

THE OXFORD
BIBLE COMMENTARY

THE
GOSPELS

Edited by
JOHN MUDDIMAN
AND JOHN BARTON



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ABBREVIATIONS

GENERAL

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	D. N. Freedman (ed.), <i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> (6 vols.; New York: Doubleday, 1992)
AnBib	Analecta biblica
Aram.	Aramaic
b.	Babylonian Talmud
B	4th-cent MS of part of NT, in the Vatican Library
BCE	Before Common Era
BETL	Bibliotheca ephemeridum theologiarum lovaniensium
Bib.	<i>Biblica</i>
BZNW	Beihefte zur ZNW
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CD	Cairo Geniza, Damascus Document
CE	Common Era
ctr.	contrast
D	Deuteronomist source in the Pentateuch
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
ET	English Translation
ETL	<i>Ephemerides theologicae lovanienses</i>
Fr.	French
Gk.	Greek
GNB	Good News Bible
HB	Hebrew Bible
Heb.	Hebrew
ICC	International Critical Commentary
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JSTNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSTNSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament—Supplement Series

JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament—Supplement Series
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
Lat.	Latin
LXX	Septuagint
<i>m.</i>	<i>Mishnah</i>
MS	Monograph Series; manuscript
Mt.	Mount
MT	Masoretic Text
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
p ⁶⁶	Papyrus of parts of the Gospel of John, c. 200 CE, Bodmer Library, Cologny-Geneva, and Chester-Beatty Library, Dublin
p ⁷⁵	Papyrus of parts of the Gospels of Luke and John, 3rd cent., Bodmer Library, Cologny-Geneva
par.	parallel(s)
pl.	plural
SANT	Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament
SBL SBS	SBL Sources for Biblical Study
ScEs	<i>Science et esprit</i>
SCM	Student Christian Movement
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Study Monograph Series
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
ST	<i>Studia theologica</i>
Str-B	[H. Strack and] P. Billerbeck, <i>Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch</i> (6 vols.; Munich: C. K. Beck, 1926–61)
<i>t.</i>	Tosefta
<i>T. Dan.</i>	Testament of Dan
TOB	Traduction œcuménique de la bible
TT	<i>Teologisk Tidsskrift</i>
TZ	<i>Theologische Zeitschrift</i>
v.	versus
WBC	World Biblical Commentary
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
<i>y.</i>	Jerusalem Talmud
ZNW	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

CLASSICAL

'Abot R. Nat.	'Abot de Rabbi Nathan
Ap. John	Apocryphon of John
Apoc. Abr.	Apocalypse of Abraham
2-3 Apoc. Bar.	Apocalypse of Baruch
Apoc. Sed.	Apocalypse of Sedrach
As. Mos.	Assumption of Moses
Aug.	Augustine
<i>De civ. dei</i>	<i>De civitate dei</i>
Barn.	Epistle of Barnabas
B. Bat.	Baba Batra
Ber.	Berakot
Calvin	
Inst.	Institutes
Clem. Al.	Clement of Alexandria
Ped.	Pedagogus
Dem.	Demai
Did.	Didache
Dio Chrystostom	
Or.	Orationes
Eccles. Rab.	Ecclesiastes Rabbah
Ep. Arist.	Epistle of Aristeas
Ep. Diogn.	Epistle to Diognetus
Eusebius	
<i>Hist. eccl.</i>	<i>Historia Ecclesiastica</i>
Gen. Rab.	Genesis Rabbah
Gos. Thom.	Gospel of Thomas
Hag.	Hagiga
Irenaeus	
<i>Adv. haer.</i>	<i>Adversus haereses</i>
Jos.	Josephus
Ag. Ap.	Against Apion
Ant.	Antiquities of the Jews
J.W.	Jewish War
Jub.	Jubilees
Just.	Justin Martyr
Dial.	Dialogus
Apol.	Apologia

Meg.	Megilla
Mek.	Mekilta
Ned.	Nedarim
Origen	
C. Cels.	<i>Contra Celsum</i>
Philo	Philo Judaeus
Abr.	<i>De Abrahamo</i>
Dec.	<i>De Decalogo</i>
Leg. ad Gaium	<i>Legatio ad Gaium</i>
Leg. All.	<i>Legum allegoriae</i>
Migr. Abr.	<i>De migratione Abrahami</i>
Ps.-Philo	Pseudo-Philo
LAB	<i>Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum</i>
Ps.-Phoc.	Pseudo-Phocylides
Pss. Sol.	<i>Psalms of Solomon</i>
Odes Sol.	<i>Odes of Solomon</i>
1QH	Qumran Cave 1, <i>Hôdayôt (Thanksgiving Hymns)</i>
1QM	Qumran Cave 1, <i>War Scroll</i>
1QpHab	Qumran Cave 1, <i>Pesher on Habakkuk</i>
1QS	Qumran Cave 1, <i>Serek hayyahad (Rule of the Community, Manual of Discipline)</i> [2h dot]
3Q15	Qumran Cave 3, <i>Copper Scroll</i>
4Q270	Qumran Cave 4, <i>Zadokite fragments</i>
4Q491	Qumran Cave 4, <i>War Scroll</i>
4Q521	Qumran Cave 4, <i>Messianic Apocalypse</i>
4QFlor	Qumran Cave 4, <i>Florilegium</i>
4QPrNab	Qumran Cave 4, <i>Prayer of Nabonidus</i>
11QMelch	Qumran Cave 11, <i>Melchizedek text</i>
11QTemple	Qumran Cave 11, <i>Temple Scroll</i>
Rab.	<i>Rabbah</i>
Sanh.	<i>Sanhedrin</i>
Suetonius	
Dom.	<i>Domitian</i>
Vesp.	<i>Vespasianus</i>
Sukk.	<i>Sukka</i>
T. Abr.	<i>Testament of Abraham</i>
Tert.	<i>Tertullian</i>
Adv. Marc.	<i>Adversus Marcionem</i>
Apol.	<i>Apologeticus</i>

<i>T. Gad</i>	<i>Testament of Gad</i>
<i>Tg. Ps.-J.</i>	<i>Targum Pseudo-Jonathan</i>
<i>T. Iss.</i>	<i>Testament of Issachar</i>
<i>T. Job</i>	<i>Testament of Job</i>
<i>T. Levi</i>	<i>Testament of Levi</i>
v.	versus
y.	Jerusalem Talmud
<i>Yebam.</i>	<i>Yebamot</i>

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1. General Introduction

A. Studying the Bible. 1. People's reasons for studying the Bible—and therefore for using a biblical commentary—are many and various. The great majority of Bible readers have a religious motivation. They believe that the Bible contains the 'words of life', and that to study it is a means of deepening their understanding of the ways of God. They turn to the Bible to inform them about how God desires human beings to live, and about what God has done for the human race. They expect to be both challenged and helped by what they read, and to gain clearer guidance for living as religious believers. Such people will use a commentary to help them understand the small print of what has been disclosed about the nature and purposes of God. The editors' hope is that those who turn to the Bible for such religious reasons will find that the biblical text is here explained in ways that make it easier to understand its content and meaning. We envisage that the Commentary will be used by pastors preparing sermons, by groups of people reading the Bible together in study or discussion groups, and by anyone who seeks a clearer perspective on a text that they hold in reverence as religiously inspiring. Jews, Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox Christians have different expectations of the Bible, but we hope that all will find the Commentary useful in elucidating the text.

2. A somewhat smaller group of readers studies the Bible as a monument to important movements of religious thought in the past, whether or not they themselves have any personal commitment to the religious systems it represents. One of the most striking developments of recent decades has been the growth of interest in the Bible by those who have no religious commitment to it, but for whom it is a highly significant document from the ancient world. Students who take university or college courses in theology or religious or biblical studies will often wish to understand the origins and meaning of the biblical text so as to gain a clearer insight into the beginnings of two major world religions, Judaism and Christianity, and into the classic texts that these religions regard as central to their life. We hope that such people will find here the kinds of information they need in order to understand this complex and many-faceted work. The one-volume

format makes it possible to obtain an overview of the whole Bible before going on to use more advanced individual commentaries on particular biblical books.

3. Finally, there are many Bible readers who are committed neither to a religious quest of their own nor to the study of religion, but who are drawn by the literary quality of much of the Bible to want to know more about it. For them it is a major classic of Western—indeed, of world—literature, whose influence on other literature, ancient and modern, requires that it should be taken seriously and studied in depth. A generation ago 'the Bible as literature' was regarded by many students of the Bible, especially those with a religious commitment to it, as a somewhat dilettante interest, insufficiently alert to the Bible's spiritual challenge. Nowadays, however, a great deal of serious scholarly work is being done on literary aspects of the Bible, and many commentaries are written with the needs of a literary, rather than a religious, readership in mind. We think that those who approach the Bible in such a way will find much in this Commentary to stimulate their interest further.

B. Biblical Criticism. 1. The individual authors of commentaries have been free to treat the biblical books as they see fit, and there has been no imposition of a common editorial perspective. They are, however, united by an approach that we have called 'chastened historical criticism'. This is what is traditionally known as a *critical* commentary, but the authors are aware of recent challenges to what is generally called biblical criticism and have sought (to a greater or lesser extent) to take account of these in their work. Some explanation of these terms is necessary if the reader is to understand what this book seeks to offer.

2. Biblical criticism, sometimes known as historical criticism of the Bible or as the historical-critical method, is the attempt to understand the Bible by setting it in the context of its time of writing, and by asking how it came into existence and what were the purposes of its authors. The term 'historical' is not used because such criticism is necessarily interested in reconstructing history, though sometimes it may be, but because biblical books are being studied as anchored in their own time, not as freely floating

texts which we can read as though they were contemporary with us. It starts with the acknowledgement that the Bible is an ancient text. However much the questions with which it deals may be of perennial interest to human beings (and perhaps no one would study it so seriously if they were not), they arose within a particular historical (and geographical) setting. Biblical criticism uses all available means of access to information about the text and its context, in order to discover what it may have meant when it or its component parts were written.

3. One precondition for a critical understanding of any text is a knowledge of the language in which it is written, and accordingly of what individual words and expressions were capable of meaning at the time of the text's composition. The critical reader is always on guard against the danger of anachronism, of reading later meanings of words into their use in an earlier period. Frequently, therefore, commentators draw attention to problems in understanding particular words and phrases, and cite evidence for how such words are used elsewhere in contemporary texts. A second prerequisite is that the text itself shall be an accurate version of what the author actually wrote. In the case of any ancient text this is an extremely difficult thing to ensure, because of the vagaries of the transmission of manuscripts down the centuries. Copying by hand always introduces errors into texts, even though biblical texts were often copied with special care because of their perceived sacred status. In all the individual commentaries here there are discussions of how accurately the original text is available to us, and what contribution is made to our knowledge of this by various manuscripts or ancient translations. The art of textual criticism seeks to explain the evolution of texts, to understand how they become corrupted (through miscopying), and how their original form can be rediscovered.

4. In reading any piece of text, ancient or modern, one needs to be aware of the possibility that it may not be a unity. Some documents in our own day come into existence through the work of several different authors, which someone else then edits into a reasonably unified whole: such is the case, for example, with documents produced by committees. In the ancient world it was not uncommon for books to be produced by joining together, and sometimes even interweaving, several already existing shorter texts, which are then referred to as the 'sources' of the resulting single document. In the

case of some books in the Bible it is suspected by scholars that such a process of production has resulted in the texts as we now have them. Such hypotheses have been particularly prevalent in the case of the Pentateuch (Genesis–Deuteronomy) and of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). The attempt to discover the underlying sources is nowadays usually called 'source criticism', though older books sometimes call it 'literary criticism' (from German *Literarkritik*, but confusing in that 'literary criticism' usually means something else in modern English), or 'higher criticism'—by contrast with 'lower', that is, textual criticism. It is important to see that biblical critics are not committed to believing that this or that biblical book is in fact the result of the interweaving of sources (R. N. Whybray's commentary on Genesis in this volume argues against such a hypothesis), but only to being open to the possibility.

5. A further hypothesis that has had a long and fruitful history in the study of both Testaments is that our present written texts may rest on materials that were originally transmitted orally. Before the biblical books were written, the stories or other units of which they are composed may have had an independent life, circulating orally and being handed on from parent to child, or in circles where stories were told and retold, such as a 'camp-fire' or a liturgical context. The attempt to isolate and study such underlying oral units is known as form criticism, and it has been much practised in the case of the gospels, the stories in the Pentateuch and in the early historical books of the Old Testament, and the prophetic books. Again, by no means all critics think that these books do in fact rest on oral tradition, but all regard the question whether or not they do so as important because it is relevant to understanding their original context.

6. Where texts are composite, that is, the result of weaving together earlier written or oral sources, it makes sense to investigate the techniques and intentions of those who carried out the weaving. We should now call such people 'editors', but in biblical studies the technical term 'redactor' tends to be preferred, and this branch of biblical criticism is thus known as 'redaction criticism'. Once we know what were a biblical redactor's raw materials—which source and form criticism may be able to disclose to us—we can go on to ask about the aims the redactor must have had. Thus we can enquire into the intentions (and hence the

thought or the 'theology' of Matthew or Luke, or of the editor of the book of Isaiah. Redaction criticism has been a particular interest in modern German-speaking biblical study, but it is also still widely practised in the English-speaking world. It is always open to the critic to argue that a given book is not composite in any case and therefore never had a redactor, only an author. Most scholars probably think this is true of some of the shorter tales of the Old Testament, such as Jonah or Ruth, or of many of Paul's epistles. Here too what makes study critical is not a commitment to a particular outcome, but a willingness to engage in the investigation. It is always possible that there is simply not enough evidence to resolve the matter, as R. Coggins argues in the case of Isaiah. This conclusion does not make such a commentary 'non-critical', but is arrived at by carefully sifting the various critical hypotheses that have been presented by previous scholars. An uncritical commentary would be one that was unaware of such issues, or unwilling to engage with them.

7. Form and redaction criticism inevitably lead to questions about the social setting of the underlying units that make up biblical books and of the redactors who put them into their finished form. In recent years historical criticism has expanded to include a considerable interest in the contribution the social sciences can make to understanding the Bible's provenance. The backgrounds of the gospels and of Paul's letters have been studied with a view to discovering more about the social context of early Christianity: see, for example, the commentary here on 1 Thessalonians by Philip Esler. In the study of the Old Testament also much attention has been directed to questions of social context, and this interest can be seen especially in D. L. Smith-Christopher's commentary on Ezra–Nehemiah.

C. Post-Critical Movements. 1. In the last few decades biblical studies has developed in many and varied directions, and has thrown up a number of movements that regard themselves as 'post-critical'. Some take critical study of the Bible as a given, but then seek to move on to ask further questions not part of the traditional historical-critical enterprise. Others are frankly hostile to historical criticism, regarding it as misguided or as outdated. Though the general tone of this commentary continues to be critical, most of its contributors believe that these newer movements have raised important issues,

and have contributed materially to the work of biblical study. Hence our adoption of a critical stance is 'chastened' by an awareness that new questions are in the air, and that biblical criticism itself is now subject to critical questioning.

2. One important style of newer approaches to the Bible challenges the assumption that critical work should (or can) proceed from a position of neutrality. Those who write from feminist and liberationist perspectives often argue that the older critical style of study presented itself as studiously uncommitted to any particular programme: it was simply concerned, so its practitioners held, to understand the biblical text in its original setting. In fact (so it is now argued) there was often a deeply conservative agenda at work in biblical criticism. By distancing the text as the product of an ancient culture, critics managed to evade its challenges to themselves, and they signally failed to see how subversive of established attitudes much of the Bible really was. What is needed, it is said, is a more engaged style of biblical study in which the agenda is set by the need for human liberation from oppressive political forces, whether these constrain the poor or some other particular group such as women. The text must be read not only in its reconstructed 'original' context but also as relevant to modern concerns: only then will justice be done to the fact that it exercises an existential claim upon its readers, and it will cease to be seen as the preserve of the scholar in his (*sic*) study.

3. Such a critique of traditional biblical criticism calls attention to some of the unspoken assumptions with which scholars have sometimes worked, and can have the effect of deconstructing conventional commentaries by uncovering their unconscious bias. Many of the commentators in this volume are aware of such dangers in biblical criticism, and seek to redress the balance by asking about the contribution of the books on which they comment to contemporary concerns. They are also more willing than critics have often been to 'criticize' the text in the ordinary sense of that word, that is, to question its assumptions and commitments. This can be seen, for example, in J. Galambush's commentary on Ezekiel, where misogynist tendencies are identified in the text.

4. A second recent development has been an interest in literary aspects of the biblical texts. Where much biblical criticism has been concerned with underlying strata and their combination to make the finished books we now have,

some students of the Bible have come to think that such 'excavative' work (to use a phrase of Robert Alter's) is at best only preparatory to a reading of the texts as finished wholes, at worst a distraction from a proper appreciation of them as great literature just as they stand. The narrative books in particular (the Pentateuch and 'historical' books of the Old Testament, the gospels and Acts in the New) have come to be interpreted by means of a 'narrative criticism', akin to much close reading of modern novels and other narrative texts, which is alert to complex literary structure and to such elements as plot, characterization, and closure. It is argued that at the very least readers of the Bible ought to be aware of such issues as well as those of the genesis and formation of the text, and many would contend, indeed, that they are actually of considerably *more* importance for a fruitful appropriation of biblical texts than is the classic agenda of critical study. Many of the commentaries in this volume (such as those on Matthew and Philipians) show an awareness of such aesthetic issues in reading the Bible, and claim that the books they study are literary texts to be read alongside other great works of world literature. This interest in things literary is related to the growing interest in the Bible by people who do not go to it for religious illumination so much as for its character as classic literature, and it is a trend that seems likely to continue.

5. Thirdly, there is now a large body of work in biblical studies arguing that traditional biblical criticism paid insufficient attention not only to literary but also to theological features of the text. Here the interest in establishing the text's original context and meaning is felt to be essentially an antiquarian interest, which gives a position of privilege to 'what the text meant' over 'what the text means'. One important representative of this point of view is the 'canonical approach', sometimes also known as 'canonical criticism', in which biblical interpreters ask not about the origins of biblical books but about their integration into Scripture taken as a finished whole. This is part of an attempt to reclaim the Bible for religious believers, on the hypothesis that traditional historical criticism has alienated it from them and located it in the study rather than in the pulpit or in the devotional context of individual Bible-reading. While this volume assumes the continuing validity of historical-critical study, many contributors are alive to this issue, and are anxious not to make imperialistic claims for historical

criticism. Such criticism began, after all, in a conviction that the Bible was open to investigation by everyone, and was not the preserve of ecclesiastical authorities: it appealed to evidence in the text rather than to external sources of validation. It is important that this insight is not lost by starting to treat the Bible as the possession of a different set of authorities, namely historical-critical scholars! Canonical approaches emphasize that religious believers are entitled to put their own questions to the text, and this must be correct, though it would be a disaster if such a conviction were to result in the outlawing of historical-critical method in its turn. Contributors to this volume, however, are certainly not interested only in the genesis of the biblical books but are also concerned to delineate their overall religious content, and to show how one book relates to others within the canon of Scripture.

6. Thus the historical-critical approach may be chastened by an awareness that its sphere of operations, though vital, is not exhaustive, and that other questions too may reasonably be on the agenda of students of the Bible. In particular, a concern for the finished form of biblical books, however that came into existence, unites both literary and canonical approaches. Few scholars nowadays believe that they have finished their work when they have given an account of how a given book came into being: the total effect (literary and theological) made by the final form is also an important question. The contributors to this volume seek to engage with it.

D. The Biblical Canon. 1. Among the various religious groups that recognize the Bible as authoritative there are some differences of opinion about precisely which books it should contain. In the case of the New Testament all Christians share a common list, though in the centuries of the Christian era a few other books were sometimes included (notably The Shepherd of Hermas, which appears in some major New Testament manuscripts), and some of those now in the canon were at times regarded as of doubtful status (e.g. Hebrews, Revelation, 2 and 3 John, 2 Peter, and Jude). The extent of the Old Testament varies much more seriously. Protestants and Jews alike accept only the books now extant in Hebrew as fully authoritative, but Catholics and Orthodox Christians recognize a longer canon: on this, see the Introduction to the Old Testament. The Ethiopic and Coptic churches accept also *Enoch* and *Jubilees*, as

well as having minor variations in the other books of the Old Testament.

2. In this Commentary we have included all the books that appear in the NRSV—that is, all the books recognized as canonical in any of the Western churches (both Catholic and Protestant) and in the Greek and Russian Orthodox churches and those in communion with them. We have not included the books found only in the Ethiopic or Coptic canons, though some extracts appear in the article *Essay with Commentary on Post-Biblical Jewish Literature*.

3. It is important to see that it is only at the periphery that the biblical canon is blurred. There is a great core of central books whose status has never been seriously in doubt: the Pentateuch and Prophets in the Old Testament, the gospels and major Pauline epistles in the New. Few of the deuterocanonical books of the Old Testament have ever been of major importance to Christians—a possible exception is the *Wisdom of Solomon*, so well respected that it was occasionally regarded by early Christians as a New Testament book. There is nowadays comparatively little discussion among different kinds of Christian about the correct extent of the biblical canon (which at the Reformation was a major area of disagreement), and our intention has been to cover most of the books regarded as canonical in major churches without expressing any opinion about whether or not they should have canonical status.

E. How to Use this Commentary. 1. A commentary is an aid towards informed reading of a text, and not a substitute for it. The contributors to this volume have written on the assumption that the Bible is open before the reader all the while, whether in hard copy or electronic form. The NRSV is the normal or 'default' version. When other versions or the commentator's own renderings are preferred this is indicated; often this is because some nuance in the original has been lost in the NRSV (no translation can do full justice to all the possible meanings of a text in another language) or because some ambiguity (and these abound in the text of the Bible) has been resolved in a way that differs from the judgement of the commentator.

2. The NRSV is the latest in a long line of translations that go back to the version authorized by King James I of England in 1611. It is increasingly recognized as the most suitable for the purposes of serious study, because it is

based on the best available critical editions of the original texts, because it has no particular confessional allegiance, and because it holds the balance between accuracy and intelligibility, avoiding paraphrase on the one hand and literalism on the other. But comparison between different English translations, particularly for the reader who does not know Hebrew or Greek, is often instructive and serves as a reminder that any translation is itself already an interpretation.

3. *The Oxford Annotated Bible*, based on the NRSV, is particularly useful for those who wish to gain a quick overview of the larger context before consulting this Commentary on a particular passage of special interest. It is useful in another way too: its introductions and notes represent a moderate consensus in contemporary biblical scholarship with which the often more innovative views of the contributors to this Commentary may be measured.

4. When a commentator wishes to draw attention to a passage or parallel in the Bible, the standard NRSV abbreviations apply. But when the reference is to a fuller discussion to be found in the Commentary itself, small capitals are used. Thus (cf. Gen 1:1) signifies the biblical text, while GEN 1:1 refers to the commentary on it. In the same way GEN A etc. refers to the introductory paragraphs of the article on Genesis. The conventions for transliteration of the biblical languages into the English alphabet are the same as those used by *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* (ed. B. M. Metzger and M. Coogan, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

5. The traditional kind of verse-by-verse commentary has in recent times come under attack as a 'disintegrating' approach that diverts the attention of the reader from the natural flow of the text. The paragraph or longer section, so it is argued, is the real unit of thought, not the verse. However, certain commentators commenting on certain texts would still defend the traditional approach, since they claim that readers chiefly need to be provided with background information necessary to the proper historical interpretation of the text, rather than a more discursive exposition which they could work out for themselves. Examples of both the older and newer methods are to be found in the commentaries below. But even when a particular commentator offers observations on individual verses, we would recommend readers to read the whole paragraph or section and not just the comment on the verse that interests them, so as to gain a more rounded picture.

And to encourage this we have not peppered the page with indications of new verses in capitals (V.1) or bold type (v.1), but mark the start of a new comment less obtrusively in lower case (v.1).

6. The one-volume Bible commentary, as this genre developed through the twentieth century, aimed to put into the hands of readers everything they needed for the study of the biblical text. Alongside commentaries on the individual books, it often included a host of general articles ranging from 'Biblical Weights and Measures' to 'The Doctrine of the Person of Christ'. In effect, it tried to be a Commentary, Bible Dictionary, Introduction (in the technical sense, i.e. an analysis of evidence for date, authorship, sources, etc.) and Biblical Theology all rolled into one. But it is no longer possible, given the sheer bulk and variety of modern scholarship, even to attempt this multipurpose approach: nor indeed is it desirable since it distracts attention from the proper task of a commentary which is the elucidation of the text itself. Readers who need more background information on a particular issue are recommended to consult *The Oxford Companion to the Bible* or the six volumes of *The Anchor Bible Dictionary* (ed. D. N. Freedman, New York: Doubleday, 1992), though older bible dictionaries may be used instead: the basic factual information they contain remains largely reliable and relatively stable over time.

7. Each article concludes with a bibliography of works cited. But in addition at the end of the volume there is an aggregated bibliography that points the reader towards the most important specialist works in English on the separate books of the Bible, and also major reference works, introductions, theologies, and so forth.

8. The contributors to *The Oxford Bible Commentary*—and this will probably apply to its users as well—belong to different faith traditions or none. They have brought to their task a variety of methods and perspectives, and this lends richness and depth to the work as a whole. But it also creates problems in coming to an agreed common terminology. As we have noted already, the definition of what is to be included in the Bible, the extent of the canon, is disputed. Further, should we refer to the Old and New Testaments, or to the scriptures of Israel and of early Christianity; to the Apocrypha or the deuterocanonical literature? How should dates be indicated, with BC and AD in the traditional manner or with BCE and CE in

reference to the *Common Era*? The usages we have actually adopted should be understood as simple conventions, without prejudice to the serious issues that underlie these differences. A particular problem of a similar kind was whether or not to offer some assistance with a welter of texts, dating from the late biblical period up to 200 CE, which, while not biblical on any definition, are nevertheless relevant to the serious study of the Bible: these are the Dead Sea scrolls, the Old Testament pseudepigrapha, and the apocryphal New Testament. The compromise solution we have reached is to offer not exactly commentary, but two more summarizing articles on this literature (chs. 55 and 82) which, however, still focus on the texts themselves in a way consistent with the commentary format. Some readers may wish to distinguish sharply between the status of this material and that in the Bible; others will see it as merging into the latter.

9. In addition to the overall introductions to the three main subdivisions of the commentary, there are other articles that attempt to approach certain texts not individually but as sets. The Pentateuch or Five Books of Moses functions not only doctrinally but also in terms of its literary history as one fivepart work. Similarly, the letters of Paul were once a distinct corpus of writings before they were expanded and added to the growing canon of the New Testament. The four gospels may properly be studied separately, but, both as historical and theological documents, may also be read profitably 'in synopsis'. No attempt has been made by the editors to make these additional articles that group certain texts together entirely consistent with the individual commentaries on them, for the differences are entirely legitimate. The index of subjects at the end of the volume relates only to this introductory material and not to the commentaries themselves. To locate discussions of biblical characters, places, ideas etc. the reader is recommended to consult a concordance first and then to look up the commentary on the passages where the key words occur.

The Bible is a vast treasury of prose and poetry, of history and folklore, of spirituality and ethics; it has inspired great art and architecture, literature and music down the centuries. It invites the reader into its own ancient and mysterious world, and yet at the same time can often surprise us by its contemporary relevance. It deserves and repays all the efforts of critical and attentive reading which the *Oxford Bible Commentary* is designed to assist.

2. Introduction to the New Testament

LESLIE HOULDEN

A. Introduction. 1. This article sets out to 'introduce' the New Testament. But in literature as in life, introductions may be of two kinds. At a formal lecture or public meeting, the speaker is usually introduced with a factual account of career and achievements. We receive in effect the speaker's credentials, flattering him or her and reassuring the audience as it settles to what lies ahead. Such introductions, with their battery of facts, generally bear no close relation to the substance of the ensuing utterance, except that they lead the listener to expect a display of some competence in, say, economics, but none in civil engineering.

2. Introductions at social gatherings are of a different character. When we are introduced to someone, we do not expect a monologue of information about our new acquaintance to flow from the introducer, still less from the person who faces us. No, introduction is a mere beginning. It offers the prospect of conversation where we shall range around for points of contact and explore possible features of character and opinion; so that gradually, but quite unsystematically, we may build up a picture of the one who has been introduced to us. If the introduction leads to sufficient interest, we shall hope that it leads to further meetings, so that our sketchy picture may become fuller and more exact. We shall take steps to ensure that the process continues from this propitious beginning. We shall certainly not expect that the first encounter provides more than a few unrelated bits of information and half-formed impressions. Loose ends will not worry us in the least.

3. This Introduction is of this second kind. At many points, the reader who is new to the subject will wish to question and clarify, and may even be frustrated by the incompleteness of what is provided. The aim, however, is to open subjects rather than to close them. Moreover, though a range of ideas on a particular subject will often be given, to indicate that it is not all plain sailing and where the rocks and shoals lie, this Introduction represents only one among the many possible perspectives on its subject. Further information on many topics comes in the detailed articles that follow, or else in other works of reference, such as Bible dictionaries or encyclopedias or in fuller commentaries on particular NT books. The aim here

is to stimulate curiosity, even to incite to discontent, so that the New Testament may continue to fascinate as well as edify its readers.

B. The Idea of the New Testament. 1. It is natural to suppose that the NT is virtually as old as Christianity itself. It is equally natural to assume that the NT has always been part and parcel of Christianity, integral to its very being. It is refreshing to the mind to recognize that the truth is not so simple. We shall list some of the facts that cast doubt on those assumptions about the NT.

2. But first we should identify what we have in mind when we think of 'the NT'. Most people will visualize a slim volume containing twenty-seven writings from early Christianity, or else think of the second part of the Christian Bible, most of it occupied by the OT. These writings vary in type (though most are either gospels or letters) and in length (from the 28 chapters of Matthew's gospel and Acts to the few lines of the 2nd and 3rd Letters of John). Though there are connections between some of them, by way of authorship (e.g. the letters of Paul) or in a literary way (dependence among the first three gospels and common material in Colossians and Ephesians), each is in origin a separate work, composed in its own time and place for its own particular purpose.

3. These writings differ also in accessibility: we are likely to feel most at home with the gospels and Acts, with their strong story-line, much less at home with some of the letters and the Revelation of John; and when we survey the list, there may be some titles that we have scarcely heard of. It is interesting then how rapidly diversity among these writings forces itself on our attention, even though we are attending to the NT as a single entity. Clearly this is not a single entity at all in some senses of that term, either in itself or in our awareness of its contents.

4. The NT we think of is probably in the English language. But every bit of it began in the Greek language of the first century of our era (apart from a handful of words taken over from Hebrew, Aramaic, or Latin); so what we have is a translation, never a simple operation and always involving decisions that amount to interpretation. Until fairly recently, it would have been overwhelmingly likely that the NT

in our hand or in our memory was the translation issued in England in 1611, usually known simply (and confidently) as 'The Authorised Version', or sometimes as the King James Version, after James I in whose reign and by whose authority the work was done.

5. In the last fifty years, however, a plethora of different translations has appeared, each attempting the task in a particular way or even looking at the NT from a particular doctrinal standpoint. Most aim to give a more modern English version than that of 1611: old words have changed sense or gone out of use, new ways of putting things have come in. Some recent versions do their modernizing in a way that stays close to the old version (e.g. the RS Version), others break right away from it (e.g. the NEB and the GNB). In a determination to make the NT speak today, they may go so far as to amend the strong masculine assumptions of former times, embodied in the Bible, by producing gender-neutral renderings simply absent from the original. Churches, using the NT in worship or for study by their members, take varying views about new versions, some favouring the resonance and familiarity of traditional language, others seeing it as an obstacle to the use of the NT by modern people.

6. It is not just a question of modernizing the English or not, though often the subject is discussed as if it were. There are also issues of accuracy. For one thing, because of the discovery since the seventeenth century of numerous very old manuscripts of the NT, some going back to within a hundred years or so of the original writing, we have a better idea of the NT authors' precise wording than was available to our ancestors (Metzger 1964; Birdsall 1970). (Never lose sight of it: until the invention of printing, every copy of the NT was made by hand, with all the inevitable slips and blunders, and even the alteration of the text to bring it into line with what the copyist believed the scriptural writer 'must' or 'should' have put.) Despite this opportunity for a better informed judgement about the text itself, however, there remain numerous places of disagreement; and translations differ as they reflect differences of judgement in what are often nicely balanced decisions. All this is in addition to unavoidable variations of style and emphasis as translators view the text before them. Again, the NT is far from the stable entity that it appears at first sight.

7. And there is more to come. Look at the NT historically. Only gradually did these writings

come to be accepted in the Christian churches in such a way that they could begin to be seen as a single book with a name of its own. This is not the place to go into details of the process whereby this came about (von Campenhausen 1972; Metzger 1987). Suffice it to say that a collection of Paul's letters was probably made before the end of the first century; that the idea of Christians needing both a gospel (i.e. the story of Jesus) and Paul's letters caught on soon after; that the end of the second century saw the acceptance in a number of major Christian centres (e.g. Rome, Alexandria) of something close to the present collection (four gospels, Acts, Paul's and other letters; but that it was four centuries before most churches accepted more or less the set of writings that have remained to this day as those authorized for official use—it is a list that has survived (despite occasional marginal hesitations) all the great divisions of the church, the same for all. The negative corollary of this progressivist way of putting things is of course that the church, viewed as a whole, managed for four centuries or so without the NT as we know it.

8. Again it cannot be our concern here, but it is worth recognizing that there was no discernible inner drive towards the production of such a thing as the NT: that makes it sound much too purposive. Historically speaking, it was all more haphazard. It is more realistic to look at it this way: the Christian communities, widely scattered around the Mediterranean within a few decades of Jesus' lifetime, had certain needs that had to be met if their life and mission were to flourish and if they were to have any coherence as (despite their plurality) a single phenomenon—the Christian church, or even 'Christianity'. They needed first to communicate with each other and to profit from one another's experience and wisdom, not to speak of bringing one another into line. Hence the early importance of letters. Even if these originally addressed passing situations and had no eye on the long term, they might profitably be preserved against future crises or simply for encouragement and edification. Inevitably, they would be circulated and acquire authority, both forming and buttressing church leaders in their work.

9. The Christian communities also needed to have ways of recalling Jesus, both in his time on earth and in terms of present relationship with his heavenly reality. The content of the letters (e.g. of Paul) might often help with the second, as did the eucharistic worship and prayers of

the church; the gospels were essential for the first. There is a question about how early this need came to be strongly felt; but soon the gospels were used as tools for teaching and, from at least the middle of the second century but probably earlier, as an element in the Christian gatherings for worship, where extracts were read to the community and were no doubt the subject of preaching. In this way, the parts of the NT were prior to the whole—that is, in the church's use of these writings. The more one looks at the matter from the point of view of use, the more the final production of a single entity, 'the NT', appears to be an afterthought, a tidying up.

