant event in the career of Jesus.

Matthew finds Jesus both prefigured in the Old Testament and the fulfiller of the Old Testament.

B. Matthew especially draws on the prophet Isaiah to interpret Jesus, including seven of the formula citations. Jesus is the "Servant of the Lord" when he heals diseases (8:17)[30] and when he leaves the synagogue in judgment on his compatriots who reject him (12:18-21). But Isaiah plays into other aspects of Jesus' ministry. When John the Baptist in doubt inquires whether Jesus is really the "Coming One" to whom he pointed, Jesus responds by using the language of Isaiah to describe his deeds (11:2-6; see Isa 29:18-19; 35:5-6; 42:18), the so-called Iprophetic signs. Jesus quotes Isa 6:9-10 LXX to explain to his disciples that he teaches in parables to conceal his meaning from the unbelieving crowds, as Isaiah was called to speak (13:10-17). Jesus is for Matthew the last and greatest of God's messengers, all of whom the non-believing Jews reject (see 21:33-41, 23:34-36; cf. 11:16-19).

C. Jesus relives Israel's history as God's people should have lived it. The genealogy ties Jesus to the past of his people, as the discussion above showed. Chapter 2 compares Jesus going to Egypt with the life of Israel in Egypt, from which God called Israel, his "son" (2:13-15, citing Hos 11:1). At his baptism Jesus fulfills all righteousness, δικαιοσύνη, 3:14-15), the proper response of humankind to God.[31] The voice from heaven then announces that he is "my beloved son," using a title that properly belongs to Israel (Exod 4:22; cf. Hos 11:1) and Israel's king (2 Sam 7:14). The three temptations in the wilderness recall Israel's failures under testing in the Exodus. In each case Jesus rejects the temptation by citing Moses' farewell discourse to Israel in Deuteronomy 6-8. Jesus is tested as Israel was tested and lives righteously before God.[32]

Matthew draws on many rich images from the Old Testament and Early Judaism

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[30] Matthew does not apply these Servant of the Lord songs to the death of Jesus, as 1 Pet 2:18-25 does. Psalms 22 and 69 shimmer in the background of the crucifixion, as Ezekiel 37 does behind Mt 17:51-53.

[31] See G. Schrenk, "δικαιοσύνη," *TDNT* 2.195-99. esp. 198-99 on righteousness in Matthew, and Smith, 16-17.

[32] See T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1949), 41-46.

to clarify Jesus' role in Israel.[33] Jesus is a teacher of the Torah.[34] He sits on the mountain, the posture of the teacher in Israel (cf. the significance of "the seat of Moses" in 23:2).[35] The disciples are to teach the nations to observe "all that he had commanded them," the teaching contained in the five great discourses (28:19). He is the fulfiller of the Old Testament, the final revealer of God's will. Jesus is a doer of great deeds (11:2-6), though Matthew does not regard miracles as evidence of Jesus' status (cf. the demand for a sign in 12:38-42). His preaching is the only sign that he does (12:41-42). For his disciples he is the revealer of the father (11:27). Jesus (along with John the Baptist) is an emissary of wisdom (11:19), the last such to be sent (23:24). He is "Son of David" and "Son of God," the "Anointed One." He enters Jerusalem as the judge to cleanse the temple (21:1-17), to vindicate and save. But above all he is the "Son of Man" who suffers, dies, and rises again.[36]

Preaching to one's real world

On reading the signs of the times. Antioch about 90 C.E. was a polyglot city of many ethnic groups.[37] It was a thoroughly hellenized city, bounded by a countryside that retained its eastern complexion. Like many ancient cities, it was crowded, often dirty and unsanitary, devastated by recurring famine, plague, earthquake, and war.[38] Matthew's church, a minority group of Christian Jews in a minority Jewish population, ran the risk of ghettoizing itself. Recent social setting analysis of Matthew's Gospel pays great attention to the social, religious, and economic setting of Matthew's church.[39]

Matthew gave identity to this community. Matthew's church faced a crisis of identity. Composed primarily of Jewish believers, its members were apparently beginning to waver in their convictions. Non-Christian Jewish critics challenged their

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[33] See Kingsbury, *Structure,* 40-127.

[34] Check the use of διδάσκειν in 4:23, 5:2, 7:29, 9:35, 11:1, 13:54, 21:23, and E. P. Blair, *Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (New York, Nashville: Abingdon, 1960), 44-84.

[35] The excavators of the synagogue at Chorazin (cf. Matt 11:20-21) found a stone seat inscribed with that legend in Hebrew. It is presently in the Hebrew Museum in Jerusalem. See N. Avigad, "Chorazain," *Encyclopedia of Archaeological Excavations in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society and Massada Press, 1975), 1.301-303.

[36] See above all the three passion predictions (16:21-23, 17:22-23, 20:17-20) and 1710-13, 26:1-2. I differ at this point from Kingsbury, *Structure,* 40-83, who regards "Son of God" as the key title in Matthew.

[37] The modern bibliography on Antioch is immense—and useful. See F. W. Norris, "Antioch of Syria," *ABD* 1.264-269 for a useful overview and bibliography; Glanville Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961); Wayne Meeks and Robert Wilken, *Jews and Christians in Antioch in the First Four Centuries of the Common Era* (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1978). John P. Meier reconstructs the developing history of the church in Antioch in *Antioch and Rome: New Testament Cradles of Catholic Christianity* (New York/Ramsey: Paulist Press, 1983), 11-86. Raymond Brown wrote the chapters on Rome.

[38] See Rodney Stark, "Antioch as the Social Situation for Matthew's Gospel," 189-210 in Balch, *Social History.* He gives a helpful bibliography on social factors influencing life in Greco-Roman cities.

[39] Since Robert Smith discusses the social world of Matthew in this issue, I omit further discussion here. See also Balch, *Social History,* and J. Andrew Overman, *Matthew's Gospel and Formative Judaism: The Social World of the Matthean Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990).

conviction that Jesus was the Messiah and hope for salvation. Matthew argued that his church possessed all the requisite marks of the true people of God. First of all Matthew gave his community a history with which to identify. Novelty was not prized in antiquity. It had a founder to rival Abraham. Jesus calls Peter "Rock," πέτρα, recalling the role of Abraham in Israel (see Isa 51:1-2, where Abraham and Sarah are the rock from which Israel is hewed). The church has a "patriarch" to equal Abraham, just as Jesus parallels God as the founder of Israel (16:16-20).[40] The disciple community also has the true key to understanding the Scriptures, bringing out from the treasure "things old and things new" (13:51-52). It understands and knows, characteristics of God's people.[41] It has leadership and teaching through God and Jesus (23:8-12). And it finally has the "Law and the Prophets" (5:17-20; 7:12), truly understood and lived. The Sermon on the Mount is the Christian explication of the Torah.

The church[42] is a saving community, internally and externally. Matthew 18 describes how the church is to hang on to its members through an internal witness that explicates the saving will of God (18:14-20). The forgiven must forgive (18:23-35; cf 6:14-15; 7:1-5). The church does not strive to be pure, for judgment belongs finally to the Son of Man (13:47-50).[43] Instead its task is to preach the good news of the kingdom (Matthew 10) and make disciples of the nations (28:18-20).

The church has social cohesion because it is a community of equals, brothers (and sisters) under one Lord (23:8-12).[44] The church in Matthew has no structure, no special offices. The "scribe discipled to the kingdom of the heavens" (13:52) is an interpreter of the Hebrew Scriptures, but not a liturgical or structural leader of the church. Matthew also knows of "prophets" and "righteous ones" (10:41), but they are probably missionaries who preach to convert others (cf. Didache 11:7-12 for tests of the true prophet and 13:1 for the prophet who desires to "settle down" in a particular location).

Matthew urges a practical Christianity. The will of the Father determines action. Thus the will of the father focuses the life of the community to save (18:10). Matthew 5-7 describes the "righteousness surpassing

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[40] Manson, *Sayings*, 202, cites a passage from the homiletic Midrash *Yelammedenu* : A king, planning to build a palace, "dug in several places seeking proper ground for a foundation; at last he struck rock beneath, and said, Here I will build, so he laid the foundation and built. Just so when God sought to create the world, He examined the generation of Enoch and the generation of the Flood, and said, How can I create the world when these wicked people will rise up and provoke me to anger? When He saw Abraham who was to arise, He said, Now I have found a rock (*petra*) on which to build and establish the world. For this reason He calls Abraham a rock (Is. 51.1f.)."

[41] Blair, 85-109.

[42] The term occurs only in Mt 16:18 and 18:17 in the four Gospels.

[43] There is nothing in Matthew that parallels "The Community Rule" (1QS) at Qumran. 1QS 6.24-9.11 lays down rules for conduct and penalties for infractions, while 1QS 9.12-26 gives regulations for the community leader. See *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, ed. G. Vermes (3rd ed. New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 70-75.

[44] See E. Krentz, "The Egalitarian Church of Matthew," *Currents* 4 (1977): 333-41, and "Character and Community: Matthew's Vision of the Church," *SBLSP* 1987: 565-73; G. Bornkamm, "End-Expectation and Church in Matthew," in G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and J. H. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963), 38-51.

that of the scribes and Pharisees" as active in piety (almsgiving, prayer, fasting, 6:1-18). It is not the confession of Jesus as Lord, not the doing of miracles and exorcisms, that demonstrates commitment to Jesus (7:21-23). Jesus regards those who trust in such deeds as "perpetrators of lawlessness," i.e. breakers of the Torah. Finally, the Son of Man will judge according to deeds, not beliefs at the eschaton (25:31-46). Matthew urges an active faith. It is not surprising that James is close to Matthew in his stress on activity.

Problems in preaching Matthew

Matthew and the law. Matthew causes problems for some modern preachers by his insistence on the continuing validity of the law (Torah; Mt 5:17-20) and the concept of reward (5:11-12, 5:20). Is Matthew a legalist? One should recall two Matthean emphases at this point. The opening words of the Sermon on the Mount, the beatitudes, describe the disciples as people who respond to God's gift of the kingdom by acts of fidelity and love. Piety (*δικαιοσύνη*), a key motif in Matthew, underscores the fidelity of God's people to him. Matthew also stresses the freedom of disciples in the story of the tribute money in 17:24-27. The great prayer of thanksgiving in 11:25-27 stresses God's unconditional choice of disciples who have no status. Jesus' invitation to find rest by taking up his yoke (11:28-30) directly contradicts the claim of the teacher Jesus ben Sirach that the study of the Torah in the Beth ha Midrash (House of Interpretation) is what offers release (cf. Ecclus 51:23-30).

Matthew and the Jewish people. Matthew is written for a church whose members are Jewish Christians. They bring with them their concerns about the Torah and their Jewish heritage. Matthew in part reinforces their convictions by writing his "Gospel *against* the Jews," as C. F. D. Moule has put it.[45] Matthew writes after 70 C.E., when Judaism fragments into sects, each claiming to be the only true Judaism, the correct interpreter of the law. Matthew writes to legitimate his community.[46] Later Christianity sometimes used texts in Matthew (and John) to validate anti-Semitism. Such interpretation is illegitimate. For full discussion of these problem passages see the article by Ulrich Luz in this issue.