10. That it was more than this is to do with the fact that an element of selection entered into the matter. The NT is far from containing the whole of early Christian literature (Schneemelcher (ed.) 1991, 1992; Staniforth and Louth (eds.) 1987). We know there were numerous other writings, from the second century if not from the first, because copies of them have survived, often in fragments and extracts. Some of them indeed are as old as at least the later of the writings included in the NT itself. It is apparent then that the authorized collection did not come together simply on the basis of antiquity—it was not just the early church's archives. It looks as if a number of factors played a part: simply, popularity and usefulness on a sufficiently wide scale; but also the attachment of an apostolic name, that is the name of one of the earliest Christian leaders, increasingly venerated as authorities, perhaps as martyrs, certainly as close to Jesus. These two factors were not wholly distinct: indeed it looks as if a bid could be made for the authoritativeness of a writing by attaching to it an apostle's name, whether Paul or Peter or John. It is not clear how far this was done in what we should regard as a deliberately fraudulent way and how far it was a matter of claiming the revered figure's patronage—this is what he would have written if he had been in our shoes. Both strategies can be paralleled in the relevant parts of the ancient world. It is not even wholly clear whether it is legitimate to draw a sharp distinction between them ('Pseudonymity', in *ABD* 5). However that may be (and modern literary ethics are surely inappropriate), there was a Christian literature far larger than the NT itself that failed to win general endorsement.

11. In any case, it is evident that the NT grew piecemeal, both in its parts and as a whole.

Evident too that it is an instrument of the church, which for all the authority that, in whole and in parts, it came to have in the church, came into being within the already existing life and work of the Christian communities. In so far as the church had a Bible from the start, it consisted of the Jewish Scriptures, eventually designated by Christians 'the Old Testament', which it interpreted in the light of the career and person of Jesus, seen as its fulfilment. More will be said about this at the end of this section.

12. If the church managed without a fully formed and authorized NT for its first few centuries, it is equally true that, in a contrary movement, the NT has undergone a disintegrative process in the last three or four centuries. This has not occurred primarily (often scarcely at all) in the official life of the churches, but in the realm of scholarship, itself church sponsored (especially in mainstream Protestantism) if not church endorsed in many of its results (Houlden 1986; Carroll 1991). During that period, the NT writings have been subjected to all kinds of analytical procedures. Almost all of these have involved treating them as separate units, often indeed identifying possible sources behind them (notably in the case of the gospels) or possible earlier units that have gone to form them as composite wholes (some of the letters, e.g. 2 Cor). Mostly, it has been a matter of attempting to suggest the original form, setting, and intention of each of the writings by the use of informed historical imagination and literary observation. Nearly always the effect has been to break down in the reader's mind the sense of NT as a whole, which was so laboriously built up in the early centuries. The NT comes to be seen very much as a collection of independent, or semi-independent, works, each to be examined in its own right as well as in relevant wider contexts.

13. The upshot is that, in the strict sense, the heyday of the NT as a compact entity (the book within the covers) was in the middle millennium of the church's 2,000-year history; even then, its most characteristic use, the form in which it was mainly experienced, was in bits—sometimes as little as a few words, that would support a doctrinal or ethical point, more often a longer section recited in liturgy or, especially in the later part of the period, used in private meditative prayer. It is interesting to note that for much of that middle period, Christian imagination was filled not only with material derived from Scripture but with legendary stories

that the church had specifically rejected from the authorized canon. In for example, the sequence of windows at Chartres Cathedral, details of Jesus' family, birth, and childhood drawn from the Protevangelium of James (2 cent.) figure alongside those drawn from the gospels.

14. At the same time, in whole or in substantial parts, 'the NT' played a recognized part in Christian life. The NT as a volume came in medieval times to carry the sacred weight of an icon, as did the gospels, bound separately—to be revered, viewed with awe, even feared, as charged with numinous power. The ceremonial carrying of the book of the gospels in Eastern Orthodoxy and (much less often now) in the Western eucharistic liturgy retains this sense. So, at a more mundane level, still sometimes tinged with superstition, does the use of the NT in courts of law in some countries for the swearing of oaths. More grandly, the British coronation ritual includes the monarch's oath-taking on the fifth-century NT manuscript (actually far from complete), the Codex Bezae. In these residual uses, 'the NT' survives in a way that our medieval ancestors saw as wholly normal: and notice, this use of it did not necessitate its being opened or read at all. Of course, for the many Christians who remain immune to the analytical endeavours of scholarship, the NT, in whole and in parts, retains its verbal authority, speaking to the reader as God's very utterance, with Paul and his fellow-writers as no more than instruments. There are of course many intermediate stages between such literalism and the recognition of variety within the NT, understood in the light of the diverse settings of the various writings (Houlden (ed.) 1995).

15. This brings us to the final recognition that tends towards the breaking up of the NT as we may now read it. Once we attend to the likely origins of the various writings, we find that they do not all sing the same tune. Certainly, we must abandon any idea that they were the result of some kind of collaborative exercise—an impression that the single, tightly bound volume easily creates. It may be retorted that divine inspiration—the idea that, through the various human agents, the one divine 'pen' is at work—implies a transcending singleness of mind. But it is not wholly transparent that, even on such a strong view of inspiration, God necessarily favours singleness of statement at the expense of (for example) the emergence of truth by way of dialogue or controversy, even in early Christianity whose memorial the NT is. At all

events, a candid historical view of the NT writings, while recognizing their overall unity of purpose and interest, is bound to recognize that they represent different viewpoints in the early church, and even that some of them look as if they were written to correct and refute others. For instance, it is likely that the Gospels of Matthew and Luke were designed, not simply to amplify but rather to improve on the Gospel of Mark, eradicating what were seen as its inadequacies. The formal opening of Luke, the first four verses, seems to suggest as much. And the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Tim, Titus) and perhaps Ephesians (as well as the latter half of Acts) were probably designed to put Paul in a different light from that in which his letters had come to place him: they smooth out the sense of him as a strident and pugnacious figure, ready to take on esteemed church leaders when in his view the gospel dictated it. The Letter of James seems to subvert one of the crucial emphases of Paul's teaching. The NT does not support the view that the early church enjoyed harmonious unanimity of opinion or homogeneity of teaching. Their disputes may often have related to issues long since dead, so that we tend to discount them, but the battles were real enough in their day, sometimes have modern counterparts, and in any case caution us against over-ready adoption of a particular idea or teaching as *the* NT view of the subject in question. On almost every topic of importance, there was diversity and conflict.

16. There is one more important point. Throughout this section we have had in mind the NT as a self-contained work, bound in its own covers, albeit a collection of twenty-seven distinct writings. But more often than not, we encounter the NT as the second (and much the smaller) part of the Bible: in sheer prominence, it can even look like a sort of adjunct to the OT. From the fourth century, Bibles have been produced by Christians consisting of these two parts, and both parts have been in constant use in Christian worship and Christian study. This combination of the NT with the OT compels us to consider the relation between the two. It is impossible here to detail the many different ways in which that relation has been seen. But, despite the comparative brevity of the NT, Christians have always seen it as the climax and goal of the Bible as a whole. Most commonly (as was hinted earlier), they have seen the NT as fulfilling the OT; or, more precisely, Jesus as fulfilling the old Scriptures and the NT as commenting on the manner of that fulfilment.

In the NT's own terms, the fulfilment was expressed by way of OT images and themes which were taken up and applied to him (e.g. king of Israel, son of God, lamb), often with startling paradox and originality; also by way of statements in the OT which were read through fresh eyes and seen as relevant to some aspect or detail of Jesus' life or teaching. Most NT books, most obviously the Gospels of Matthew (e.g. 1–2) and John, contain many such applications of OT quotations to Jesus (Lindars 1961). The modern reader who looks up the original OT context will often see audacity (or even fraudulence) in many of these applications—a difficulty removed or at least alleviated once it is understood that the NT writers are using techniques of scriptural interpretation current in Judaism at the time, and applying them creatively to their own subject-matter. Again from a modern point of view, it is necessary to recognize that they were reading Scripture as sheer words, God-given, with only a minimal sense of historical context such as modern scholarship has so vigorously pursued. So words that originally related to the birth of a child in the royal house in Jerusalem in the late eighth century BCE (Isa 7:14) are applied to the birth of Jesus many centuries later and taken to illuminate its character (Mt 1:23; Brown 1993).

C. The Background of the New Testament. 1. So far we have considered the *idea* of the NT. In terms of introduction, this has been the stage of sizing up the new acquaintance. Another important aspect of introduction lies a little behind the scenes and is often slow to emerge. It concerns the world and the culture from which the new acquaintance comes. Only if we find out about that will the introduction progress and lead to understanding.

2. As we face this matter, we immediately encounter what can seem a puzzling fact. All the NT books were written in Greek (though just possibly Hebrew sources lie somewhere behind one or two of them), but their culture is chiefly Jewish. There are in these writings only occasional instances of Hebrew or Aramaic (the Semitic vernacular of the area), the words of Jesus from the cross in Mk 15:34 (Aramaic = Mt 27:46 Hebrew) being much the most extensive. In one way this creates an obstacle—when for example we hope to read the very words of Jesus. While (as we shall see) there is a chance that Jesus knew some Greek, the overwhelming probability is that the main vehicle of his teaching was Aramaic. Therefore, at best

(i.e. even if no other factors are involved) we have in the gospels renderings of Jesus' words into a foreign tongue—with the distortions that translation cannot but entail.

3. It is worth noting at this point that, apart from a few words and references to a few military or legal institutions, Latin culture has left little mark on the NT: these writings reflect life in the eastern half of the Mediterranean world, parts of the Roman empire with their own strong and often mixed cultures, with Greek as the dominant force in many areas of life. True, descendants of Roman army veterans with Latin names (e.g. Tertius, Rom 16:22) appear in the church at Corinth; Roman officials are not inconspicuous in Acts, Pilate is a key figure in the gospel story, and the empire sometimes broods over the scene, as in Revelation, or is an acknowledged presence, as in 1 Peter and Philipians; but even so, Roman cultural penetration is not deep in the circles from which the NT comes.

4. Yet the obstacle referred to above is modified once we realize that in the first century there was no impenetrable wall between Greek language and Jewishness, or indeed between Jewish and Greek cultures. It is only fair to say that some aspects of the first-century situation, even quite important ones, remain obscure and contentious. But two major facts are clear. First, Palestine, at least as far as the towns were concerned, had become deeply affected by Greek culture during the three centuries before the time of Jesus. It showed itself in public matters such as civic architecture (e.g. Herod's Temple in Jerusalem, built just before Jesus' time), leisure provision (amphitheatres, games), commerce and language (Greek inscriptions on buildings and burial urns); in matters of the mind, so that for example the old Jewish tradition of wisdom writing (classically represented in Proverbs) seems to have absorbed elements of Greek thought (e.g. in Job and Ecclesiasticus). While politically the area that would later be called Syria Palestina was, in Jesus' day, part of the Roman empire, its Herodian rulers and many aspects of the Jewish life over which they presided were in practice deeply affected by Hellenistic culture especially in the upper reaches of Jewish society. It is much less clear how far the countryside was affected: throughout the Mediterranean world, old indigenous cultures tended to survive intact outside the limits of the towns and cities. The town of Sepphoris, only a few miles from Nazareth, was being rebuilt along Hellenistic lines in the

years of Jesus' youth, but it is impossible to be sure how far such a place would radiate its influence and in exactly what respects. Certainly it is never referred to in the gospels. We shall discuss the setting of Jesus' own life later: suffice it to say here that the extent of his exposure to things Greek *may* have been minimal.

5. Secondly, in the Diaspora (i.e. among the Jews living in the cities of the Mediterranean world), Greek was the predominant medium—even the Scriptures had been translated (the Septuagint); and it is this more firmly Hellenized Judaism that forms the background for most, perhaps all, the NT writers and their books. That does not imply total cultural homogeneity: there were many styles and grades of the conditioning of Judaism by Hellenistic thought and Greek language, and the early Christians whose outlook is encountered through the books of the NT differ a good deal along these lines. None of them displays more than a perfunctory acquaintance with Greek literature (Acts 17:28; 1 Cor 15:33): overwhelmingly their literary formation comes from the Jewish Scriptures, mostly in their Greek form, and often with emphasis on some parts more than others—depending perhaps on the availability of expensive and cumbersome scrolls.

On the other hand, some of them show knowledge of Greek literary forms. Thus, there is a good case for saying that the gospels have affinities with Roman and Greek lives of celebrated figures (Burridge 1992). To judge from books of the period, Luke's preface (1:1–4) indicates that he saw himself as providing a kind of handbook about Jesus, whether for the Christian community or for a wider public (Alexander 1993). Mark shows signs of a degree of training in rhetoric as taught in the Greek schools of the period (Beavis 1989), and the same may be true of Paul (Betz 1979). These writers, for all the Jewishness of their thought and culture, were dependent also on the Greek culture of the setting in which they had been formed—and unselfconsciously so. In their very different ways—and the same variety is found among Jewish writers of the period—they drew upon Greek models. They were part and parcel of their habitat. Partly because of this close interweaving of Judaism and Hellenism by this time, it is not always easy to assign a given feature of a NT book to Jewish or Greek influence. It can still be discussed, for example, whether the prologue of the Gospel of John owes more to the Jewish tradition of 'wisdom' writing or to Greek philosophical discourse of a

Platonist kind; and though current opinion tends to the former opinion, the matter is immediately complicated by the understanding that the wisdom tradition itself had already been open to strands of Platonist thinking (Hengel 1974; Meyers and Strange 1981).

6. Attempts to produce more exotic sources for central early Christian ways of thinking or behaving have failed to earn a permanent place in our picture of the time. The suggestion is made that Paul's ideas on baptism, seeing it in terms of dying and rising with Christ (Rom 6:3–11), and perhaps John's on the eucharist, in terms of eating and drinking Christ's flesh and blood (6: 51–8), have links to supposed beliefs of mystery cults or other esoteric sects, but the chronological difficulties in making some of these connections (especially if gnostic links are introduced) can scarcely be removed and the match of mental worlds is a long way from being exact (Wagner 1967; Wedderburn 1987). At points like these, there must be space for real Christian originality. On any showing, Paul and John were figures of great creativity. Equally, whatever the roots and affinities of his teaching, the impact of Jesus and his followers in the years following his lifetime was so great and so novel that it is vain to hope that every aspect of thought about him, every item of Christian observance, can be shown to be derived easily and directly from phenomena already present in one circle or another in the vastly diverse religious scene of the first-century Mediterranean world. Jesus, the new, unique factor, produced new patterns, new ways of looking at the world. In the gospel's own words, it really was a case of new wine even when there might be old bottles to contain it.

7. Let us look a little more closely at some of the varieties of Hellenized Jewishness, now Christianized, that are visible to us in the NT. With the possible exception of the author of Luke–Acts (and even he was imbued with Jewish lore and culture), every one of the main NT writers was almost certainly Jewish in birth and upbringing. But they exhibit a variety of styles of Jewishness as currently found in various parts of the Jewish world. None of them matches the sophisticated Platonized mentality that Philo of Alexandria was bringing to bear on traditional Jewish themes and biblical texts at precisely the time of Christianity's birth. But Matthew's gospel, for example, with its many scriptural quotations, is the work of someone skilled in the contemporary scribal techniques of biblical interpretation, as abundant examples

in the Dead Sea scrolls have demonstrated (Stendahl 1968; Goulder 1974). The kind of training to which they testify, in a work written in Greek, comes most naturally from a Syrian context, affected by the methods elaborated in nearby Palestine and by issues (of law observance) that were hotly debated in the sectarian life of the Jewish heartland in the period (Sanders 1992). Paul and John show similar expertise in the handling of scriptural texts, and the former tells of his background in Pharisaism (Phil 3:5), which operated in a thought-world of such interpretation. John's gospel can be seen as a thoroughgoing reworking of scriptural themes and symbols (light, life, bread, shepherd, lamb), applying them to the determinative figure of Jesus.

8. Luke's reliance on the traditional Scriptures comes out in an ability to write in a Septuagintal style where the context demands it. So, while the stories of the birth of John Baptist and Jesus (1–2) contain no biblical quotations, their language is biblical from end to end, and the characters they depict evoke familiar scriptural figures, most obviously Hannah (1 Sam 2) in the case of Mary, but also couples such as Abraham and Sarah and Manoah and his wife (Jdt 13), who serve to create an ethos of profound biblical piety and solid embeddedness in history for the life of Jesus which follows. Luke is deeply imbued with biblical language and the biblical story.

9. The latter comes out in passages such as Stephen's speech (Acts 7), with its survey of Jewish history presented in a manner reminiscent of numerous Jewish writings (most notably and extensively the contemporary historian Josephus), including its mixture of example and warning. In the NT, the same feature appears in Hebrews, most explicitly in ch. 11.

10. In the NT it is plain that we are reading the work of people soaked in the stories, images, themes and language of the Jewish Scriptures (chiefly in their Greek translation). This sense of thorough permeation comes across nowhere more strongly than in the Revelation of John, where there are no quotations yet almost everything is owed to a disciplined reflection on the books of Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Daniel in their own symbolic and linguistic terms. To call it pastiche would be to undervalue the degree of ingenuity and visionary creativity displayed in this reminding of old motifs in the light of Jesus and beliefs about his person and significance (Farrer 1949; Sweet 1979).

11. The Jewish background of the NT writings comes out as clearly and distinctively as anywhere in the cosmic framework within which their reflection on Jesus and his achievement is set. It is true that much Jewish religious energy went into the minutiae of the application of the Law to daily living, both in spheres that we should call secular and in matters of plain religious observance: Judaism drew no line between the two as far as the applicability of the Law was concerned. In other words, Judaism was (and is) a faith and a lifestyle that viewed the present with intense seriousness and subjected daily conduct to the closest scrutiny (Sanders 1985, 1992).

12. But alongside this concern with the details of present living, and to our eyes perhaps at variance with it, we find, sometimes (as at Qumran) in the same circles, an equally intense interest in the future destiny of the individual, of Israel, and indeed of the world as a whole. This concern with the future and with the cosmic dimension is part and parcel of the Jewish mentality which the first Christians inherited, and both in many of its characteristics and in its strength it differentiated Judaism from other speculative systems and 'end-expectations' of the time. This strength is generally thought to be closely related to the cohesiveness of the Jewish people (despite geographical dispersion) and to the many national catastrophes and disappointments they had endured. These pressures gave rise to extravagant and even desperate hopes of divine intervention and the restoration of Israel. But the power and grandeur of this understanding was enhanced by the strong underlying tradition of monotheism. It was the one God of the universe whose purpose would soon be fulfilled (Rowland 1982).

13. Christian expressions of this world-outlook, centring on the figure of Jesus as God's agent in the hoped-for intervention, are to be found in one form or another in most of the NT books, most notably in the Revelation, a work that is (apart from the letters in chs. 2–3) wholly couched in the idiom of apocalyptic, focused on the heavenly realities and the consummation about to be revealed.

14. But this perspective is by no means confined to Revelation. Jesus himself is depicted as imbued with it in all the gospels, but especially in the first three (Mk 13; Mt 24; Lk 17, 21; but also Jn 5:24–7). Not only does it therefore carry his authority, but its presence as an important constituent in these works lends to each of them as a whole an apocalyptic character: if the modern

reader is inclined to skip over these passages, that is simply a symptom of the gap between then and now. Moreover, the actual expression of this feature goes well beyond the chapters that are formally labelled 'apocalyptic', extending, for example, to parables which look forward to cosmic judgement (eg Mt 13:36–43; 25:1–46; Lk 12:35–40). This placing of apocalyptic material cheek by jowl with narrative is already found in Jewish models such as Daniel and serves to place the story as a whole against a cosmic backcloth: we may seem to be reading about events in Galilean villages, but in fact the story is set in the context of the whole universe, heaven and earth and Hades. What is being described has a meaning far beyond that of earthly events and words, however impressive or profound. Further, while the Gospel of John has little explicit apocalyptic material in a formal sense, and its precise literary background is not easily defined, there is a good case for saying that in this work Jesus is seen in his entire career as a manifestation of the divine from heaven—with the consummation of God's purposes both embodied and so concretely anticipated in his life and death. It is a revelatory work *par excellence* (Meeks in Ashton (ed.) 1986; Ashton 1991).

15. Paul too clearly works within an eschatological framework that is apocalyptic or revelatory in character, that is, he sees history, under God's energetic providence, moving rapidly to a climax of judgement and of renewal for his people; and in expressing this conviction he uses the revelatory imagery familiar, in various forms and combinations, in Judaism. There will be judgement according to moral deserts (2 Cor 5:10; Rom 2:16); there will be a resurrection seen as the transformation of God's faithful ones into the form of spiritual bodies (1 Cor 15:35–56); there will even be what amounts to a new creation (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 6:15).

16. For both Paul and John, especially, this picture is linked strikingly to the coming of Jesus and in effect given a new shape as a result of the conviction that the fulfilment of God's purpose centres on him. This conviction necessitates an intensifying of the apocalyptic sense and a shift in its temporal framework. If Jesus is the decisive revelation of God and agent of his purpose, then the process of cosmic consummation is already under way and those who adhere to him embody the fulfilment of Israel's hope. Here is the essential (and radical) amendment to the Jewish picture of things that makes for Christian distinctiveness. It may have taken

some decades to be widely manifest and institutionally plain, but from our earliest source (the letters of Paul) the Christian movement was on its own new path. From a Jewish point of view, this was a fatal distortion of the heritage—especially when, already for Paul, it involved the free inclusion of Gentiles within the new people of God. From the Christian side, it is the goal to which all has tended. No wonder Christians immediately had to set about the appropriation of the old Scriptures—the agreed data—to their picture of things; no wonder the Scriptures were the battleground in the struggle to decide whose right it was to inherit the mantle of Israel's history and God-given privileges.

17. The attaching of a hitherto future hope to the career of Jesus, now past, and to the life of the church, the people that stemmed from him, was a decisive shift; all the more so when (as we shall see) that career was by no means the obvious match to the terms of that hope. In order to accomplish the shift, the apparatus or imagery of apocalyptic was the most readily available tool. So: Jesus was cast (and had perhaps cast himself) in the role of instigator of the fulfilment of God's purpose; the resurrection process began in his own rising on the third day; the Spirit of God, whose outpouring in a new God-given vitality was associated with the coming consummation, was already experienced in the Christian groups (1 Cor 12:1–13; Rom 8); judgement could be seen as linked to the act of adherence to Jesus or the refusal to make that act—to accept the shelter of his gift of overwhelming grace was to come safely to the far side of judgement and into a state of reconciliation with God (Rom 5:1–11; 2 Cor 5:17–21; Jn 5:24). It made a breathtaking offer and no wonder it was put in the most audacious terms.

18. Paul and John saw the implications of this reworking of old categories more clearly than others: it is certainly carried through in their work more thoroughly than in any other of the NT writings. For both of them, concentration on the decisiveness of Jesus is combined with a sense of driving on towards an assured end. The Jewish framework of the one God of the universe, the achieving of whose purpose of salvation will assuredly be realized, is preserved intact. What is new is, first, that it centres on Jesus and is seen as visibly guaranteed by his life, death, and resurrection (and that very attachment to an actual human career, capable inevitably of numerous assessments, opened the door immediately to controversy); and, second, that the fulfilment now has both an urgency

and an institutional frame (the church). Only the Qumran sect could rival it in Judaism in this sense of urgency and expectancy, and that group lacked universality of vision and missionary drive, so that its failure to survive the Jewish rebellion of 66–73 CE is in no way surprising. By that time, the followers of Jesus, with their openness to all-comers, Jew and Gentile alike, were well established in the main towns and cities of the Mediterranean world.

19. Only in some of the later books of the NT (1 and 2 Tim, Titus, 2 Pet) do we begin to get a sense of the slackening of the kind of dynamism we have been noticing, a loss of the creative theological vision which had set the people of Jesus on their own distinctive path. The church is here just beginning to be the defender of a system, of both thought and organization, rather than the originator of a novel response to God's action in the world. Sociology teaches us to see such a development as inevitable (von Campenhausen 1969; Holmberg 1990). It is a remarkable fact about the Gospel of John that, in these same last years of the first century, it is able to produce a more thoroughly creative reworking of the traditional Jewish pattern of history, in the light of Jesus, than any other early Christian writing. Anyone inclined to think in terms of single-track, linear development should reflect that, with regard to the basic perspectives that we have been discussing, we find an essential community of mind between Paul, the first Christian writer of all, and John, writing towards the end of the period.

20. Anyone who knows about the ancient world will wish to raise questions about this account of the NT's cultural milieu. The pervasive Hellenizing of the life of the societies around the Mediterranean, especially in the East, must surely point to certain influences on which nothing has been said. Was this not a world in which the great philosophical achievements of Plato and Aristotle, not to speak of Stoics, Cynics, and Pythagoreans, were currents in the prevailing air? It has to be said that the great philosophies have left little trace in these writings. This is not wholly explained by their dominant Jewishness, for, as the case of Philo shows, Judaism was not in itself inimical to the Platonist idiom of thought. It is more a matter of the social strata from which the NT writers came. They were, by definition, not illiterate, but either their education was scriptural or scribal in content and manner or it stopped at a stage on the ladder below that where serious philosophical teaching would have occurred.

All we get then is perhaps a few scraps of Stoicism, possibly affecting Paul's teaching on 'nature' in Rom 1 and 2:14–15, and showing itself in the discussion of the divine in Acts 17:22–31, and in a few other features; and, a subject of much current discussion, Cynic moral wisdom as a factor behind some aspects of Jesus' teaching. It is a disputed question, not so much whether parallels can be identified, as whether, in the circumstances of Jesus' Galilee (or indeed of the evangelists), Cynic influence is at all probable. The day was not far distant, however, when philosophy (chiefly Platonist and Stoic) was to provide a framework of thought in which Christian thinkers sought to operate. Within a few years of the writing of the last books to find a place in the NT (120 CE?), such attempts were beginning to get into their stride.

D. The Church of the New Testament. 1. The Christian church is both depicted in most of the books of the NT and presupposed by all of them. Every one of them is the product of one setting or another in the early Christian communities. Sometimes the location of that setting is actually stated; in other cases it is not hard to see a good deal about its character. Though most of the books bear the name of a single author, there is good reason to think that, even if those ascriptions were in fact accurate (and most of them probably are not), we ought to see these writings partly as productions of the church. While they reflect the thought of some single mind—a genuine author—they were not written in isolation in some equivalent of a modern author's secluded retreat, but from the midst of a particular group of Christians with whom the author was in close interaction. Even the author of Revelation, shut away on Patmos, has his mind on the fellow-Christians from whom he is separated.

2. But, as we saw earlier, churches were not all of one kind or, in many matters, of a single mind. They differed in geographical location; in exposure to some of the cultural features that have been described; in their relation to Jewish observances and the local Jewish community; in attitudes to leading Christian figures such as Peter and Paul; in social composition (Jews, Gentiles, rich, poor); in the handling of moral problems, such as divorce and the scope of generosity. While the Christian churches were a far closer network than any other organization of the time that is at all comparable (and this is surely a major factor in their success, both now and later), held

together by visits, letters, and a measure of supervisory responsibility felt by founders and leaders and by one church for another, they were nevertheless often strung out across great distances and surely were compelled to engage in much independent decision-making. As letters such as Galatians and 1 Corinthians show very well, the independence and the supervision could find themselves on a collision course. Many of the NT writings were indeed both an instrument of cohesion (as in due course they recommended themselves to a variety of communities) and a product of difference (in so far as they were designed to meet local and transient needs, or to counter or correct lines taken in other writings and places).

3. If our interest is in the churches within or for whom the NT books were produced, then the most obvious place to begin—and the place where we shall get the most direct results—is the corpus of genuine letters by the apostle Paul. Here is the most transparent (or at any rate the least opaque) window available to us as we seek to look at the life of early Christian communities. That immediately creates narrowness, for they cover only a limited range of churches—in Greece and Macedonia (1 and 2 Cor, 1 and 2 Thess, Phil), Asia Minor (Gal, Col, Philem), and Italy (Rom). (Other letters are of uncertain Pauline authorship or unclear geographical destination: Eph, 1 and 2 Tim, Titus.) Moreover, they vary a great deal in the degree to which they illuminate for us the lives of those to whom they are addressed—as distinct from the thought and interests of Paul who addresses them. Clearest of all is the church in Corinth, where we have the two NT letters (the first of them directly concerned with a welter of practical problems) and personal information from Rom 16, written at Corinth and including greetings from members of the Corinthian church. And Acts 18 gives an account of Paul's initial mission in the city. There is also archaeological and literary material shedding light on the Corinthian background (Theissen 1982; Meeks 1983; Murphy-O'Connor 1983).

4. What is perhaps most surprising about this community, established in the early 50s, is the small degree to which its manifold problems appear to reflect difficulties that are related to Christianity's Jewish origins. There were, it appears, some Jewish members, but what one might expect to be their concerns (Law observance, relations to Gentile members, and scriptural interpretation) scarcely figure. This was,

already, largely a Gentile community, and most of its problems sprang from overexuberant and élitist religiosity on the part of the most articulate and wealthy members. More clearly than any other NT writings, these letters give evidence of a church whose cohesion was made precarious by the dominance of these religious 'experts'. Precarious, that is, in the eyes of Paul, who insists that all-embracing dependence on Christ implies the transcending of social and racial divisions (1 Cor 1–4; 12:13) and the giving of full honour and consideration to the simpler and poorer members (11:17–34; 12:1–13). In Paul's perception, the Lord's supper was to be the outward manifestation of this basic equality of generous love, rather than the focus of social division that it had become in Corinthian practice. They were simply continuing to run their meetings along the hierarchical lines taken for granted in a place such as Corinth in households and in guilds and associations of various kinds.

5. Galatians gives evidence of a different situation. Here it is indeed the implications of Christ for the adherence of his followers to Jewish observance that is in question, in particular the traditional Jewish identity-markers of circumcision, sabbath, and food rules. This letter gives a vivid picture of the bitterness caused by this issue (1–2 especially). Whether or not Paul was the first to see adherence to Christ as transcending this observance, and so as eliminating it at least as far as Gentile Christians were concerned (and therefore in effect dethroning it for all Christians), he it was who gave a rationale, scripturally based at that, for resistance to the imposition of the old Jewish marks of valid membership of God's people (3–4; see also Rom 4).

6. Some writings point to there being groupings of churches, whether on a geographical basis, or in relation to a shared missionary-founder. There would often be a shared language—a particular idiom or set of ideas in which to express Christian belief. This is most easily seen in the case of the communities visible in the Johannine Epistles. Here we have evidence of a number of Christian groups (it is unclear how many), where there is a limited degree of common acquaintance (3 Jn) and so perhaps a fairly wide geographical spread, but all sharing some sort of organizational unity (2 Jn 1)—and having to struggle to maintain it (3 Jn). The basis of this unity, fragile as it was, was the form of Christian belief whose classic expression was in the Gospel of John, with its

distinctive, finely tuned vocabulary of key words (light, life, truth, word), endlessly re-woven like elements in a complex fugue. But it is plain that there was no machinery for the exerting of rigid discipline among these Johannine Christians: the occasion for the first two letters is the emergence of division about the interpretation of their manner of belief concerning the person of Jesus. It is also plain that, even in the short time that must have elapsed between the writing of the gospel and the letters, some of the key words changed subtly in sense, in response to the quarrels. 'Love', for example, becomes a duty confined to the like-minded (Brown 1979).

7. The Revelation of John, with its letters to seven churches in Asia Minor (chs. 2–3), may again testify to some kind of group consciousness among a set of congregations, though it is unclear whether the admonitory role adopted by the seer is self-appointed or represents a formal acceptance by these churches of a special relationship. That such groupings might not be tight or exclusive is suggested by the fact that the church in the major centre of Ephesus appears in three different sets: the seven churches of Revelation, the largely different seven churches who received letters from Ignatius of Antioch (c.110 CE), and the Pauline foundations (Acts 19). The speed with which the main NT writings seem to have circulated itself suggests the effectiveness of at least informal ties among the churches, as does such a project as the collecting of Paul's letters, presumably from the churches which had initially received them, a process perhaps concluded by the end of the first century.

8. What has been said so far about the early Christian communities may seem to point to virtual simultaneity among the situations depicted; and it may seem that as, at the outside, the time-span of their composition was no more than seventy years (say, 50–120 CE), and as the period is so distant and obscure, there is little scope for attempts to refine that approach. But we are not entirely without the possibility of identifying developments even within that relatively short period, though certainty very often eludes us.

9. The first development was the shift in the character of the Christian movement from the period of Jesus' ministry to the subsequent mission and the living of the Christian life. Our written sources in the NT itself, the gospels and Acts, present it as the smoothest of transitions. At first there was, it seems, a brief time of Galilean ministry by Jesus and a small group of

adherents, supported from time to time by transient and anonymous crowds. It was marked by constant movement, and a few references to Jesus' home (Mk 2:1, 15) scarcely modify this picture of endless mobility. The fact that the dominant mode of Christian life soon came to be settled and static speaks for the accuracy of this picture: any temptation to redescribe Jesus' circumstances in the light of later times has been resisted.

10. This time was also marked by the rural character of its setting: the big urban centres of Galilee in Jesus' day, notably Sepphoris and Tiberias, are conspicuous by their absence, even though the former was only a few miles from Nazareth where Jesus was brought up. There are of course numerous references to 'cities', in general and by name, but none of them is much more than a village or small town in modern terms. They were small settlements in an overwhelmingly peasant-dominated and agriculture-centred world. We have already seen that, in congruity with this mode of life, this was a setting where Aramaic was the dominant language and where literacy and a wider culture were almost certainly rare. While, like the wandering character of Jesus' ministry, the rural setting has amply survived any attempt the evangelists might have been expected to make to conform their account of Jesus' activities to the urban setting of the churches of their own experience, the Semitic speech has been almost totally obliterated (Mk 5:41; 7:34; 14:36—all dropped by Matthew and Luke in their parallel passages), and Jesus is depicted as possessing both scriptural knowledge and technical interpretative skill, including the ability to read (Lk 4:17), and even perhaps some acquaintance with current popular moral teaching with Cynic affinities. The question attributed to the people in the synagogue (Mk 6:2), 'Where did this man get all this?' has never been satisfactorily answered, except in the terms of supernatural endowment—which the evangelist is no doubt content for us to entertain. However, it has to be said that evidence about synagogues in Galilee in this precise period (as distinct from a little later) and about educational opportunities at village level is practically non-existent and intelligent guesses vary, some more optimistic than the tone adopted here (Freyne 1988).

11. Leaving these matters aside, we do not have to look for the reason behind the original organizational simplicity, even indifference, of the movement that centred on Jesus. It lay

surely in the vivid sense of God's imminent fulfilment of his saving purpose—to which, as we have seen, the gospels (not to speak of Paul and most other early Christian writers) bear witness. True, in the Qumran sect we have a Jewish group that combined such a sense (despite their existence for two centuries without its realization) with the most meticulous rules and observance covering every aspect of the common life. But in the case of both John Baptist and Jesus, the policy is different: open not secluded, of mass appeal not separatist, personal not immediately communal in its effects. There is not much sign in the gospels (and again the resistance of inevitable pressure to conform the story to later situations is impressive) of any attempt by either of these charismatic figures to ensure the survival and stability of a movement, with the structural provision which that requires. What there is, for example the commission to Peter (Mt 16:17–19), has all the marks of coming from later times: in this example, the words are added by Matthew to Mark's narrative, reducing it to confusion when we read on to 'Get behind me, Satan', addressed now to one just assured of the most crucial role in the church. Even when such material is taken into account, it does not amount to a blueprint: in the later first century, when the gospels were written, the church had still not reached a Qumran-like point, where every detail of life should be provided for by rule. The strong eschatological impulse from Jesus had not exhausted itself, despite the great changes which had nevertheless occurred.

12. Those changes were indeed momentous. Almost all the features of Jesus' ministry that have been described were replaced by their contraries. Mesmerized by the smoothness of the transition as described by Luke, as we move from his gospel to the beginning of Acts, readers have been reluctant to grasp how incongruous are the 'before' and the 'after'. Much attention has long been given to the question of how and why the Christian movement survived the death of its founder and the seeming failure of all his hopes and promises; and in answering that question, attention has focused chiefly on the resurrection of Jesus as offering, somehow, the key to the problem's solution. But there is the at least equally fascinating institutional problem. Evidence to shed light on it is almost non-existent, and Luke has thrown us off any scent there might be, encouraging us to see the move as the most natural thing you could imagine: of course, Jesus' followers simply

established themselves in Jerusalem, where they happened to be, and started preaching.

13. In fact it was remarkable that, in institutional terms, the Christian movement survived the crisis. It was done at the cost of severe changes to some of its central attributes and perspectives. Most obviously, there was a shift from rural to urban settings, probably first in Jerusalem, as Acts says, but soon in other major cities—Antioch (one of the largest cities of the ancient world) and then, in due course, in Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome, in the 40s and 50s. The world of Galilee was left behind. Indeed, with the exception of a single allusion in Acts 9:31, we have no clear evidence of Christian activity there after Jesus left for Jerusalem. For all we can tell, his work there was without trace—a passing whirlwind. (References to appearances of the risen Jesus there, in Mt 28 and Jn 21, are of uncertain value in this regard and nothing visible follows from them.)

14. There was a shift too (and necessarily, given the urban locations) from itinerant to settled life, with missions undertaken from permanent urban centres. The result of this shift was that tensions arose between the more mobile missionaries and the members of Christian congregations who did not normally reckon to leave their city boundaries and whose Christian life soon expressed also a change from a movement of unorganized individual adherents, many of them perhaps transiently impressed by the preaching of Jesus (the 'crowds' of the gospels), to one of tightly knit congregations, many of their members belonging probably to a small number of households in a given place and living quite circumscribed lives, marked in all kinds of ways by their Christian allegiance. We have seen that the letters of Paul testify amply to some of the problems resulting from this new allegiance, working its way within the social framework of such cities of the Graeco-Roman world as Corinth and Thessalonica.

15. We said that the strong sense of an imminent manifestation of God's power, to judge and then to save his own, survived the lifetime of Jesus—it is the framework of Paul's faith—and the shift to a more organized mode of existence. But certain of its concomitants in the earlier phase are no longer prominent. It was not practicable in the circumstances of an urban institution to follow the pattern of abandonment of family and property which is so strong in the preaching of Jesus. No doubt, with the exception of Jesus' immediate circle of itinerant preachers, there was always a

measure of metaphor in the interpretation of this theme: Peter was married when he 'forsook all and followed' Jesus (Mk 1:16–20, 29–31), and remained so (1 Cor 9:5), and indeed Mark studiously omits wives from the list of relations to be left behind (10:29–31; cf. the prohibition of divorce in 10:1–12)—though Luke (looking back through ascetic rose-tinted spectacles?) does not (18:29). The message might be interiorized into attitudes of single-mindedness and self-abnegation, or modified to spur Christians into generosity (forsaking not all wealth but certainly some), whether to the needy of the Christian group or to outsiders (Lk 10:25–37). There is astonishingly little on these themes in the ethical sections of the letters of Paul (Rom 12:13; 16:1–2 on giving; and 1 Cor 7:12–16 on marital problems in relation to conversion); though it is hard to believe that passages such as Mk 1:16–20 did not resonate with people whose Christian decision cost them dear in terms of family relationships and inheritance (cf. Jn 9).

16. Christian family life, with its development of injunction and advice for its regulation, was not long in becoming a primary concern in the urban congregations. It had soon become an institution in its own right, and it figures in one form or another in many of the NT letters (1 Cor 7; Col 3:18–4:1; Eph 5:21–6:9; 1 Pet 2:18–3:7), in terms much like those found in both Jewish and Greek compendia dealing with the same themes. The church had become domesticated. The note of abandonment, as a constant sound in the Christian ear, was muted, as emphasis shifted to the maintenance of church life.

17. It has become common to give more attention to a second transition in church life during the period in which the NT books were written, and sometimes it has been exaggerated or misleadingly described, perhaps in surrender to the impulse to contrast an early golden age with subsequent decline. This is the development in the later years of the first century and the earlier years of the second, of a greater concern to formalize and legitimate Christian institutions of many kinds. The first moves towards an authorized body of Christian writings probably belong to this time and are one mark of this trend. Others include the final replacement of itinerant missionaries (such as Paul and his associates) by the leaders of local churches, so that the churches now bear the weight of Christian organization and authority: there is no outside body to turn to, except other churches comparable to one's

own. Despite the emergence of networks and groupings, local leaders became more prominent, and in more and more places, a single 'supervisor' (*episkopos*, later acquiring the status of a Christian technical term, 'bishop') came into being as the chief officer of the Christian community. As a matter of history, he probably arose from among the natural leaders of household-churches in a given place, but some bishops at least soon came to see their role in much more lofty terms: as representatives of God the Father and vehicles of the Spirit's utterance. The letters of Ignatius of Antioch (c.110 CE; Staniforth and Louth 1987) show us a man whose high sense of his place in the Christian scheme of things makes Paul's idea of an apostle pale by comparison (Campbell 1994).

18. There is little surviving evidence, but it is likely that forms of worship came to be formulated in the same period. The *Didache* (not in the NT and unknown until a single manuscript came to light in 1873) contains forms of eucharistic prayer from Syria, probably from the late first century. There are signs too of an increasing concern with conformity to whatever in a particular place was seen as orthodoxy: both the Johannine and the Pastoral Epistles show this trait, and in the latter case, there is more interest in urging such conformity than in elaborating on the beliefs actually involved. These pseudonymously Pauline letters are also insistent on the need for respectable behaviour, acceptable to society at large, and on the sober qualities required in church leaders (1 Tim 2:1–4; 3:1–11). It is all a far cry from the exuberance and brave independence of mind that mark the mission of Paul half a century before.

19. All the same, it does not do to paint too sharp a contrast between the solid and perhaps unexciting interests visible in some of the late NT writings and the enthusiasm and innovation of earlier days. If Paul is aware of the inspirational force of the Spirit in himself and among his converts, Ignatius shows comparable assurance, speaking with the voice of God. He is no mere ecclesiastical official, basing his position on human legitimation and just, as it were, doing a job for the church. On the other hand, Paul himself is far from being uninterested in due order in his Christian communities. It may sometimes have been hard to achieve or, as in Corinth, power had come to be concentrated in persons he disapproved of—even if they were themselves, it appears, claiming charismatic

inspiration. But the whole tone of his correspondence shows an acute concern for properly accredited leadership, as 1 Cor 16:15–17 tactfully indicates. He was no lover of spiritual anarchy (Holmberg 1978).

20. However the matter is analysed in detail—and there is room for difference of opinion—it is evident that the churches underwent considerable changes, even within the relatively brief period to which the NT testifies and even to the extent of producing contradictory opinions and policies (for example on ethical questions such as the continuing role of the Jewish Law in daily life, Houlden 1973).

21. It is to be noted that all this took place among a still obscure body of people—spreading rapidly across the Mediterranean map and growing in numbers right through the century, but, in the writings available to us, showing little awareness of the world of the history textbook. There are, however, some marks of that world: the author of Revelation has his eyes on the fate of the Roman Empire and is aware of the rise and fall of emperors; Luke knows about Roman governors and other officials in the territories he describes, as well as something of the system they operate (Sherwin-White 1963; Lentz 1993). Yet the events that might be expected to have made an impact on the late first-century writings of a religious group with Jewish antecedents—the Jewish rebellion in Judea, the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple at Roman hands, and the mass suicide at Masada—have left only oblique traces, such as elements in a parable (Mt 22:7) and symbol-laden prophecies on Jesus' lips (Lk 21:20–4). On the face of it, this is astonishing, so much so that some critics have been led (in the teeth of all other considerations) to date the NT books well before those happenings of 66–73 CE (Robinson 1976). It may be better to see this silence as evidence of the degree to which the Christian communities responsible for these books had by the time of writing abandoned their Palestinian and, in many cases, their Jewish roots, at least in social and institutional terms. These events impinged, on people whose loyalties and interests now lay elsewhere and who were removed from the immediate scene, less than seems to modern people to be credible.

22. Finally, part of the explanation lies also in the high concentration that marked the self-understanding of the Christian communities: they had strongly formed beliefs not just about God and Jesus, but also about the church itself. In other words, the detached and analyt-

ical terms in which the church has been discussed in this article would have been wholly alien to them. In Jesus' own preaching, there can be little doubt that, even if he did not establish 'cells' of followers in the Galilean countryside and villages (and there is no sign of such groups), his preaching of the dawn of God's kingdom, his visible and effective sovereignty, involved communal assumptions. What was to emerge was a purified and rejuvenated 'people of God'—some sort of 'Israel'.

23. The urbanizing of Christianity, visible in Paul and elsewhere, brought no break in this 'Israel-consciousness'. Above all in Rom 9–11, Paul produced a complex and ingenious theory to demonstrate the continuity between the Israel of the Scriptures and the Christian community, made up of Jews and Gentiles on equal terms (at least in Paul's determined view). But Paul also saw the church in a quite different perspective, one that was in tension, if not contradiction, with the idea of continuity which his Jewish roots and his sense of the one God of history would not allow him to forgo. This other perspective, for which he also argued with great skill and passion, centred on Christ and the sheer novelty that had come on the scene with him. It was nothing less than a new creation (2 Cor 5:17), with Jesus as a new Adam, starting the human journey off all over again (Rom 5:12–21; 1 Cor 15:22). In him, the human race was created afresh. Paul's highly concentrated image of the church as Christ's body encapsulates this consciousness, in which the Jew–Gentile divide is not so much overcome as undermined and rendered irrelevant (1 Cor 12; Rom 12; Gal 3:28). By clever scriptural arguments, chiefly involving the figure of Abraham (Gal 3; Rom 4), Paul sought to reconcile these two perspectives. They did not convince Jews, and while Christians mostly maintained that they were the true heirs of the old Israel, it was the idea of their membership 'in Christ', expressed in baptism and eucharist, and worked out in following his teaching as found in the gospels, that chiefly occupied their practical consciousness. John's gospel systematically shows Jesus, and then those attached to him as branches to vine and as sheep to shepherd (15:10), as embodying and absorbing all the great attributes and properties that had belonged to Judaism and the people of Israel. They belonged now to the people of Jesus.

E. Jesus and the New Testament. 1. It might be expected that an introduction to the NT

would open with an account of Jesus rather than delay the subject to the end. After all, directly or obliquely, Jesus is the subject of most of the NT books, and is the most significant factor in their ever having been written at all. There are, however, good reasons for the roundabout approach to the heart of the matter. For, despite all his prominence, Jesus is in the NT a figure to be approached with caution. For one thing, much depends on the reader's interest: whether, for example, you are keen to find out about the facts and circumstances of Jesus' life, personality, and teaching, or about the origins and terms of faith in him. There is a well-grounded distinction between Jesus as a figure of early first-century Jewish history and Jesus as the object of devotion and faith, presupposed by all the NT writers; with the resurrection (that most difficult of phenomena to pin down) as the hinge between the two.

2. It is a basic truth that, whatever the claims and the appearances, Jesus is never encountered 'neat' in the NT. Apart from the fact that the gospels are unlikely to be the work of stenographers who hung on Jesus' every word and of adherents who witnessed his every act, those brief books have all the inevitable distortion that goes with selectivity; moreover, it is apparent that the selectivity was not unprincipled or merely random. It worked by way of filters, some obvious, others more hypothetical, by which material was affected on its way into the gospels we read. We have already referred to the frequently ignored filter of translation of speech from Aramaic into Greek. It is accompanied by the equally frequently ignored filter by which the material moves from an originally uneducated Galilean and rural setting to more sophisticated urban settings, in Syria, Asia Minor, or elsewhere, where much vital original colouring must have been invisible. Sometimes the provision of new colouring is obvious enough: the well-known example of the tile-roofed Hellenistic town house described in Luke's version of the healing of the paralytic (5:19; contrast the Palestinian house in Mk 2:4). For all we know, there are many details, large and small, in the gospels that are both harder to spot and more significant for the general picture than that.

3. Equally important as a distorting factor is the effect of developing convictions and attitudes in the church in the years following Jesus' lifetime. Some instances have proved devastating in their results, above all the way the gospels (increasingly as one succeeds another)

place responsibility for Jesus' death on Jewish heads (on *all* Jewish heads, Mt 27:25), with Pontius Pilate as their pliable but scarcely guilty accomplice (Mt 27:24; Lk 23:22). There is good reason to suppose that this is unlikely to represent the truth of the matter and that it reflects instead the increasing tension between Christians and (other) Jews, as the former were virtually compelled to define themselves over against the latter. Historically, the probability is that, at a time of governmental nervousness in a Jerusalem crowded for Passover, the Roman authorities combined with the Jewish priestly aristocracy who administered the Temple to remove one whom they perceived to be a possible occasion of civil disorder. His execution was, after all, by the Roman method in such cases, that is crucifixion (Rivkin 1984; Brown 1994).

4. But this is only the most spectacular instance of a pervasive principle, often hard to identify with assurance. Take, for example, the matter of Jesus' attitude to the Jewish Law. Did he simply take it for granted as the air he breathed, perhaps taking one side or another on subjects of current dispute, but not stepping outside the limits, as currently seen, of legitimate debate? His society did not, it seems, operate under a rigid orthodoxy and there was much diversity of interpretation about such matters as sabbath observance and tithing of produce. Or did he go beyond such bounds, offering a radical critique of the Law's very foundations? If so, it is puzzling that none of the gospels offers this as the reason for his final condemnation (though he is attacked for it in the course of the story, e.g. Mk 3:1–6). But the gospels differ in their presentation of Jesus' teaching on this subject in the course of his ministry.

5. In brief, Mark depicts him as radical, marginalizing food taboos and the priority of sabbath observance (7:19; 2:23–3:6) and downplaying the sacrificial system in favour of an ethic of active love (12:28–34); while John shows him superseding the Law in his own person as the medium of God's disclosure to his people (1:17; 2:21; 7:37–8). Matthew, by contrast, has Jesus endorse and intensify the requirements of the Law (5:17–20; 23:23), while he takes a humane view on certain currently disputed issues (12:1–14; 19:1–9; adapting Mark). And Luke places his attitude somewhere between Mark and Matthew, rather in the spirit of the compromise he shows the Jerusalem church arriving at later in the light of substantial Gentile conversions to the church (Acts 15).

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that all these presentations have been affected by the diverse resolutions of this problem, both pressing and practical in the first decades of the Christian movement, that were adopted in various different quarters of the church.

6. Moreover, all the evangelists were writing after the shock of Paul's strong stand on this very matter, releasing Gentile converts from the adoption of the key marks of Jewish identity—sabbath observance, food laws, and circumcision—and thereby implicitly placing allegiance to Christ as the sole identity marker for all Christians. It appears that the whole subject remained contentious for some time, with a variety of positions being taken (though it remains a puzzle that neither radical nor conservative presentations in the gospels refer to the matter of circumcision on whose irrelevance Paul was so insistent, as Galatians in particular demonstrates). The upshot of all this is that we really cannot tell with certainty exactly what Jesus himself taught or practised, and scholarly opinion remains divided. Careful analyses of crucial sayings, fitting them plausibly into the setting of his time and place, always remain open to alternative interpretations which see them as reflections of the particular evangelists' views (Harvey 1982; Sanders 1993).

7. Jesus is obscured too by the fact that, by the time the gospels were written, interest in the sheer preservation of his words and ideas was overshadowed by his being the object of faith—and by the consequent need to make a case for that faith, which saw him not simply as a figure of the past who had once revealed God and his saving purposes and whose death and resurrection had given new insight into those purposes or marked their realization; but as the present heavenly Lord who enjoyed supreme triumph as God's co-regent and would soon return in the public display of that reality.

8. The scriptural text that seemed best to epitomize that faith was 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool' (Ps 110:1). This text is quoted more widely across the gamut of NT authors than any other—closely followed by 'Thou art my son, this day I have begotten thee' (Ps 2:7), less precise but not dissimilar in import. It is impossible to believe that this faith failed to colour the memory of Jesus' earthly life, even if there had been in the churches a strongly archival sense, or, more likely, a reverence for Jesus' words and the stories of his deeds, which could stand alongside that faith:

argument ranges back and forth on the balance of effect of these various aspects of the situation (Gerhardsson 1961; Stanton 1974; Meier 1991).

9. The faith in Jesus which prevents the gospels being neutral records (whatever that might mean) was largely articulated by means of material drawn from Judaism, and especially from the old Scriptures. This was partly for purposes of Christian self-understanding (to what other medium could the first Christians practically turn?) and partly for purposes of self-definition in relation to (other) Jews who did not share their assessment of Jesus and adherence to him. But this appeal to Scripture, which pervades the gospels, makes yet another screen between us and the realities of Jesus' historical life. It is an interpretative tool that was certainly used, in one form or another, by all schools of thought in the early church, but, when it comes to the gospels, we are faced with the question of whether Jesus himself initiated the process—as in the depiction that is before us. Did he not, inevitably, interpret his own mission and person in scriptural terms? If so, to which models did he appeal? And to what extent did the amplifying of this mode of thought in the church, as evidenced in the gospels and elsewhere, merely build upon his foundations and continue along lines he laid down, as distinct from moving along altogether more ambitious paths? For example, when the Gospel of John views Jesus under the image of God's pre-existent Word, his copartner in the work of creation itself (1:1–18), thus drawing on a symbol current in Judaism (e.g. Ps 33:6; Wis 9:1), there is nothing to suggest that Jesus himself made use of that category of thought. It is quite otherwise with Jewish terms such as Messiah, son of God, or son of man. These appear on his lips or are inseparable from the tradition about him. None of them is easy to interpret, and if Jesus used them, it is as likely that they received, by the very fact of their application to him if not from his explicit teaching, twists of sense, perhaps to the extent of sheer paradox, that were novel. Jesus was, after all, on any showing a most un-messianic Messiah, given the nationalistic associations of the term—if indeed he did make any such claim. And the same would be true even if in reality the claim derives from his followers after his lifetime rather than from himself.

10. None of this caution, this indirectness, is designed to say that the gospels merely obscure the figure of Jesus or tell us nothing of value about him. There are certain features of his life

and teaching that not only come across loud and clear but were less than wholly welcome in the early church—and would not therefore have survived if the church, like a traumatized individual, simply eliminated that which it no longer approved of or no longer served its purposes. We have seen that the renunciatory teachings of Jesus the Galilean charismatic preacher were toned down or repackaged quite rapidly in the more settled life of the urban churches. Yet we see them prominently displayed in the first three gospels. Much has been made (Hengel 1981) of the saying in Mt 8:22 ('Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead'), advocating, in the name of the extreme urgency of God's call and of his kingdom, a stance of provocative immorality by the standards of virtually any culture and soon abandoned in the family ethic of the church, as Eph 6:4 demonstrates. It is these harder, more uncomfortable elements in the story of Jesus which, however they may sometimes visibly, as one evangelist modifies another, have been modified by the church, speak most powerfully for the tenacity and authority of Jesus' vision, simply because it was his (Harvey 1990).

11. A promising line of enquiry begins by bypassing the gospels altogether. We know when and where Jesus lived: what then can we learn from a knowledge of the times derived from other sources, such as archaeology and histories of the period? We have already made reference to evidence of this kind: the Qumran sect and the Dead Sea scrolls left by them (Vermes 1977, 1995); the probabilities about the circumstances of Jesus' death; the mixed culture of Galilee with its peasant countryside and Hellenistic cities. But can this approach bring us nearer to a realistic view of Jesus himself, at any rate to a view of his role in the society of his time—what sort of part he played, how he may have fitted into its structure and been perceived (Finegan 1992; Stanton 1995)?

12. This more detached and wider-ranging approach does not yield unquestioned results, but many would agree that it places Jesus in a category of persons recognizable in the period (Vermes 1973). In traditional terms, such persons have affinities with the prophets of former centuries, men who stood out from the prevailing religious culture and social system, declaring the will of God and the imminence of his judgement. More sociologically, we can refer to them as charismatics, that is people whose message threatens to turn the world upside down, challenging conventional values—even those

whose morality seems unimpeachable—and looking towards an order of things where life is lived at a new level of righteousness and God is all in all. Such people rarely get much of a hearing: often their day is brief or they are snuffed out by authorities who feel endangered by them. First-century Galilee, somewhat removed from the centre of power in Jerusalem and probably unstable in its rural economy, spawned several such figures, most of them leaving practically no trace. John Baptist had more identifiable effects: he comes into the story of Jesus, and the late first-century Jewish historian Josephus (like Mark and Matthew but in somewhat different terms) tells of his execution for his righteous meddling in the affairs of the great ones in the land—a classic prophet's predicament. Moreover (and somewhat mysteriously), like Jesus, he gave rise to a group of followers who, according to Acts 18:24–19:6, had spread to Ephesus in the later years of the century—thereafter they fade from view.

13. Much of the broad picture of Jesus in the gospels coheres with this identification of his social role: the radical, shocking teaching about ties to family and property; the call to 'follow' that brooks no delay, no appeal to prudence; the ready challenge to established religious groups, even the most pious, for their routines and their self-satisfaction; the challenge to central authority—if that is how we are to construe the incident in the Temple (Mk 11:15–17) which probably precipitated the perception of Jesus as a breacher of the peace and his speedy elimination; above all, the sense of the imminent realization of God's rule.

14. However, other readings are possible and win some support, even within the method we have been describing. The picture of Jesus as charismatic leader or prophet, once put forward, seems obvious: it makes best sense of the most basic recognition of modern scholarship—that Jesus was a Jew of his time. It brings it into sharp focus and takes us behind some of the other characterizations of Jesus (for example, as the heavenly one come to earth) that soon came to dominate Christian accounts of him (Rom 1:3; Gal 4:4). But it does less than justice to certain other aspects of the gospel material: such as the teaching about there being no need for anxiety, no need for complexity of lifestyle (Mt 6:25–34); or the picture of Jesus and his followers as a band of brothers espousing freedom and simplicity of life under God's heaven, somewhat after the manner of modern opters-out from society. Jesus'

common meals with his followers (specially emphasized in Luke) were then the central symbol of this lifestyle, focused on the present.

15. This is a distinctly non-apocalyptic picture of Jesus and, in terms of Jewish heritage, seems to owe more to some facets of Jewish 'wisdom' tradition, with its provision for moral life here and now. But its associations and provenance may lie more in the teaching of Cynic philosophers who adopted values of this kind and whose influence had perhaps penetrated into northern Palestine. The straightforward view is of course, that Jesus himself sensed a directness and simplicity of filial relationship with God—it was his stance in daily life ('father' e.g. Mt 6:7–14). Alternatively, this picture may represent one style among others of church reflection on Jesus, as the tradition about him was exposed to the variegated culture of the Graeco-Roman world (Crossan 1991; 1994).

16. This discussion started, somewhat negatively, under the injunction to approach the figure of Jesus with caution: the nature of our evidence, literary and circumstantial, dictates it. But (to repeat) it would be a mistake to let caution lead to the conclusion that Jesus is a mere enigma, lost in the mists of time or a welter of church obfuscation of whatever clarity there might otherwise have been. As we have seen, some features are unmistakable and their strength shines through. But the equally unmistakable effects of church interpretation of various kinds are there in the gospels, and they lead us to our final topic: Jesus as the object of faith.

17. If we had only the letters of Paul, we should think that all that really mattered about Jesus' career was his death and resurrection: that is, its importance centred almost wholly on a period of some forty-eight hours—and if more than that, then what followed it (his heavenly rule and presence in his adherents) was more notable than what preceded it. That is the earliest Christian perspective of which we have evidence.

18. How different it is from the picture we get from the gospels. There, though the death and resurrection are plainly the climax of the narrative and occupy a disproportionate place from a purely biographical point of view, these elements are nevertheless parts of a much greater whole. To put it more succinctly, they form the end of a story, where in Paul they acted much more as the inauguration of a continuing state of affairs. It is not wholly satisfying simply to point out that these are different genres of writing and so naturally differ in their perspective. After all, none of these writers was com-

pelled to write as he did, and each wrote in a particular way because, presumably, it reflected the 'shape' of his convictions about Jesus.

19. The two perspectives meet, however, precisely in the death and resurrection, and the latter in particular may be seen as the junction between them (Evans 1970; Marxsen 1970). Luke's two-volume work (Gospel and Acts) comes nearest to meeting the need to unite Jesus' life before the resurrection and the life of the church after it—though even this narrative probably ends before the time of writing, and so, like the gospels, looks back from the Christian present to an (albeit longer) normative history. On the other hand, though the gospels do indeed describe a past that culminates in Jesus' death and resurrection, they are nevertheless imbued with a present faith in the living Christ who, in his heavenly rule, may still be said to inspire his people and even to dwell in and among them: perhaps especially in Mark and John, the backdrop is that of Jesus' past life but he addresses the present of the gospels' readers. So much is this the case that, as we have seen, we must be alert to the effects of this factor as we read the gospels with a view to discovering simply what happened and how things were in Jesus' lifetime.

20. To take a small example, but significant for that very reason (and capable of being paralleled almost limitlessly): Mk 9:40 ('Whoever is not against us is for us') suggests that Jesus urged on his followers an open, expansive attitude to possible supporters and deflects them from any narrowness or the erection of barriers and the application of tests. This is, in the words of the church poster, a case of 'All welcome'. But Mt 12:30 ('He who is not with me is against me') reflects the precise opposite. Jesus makes stringent demands on potential followers and there is no easy entry to their company: adhering is sharply distinguished from remaining outside. The boundary wall is high. Must we not see here the effects of two different outlooks in different parts of the early church, both equally comprehensible, but contrasting in their policies—and far-reaching in their twin visions of Christian life? It does not take much imagination to see that the two statements betoken two very different ways of believing in Jesus' significance and the scope of his work, as they also may be seen as the founts of two different traditions in Christian life down to our own day. The gospels, accounts of the pre-resurrection life of Jesus, then reflect the faith of the postresurrection church, in small ways as in

great. These considerations go some way to mitigate the contrast that we drew between the perspectives of Paul and the gospels.

21. From another point of view, we may indeed say that these writings—and indeed almost all the NT books (the Letter of James is a strange exception)—testify to a remarkably homogeneous faith in the centrality of Jesus as the agent of God's saving purpose. True, they differ in certain respects, in emphasis and terminology, but the unanimity is striking. To return to the obvious: it is this common conviction about Jesus as the one who 'makes all the difference' that holds together the early Christian movement, and so the NT as its literary deposit—whatever other factors loomed large in its life and whatever the problems to which it had to attend.

22. Yet we may observe interesting variations of resonance even in the use of certain terms to express this conviction about Jesus. For example, many early Christian writers speak of him as 'son of God'. But what associations did this expression have for them? It is not, after all, an expression that simply comes out of the blue: it has numerous antecedents in Judaism, and without recognizable resonances it could scarcely have been used at all in its new context. In Paul, the earliest writer to use it, it is not altogether clear what is in mind, for he gives it multiple applications. In Rom 9:4, it receives one of its traditional applications, to Israel as a people (cf. Ex 4:22; Hos 11:1); in Gal 3:26 and Rom 8:14, it denotes Christian believers—a usage paralleled in Jewish wisdom writing (Wis 2:18), where it is applied to righteous servants of God. Yet clearly, for Paul, this application to Christians is now closely related (but exactly how?) to its central use for Jesus himself; just as God's 'fatherhood' of Jesus is related to their right to claim that same fatherhood (Gal 4:4–6; Rom 8:14–17). Paul perhaps comes nearest to showing his mind in Rom 8:32, where he appeals to the giving by Abraham of his son Isaac to death (narrowly averted, Gen 22) as a parallel to God's giving of Jesus: 'God did not spare his only son' (cf. Gen 22:16). That model of sonship splendidly and appropriately illuminates the death of Jesus and is an important ingredient in the quest for scriptural texts that could put that otherwise catastrophic event, as far as the hopes of Jesus' followers were concerned, in a positive light. Here was a case where the giving of a son by a father was the seed of total good—the establishing of the people of Israel (Byrne 1979).

23. The same model may play a part in the Markan story of Jesus' baptism, where his sonship is announced by God himself: the word 'beloved' in 1:11 is the Septuagint's repeated adjective for Isaac in Gen 22. But here, in what is for Mark the crucial opening scene, establishing Jesus' identity, it is joined with the words of Ps 2:7, 'Thou art my son', probably seen as messianic in import in the Jewish background upon which Mark draws.

24. In Matthew and Luke, Jesus' sonship is for the first time linked to his conception and birth, but even here the focus is not on physiology but on scriptural texts and models which are seen to foreshadow Jesus and to authenticate his role. In Matthew, for example, Isa 7:14 plays a crucial role (cf. 1:23). In Luke, the whole narrative of chs. 1 and 2 is couched in language that echoes the old stories of providential births, such as those of Isaac, Samson or Samuel.

25. In John, the sonship of Jesus in relation to God is taken further still. Partly by way of its associations with other terms and models, it now describes a relationship that does not begin at Jesus' baptism or conception, but exists from all eternity. Jesus' relationship with God, as Father, is, for the Gospel of John, anchored at that most fundamental level. From the vantage point of this climax in the development of the model (soon to be taken up in a more philosophical idiom), we can see how Jesus' representation of God comes to be seen in more and more extensive terms, until it operates on the scale of the cosmos itself.

26. This example of development and of many-sidedness could be paralleled for other expressions and ideas in which the Christians of the NT period clothed their belief in Jesus. Typically, it is based on a variety of scriptural passages, each pointing to its own associations and concepts. Typically too, even within the narrow temporal confines of the NT period, it is neither static nor universal. It is symptomatic of the explosion of symbolic energy which so imaginatively produced the new devotion that saw in Jesus the key to everything.

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3. Matthew

DALE C. ALLISON, JR.

INTRODUCTION

A. Authorship. 1. Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39, attributes to Papias, a second-century Bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor, the earliest testimony to Matthew's authorship: 'Now Matthew made an ordered arrangement of the oracles in the Hebrew [or: Aramaic] language, and each one translated [or: interpreted] it as he was able.' These words and the traditional title, 'According to Matthew', show that not long after it was written people attributed our gospel to the disciple named in Mt 9:9; 10:3. Because the tradition is so early, and because the apostle Matthew is a relatively unimportant figure in early Christian literature, the traditional attestation still has its defenders; see e.g. Gundry (1982).

2. Most, however, now doubt the tradition. For (1) from Papias on, Christian tradition consistently associated Matthean authorship with a Semitic original; but this gospel is unlikely to be the work of a translator. (2) It is improbable that a Semitic document, such as Papias speaks of, would have incorporated a Greek document (Mark) almost in its entirety. (3) Would an apostle who accompanied Jesus have used so little personal reminiscence but rather have followed Mark so closely? (4) Papias' tradition might have originally referred to an early version of lost sayings (source known as Q) and then, when Q disappeared, have been connected with Matthew. It was common enough for a document to carry the name of the author of one of its sources (cf. the evolution of Isaiah).

3. These points are sufficiently strong that in the present commentary 'Matthew' will be used of the author without any claim to his apostolic identity. On one point, however, the tradition

appears quite correct: the author was a Jew. The gospel has numerous Jewish features which cannot be attributed to the tradition—e.g. *gematria* (see MT 1:2–17), OT texts seemingly translated from the Hebrew specifically for this gospel (e.g. 2:18, 23; 8:17; 23:18–21), concentrated focus on the synagogue (e.g. 6:1–18; 23:1–39), and affirmation of the abiding force of the Mosaic law (5:17–20). Matthew alone, moreover, records Jesus' prohibitions against mission outside Israel (10:5; 15:24) and shows concern that eschatological flight not occur on a sabbath (24:20). These and other Jewish features have not been sprinkled here and there for good effect: they are an organic part of the whole and imply a Jewish-Christian author and audience.

B. Date and Place of Origin. 1. Although there has recently been a slight tendency to date Matthew before 70 CE, the majority opinion rightly holds that Matthew was written in the last quarter of the first century CE. (1) Ignatius of Antioch, the *Didache*, and Papias—all from the first part of the second century—show knowledge of Matthew, which accordingly must have been composed before 100 CE. (See e.g. Ign., *Smyrn.* 1; *Did.* 8.2.) (2) 22:7 (a seeming allusion to the fall of Jerusalem) and the dependence upon Mark (written c.60–70 CE) indicate a date after 70 CE. (3) Matthew reveals points of contact with early rabbinic Judaism as it struggled to consolidate itself after the Jewish war; see esp. Davies (1964).

2. Many have urged that Matthew originated in Antioch in Syria. Peter's prominence harmonizes well with his undoubted status there (cf. Gal 2:11), and the mixture of Jew and Gentile in a large urban area is consistent with composition in Antioch. Further, Ignatius may be the earliest witness to Matthew, and he was bishop

of Antioch. But these and additional considerations do not add up to proof, and patristic tradition places neither this gospel nor the apostle Matthew in Antioch. So other suggestions have been made—Jerusalem, Galilee, Alexandria, Caesarea Maritima, Phoenicia, or, more generally, east of the Jordan (on the basis of 4:25 and 19:1, which may view Palestine as being on the other side of the Jordan).