> His five great discourses are exemplary teaching; not teaching for teaching's sake, but teaching to move Christians to proclamation and action.

The proclaimer as community model

Matthew is clearly concerned for teaching the faith of the church. His five great discourses are exemplary teaching. But they are not teaching for teaching's sake, but

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[45] C. F. D. Moule, *The Birth of the New Testament* (3rd ed. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982) 124.

[46] This is the burden of Overman's book.

teaching to move Christians to proclamation and action. It is the message, not the messenger, that is important. The test of the message is the practical effect it has on Christian action. Preachers do not ratify the message in Matthew's church by pointing to their confession of "Jesus as Lord" or to mighty deeds of power (7:21-23). Proclaimers do not seek status in Matthew. Nor do they measure their success by popularity (10:23-25). They follow their master into suffering for the sake of witness to the world. They live *sub specie aeternitatis*, eschatologically, in expectation of the new world (19:28-30) where the enthroned kosmokrator will claim his own.

Commentaries

Gundry, Robert H. *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982. Much attention is given to Matthean redaction, unique elements.

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The Gospel of Matthew. The Two Ways: Hypocrisy or Righteousness

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I am grateful to Wilhelm Linss for his stimulating scholarship, his commitment to quality teaching, his collegiality, and his friendship during my time at LSTC.

This tribute to him is directed to the preaching task. Preachers may find it helpful to understand better the entire writing in which a liturgical text is located. The liturgical year devoted to Matthew provides an opportunity for the pastor (and parish) to study the dynamics of the Gospel of Matthew as a whole.[1] To that end, I have focused here on key dynamics of Matthew's Gospel: the view of the human condition, the vision for human life, and the work of God which empowers people.

In the first century, it was common to present ethical teaching as a contrast between two ways, the way of good and the way of evil. The two conceptions were presented as opposites, so that the particular directions for good were an exact contrast to directions about what evils to avoid. Such contrasts appear in ethical instructions and in argumentative rhetoric. They also appear embedded in the narratives of the Gospels. For example, in the Gospel of Mark, "thinking the things of God" (faith, losing life, being least, and serving) contrasts with "thinking the things of humans" (fear, saving one's life, being great, and lording over). The characters in Mark embody one or the other of these two ways. The narrative is tightly structured so as to present the reader with a choice between these two ways. Likewise, John presents a dualism in which people either know God and have eternal life or they do not know God and will die in

[1] In conjunction with this article, it would be helpful to read the whole Gospel at one time, as one might read a short story. In a group study, it would be helpful to read the Sermon on the Mount aloud (about 20 minutes in length) as a way to provide a common experience of Jesus' teaching in Matthew.

The contrast is between two different ways to interpret God's will, two contrasting ways to live out Jewish law.

their sins. Luke contrasts life with mercy and life without mercy in the nation of Israel.

In Matthew, the contrast is between two different ways to interpret God's will, two contrasting ways to live out the Jewish law. On the one hand, the interpretation of the law by the Pharisees leads to hypocrisy and will result in destruction. On the other hand, the interpretation of the law by Jesus enables people to carry out the law with righteous integrity and will result in salvation. For Matthew, the two ways of life are: (1) life under the law as the Pharisees live it, which results in "hypocrisy," and (2) life in response to the law as Jesus teaches it, which results in "righteousness." In the narrative, these two ways are embodied in many of the characters, expressed in parables, and most evident in the ethical teaching, especially the Sermon on the Mount and the Woes against the Pharisees.

The two ways in the historical context

The origins of Matthew's two ways are probably rooted in Matthew's historical context. The dominant scholarly view is that the Gospel of Matthew was written between 80-90 C.E., about ten to twenty years after the Roman-Jewish War of 66-70 C.E.[2] The two main Jewish groups in Israel to survive that war were the liberal Pharisees and the liberal Christians, groups which had opposed the war and were open to relations with Gentiles. After the war, the Pharisees set up a school at Jamnia under the leadership of Rabbi Johanan ben Zakkai in order to reinterpret the Jewish law in light of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. These Pharisees wanted to establish their view of the Jewish law as normative for Jews everywhere.

The Christian Jews who survived the war also wanted influence over Jewish beliefs and practices. Matthew's community was likely such a Jewish-Christian synagogue, probably located in Antioch of Syria. Scholars agree that this Gospel was not written by the disciple of Jesus named Matthew. Nevertheless, for the sake of convenience, we will refer to the author as Matthew. Matthew was probably a Jewish scribe or rabbi who believed Jesus was the Messiah. Like the Pharisees, these Christian Jews in Antioch believed they had the correct interpretation of the Jewish law. Matthew wrote to show that the Messiah had already come in the person of Jesus and had given the authoritative interpretation of the law. The Pharisees should not therefore interpret the law otherwise.

Matthew also wanted to show that the Jewish leaders could have avoided the war. If they had listened to Jesus' teaching about the law, they would have loved the enemy, refused to fight the Romans, and survived the war. Jesus taught that "those who live by the sword will die by the sword" (26:52) and that "the gentle (meek) ...will inherit the

[2]W.D. Davies has best articulated the historical context for Matthew's Gospel.

earth" (5:5). Matthew's story shows, on the one hand, how the Jews who rejected Jesus' way came to "die by the sword" and, on the other hand, how the Jews who accepted Jesus' way are now inheriting the earth by spreading the Gospel among Gentile nations.

Under no circumstances is it appropriate to use Matthew's narrative portrayal of hypocritical Jewish leaders in the service of anti-Semitism. Matthew employs characters as "types" to represent ethical behavior which the reader is either to reject or to emulate. The two ways thus reflect good and evil character traits in everyone and do not accurately reflect the Jewish leaders as we know them from other sources. As such, the rhetoric of the narrative leads readers to choose between hypocrisy and righteous integrity. The choice is not between Judaism and Christianity, because in the narrative both the hypocrites and those with integrity are Jews.

The two ways in the plot of Matthew's Gospel

The plot of Matthew's Gospel follows the fate of the two groups which embrace these two ways. The Jewish leaders who come to reject Jesus are foreshadowed in the birth narratives by Herod, who pretends to worship the king Jesus but really wants to murder him (2:8). As the story progresses, the Jewish authorities oppose Jesus and seek to trap him. In the Woes, Jesus condemns the scribes and Pharisees for their hypocritical destructiveness (23:1-39). At the end of the story, this group coalesces its opposition to Jesus when the leaders stir up the crowd to call for Jesus' death: "Let his blood be upon us and upon our children" (27:25). Matthew portrays this declaration as a prophecy of the fate of this group, for he considers that their rejection of Jesus and of his teaching led to their destruction in the Roman-Jewish War (23:37-39). At the final judgment, those who have chosen the path of destruction will "weep and gnash their teeth" (25:30,46).

The Jews who come to embrace Jesus' way are also foreshadowed in the birth narratives by the wise men who come from afar sincerely seeking to worship Jesus (2:1-12) and by the righteous Joseph (1:19). Jesus blesses the new community into being (5:1-12). Then, in the Sermon on the Mount, he shows the interpretation of law which will characterize this community (5:13-7:27). Many respond to Jesus' teaching and healing, and Jesus calls twelve disciples. About halfway through the story, Jesus gives authority to his disciples and establishes this new community as the church (16:17-19). Although the disciples stumble at the time of Jesus' death, Jesus reaffirms their leadership in a resurrection appearance in which he commissions his followers to go to all nations baptizing and teaching (28:16-20). At the final judgment, the disciples will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (19:28), and all who have chosen the way of Jesus will "shine like the sun" (13:43).

The experience of the narrative leads readers to identify with followers of Jesus and reject those who oppose him. The extensive teaching of Jesus often puts readers in the position of being disciples who listen to Jesus. Readers see the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders through Jesus' eyes and learn how to live for righteous integrity. The account of Jesus' execution reinforces readers' rejection of the Jewish leaders. In turn, the account of the resurrection secures the readers' commitment to the mission of the new community. Thus, readers accept the way of Jesus and reject the way of the Pharisees.

The contrasting behavior associated with the two ways is embedded in the whole

narrative, but the contrasts are most clearly set out in the Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:27) and in the Woes (23:1-39). In these two sections of the Gospel, Matthew lays bare the contrasting dimensions of destructive hypocrisy and life-giving integrity.

The way of hypocrisy

In Matthew, life lived under the law as the Pharisees interpret it leads to blind hypocrisy. It is "blind" hypocrisy, because Matthew deals mainly not with the crass hypocrisy of people like Herod (2:8), who knowingly say one thing and intend to do another, but with people like the Pharisees who believe they are being righteous yet are unaware of the inconsistencies of their misguided efforts. In Matthew's portrayal, the Pharisees tell people to follow God's will, but they themselves do not follow it (23:3). They apply the law only to outward actions and to limited situations, which leads to hypocritical inconsistency.

In Matthew, the word "hypocrisy" means to be "under judgment" due to an inconsistency, a doublemindedness by which people are convicted by their own standards. For example, people may do the right action but for the wrong motive, or they may do the right thing partly but not all the way. The result is an inconsistency reflected in such imagery as a lamp under a basket (5:15), salt which no longer preserves (5:13), sheep which are inwardly wolves (7:15), lights which are dark (6:23), a house built on sand (7:26-27), and guides who are blind (23:24). It is this inconsistency, this doublemindedness, this hypocrisy, this lack of integrity in human action which Matthew sees as the problematic human condition—and "unless your righteousness goes beyond that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of God" (5:20).

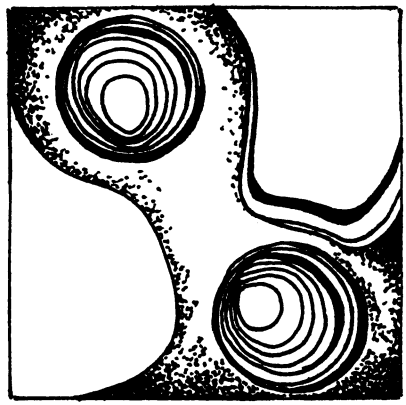
The are four types of hypocrisy in Matthew. In one category are people whose inner motives contradict their outward actions. For example, people appear to do acts of righteousness to glorify God—alms, prayer, and fasting. However, they are really doing such acts to be glorified by others (6:1-18). Jesus warns them that if they do this, they will receive their reward in full (6:2)—they will indeed be glorified by others—but they will get "no reward from your Father in heaven" (6:1). The hypocrites announce their charity in the markets (6:2) or pray in public to impress people (6:5) or "disfigure" their faces with ashes when fasting to be noticed by people (6:16). In so doing, they store up treasures (of status) on earth (6:19), but they will get no reward from God (6:1). They do these acts to be glorified rather than to glorify God (5:16). In each case, the motive for the action—to be seen and honored by people—undermines the integrity of an action which presumes to be in obedience to God's will. The approval by others blinds such "religious" people and leads them to think mistakenly that they really are righteous.