C. Matthew's Purpose and its Setting in Judaism. 1. Following the revolt of 70 CE the Pharisees emerged dominant. They set in motion a process which was to allow Judaism to continue and even thrive after defeat. To the early stages of this process the rabbinic sources apply the term 'Jamnia', after the place where, according to tradition, Pharisaic sages congregated after the war. These sages were concerned with the disunity of the Jewish people and with the attraction of movements from without, including Christianity. They accordingly promoted unity, began the process of collecting their oral laws, sought to establish a standard calendar for the religious year, and tried to transfer to the synagogue rites previously performed in the temple itself. So in Matthew's time a highly self-conscious and probably aggressive Pharisaism was asserting itself to reunite Israel; and this involved defining itself in opposition to others, including Christians. It probably also involved activities Christians interpreted as persecution. Tolerance comes in times of self-confidence; but the period after the destruction was not such a time for formative Judaism.

2. Matthew's mainly Jewish community had to come to terms with such a Judaism—a fact which helps explain the great interest in the scribes and Pharisees. That community seems, on the one hand, to have demanded its own inclusion within Judaism, whose faith it thought to share, and, on the other, to have sought the expansion of Judaism beyond strictly Jewish confines by challenging that faith to shed its tendency to ethnic privacy. But scholars disagree whether Matthew's community was still—as 23:3 so strongly implies—within Judaism or whether it had recently declared itself independent of its parent faith so that it had become a sect outside Judaism or, again, whether, having long been regarded as deviant by the Jewish community, it was in the process of deciding if it should leave while yet remaining under the authority of the local synagogue.

3. Whatever the exact status of Matthew's community in relation to Judaism, his writing

points to a process of differentiation which took place between his community and 'their synagogue'. Believers in Jesus may have preferred to refer to their own gatherings not as 'synagogue'—in Matthew the expression is 'their synagogue'—but as 'church'. Again, Christian leaders were not to be called 'rabbi', a term which was, in the Jamnian Judaism of Matthew's day, becoming an official title (23:7–8). Along with the differentiation went outright, polemical criticism, especially of the Pharisees. The cohesion of the believers in Jesus was no doubt strengthened by such criticism: a common enemy unites the divided and insecure.

4. The establishment of group identity also involved legitimizing belief in Jesus over against Jewish criticism. Explicit about the existence of such criticism is (28:15), which no doubt helps account for the formula quotations, the parallels between Jesus and Moses, and Jesus' endorsement of the Torah. One detects in all this a sort of apologetics. Christians claimed to be vindicated by antiquity, to have a lawgiver like Moses, and to keep Torah.

5. The need for group identity made the need for unity a paramount concern. This illuminates the emphasis in both the Sermon on the Mount and ch. 18 on forgiveness and reconciliation. Forgiveness up to seven times is advised in Luke, but 'seventy times (and) seven' in Mt 18:22. Despite its often violent polemics, perhaps no other ancient document shows more sensitivity to the desperate need for love and peace rather than hate and vengeance than does Matthew. The tendency towards reconciliation appears also in Matthew's desire not to give away too much of his Jewish heritage but to bridge as sensitively as possible the gulf between Jewish and Gentile believers. He tried to preserve both the old and the new (8:17; 13:52). While he called for a mission to Gentiles, he also recognized Israel's special place (10:5–6; 15:21–8) and insisted on the demands for a righteousness even higher than that of the Pharisees. The proof of Matthew's ecumenical character is that both Jewish and Gentile Christians welcomed it as their own: it became the chief gospel of both groups.

6. Despite both the polemic and the ecclesiastical tactics, the gospel remains eloquent testimony to the faith that inspired Matthew. Further, we cannot doubt that while he had one eye on his own social setting, he also envisaged a broader readership. For it is only through a studied neglect of the obvious that one can miss that a major and perhaps the primary impulse behind

the First Gospel was the natural desire to record what Jesus said and did and to preserve that memory for posterity. Matthew was composed so that the story of Jesus, rightly interpreted, might continue to be heard beyond as well as in his own time and place.

D. Theology. 1. Although there are aspects of a theology in Matthew they do not present themselves as a coherent or abstract edifice; there is no systematically developed body of thought. Despite the book's theocentricity, a theology of Matthew, in our sense of the term, is not really possible. Like the rabbinic corpus Matthew contains much implicit theology but is primarily concerned not with correctness of belief but with obedience.

2. Matthew did not offer a theological system as an expression of his faith in Jesus. Rather he drew upon and applied texts he had reflected upon—the OT, Mark, Q, M. As pastor he was above all an exegete and commentator. That is, he was primarily concerned to pass on the traditions handed to him. His gospel is less a statement of personal opinions than the expression of a traditional faith. He told a story more than he authored it, or rather he retold his community's story to which he added commentary.

3. Matthew's genius was not that of theological invention. He was not a Paul or an Origen. To judge from his gospel the evangelist's religious convictions were traditional. Along with all the NT authors his God was the God of the OT, that is, the God of Israel. In other words his theology, in the proper sense of that word, was Jewish theology as transmitted to him by his Jewish education and the church. There was also nothing much original about his Christology. All the Christological titles found in his gospel appear in other early Christian texts; and even his story of a virgin birth has its parallel in Luke. Matthew also contributed nothing new to soteriology. The gospel says only that Jesus gave his life as a ransom for many and saved his people from their sins—convictions common enough in primitive Christianity.

4. One could, if the non-Markan material in 16:13–20 were thought redactional, make a case for a novel contribution to ecclesiology. But here the evidence again points to tradition. It is the same with Matthew's Deuteronomistic view of history and his eschatology. The former reminds one of Q, and regarding the latter, while certain themes receive special accent, one can easily find parallels to every strand of Matthean eschatology—to Matthew's hope for a near end,

to his realized eschatology, and to his use of apocalyptic expectation to tender encouragement, offer paraenesis, and explicate Christology. Also in Matthew's moral teaching we find, first of all, tradition. The demand to love, the call to non-retaliation, and the imperative to imitate Christ were standard in the early church.

5. Even with regard to the law Matthew was no innovator. In some ways indeed he was on this matter at one with Paul: Gentiles did not have to become Jews in order to be saved; that is, they did not have to become circumcised and obey Moses. If it had been otherwise, Matthew could not have enthusiastically endorsed the Gentile mission in his conclusion, for by his time that mission was in most areas presumably free of the demand for circumcision. At the same time—here the relationship with Paul is more difficult to assess—Matthew believed that the Mosaic law was still in effect. This can only have meant that Matthew expected Jewish Christians to keep it. But this was also the position of Luke, who had no trouble passing on stories in which even the apostle to the Gentiles keeps the law. Moreover, the idea that Jewish Christians should observe the precepts of the Torah from which Gentiles Christians were free, was not unknown. So much is clear from the decree reproduced in ACTS 15 (see ACTS 15:29). Whatever its precise origin, that decree was not Luke's invention, and it assumes that while Jewish Christians will observe the law, Gentiles need only follow a few general proscriptions. This position was probably the dominant one in first-century Christianity. Here too then, Matthew swims in the mainstream.

E. Story, Structure, and Plot. 1. Mt 1–4 opens with the title (1:1) and Jesus' genealogy (1:2–17). There follow infancy stories (1:18–25; 2:1–11, 12–23), the section on John the Baptist (3:1–17), and three additional pericopae that directly prepare for the ministry (4:1–11, 12–17, 18–22). All this material constitutes an extended introduction. We are told *who* Jesus was (1:1–18; 2:1, 4; 3:11, 17; 4:3, 6), *where* he was from (2:6), *how* he came into the world (1:18–25), *why* he came into the world (1:21; 2:6), *when* he came into the world (1:17; 2:1), and *what* he proclaimed (4:17).

2. The Sermon on the Mount, the first major discourse, opens with a short narrative introduction (4:23–5:2) and closes with a short narrative conclusion (7:28–8:1). The discourse proper, 5:3–7:27, is also symmetrically centred: blessings (5:3–12) are at the beginning, warnings (7:13–27) at the end. In between there are three

major sections, each one primarily a compilation of imperatives: Jesus and the law (5:17–48), Jesus on the cult (6:1–18), Jesus and social issues (6:19–7:12). The sermon contains Jesus' demands for Israel.

3. If the Sermon on the Mount presents us with Jesus' words, Mt 8 and 9 recount his deeds. The chapters are largely a record of Jesus' acts, particularly his compassionate miracles, which fall neatly into three sets of three: 8:1–4, 5–13, 14–15 + 8:23–7, 28–34; 9:1–8 + 9:18–26, 27–31, 32–4. Jesus also speaks in this section, but the emphasis is upon his actions, what he does in and for Israel (cf. 8:16–17).

4. Having been informed of what Jesus said and did, we next learn, in Mt 10, the second major discourse, what Jesus instructed his disciples, as extensions of himself, to say and do. The theme of imitation is prominent. The disciples are to proclaim what Jesus proclaimed (cf. 10:7 with 4:17) and do what Jesus did (cf. 10:8 with Mt 8–9 and 11:2–6). The disciple is like the teacher, the servant like the master (10:24–5). In Matthew Jesus is the first Christian missionary who calls others to his example.

5. The chapters on the words and deeds of Jesus and the words and deeds of the disciples are followed by chs. 11–12. These record the response of 'this generation' to John and Jesus and the twelve. This is what the material on the Baptist (11:2–6, 7–15, 16–19) is all about, as well as the woes on Galilee (11:20–4) and the conflict stories in Mt 12 (1–8, 9–14, 22–37, 38–45). It all adds up to an indictment of corporate Israel: the Messiah has been rejected. But this is unexpected. In Jewish eschatology God saves Israel in the latter days. One hardly expects the Messiah to meet opposition from his own people—which explains Paul's agonizing in Rom 9–11. Mt 13, the parable chapter, the third great discourse, is Matthew's attempt to tackle this problem. That is, Mt 13 offers various explanations for the mixed response to the Messiah: there can be different responses to one message (13:1–23), the devil works in human hearts (13:24–30), and, if things are not right now, all will be made well in the end (13:31–3, 36–43, 47–50).

6. The fourth major narrative section, chs. 14–17, follows the parable chapter. The most memorable pericope is 16:13–20, where Jesus founds his church. This suits so well the larger context because after corporate Israel has, at least for the time being, forfeited her role in salvation-history, God must raise up a new people. That this is indeed the dominant theme of the section is hinted at not only by

the ever-increasing focus upon the disciples as opposed to the crowds but also by Peter's being the rock upon which the church is built. For it is precisely in this section that he comes to the fore; see 14:28–33; 15:15; 16:13–20; and 17:24–7—all insertions into Mark. Peter's emerging pre-eminence correlates with the emergence of the church.

7. All this is confirmed by Mt 18, the fourth major discourse. Usually styled the 'community' or 'ecclesiological' discourse, this chapter is especially addressed to the topic of Christian fraternal relations. How often should one forgive a brother? What is the procedure for excommunicating someone? These ecclesiastical questions are appropriate precisely at this point because Jesus has just established his church.

8. Having founded the new community and given her teaching, it remains for Jesus to go to Jerusalem, which is what happens in the next narrative section, chs. 19–23. The material is mostly from Mark, with the woes of ch. 23 added. The bankruptcy of the Jewish leadership and the rejection of the Messiah are to the fore.

9. Before the passion narrative proper, however, Jesus, in chs. 24–5, speaks of the future, that is, the future of Israel and of the church. Here, in the fifth and last major discourse, we are taken beyond chs. 26–8 into the time beyond the narrative. The discourse foretells judgement upon Jerusalem and salvation through difficulty for the church.

10. Following chronological order, Matthew closes as does Mark (and Luke and John for that matter). The passion and resurrection constitute the conclusion.

11. The primary structure of the gospel is narrative (N) + discourse (D) + narrative (N) + discourse (D), etc., and the plot is determined by the major theme of each narrative section and each discourse. Pictorially, and in minimum compass:

1–4	N	the main character introduced
5–7	D	Jesus' demands upon Israel
8–9	N	Jesus' deeds within and for Israel
10	D	extension of ministry through words and deeds of others
11–12	N	negative response
13	D	explanation of negative response
14–17	N	founding of new community
18	D	instructions to the new community
19–23	N	commencement of the passion
24–5	D	the future: judgement and salvation
26–8	N	conclusion: the passion and resurrection

F. The Nature of the Text. 1. Much of Matthew's meaning remains implicit, even much of importance. We know this after only the first few verses, for the insertion of four women into the genealogy, a fact that cannot be ignored, must mean something. But the meaning is not made explicit. And so it is throughout: Matthew is a discourse full of tacit references; it is densely allusive. The ubiquitous scriptural citations and allusions—which are anything but detachable ornamentation—direct the informed reader to other books and so teach that Matthew is not a self-contained entity: much is missing. The gospel, in other words, stipulates that it be interpreted in the context of other texts; it evokes tradition through the device of allusion. This means that it is, in a fundamental sense, an incomplete utterance, a book full of holes. Readers must make present what is absent; they must bring to the gospel knowledge of what it presupposes, i.e. a pre-existing collection of interacting texts, the Jewish Bible (the main source for our knowledge about the four women in the genealogy). The First Gospel, like so much ancient Jewish literature, is partly a mnemonic device, designed to trigger intertextual exchanges which depend upon informed and imaginative reading. It is a catena of allusions.

2. If Matthew constantly alludes to the Jewish Bible and the traditions parasitic upon it, it also often alludes to itself. Our text was almost certainly composed with some sort of liturgical (and perhaps also some sort of catechetical) end in view, which means that it was designed to be heard again and again. In line with this the text assumes that listeners will appreciate not only intertextual allusions but intratextual allusions. For instance, 5:38–42 alludes to Isaiah, but also, plainly, to Matthew's own passion narrative; and if 17:1–8 develops a Moses typology, it also foreshadows the crucifixion and perhaps Gethsemane. Our gospel was not composed for bad or casual readers. It was rather written for good and attentive *listeners* accustomed, because of their devotion and relatively small literary canon, to polysemous and heavily connotative religious speech; and such listeners, who heard Matthew repeatedly, would be expected to relate the gospel to itself.

G. Genre and Moral Instruction. 1. Prior to our century Matthew was, despite its many gaps and relative brevity, often referred to as a biography. Most twentieth-century scholars, however, have rejected this view: the canonical gospels are not historical retrospectives but

rather expressions of the earliest Christian proclamation. Yet recently there has been a change in the minds of at least some scholars, a reversion to the older view, to the idea that the gospels are biographies—if the term is used not in its modern sense but in accord with ancient usage. The canonical gospels then qualify as a subtype of Graeco-Roman biography.

2. The truth is that Matthew is an omnibus of genres: apocalypse, community rule, catechism, cult aetiology, etc. Like the book of Job it is several things at once, a mix of genres, including biography. There are indeed significant resemblances between the First Gospel and certain Hellenistic biographies; and despite its incompleteness as a biography in the modern sense, it is none the less the partial record of a man's life.

3. The content of Matthew's faith partly explains why the First Gospel is biographical. The distinctiveness of Matthew's thinking over against that of his non-Christian Jewish contemporaries was the acceptance of Jesus as the centre of his religion: it was around him as a person that his theological thinking revolved. For Matthew, revelation belonged supremely to the life of the Son of God. The significance of this can be measured when Matthew's comparatively brief gospel is set over against the literature of rabbinic Judaism. In rabbinic sources there are stories about rabbis but no sustained lives such as we find in the Gospel of Matthew, report upon report of what Rabbi X or Rabbi Y purportedly said, but no biographies. Particular sages are seldom an organizing category or principle in rabbinic literature. So whereas rabbinic Judaism, with its subordination of the individual to the community and its focus upon the Torah instead of a particular human being, produced no religious biographies, the substance of Matthew's faith was neither a dogmatic system nor a legal code but a human being whose life was, in outline and in detail, uniquely significant and therefore demanding of record.

4. Matthew's biographical impulse also owes much to the circumstance that whenever social crisis results in fragmentation (as happened at the beginning of Christianity), so that the questioning of previous beliefs issues in the formation of a new social unit, new norms and authorities are inevitably generated, which are always most persuasively presented when embodied in examples: new fashions must first be modelled. In Matthew, Jesus is the new exemplar. There is a multitude of obvious

connections between Jesus' words and his deeds. If Jesus indirectly exhorts others to be meek (5:5), he himself is such (11:29; cf. 21:5). If he enjoins mercy (5:7), he himself is merciful (9:27; 15:22; 20:30). If he congratulates those oppressed for God's cause (5:10), he himself suffers and dies innocently (27:23). Jesus further demands faithfulness to the law of Moses (5:17–20) and faithfully keeps that law during his ministry (8:4; 12:1–8, 9–14; 15:1–20). He recommends self-denial in the face of evil (5:39) and does not resist the evils done to him (26:67; 27:30). He calls for private prayer (6:6) and subsequently withdraws to a mountain to pray alone (14:23). Moreover, Jesus advises his followers to use certain words in prayer ('your will be done', 6:10; 'do not bring us to the time of trial', 6:13) and he uses those words in Gethsemane (26:41–2). He rejects the service of mammon (6:19), and he lives without concern for money (8:20). He commands believers to carry crosses (16:24), and he does so himself, both figuratively and literally.

5. The evangelist's moral interest, apparent above all in the Sermon on the Mount, was well served by a story in which the crucial moral imperatives are imaginatively and convincingly incarnated. This the First Gospel supplies. To quote Clement of Alexandria, Matthew offers two types of teaching, 'that which assumes the form of counselling to obedience, and that which is presented in the form of example' (*Ped.* 1.1). Jesus embodies his speech; he lives as he speaks and speaks as he lives.

COMMENTARY

Jesus Introduced (1:1–4:17)

(1:1) The second word of this verse (*genesis*) may be translated 'genealogy' and so made the heading for 1:2–17. But the word can also mean 'birth' (as in 1:18), 'origin', or 'beginning' and be taken as the introduction to 1:2–25 or 1:2–2:23 or 1:2–4:16. Yet another suggestion is that 1:1 is Matthew's title: 'Book of the New Creation wrought by Jesus Christ'. In accord with this last option, Matthew's very first word, *biblos* (NRSV 'account') literally means 'book', and Matthew's opening phrase, *biblos genesēōs*, is not a usual title for genealogies. Moreover, in Gen 2:4 and 5:1, the only two places in the LXX to use Matthew's expression, it is associated with more than genealogical materials. Finally, other Jewish books open with an independent titular sentence announcing the content of the whole (e.g. Nah 1:1; Tob 1:1; Bar 1:1; *T. Job* 1:1; *Apoc. Abr.*

title; 2 Esdr 1:1–3). Whatever the reach of 1:1, the first book of the Bible was already known by the title 'Genesis' before Matthew's time, so to open a book with *biblos genesēōs* would inevitably have recalled the first book of Moses. John's prologue, which introduces Jesus by recalling the creation story ('in the beginning'), supplies a parallel.

'Jesus Christ' combines a personal name (one quite popular among Jews before 70 CE) with a title (cf. 2:4; 16:16, etc.). 'Son of David' prepares for the following genealogy, in which David is the key figure. It also explicates 'Christ': the anointed one fulfils the promises made to David (2 Sam 7:12–16; Isa 11:10; Zech 3:8; etc.). Jesus himself later acknowledges that he is 'the Christ' (16:13–20), and the title plays an important part in his trial (26:57–68).

'Son of Abraham' was not a messianic title but rather an expression used to refer either to a descendant of the patriarch or one worthy of him. Here both meanings may be present. Further, the phrase probably foreshadows the salvation Jesus brings to Gentiles. For Abraham was himself a Gentile by birth, and Gen 17:5 promises that all the nations will be blessed in him. It is fitting that soon after his birth Jesus is honoured by Gentile representatives, the magi (2:1–12).

The three personal names of 1:1 reappear in reverse order in 1:2–16: Jesus Christ—David—Abraham || Abraham (1:2)—David (1:6)—Jesus Christ (1:16). So Matthew opens with a triad (one of his favourite literary devices) and a chiasmus.

(1:2–17) The genealogy first offers evidence for the title: it shows that Jesus is indeed a descendant of the royal Davidic line. Secondly, it makes Israel's history culminate in Jesus Christ: the Messiah is the goal of the biblical story. Thirdly, the genealogy helps to give the church its identity: the community, by virtue of its union with Jesus, shares his heritage.

The outstanding formal feature of this passage is its triadic structure: there are fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen from David to the captivity, and fourteen from the captivity to Jesus (v. 17). The scheme is artificial. Not only have several names been omitted from the monarchial period, but there are only thirteen generations in the third series. (But cf. *v.l.* at v. II.) Probably the key to understanding the composition is the device known as *gematria*, by which names are given numerical value (cf. Rev 13:18). In Hebrew David's name has three consonants, the numerical value of which

amounts to fourteen: $d + w + d = 4 + 6 + 4$. When it is added that David's name is fourteenth on the list, that he is given the title, 'king', and that 'David' occurs both before and after the genealogy, we may infer that 'David' is the structural key to vv. 2–17.

Women are not usually named in Jewish genealogies, so the mention of Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, and the wife of Uriah must betray a special interest. Some have suggested that the reader should remember that the women were sinners, or that their marital unions were irregular, the lesson being either that God saves his people from their sins, or that providence can turn scandal into blessing (as in Matthew's story of Mary). But the best guess is that the four women are named because they were Gentiles: their presence in vv. 2–17 foreshadows the inclusion of non-Jews in the people of God.

(1:18–25) The story of Jesus' miraculous conception, like 1:1 and 1:2–17, continues to clarify Jesus' identity. He is conceived of the Holy Spirit. He will save his people from their sins. And he fulfils biblical prophecy (Isa 7:14). The passage also tells how Jesus can be a descendant of David and yet have a supernatural origin: although not literally Jesus' father, Joseph makes Jesus legally a Davidid by acknowledging him as his own. This passage (like the stories in Lk 1) is modelled upon older birth stories and so adds a hallowed cast to the narrative. Gen 16 (Ishmael) and Judg 13 (Samson), for example, also recount (1) introductory circumstances; (2) the appearance of the angel of the Lord; (3) an angelic prophecy of birth, including the child's future deeds; and (4) the issue of things. But Matthew's paragraph also resembles 2:13–15 and 19–21, the other two angelic appearances to Joseph. All three have this outline: (1) note of circumstance; (2) appearance of the angel of the Lord in a dream; (3) command of angel to Joseph; (4) explanation of command; (5) Joseph rises and obediently responds.

The story opens with Mary betrothed to Joseph; they do not yet live together as man and wife. But Mary is with child 'of the Holy Spirit'. One might think of a new creation (cf. Mt 1:1), for creation was the work of the Spirit (Gen 1:2), or perhaps of the traditional link between the Spirit and messianic times (e.g. Isa 44:3–4). But the main point is that Jesus has his origin in God, in fulfilment of a prophecy, Isa 7:14. It is true that the Hebrew text says only that a 'young girl' will conceive, and that the LXX, which does indeed use 'virgin', seems only to

mean that one who is now a virgin will later give birth; no miracle is envisaged. In Matthew, however, the text has been interpreted in the light of the story of the virgin birth, and it refers to the supernatural conception of Jesus.

Isa 7:14 speaks not only of a virgin birth but of 'Emmanuel', which means 'with us is God'. This does not entail that Jesus is God in the sense proclaimed at Nicea; Matthew's Christology is not that elevated. The idea here is rather that Jesus is the one through whom divine favour and blessing show themselves. At the same time, in 18:20; 25:31–46; and 28:20 (which makes an *inclusio* with v. 23) the presence of Jesus with his people is more than that: the divine presence is (as in Paul) conceived of as the presence of Christ.

When Joseph learns of his wife's state, he resolves, in accord with Jewish law, and because he thinks her guilty of adultery, to divorce her. This action is introduced with the observation that Joseph is 'just'. This matters for the interpretation of 5:31–2 and 19:3–12, where Jesus prohibits divorce except on the ground of *porneia*. There has been much debate over the Greek word, but if it does not mean unchastity within marriage, then the narrator would not be able to call Joseph 'just' for the course he purposes.

(2:1–12) The story of the mysterious magi, which overturns the traditional motif of the superiority of Jewish hero to foreign wise man, continues the theme of Davidic kingship. Jesus is born in Bethlehem, where David was brought up and anointed, and Mic 5:1, 3, which is here quoted as fulfilled in Jesus, is, in its original context, about a promised Davidic king. The central theme, however, is the homage of Gentiles. The magi, whose country of origin is unspecified—Persia, Babylon, and Arabia are the usual guesses—represent the best wisdom of the Gentile world, its spiritual élite. Perhaps Isa 60:3–6 is in the background. Num 23:7 LXX, according to which Balaam is 'from the east', almost certainly is. Jewish tradition made Balaam a magus and the father of magi; and, according to the OT, when the evil king Balak tried to enlist Balaam in the cause against Israel, the seer instead prophesied the nation's future greatness and the coming of a great ruler. This is close to Matthew, where the cruel Herod, attempting to destroy Israel's king, employs foreign magi who in the event bring only honour to the king's rival. Matthew's magi are Balaam's successors.

The 'star' goes before the magi and comes to rest 'over the place where the child' is. This is no

ordinary star, and attempts to identify it with a planetary conjunction, comet, or supernova are futile. The *Protevangelium of James* (21:3), Ephrem the Syrian in his commentary on the *Diatessaron*, and Chrysostom in his commentary on Matthew all rightly recognize that the so-called star does not stay on high but moves as a guide and indeed comes to rest very near the infant Jesus. Matters become clear when we recall that the ancients generally believed stars to be animate beings, and Jews in particular identified them with angels (cf. Job 38:7). The *Arabic Gospel of the Infancy*, 7, and Theophylact must be right in identifying the magi's star with an angel, and one may compare the angelic guide of the Exodus (Ex 23:20, 23; 32:34).

Justin Martyr, *Dial.* 106, and other commentators have found the scriptural key to v. 2 in Num 24:17, where Balaam prophesies that a star will come out of Jacob, and a sceptre will rise out of Israel. This text was given messianic sense by ancient Jews (as in the targums); sometimes they identified the star with a messianic figure (CD 7:18–26), sometimes with a star heralding the Messiah (*T. Levi* 18:3). Matthew recounts the fulfilment of Balaam's prophecy.

The passage contains several elements which anticipate the story's end. Here as there the issue is Jesus' status as 'king of the Jews' (v. 2; 27:11, 29, 37). Here as there the Jewish leaders gather against him (vv. 3–4; 26:3–4, 57). Here as there plans are laid in secret (v. 7; 26:4–5). And here as there Jesus' death is sought (vv. 13, 16; 26:4). So the end is foreshadowed in the beginning. But there are also artistic contrasts. Here a light in the night sky proclaims the Messiah's advent; there darkness during the day announces his death (v. 2; 27:45). Here Jesus is worshipped; there he is mocked (26:67–8; 27:27–31, 39–44). Here it is prophesied that Jesus will shepherd his people Israel; there it is foretold that Jesus the shepherd will be struck and his sheep scattered (26:31). Here there is great rejoicing; there we find mourning and grief (26:75; 27:46).

(2:13–23) With 2:1–12 we move from a scene of gift-giving to one of murder and flight. The extremes of response to Jesus are here writ large. The quotation of Hos 11:1 in v. 15 evokes thought of the Exodus, for in its original context 'Out of Egypt I have called my son' concerns Israel. Our text accordingly offers a typological interpretation of Jesus' story. By going down to Egypt and then returning to the land of Israel Jesus recapitulates the experience of Israel. But there is, more particularly, a Moses typology

here. vv. 19–21 borrows the language of Ex 4:19–20: just as Moses, after being told to go back to Egypt because all those seeking his life have died, takes his wife and children and returns to the land of his birth, so too with Jesus: Joseph, after being told to go back to Israel because all those seeking the life of his son have died, takes his wife and child and returns to the land of his son's birth.

A Moses typology in fact runs throughout Matthew's infancy narrative. Joseph's contemplation of what to do about Mary and the angel which bids him not to fear and then prophesies his son's future greatness recalls the story of Amram in Josephus, *Ant.* 2.210–16. In Josephus Moses' father, ill at ease over what to do about his wife's pregnancy, has a dream in which God exhorts him not to despair and prophesies his son's future greatness. 'You are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins' (1:21) reminds one of Moses' status as saviour of his people (*Jos. Ant.* 2.228; *b. Sot. a* 12b). Herod's order to do away with the male infants of Bethlehem (vv. 16–18) is like Pharaoh's order to do away with every male Hebrew child (Ex 1). And if Herod orders the slaughter of infants because he has learned of the birth of Israel's liberator (2:2–18), in Jewish tradition Pharaoh slaughters the children because he has learned of the birth of Israel's liberator (*Jos. Ant.* 2.205–9; *Tg. Ps.-J.* on Ex 1:15). Further, whereas Herod learns of the coming liberator from chief priests, scribes, and magi (2:1–12), Josephus, *Ant.* 2.205, 234, has Pharaoh learn of Moses from scribes, and the *Jerusalem Targum* on Ex 1:15 says that Pharaoh's chief magicians (Jannes and Jambres, the sons of Balaam) were the sources of his information. For further parallels see Allison (1993: 137–65), where the possibility of a tradition about Moses' virgin birth is raised.

The most difficult verse in the passage is the very last, v. 23. 'He will be called a Nazorean' does not appear in the OT. Yet Matthew refers to 'the prophets' being fulfilled. Many explanations have been put forward—the biblical text is Isa 11:1 (the branch [*nēšer*] from Jesse) or 42:6 or 49:6 or Jer 31:6–7 or Gen 49:26, or we should think of Nazareth as a humble place and so connect it with the contempt for Isaiah's suffering servant. It is more likely, however, that Matthew contains an involved wordplay. The LXX interchanges 'holy one of God'—an early Christian title for Jesus (Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34; Jn 6:69)—and 'nazarite' (cf. Judg 13:7; 16:17). This matters because if we make that substitution in Isa 4:3 MT ('will be called holy'), the result is very

near v. 23. Further, in Acts 24:5 Christians are 'the sect of the Nazarenes' (an appellation also attested in Tertullian, *Adv. Marc.* 4.8), and in rabbinic writings Christians are *nôšrîm*. Given the striking links between Matthean Christianity and Nazorean Christianity as known through the fathers, as well as the fact that Syrian Christians called themselves *nâšrâyā*, it is likely that members of the Matthean community referred to themselves not as 'Christians' (a term missing from this gospel) but as 'Nazoreans'. Certainly that would have given v. 23 an even greater impact: Jesus' followers bear the name that he bore.

(3:1–6) Matthew passes from its hero's infancy to his adulthood and so jumps over many years (cf. Ex 2:11). The intervening period does not even merit allusion; and when readers move from Nazareth to the Jordan and far forward in time, they first meet not Jesus but John the Baptist. Throughout Matthew John has two distinguishing characteristics. First, he prepares Israel for Jesus' coming; that is, he is the eschatological Elijah (11:14; 17:11–13; here in v. 4 John even dresses like Elijah; see 2 Kings 1:8 LXX). He baptizes and preaches repentance in order to make the people ready to receive the person and work of Jesus. Secondly, John is Jesus' typological forerunner: his life parallels and so foreshadows that of Jesus. Both say similar things (cf. 3:2, 7, 10; 4:17; 7:19; 12:34; 23:33). Both attack the Sadducees and Pharisees (3:7–10; 12:1–14, 34; etc.). Both appeal to the same generation to repent (11:16–19). Both act by the same authority (21:23–32). Both are thought of as prophets (11:9; 14:5; 21:11, 26, 46) and feared by their enemies because of the people (14:5; 21:46). Both are seized and bound (14:3; 21:46; 27:1). Both are sentenced by reluctant authorities (14:6–11; 27:11–26). Both are executed as criminals (14:1–12; 26–7). And both are buried by their own disciples (14:12; 27:57–61).

John's ministry is the fulfilment of Isa 40:3 LXX, cited in v. 3. In the OT the prophecy is comfort for the exiles in Babylon: a new exodus and return to the land lie ahead. In Matthew the words no longer have to do with a literal restoration to Palestine. But the theme of new exodus remains in so far as the story of Jesus, who is so much like Moses, is a sort of replay of Israel's formative history. After the story of the birth of Israel's saviour and the wicked king's slaughter of innocent Jewish children Jesus passes through the waters of baptism—other texts compare baptism with passing through

the Red Sea (1 Cor 10:1–5; *Sipre Num.* §108)—and then enters the desert, where he faces the temptations once faced by Israel and then goes up a mountain to give his commandments. The new Moses recapitulates Israel's Exodus.

(3:7–12) John preaches to the Pharisees and Sadducees. The two groups also appear together in 16:1–12. The former are Jesus' chief opponents and, with the scribes, come under withering attack in ch. 23. Matthew evinces a special, lively preoccupation with the Pharisees, and one infers that his own Jewish opponents considered themselves heirs of the Pharisees.

The Baptist divides his hearers into two categories—the fruitful and unfruitful, the wheat and the chaff. This sort of dualism runs throughout Matthew: things are usually black and white. There are those who do Jesus' words and those who do not (7:24–7); there are good and bad fish (13:47–50), sheep and goats (25:31–46). This division of humanity, which also characterizes the Dead Sea scrolls and Jewish apocalyptic literature, reflects the nearness of the eschatological judgement, at which only two sentences—salvation and damnation—will be passed.

John threatens that God can raise up or cause to be born children to Abraham from 'these stones'. As Chrysostom has observed, Isa 51:1–2 (where Abraham is the rock from which Israel was hewn) is in the background. If God once brought forth from the lifeless Abraham descendants as numerous as the stars of heaven, so can he raise up a new people. The threat is aimed at what has been called 'covenantal nomism'. Many Jews no doubt assumed that to be a descendant of Abraham meant, if one did not commit apostasy, having a place in the world to come (cf. *m. Sanh.* 10.1). But in Matthew salvation is linked solely to Christology: one's decision for or against Jesus decides one's fate (cf. 10:32–3). This is why John denies the efficacy of Abrahamic descent and instead prophesies the coming one.

The prophecy of baptism in Holy Spirit and fire has traditionally been taken in two ways: either fire means the same thing as Spirit (cf. Acts 2), in which case there is only one baptism, or it refers to eschatological judgement, in which case there are two baptisms, one in the present and one in the future. Because Matthew elsewhere associates fire not with the Spirit but with judgement, the second interpretation is to be preferred.

(3:13–17) Matthew focuses not upon the baptism itself but a prefatory episode—John's

protest of Jesus' desire for baptism—and subsequent events. Although Jesus' sinlessness is not taught in Matthew, it is probably assumed (cf. Jn 8:46; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 7:26). And because John's baptism involves the confession of sins (3:6), Jesus' submission to it is awkward. But Matthew's Jesus declares that the act fulfils all righteousness. Here fulfilment is probably, as elsewhere, a reference to biblical prophecy. In line with this, v. 17 draws upon both Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1. Jesus, knowing the messianic prophecies, obediently fulfils them and thereby fulfils all righteousness. Because prophecy declares God's will, to fulfil prophecy is to fulfil righteousness.

The appearance of the symbolic dove has occasioned much speculation. Since Tertullian it has often been connected with Noah's dove: the former dove announced deliverance from the flood, the latter dove deliverance from sins (cf. Theophylact and 1 Pet 3:20–1). It is also possible to associate the dove with the new-exodus motif, for in the *Mekilta* the Holy Spirit rests upon Israel as she crosses the Red Sea and the people are compared to a dove (cf. Ps.-Philo, *LAB* 21:6) and granted a vision. But the best guess relates the text to Gen 1:2, which involves the Spirit of God, water, and the imagery of a bird hovering. Further, in *b. Hag.* 15a the hovering of the Spirit over the face of the waters is represented more precisely as the hovering of a dove. The meaning is then once again that the last things are as the first: Jesus inaugurates a new creation. The correctness of this interpretation is confirmed by a Dead Sea scroll fragment, 4Q521. In line 6 ('his Spirit will hover over the poor') the language of Gen 1:2 characterizes the eschatological redemption: just as the Spirit once hovered over the face of the waters, so too, at the end, will the Spirit hover over the saints and strengthen them. This pre-Christian application of Gen 1:2 to the eschatological future has the Spirit hovering over human beings as opposed to lifeless material. The striking parallel with Matthew evidences a similar creative application of Gen 1:2.

The divine voice of v. 17, which anticipates 17:5, conflates two scriptural texts, Ps 2:7 and Isa 42:1 (which is formally quoted in 12:8). The result is that Jesus is revealed to the Baptist and to those standing by as the Son of God (cf. Ps 2:7) and the suffering servant of Isaiah (Isa 42:1; cf. 8:17; 12:18–21; 20:28; 26:28). Here 'Son of God' refers first to Jesus' special relationship to God the Father (cf. 11:25–30). But one cannot give a simple or single definition to the

title; its connotations vary. In 4:1–11, as in 2:15, it is associated with an Israel typology; and in 16:13–20 and 26:59–68 it is linked with Jesus' status as Davidic Messiah (cf. 2 Sam 7:14; perhaps this is so also in 3:17, for Ps 2 is a royal psalm).

(4:1–11) This pericope has most commonly been given either a paraenetic interpretation according to which Jesus is the model disciple or a Christological interpretation according to which Jesus rejects a false understanding of political messiahship. Neither interpretation can be discounted; but Jesus' obedience as Son of God in the face of temptation is first of all a statement about salvation history: the Son of God now recapitulates the experience of Israel in the desert (cf. esp. Deut 8:2–3); the end resembles the beginning. Like Israel Jesus is tempted by hunger (Ex 16:2–8), tempted to put God to the test (Ex 17:1–4; cf. Deut 6:16), and tempted to idolatry (Ex 32). On each occasion he quotes from Deuteronomy—from Deut 8:3 in v. 4, from Deut 6:16 in v. 7, and from Deut 6:13 in v. 10. Unlike Israel, Jesus neither murmurs nor gives in to temptation.

Although the forty days of temptation are the typological equivalent of Israel's forty years of wandering, they also have rightly reminded Irenaeus, Augustine, Calvin, and many others of Moses' fast of forty days and forty nights (Ex 24:18). As in Mt 2, so also here: the Israel typology exists beside the Moses typology. In line with this, when the devil takes Jesus to a very high mountain to show him all the kingdoms of the world (v. 8), one may think of Moses on the top of Pisgah, for, among other things, not only does v. 8 use the language of Deut 34:1,4 LXX, but Jewish tradition expands Moses' vision so that it is of all the world. See further Allison (1993: 165–72).

The three temptations contain a spatial progression: we move from a low place in the desert to a pinnacle in the temple to a mountain from which all the world can be seen. This progression corresponds to the dramatic tension which comes to a climax in the third temptation. The mountain here forms an *inclusio* with the mountain of 28:16–20. On the first mountain the devil offers to give Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and their glory on the condition that he worship him. On the last mountain, where Jesus is worshipped by others, Jesus declares that he has been given all authority in heaven and earth. The two texts mark the beginning and end of Jesus' labours: he rejects

the devil's temptations, choosing instead to travel the hard road of obedient sonship which in the end brings exaltation.

The devil is the same as Satan (v. 10; 12:26; 16:23) and Beelzebul (10:25; 12:24, 27). He is 'the enemy' (13:39) who, in tempting Jesus, only acts as he does towards all (cf. 6:13; 26:41). But throughout Matthew he and his evil underlings (4:23; 8:16, 28; 9:32; 12:22; 23:39; 15:22; 17:18) always wear faces of defeat. The devil's failure with Jesus in the temptation narrative is paradigmatic: he nowhere wins. Jesus, for instance, easily casts out demons. So there is in Matthew a recognition of the limitations of the powers of iniquity. These are strictly circumscribed.

(4:12–17) On the literary level these verses signal the beginning of the public ministry, move Jesus from Nazareth to Capernaum, and introduce in summary fashion the content of Jesus' proclamation. On the theological level, they underline three recurring themes—the fulfilment of Scripture (vv. 14–16), the salvation of the Gentiles (v. 15), and the announcement of the kingdom of God (v. 17). This last calls the most attention to itself; for it not only repeats words of the Baptist (3:2), but the ingressive aorist (*ἔρχατο*) connotes repetition: Jesus evidently utters the words again and again. So just as 1:1 stands over the whole gospel, so does v. 17 stand over the entire public ministry.

Jesus, like the Baptist, proclaims the nearness of the kingdom of God (or heaven; the expressions are, *pace* some scholars, equivalent). In Matthew this kingdom is God's eschatological rule which is even now establishing itself. In fact, it is entering the world through a complex of events, some of which have taken place (e.g. the Messiah's first advent; cf. 11:12; 12:28), some of which are taking place (e.g. 10:16–23), and some of which will take place in the near future (e.g. much of chs. 24, 25).

(4:18–22) The structure of the two short passages in this paragraph—(1) appearance of Jesus; (2) disciples at work; (3) call to discipleship; (4) obedient response—reappears in 9:9. The source of the common arrangement is 1 Kings 19:19–21, Elijah's call of Elisha. There Elijah appears and finds Elisha at work, after which the former puts his mantle upon the latter, that is, calls him to share his prophetic office. The story ends with Elisha following Elijah. The difference between Kings and the NT accounts is that whereas Elisha asks if he may first kiss his parents and perform a sacrifice and then is (in

the LXX and Josephus' retelling) given permission so to act, in the NT Jesus permits no tarrying. His radical demand leaves no time even for saying farewell (cf. 8:21–2; 10:35–7). See further Hengel (1981). Within their broader context, vv. 18–22 illustrate the nature of Christian discipleship. They offer an example of wholehearted obedience to the call of Christ, an obedience which is expected of all, even to the point of great personal sacrifice. (Cf. further FGS F.)

(4:23–5:2) This is the first of many editorial summaries (of which there at least two between each major discourse). They do not just summarize what comes before or after, but also supply narrative continuity, lengthen narrative time, expand the geographical range, create a picture of movement (Jesus goes from here to there), highlight central themes, and tell us that Matthew's material is only a selection: Jesus did much more.

Between 4:23 and 9:35, which together create an *inclusio*, Jesus first teaches (the Sermon on the Mount—hereafter SM) and then secondly acts (chs. 8–9). Afterwards, in ch. 10, where he instructs and sends out the disciples for mission, he tells them to do and say what he has said and done. This circumstance means that Jesus is the model missionary, and it explains the parallelism not only between 4:23 and 9:35 but also between 4:17 and 10:6 and 4:24 and 10:1.

It is common to view the mountain of 5:1 as a counterpart to Sinai. As Matthew Henry had it, 'Christ preached this sermon, which is an exposition of the law, upon a mountain, because upon a mountain the law was given.' Matthew's Greek (*anēbē eis to oros*: he went up the mountain) does recall pentateuchal passages having to do with Moses (e.g. Ex 19:3, 12, 13). And Jewish tradition spoke of Moses *sitting* on Sinai (so already the *Exagogue* of Ezekiel; cf. *b. Meg.* 21a). Furthermore, other Moses typologies from antiquity have their Mosaic heroes sitting on a mountain (e.g. 2 Esdras 14); *Mekilta* on Ex 19:11 and 29:18 and other sources claim that Israel was healed at the foot of Sinai (cf. 4:23); and 8:1, the conclusion of the SM, is identical with Ex 34:29 LXX A, which recounts Moses' descent from Sinai.

In its entirety, this passage, which gives us a brief overview of Jesus' ministry to Israel, introduces the SM. It makes the crowds as well as the disciples hear Jesus, who heals them. So before the demands there is healing. The crowds, having done nothing, are benefited. Grace comes before task.

Jesus' Demands Upon Israel (5:3–7:27)

4:23–5:2, which opens the SM, and 7:28–8:1, which concludes it, share several words and phrases—'great crowds followed him', 'the mountain', 'going up/down', 'teaching'. The correlations mark the intervening material in 5:3–7:27 as a distinct literary unit with its own beginning and end. Within that literary unit the eschatological blessings of the faithful in 5:3–12 are balanced by the eschatological warnings of 7:13–27.

The beatitudes are followed by 5:13–16 (salt and light), a section which supplies a general heading for the detailed paraenesis that follows. It is a transitional passage which moves from the life of the blessed future to the demands of life in the present, in which the theme switches from gift to task, and in which those who live as 5:17–7:12 directs are summarily characterized.

5:17–7:12 in turns divides itself into three major sections. There is first of all 5:17–48, on Jesus and Torah. Then there is the 'cult-didache' (Betz 1985) in 6:1–18. It covers properly ecclesiastical issues—almsgiving, prayer, fasting. Thirdly there is 6:19–7:12, the first half of which has to do with worldly goods and cares (6:19–34), the second with, primarily, attitude towards others (7:1–12). So the section in its entirety covers social issues. One suspects that the very structure of the SM reflects the famous maxim attributed to Simeon the Just, according to which the world stands on three things—Torah, temple service, and pious social acts (*m. 'Abot* 1.2). The period after 70 CE evidently saw discussion of the traditional pillars because the second, after the destruction of the temple, became problematic (cf. *'Abot R. Nat.* 4). Was the SM a Christian answer to the old Jewish question, What does the world stand upon?

Valid interpretation of the SM must keep several things in view. First, the SM is not an adequate or complete summation of anybody's religion (contrast Betz 1985; Betz interprets the SM as an epitome). It was never intended to stand by itself; it is rather part of a larger whole. The SM's demands are perverted when isolated from the grace and Christology which appear from Matthew in its entirety. The SM is in the middle of a story about God's gracious overture to his people through his Son. Read in its entirety it brings together gift and task, grace and law, benefit and demand. Secondly, the SM presupposes the existence of the Christian community. This is why God is 'our Father'. The church is the surrogate family which lightens the Messiah's Torah: tasks jointly undertaken

become easier. In addition, the church belongs to salvation history; its story is the story of Israel and the story of Jesus, and these stories, it is assumed, have altered human existence and changed the historical possibilities. Thirdly, the SM must be associated with the Kingdom of God. The SM does not speak to ordinary people in ordinary circumstances. It instead addresses itself to those overtaken by an overwhelming reality. This reality can remake the individual and beget a new life. Beyond that, the SM sees all through the eyes of eternity. It does not so much look forward, from the present to the consummation, as back from the consummation to the present. Mt 5–7 presents the unadulterated will of God because it proclaims the will of God as it will be lived when the kingdom comes in its fullness. This is why the SM is so radical, so heedless of all earthly contingencies, why it always blasts complacency and shallow moralism and disturbs every good conscience.

Finally, the SM is a Christological document. Not only do the beatitudes imply that Jesus is the eschatological herald of Isa 61, but the qualities they praise—e.g. meekness and mercy—are manifested throughout the ministry (cf. 9:27–31; 11:29; 20:29–34; 21:5). Again, the paragraph about turning the other cheek (5:38–42) has been moulded so as to foreshadow events from the last days of Jesus, and the Lord's Prayer is echoed in Jesus' own prayer (see 26:42). The SM then is partly a summary of its speaker's deeds; or, put differently, Jesus illustrates his demands. In Matthew Jesus is a moral model, and the SM proclaims likeness to the God of Israel (5:48) through the virtues of Jesus Christ.

(5:3–12) The beatitudes do not exhibit any obvious structure; but it may be significant that the triad is the structural key to the SM and that there are nine (= 3 × 3) beatitudes (cf. Epiphanius, *Apophthegmata Patrum*, 13, where the number of the beatitudes is reckoned as three times the Trinity). However that may be, vv. 3–12 contain first of all eschatological blessings; that is, the beatitudes are first of all promise and consolation. The first half of each beatitude depicts the community's present; the second half foretells the community's future; and the juxtaposition of the two radically different situations permits the trials of everyday life to be muted by contemplation of the world to come. This hardly excludes the implicit moral demand: one is certainly called to become what the beatitudes praise (cf. the beatitudes in Sir

25:7–10; 4Q525 2). But Matthew's beatitudes are not formally imperatives. Like the eschatological blessings in 13:16 and Rev 19:9 and 22:14, they offer hope and indeed function as a practical theodicy. Although there is no explanation of evil, the imagination, through contemplation of God's future, engenders hope and makes the present tolerable.

Because Isa 61:1, 2, and 7 speak of good news for the poor (cf. Mt 5:3), comforting all who mourn (cf. Mt 5:4), and of inheriting the earth or land (cf. Mt 5:5), Matthew's beatitudes make an implicit Christological claim: they are uttered by the anointed one of Isa 61. The Spirit of the Lord is upon Jesus (3:16); he has been anointed to bring good tidings to the poor, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, to comfort those who mourn (cf. Lk 4:18–19 and the messianic application of Isa 61 in 4Q521).

There is nothing formally remarkable about Matthew's beatitudes. The form, 'blessed' (*makarios*) + subject + 'that' (*hoti*) clause, is attested elsewhere (cf. Gen 30:13; Tob 13:16), as are the eschatological orientation (cf. Dan 12:12; 1 Enoch 58:2–3), the grouping together of several beatitudes (cf. 4Q525 2; 2 Enoch 52:1–14), and the third person plural address (cf. Pss. Sol. 17:44; Tob 13:14).

'Blessed are the poor in spirit' (cf. 1QM 14:7) means much the same as 'blessed are the meek', and 'for theirs is the kingdom of heaven' is another way of saying 'they will inherit the earth' (cf. Ps 37:11). Both beatitudes are about eschatological reversal. Those who are without power or status and who depend upon God will be given the kingdom of heaven and inherit the earth when things are turned upside down at the last judgement. As it says in *b. Pesah.* 50a, 'those who are on top here are at the bottom there, and those who are at the bottom here are on the top there'.

Those who mourn' (v. 4) are not, against Augustine, sorry for their sins so much as they are aggrieved that while now the wicked prosper, the saints do not, and God has not yet righted the situation. The 'righteousness' that the saints hunger and thirst for (v. 6) is neither justification nor eschatological vindication but the right conduct that God requires (cf. v. 10). Seemingly implied is the notion that the saints are not as a matter of fact righteous; rather, righteousness is always the goal which lies ahead: it must ever be sought. To be 'pure in heart' (v. 8; cf. Ps 24:3–4) means harmony between inward thought and outward deed; it

involves a singleness of intention, that intention being the doing of God's will. To 'see God' (v. 8) has been understood as a literal vision of God's body (cf. *Ps. Clem. Hom.* 17:7), a literal vision of the glorified Christ (cf. 17:1–8; Cor 15:3–11; so Philoxenus), a spiritual or mental apprehension (cf. 'I see the point'; see Origen, *C. Cels.* 7.33–4), an indirect perception through unspecified effects of God (cf. Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 4.20.6), or an apprehension of the image of God in the perfected saints (so Gregory of Nyssa and much Eastern Orthodox tradition). The text unfortunately does not decide the point. But one thing is obvious: the vision of God is here eschatological. Nothing is said of the possibility of seeing God in the present life. One day the saints will enjoy what the angels, according to 18:10, even now experience (cf. Augustine, *De civ. dei* 22.29). (Cf. further FGS G.)

The last two beatitudes (vv. 10–12) envisage the most difficult aspects of discipleship—persecution and ridicule. They offer consolation not only by promising reward in heaven but also by observing the similar ill-treatment of 'the prophets'. The effect is to draw into Israel's sacred history the community of readers who find themselves in Matthew's text.

(5:13–16) The parables about salt, light, and lamp are the general heading for 5:17–7:12. They together offer a summary description of those who live the SM. It is no longer the Torah or the temple or Jerusalem or Israel that is the salt or light of the world (cf. Isa 60:1–3; Bar 4:2; *b. Ber.* 28b) but the church. Moreover, Jesus' followers are not the salt or light of Israel (contrast *T. Levi* 14:3) but of the whole world (the Gentile mission is presupposed). 'What the soul is in a body, this the Christians are in the world' (*Ep. Diogn.* 6.1).

(5:17–20) In denying the suspicion that Jesus abolishes the Torah, these verses look forwards, not backwards, for no such suspicion could arise from what has gone before. They introduce 5:21–48 and declare that the so-called 'antitheses' are not antitheses: Matthew's Jesus does not overturn Moses or set believers free from the law. (Alternative interpretations of this passage are often motivated by a desire to bring Matthew closer to Paul; but the NT appears to have more than one judgement on the status of the Torah, and we should read Matthew on its own terms.)

These verses not only rebut in advance a wrong interpretation of 5:21–48 but also supply

a clue for the right interpretation. In announcing that the righteousness of disciples must exceed that of the Jewish leaders, v. 20 anticipates that Jesus' words in the subsequent paragraphs will require even more than the Torah itself requires. The tension between Jesus' teaching and the Mosaic law is not that those who accept the former will transgress the latter; rather it is that they will achieve far more than they would if the Torah were their only guide.

(5:21–48) This section, which falls into two triads—5:21–6 + 27–30 + 31–2 || 5:33–7 + 38–42 + 43–8—has generated many conflicting interpretations, but four propositions seem more probable than not. First, 5:21–48 does not set Jesus' words over against Jewish interpretations of the Mosaic law; rather there is contrast with the Bible itself. 'You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times' refers to Sinai. Secondly, although Jesus' words are contrasted with the Torah, the two are not contradictory (cf. 5:17–20). Certainly those who obey vv. 21–48 will not find themselves breaking any Jewish law. Thirdly, 5:21–48 is not Jesus' interpretation of the law. The declaration that remarriage is adultery, for example, is set forth as a new teaching grounded not in exegesis but Jesus' authority. Fourthly, the six paragraphs illustrate, through concrete examples, what sort of attitude and behaviour Jesus requires and how his demands surpass those of the Torah without contradicting the Torah.

Many have complained that the teaching of vv. 21–48 is impractical. As Dostoevsky's Grand Inquisitor says, Jesus 'judged humanity too highly', for 'it was created weaker and lower than Christ thought'. But the SM, which is so poetical, dramatic, and pictorial, offers not a set of rules—the ruling on divorce is the exception—but rather seeks to instil a moral vision. Literal (mis)interpretation accordingly leads to absurdities. The text, which implies that God demands a radical obedience which cannot be casuistically formulated, functions more like a story than a legal code. Its primary purpose is to instill principles and qualities through a vivid inspiration of the moral imagination. What one comes away with is not an incomplete set of statutes but an unjaded impression of a challenging moral ideal. That ideal may ever be beyond grasp, but that is what enables it ever to beckon its adherents forward.

(5:21–6) Moses prescribes punishment for murder (cf. Ex 21:12; etc.), Jesus punishment for

anger and insulting speech. The hyperbolic equation of murder with anger (also found in Jewish tradition) shifts attention from the outward act to the inward state (cf. 5:27–30) and makes anger and harsh words grievous sins to be exorcized at all costs. In contrast to later Christian interpretation, Jesus makes no allowance for justified anger (such as anger towards the devil). This seems to take us beyond the wisdom tradition, which permits, even encourages, appropriate hatred and anger (cf. Sir 1:22; Eph 4:26).

(5:27–30) Jesus' prohibition of lust and its equation with adultery (cf. T. Iss. 7:2) do not contradict the biblical injunction against adultery (Ex 20:14; Deut 5:18), for Jesus himself speaks against this sin (5:32; 15:19; 19:9). Rather does he pass beyond the Decalogue to require more: vv. 27–30 at once uphold and supplement the law. While the verses assume that the external act is evil, no less evil is the intention that brings it forth, and 'it is each one's intention that is examined' (*Ps.-Phoc.* 52; cf. *Ep. Arist.* 133; in holding that intention is to be judged as deed—as also in 5:21–6—Jesus is closer to the rabbis associated with the House of Shammai than those associated with Hillel; see *b. Qidd.* 43a). Matthew's construction (*pros to epithumēsai*, 'to lust') implies that the sin lies not in the entrance of a thought but in letting it incite to wrongful passion.

The vivid demands for personal sacrifice in vv. 29–30 (which reappear in 18:8–9) are hyperbolic: they underscore the seriousness of the sin. Literal amputation is hardly envisaged, for the problem is not the body as such but the sin that dwells in it (cf. Rom 7:17, 20). Nor should we (despite Jn 20:20, 25) visualize a mutilated resurrected body. The bizarre images, which arouse the imagination and enhance memory, instead underline that one cannot disclaim responsibility by blaming the body. Actions are psychosomatic, and body and soul, being united, are judged as one accountable individual.

(5:31–2) If lust is like adultery, so too is divorce. Jesus summarizes Deut 24:1–4, where allowance is made for remarriage, and then goes on to say that (for a man) to divorce (a woman) except for *porneia* causes her (because she will remarry) to commit adultery. As it stands no explanation is offered; but 19:3–9 will provide such. The assumption is that monogamy must be upheld.

Erasmus and most Protestants have thought Matthew allows the innocent party to divorce

and remarry in the event of *porneia*. But according to the almost universal patristic as well as Roman Catholic opinion, separation but not remarriage is permitted. Unfortunately the text does not admit of a definitive interpretation.

The meaning of *porneia* has been disputed. Most take it to mean either sexual unfaithfulness within marriage or incest. In favour of the latter, we can envisage a situation in which Gentiles entering the community were found to be, because of marriages made before conversion, in violation of the levitical laws of incest (see Lev 17). But there is no patristic support for the equation of *porneia* with adultery, and in 1:18–25 Joseph, who determines to divorce his wife because of suspected adultery, is ‘just’—an odd comment if Jesus’ ruling does not cover his case.

(5:33–7) The OT permits oaths in everyday speech—provided they are neither false nor irreverent. But for Jesus oaths are not needed (cf. Jas 5:12); for the presupposition behind the oath is that there are two types of statements, one of which demands commitment (the oath), one of which does not (the statement without an oath). But Jesus enjoins invariable commitment to every statement so that the oath becomes superfluous.

The paragraph opens by summarizing the teaching found in Ex 20:7; Lev 19:12; Num 30:3–15, and elsewhere. Perhaps Ps 50:14 in particular is in mind. Despite the reservation shown to oaths in some Jewish sources (e.g. Sir 23:9; *m. Dem.* 2:3), one wonders whether Jesus’ command is to be understood literally as forbidding all oaths. (Tolstoy went so far as to affirm that Jesus’ words require the abolition of courts.) Perhaps indeed the situation envisaged is not swearing in court but swearing in everyday speech. However that may be, early Christian literature does not show much aversion to swearing (e.g. Gal 1:20; Rev 10:6; *Prot. Jas.* 4:1), and Matthew itself seems to presuppose the validity of certain oaths (23:16–22). Further, the reduction of speech to ‘yes, yes’ and ‘no, no’ is obviously hyperbole. (The meaning of this last appears to be: let your yes be true and your no be true; or perhaps: let your yes be only yes—not yes and an oath—and let your no be no—not no and an oath.)

In the Mishnah oaths by heaven, by earth, and by one’s own head are all viewed as not binding by at least some authorities (e.g. *m. Ned.* 1.3). This may explain their appearance here. If it was claimed by some that oaths by heaven or

earth or Jerusalem or one’s head were, because not binding, not covered by Jesus’ prohibition, vv. 34–5 counters by linking heaven and earth and Jerusalem to God, thereby making all oaths binding and so nullifying any casuistic attempt to circumvent v. 34a.

(5:38–42) Following the citation of the law of reciprocation in v. 38 (cf. Ex 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21) Jesus goes on to offer a general principle in v. 39 which has four illustrations: the disciple is (1) personally insulted then (2) taken to court then (3) impressed to do a soldier’s bidding then (4) asked to help one in need of funds. The brief scenes vividly represent the demand for an unselfish temperament, for naked humility and a willingness to suffer the loss of one’s personal rights: evil should be requited with good. There is no room for vengeance on a personal level (cf. Rom 12:19).

These verses are not a repudiation of Moses. While in the Pentateuch the *lex talionis* belongs to the judiciary process, this is not the sphere of application in Matthew. Jesus does not overthrow the principle of equivalent compensation on an institutional level—that question is just not addressed—but declares it illegitimate for his followers to apply it to their private disputes.

This passage shares language with Isa 50:4–9 LXX. There are also thematic parallels—both this and Isa 50:4–11 depict the unjust treatment of an innocent individual and use the terminology of the lawcourt. Clearly Matthew alludes to the third Servant Song; the allusion does more than inject a vague scriptural aura, rather do we see the truth when we observe that Isa 50:4–9 is again alluded to in the passion narrative, in 26:67 (cf. 27:30): the scriptural text associated with turning the other cheek is also associated with the passion of Jesus. Furthermore, of the seven words shared by this passage and Isa 50:4–9, two appear again in the passion narrative—‘strike’ (*rapizō*) (26:67) and ‘cloak/clothes’ (27:31, 35). Indeed, ‘strike’ appears only twice in the First Gospel, here in v. 39 and in 26:67; and in both places an innocent person is struck—just as in v. 40 and 27:31, 35, an innocent person’s clothes are taken. So the allusions to Isa 50:4–9 are in effect allusions to the passion of Jesus. Put otherwise, this passage superimposes three images: the suffering Christian, the suffering Christ, and the suffering servant. Jesus’ own story offers an illustration of his imperative. If he speaks of eschewing violence and not resisting evil, of being slapped, of

having one's clothes taken, and of being compelled to serve the Romans, the conclusion to his own life makes his words concrete: he eschews violence (26:51–4); he does not resist evil (26:36–56; 27:12–14); he is struck (26:67); he has his garments taken (27:28, 35); and his cross is carried by one requisitioned by Roman order (27:32). Here then we meet two themes found throughout Matthew: the congruence between word and deed, speech and action—an idea so important for Hellenistic philosophy—and Jesus' status as moral exemplar, which requires an imitation of Christ.

(5:43–8) The material on love of one's enemy, as the last of the six paragraphs introduced by 5:17–20, is climactic, and it contains the most important and most difficult commands. Jesus begins by quoting Lev 19:18 ('Love your neighbour'), which he will again quote—and uphold—in 19:19 and 22:39. But 'hate your enemy' is not found in the OT, although similar sentiments appear (e.g. Deut 7:2; the closest parallels occur in the Dead Sea scrolls, where the sons of light hate the sons of darkness). Jesus does not contradict Lev 19:18 but goes beyond it. For the Pentateuch understands 'neighbour' as fellow Israelite, and this allows one to confine love to one's own kind, or even to define 'neighbour' in opposition to 'enemy'. These verses, however, give 'neighbour' its broadest definition (cf. Lk 10:29–37). If one loves even one's enemies, who will not be loved?

The context equates enemies with those who persecute the faithful. This means those enemies are not just one's personal opponents but God's opponents. Further, 'love' is clarified by what follows: one must pray for enemies, do good to them, and greet them. Jesus is speaking of actions which benefit others. In this the disciple is only imitating God, who causes the sun to shine and the rain to fall upon all, not just the righteous.

v. 48 belongs first to the unit that begins in v. 43. Certainly the motif of imitating God takes one back to v. 45. At the same time v. 48 is the fitting culmination of all of 5:21 ff., for throughout the section Jesus asks for 'perfection', for something that cannot be surpassed. What more can be done about lust if it has been driven from one's heart? And who else is left to love after one has loved the enemy? 'Be perfect' is not a call to sinlessness; nor does the imperative posit two sorts of believers, the merely good on the one hand and the perfect on

the other. Jesus' call to perfection is a call to completeness.

(6:1–18) While the subject of 5:21–48 is Jesus and the Torah, in vv. 1–18 the cult becomes the subject. The former has mostly to do with actions, the latter with intentions. That is, this passage is a sort of commentary on 5:21–48: having been told *what* to do, one now learns *how* to do it.

The little cult-didache opens with a general statement of principle. Righteousness is not to be done in order to be seen by others (cf. Rom 2:28–9); right deeds must come from right intention, which involves humility and self-forgetfulness (v. 1). The idea is elaborated upon in the three subsequent paragraphs. The first is on almsgiving, the second on prayer, the third on fasting. Each opens with a declaration of subject (vv. 2a, 5a, 16a), follows with a prohibition of wrong practice (vv. 2b, 5b, 16b), and gives instruction on proper practice (vv. 3–4, 6, 17–18).

vv. 2–4 concern not whether one gives alms but how. The teaching is akin to *b. B. Bat.* 9b: 'One who gives charity in secret is greater than Moses.' The blowing of a trumpet is probably just a picturesque way of indicating the making of an announcement or the calling of attention to oneself. But trumpets may sometimes have been blown when alms were asked for (cf. *b. Ber.* 6b), so it is just possible that some unknown custom is being protested. There may also be a pun on the shofar chests that were set up in the temple and in the provinces. If the trumpet-shaped receptacles for alms could be made to resound when coins were thrown into them, perhaps our verse was originally a polemical barb at the practice.

The section on prayer, vv. 5–15, rejects praying in public places with the intent to be seen by others and then goes on to spurn long-winded or repetitious prayer (cf. Eccles 5:2; Matthew's 'do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do' is consistent with his audience being largely Jewish Christians). There follows the Lord's prayer, a model of brevity. Although Christian tradition has usually understood the prayer as having to do with everyday needs, much is to be said for interpreting it as an eschatological prayer. 'Hallowed be your name', 'your kingdom come', and 'your will be done' may ask God to usher in his everlasting reign. The request for 'bread of the morrow' (NRSV marg.) may be a prayer for the bread of life or heavenly manna of the latter days. 'Forgive us our debts' may envisage the coming judgement. And 'do

not bring us to the time of trial' may refer to the messianic woes (cf. Rev 3:10), (see further Lk 11:1–13).

The Lord's prayer is followed by two verses on forgiveness. A similar sequence appears in Mt 11:23–5 and Lk 17:3–6. There appears to have been a traditional connection between prayer and forgiveness: prayer is not efficacious unless the members of the community are reconciled to each other.

(6:19–34) The four paragraphs which make up this passage have to do with earthly treasure—vv. 19–21 with not storing it up, vv. 22–3 with being generous, v. 24 with serving God instead of mammon, and vv. 25–34 with not being anxious about food and clothing.

The passage contains three antitheses—earth/heaven (vv. 19–21), darkness/light (vv. 22–3), wealth (= mammon)/God (v. 24). The focus of the first is the heart, the second the eye, the third service. The determination of the heart to store up treasure in heaven or on earth creates either inner light or darkness while the resultant state of one's 'eye' (intent) moves one to serve either God or mammon. So one's treasure tells the tale of one's heart.

vv. 22–3 do not liken the eyes to a window but to a lamp (cf. Dan 10:6; Zech 4; *b. Šabb.* 151b). The picture is not of light going in but of light going out. This accords with the common pre-modern understanding of vision, according to which the eyes have their own light (so e.g. Plato and Augustine). To say that when one's eye is 'healthy' (generous, cf. Prov 22:9; *m. 'Abot* 2.19) one is full of light means that generosity is proof of the light within—just as to say that when one's eye is 'unhealthy' (ungenerous, cf. 20:15) one is full of darkness means that covetousness is a sign of inner darkness. vv. 24–34 follow 19–23 as encouragement follows demand. The commands to serve God instead of mammon, especially when interpreted in the light of the rest of the gospel (e.g. 5:39–42; 19:16–30), are difficult, and their observance will bring insecurity. So vv. 24–34 are the pastor's addendum: they are respite from the storm that is the SM. Those who undertake the hard demands of the gospel have a Father in heaven who gives good gifts to his children.

(7:1–12) Matthew now turns from one social issue, what to do with and about mammon (6:19–34), to another, how to treat one's neighbour. The new subject opens with the imperative not to judge or condemn. This is not a

prohibition of simple ethical judgements but rather a way of calling for mercy, humility, and tolerance. The verses about the 'speck' and the 'log' (vv. 3–5) continue the theme of vv. 1–2 but focus on hypocrisy (cf. Jn 7:53–8:11; Rom 2:1). But v. 6 is difficult. Some have even thought it without meaning in its present context. The point, however, is that if there must not be too much severity (vv. 1–5), there must at the same time not be too much laxity (v. 6). While this much is plain, one does not know whether 'your pearls' stands for any particular thing. Should we think of the gospel itself (cf. 13:45–6) or of esoteric teachings or practices? vv. 7–11 follow. They are the twin of 6:24–34. Both follow an exhortation (6:19–21; 7:1–2), a parable on the eye (6:22–3; 7:3–5), and a second parable (6:24; 7:6), and both refer to the heavenly Father's care for his own. Both also argue from the lesser to the greater and offer encouragement for those bombarded by the hard instruction in the rest of the SM.

The Golden Rule (which was well known to pre-Christian Jewish tradition) brings to a climax the central section of the SM (5:17–7:11). Mention of 'the law and the prophets' creates an *inclusio* within which Matthew has treated the law, the cult, and social issues. v. 12 is then, in rabbinic fashion, a general rule which is not only the quintessence of the law and the prophets but also of the SM. Interpreted within this gospel as a whole it is certainly not an expression of 'naive egoism' (Bultmann 1963:103); nor is it even an expression of 'common sense' or 'naturallaw' (Theophylact). Rather, as Luz (1985:430) has it, the Golden Rule is 'radicalized' by the SM: 'everything, without exception, which is demanded by love and the commandments of Jesus you should do for other people'.

(7:13–29) The SM winds down with warnings. There is first the declaration about the two ways (vv. 13–14), then the warnings about false prophets (vv. 15–23), then the parable of the two builders (vv. 24–7). All this balances the blessings which open the SM.

v. 14 is not a dogmatic calculation that most human beings will go to hell. Not only does this interpretation clash with the use of 'many' in 8:11 and 20:28, but hyperbolic declarations are common in Jewish hortative material (cf. *m. Qidd.* 1.10: 'If one performs a single commandment it will be well with him and he shall have length of days and shall inherit the land; but if he neglects a single commandment it shall be ill

with him and he shall not have length of days and shall not inherit the land'). It probably means that one should act *as if* only a very few will enter Paradise.

The identity of the false prophets in vv. 15–23 is unknown, although suggestions abound (e.g. Pharisees, antinomians, enthusiasts). We can say no more than that they were Christians (cf. 7:21) whom Matthew wished to attack (cf. 24:23–8).