A second type of hypocrisy includes actions where the inner attitudes are the opposite of the outward appearance of righteousness. For example, people who never murdered may be full of anger. "You have heard that it was told the ancients, 'Do not murder, and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.' But I tell you, whoever is angry with a brother or sister is liable to judgment" (5:21-22). People who have not committed adultery may be full of lust (5:27-30). People are like cups which are clean on the outside but inwardly full of greed and self-indulgence (23:25). They are like whitewashed graves, outside signaling cleanness, but inside full of dead peoples' bones—outwardly appearing righteous, but inwardly full of hypocrisy and wickedness (23:27-

28). Again, the outward appearance of righteousness blinds people to the double standard in regard to their inner disposition.

A third type of hypocrisy results when people act morally in some situations but not in others. For example, Jesus tells people "not to take an oath" (5:33-37), because then your word may be good only when you are taking the oath. In this category belong also those who love their neighbors but hate their enemies (5:43-48), love only those who love them in return. Jesus observes wryly that such people should get no reward, because even the tax collectors and Gentiles "do the same." Also, Israel's leaders honor the prophets of old by building memorials to them, but they blindly persecute the prophets God sends them in the present (23:29-31). Pharisees stringently tithe their house spices but neglect the more important parts of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness. As Jesus says, "They strain a gnat out of their soup, then proceed to gulp down a camel" (23:23-24). In this type, the self-satisfaction over some good behavior blinds people to the hypocritical inconsistency of more important things which they have failed to do.

A final category of hypocrisy involves the inconsistency between relating to God one way and treating others another way, such as: loving God and not loving the neighbor; bringing a gift for God without first being reconciled to others (5:23-24); asking God for what you want but not doing for others what they want (7:7-12); assuming God will forgive you when you do not forgive others (6:14-15); or expecting you will not be judged when you judge others (7:1-5). Such people address God's son as "Lord," yet they do not do the will of their Father in heaven (7:21-23). Other examples here include presuming to serve God while storing up treasures on earth (6:19-20) or having faith in God but worrying over food and clothing (6:25-34). In this category of hypocrisy, blindness comes from thinking we can separate our relationship with God from our relationships with other people.



In all these expressions of hypocrisy, there is something wrong on the inside, in the hearts of people.[3] The interior motivation, the inner disposition, the limited commitment to goodness are signs that the inside is warped and flawed. The whole person must be changed before righteousness can occur, for one does not harvest grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles (7:16), and a bad tree brings forth rotten fruit (7:17-18). Something is wrong with the hearts of people who do not produce good fruit; they are not pure of heart. And if something is wrong on the inside, even fruit which appears to be good will be bad.

Matthew's story leads readers not to point fingers at the hypocrisy of others but to discern their own hypocrisy—not first to

[3]See Dan Via's similar treatment of hypocrisy and wholeness, which contains an excellent analysis of self-deception as willful blindness.

take the sliver from the eye of another but to notice the board in their own eye (7:3-5). Failure to remove this board is the willful blindness at the heart of hypocrisy. And when we combine blind hypocrisy with missionary zeal, we have the worst situation—blind guides who shut the door to the kingdom of God in people's faces and do not enter themselves (23:13), who go to great lengths to convert others and end up making them twice the children of hell they are (23:15), who lay burdens on people's shoulders and do not raise a finger to lift them (23:4). This is hypocrisy at its most destructive.

The way of righteousness with integrity

The vision for human life is that people be like God, because God has integrity of purpose, speech, and action. Matthew states the goal in this way: "Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (5:48). This statement follows the discussion about loving your enemy. If we want to be children of our heavenly parent, if we would be like God, we will love our enemies as well as our friends because God provides sunshine and rain for both the wicked and the good (5:45). To be perfect is to be mature and consistent in love—to love for the right reason and to do it for all people, not just those who benefit you in return.

To be perfect, therefore, is to be single-minded in the pursuit of righteousness, "true" as one is true to a lover or true to a cause, with integrity of thought, speech, and action.[4] For Matthew, being "perfect" is not a matter of engaging in a legalistic adherence to the letter of the law. Rather, it is devotion to the will of God, to God's full intention for human beings—righteousness with mercy (9:13; 12:7). It is commitment from the heart which goes deeper than external fulfillment and broader than the overt extent of the law. As such, perfection is fulfillment of the law as interpreted by Jesus and made possible in relation to Jesus.

To be perfect like God means to have integrity. People with integrity let their lights shine in order that others may glorify God (5:16). To avoid glorifying themselves, they will do righteousness in secret, give charity so that the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing, pray in private, and fast without display (6:1-18). Having integrity means that an outward avoidance of murder and adultery reflects a heart free of anger and lust (5:21-30). It means that people are always as good as their word (5:33-37), that they love others without respect to how others treat them (5:43-48), that they attend not just to the minutiae of the law but to justice, mercy, and faithfulness (23:23). Finally, it means they will treat others as they want God to treat them (7:12)—showing mercy, not judging, providing for their needs, seeking reconciliation. Such goodness comes from people whose hearts, words, and actions are in harmony. A person who acts with such integrity is the good tree which brings forth good fruit (7:17), the house built on rock (7:24-25), the preserving salt of the earth (5:13), the light for the world (5:14).

Matthew depicts Jesus as expressing that kind of integrity. Jesus obeys every word that comes from the mouth of God (4:4), and his life is a fulfillment of God's will. Jesus displays an integrity in relation to God's will, as supremely expressed in the blessings (5:1-12): humble in spirit, gentle, hungering and thirsting for justice, merciful, pure in heart, peacemaker, willing to

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[4]For an anthropological analysis of the relation between thought, speech, and action, see Bruce Malina's treatment of the first century view of the personality.

Jesus establishes a relationship of empowerment and support which enables people to carry out the law.

suffer in the pursuit of justice/righteousness. These represent the true spirit by which the law is to be carried out. And such perfection, such integrity, may best be expressed by people who are unaware of being righteous. In Matthew's depiction of the righteous at the last judgment, those who clothe the naked and visit the prisoners and feed the hungry do so without being aware they will be rewarded for it (25:31-46).

The transformation: a relationship with Jesus of blessing and forgiveness

How does one escape the sinful condition of hypocrisy in order to achieve integrity? How do people change so that they are able to bring forth good fruit?

In Matthew, the key to this transformation is that followers come into a relationship with Jesus. Matthew promulgates law carried out in relationship to the Messiah who interprets the law. Jesus says: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light (11:28-30)

Notice that Jesus does not abrogate the law. He clearly says, "I came not to abolish the law but to fulfill it" (5:17). Like the Pharisees, he lays the yoke of the law upon people. But Jesus does not lay on a burden and then withdraw and condemn people. Rather, he establishes a relationship of empowerment and support which enables people to carry out the law. Such an approach to law stands in contrast to the Pharisees who in their teaching of the law "lay heavy burdens on people and do not lift a finger to help them" (23:4). Whereas converts to the Pharisees become hypocritical "children of hell" (23:15), converts to Jesus are able to carry out the law in love because they are in personal relation with the Messiah who loves as God loves. Thus, even though Jesus interprets the law in a more thoroughgoing way than the Pharisees, his yoke is light because he enables people to bear it.

There are several dimensions to this relationship with Jesus which make the yoke easy and bring rest. First, the words of Jesus bring empowerment, for the transition to integrity begins with blessing (5:1-12). We tend to think of blessings as kindly affirmations, but biblical blessings are powerful words granting the capacity to carry out what is spoken. The blessings announce a vision of excellence in human righteousness. They empower the possibilities of this vision. They bless a new community into existence, a community in which people are merciful, hunger for justice, create peace, are pure in heart. The blessings inaugurate a new life under the rule of God by conveying the potency to carry out the law in its true spirit. Just as Jesus' words of healing in the Gospel effect physical wholeness, so his words of blessing create moral wholeness for those who will respond. Jesus the Messiah establishes a relationship of empowerment by pronouncing these blessings.

A second dimension to this relationship with Jesus comes when Jesus exposes our failure to fulfill this vision of righteousness. Following the blessings, Jesus gives an exposition of the law in the Sermon on the Mount. Here Jesus interprets the law so as to expose to followers the full extent of their sin. By a variety of concrete examples, Jesus seeks to break through the blindness and self-deception of the reader in order to illuminate the depths of human hypocrisy. Here is a positive view of law as that which reveals and illuminates. A story about Mahatma Gandhi might show how Jesus here exposes hypocrisy and grants a vision of excellence in human righteousness.

> Before Gandhi was active in India, he lived in South Africa, in a small village populated by people from India. He was a magistrate, the village father-figure to whom people brought a wide range of problems to be solved.
>
> In this village there was a widow trying hard to raise a teenage son. The child would not eat any healthy foods but would consume only sweets full of sugar.
>
> The widow knew that if Gandhi spoke to the boy he would listen. She brought him to Gandhi and asked, "Will you talk to my son and tell him to stop eating sugar?"
>
> Gandhi was silent for a moment and then said, "Would you bring the boy back to me a week from now."
>
> A week later, the woman brought the boy before Gandhi and asked again, "Will you now please tell my son to stop eating sugar?"
>
> But Gandhi replied, "I'm sorry. Would you please bring him back in another week?"
>
> A week passed, and the woman, desperate by now, came and again asked Gandhi to talk with her son. This time Gandhi carried out the woman's request. He talked with the boy and told him that it was imperative that he stop eating sugar.
>
> When Gandhi was finished, the woman took Gandhi aside, thanked him, and then asked him, "When we first came to you, you asked us to come back in a week. Then, when we came back, you asked us to come back in another week. Why did you do that?"
>
> Gandhi replied, "Because I had not realized how difficult it would be for me to give up sugar."

Everywhere I tell this story, eyes open wide in surprise and there is often laughter of self-recognition and self-revelation. The response is "Aha! Yes, I see." We see in a moment Gandhi's integrity and the extent of our own hypocrisy. Gandhi would not tell anyone else, even a child, to do something which he himself was not prepared to do. Yet how often we ourselves advise what we do not do.

In a similar way, the Sermon on the Mount exposes to us how we pray to be seen by others or how we live free of adultery but full of lust or how we love only those who love us. In so doing, he illuminates the depths of our human brokenness and lack of integrity. The Sermon on the Mount is great because it cuts through the rationalizations, the self-imposed blindness, the games we play to reassure ourselves that we are "good" people, and it exposes the human condition for what it really is. At the same time, the Sermon grants the possibility of loving someone who does not love us or giving a shirt to someone who sues for our cloak or confessing our own fault rather than that of another. The whole sermon engenders a series of "Aha! I see!" experiences. Thus, in the hands of Jesus the Messiah, the law is delightful because it brings the gift of sight, the relief of finding out what is wrong with us, and the joy of discerning what we might become. The transition from hypocrisy to integrity involves an openness to the teaching of Jesus, a willingness to look at oneself, and an eagerness to be exposed and empowered by his words.

There is even more to this personal relationship with Jesus. Jesus not only lifts a finger to help people bear the yoke of the law, Jesus dies so that people's sinful failures might be forgiven. God tells Joseph to name the baby "Jesus," because he will "save his people from their sins" (1:21). At the last supper, Jesus says that his blood will be poured out for many "for the forgiveness of sins" (26:28). The offer of forgiveness engenders self-examination, encourages repentance, and lightens the yoke of the law. There is always the opportunity to be freed from past failures for a fresh beginning. And as we know from the parable of the king who forgave the great debt, the act of forgiveness is also meant to empower people to forgive others (18:21-35).

Also, the relationship with Jesus is spiritual. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, Jesus becomes spiritually available to followers (28:20). Jesus is named "Immanuel" (1:23), meaning "God with us." Jesus says that where two or three are gathered he will be "with them, in their midst" (18:20). And the risen Jesus assures the disciples that he will be "with you always even to the end of the age" (28:20). Thus, the risen Jesus is available as a spiritual presence.

Finally, Jesus establishes a relationship for the follower not just with himself but also with God as Father: "All things have been committed to me by my Father... and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal the Father" (11:27). Judaism had always known God as Father. However, the dominant model for God was that of a remote king or lord. In Matthew, the depiction of God as Father is paramount.[5] The model of God as Father brings God near, into the orbit of familial relationships, establishing intimacy and care. As a heavenly parent, God knows what you need before you ask, provides food and clothing, teaches, reveals, commands, rewards, punishes, and forgives. This secure relationship with a heavenly parent provides the context whereby people can dare to imitate God, attain righteousness and integrity, and thereby glorify God by becoming "children of the Father" (5:45). In response to a relationship of love and forgiveness, God empowers people to be righteous. For Matthew, this is the glory of being human.

Summary

Matthew preserves the law and intends for people to fulfill it. Matthew shows that in the wrong hands law can lead to self-deception, blindness, and hypocrisy. However, in relation to Jesus, law brings self-examination, insight, and a vision of integrity. Matthew has a "theology of character,"[6] seeking to create people who do righteous deeds of integrity in relation to a loving God, summarized in the commands to "love God" and to "love your neighbor as yourself." At the final judgment, the determinative question is: Did you feed the hungry, visit those in prison, clothe the naked—love the neighbor? (23:35-36). Jesus does not abolish law; rather, he helps people to fulfill it. In Matthew, God's activity in Jesus is the grace and power which enable one to strive—through the presence and forgiveness of Jesus—to fulfill the law.

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[5]To experience the original power of the Father language in Matthew, read the Sermon on the Mount with all female imagery for God, for example, by substituting "Mother" where "Father" occurs in the text.

[6]Similarly, Ulrich Luz argues that Matthew has a "theology of deeds."

Preaching Helps

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany—Good Friday, Series A

Thank God for This Friday

I have no idea when folks started saying, TGIF. It's natural apparently to suffer Monday morning blues, to feel a surge on Wednesday at the half-way point, and to celebrate the arrival of Friday, signaling the onset of Sabbatical time. These days, of course, many people work schedules which would have seemed heretical or totally unorthodox a generation ago. Nevertheless working people everywhere either say, TGIF, or they have their own version of that cry.

The traditional working week has its rhythm, and so does the typical Christian year. And within the Christian year, Lent is a miniature representation of the whole Christian life, life as pilgrimage toward Jerusalem or journey toward that strange and shattering Friday which bursts all the old boundaries and lets loose God's great Sabbath for the world.

In Matthew's passion narrative, the death of Jesus is celebrated in the rocks, which shake wildly and split wide open, heaving the covers off ancient coffins and waking the dead. Saints are roused from their mortal slumbers, sit up in the coffins, and rub their eyes in disbelief. The death of Jesus enlivens the quick and the dead (Mt 27:51-53).

In addition to Lenten materials, this issue carries materials for the final Sundays of Epiphany. We simply did not have room in our October issue for all the good material contributed by Walter Taylor, Professor of New Testament at Trinity Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, so we held some back

till now. Susan Nachtigal, pastor at St. John Lutheran church in Sacramento, California, has written for these pages before, and she produced the Pastoral Reflections for these final Sundays of Epiphany.

Another return writer is Lucy Kolin, pastor at Resurrection Lutheran Church in Oakland, California. She offers the Pastoral Reflections on the texts of Lent. Usually my role here is that of editor rather than author. (I may be permitted to say here that I have authored a small book called *Holy Week* for the Proclamation Series published by Fortress. In it I treat the lessons from Passion Sunday through the Easter Vigil, expanding on the theme of pilgrimage and journeying.)

Once in a great while an invited author is not able to deliver material promised for these pages, and I jump into the gap as I do for this issue. This emergency service reminds me to remind you to let me know if you have a name you would like to suggest (even your own) as a possible future writer of First Readings or Pastoral Reflections. Send me a note at Pacific Lutheran Seminary, 2770 Marin Avenue, Berkeley, CA 94708. Thank God for This Friday!

Looking forward to Good Friday and all its benefits.
TGFTF

Robert H. Smith
Editor of Preaching Helps

Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany
February 7, 1993

Psalm 112
Isaiah 58:5-9a
1 Corinthians 2:1-5
Matthew 5:13-20

FIRST READING

Matthew 5:20 is the theme of the Sermon on the Mount: the call for the greater righteousness. That verse, together with 5:17-19 and 5:21ff., proposes a radical righteousness that has often seemed to be nothing more than a new law. That observation has been strengthened by the fact that Jesus appears to be a new Moses, who gives his law from the mountain (5:1) just as did his Old Testament predecessor. In Epiphany 3, however, we learned that Matthew understood the message of Jesus to be gospel (4:23), and, for that matter, the responses called for starting in 5:13 are based not only on the indicative of the Beatitudes (5:1-12) but on the indicative that the kingdom of heaven has come near (4:17). Jesus, then, has come to fulfill the law and prophets (5:17) both by bringing out the true meaning of the law through his teaching and by completing the promises of the law and prophets through his ministry and death.

Only Jesus, in Matthew, fulfills the law, and only Jesus has the authority to say, "I say to (or, tell) you" (vv. 18, 20, and the antitheses which follow in vv. 21ff.).

The lesson opens with sayings that characterize the followers of Jesus. They are salt and light. The images are less demand than they are reality—and promise: "You *are* the salt of the earth, ...the light of the world." They/we are salt and light simply because Jesus has called us, and we have responded. The call of Jesus is for us to live as salt and light, which we do through our good works (v. 16). The issue here, we need to note, is not the issue faced by Paul. The good works in Matthew are not meant to be self-justifying, but the opposite: good works point not to the doers but to the Father in heaven. Just as Jesus is to be the light that shines in great darkness (4:16), so his disciples are to give light to the world around them. Even (especially?) in the midst of persecution (vv. 11-12), Matthew's community is to carry out its evangelistic task.

Isa 58:5-9a defines a fast that is pleasing to God. In vv. 3-4 the prophet condemns fasts that deal only with the individual's spirituality but ignore the needs of the neighbor: "Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day, and oppress all your workers. Look, you fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist." The fast that God chooses is justice, freedom, sharing bread, providing shelter, clothing the naked. When God's people fast in that way, their "light shall break forth like the dawn" (v. 8). Once more we have emphasis on deeds, as the life of the believer itself becomes an epiphany of God's love and justice.

If we still feel uncomfortable with the emphasis given in Matthew and Isaiah to deeds, we find a certain balancing weight in 1 Cor 2:1-5. The center of Paul's ministry is "Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (v. 2; see also 1:23). The faith of believers is not in self, including deeds, but rests "on the power of God" (v. 5). WFT

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

The thought of salt immediately brings to mind the blue Morton salt box. Remember, the box used to have two spouts: one for pouring and one for sprinkling. This sounds a bit like Andy Rooney, but "did ya ever notice" that there is no more sprinkling spout? It's kind of too bad, because every recipe does not require pouring. Sometimes it is the lesser amount of salt, the individual grains that are desired.

We might do better than we've done before if we approach this gospel reading with a grain of salt in mind.

So often we have thought of the church as being the salt of the earth. This would be a large vat of salt, a huge mound of salt in which our individual responsibility, our individual role, becomes insignificant. Or, we have thought of salt as a preservative that would keep the world from

rotting away, in which case, again, a whole vat would be needed to pour on and pack in around the globe. One single grain becomes insignificant.

But if we take this with a grain of salt in mind, then the "you" becomes singular, and each of us is called to flavorfully effect the persons and places and situations of our lives and ministries. Why not, each of us, consider our task of giving our small area of the world a little better flavor to make it more tasty, more palatable? It doesn't have to be that the mixture of our lives—where we live, what we do, family, spouse, friends, co-workers—be just bland, flat, thin gruel, if each single grain of us is willing to add our bit of flavor to the mix.

Of course, the task of being tasty can be a tough one. It is as tough as exceeding the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees. But the source of our flavor comes in knowing something of Jesus Christ and him crucified, risen again, and indwelling in our lives. If our flavor is to be greater than that of the scribes and Pharisees, it must be that which comes only, as St. Paul says, from the Spirit and power of God.

How tasteless the little place into which the hand of God shook out the grain of salt who was the Savior, the son of Mary. What a taste-full delight his presence was. He was, he is the single grain of difference, the salt of the earth, a taste for the hungry, seasoning for the soul.

Go and be likewise. SKN

Sixth Sunday after the Epiphany
February 14, 1993

Psalm 119:1-16
Deuteronomy 30:15-20
1 Corinthians 2:6-13
Matthew 5:20-37

FIRST READING

The first verse of our gospel lesson repeats the thesis of the Sermon on the Mount (just in case we missed it last week!). The repetition serves to place into broader context the ethical demands that follow. Those demands apply righteousness to daily life as illustrations of how the righteousness of Jesus' followers can exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees. The structure of each sub-division of vv. 21-37 is (a) the citation of an Old Testament commandment, followed by (b) a solemn statement of Jesus in opposition to the commandment ("but I say to you"), and concluded by (c) Jesus' teaching on the greater righteousness. We find in the Sermon on the Mount a Jesus whose authority is greater than that of Moses. And we find a Jesus who demands more than even Moses demanded.

The first sub-division deals with anger (vv. 21-26). Jesus quotes Ex 20:13/Deut 5:17 on not committing murder, and sets against it his own radical interpretation. Thus the Jesus who has come to fulfill the law (v. 17) also radicalizes it by moving from the outward act to the inner motivation. Anger and lack of respect for the neighbor (inner motivations) are just as serious as actual physical harm. In addition, Jesus moves to positive action. His followers are to seek reconciliation with others, including those whom they have offended (vv. 23-26). The pattern is similar to what Luther does with the Ten Commandments. Instead of leaving them at the level of prohibition, he turns them around in order to identify positive directives.