The memorable concluding parable in 7:24–7 stresses the gravity of Jesus' imperatives by taking a dualistic point of view: there are really only two responses, obedience and disobedience, and only two human fates, salvation and destruction. Shades of grey do not have much place in Matthew's moral exhortation. Many take the storm that strikes the two houses to stand for the calamities and afflictions of everyday life, but in the OT God's judgement can come in a storm (as with Noah's flood); and in later Jewish literature the trials of the latter days are sometimes pictured as terrible tempests (e.g. 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 53:7–12). Maybe our parable should conjure up in the mind the storm of the eschatological ordeal.

vv. 28–9, which conclude the SM, should not be quickly passed over. First, the items it shares with 4:23–52 make the beginning and end of the SM mirror each other. Secondly, the line is similar to others which close chs. 10, 13, 18, and 24–5 and helps clarify the outline of the entire book (see *MT* E.11). Thirdly, one is put in mind of a formula used in Deut 31:1, 24 and 32:45. It seems likely enough, given the clear allusions to Moses in 5:1–2 and 8:1 (cf. Ex 34:29 LXX), that vv. 28–9 are one more piece of Matthew's Moses typology.

Jesus' Deeds within and for Israel (8:1–9:34)

Following the challenge of Jesus' difficult speech in the SM, this passage gives us the challenge of his merciful deeds, which are performed for people from the margins of Jewish society or without status—a leper, a Roman's servant, Peter's mother-in-law, two demoniacs, etc.—and are grouped into three triads; see *MT* E.3.

(8:1–4) The story of Jesus cleansing a leper—the disease is probably not what we know as leprosy but may be any one of several skin diseases—echoes both Num 12 (Moses heals Miriam) and 2 Kings 5:1–14 (Elisha heals Nahtan). It comes appropriately here as illustration of one of the central themes of the SM: Jesus,

who sends the healed man to a priest, observes the law of Moses (cf. Lev 13:49). But the story also links up with what follows. 11:5 makes the cleansing of lepers an item of eschatological expectation; so these verses stand as fulfilment to prophecy. Further, 10:8 instructs missionaries to heal lepers and so extends the notion of the imitation of Christ.

(8:5–13) A nameless Roman centurion, an exemplar of faith, asks help from Jesus the Jew: a Roman commander becomes a supplicant. The request is for the man's 'son' or 'servant' (the Gk. is ambiguous). Jesus' response is apparently a question: 'Should I come and cure him?' (my tr.). Jesus hesitates to help a Gentile (cf. 15:24). But the soldier wins him over by a declaration of faith: Jesus, whose spiritual authority is analogous to the centurion's military authority, needs only speak a word. Jesus' response is threefold: (1) he declares that no one in Israel has such faith; (2) he makes a prophetic threat using the language of Ps 107:3—'the heirs of the kingdom' (which cannot mean all Jews) will suffer eschatological rejection while many from east and west (Gentiles or diaspora Jews) will enjoy eschatological salvation—and (3) he heals the boy. (Cf. further *FGS* H.)

(8:14–17) Following the simple short story of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law there is a brief summary (cf. 4:23–5; 9:35) which offers the NT's only explicit citation of Isa 53. (But Matthew alludes to the chapter in 20:28; 27:12; 26:28.) The quotation attributes Jesus' healings to his spirit of self-sacrifice.

(8:18–22) Before the next three miracle stories there are two encounters which emphasize the hardships of discipleship. The encounters belong here because they illustrate the moral of the stilling of the storm, which is a symbolic illustration of what it means to follow Jesus. The first, vv. 19–20, in which a scribe addresses Jesus as 'teacher' (not 'Lord') and is not asked to follow, may offer a negative illustration, whereas the second, vv. 21–2, in which Jesus is called 'Lord' and issues the call, 'Follow me', may offer a positive illustration. v. 20 could allude to Ps 8: 'the Son of Man', who has nowhere to lay his head, in truth has all things under his feet, including the birds of the air. v. 22, which many have thought in tension with the commandment to honour father and mother, demands that 'the [spiritually] dead' take care of burial: Jesus must be followed now. The shocking saying should

not be explained away as a mistranslation of a hypothetical Aramaic original or in terms of secondary burial or rites of mourning. Only a little more plausible is the attempt to find here an idiom expressing the duty of caring for one's aged parents until they are dead. More likely we should find here a prophetic consciousness which can, 'according to the need of the hour' (*b. Yebam.* 90b), flout custom and law (cf. Jer 16:1–9; Ezek 24). In any case early Christian texts follow Jewish tradition in making burial an act of lovingkindness (27:57–61, etc.).

(8:23–7) The stilling of the storm is 'a kerygmic paradigm of the danger and glory of discipleship' (Bornkamm 1963: 57). The sea and its storm symbolize the world and its difficulties (cf. Ps 65:5; 69:1–2), and the ship is, as in patristic exegesis, the church. So the main point is that discipleship requires faith in Jesus in the midst of trial. But there is also a Christological message. Jesus is a prophet greater than Jonah. (The parallels with Jonah are obvious; cf. esp. v. 24 with Jon 1:4 MT.) Unlike Jonah, Jesus does not pray to God but directly addresses the storm; and in stilling the cosmic forces of evil that threaten the created order (cf. Ps 46; Rev 13:1; 21:1), he exercises the power of YHWH himself (cf. Ps 65:7; Isa 51:9–10).

(8:28–34) This narrative continues the theme of Jesus' authority. It may depict the healing of Gentiles (cf. 8:5–13). Such is suggested by the location in the Decapolis and the fact that swine are being raised nearby. On the other hand, the population along the east coast of the Sea of Galilee was mixed, and in the other cases where Jesus bends his rule of confining his mission to the lost sheep of the house of Israel this is made plain (8:5–13; 15:21–8). In either event Jesus sends the demons into the water—apparently a punishment as they were thought to prefer dry places (cf. 12:43). But this success does not garner support for Jesus' cause. As elsewhere his service for others generates hostility: good is repaid with evil.

(9:1–8) In the story of the man sick with palsy Jesus—now home in Capernaum (cf. 4:13)—sees and responds to the faith of those who bring a paralytic: he forgives the man's sins. The story presupposes that the infirmity has a spiritual cause (cf. Ex 20:5; 1 Cor 11:29–30; Jas 5:14–15; in 9:32–4 a demon makes a man deaf and dumb). So by forgiving sins Jesus uproots the cause of the paralysis. Although 4QPrNab proves that at

least some Jews could think of one person forgiving another's sins (with healing as the result), in Matthew the scribes object that Jesus has spoken evil ('blaspheming') because he has done what only God can do. Jesus, however, urges that it is easier to pronounce the forgiveness of sins than to command someone to walk, this because only the latter can be objectively verified. Further, because Jesus, in the event, can in fact make the paralytic walk and so do the harder thing, others must wonder whether he cannot also forgive sins.

(9:9–13) The first verse is an extraordinarily brief call story with the same structure as the two stories in 4:18–22; see above. The arrangement depends upon 1 Kings 19:19–21. In the objection story in vv. 10–13, which may be set in Peter's house, Pharisees denigrate Jesus by asking how he can eat with tax collectors and sinners, that is, those who through apostasy have removed themselves from the covenant. Jesus responds with a proverb (the sick need a physician), a scripture (Hos 6:6), and a declaration about his mission (in which the 'righteous' are apparently the '(self-)righteous'). The scripture, again quoted in 12:7, was probably an important text for Johanan ben Zakkai in the period after 70 CE: it helped people come to terms with the destruction of the temple. Perhaps then Matthew's use of Hos 6:6 was polemical: Jesus, not the rabbis, properly applies the prophet's words.

(9:14–17) John the Baptist's disciples (cf. 14:12) ask why the disciples of Jesus, the preacher of repentance, do not fast, that is, display acts of repentance. The question is not why they do not fast at all. For 5:17–20 implies that they at least keep the fast for the day of atonement (cf. Lev 16:1–34), and Jesus himself fasts in 4:1–11. Rather the issue is probably why they do not follow the custom (which the Pharisees followed) of fasting on Mondays and Thursdays. Jesus declares that guests do not fast during wedding celebrations and implies that the time of the Messiah's presence is in this particular akin to a wedding celebration. But this in turn means that when the Messiah has gone such fasting will be appropriate. Jesus then adds the parables about the patch and wineskins. These too offer paradoxical combinations. Putting new cloth on an old garment and new wine into old wineskins are as improbable as wedding guests fasting. The implicit subject continues to be the discontinuity between old

and new. But there is also continuity: 'so both are preserved'. Jesus' message and the kingdom of God not only bring the new but fulfil Judaism: the past is not abandoned but fulfilled.

(9:18–26) Here Jesus raises from the dead the daughter of a synagogue director (this justifies 11:5: 'and the dead are raised') and heals a woman with a uterine haemorrhage. The former he sets his hand upon (cf. the OT's 'hand of God'), the latter puts her hand upon him (or rather his 'fringe', that is, 'tassel', cf. 23:5). Because Jesus can read the thoughts of the woman with a haemorrhage, vv. 20–2 are really a sort of conversation. Their theme is faith—which in 9:28 is clarified as faith in Jesus as the embodiment and channel of God's power and grace. 'The hem of his garment' may, as several older commentators thought, allude to the prophecy of Mal 4:2, where 'the sun of righteousness' arises with 'healing in his wings,' for Jews sometimes spoke of the edges or fringes of their garments with a word whose first meaning is 'wing' (cf. Num 15:38; Deut 22:12).

(9:27–31) This colourless healing story closely resembles 20:29–34, of which it may be a redactional doublet. It prepares for 11:5, which cites Isaiah's prophecy of the healing of the blind. Blindness for an ancient Jew could involve not only poverty and hardship (cf. Mk 10:46) but also religious alienation (cf. Lev 21:20; 11QTemple 45:12–14). But the Torah makes some humanitarian provisions for the blind (e.g. Lev 19:14), and Jesus' ministry to the blind may be interpreted as an extension of such concern. The blind men call Jesus 'Son of David'. This is a messianic title (1:1); but Jesus also heals as Son of David in 12:23; 15:22; and 20:30–1. This matters because, with one exception, 'son of David' is, in the OT, used of Solomon, who was later renowned as a mighty healer and exorcist (cf. *T. Sol.* 1:7; 5:10; 20:1; 26:9). Perhaps then Matthew offers a Solomon typology.

(9:32–4) The healing of a demoniac who is deaf and dumb—the Greek word, *kōphon*, here means both—appropriately closes Matthew's third miracle triad. Not only does it prepare for 11:5 ('the deaf hear'), but the crowd's declaration that Jesus' ministry is like nothing in Israel's history (cf. Judg 19:30) is climactic. Moreover, v. 34 records the negative reaction of the Pharisees to the crowd's wonder and so anticipates the theme of opposition in the missionary discourse (cf. esp. 10:25).

(9:35–10:4) This unit, like 8:16–22, concludes a miracle triad, contains summary statements about Jesus' healing ministry, and uses Scripture ('sheep without a shepherd' appears in Num 27:17; 2 Chr 18:16; Jdt 11:19). It also closes off one section and opens another, concluding chs. 8–9 and introducing the missionary discourse by equating the work of the disciples with the compassionate work of Jesus (cf. 9:35 with 10:1). They do what he does and work in the eschatological harvest. By harking back to 4:23 and so forming an *inclusio* with the introduction to the SM, the passage makes Jesus' words (chs. 5–7) and deeds (chs. 8–9) the fundamental context for understanding 10:1–42. The twelve are to preach to Israel about the kingdom of God and to heal the sick (10:1, 7–8) and so imitate Jesus. Moreover, as 5:1–7:27 gives content to the command to preach the gospel (10:7), and as 8:1–9:34 gives content to the command to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons (10:8), Jesus' words and deeds are for the missionary example and precedent.

The Disciples' Ministry of Words and Deeds (10:1–42)

10:1–4 opens with an implicit call to imitate Jesus the missionary. By casting out 'unclean spirits' (cf. 12:43) and healing the sick (cf. 4:23) the twelve, who have been in the background until now, repeat his deeds. Unlike a genealogy, in which the names outline a pre-history (cf. 1:2–17), a list of students (cf. *m. 'Abot* 2.8) indicates a post-history—here the church under Peter's head. Peter is 'first', by which is meant not just first on the list but of privileged status. Judas, the most dishonoured, is last.

(10:5–25) Following the instructions in vv. 5–15 there comes first a list of hardships (vv. 16–23) and then a warning that the twelve—their number corresponds to the tribes of Israel—will be treated as Jesus was treated (vv. 24–5). Altogether the picture is bleak: the future is full of tribulation. Thus the scene is set for 10:26–31, which (in a way reminiscent of 6:25–34 and 7:7–11) offers consolation.

Jesus opens with a prohibition—given prominence by its initial position—not to go to Gentiles or Samaritans (v. 5; in Matthew Jesus never visits Samaria). Jesus is sent only to the lost sheep (cf. 9:36) of the house of Israel. It is not until the turning-point marked by his death and resurrection that there will be a Gentile mission (28:19). The Messiah is, in accordance with the Scriptures, sent to Israel.

vv. 11–15 concern the reception and rejection of missionaries in ‘town or village’ (cf. 9:35) and their response to such. The gift of peace is not just a social convention. Given the prophecies of peace for the eschatological age (e.g. Isa 52:7) and the eschatological content of the disciples’ mission, the apostolic greeting should be understood as a sign of the inbreaking of the kingdom: God is bringing *šālôm*. But when a place does not receive the good news, the Messiah’s emissaries will wipe their feet or shake the dust off themselves as they leave it. Such action is a public demonstration of the breaking of communion and the repudiation of responsibility (cf. 27:24); and it intimates a fate worse than that which came to Sodom and Gomorrah, two cities remembered as so wicked that God made them a burned-out waste (Gen 18:16–19:29). Obviously it is unprecedented honour to hear the disciples’ proclamation and unprecedented failure to reject it.

The prophecies of affliction in 10:16–23 go beyond the pre-Easter period to include later missionaries. So we pass from past to present without notice (cf. the situation in Jn 3). The transition reflects Matthew’s typification of the twelve: they stand for the Christians of later times. Further, the eschatological character of the sufferings, reinforced by the parallels in 24:9–14 as well as in Jewish apocalyptic literature, imply that the post- and pre-Easter periods both belong to the messianic woes and will only be ended when the Son of Man comes on the clouds of heaven. (So 10:23; the verse is not a reference to the resurrection, Pentecost, or the destruction of Jerusalem.) The missionary endeavour takes place in the latter days, and the suffering of missionaries is a manifestation of the birth-pangs which herald the advent of God’s new world.

The passion narrative has left more than traces in vv. 16–23. The fate the disciples face is analogous to what Jesus suffers in later chapters. Jesus too is handed over (26:45). He appears before a sanhedrin (26:59). He is whipped (20:19; cf. 27:26). He is led before a governor (27:1–26). He bears testimony before government officials (26:57–69; 27:11–26). He is betrayed by a member of the group closest to him (26:47–56). And he is killed. The reader recalls all this not only because ch. 10 is permeated by the implicit notion of Jesus Christ as model missionary but also because 10:24–5 explicitly sets the mistreatment of Jesus beside the mistreatment of the disciples. So we have in vv. 17–23 what we also meet in 5:38–42: Jesus in his

passion is the exemplar of suffering discipleship.

The theme of the imitation of Christ, already strongly implicit, becomes explicit in vv. 24–5. The verses (cf. Jn 13:16) declare that suffering will come to those who are like Jesus. The implicit subject of ‘call’ and ‘malign’ may be the Pharisees (cf. 9:34). Beelzebul is Satan, the prince of demons (12:24–6).

(10:26–31) Three negative injunctions (vv. 26a, 28a, 31a) mark three different points. vv. 26–7, with their antitheses between covered and revealed, hidden and made known, darkness and light, whispering and proclamation, speak of the eschatological revelation of God’s truth in which the inspired imagination can even now find solace. v. 28 unfolds the real meaning of death. And vv. 29–31 declare God’s sovereignty over the present. In its entirety the section is a sort of theodicy that offers consolation. It declares that the eschatological future will reverse the present (v. 26) and that what happens after death matters above all (v. 28). But lest one suppose that only the future will see God’s will done, v. 29 asserts God’s present sovereignty. This of course leaves unanswered the problem of how God can be sovereign in a world where his saints suffer so. v. 30 responds with the lesson of Job: God knows what we do not (the verse is not a promise of God’s protection—that is contradicted by the context—but a proverb which contrasts God’s omniscience with human ignorance; cf. Job 38:37; Sir 1:2; *Apoc. Sed.* 8.6).

(10:32–42) This section on confession (vv. 32–3), conflict (vv. 34–9), and consolation (vv. 40–2) is partly repetitious: public confession, familial division, eschatological trial, endurance in suffering, and the reception of missionaries have already been treated. The repetition, however, adds emphasis: suffering is indeed inevitable. But there is more than repetition. Whereas 10:5–25 is largely specialized instruction for missionaries, vv. 32 ff. could be heeded equally by every believer. While the non-missionary might find much of vv. 5–25 beside the point, the last portion of the discourse imposes itself upon all.

The prophecy of family strife is based upon Mic 7:6, which was thought to describe the discord of the latter days (cf. *m. Sota* 9:15); and the conviction that the great tribulation would turn those of the same household against one another was widespread (cf. *Jub.* 23:16). So v. 35

comprehends the ministry of Jesus and the time of the church—literal and figurative crucifixion characterizes and so unifies both periods (v. 38)—in terms of the eschatological woes (cf. Rev 6:4).

The missionary discourse winds down with promissory words in which the disciples are not active but passive: they are received and served (vv. 40–2). The main theme is compensation: those who welcome the eschatological messengers of Jesus welcome Jesus himself and so gain eschatological reward. The ‘little ones’ are Christian missionaries; so v. 42 is a word not for them but for others—those who, although not itinerants, can share in the Christian mission.

The Response of Israel (11:1–12:50)

(11:1–12:46) Chs. 11–12 recount the failure of ‘this generation’ to accept God’s eschatological messengers and recognize ‘the deeds of the Messiah’ (11:2, my tr.; the term is a comprehensive reference to Jesus’ ministry in Israel). But the focus on rejection is punctuated by the invitations and hope found in 11:25–30; 12:15–21; and 12:46–50. Not all is bleak. There is a remnant.

(11:1–19) Following a transitional sentence (see MT 7:28–9), we have the Christological question of John the Baptist. It is rather surprising in view of John’s recognition of Jesus in ch. 3. It is also surprising that the upshot of the disciples’ mission is not recorded: while they are commanded to go out, they are never said to return. Perhaps the odd circumstance not only prevents 10:23 from being viewed as a false prophecy but also implies that the Jewish mission is still continuing.

Jesus’ answer to John conflates the language of Isa 26:19; 29:18; 35:5–6; 42:7, 18; and 61:1. All the items listed—which might remind one of Elijah—refer to things that have already happened, so that the reader sees in Jesus the fulfilment of Isaiah’s eschatological prophecies. (Cf. the list of eschatological events listed in 4Q521; this includes giving sight to the blind, raising the dead, and preaching good news to the poor.)

In vv. 7–15 Jesus ceases to speak of himself and instead speaks of John. He makes five points. John is a prophet and more than a prophet (v. 9). He is the figure foretold by Mal 3:1 (so v. 10; cf. Ex 23:20). He is the greatest of those born among women (v. 11—although the least in the coming kingdom will be greater than he). He is the turning point in salvation

history (vv. 12–13; the suffering of John and the saints after him belong to the time when the kingdom is attacked by violent men). And he is Elijah (v. 14; cf. Mal 4:5–6 and John’s resemblance to Elijah in Mt 3:4; the issue will come up again in 17:9–13).

Having spoken about himself (vv. 2–6) and about John (vv. 7–15), Jesus next speaks about the response of ‘this generation’ to both (vv. 16–19). Most commentators identify the children of v. 16 with Jesus and John: the former’s invitation to rejoice and the latter’s call for the mourning of repentance have fallen upon hostile ears. But the text literally identifies ‘this generation’ with the piping and wailing children, and it may be better to think that the Baptist, who sternly demanded repentance, met with those who wanted rather to make merry (‘we played the flute for you, and you did not dance’), and that Jesus, who preached good news and likened the present to a wedding celebration, was thought to be insufficiently sombre (‘we wailed, and you did not mourn’, cf. 9:14–17). In any case the deeds of Jesus are the deeds of Wisdom, and they exonerate him (v. 19).

(11:20–4) The two eschatological woes, whose form—address, indictment, verdict—recalls OT oracles (e.g. Isa 5:11–17), carry forward the disappointment registered at the end of 11:16–19—although nothing has prepared for the mention of Chorazin or Bethsaida. But we have read of scribes and Pharisees in Capernaum opposing Jesus (9:3, 11) and of a crowd in Capernaum laughing at him (9:24). The passage serves notice that Jesus’ mission to Israel has not summoned corporate repentance and that the consequences will be devastating.

(11:25–30) The theme of rejection (11:2–24) now recedes as we read of those—the ‘infants’ (cf. 10:42)—who respond rightly to the deeds of the Messiah (11:2). vv. 25–6 (instead of making justified complaint) offer thanksgiving; v. 27 reveals that Jesus is the revealer; and vv. 28–30 are an invitation. The whole has a Mosaic colour. The declaration about Father and Son knowing each other depends upon Ex 33:12–13, in which Moses says that God knows him and in which Moses prays that he might know God; and the promise of rest (cf. the realized eschatology in Heb 4:1–13) is modelled upon Ex 33:14. Jesus moreover is like Moses in that he is ‘meek’ (Num 12:3), full of revelation (Jewish tradition made Moses all but omniscient; cf. *Jub.* 1:4; *Sipre Deut.* §357), and has a ‘yoke’ (a word often

applied to the Mosaic law). All this accords with Jesus' status as the new Moses of the new covenant.

(12:1–8) Although Jews certainly recognized that exceptional circumstances sometimes allowed the non-observance of Torah (cf. 1 Macc 2:39–41), the Pharisees object that the disciples, by plucking and eating grain on the sabbath, are acting unlawfully (cf. Ex 34:21). But Jesus answers by appealing to an unlawful act—which some late rabbinic sources place on a sabbath—of his royal ancestor David, an act motivated by hunger: the king and those with him ate the bread of the Presence (1 Sam 21). Only the priests were allowed to eat such bread (Lev 24:9). The force of Jesus' appeal is debated, but the following suggestions (which are not contradictory) should be considered: (1) because Scripture does not condemn David for his action, the Pharisees' rigidity is unacceptable; (2) one can observe one commandment at the expense of another (cf. vv. 5–6), and here Jesus puts mercy first (cf. 12:7, 9–14); (3) if David could break the Torah, so can the Messiah (cf. vv. 6, 8), vv. 5–6 then add that if the priests in the temple could violate the sabbath for a higher good, how much more he who is greater than the temple? The argument concludes with (1) an appeal to Hos 6:6 (already cited in 9:13) which shows Scripture's overriding demand for mercy; and (2) a clarifying addition: Jesus' ministry stands above the sabbath. Nothing in the pericope outlaws sabbath observance. Such observance is indeed presupposed by 24:20. Jesus is not setting aside the law but, in traditional Jewish fashion, placing one divine imperative over another for the moment.

(12:9–14) Jesus does a second controversial thing on the sabbath: he heals a paralysed or withered hand. Probably many but not most Jewish teachers of Jesus' day would have thought it wrong, unless a life were at risk, to heal on a sabbath. In defence Jesus (who here does nothing but speak) appeals not to scriptural precept or example (contrast 12:1–8) but to the human sentiment of his hearers. He assumes that their common practice is to help animals on a sabbath (contrast CD 11:23–14). He then makes the inference from the lesser to the greater: if it is lawful to do good to an animal on a sabbath, surely it is lawful to do good to a human on a sabbath.

(12:15–21) As in 8:16–17, we have a summary of Jesus' healing activity followed by a formula

quotation from Isaiah. The text is Isa 42:1–4, 9, the longest OT quotation in Matthew. Jesus is the chosen servant, the beloved with whom God is well pleased, and the Spirit (cf. the following paragraph) is upon him—all of which recalls the baptism. The mention of Gentiles harks back to 4:15 and anticipates 28:19. The voice not heard in the streets relates itself naturally to v. 16 and Jesus' lack of self-publicity. The 'bruised reed' and 'smouldering wick' probably represent Jesus' compassion for those at society's margin.

(12:22–50) As in 12:1–21 two controversies with the Pharisees (vv. 22–37 and 38–45) are followed by a paragraph which focuses on those who accept Jesus. 11:1–30 has a similar structure: after the section which ends with the rejection of John and Jesus by 'this generation' (11:16–19) and the woes upon Galilee there follows the invitation in 11:25–30.

(12:22–37) This drawn-out objection story consists of (1) an exorcism (v. 22); (2) the positive (if inadequate) response of the crowd (v. 23); (3) the dissenting and polemical reaction of the Pharisees to the crowd (v. 24); and (4) Jesus' extended response. This last consists of three rebuttals and a warning (vv. 25–30), teaching on the unforgivable sin (vv. 31–2), and a unit on fruits and words (vv. 33–7).

Jesus first responds by appeal to common sense (vv. 25–6). But vv. 27–8 are difficult. If v. 27 urges that two similar activities (exorcisms of Jesus, exorcisms of others) should not be assigned to radically dissimilar sources (Beelzebul, God), v. 28 goes on to make a claim whose logic has seemed to many unclear. Why should Jesus' exorcisms signal the coming of the kingdom? By his own reasoning should not the same be signalled by the exorcisms of others? But the questions miss the implicit Christological claim. Jesus accepts the miracles of others but holds his own to be of different import because of his identity as the Messiah. What matters is not the exorcisms but the exorcist ('if I cast out demons'). The Messiah has come as victor over evil forces, so the kingdom is already establishing itself.

In vv. 31–2 Jesus drops his defensive posture and takes up the offensive. His words are warnings to those who have not accepted what has just been said. v. 31 simply declares that although God is ready and willing to forgive, those who oppose the eschatological work of God's Spirit in the ministry of Jesus push God's

inclination to forgive past its limit. (Cf. 4Q270 ii 12–15, where we read of those who curse or speak against ‘those anointed with His Holy Spirit’.) Despite the common tradition of associating the sin against the Holy Spirit with 1 Jn 5:16, nothing is here taught about post-baptismal relapse. The meaning of v. 32, however, remains obscure. For speaking a word against the Son of Man seems in context to be the same as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit—the one is forgivable, the other is not. A truly satisfying interpretation has yet to be offered. vv. 33–7 conclude the unit by opposing the possible supposition that blasphemy cannot really have eternal consequence because it consists of nothing but words with the assertion that to speak evil is to be evil: words reflect the true self and so can be the criterion of divine judgement. (Cf. further FGS 1.)

(12:38–45) After being asked for a sign Jesus speaks of the one sign to be given to ‘this generation’, refers to the eschatological judgement of ‘this generation’, and utters a parable about ‘this generation’. The scribes and Pharisees want from Jesus not words but a stupendous miracle. The irony is that Jesus has already worked enough miracles to persuade an open mind. So he brands the request as coming from ‘an evil and adulterous [i.e. faithless] generation’, an expression which recalls Deut 1:35 and 32:5. Jesus’ contemporaries are like those who grumbled in the wilderness, those whom God punished by not letting them see the land of promise. None the less, a stupendous sign still will be given—Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. (‘Three days and three nights’ is from Jon 2:1 LXX and, in view of Matthew’s chronology, can hardly be taken literally.)

Following the mention of Jonah we read that the Ninevites who repented at or because of the prophet’s preaching (cf. Jon 3:2) and the queen of the South (i.e. Sheba) who visited Solomon (cf. 1 Kings 10:1–10; 2 Chr 9:1–9) will be raised at the last judgement and be the standards by which ‘this generation’ will be condemned. The Ninevites and the queen responded rightly to Jonah and Solomon; but to the one greater than Jonah and Solomon, namely, Jesus (cf. 12:6), ‘this generation’ has not rightly responded. This then leads to a parable about exorcism, in which the last things are worse than the first. This illustrates the situation with those who have rejected the proclamation of Jesus and the church: they would be better off

at the final assize if they had never heard the gospel.

(12:46–50) 4:21–2; 8:22; and 10:34–7 entail at best a loosening of family ties, at worst renunciation of one’s parents and siblings. But Jesus offers consolation when he declares that his disciples are his family, and that all who do the will of his Father belong to that family. The obedient disciple is not left alone, without a family; for the church is the household of faith in which there is a father (God) and in which there are brothers and sisters (23:8). Jesus’ demand to forsake family is not a call to solitary existence but an invitation to join a new spiritual community.

Explaining Israel’s Response (13:1–52)

This discourse is a sort of theodicy—not a solution to the problem of evil in general but a solution to the rejection of Jesus in particular. See MT E. 5.

(13:1–23) The parable of the sower (vv. 1–9) comes with an allegorical explanation (vv. 18–23) which makes matters plain: the effects of Jesus’ proclamation in Israel are varied because of various factors (including the devil’s activity, lack of character under trial, and inappropriate love for the world). vv. 10–17 are more difficult. The disciples want to know why Jesus speaks in parables. He answers that the parables reveal and (in accordance with Isa 6:9–10) hide at the same time, for their effect depends upon the moral status of the hearer. So parables uphold the concept of a closed group in Matthew’s thinking (cf. 7:6). Things that should not be revealed to unbelief are not. Only those who do the will of the Father in heaven and so belong to Jesus’ family will understand Jesus’ parables (cf. 11:25–30; 12:46–50). Those who do not do the will of the Father will not understand. Knowledge has a moral dimension. While the mysteries of the presence of the eschatological kingdom are given by grace through his parables, such teaching falls upon closed as well as open ears. As in the parable of the sower, so too in vv. 10–17: the divine message begets different responses.

(13:24–43) Here Jesus utters three parables (vv. 24–30, 31–2, 33), makes another general statement about parables (vv. 34–5), and offers an interpretation of vv. 24–30 (vv. 36–43). The structure is reminiscent of 13:1–23, the only difference being that instead of one parable there are three:

Parable of sower	Parable of the tares
	Parable of the mustard seed
	Parable of the leaven
Discussion of parables	Discussion of parables
Interpretation of sower	Interpretation of tares

The parable of the tares employs motifs from 13:1–23—sowing, seeds, soil, kingdom, obstacles to growth, the devil—and there is a common message: while the victory of God's kingdom is sure, the progress of the gospel is hampered by unbelief and its effects. But while the sower focuses on human responsibility (the devil being only one factor among others), the tares concentrates on the devil, who imitates Jesus (the sower of 13:1–9) by sowing his own seed. Satan shares responsibility for human sin; those without faith are 'sons of the evil one'. Many commentators have thought the parable reflects concern over the character of some members of Matthew's church and teaches tolerance, but vv. 24–30 do not clearly address a situation in the Christian community. Augustine used this parable to argue against the Donatists, who wanted to exclude the lapsed from church. 13:36–43, however, quite plainly identifies the field with the world, not the church. Moreover, the broader context is not ecclesiological affairs but failure to believe in Israel's Messiah, and 18:15–20 shows us that Matthew had no qualms about pulling up Christian weeds when necessary.

The parable of the mustard seed (a proverbially small seed: cf. 17:20) in vv. 31–2 teaches that a humble beginning is not inconsistent with a great and glorious destiny. The juxtaposition of two seemingly incongruent facts—the tiny seed and a tree for birds—illustrates the contrast between the experience of Jesus and his followers in the present and their expectations of the future. Our parable implicitly sets reality and hope side by side and offers that the grand end is in the mundane beginning. Just as the seed produces the tree, so that which is inconspicuously present in Jesus' ministry will become the universal reign of God.

The introduction to the parable of the leaven (v. 33) resembles the introduction to the parable of the mustard seed, and both parables tell of a small, hidden thing that becomes large through an organic process. These similarities signal an identity of theme. Both teach that the coming of the kingdom begins not with a grand spectacle but a hidden presence. In this way the character and nature of Jesus' ministry, including its failure in Israel, can be better understood.

vv. 34–5 is a formula quotation about Jesus' use of parables. The quotation from Ps 78:2 grounds Jesus' parabolic manner of speaking in prophecy: the OT prophesies the Messiah's use of revelatory parables. These verses also serve as a transition from one audience to another: Jesus turns from those who do not understand to those who do (cf. 13:10–17).

vv. 24–30 tell a parabolic story. vv. 37–9, in response to the disciples' request for its interpretation (cf. 13:10), supply a sort of lexicon which explains the allegorical meanings of seven figures in that story. vv. 40–3 then take those meanings and with them constructs a second narrative about the last judgement. The result is two stories—vv. 24–30 and 40–3—with one meaning. Together they put things in eschatological perspective. If the sun now shines on the just and unjust, it shall not always be so. The tares will eventually be plucked up, the wheat gathered. History's end will give the answers to the difficult questions that history, including the history of Jesus, raises.

(13:44–52) The three parables (cf. 13:24–33) of the treasure, pearl, and net are followed by an interpretation of the latter (cf. 13:18–23, 13:36–43) and a general discussion of parables (cf. 13:10–17, 34–5) which concludes the discourse. The first two parables (vv. 44–6) concern finding the kingdom (represented by the treasure and the pearl) and doing everything to obtain it. The focus is on the present, not the future, and on the actions of believers, not unbelievers. The point is that although the kingdom is hidden (cf. 13:31–3) it can be found; and when it is, one should make whatever sacrifice is necessary to obtain it. 'Anyone who counts the cost of discipleship has completely failed to grasp the greatness of the reward' (Beare 1981: 315).

The parables of the treasure and pearl appropriately succeed 13:1–43 by offering paraenesis—buy, sell, seek. Granted the kingdom's value and its sure triumph, one must strive to overcome every obstacle in the way of obtaining it. One must not respond as the people denounced in chs. 11–12 or be like the unfruitful seeds of 13:1–23. The necessity for such action is, in turn, underlined by vv. 47–50, which return to the last assize (cf. 13:36–43): judgement will come upon those who reject the kingdom. There is, accordingly, a shift of emphasis between 13:1–43 and vv. 44–50. Whereas the former is more descriptive, the latter is more hortative.

The discourse ends with vv. 51–2, a comparative proverb. The major point is that the

disciples have indeed understood Jesus' discourse and so qualify as scribes instructed in the truths of the kingdom of heaven. Perhaps a Christian counterpart to the Jewish rabbinate is envisaged. It is altogether probable that Matthew belonged to a 'school' of Christian scribes. In this case the verse would be a sort of self-portrait. What exactly is meant by 'new' and 'old' is unclear. Should we think of the new revelation in Jesus and old revelation in the Torah, or of Christian tradition and Jewish tradition, or of the teaching of Christians and Jesus' teaching, or of Matthew's interpretations of Jesus' parables and those parables themselves?

The Birth of the Church (13:53–17:27)

(13:53–8) This pericope, which supplies a concrete example of people hearing but not hearing and seeing but not seeing (cf. 13:13), illustrates that the failure to understand leads not to indifference but to hostility, and further that unbelief does not correspond to any geographical pattern: Jesus' words and deeds are rejected in the north (here Nazareth) as well as the south, in his home town as well as the capital. There is no sacred space uncontaminated by hostility. The lesson complements 12:46–50, which immediately precedes 13:1–52. For if in vv. 53–8 one learns that geographical and social ties do not really matter, in 12:46–50 it is taught that family ties may be relaxed by commitment to Jesus. So the great parable discourse is framed by two texts which relativize the significance of earthly ties.

vv. 53–8 link up not only with what precedes but also with what follows. In v. 57 Jesus implicitly proclaims himself a prophet, and in 14:5 the people hold John to be a prophet. The upshot is clear. John's fate, which is recounted in 14:1–12, is that of a prophet, and a similar fate must also lie ahead for Jesus. To be a prophet means to suffer rejection and ultimately death (cf. 23:29–39).

On the concluding formula in v. 53 see MT 7:28–9. In v. 55 the crowd attempts to explain away the extraordinary by associating it with the familiar. Their unbelief, which moves Jesus to restrict his effort on their behalf, is not explained. But 13:1–30 has already supplied the answers.

(14:1–12) Having in the parable discourse examined the roots of unbelief, Matthew now shows us how the failure to gain faith can manifest itself. In this passage (cf. the rather different account in Josephus, *Ant.* 18 §§

117–19) unbelief begets not only misunderstanding (vv. 1–2—Jesus is mistaken for John raised from the dead) but violent opposition (vv. 3–12; cf. 13:53–8). Moreover, the passage portends in some detail the passion narrative, for there are many parallels between Jesus and John. Both are seized (v. 3; 21:46) and bound (v. 3; 27:2) and suffer the shameful deaths of criminals. Both are executed at the command of a government official (Herod, Pilate) who acts reluctantly at the request of others (vv. 6–11; 27:11–26). Both are buried by their disciples (v. 12; 27:57–61), and in each case opponents fear what the crowds might do because they hold John and Jesus to be prophets (v. 5; 21:46). As in 2:1–23 (where the opponent is Herod the Great, Herod the tetrarch's father); 5:38–42; and 10:17–23, the end is foreshadowed. So John's martyrdom is not an interesting aside, a slack moment in the narrative during which someone other than Jesus is the focus, but rather a Christological parable: the fate of the forerunner is that of the coming one (cf. 17:12).

Because John is elsewhere identified with Elijah (11:14), and because in 1 Kings 17–19 the prophet Elijah accuses King Ahab of misdeeds while the evil Queen Jezebel seeks the prophet's life, one may liken Herod to king Ahab and Herodias to Jezebel. It is suggestive that in the very next pericope Jesus acts like Elisha, Elijah's successor (see 2 Kings 4:42–4).

(14:13–21) The feeding of the five thousand is above all about the compassionate (cf. v. 14) Jesus and his supernatural ability to satisfy those in physical need—a theme that runs throughout the gospel. Here, as in the similar stories in 1 Kings 17:8–16; 2 Kings 4:42–4; and Jn 21:4–8, the miracle, itself undescribed, comes not in response to a request but flows from the spontaneous goodness of the miracle worker. (Despite the opinions of many, it is not clear that the numbers—five loaves, two fishes, twelve baskets, 5,000 men—have symbolic significance.)

The verbal parallels with 26:20–9 make the present episode foreshadow the eucharist, and this episode may even be a sort of allegory of the church's eucharistic celebration. But there is more. Like the last supper, the feeding of the five thousand anticipates the messianic banquet. It also strongly recalls 2 Kings 4:42–4, where (1) Elisha takes bread and (2) commands, 'Give to the people, and let them eat', whereupon (3) a question is raised as to how so many can be fed by so little; but (4) the people eat

anyway and (5) food is left over. The parallelism implies that Jesus is an eschatological prophet like Elisha. Finally, Jesus' miracle in a deserted (*erēmon*) place in the evening after crossing water recalls the miraculous evening fall of manna in the wilderness (*erēmos*) under Moses after passage through the Red Sea (Ex 16; Num 11). *Sipre* on Num 11:22 records that the Israelites ate fish in their desert wanderings (cf. Wis 19:12), and the manna in the wilderness was spoken of as a sort of 'bread' (e.g. Deut 8:3). Matthew's Moses typology is, as patristic exegesis saw, again present (cf. Jn 6:25 ff.). In sum, the miraculous feeding looks to the past and to the future—it anticipates the Lord's supper and the messianic banquet and it looks back to OT miracles of Moses and Elisha.

(14:22–36) This passage, which is rich in both its Christological implications and its instruction on discipleship, is an epiphany which brings rescue. Jesus orders the disciples to cross without him—a circumstance which may be intended to teach that if obedience to Christ puts one in dire need then Christ himself will offer help. Jesus, illustrating 6:6, then goes by himself up a mountain to pray (cf. the circumstance that Moses prayed alone on Sinai, e.g. Ex 32:30–4). But when the disciples suffer distress during the last watch of night, Jesus walks on the sea towards them and, to calm a terror born not only from the wind but also from fear of a ghost, commands them not to be afraid. By walking on the sea, Jesus, like the omnipotent creator of the OT, overcomes the powers of chaos (cf. Job 9:8), and by crossing the sea so that his disciples may in turn cross safely he is again like YHWH, who prepared the way for the Israelites to pass through the Red Sea (Ps 77:19). Clearly the powers of the deity are incarnate in God's Son, who can here borrow the theophanic 'I am' (*egō eimi*, v. 27; cf. Ex 3:14). (Cf. further FGS J.)

vv. 28–31 constitute a story within a story. Peter rightly wishes to imitate his Lord, who can share his authority and power with his followers. But Peter begins to sink because of his little faith (cf. 6:30; 8:26) and so must cry for help (cf. Ps 69:1–3). Jesus, however, is there to answer his call despite inadequate faith. What counts is not strength of will or courage but Jesus' saving presence.

(15:1–20) Jesus speaks with the scribes and Pharisees (vv. 1–9), then with the crowd (vv. 10–11), then with the disciples (vv. 12–20). The

theme of the first conversation is the Pharisaic tradition: that tradition does not have the same authority as Scripture, and where it goes against Scripture it must be condemned. (23:2–3, 23 imply that the tradition is not rejected completely.) Then in vv. 10–11, 15–20, Jesus teaches the truth about purity: the serious defilement is that created by the heart. vv. 12–14 attack the Pharisees themselves: their lives exhibit hypocrisy and they cannot be followed (cf. 16:5–12). There is no obvious thematic link with the surrounding material.

The legal question of why the disciples do not ritually wash their hands before eating is for us a dim one. Not only do we no longer think in terms of ritual purity, but we have no detailed sources on the subject of handwashing from the first century. 7:3, according to which no Jew would eat with unwashed hands, is usually said to be exaggeration. But Jn 2:6, which refers to stone jars of water for purification at a wedding, is perhaps some evidence that ritual handwashing was widely practised before 70 CE.

Jesus does not directly answer the Pharisees but rather accuses them of hypocrisy: they keep their own tradition at the expense of violating Torah, specifically the commandment to honour one's parents (Ex 20:12; Deut 5:16)—a commandment whose importance is shown by Ex 21:17, which prescribes death for speaking evil of father or mother. The Pharisees teach that one can pronounce a *qorbān* vow—a vow which withdraws something from profane use and makes it as though it were dedicated to the temple—for the purpose of not sharing property, even with one's parents (cf. *m. Ned.* 5:6; contrast 4:7–8). But this is hypocrisy, which can be illustrated by the quotation from Isa 29:13.

Nothing so far said annuls any OT law. On the contrary, Jesus is presented as upholding Torah (cf. 5:17–20). Even the declaration in v. 11 (cf. Rom 14:14) does not abolish Moses. It is not halakah but a moral pronouncement. We have here the Semitic idiom of relative negation in which all the emphasis lies on the second half of the saying. Food cannot defile because true defilement is a function of morality. What matters is not the belly (v. 17) but the heart (cf. 5:21–8; 23:16–26; also the interesting parallel in 2 Chr 30:18–20). The 'parable' (v. 15) may relativize the ritual law but it does not set it aside. Compare the teaching in *Num. Rab.* 19:8: 'It is not the dead that defiles nor the water that purifies. The Holy One, blessed be He, merely says: "I have laid down a statute, I have issued

a decree. You are not allowed to transgress my decree.” As Maimonides later said, defilement ‘is a matter of scriptural decree and dependent on the intention of the heart’. v. 11 could be formulated as is 5:27–8: ‘You have heard that it was said, “One is defiled by what goes into the mouth.” But I say to you: what comes out of one is what defiles one.’ Just as the condemnation of lust does not mean indifference to adultery, so too the identification of the heart as the source of defilement does not mean the dismissal of levitical law.

The unit concludes with a list of vices (v. 19; cf. the Decalogue) which tell the tale of the defiled heart and then a summary conclusion (v. 20). This last makes plain that the whole discussion turns on the question of Pharisaic tradition, not the written law, for the washing of hands before meals is only enjoined in the former.

(15:21–8) When Jesus goes to the region of Tyre and Sidon (v. 21)—two cities with evil reputations (cf. Ezek 28)—he meets a Canaanite woman. ‘Canaanite’ adds to the negative connotations of ‘Tyre and Sidon’. As Chrysostom rightly had it, ‘the evangelist speaks against the woman, that he may show forth her marvellous act, and celebrate her praise the more. For when you hear of a Canaanite woman, you should call to mind those wicked nations which overturned from their foundations the very laws of nature and, being reminded of these, consider also the power of Christ’s advent.’

The woman surprisingly addresses Jesus as Lord and Son of David and asks for mercy for her daughter, who suffers from a demon. Jesus’ response is silence—he is either turning her down or trying her faith. The disciples then want her dismissed (cf. 14:15). Jesus, in accordance with 10:6, declares his commitment to Israel, the nation which is by and large lost for lack of leadership. He thus promotes a biblical doctrine of election. Israel is God’s chosen people, and to them the Messiah goes first of all. Even in the face of opposition and disbelief Jesus, the mirror of God’s faithfulness, continues to direct his mission to the leaderless sheep of Israel. Instead of taking Jesus’ theological pronouncement for the last word the woman again asks for help. Jesus responds with seemingly cruel words (which may reproduce a proverb): it is not good to take the bread of the children (that is, what Jesus has to offer Israel) and to give it to dogs (Gentiles). The woman then offers an unexpected riposte: the

dogs eat the scraps that fall from their masters’ tables. This recognizes Israel’s privileges yet simultaneously implies that others can be benefited. Jesus acknowledges the clever reply as the product of great faith and so grants the daughter’s healing.

The parallelism with 8:5–13 is striking. Both passages are about Jesus encountering a Gentile who wants him to heal a child. In both, the supplicants call Jesus ‘Lord’. In both, the focus is not on the healing itself but the preceding conversation, which in each instance contains a general statement by Jesus about Israel. In addition, both record initial hesitation on the part of Jesus, relate how the Gentile wins Jesus over by clever words which illustrate great faith, and have the healings, which are accomplished at a distance, transpire ‘from that hour’. The assimilation of the two episodes is part of our author’s wider habit of assimilating like to like. But the repetition also reinforces the common themes, above all the theme that salvation comes to those outside Israel in response to their faith in Jesus.

(15:29–39) The feeding of the four thousand is very much like the feeding of the five thousand (14:13–21), and so the meaning of the two stories is much the same: again the repetition makes for emphasis. (And again it is dubious to find symbolic significance in the various numbers.) There is indeed an old tradition that the five thousand were Jews, the four thousand Gentiles; but nothing substantial in Matthew supports this interpretation, and 15:21–8 seemingly contradicts it. There is, however, one major way in which vv. 29–39 add to the narrative. The gathering of the crowds, the healing of the sick (cf. 11:5), the allusion to Isa 35:5–6 (vv. 30–1), the compassionate feeding of many, and the mountain setting together recall OT prophecies about Mount Zion (see Donaldson 1985). So the second feeding shows us that the eschatological expectations associated with Zion have come to fulfilment in Jesus.

(16:1–4) Despite everything Jesus has said and done, the Pharisees and Sadducees—an unlikely alliance—remain unconvinced; and because they find Jesus a threat to themselves, they seek to trip him up by making a request they think he cannot fulfil. They profess to want a spectacular sign in or from the heavens but refuse to see the many proofs right before their eyes (cf. 12:38). They can read the signs of the weather but are blind to the signs of the last

times set by God. Jesus, who here makes no vain attempt to persuade, does not grant their request—we assume that he could (cf. 26:53)—but offers them only the sign of Jonah, that is, his resurrection (cf. 12:40; the Sadducees dogmatically denied the general resurrection). The chief point is that seeing is not believing. Rather, one does not see until one believes. For the faith that holds the soul also rules one's perception. It is vain to expect hardened hearts to be melted by demonstrations of power. This is why, in this gospel, miracles, while certainly pointers to God's presence in Jesus, are always therapeutic or salvific; their object is not the convincing of sceptics (cf. 13:56).

(16:5–12) The emphasis is not upon Jesus' ability to meet physical needs or his pedagogical skills, although both themes are present; the focus is the admonition about the Pharisees and Sadducees. The warning to beware of their 'leaven', repeated twice, frames the discourse, and is interpreted in the conclusion (v. 12: 'leaven' means teaching). It is clearly the main point. Perhaps among early readers of this gospel there were still some who attended Jewish synagogue. To them the warning would be most appropriate. The tension with 23:2–3, where Jesus tells disciples to observe what the scribes and Pharisees say, is more apparent than real; vv. 5 and 11 do not imply that everything taught by the Jewish leaders is false, just as 23:2–3 can scarcely mean that everything they say is true. And whereas the latter is about what followers of Jesus and Jewish teachers have in common, the former is about what divides the two groups. It follows that believers should listen to the synagogue leaders in so far as the leaders' speech is grounded in the authoritative oracles of the OT and so true; at the same time, believers must also take heed, for the leaders' opposition to Jesus means that much of what they teach must be false.

(16:13–20) The primary function of this passage is to record the establishment of a new community, one which will acknowledge Jesus' true identity and thereby become the focus of God's activity in history. The event has been occasioned by the rejection of Jesus by so many in Israel, including Israel's leaders, a rejection chronicled in the previous chapters.

The major themes have their collective root in Davidic messianism, above all in Nathan's famous oracle to David, preserved in 2 Sam 7:4–16 || 1 Chr 17:3–15. Jesus is confessed as

both Christ and Son of God; he builds a church or temple; and he gives to Peter the keys to the kingdom of heaven. These are all Davidic motifs. In 2 Sam 7 and 1 Chr 17 it is promised that one of David's descendants will rule Israel as king (and therefore as anointed one), that he will be God's son ('I will be his father, and he will be my son'), that he will build a temple, and that his kingdom will be forever. This oracle was, before Matthew's time, understood to refer not just to Solomon but to Israel's eschatological king (cf. 4QFlor). Matthew asserts its fulfilment in Jesus. Moreover, the giving of the keys of the kingdom of heaven to Peter has its closest OT parallel in Isa 22:22, where God will place on Eliakim's shoulder 'the key' of 'the house of David' (a term with messianic associations; cf. Zech 12:7–13:1; Lk 1:27); with it he will open and none will shut, and he will shut and none will open. This text, which is applied to Jesus in Rev 3:7 and here lies behind Jesus' promise to Peter, is about the activity of a man second only to the king. In sum, vv. 13–20 record the eschatological realization of the promises made to David.

When Jesus gets to Caesarea Philippi, a Gentile town 20 miles north of the Sea of Galilee, he asks his disciples what others think of him. The consensus is that Jesus is a prophet. People identify him with John the Baptist (so Herod, 14:2) or Elijah (in 4:18–22 Jesus acts like Elijah) or Jeremiah (a prophet like Moses who spoke against the temple, suffered, and was remembered as a martyr) or more generally 'one of the prophets'. But when Peter confesses that Jesus is more than a prophet, that he is the Christ, the Son of the living God, Jesus pronounces over him (not the disciples as a group) a beatitude. Jesus goes on to utter three sentences, each of which consists of three parts—a statement of theme plus an antithetical couplet. The first sentence, v. 17, interprets the confession as an eschatological secret revealed through divine agency.

The second sentence, v. 18, concerns Peter and the *ekklesia*, the end-time community, the counterpart of the Sinai congregation (which in Deuteronomy is called the *ekklesia*). The verse is among the most controversial in all Scripture. 'You are Peter' matches 'you are the Messiah', and Jesus, like Peter, also utters revelation. The most natural reading is that 'this rock' (*petra*—we have a wordplay) refers to Peter, the foundation stone of the new temple which Jesus builds. This does not mean Peter is the first holder of an office others will someday hold,

as Roman Catholic tradition has it. But he is surely more than a representative disciple, as so many Protestants have anxiously maintained. Rather, he is a man with a unique role in salvation history. His person marks a change in the times. His significance is akin to that of Abraham: his faith is the means by which God brings a new people into being. In fact, one should perhaps think of Gen 17. There too we witness the birth of the people of God through an individual whose name is changed to signify his crucial function (Abram becomes Abraham, 'father of a multitude'). Moreover, Abraham is, in Isa 51:1–2 (cf. the comments on 3:9), a rock from which the people of God are quarried. Is not Peter the patriarch of the church?

That the gates of Hades will not prevail against the church is not an allusion to Jesus' death and resurrection, nor to the general resurrection, nor to Christ's descent into hell (a thing otherwise unattested in this gospel). The most plausible interpretation is that the gates of Hades are the ungodly powers of the underworld who will assail the church in the latter days: the church will emerge triumphant from the eschatological assaults of evil. In the background is the end-time scenario of powers which, unleashed from below, rage against the saints (cf. 1 *Enoch* 56:8; Rev 11:7; 17:8). One may compare Rev 9:1–11, where the demonic hosts, under their king, Abaddon, come up from the bottomless pit to torment humanity. They prevail against all except those with the seal of God.

In v. 19 Peter is given the keys to the kingdom, which is explicated to mean that he has the authority to bind and loose (cf. 18:18). This is not a statement about exorcism or the forgiveness of sins (cf. Jn 20:23). Rather, Peter, as a sort of supreme rabbi of the kingdom, is given teaching authority. His decisions stand.

(16:21–3) Once it is evident that Israel as a corporate body is not going to welcome Jesus as the Messiah, two things remain to be done. First, Jesus must found a new community. Secondly, he must give his life as a ransom for many. Having just begun the first task in the previous paragraph, he now turns his eyes towards the second. His prophetic foresight is such that he can see the future, including his own death. But Peter, who here goes from the heights to the depths and functions not as the rock on which the church is built but as a stone of stumbling (Isa 8:14), behaves like a fool and does not recognize the necessity of messianic

suffering. Jesus rebukes him in the strongest possible terms—and shows that the Messiah goes to his death as a free man: he chooses his own destiny.

(16:24–8) After the brief narrative setting (v. 24a) there are sayings on discipleship (vv. 24b–26) and the eschatological future, which will come sooner rather than later (vv. 27–8). The logic is clear: thought of the future should encourage acts of discipleship in the present, for only the final state matters (cf. v. 26). But discipleship is not easy of achievement. Jesus is not a substitute but a leader who must be followed (v. 24; cf. 4:18–22; 8:18–22; 9:9), and his life ends in suffering and crucifixion (vv. 21–3). Further, Jesus calls for a surrender or denial of self no matter what the cost or dangers (v. 25). This means above all obedience to another's will (cf. Gethsemane). Anything more difficult could hardly be asked of human beings. Faith is obedience, and obedience is the grave of the will.

(17:1–8) The major theme of this epiphany is Jesus' status as a new Moses. 'Six days later' (v. 1, an ambiguous reference, but cf. Ex 24:16) Jesus' face shines like the sun (v. 2) as does Moses' face in Ex 34:29–35 (cf. Philo, *vit. Mos.* 170; *Ps.-Philo*, *LAB* 12:1). As in Ex 24:15–18; 34:5 a bright cloud appears, and a voice speaks from it (so too Ex 24:16). The onlookers—a special group of three (v. 1; cf. Ex 24:1)—are afraid (v. 6; cf. Ex 34:29–30). And all this takes place on a mountain (v. 1; cf. Ex 24:12, 15–18; 34:3). Moreover, Moses and Elijah, who converse with the transfigured Jesus, are the only figures in the OT who speak with God on Mount Sinai, so their presence together makes us think of that mountain. Jesus is the prophet like Moses of Deut 18:15, 18.

The transfiguration relates itself to the immediately preceding narrative. It illustrates 16:24–8 first by showing forth the glory of the parousia foretold in vv. 27–9 (cf. 2 *Pet* 1:16–18) and secondly by making concrete the resurrection hope of those who follow the hard commands of Jesus issued in vv. 24–6. (In 13:43 the resurrected saints shine like the sun.) As for the prophecy of passion and resurrection in 16:21–3, the transfiguration anticipates Jesus' exaltation. Further, through the allusion of the voice to Isa 42:1 ('with him I am well pleased') Jesus is made out to be the suffering servant of Isaiah. Going back even further, to 16:13–20, the divine confession of Jesus as the Son of God confirms and underlines Peter's confession.

The transfiguration not only resembles the baptism but also has a twin of sorts in 27:32–54. 17:1–8 records a private epiphany in which an exalted Jesus, with garments glistening, stands on a high mountain and is flanked by two religious giants from the past. All is light. But 27:32–54 relates a public spectacle in which a humiliated Jesus, whose clothes have been taken from him and divided, is lifted upon a cross and flanked by two criminals. All is darkness. In both accounts there are three named onlookers (17:1; 27:56), Jesus is confessed as Son of God (17:6; 27:54), and people are afraid (17:6; 27:54: ‘and were overcome with fear’; the Greek is the same in both places although this does not appear from the NRSV). And whereas Elijah is present in one place (17:3), in the other he fails to appear (27:46–9). We have in all this pictorial antithetical parallelism, a diptych in which the two plates have similar lines but different colours. As God’s Son Jesus participates in the whole gamut of human possibilities; the eschatological prophecies of doom and vindication play themselves out in his life. Jesus is humiliated and exalted, surrounded by saints and ringed by sinners, clothed with light and wrapped in a mantle of darkness.

(17:9–13) Just as Peter’s confession of Jesus as the Son of God is immediately followed by a passion prediction (16:13–23), so now is the transfiguration immediately followed by another prophecy of the suffering of the Son of Man. The verses deprive Jewish criticism of Christian claims of one forceful objection, namely, since Elijah has not yet come (cf. Mal 4:5), the eschatological scenario cannot be unfolding. Jesus counters that Elijah, in the person of the Baptist, has indeed come (v. 12). Beyond that the passage emphasizes yet once more the parallels between Jesus and John: both suffer similar fates. Lastly, the command to keep silent until Jesus has risen from the dead (v. 9) not only stresses the impossibility of preaching the whole truth about Jesus until he has completed his mission—this underlines the centrality of the cross—but also makes Peter, James, and John authoritative bearers of the Jesus tradition.

(17:14–21) Jesus’ exorcism of a demon who is causing self-destructive behaviour (v. 15) is told primarily for the sake of Jesus’ provocative declaration in v. 20. The focus is not on Jesus as healer but on discipleship and faith. The lesson is not what Jesus can do but what his followers

should do. Despite 10:1 the disciples have been unable to cast out the demon. They, by their ‘little faith’ (v. 20), have retrogressed to the spiritual level of the multitude (v. 17). But this is needless. So after expressing prophetic exasperation and healing the boy himself, Jesus informs them that any faith at all can move mountains, that is, work wonders. This seemingly stands in tension with his diagnosis of ‘little faith’. That is, v. 20 affirms that the disciples have at least some faith, whereas v. 21 (NRSV marg.) suggests that only a little faith will do miracles (cf. 1 Cor 13:2). Although the way the two ideas should be harmonized is unclear, the main point stands: faith enables; its lack cripples. Faith, which is not belief but trust and hope in God in Christ, is the precondition which God has set for many of his actions in the world (cf. 13:58).

(17:22–3) Jesus, without adding any additional details, again plainly prophesies his end. The repetition not only emphasizes Jesus’ prophetic powers and makes plain the voluntary nature of his suffering but also pushes the reader forward in anticipation: the key to everything must be in the end. If in 28:18 Jesus declares that all authority has been delivered to him (by God), here he speaks of being delivered into the hands, that is, authority, of sinful people. The poles of experience represented by the two texts are worlds apart. This adds pathos. God gives the Son of Man into the hands of others, and God gives the Son of Man universal authority. It is the burden of the gospel to demonstrate that these two opposing acts, far from being contradictory, are, in God’s hidden but sovereign will, the two complementary halves of the same divine purpose.

(17:24–7) After Peter tells tax collectors that Jesus pays the tax for support of the sacrificial system in Jerusalem, the apostle goes to Jesus for instructions about that tax. Jesus says that the relationship between God and Israel is like that between a king and his family. Just as a king does not tax his own family, so God does not tax his people. The point is not that Jesus rejects the temple cult. He rather rejects the idea that theocratic taxation is the appropriate means of maintaining that cult. But with the miracle—not actually narrated—of the coin in the fish (which sounds like a piece of folklore), Jesus makes arrangements for payment. He thereby avoids offending the devout people who, in collecting the money, think themselves to be serving God. Personal freedom must be

delimited because it must be responsibly exercised, which means it must take into account the effect upon others (cf. 1 Cor 8:13). At the same time, by not giving his own money but only a lost coin, Jesus does not acknowledge the legitimacy of a mandatory tax. One may compare Paul's collection for the poor in Jerusalem (which was seemingly modelled on the collection of the temple tax). The apostle stressed that payment was purely voluntary: he was not collecting a tax (Rom 15:25–7).

Instructions for the Church (18:1–35)

This, the fourth major speech, is the ecclesiastical discourse; see MT E.7. vv. 1–5 focus on the theme of imitating and receiving children; vv. 6–9 warn about causing others or oneself to stumble; vv. 10–14 speak of God's love for the lost. All three paragraphs refer to 'children' or 'little ones'. But with 18:15 ff. the key word becomes 'brother' (which the NRSV translates 'member of the church'). In this second half there are instructions for communal discipline (vv. 15–20), teaching on forgiveness (vv. 21–2), and a long parable (vv. 23–35). It may be that the three paragraphs before vv. 15–20 and the two after are buffers of a sort; that is, they emphasize the qualities required if one is going to be so bold as to carry out the difficult directions on discipline. Before talking about reproof Jesus goes on at length about humility, not offending others, and God's love. And as soon as he finishes the subject of disciplinary measures he talks about reconciliation and forgiveness. The pastoral effect is to strike a balance. Just as 7:6 joins a logion about discernment to injunctions prohibiting condemnation of others (7:1–5), so ch. 18 surrounds the material on fraternal correction with calls for generosity, humility, and forgiveness.

(18:1–14) This block of moral teaching, which presupposes a communal setting, begins by referring to literal children (v. 2), but by vv. 10–14 'little ones' designates believers (cf. 10:42). The transition from one thing to the other is probably marked by the change in vocabulary: *paidion* is the key word in vv. 1–5, *mikros* in vv. 6–14; i.e. vv. 1–5 concern literal children, vv. 6–14 believers. The former teaches that one should become like little children, for only by this will one enter the kingdom (v. 3). One should humble oneself as a child, for in the kingdom the humble will be great (v. 4; cf. 23:12). The point is not that children are self-consciously humble but that they are, within

society, without much status or position. One also should—perhaps this is an illustration of humility—welcome children in 'my name', for to receive such a one is to receive Jesus himself (v. 5; Jesus' own action in 19:13–15 illustrates his words here). The sequence is: entrance into the kingdom (v. 3), greatness in the kingdom (v. 4), service in the world (v. 5).

With v. 6 the tone is no longer one of promise but warning. To cause a believer to be misled or perverted morally brings a fate worse than being thrown into the dark, eternal grave of the sea with a donkey millstone around one's neck (cf. Rev 18:21). God sees to it that one cannot harm others without harming oneself. It is indeed true that *skandala*, 'stumbling blocks', are necessary, for evil must flourish in the latter days (24:6); but this does not entail that any one individual must commit them (v. 7). The self is in fact called to rid itself of whatever in it leads to sin (vv. 8–9; the references to hand and eye do not, in Pauline fashion, represent members of the church; they are rather hyperbolic illustrations, as in 5:29–30). The underlying logic seems to be that in order to avoid offending others (v. 7) one must also take care of oneself (vv. 8–9). The self must suffer a 'life-giving mortification' (Symeon the New Theologian).

The warning against harming 'little ones' is reinforced by the parable in 18:10–14. The shepherd recovering his lost sheep stands for God's work in Christ and so illustrates God's concern for the faithful who go astray. His concern for such—represented by his appointment of guardian angels for them (v. 10)—is the paradigm and illustration for a similar human concern (cf. v. 14; cf. 5:45–8). To harm them would be to set oneself against God.

(18:15–35) If one Christian sins against another, the offended party, imitating the shepherd who goes after the lost sheep, should first seek reconciliation in private by bringing up the fault (cf. Lev 19:17, alluded to in v. 15). If this attempt fails, the offended should next seek the aid of another, maybe two (cf. Deut 19:15; 2 Cor 13:1; 1 Tim 5:19), and try again. If that likewise does not produce results, the matter is to be brought to the whole community. If, after that, a sinner remains recalcitrant, he or she must be regarded as outside the community (excommunication). The community's decision then has the authority of heaven itself (vv. 18–20), for its prayer is in effect Jesus' prayer, and his prayer cannot but be answered (v. 20). (This verse may

revise the rabbinic notion that the *shekinah* or divine effulgence is present when two or more gather to study Torah; cf. *m. Abot* 3.2, 3, 6. As in the Mishnah, so in Matthew: holy space is determined not by geography but activity. The difference is that in the gospel space is made holy by the presence of Christ and entered into by gathering in his name.)

The instructions to correct another have a long history in Jewish literature. The key text is Lev 19:15–18, which enjoins not hating others but reproofing them (cf. Sir 19:13–20:2). In the Dead Sea scrolls Lev 19:15–18 is behind a formal procedure: one first takes a complaint to the individual against whom it is directed; if this does not have the intended effect, one then goes before the community. Also close to Matthew is *T. Gad* 6:3–5, where, on the basis of Lev 19:15–18, one is to speak in love to an offender, forgive if repentance is made, and do all this in secret.

Following the hard instructions on excommunication is teaching on forgiveness which functions as a hedge against rigidity and absolutism (vv. 21–2). To Peter's question whether he should forgive seven times, Jesus says that he should forgive seventy-seven or (the Greek is ambiguous) seventy times seven times. This makes explicit the attitude required if one is to correct another. Forgiveness, like love, must be limitless. Without such forgiveness the community cannot correct the wayward, pray as a united front, and have Christ in its midst.

Although many have felt tension between vv. 21–2 and 15–20, Lev 19:17 joins reproof and love, and so in Judaism the two belong together. Further, membership in the Matthean community disallows certain acts; the church would cease to be itself if it did not insist that its members acknowledge Christ's standard of behaviour. The spirit of forgiveness is not indifference to sin. So we may suppose that when the offended goes to the offender, there has already been forgiveness; the reproof is for the sake of the other.

The chapter ends with the parable of the unforgiving servant (18:23–35). It does not merely illustrate vv. 21–2, which are a call for repeated forgiveness. Rather vv. 23–35 make the additional points that failure to forgive (1) is failure to act as God—represented by the king who remits the incredible sum of 10,000 talents—and (2) will merit eschatological punishment (cf. 6:15).

Commencement of the Passion (19:1–25:46)

(19:1–12) Ch. 18 has to do with ecclesiastical issues, ch. 19 with everyday existence: marriage

and divorce (vv. 1–9), celibacy (vv. 10–12), children (vv. 13–15), and money (19:16–20:16)—all key social concerns. There is in all this a certain parallelism (reflective of a catechetical order?) with 6:1–7:12, where Jesus first discusses cultic issues (6:1–18) and next speaks to social issues (6:19–7:12).

The extended dialogue in 19:1–12, in which Jesus three times responds to a challenge or question, covers a topic already considered in the SM (5:31–2); but the declaration there made, without explanation, is now elucidated. The subject of celibacy, on the other hand, has not previously appeared (although in 1:24–5 Joseph refrains from 'knowing' Mary for a time).

The Pharisees, who want Jesus to contradict Moses, challenge their opponent to interpret the *erwat dābār* of Deut 24:1, a phrase given different interpretations by the schools of Hillel and Shammai. Matthew's 'for any cause' reflects knowledge of the more liberal and presumably dominant Hillelite position, according to which many things constitute grounds for divorce. The question then is whether Jesus agrees or, on the contrary, holds a less liberal position. Jesus directs his opponents to Gen 1:27 and Gen 2:24 and so responds by raising the issue of the permanence of marriage. 'Have you not read?' invites reconsideration of the implications of Genesis: has God not established lifelong partnership? CD 4:19–21 shows that before Jesus' time Gen 1:27 was brought into connection with the subject of marriage and used to endorse its permanence. (Cf. perhaps Mal 2:15; in Gal 3:28 the allusion to Gen 1:27 LXX upholds the theme of reunification.)

Jesus' position requires him to elucidate Deut 24:1, where God permits divorce. The main point is not that the teaching of Genesis is from God, that in Deuteronomy from Moses. Rather, the instructions in Deut 24:1 are a concession to the moral petrification of the post-fallen state. Jesus does not undo Deut 24:1 but rather distinguishes the perfect will of God from the commandments which reflect human sinfulness (cf. the legislation for kingship, an institution due to divine concession). With this distinction in mind Jesus can demand conformity to the will of God as it was expressed in the beginning. Probably in the background is the equation of beginning and end: the coming of the kingdom is the restoration of paradise and so the realization of what God intended from the beginning. In any case the only command in Deut 24:1–4 is that 'her first husband, who sent her away, is not permitted to take her again to

be his wife'. This matters because whereas in v. 7 the Pharisees ask why Moses 'commanded' a certificate of divorce to be given, in v. 8 Jesus speaks of Moses giving permission. Here then there is a correction: Moses did not command divorce; he only allowed it—seemingly as the lesser of two evils in some circumstances.

The problem of whether v. 9 allows remarriage for the innocent party (so traditionally most Protestants) cannot finally be answered. Does 'except for unchastity' qualify only the first verb ('divorces') or both verbs (also 'marries')? Patristic opinion, burdened by a less than enthusiastic view of marriage, disallowed remarriage and so understood our text accordingly. The link with vv. 10–12, which have to do with sexual abstinence, has been taken to uphold this view: the eunuchs for the kingdom are those who separate from their spouses because of 'adultery' and do not remarry. Yet the saying about eunuchs is not a command but a qualified recommendation: not all are given the gift. So if vv. 10–12 are closely associated with v. 9, it might appear that some *can* remarry. One also wonders whether something like the later distinction between separation and divorce would have made sense in Matthew's environment. The Jewish divorce bill contained the clause, 'You are free to marry again.' To obtain a divorce was to obtain permission to remarry (5:32 simply assumes that divorce leads to remarriage: to divorce a wife is to make her commit adultery—because she will take another spouse).