The second sub-division deals with marital commitment and divorce (vv. 27-32; vv. 31-32 seem to be added to the major concern of this sub-

division). Jesus quotes Ex 20:14/Deut 5:18, states his authoritative opposition, and radicalizes the original commandment. The price we are just starting to pay in North American society for our sexism and lust (the inner motivation) makes v. 28 quite contemporary. Verse 28 leads naturally into consideration of what creates the occasions for sin: the eye and, at greater distance from the major concern of the section, the hand. Exactly those situations are to be avoided which readily occasion the sin. Verse 31 cites Deut 24:1, which allowed the man easily to divorce his wife. Jesus asserts his authority by protecting the rights of women through tightening lax divorce laws (especially as interpreted by some rabbis in the first century).

The third sub-division discusses oaths (vv. 33-37) and begins not with a direct quotation, but with a summary of the content of passages such as Ex 20:7, Lev 19:12, and Deut 5:11. The radicalized command of Jesus is to speak the truth. When that is done, no oaths are needed (see 23:16-22). In this and in the other ways outlined by Jesus in the Sermon, love of neighbor is to be lived out in daily life by those whom Jesus has called. God's claim on humanity is for total obedience, of the inner (motives) as well as the outer (actions) life. Lest these demands be seen as mere bad news, the Deuteronomy passage reminds us that God's commandments are meant to give life. WFT

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

"Holy Moses!" the people used to say. But after hearing these words from Jesus, they must have been left wondering. "You have heard that it was said, but I say to you...." Clearly, Jesus intensifies parts of the Torah and puts himself above the revelation at Mt. Sinai.

The setup looks like this: The first lesson pictures Moses' final injunction to Israel to obey the law and keep the covenant made at Mt. Sinai. The preludial verses to the gospel text say that those who relax this law are least in the kingdom, while those who do and teach the law are great. No one says the law is unimportant.

And so, verse 17 says that Jesus came to fulfill the law. In doing this, not only does he keep the law but he teaches the law as even more comprehensive, and he cuts down to the marrow and motive of things. He states clearly the impossibility and then himself becomes the epiphany. Jesus is the giver and the keeper of the law.

Deut 30:11 says to Israel that "this commandment is not too hard for you." But they couldn't do it, and neither can we. With our Lord's intensifying of these commandments we must face even more squarely that no one can be justified by trying to keep the law.

But, of course, we do have the greater advantage, because we have received the secret and hidden wisdom of God, revealed through the Spirit. And the center of what is included in this wisdom is the one of whom St. Paul wrote in earlier verses, namely Jesus Christ crucified and risen. We have been made greater by the Greatest. And because of this we are, already, "holy, Moses." We too, can be an epiphany as we with cheer, rather than with fear, seek to live faithfully the "but I say unto you" goals set forth by our Lord. SKN

The Transfiguration of Our Lord
February 21, 1993

Psalm 2:6-13
Exodus 24:12, 15-18
2 Peter 1:16-19 (20-21)
Matthew 17:1-9

FIRST READING

Context is important for understanding Mt 17:1-9. Chapter 16 contains Peter's confession (vv. 13-20), Jesus' prediction of his death (v. 21), Peter's objection (vv. 21-23), and Jesus' teaching on discipleship, which concludes with reference to the glory of the Son of Man (vv. 24-28). When Matthew begins in chapter 17 with "six days later," he wants us to relate what is to happen next with what had just, in his narrative, been discussed. Jesus had talked of the glory of the Son of

Man. The trio of disciples will experience that glory. Their presence also subtly reminds us of the death of Jesus, since they are the three who are with him in Gethsemane (26:37).

The verb for "transfigured" is *metamorphoumai*, which means to be transformed or altered in one's abiding form. That is, the transfigured Jesus is who Jesus really is. Not only do we have in the Transfiguration a preview of coming attractions, we also have a moment in which the veil is lifted and the protagonist of our story is recognized for who he truly is. The appearance of Elijah and Moses has many possible meanings. One that is often ignored is that both men were prophets who suffered: Elijah in 1 Kg 18:7ff., 19:2ff.; Moses in Ex 14:11ff., 16:2ff.; Num 11:1ff., 16:1ff. The two, who were believed by first-century Jews to have been taken into heaven alive and who were to come again at the end of time, prefigure Jesus both in glory and in suffering. Peter responds to all of this with a proposed building project (v. 4), a probable reflection of the Feast of Tabernacles, one of the most popular Jewish holidays at the time of Jesus, which remembered the wilderness wanderings and the giving of the law to Moses on Sinai (our second lesson, from Exodus 24, where we have Moses going up the mountain, a cloud covering the mountain, the glory of the Lord, and six days, all of which appear in Matthew 17). This is a "Kodak moment" that Peter does not want to lose.

Our Epiphany cycle closes with the same words we heard at the beginning of the cycle, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased," exactly the same words spoken at the baptism of Jesus (3:17). The one difference is that in chapter 17 the disciples are directed to listen to Jesus—who hasn't said anything! But in 8:21-28 Jesus says a lot. The Transfiguration is the confirmation of a suffering Messiah-Son of God who will return in glory. As is often the case in the Bible, the disciples respond with fear at this manifestation of the divine. The touch and word of Jesus overcome the fear, and then, just as suddenly as the Transfiguration began, it ends, with only the final word to be spoken: "Tell no one." But that command is time-bound. After Jesus' death and resurrection, proclamation must occur.

At this interface between present and future we see the post-resurrection Jesus. Who is he? He is the Lord and Judge of the world. He is the "lamp shining in a dark place," "the morning star" that rises in our hearts (2 Pet 1:19). To him we respond with our praise and our witness to his glory. WFT

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

In *The Parables of Grace*, Robert Farrar Capon accents a significant thrust of today's lessons. This is an old-order-versus-new situation. The prominent figures of the old-world order are having a hard time understanding. So, Capon writes: "God, apparently out of sheer impatience with the disciples' failure to grasp the new order in Jesus, simply drops a cloud on the lot of them and tells them to pay attention to his beloved Son."

God came down, but you are to listen up! The lesson is to listen. We are to receive the sound bites of God's revelation. We are to receive the revelation that God works in words. Listen!

Our reaction is apt to be a half-envious wish that we could have seen our transfigured Lord. Scripture clearly reflects the reality of Jesus' visible presence on earth during those 33 years. Jesus was "born in human likeness" (Phil 2:7), and "we have seen his glory" (Jn 1:14), and we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty (2 Pet 1:16).

But visibility was only part of the incarnation. Actually, it was the short of it. But in the long run, the incarnation is conveyed also by things audible: in the Word in words, in waves of sound, in impressions received other than visually.

The voice of God said, "Listen to him."

In Second Timothy Paul writes, "Follow the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me..." (2 Tim 1:13). It can be a play on words, but it is true as well. What we have heard and now pass on is not simply a myth. Rather, these are the words, the sounds, of eternal life that tell what the Savior did when he first came, what he will do at his second glorious coming, and how God in Christ is with us, even now. We would do well to pay attention to the sound of it as much as we would to a "lamp burning in a dark place" (2 Pet 1:19).

Long ago, Jesus said, and Matthew wrote, "tell no one the vision." But now, *do tell!* Tell of the Transcendent made Immanent. Tell of his dying and his rising from the dead. Tell of all that he commanded. Tell how he is with us always to the close of the age, even though we can no longer see him.

And to all this proclamation, *listen.* SKN

Ash Wednesday
February 24, 1993

Psalm 51:1-13
Joel 2:12-19
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:2
Matthew 6:1-6, 16-21

FIRST READING

Matthew's Jesus is not all on the side of inwardness against any form of outwardness. In fact some have seen the topic statement of the Sermon on the Mount not in the verse about higher righteousness (5:20) but in the declaration, "You are salt...and light; let your light so shine in the midst of the human community that people will see your good deeds and give glory to your heavenly Father" (5:13-16).

In a first explication of "light" or "righteousness" Jesus speaks in Mt 5:21-48 about all sorts of deeds out among our neighbors in the real world. A second series of comments on "light" and "righteousness" runs from 6:1-18 and a third from 6:19-7:11.

The life of discipleship, growth in love and maturity (agape and "perfection" in 5:43-48), is easily undermined, especially if we begin to feel we are making good progress. The text for Ash Wednesday is a call for sober reflection on our life's journey as we begin our Lenten journey.

"Righteousness that exceeds that of scribes and Pharisees" (5:20) has moved many readers to think of the superiority of Christian piety. But our text (6:1-21) warns about "hypocrisy," a disease that often afflicts insiders.

Prayer is spoiled when it is no longer a cry rising from the human heart to the heart of God and becomes instead an occasion for spreading peacock feathers. And the same goes for almsgiving and fasting.

The Lord's Prayer (unfortunately not a part of the Gospel for this occasion) is exactly in the middle of the lection and in the very center of the Sermon on the Mount—precisely where it should be. The moment when we cease to be centered on God's name and God's kingdom and God's will is the moment when we begin looking around for earthly applause, earthly security, and earthly treasure.

This lesson and the whole of Lent are all about heading for the center, seeking God's kingdom and righteousness (6:33). RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Lent is something of a paradox, a marriage of impossible contradictions. And especially so on Ash Wednesday. One moment we hear the words, "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return," and the next *these* words that begin the Eucharist: "O God,... you bid your people cleanse their hearts and prepare with joy for the paschal feast."

Well, which is it? Are we supposed to weep and mourn with the prophet Joel or give ear to Jesus, freshen up, and venture forth with confident smiles?

To which God, with all the divine whimsy only God can muster, says, "Yes." Sorrow and joy, tears and laughter. Or in gospel language: dying and rising, inseparable and intertwined, all spelled out mysteriously, brilliantly, and graciously in the simplicity of dust and cross.

First of all, dust. Each day we experience ourselves as dust. Scientists tell us—and our own bodies do not let us forget—that from the moment of our birth we begin to die. Acne, indigestion, malignancy, and forgetfulness all remind us daily how fearfully close to nothingness we are.

But the gospel will not allow us to stop there. On Ash Wednesday, when our foreheads are dusted with ashes, the dust will be redeemed—the dust that took the most deliberate form of a cross.

Here is the glorious bone and marrow of our

faith: here joy transfigures sorrow and ecstasy weds pain. For when God's own Child became the dust we are and nailed it to a cross, God's words "You are dust" were immediately transformed from judgment into promise, from condemnation into life. Ever since Bethlehem and Calvary, these specks of humanity that are you and I are now (as the poet writes) "charged with the grandeur of God." Our dust is literally electric with God's own life; our nothingness has been filled with God's eternity.

The sign of the cross that marks our forehead on this day cries out that death is not the end of this frail dust. The cross is God's holy shorthand for the reading from St. Paul: that because God made the One who knew no sin to be sin, we have become the very righteousness of God.

So is Lent for laughter or for tears? The answer is "Yes," for "remember that you are dust"..., dust redeemed by a cross. LK

First Sunday in Lent
February 28, 1993

Psalm 130
Genesis 2:7-9,15-17; 3:1-7
Romans 5:12 (13-16) 17-19
Matthew 4:1-11

FIRST READING

One of the great temptations for those preaching on Jesus' temptations is to ridicule once more old Jewish hopes for a Messiah who would bring lasting relief for perennial human and historical problems. It is too easy to be critics of the citizens of ancient Judea and leave the impression that we, by contrast, with our religion and our politics, are all right.

This whole scene, coming as it does immediately after Jesus' anointing with water and the Spirit, and immediately before his public ministry, is a moment of clarification and testing. It is like young David's vanquishing of Goliath, or young Arthur's success in drawing Excalibur out of the rock. It reveals to us readers the power and the program of this anointed Jesus, this "beloved son" of God.

It is not difficult to elaborate on the three temptations. It is no great trick to show the deficiencies of bread and circuses in ancient times or government programs in our time, of Roman legions or Pentagon armies, of ancient propaganda or the myths of our own culture.

We might try to sympathize with kings or presidents, with chiefs or generals, with poets or artists who practice their skills and exercise their powers, in an honest effort to curb evil and enrich human life. Their works are penultimate, but they can be great service.

What of the ultimate? Fyodor Dostoevsky once commented that if every Bible and every page of every Bible, except for the story of Jesus' temptation, would be lost from the face of the earth, this one story would be enough to save us.

He correctly focused on the good news in this pericope. It announces that God has entered our world not simply to discuss evil or name evil but to confront evil with saving power in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. His life (words and deeds and suffering) is God's own response to life's deeply entrenched evils, and God both defines them and defeats them in Jesus. And calls us, to behold and rejoice and celebrate, and to follow on the path of life. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

"Trust me" is a phrase which can get you into a lot of trouble or can save your life, depending on the trustworthiness and expertise of the person saying it.

For example, there are all too many stories of salespeople selling everything from cars to European tours who brush aside a nervous customer's every question, smile sweetly, and say, "Trust me"—only to leave the buyer the proud owner of a "lemon" of a car or a European charter that leaves them stranded at a foreign airport.

But there are just as many stories about unsavory and unknown persons who were trusted out of desperation and who saved a life.

Experience often teaches us whom to trust,

but pride and prejudice often render us helpless and lost, like the person who drives in circles refusing to ask directions... in case they're wrong.

One of my close friends is a pilot, who is so enamored of flying that sometimes he expresses theology in aviation terms. He once described the strategy for flying into cloudbanks. The inclination is to trust your instincts about how far you've traveled, what direction you're moving, whether the plane is level, on a slant, or even upside down. But in the midst of the cloud, you become so disoriented that relying on instinct or feeling would spell disaster. Then the words of the flight instructor must echo in the pilot's ears: "Trust the instruments." Trust the instruments even when what they say is absolutely opposed to what your brain is telling you. Because not to trust the instruments is to court death.

Just so with the Scripture texts for this Sunday. When moving through the clouds of life (or even life's clear weather), God calls out: "Trust the instruments"—not some mere mechanical device but the true instrument of grace, namely, Jesus Christ. Trust the one who has navigated even the clouds of death and emerged triumphant and alive.

British theologian H. A. Williams has written: "The opposite of sin is never virtue." The opposite of sin is always grace. So, for us, Jesus' encounter with the tempter is no mere battle of Scripture quotes and subtle wit. Instead, what Jesus models for us is trusting, always trusting in the perfect instrument of grace, the God whose Word alone can be trusted.

And as we learn the trustworthiness of God, we can begin to grow as a trustworthy people, as a people who learn to keep the promises made to one another in baptism: promises to love one another, comfort one another, forgive one another, defend one another, pray for one another. LK

Second Sunday in Lent
March 7, 1993

Psalm 105:4-11
Genesis 12:1-8
Romans 4:1-5,13-17
John 4:5-26 (27-30, 39-42)

FIRST READING

More than once the Old Testament recites a story in which a young man travels as a stranger to a foreign land, stops at a well seeking water and refreshment, meets a young woman, is invited to her home, and in the end takes her in marriage. Echoing such stories, John portrays Jesus as crossing the border into Samaria where he first woos and wins the woman at the well and then "many Samaritans from that city" (5:39).

In the series of stories stretching from Cana (2:1) to Cana (4:46) Jesus appears as the fulfiller of the hopes and dreams of priests and templegoers (2:13-25), of Pharisees and teachers (3:1-21), of the Baptist and his circle (3:22-36), of unorthodox Samaritans (4:1-42) and even of a gentile (?) official (4:46-54). The story of Jesus and the woman at the well is climactic in the sense that it offers the great and crowing confession, "This is in fact the Savior of the world" (5:42).

The narrative of Jesus' encounter with the woman in Samaria is the longest in the series, and John has lavished great care on its telling. It is full of Johannine themes. The early chapters of the Gospel keep talking about water and Spirit (1:31-33), water and wine (2:3-10), water and spirit (3:5), abundance of water and numbers of baptisms (3:22-30), ordinary water, and water welling up to eternal life (4:13-14). At Cana, Jesus had the servants "draw" water, and that odd word occurs here again as one more way of nudging us to read from the wedding to the well as a single series.

Throughout the series we hear talk of wedding (2:1-10), of birth from flesh and from Spirit (3:3-7), of bridegroom and best man (3:29), of five husbands and one who is not the woman's husband (4:16-18). The woman is often under-

stood to be a prostitute or woman of loose morals. (How little John is interested in moralistic definitions of sin will be apparent in next Sunday's reading.) John portrays the woman as a lay theologian, the counterpart of Nicodemus (chap. 3). The woman says, "I perceive that you are a prophet" (4:19), and promptly engages Jesus in theological debate over the relative merits of Samaritan and Jewish mountains. Throughout the Gospel, conversation partners begin with low estimates of Jesus (teacher, rabbi, prophet) and are led along gradually until they confess Jesus as Savior or Son.

John writes these chapters to show us what God through Jesus is always up to: wooing us readers away from our five or six (or who knows how many) entangling allegiances (represented by her men and her well, her mountain and her treasured story of Jacob). God in Christ offers us a new connection, a new story, and an unfailing supply of the water of life. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

"Mommy, I want a drink of water."

"Honey, get me a cold beer from the fridge, will ya?"

"Isn't the coffee ready yet?"

Thirst afflicts us all, no matter what our age or condition. And the thirst goes on: thirst for water or our liquid of choice. The refrigerator must be restocked, the tap turned on again, the reservoirs filled, the coffee brewed.

And so it was as Jesus sat by Jacob's well in a Samaritan city, thirsty for a drink of cool water. And we find a Samaritan woman, who came to get a fresh supply of water for her household and found herself drinking living water in its place.

What does this story have to do with Lenten living? It reminds us that everyone is in need of the deep refreshment that the water of life can bring. Yet most of us have only sipped God's living water. Jesus calls us to that quality of passion and energy with which we pursue our deepest life goals, to that quality of knowing and loving which characterizes our most intimate relationships. Somehow in this deepening season we are called to get over being bored with Christ and allow ourselves to be absolutely mesmerized and thrilled by Christ, just like the woman at the well.

We are called this Lent to the kind of knowing and loving of which the Psalmist writes, "As a hart longs for flowing streams, so longs my soul for Thee, O God." Indeed, we are called to what the early Christians described as a "divine and sober intoxication."

But we must remember that when we ask for living water, we are taking a risk. We are asking God to change us, to transform us, to remake us in the image of the Christ, to engage us in dying and rising, to redirect our tomorrows—like Sarah and Abraham—onto roads we cannot map. Yet, if that frightens us, we can remember, too, that when one has to jump, it is so much safer to jump into deep water. So on this Sunday, we dare to drink and drink deeply, to leap and leap boldly, deep into the living water of a living Lord. LK

Third Sunday in Lent
March 14, 1993

Psalm 142
Isaiah 42:14-21
Ephesians 5:8-14
John 9:1-41 or John 9:13-17,34-39

FIRST READING

Long readings can be hard to listen to, but it is a shame to omit any part of John 9. The chapter is a drama in seven scenes (1-7, 8-12, 13-17, 18-23, 24-34, 35-38, 39-41).

The comings and goings of the characters seem confused until you recognize that John conforms his narrative to the criterion of dramatic presentation: only two speaking parties on the stage at any one time.

The theme of this chapter, to judge by word-statistics alone, is sin. John has mediated long and hard on "Jesus the Healer," and has come to see that Jesus heals us from the widest possible range of ills, including especially sin.

Here and everywhere in John's Gospel, sin is not some infraction of the Ten Commandments. John is not particularly interested in such behavior as robbery, murder, adultery, or perjury. Nor does he pay any attention to such faults as greed, envy, indifference, or selfishness. John is a great theologian of the first table of the law. The first commandment is his first concern. Sin means not trusting God through Jesus Christ. Sin is unbelief.

So John 9 is the story of a great reversal. Religious authorities, smug in their assumption that they possess the truth, interfere in the lives of the blind man, his parents, and their neighbors. They conduct hearings and issue verdicts, but in the end they are exposed as blind. Jesus' final verdict on them is not just that their "guilt" remains (RSV, 9:41). The Greek word is *hamartia*, "sin." (The NRSV has it right.) Their sin, their disconnectedness from God, their blindness abides.

Meanwhile, the blind man, speaking simply out of his admission of blindness and the sudden gift of sight, answers with sass the objections of the town's resident theologians. And he makes steady progress through the whole chapter. He goes from darkness and groping in the beginning to sight and crystalline confession at the end.

We could have a worse model than that blind man as we try to make some progress of our own in our Lenten journeying. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

This Sunday's Gospel is the story of Jesus and a man born blind. It is the story of Jesus revealed more and more as the Holy One of God. It is the story of the man born blind, seeing more and more clearly the face of God and the will of God each day. It is the story of a journey destined to lead them both once again into utter darkness, but also guaranteed to lead them both into eternal light, into the realm forever lit by God's own radiant presence.

It is our story, too—we whose propensity for darkness has been drowned and defeated in the baptismal pool. And on this Third Sunday in Lent, God once more offers us sight, washing away our blindness and calling us to look into the light. Will we settle for the old familiar shadows or will we dare to confess, "Lord, I Believe," and follow the path that leads us more deeply into light? Will we be content with limited light, pulling down the shades on the church's treasure and keeping the light from penetrating this dark world of pain and sorrow, sickness and sin? Will we busy ourselves trying to keep the light from slipping through our fingers or will we declare it boldly and release it with joy to shine in the very places where death and the demonic have a stranglehold on life?

The Lenten journey goes on, with us or without us. The Lenten journey goes on from darkness into light, from brokenness to wholeness. And Jesus stands beside us even now, searching our faces, searching our hearts, and asking, "Do you believe in the Holy One?" By the grace of God, we now can answer, "Yes, Lord, I believe," and follow him deeper and deeper into life and light.

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see. LK

Fourth Sunday in Lent
March 21, 1993

Psalm 43
Hosea 5:15–6:2
Romans 8:1-10
Matthew 20:17-28

FIRST READING

Jesus' Lenten path is described in the initial and the final sentences of the gospel (Mt 20:17-19 and 20:28). The middle portion describes the way the mother of James and John wanted her sons to walk, the path the twelve had in mind, and the road most traveled not only by "rulers of the gentiles" but by the common run of humankind.

It is only natural, we say, for a mother or father to want their children to do well. We want them to have what we did not have. It is only natural for hardworking disciples to expect rewards. It is only natural for rulers to flex their muscles and enjoy their perks.

But none of that is in accord with the nature of God or Christ or human life as envisioned by Jesus.

During Lent he travels up to Jerusalem knowing full well what awaits him: opposition, rejection, and death. And resurrection (20:19). That is to say, Jesus travels in full knowledge of the human heart and of the heart of God. If we know only the one (the human), we will rarely take an unpopular stand or find the strength to deny ourselves and serve others.

Jesus is the great "Son of Man." Daniel in his night visions (Daniel 7) saw four terrible beasts rise up from the untamed cauldron of the seas: a lion, a bear, a leopard, and a dreadful beast with ten horns. They represented a series of empires: the Babylonians, the Medes, the Persians, and the Greek successors of Alexander the Great. They came conquering everything in their path. But then Daniel saw a final sovereign power, not a beast but one "like a son of man," that is, a human figure.

It is God's will and God's plan to rid the world of beastly powers and to usher in a great final sovereignty called "the *basileia* of God," and God has begun that final work through "the human one," Jesus with all his gracious vulnerability.

Lent means contemplating the James and John (or their mother) who lives in all of us and learning to trust, once more and more deeply, the God who has erupted into the midst of human life in the person of Jesus. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

In the movies it is those who are about to die who are granted a last request by the living—a last cigarette, a last meal, a last kiss. But too often in real life, the roles are surprisingly reversed. The living gather in the presence of the dying to demand and receive what they have wanted for a very long time. The heirs jockey for position, reminding the dying of their long-term devotion (real or imagined). And so, by bequest or default, the spoils and meager treasures of a lifetime are divided while the imminence of death is blatantly ignored.

That is the story of this Sunday's Gospel as well. The "sons of thunder," having heard one more time their rabbi's stubborn prediction of imminent death, speak not a word of protest or of comfort. Rather they prevail upon their mother to seize the moment and make one last request of Jesus. It seems the brothers were less convinced that their teacher would meet death than that he would usher in a new dominion. But whatever the scenario, they fully intended to usher in the new regime from seats of power and prestige.

In this they totally misunderstood Jesus' parables and teachings. Their conversation echoes with an awkward, eerie dissonance: with the disciples stressing their ability to command, and Jesus passionately urging on them the necessity to serve. The new values that shape life in the new dominion seem lost on the disciples; the hints and images of a whole new way of being are drowned out by the distant rumble of Rome's military machine and the desire for security and revenge that centuries of oppression had stirred to a boil. Dominion overshadows community, authority does battle with compassion, and justice is no longer tempered with mercy.

The intimacy of the Lenten journey calls us to look at ourselves in the mirror. And what we see there is not so very different from the disciples in the Matthean text. Yet we also see the loving face of Jesus who declares (in the words of Paul) that "there is... now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus." Christ calls us to once more drown our power-driven selves in the baptismal waters and rise to a Spirit-led life of mutuality, service, and compassion. LK

Fifth Sunday in Lent
March 28, 1993

Psalm 116:1-8
Ezekiel 37:1-3 (4-10) 11-14
Romans 8:11-19
John 11:1-53 or John 11:47-53

FIRST READING

Once again (as with John 9, Lent 3) small is not beautiful, and abbreviating a long lesson will bring only loss.

The chapter as a whole teaches one striking lesson: life for Lazarus (as for any one of us) costs Jesus his life. That strange and terrible exchange, life for life, is the theme of the chapter, the theme of Lent, the theme of the whole Christian path and all of Christian worship.

"Glory" (*doxa*) is a big word in this chapter (11:4,40) as in the whole of the Gospel of John (1:14; 2:11; 8:50; 17:5, etc.). Originally the word meant "weight" or "heaviness," as in the expression, "He throws his weight around." God acts to throw divine weight around in Jesus of Nazareth and does so most impressively in Jesus' dying. Jesus is "glorified" at the cross (see *doxazō*, 7:39; 12:16,23; 13:31; 17:1, etc.).

Jesus ascends to the cross, and by means of the cross he mounts up to heaven. At the cross he is not defeated or destroyed but wins the final victory, overthrowing evil forever.

So the illness of Lazarus will give Jesus an opportunity to exhibit his glory, not in the sense that Jesus will display miraculous power and win approval from the crowds but in the sense that the authorities will decide to arrest and execute Jesus because by raising Lazarus he raises their anxiety level. And in executing Jesus the authorities become unwitting instruments of the divine plan. They make the mistake of thinking that the crucifixion gets rid of Jesus, but it only releases torrents of divine energy into human history.

The energy of God (that glorious and mysterious stuff we call agape) is the focus of Lenten meditation and the goal of Lenten journeying. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

"Jesus wept."

Tears are still too often hidden in our society. Tears, they say, are a sign of weakness, powerlessness, sorrow, or despair. Tears are for women, not for men, they say, but not for women who aspire to high office, who desire to be president or bishop. Weep, if you must, in privacy but never in public.

Jesus wept publicly. Perhaps it was all right then. But still we wonder, why waste time weeping when he had the power to bring Lazarus back to life?

Perhaps it was a testimony to the depth of love and friendship that had grown between these two men. Perhaps it was the deep and painful understanding of all the dying that human beings must do, even before the moment of physical death. Perhaps it was the vision of the dying *he* must do in order to accomplish life.

But perhaps it was something more. Pastor Tshenuwani Simon Farisani, who himself has seen and experienced the orchestrated passion and death of his own people, writes in a poem entitled, "Crying is for Men":

All great men cry...
All good men cry
Christ cried: Eli, eli, lama sabachthani?
Satan laughs
Always laughing
Has no feelings
For the poor
For the hungry
For the bereaved...

Perhaps in this gospel story we see a Jesus whose unhindered tears brought him into deep solidarity with the pain and sorrow of this world and then released in him the passion for his own dying and rising in order to bring life now. Jesus' tears at the tomb restored Lazarus to life and to family. Jesus' tears at the cross restored us to life and to God's family.

Now God calls on us to weep, to weep for the pain and brokenness of our world. And in weeping we will find our passion released to live and to die for the sake of the world. Jesus' tears empower us to work for the release of the captives,

for the feeding of the hungry, for the comforting of the bereaved here and now. Jesus' tears fit us for the courageous laughter that will follow, when we, like Eugene O'Neill's Lazarus, can sing:

Laugh with me!
Death is dead!
Fear is no more!
There is only life!
There is only laughter! LK

Sunday of the Passion
April 4, 1993

Psalm 31:1-5,9-16
Isaiah 50:4-9a
Philippians 2:5-11
Matthew 26:1–27:66 or Matthew 27:11-54

FIRST READING

Immediately before Matthew's passion narrative opens, Jesus speaks to disciples his final discourse on the Mount of Olives (Matthew 24-25). The last paragraph in that last discourse (25:31-46) consists of the famous judgment scene in which all the nations stand before Jesus awaiting his verdict. What irony, then, that the passion narrative shows Jesus, for the moment vulnerable, at the mercy of his human captors, accepting their shortsighted and temporary verdict.

Nearly every paragraph in the passion narrative begins not with the pronoun "he" (as so frequently in Mark's narrative) but with the blessed name "Jesus," given by divine command, "for he will save his people from their sins" (1:21). Here in the passion narrative we see the lengths and the depths to which Jesus goes to fulfill the promise of his name.

When compared with the parallel accounts of Mark and Luke and John, Matthew's record appears to focus a special light on Jesus' blood. That word "blood" is the subject of comment several times (26:28; 27:4-8,24-25). The blood of Jesus establishes and cements a fresh relationship between God and humankind. The blood of Jesus is innocent and powerful, washing out the deep stain of sin that separates humanity from God.

And when sin is removed, life triumphs over death. So as Jesus dies, the temple curtain is torn, the earth quakes, rocks are split, tombs are opened, and "many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep" were roused from their slumbers and returned to life. As in the story of Lazarus (John 11, Lent 5), so here: Jesus pours out his blood and gives up his life, and immediately the dead are raised.

Jesus is betrayed, misunderstood, denied, slandered, falsely accused, beaten, crucified, mocked, killed. But some see the strange truth of new beginnings in such extravagant outpouring: the anointing woman (26:6-13), Pilate's wife (27:19), the women at the cross and tomb (27:55-61), the pagan centurion and his squad (27:54), Joseph of Arimathea (27:57-60). Even Judas came to his senses and repented (27:3-10).

What is our own Lenten stance? RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

In these next to last chapters of Matthew's Gospel, we find a vast array of characters—mostly failed. These are people found not united around Christ their Center but fleeing to the four corners of their world.

The crowds who hailed Jesus as Son of David when he entered Jerusalem soon tempered their enthusiasm under questioning and called him merely "prophet," then joined their leaders in cruel mockery to save their political necks.

Judas Iscariot, seeing that Jesus remained stubbornly bent on political suicide, decided to make the best of a bad situation by offering a plan of betrayal, giving Jesus *and* the Sanhedrin what they wanted for a suitable price.

The sons of Zebedee, all thunder and lightning in the good times, fell asleep at the edges of Jesus' imminent sacrifice, fear keeping them at a safe distance from the dangerous center of the cross.

Peter, that boisterous braggart, swore eternal allegiance one minute but in the next fled into the shadows of the courtyard and denied his

Master quickly when a servant girl threatened to blow his cover.

All this was no surprise to Jesus, who had said as he and the disciples set off for the Mount of Olives, "You will all fall away because of me this night; for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered'" (Mt 26:31).

The embarrassing exodus continued until Christ hung, abandoned, on the cross.

We are not unlike those who ran away. We, too, sometimes find the cross an embarrassment and an outrage. We, too, find ourselves doubting the ultimate power of the One who allowed himself to die a failure.

But even as we flee, the shadow of the cross falls over us and we find ourselves in the embrace of a love that will not let us go. The reconciling arms of a compassionate Christ turn us tenderly toward home and assure us that we are once more forgiven, welcome, and restored.

On this Sunday, standing at the crossroads of Holy Week, we are no longer at cross purposes with God, but instead are empowered to take up the "cross purposes" of the risen Christ. LK

Maundy Thursday
April 8, 1993

Psalm 116:10-17
Exodus 12:1-14
I Corinthians 11:17-32 (or 23-26)
John 13:1-17,34

FIRST READING

It is heartbreaking to read the opening paragraph of John 13. Every phrase speaks of impending passion: festival of the Passover, the hour of his departure from this world, love to the end, betrayal, during the (last) meal, going to God.

Those phrases set the scene. Then comes the action. It is not enough to say that he washed their feet. The evangelist wants us to fix our full attention on Jesus' action. He took off his robe (shed his outer garment, shuffled off this mortal coil, see 2 Cor 5:1-5), tightened his belt and tucked in a towel (prepared himself for a final piece of work). Then he poured water, emptied a pitcher, outpoured a precious cleansing liquid not for his own sake but for the world's. And he washed their feet, and then began to talk about washing their feet, telling them, "You do not know now what I am doing, but you will understand" later, after you have seen my death on the cross.

The easy explanation of the washing comes in 13:12-17. It means that he has given us an example. That's easy, in the sense that it is not hard to understand, while taking the example to heart is, of course, so difficult as to be downright depressing.

But Jesus' first explanation of his washing is given in the exchange with Peter (13:6-11). The key is in verse 10, and the key to verse 10 lies in the fact that tradition has given us two different versions of the verse:

(a) "One who has bathed (*ho leloumenos*) does not need to wash (*nipto*), except for the feet, but is entirely clean."

(b) "One who has bathed does not need to wash, but is entirely clean."

In (a) "bathe" and "wash" refer to two different acts of cleansing. In (b) the two words are synonyms, and the sentence is shorter by one phrase.

The shorter verse makes excellent sense in the total scheme of the Gospel of John: Jesus provides a cleansing bath which renders any further washing superfluous. That cleansing is his dying, when he puts aside his life and pours out his life's blood and yields up his spirit for the life of the world. From his pierced side (only in John) a river of life gushes forth (19:34), sweeping away the sin that obstructs the way to God. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

"You call me Teacher and Lord," said Jesus on the night in question, "and you are right, for so I am." Indeed, much biblical and theological conversation does focus on Jesus' teaching. And when it

does, there is talk about the Sermon on the Mount, the parables and aphorisms, the clever controversies and quick-witted retorts, and the special teaching times afforded the disciples.

Yet, to see Jesus as Teacher only in his preaching and theological argumentation is to miss the fullness of his teaching. To honor and appreciate Jesus as Teacher is to look at what he did as much as to listen to what he said. For pithy and earthy as his examples and stories could be, it was also in moments such as the one in this day's Gospel that many came to understand the radical nature of God's self-giving and the model of compassionate community into which they now were called.

In the Johannine story Jesus first introduced what he was about to do with a word that acknowledged the disciples' bewilderment and embarrassment, a word which also expressed confidence—God's confidence—that they would come to understand what they were about to experience if not now, then surely in the days ahead. Jesus said, "What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand." And with those words he set them free to watch and to listen, to ponder and to reflect on the washing and the humility, on the Servant-Master and his intimate love.

Jesus also understood the importance of questions, deep and guiding questions that can call us out of bondage to what is into the journey of what yet may be. In the story, we find Jesus asking, after washing the disciples' feet and resuming his place at table: "Do you know what I have done to you?" It is not a demand for instant explication but rather a reminder that what they have seen and experienced has purpose and meaning, that it will be important to their life together in a way that is yet to be revealed.

On this night and in the drama of the Triduum just ahead, God again invites us and frees us to watch and to listen, to ponder and to reflect on the Servant-Master and his intimate love. And God promises that we shall understand, if not now, then later, for such intimate self-giving has everything to do with our life together as God's friends. LK

Good Friday
April 9, 1993

Psalm 22:1-23
Isaiah 52:13–53:12 or Hosea 6:1-6
Hebrews 4:14-16; 5:7-9
John 18:1–19:42 or John 19:17-20

FIRST READING

Lent is a short season of long readings. It may be counterproductive to read aloud the whole of the Gospel (Jn 18:1–19:42), but it would be good at least to have it printed out for worshipers to read in the silence of their own meditation.

Good Friday is a day of surpassing solemnity. Tradition has suggested ways to underscore the poignancy and terror of the crucifixion. Darken the chancel, extinguish the candles, drape the crucifix, cover statues and glass, silence the alleluias, speak in hushed voice, read in tones fit for a funeral, and let the music (if any) be dirge-like.

But the Gospel of John does not mime the atmosphere of dread and sorrow found in the Synoptics. In John the sun does not wrap itself in a cloak of darkness from noon till three. In fact Jesus is crucified not at nine in the morning but at high noon (Jn 19:14) when the sun stood tall, blazing at its zenith. Jesus does not plunge down into dark humiliation but mounts up to his "glory" (17:1-5), to his most splendid and shining moment, when he is farthest from everything anti-God and closest to the Father's heart, when he fulfills his destiny to be "the Light of the world" (8:12, 9:5).

On Good Friday Jesus ascends the cross which is the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit and its leaves are for the healing of the nations (Rev 22:2). His cross is the real Jacob's ladder, linking earth to heaven and heaven to earth, opening the way to life (Jn 1:51), and Golgotha is Bethel, the house of God.

In John's Gospel no one mocks Jesus on the cross, because he is there enthroned as true monarch of the cosmos, King of kings and Lord of lords, whose all-embracing sovereignty is proclaimed in Hebrew, Greek, and Latin. Un-mocked,

un-pitied, he reigns, and his reigning brings into being a new community of women and men (19:26-27), people not related by human birth and human blood but united by the Word of the crucified and glorious Christ. RHS

PASTORAL REFLECTIONS

Now the circle of days had come full round. And the life whose quiet beginnings had peaked to a controversial climax stretched lifeless on a cross.

Now the circle of days had come full round. And the once intimate circle of friends, family, and followers seemed closed, too, closed forever like regretted history punctuated by the mark of death.

Now the circle of days had come full round. And the jubilant cries of "Hosanna" had twisted themselves into angry jeers and symbolic insults.

The promise of life seemed empty, the registry of disciples closed, the dreams of glory evaporated. There was nothing left to see, nothing left to hope for, only a scene of desperate opposites.

And yet the evangelist will not leave it so. After recording Jesus' last words and the yielding up of the Spirit, the writer will not stop. His readers are not permitted the simplicity of despair, for there is yet more story to be told and the signal of life to be sounded.

For the God revealed here is a God who transforms irreconcilable opposites into inseparable truth, the God for whom burial and birth, death and life are not so far apart, the God whose deathly punctuation of sacrifice, far from closing the circle of community, opens a new circle of committed faith.

In these verses we find the very stuff of life pouring from a useless body, blood and water giving evidence of the springs of healing and salvation already at work in the dark world.

And we find a community of reluctant, hesitating saints on whom the Spirit through that final breath has already breathed, unexpectedly calling conviction from a soldier paid to serve the gods of Rome; inexplicably drawing to the hillside a governor who suspected that his cowardice was not masked by some proud and ineffectual ritual of absolution; mysteriously bringing together two who until the moment of Christ' death dared confess their faith only in the secrecy of darkness.

Even the entombment takes place in a garden, that arena of the mystery of a single seed cast into the darkness of earth only to yield a flowering field in its own time. And the greater mystery of a singular life which shall yield an abundant harvest of witnesses.

On Good Friday we may dare to look and looking, see not death alone, but life. On Good Friday we dare to sit awhile longer before the tomb, knowing that Christ has already turned the corner on death, on our death. And the circle of our lives shall go on unbroken until we, too, sit beside the risen Savior, once more at home with God. LK

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Reclaiming the Muhlenberg Tradition

Jerry L. Schmalenberger
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This year we celebrate missionary pastor Henry Melchior Muhlenberg's arrival in America 250 years ago.

A Prussian who was self-educated until entering Göttingen University, Muhlenberg took a teaching post at Halle upon graduation. There he met Augustus Herman Francke, after whom he named his first congregation at Trappe (outside Philadelphia), and who influenced his decision to travel to the mission field of Pennsylvania.

From Muhlenberg's journal we learn much about the struggles and ministry of this early pioneer pastor. The world and our culture long for a pastoral ministry now in the Muhlenberg tradition. God's flock will still be attracted to a fold with that kind of shepherding on God's behalf. Muhlenberg gave a strong emphasis to preaching and the sacraments. He was convinced that Lutherans had a great and potent gift with our "gospel of grace." How we need to reclaim the conviction that our gift is worthwhile and mighty to give!

This patron saint of all Lutheran pastors since, who flew in the face of the world's advice to be sure you don't overwork and aren't underpaid, saw much of ministry as "renewed holy life." How we need to reclaim the way to the renewed holy life for both clergy and laity!

Muhlenberg loved the Bible and carried it with him in a little wooden box as he rode across the country on horseback preaching, teaching, and baptizing. He had such a strong sense of God's mission to rescue the lost. How we need to reclaim that sense of mission!

Burnt out, boxed in, happy hedonists (as Russel Hale calls them) will yet respond to a servant ministry of Muhlenberg priorities: teaching and revering the Bible; powerful, spirit-filled, inspired preaching; and a meaningful, God-present worship experience, relevant in the language of the people, heart-moving, and with emphasis on the holiness of the sacraments.

He called himself "one of God's sheep dogs who must round up the sheep and goats on the pasture by barking at them, and herd them into one flock." Here is a pastor who not only loved his Lord but also loved the church and gave himself unselfishly for it. No lone ranger, he organized the synod. His Augusta church, still standing at Trappe, served as the mission center for colonial Lutheranism in the east. How we need to reclaim that sense of love of the church!

It is so easy to get a sour and aloof attitude, and, like martyrs, criticize the organization. But there is joy in loving the church organization with all its warts and

imperfections. "Ecclesia Plantanda" was his motto: the church must be planted. And on horseback he did the planting. How we need to reclaim the sense of church planting as kingdom work now! We must train new pastors, recruit present clergy, and challenge strong congregations to plant new churches where the people are relocating, and do it in their languages.

Muhlenberg was a peacemaker and a trouble-shooter, traveling all over the east coast from New York to Charleston to reconcile differences within congregations. It was this activity that made him great. It is usually the one who allows God's spirit to work through him or her to make the peace who is more blessed than the warring parties who have ceased their hostility. We must reclaim our ministry of peacemaking!

Muhlenberg spent great amounts of time catechizing and teaching from the Bible; he believed one of the functions of preaching was to teach, especially from the Lutheran confessions. His Trappe congregation built the first school house in the county outside Philadelphia. He envisioned a college and a seminary for "...the necessary training of native students." Congregations want pastors and leaders who will teach. They are hungry to learn and grow in their discipleship. How we need to reclaim the ministry of teaching our people in the Lutheran and Muhlenberg tradition!

Muhlenberg was a teacher who loved the church and brought peace to it, a person with a mission and a call who stood confident of God's grace, and a pastor who was sent and who believed the church must be planted. We thank God that the greatest of Lutherans in America was not a bishop, a monk, a televangelist, or a peculiar mystic who saw visions. He was not even a seminary president or faculty theologian, but a parish pastor who loved his people and his God and his church and gave himself for them. Together with his wife, Anna Maria, he rests under the marble slab close to the wall of the old church in Trappe, their first and last love. On the stone marker it says, "Who and what he was, future ages will know without a stone." Still an example for our time.

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