The disciples' response to Jesus' teaching is unexpected. Just as they wrongly rebuke people for bringing a child to Jesus in the next paragraph, and just as they will wonder, 'Then who can be saved?' in the paragraph after that, so here too: they misunderstand. The correct inference from Jesus' exaltation of lifelong marriage is not the promulgation of celibacy. But the disciples, holding a view of marriage and divorce akin to that in Sir 25:16–26, and reasoning that a lifetime of commitment to one woman is more burdensome than no involvement at all, conclude that it is better not to marry.

The crux of v. 11 is 'this teaching'. Does it refer to vv. 3–9 or to v. 9 (Jesus' teaching on divorce) or to v. 10 (the disciples' inference from Jesus' teaching) or does it anticipate or introduce v. 12 (the saying about eunuchs)? Or can no sense be made of the passage because disparate traditions have been merged? A reference to vv. 3–9 or 9 is unlikely. It would make v. 12 address those who have separated from their wives and

enjoin them to remain single. But v. 9 does not clearly exclude the prospect of remarriage if there has been divorce for adultery. Further, the gift of celibacy is something exceptional, something that cannot be accepted by everyone, whereas surely Jesus' teaching on divorce is for all. Finally, one could not in any case speak of a *command* not to remarry: vv. 11–12 contain only a recommendation.

Does 'this teaching' then point forward to v. 12? This is possible. But a connection with v. 10 is more likely. The disciples' remark in v. 10 is a transitional sentence. They have drawn an inference about celibacy from Jesus' teaching on marriage. Jesus does not go back to the subject of marriage but takes up the question of celibacy ('this teaching'). His main thrust may be seen in the contrast between the disciples' unqualified generalization and his own denial of universal applicability. Note how the qualifications are piled up: 'not everyone', 'those to whom it is given', 'let anyone accept this who can'. Bengel rightly wrote: 'Jesus opposes these words [vv. 11–12] to the universal proposition of his disciples.' Matthew does use the saying on eunuchs to confirm celibacy as a calling; but his emphasis—in contradiction to the disciples—is upon its special character. Perhaps the evangelist felt a need to combat a perceived excess in his own community. There was certainly a growing fondness for asceticism and so for celibacy in the Hellenistic world.

According to the rabbis there were two sorts of eunuchs, those of human device and those of nature's making (cf. *m. Zab.* 2:1). The first, the 'eunuch of man', was a male who had either been literally castrated or who had, sometime after birth, lost the power to reproduce. The second was the 'eunuch of the sun', that is, from the first seeing of the sun—one born with defective male organs (cf. *b. Yebam.* 79b). While the rabbinic sources are late, 19:12 shows that in this regard they preserve an old way of speaking. Jesus takes up the traditional categories and to them adds a third—men who are unmarried not because they cannot take a wife but rather because they will not, because the duty placed upon them is such that it is best discharged outside marriage. For these people, the good and valuable thing that marriage undoubtedly is must be sacrificed in view of the demand made upon them by something greater.

(19:13–15) This stark narrative consists of narrative introduction (v. 13) + dominical word (v. 14) + narrative conclusion (v. 15). The introduction

sets the scene: some (unspecified) want Jesus to bless children (infants?); the disciples, for reasons unknown, protest. Once the opposition is generated, Jesus reveals with whom he sides—first by word, then by deed. Both acts of communication implicitly rebuke the disciples while an *inclusio* (the laying on of hands appears in both vv. 13 and 15) confirms the instincts of those who bring the children for blessing. Thus the pericope reinforces the sympathy one feels for children elsewhere in this gospel (14:13–21; 15:21–8, 29–39; 18:3; 21:15).

After the discussion of marriage and celibacy, children are now the subject. The order is natural and occurs elsewhere, as in Philo, *De fug.* 1.3; Eph 5:21–6:4; Josephus, *Ag. Ap.* 2. 199–204; *Ps.-Phoc.* 175–217. Children should be received ‘for it is to such as these [those in the situation of children] that the kingdom of heaven belongs’ (cf. 5:3, 10; Ps 8:1–2; *b. Sanh.* 110b). Interpreted in the light of 18:3, this teaches humility, by which is meant lack of concern for worldly status. To be child-like is to be without power or position. So there are two lessons: be kind to children, embody humility.

If in 19:10 the disciples assert that it is better not to marry, in v. 13 they belittle children. Both judgements are consistent with a negative view of family life—and in both cases Jesus offers correction. In 19:11–12 he makes it plain that celibacy is not for everyone, and in vv. 13–15 he affirms that children are to be welcomed. So vv. 13–15, in their present context, reinforce 19:11–12 and so confirm the high view of marriage put forward in 19:1–9.

This passage has been used to justify infant baptism; but there is hardly evidence for thinking that this was an issue for the synoptic evangelists. On the other hand, perhaps the practice of blessing children in church was already a matter for discussion in the first century.

(19:16–30) The subject of domestic affairs continues with a section on wealth and the kingdom. The topic has already been extensively treated in the SM. Indeed, the saying about the impossibility of serving both God and mammon (6:24) is here concretely demonstrated. The subjects of treasure in heaven (6:19–21), generosity (6:22–3), eschatological reversal (5:3–12), and perfection (5:48) also resurface here.

This passage also reinforces and illustrates the SM’s teaching on Torah. Jesus’ words to the rich man and the disciples do not abolish the law. On the contrary, they enjoy the commandments. Indeed, because the two texts cited—the

Decalogue and Lev 19:18—were understood as summaries of, or headings for, the law (see below), their endorsement perhaps even implies the validity of ‘the least of these commandments’. In any event two of the OT verses cited in 5:21–48 (Ex 20:13, 14 || Deut 5:17, 18) are here quoted by Jesus, and without any qualification. The Decalogue is plainly still in force. Both the SM and vv. 16–30 affirm the Torah and at the same time demand more.

vv. 16–22 recount a call to discipleship. To the question about eternal life, Jesus responds with a question, a theological assertion, and an imperative. This last changes the metaphor from market to road: Jesus demands not a purchase but a pilgrimage. He also rejects the implication that in some way the OT is inadequate. Pilgrimage means keeping the second table of the Decalogue (the table on social relations: Ex 20:12–16; Deut 5:16–20) and, in accord with Leviticus, loving one’s neighbour as oneself. The omission of the first table is perhaps surprising; but the issue at hand will prove to be social, and certainly Calvin was correct to observe that right action (as depicted by the second table) is proof of right religion (as outlined by the first table; *Inst.* 2.8.52–3).

The question, ‘Which ones?’ (v. 18), might imply the unimportance of parts of the Torah: only some commandments are required for salvation. Jesus’ response dispels that notion. He quotes the Decalogue and Lev 19:18. The former was thought of as a summary of, or heading for, the whole law (cf. Philo, *Spec. leg.* 1.1) whereas the latter (or the chapter to which it belonged) was sometimes said to contain the Torah *in nuce* (*Sipra Lev.* on 19:1–4). So v. 19 directs attention not to isolated texts but to parts that stand for the whole.

In v. 21 Jesus demands not merely alms but everything. This is not an imperative of the Decalogue or the OT but something new, a novel charge engendered by the nature of discipleship and the greater righteousness announced by 5:20. But what is meant by being ‘perfect’? There has always been a tendency to sort Christians into two grades, one more advanced than the other, e.g. in monasticism. But v. 21 does not mean that Christians who sell all will be ‘perfect’ while others will be stuck with ‘a second degree of virtue’ (Jerome). Calvin was right: ‘Our Lord is not proclaiming a general statement that is applicable to everyone, but only to the person with whom He is speaking.’ This passage is a call story, like those in 4:18–20; 8:18–22; and 9:9. The rich man is being invited

to follow Jesus in a specific situation. This circumstance determines what is asked of him. One can no more generalize v. 21 than turn 8:22 ('leave the dead to bury their own dead') into a general order to neglect the deceased. Moreover, the continuation in 19:22–6 shows that the rich man loses not perfection but salvation.

What then is meant by 'perfect'? It can hardly be a reference to sinlessness, although such an idea would not have been foreign to ancient Jews. In 5:48 the connotation of completeness is foremost, but whereas there it is the completeness of love, here it is the completeness of obedience: perfection is perfect obedience. The rich man would be perfect if he exhibited wholehearted obedience to Jesus Christ.

In vv. 23–6 Jesus turns from the rich man to his disciples and gives commentary on what has just happened. His point is that God's kingdom is hard to reach if one is rich, for the rich inevitably trust in the security of wealth rather than in God alone. Indeed, in the absurd juxtaposition of the largest native beast in Palestine with a well-known example of a very small opening in v. 24, Jesus speaks about the impossible: 'one impossibility is compared with another' (Jerome).

The disciples' subsequent question, which uncritically presupposes (against the rest of Matthew) that wealth is a sign of divine favour, implies that if not even the rich man, blessed as he is by God, can enter the kingdom, who can? The answer lies in God's omnipotence, which is antithetical to human impotence: regarding salvation only God has strength—just as, with regard to goodness, God and human beings belong to different categories (cf. v. 17). But note that v. 26 speaks only of the possible, not the probable. God's omnipotence does not guarantee anyone's salvation. v. 26 is not comfort for the rich; it does not cancel vv. 23–4.

In vv. 27–30 Peter asks how things stand with itinerants such as himself who have, in contrast with the rich man, forsaken all. Jesus responds first by offering congratulations and promising future reward. But the happy words are soon balanced with the caution of 20:1–16: if the twelve are examples of the last becoming first, they need beware, lest they likewise become examples of the first becoming last.

The crucial v. 28, which alludes to Dan 7:9–27, refers not to a one-time judgement but to lordship. The text is not about Israel's condemnation at the consummation but the disciples' exercise of authority in the future (cf. 20:20–1). As the

twelve phylarchs once directed the twelve tribes under Moses, and as Israel was once ruled by judges, so shall it be at the end. Compare the Jewish prayer in the *Shemoneh 'Esreh*: 'Restore our judges as in former times.'

(20:1–16) The parable, which recounts the events of a single day, falls into two parts. vv. 1–7 (which open with sunrise) describe the hiring of labourers, and vv. 8–16 (which are set in the evening) then recount the story of payment. The point is not to contrast Jews and Gentiles (or Jewish Christians and Gentile Christians); nor is the passage an allegory of human life (childhood, adolescence, etc.) or of world history, or salvation history, or spiritual progress; neither is it a pictorial representation of 21:31—the toll-collectors and prostitutes (i.e. the last) go into the kingdom of God before the Pharisees (i.e. the first). It is also not a supplement to 19:16–30, illustrating how the last (cf. the disciples and those who come at the eleventh hour) become first and how the first (cf. the rich man and those hired at the first hour) become last. The text is rather a parable of the last judgement which functions as a warning against boasting or presuming oneself to be among the first. vv. 1–15 are framed by 19:20 and 20:16, which teach eschatological reversal. So vv. 1–15 mean above all that the promise of reward (cf. the previous paragraph) should not become ground upon which to stand. The last can become first.

Beyond this the parable teaches that God rewards human beings according to an unexpected goodness—although this teaching functions not as encouragement but as warning (cf. 19:30). God's kindness, in this regard analogous to Jesus' moral imperatives, satisfies justice and then goes further. So the less deserving may receive as much as the more deserving. Like the Spirit, the divine grace blows where it wills. That destroys all human reckoning and therefore all presumption. It is a truth that must be absorbed after the heady promises of 19:28–9: hope should never become self-satisfaction.

One might suppose that in 19:16–30 salvation is according to works: one must obey the Torah and Jesus Christ. But vv. 1–15 disallow this simplistic interpretation, for they clearly teach, albeit in a picture, that there is no necessary proportion between human work and divine reward; or, as Isaac the Syrian provocatively put it, 'How can you call God just when you come across the Scriptural passage on the wage given to the workers?' (*Ascetical Homilies*, 51).

Many have even found a Pauline doctrine of grace here.

(20:17–19) This detailed passion prediction summarizes the major events subsequent to Gethsemane. Their order is that of the passion narrative, except in the latter the scourging comes before the mocking. vv. 17–19 move the story forward by taking Jesus closer to Jerusalem and by forecasting for a third time and so emphasizing upcoming events. As compared with the earlier passion predictions (16:21; 17:22–3), the condemnation to death, deliverance to Gentiles, mocking, scourging, and crucifixion are new. As Jesus nears his end, its shape becomes plainer. Also plainer is Jesus' foreknowledge, which is not vague but exact.

This passage is surrounded by two sizeable paragraphs having to do with eschatological rewards. But vv. 17–19 are not a disruptive foreign body; they illustrate 19:30–20:16 in that Jesus is the last (in his sufferings and death) who will be the first (when God exalts him). As for the link with 20:20–3, the passion prediction illumines exactly what 'the cup' there spoken of is. Further, the tragic solemnity of vv. 17–19 is a perfect foil for v. 20: following Jesus' announcement of suffering we do not next read that his disciples showed concern for him—only that some people were preoccupied with their self-centred hopes. The loneliness of the passion narrative is already felt here.

(20:20–8) The two scenes—vv. 20–3 (on false ambition) and vv. 24–8 (on true service)—exhibit parallelism (cf. v. 21 with 23, v. 22 with 23, v. 25b with c, v. 26 with 27) and continue the theme of the third passion prediction, namely, Jesus' death (vv. 17–19). It is not the sons themselves who make the request but their mother. Perhaps the reader should recall 1 Kings 1:15–21, where Bathsheba appears before King David. The king enquires, 'What do you wish?' She in turn asks the throne for Solomon. The LXX uses *prosekunēsen* of the mother (v. 16; cf. v. 31) and *kathēsetai* of the son (vv. 17, 20; cf. v. 30). One can also think of the one other place in the gospel where a mother appeals to Jesus on behalf of a child: 15:21–8, the story of the Canaanite woman. Of that woman too *prosekunei* is used (v. 25). Is the similarity of the two texts designed to stimulate reflection on the differences between the two supplicants and so instruct one in what sorts of petitions are proper and which not?

The mother's question, which is about eschatological rule and places of honour, recognizes

Jesus' destiny and correctly assumes his great authority. But the request is misdirected and takes no account of what has just been predicted. Although crowds will soon hail Jesus as the Davidic Messiah, Jerusalem will see him mount not a throne but a cross—and those at his right and left will be not glorified apostles but crucified criminals (27:38). That Matthew indeed intended an ironic allusion to this last scene seems probable: in both places the Greek wording is the same.

Neither for Jesus nor for Matthew should the 'cup' be equated with 'temptations' or (with reference to 26:27) given a sacramental interpretation; nor can there be any real connection with the drink given to Jesus on the cross (27:34, 48). It is also improbable that 'cup' refers simply to death (although the targums do know the expression, 'taste the cup of death') or martyrdom (as in later Christian texts). In the OT and intertestamental literature 'cup' is often used figuratively in texts about suffering, especially suffering God's wrath or judgement; and that illumines the usage here. The cup that Jesus will drink (cf. 26:39) is the cup of eschatological sorrow, which will be first poured out upon the people of God (cf. Jer 25:15–29). Jesus will face God's judgement.

v. 28, which probably alludes to both Dan 7:13–14 and Isa 53:10–12, is the climax to vv. 20–8. It is the last word Jesus speaks before going up to Jerusalem and shows him to be the Son of Man in whom word and deed are one, the true king whose one aim is to benefit his subjects. The word traditionally translated 'ransom' means deliverance by payment. In the LXX it invariably means 'ransom-price' and appears in various contexts—of the half-shekel poll tax, of payment to save one's life after one has killed another, of buying back mortgaged property, of buying an enslaved relation, and of the redemption of the firstborn. In the present instance the principle of 'life for life' (Ex 21:23) is operative. Like the death of the martyrs in 4 Macc 1:11; 6:28–9; and 17:20–2, Jesus' death has a beneficial effect upon others—here 'the many', by which is meant 'all' (cf. Rom 5:15, 19; 1 Tim 2:6).

If v. 28, as appears, combines Dan 7 and Isa 53, there is an interesting parallel in Mt 8:20. In both the Son of Man is subject, in both he is humbled, and in both Scripture is seemingly alluded to ironically: the Son of Man, against Dan 7, has come not to be served but to serve; and the Son of Man, against Ps 8, does not have dominion, glory, and honour but rather no place to lay his head.

v. 28 is a particularly apt conclusion to 20:20–7. When the mother of the sons of Zebedee envisages James and John sitting on the right and left of Jesus in the kingdom, the reader is reminded of 19:28, where the twelve are promised thrones beside the Son of Man. It is hence fitting that the paragraph culminates in a declaration about the Son of Man. But here, as opposed to 19:28, the subject is not the Son of Man's glory but his service unto death. As in vv. 20–3, visions of grandeur (cf. Dan 7:13–14) give way to forecasts of suffering and death (cf. Isa 53; Dan 7:21–5), for the king cannot sit on his throne until he has, through self-sacrifice, rescued his people.

(20:29–34) Carter (1994: 203) has observed that if chs. 19–20 outline a difficult way of life at odds with 'dominant hierarchical household patterns', a way of 'life that is opposed and misunderstood', our story appropriately follows: 'after the uncompromising demand of chs. 19–20...this pericope underlines that God's compassionate mercy and power are available for all disciples who, in the midst of difficult circumstances, recognize their inadequacy and call for God's help'.

This passage is remarkably reminiscent of 9:27–30. In both Jesus is being followed, two blind men appear, the blind men cry out and say, 'Have mercy on us, Son of David', Jesus touches their eyes, and they see again. There are also striking verbal links (cf. e.g. 20:29, 30, with 9:27). These parallels form a sort of *inclusio*. The first restoration of sight occurs towards the beginning of the ministry, the second near the end. This gives an artistic unity to the whole gospel. Furthermore, the first takes place before corporate Israel has rejected Jesus, the second after that rejection has become manifest. So despite being rejected, Jesus' charity remains the same throughout. His difficulties do not cancel his compassion.

Is there a lesson in the juxtaposition of 20:20–8 and vv. 29–34? In the former, two privileged insiders (James and John) make a request through a third party (their mother). The request is prefaced by no title of respect or majesty, it concerns the eschatological future, and it involves personal exaltation (to sit at the right and left of the Messiah). In the latter, two outsiders (the blind men) make a request that a third party (the crowd) tries to stifle. That request is prefaced by titles of respect and majesty, concerns the present, and is for something necessary that is taken for granted by most

(sight). One might infer that petitions are more likely to be heard when addressed directly, with respect, and for things truly needful.

(21:1–11) This story, which reminds one of 1 Sam 10:1–9 (the finding of donkeys for Saul), pulls forward several threads from the previous chapters—the theme of prophetic fulfilment (cf. 1:22–3, etc.), Jesus' trek to Jerusalem (cf. 16:21; 20:17), his 'meekness' (cf. 11:29), his status as 'king' (cf. 2:1–12), 'Son of David' (cf. 1:1–18), 'the coming one' (cf. 3:11; 11:3), and 'prophet' (cf. 13:57). But vv. 1–11 also offer two firsts—(1) Jesus' public claim (albeit indirect) to messianic kingship, and (2) recognition by 'the crowds' of that kingship (contrast 16:13–14). Together these two firsts challenge Jerusalem to make a decision: who is this Jesus (cf. v. 10)? What follows depends upon the city's answer to that question.

Other texts recount the triumphal arrival (*parousia*) of a ruler or military hero and contain a standard cluster of motifs: approach of the king, public acclamation/celebration (sometimes with song), entrance into city, cultic activity (including the cleansing of cultic pollution); see e.g. 1 Kings 1:32–40; Zech 9:9; 1 Macc 5:45–54; 2 Macc 4:21–2; Jos. Ant. 11.325–39. 1 Macc 13:49–53, like v. 8, even refers to palm branches. But Jesus' entry is not a military triumph. On the contrary, the Son of David is 'meek' and has not conquered anything. Further, Jesus does not sacrifice in the temple but rebukes the cult. It does not legitimate him; he stands above it (12:6).

(21:12–17) Having entered the capital as king, Jesus next enters the temple, the symbol of national identity, and there, through prophetic deed and scriptural word, declares divine disfavour. The disfavour is not directed against the temple as such but against those who have corrupted it. In the temple the meek king heals those without status (the blind and the lame) and is praised by those without power (children). Opposed to him are men of authority, prestige, and influence. But in truth those who appear to be in charge are not, and judgement will soon overtake them.

(21:18–22) For the third time in three paragraphs Jesus performs a symbolic act. Here that act and its effect are prophetic. The visual parable inaugurates judgement against that for which it stands. That the fig tree 'near the road'—we should envisage a wild fig tree: Jesus does not curse another's property—wither is a symbol

of judgement (cf. Isa 34:4; Jer 8:13; Hos 2:12). The judgement is not against Israel as a whole but Jerusalem and/or those in charge of the temple. vv. 18–22 are located between two paragraphs having to do with the temple, in the first of which Jesus protests, in the second of which the priests protest against Jesus. So in context this passage shows that the divine wrath has begun to manifest itself against the temple establishment. Beyond this, if 21:13 refers to the temple as ‘a house of prayer’, it is not coincidence that our pericope concerns petition. In Matthew the old temple has been replaced by the church. So the sequence in 21:12–22—judgement of the old place of prayer, promise of prayer’s efficacy within the church—reflects the course of salvation history as well as the deterritorialization of Matthean religion: portable community (cf. 18:20) substitutes for fixed holy space.

(21:23–7) These verses both add to the dramatic tension between Jesus and his opponents and demonstrate the character of the latter. And trailing upon the protest in the temple and the cursing of the fig tree they illustrate why the temple is doomed: the leaders have become deaf to God’s messengers.

This section is less about Jesus—it is certainly not about his debating skills—or the Baptist than it is about the chief priests and elders. Here they enquire of Jesus ‘without reason or respect, a thing that was plain to all’ (Calvin). Further, out of cowardly expediency, they respond to his questions with a lie (‘we do not know’). As if that were not enough, they show themselves to be spiritually less perceptive than those over whom they preside, for the multitudes recognize John’s prophetic status. The effect of all this is to set the passion of Jesus within a moral context. Jesus’ death is not the upshot of an unfortunate misunderstanding by uninformed authorities; instead it is brought about by the plotting of self-serving men of ill will. The passion narrative depicts a struggle between good and evil.

(21:28–32) The polemical parable is allegorically interpreted in vv. 31–2: the father represents God; the first son represents toll collectors and prostitutes, those who were lax in the law but came to obey God through John’s ministry; the second son represents the chief priests and the elders, those who, despite their religious profession, disobeyed God by not believing in John. The main function is to characterize Jesus’ opponents. Chrysostom urged that the

two children represent Jews and Gentiles: the former, having heard the law and promised obedience, were disobedient, while the latter, not having heard the law, became obedient in Christ. This interpretation in terms of salvation history has dominated exegetical history. Recent exegetes, however, have rightly begun to question it. Nothing so far in 19:1 ff. has directly addressed Jewish–Gentile relations. Indeed, the section has encouraged us rather to think in terms of believing and unbelieving Israel. In addition, the parable is explicitly about different responses to John the Baptist, not Jesus or the Christian kerygma. The most natural interpretation, then, is that which finds in this pericope (1) depiction of a divided Israel; (2) characterization of Jesus’ opponents as hypocrites; and (3) illustration of the first (the chief priests and elders) becoming last and the last (toll collectors and prostitutes) becoming first. In 21:23–5 Jesus asks his opponents several questions. Their answers are: ‘we do not know’ (21:27), ‘the first’ (v. 31), ‘he will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time’ (21:41), ‘Caesar’s’ (22:21), ‘the Son of David’ (22:42), and, finally, silence (22:45). These answers, brief and colourless, are always dictated by the question and empty of insight. Further, two answers confess ignorance (21:27; 22:45) and two are self-incriminating (21:27, 41). Jesus’ opponents are adept at laying traps, but they are also good at falling into them. Jesus’ answers, on the other hand, are uniformly creative, clever, and memorable; and they avoid entanglement either by turning a question back on others or moving the discussion to another level. Jesus’ spiritual authority gives him a rhetorical sovereignty.

(21:33–46) This parable is an allegory about faithlessness and judgement. Its character as an allegory does not mean that it is not true to life—it largely seems to be—or that every element has a symbolic meaning, only that equations for the main elements can be given: the vineyard stands for Israel; the householder stands for God; the tenant farmers stand for leaders of Israel; the fruit stands for what is owed to God; the rejection of servants stands for rejection of prophets; the sending and rejection of the son stand for the sending and rejection of Jesus; the punishment of tenants stands for Jerusalem’s destruction; the new tenants stand for the church.

Our parable and its interpretation combine the traditional motif of the rejection and even

murder of the prophets with the traditional metaphor of Israel as God's vineyard (cf. Isa 5:2). What is new is the joining of the two themes in the service of Christology: the rejection of Jesus is the climax in the story of rebellion against Israel's God.

This passage is not about God's rejection of the Jews and the Gentiles' acceptance of Jesus. The parable identifies the tenants not with the Jews in general but with the Jewish leaders in particular. Further, the context is conflict between Jesus and Israel's leaders, not Jesus and Judaism; and it is not the vineyard (i.e. Israel) that suffers judgement but those in charge. So the kingdom is taken from the Jewish leaders and given to the church of Jew and Gentile.

(22:1–14) The passage consists of introduction (v. 1), parable (vv. 2–13b), commentary (vv. 13c–14). The parable (perhaps based upon a traditional story; cf. *y. Sanh.* 6:23c) contains two parallel sequences. Each recounts three actions of the king.

2–3a	action of king (invitation)
3b	response (rejection)
4	reaction of king (invitation)
5–6	response (rejection and violence)
7	reaction of king (punishment: death and destruction)
8–9	action of king (invitation)
10	response (acceptance)
11–12b	reaction of king (entrance and question)
12c	response (silence)
13b	reaction of king (punishment: binding and casting out)

The whole sequence is dominated by the speech of the king: no one else says anything. Everything revolves around his words.

vv. 1–10 are an allegory much influenced by 21:33–41. The king stands for God; his son represents Jesus (cf. 21:37–8); the royal wedding feast symbolizes the eschatological banquet. The dual sending of the servants is, as in the preceding parable, the sending of God's messengers; the murder of the servants represents the murder of the prophets and Jesus (cf. 21:35–9). v. 7 alludes to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. The third sending of servants is the mission of the church, in which good and evil stand side by side until the end. The man without a garment, who stands for a whole class at the last judgement, lacks either good works (cf. Rev 19:8) or a glorious resurrected body (cf. 13:43). His punishment may reflect a tradition about Azazel. According to 1 *Enoch* 10:4–5, God

instructed the angel Raphael to bind Azazel 'hand and foot and throw him into the darkness'. And according to *Apoc. Abr.* 13:14, the fallen Azazel lost his heavenly garment, which will be given to Abraham. All this is strikingly close to our text. Perhaps we should think of the man's fate as akin to that of Azazel. Just as the righteous will wear garments of glory and so be like the heavenly angels, so will the wicked be unclothed and suffer like the fallen angels.

vv. 11–14 turn attention from outsiders to insiders, from opponents to the church. The evangelist as pastor was all too aware that criticism of others as well as the doctrine of election (cf. v. 14) are both fraught with moral peril; for the former tends to nourish complacency—censure of our enemies always makes us feel better about ourselves—while the latter can beget feelings of superiority. Matthew, however, understood that while censure has its place in moral instruction, and while election is of the essence of Judaism, the two things can foster illusions; and they are no substitute for self-examination and personal effort. So it is that Christian readers of vv. 11–14, who necessarily identify with those at the king's banquet, cannot read the text and feel self-satisfaction. They must instead ask whether they are like the man improperly clothed, whether they are among 'the many' despite profession to be among 'the few'. God's judgement comes upon all, including those within the ecclesia.

(22:15–22) Here begins a series of discussions that runs through the rest of ch. 22. The first pits Jesus against Pharisees and Herodians (vv. 15–22), the second against the Sadducees (22:23–33), the third against a Pharisaic lawyer (22:34–40), and the fourth against the Pharisees (22:41–6). Taken together the four passages add to the negative characterization of the Jerusalem leaders. The first question for Jesus is whether God would have one contribute to the Roman *census*, a tax upon agricultural yield and personal property, collected through census or registration (Lk 2:1–5; Acts 5:37) and probably amounting to one denarius a year. Although Jewish authorities (including the Sanhedrin) helped farm the tax, many resented it and objected on religious grounds. Indeed, although Roman taxation had been a reality since 63 BCE, the census of 6 or 7 CE, when Judea came under direct Roman control, encouraged a revolt; and resentment of taxation also contributed to the unrest that culminated in the revolt of 70 CE.

Although the story would be coherent without vv. 19–21a, the use of a visual aid adds drama, while the coin being in the possession of Jesus' opponents highlights their insincerity: they have no qualms about using pagan money—and even bring a coin with the emperor's image and blasphemous inscription into the holy precincts of the temple.

Instead of trapping Jesus, the Pharisees and Herodians are trapped by him. Jesus' words distance him from those who oppose supporting Rome. At the same time, the inclusion of giving to God what is his relativizes the political obligation. There is here no firm principle of loyal submission to the state. Implied rather is a reservation regarding the state, a lack of reservation regarding God. While obedience to God can, as in the current instance, coexist with doing what the state requires, obligation to the former overshadows obligation to the latter. So there is no simple or straightforward rule, but the imperative to weigh the demands of two (very unequal) authorities. When those demands are not at odds (as here), obligations to both can be met (cf. Rom 13:1–7; 1 Pet 2:17). In cases of conflict, however, it is manifest which authority requires allegiance. Our text has rightly been cited to curb the powers of the state (e.g. John of Damascus, *De Imaginibus* 2.12). God, who after all determines what is Caesar's and what is not, is sovereign over the state, albeit in a non-theocratic fashion. In the end, no one can serve two masters (6:24), and all that truly matters is obedience to God. (Beginning with Tertullian, many have identified 'the things that are God's' with human beings. If coins with Caesar's image and inscription belong to Caesar, then human beings created in God's image (Gen 1:26) belong to God.)

(22:23–33) If the Pharisees raise a political issue, the Sadducees (who presumably believe only in the OT's shadowy Sheol) now pose a theological riddle which combines the teaching of the levirate law in Deut 25:5 with the concrete example in Gen 38:8. Although the two parties disagree regarding resurrection, they are one in opposing Jesus.

In 22:15–22 no one cites Scripture. Here, however, Scripture is at the centre, as also in 22:34–40, 41–6. The effect is to uphold Jesus' harmony with the Torah and to display his skill in its interpretation.

The Sadducees' question, which assumes that polyandry is unacceptable and implies that the resurrection is foreign to the Pentateuch, is

rejected by Jesus as the product of culpable ignorance and bad theology. The Sadducees deny the resurrection because they imagine the eschatological future others profess to be mundane and terrestrial. But their materialistic view is not the view of Jesus, according to whom Israel's God is the omnipotent who can transform the saints. 'Neither marry nor are given in marriage' means 'Neither do (men) marry nor are (women) given in marriage.' 'In the resurrection' means not 'at the resurrection' but 'in the resurrected condition (of the just)'. The argument moves from the general to the particular. If in general people will be like angels (then a common belief), then the marital bond in particular will be transcended, for angels (who are immortal) live without marriage (not because they are sexless or androgynous—they were typically thought of as male—but because they refrain; cf. 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 56:14).

In passing, in v. 31, from the *manner* of the resurrection to its *fact*, Jesus does not cite Dan 12:1–3 (or other possible biblical proof-texts for the resurrection) but a Pentateuchal text. He accordingly meets the Sadducees (who recognized only the authority of Moses) on their own ground. He cites Ex 3:6. The point seems to be this: God does not say, 'I was the God of Abraham, etc.' but 'I *am* the God of Abraham, etc.'—even though Abraham and the others are dead at the time of the pronouncement. They therefore cannot have ceased to be.

(22:34–40) A representative of the Pharisees continues the series of hostile challenges begun in 21:23. Again the issue regards Torah, and again Jesus speaks truth without becoming ensnared. His summary of the law and the prophets, which recapitulates the unifying theme of his own words and deeds, simply joins, against all possible complaint, two traditional Jewish summaries, the commandment to love God (part of the Shema, Judaism's closest thing to a creed) and the commandment to love neighbour (which Akiba reportedly called 'the greatest principle in the law', *Sipre Lev.* 19:18; cf. Gal 5:14; Rom 13:8–10). Together they summarize the Decalogue (cf. Philo, *Dec.* 19–20, 50–1, 106–10, 121, 154). Jesus, although asked for the greatest commandment, answers with two which are inextricable. ('A second is like it' is purely numerical; the second commandment equals in importance the first.) But Matthew does not clarify how the two commandments to love relate to one another. Evagrius Ponticus argued that love of neighbour is love of God because

it is love of the image of God. Theodoret of Cyrillus urged that, as contemplation is to action, so love of God is to love of neighbour: the one is the foundation of and inspiration for the other. We imitate what we love; so to love God is to imitate the One whose love is catholic (5:43–8). Ailred of Rievaulx contended that ‘love of neighbour precedes love of God’: the latter grows out of the former. Luther argued that while our neighbour is needy, God needs nothing, so true service of God must always be for the sake of the neighbour. Harnack thought that the gospel places love of neighbour beside love of God because ‘the love of one’s neighbour is the only practical proof on earth of that love of God which is strong in humanity’. While there may be an element of truth in the other proposals, Evagrius’ claim resonates most with the rest of Matthew. For there is some sense in which, according to Matthew, God is in others. Especially striking is 25:31–46. In this, Jesus, the functional presence of God (cf. 1:23; 18:20; 28:20), is the direct recipient of acts of love done to others: ‘as you did it to one of the least of these . . .’ Service of neighbour is service of Christ, which means service of God. Chrysostom was right: ‘to love God is to love one’s neighbour’. As the *agraphon* has it: ‘You have seen your brother; you have seen God.’

Often cited as a parallel to our verse is *b. Šabb.* 31a, where Hillel, in response to a request to teach the Torah while standing on one foot, answered with this: ‘What you hate for yourself, do not do to your neighbour. This is the whole law. The rest is commentary.’ This is even closer to Matthew than the commentaries indicate; for in Jewish tradition, as in Christian, the Golden Rule (or its negative form) was thought synonymous with Lev 19:18, cited here (cf. *Tg. Yer. I* on 19:18; *Sipre Lev.* on 19:18).

Lev 19:18 is quoted three times in this gospel, more than any other OT text: at 5:43; 19:19; 22:39. The first citation expands the meaning of neighbour to make it universal: even the enemy is to be loved. The second citation reveals Lev 19:18’s status as a fundamental summary of the moral demands of the Decalogue. The third brings the love of neighbour into intimate connection with the commandment to love God and thus, in typically Matthean fashion, fuses religion and ethics.

(22:41–6) Following the narrative introduction (v. 41), Jesus abandons his defensive posture and takes the offensive. He asks the Pharisees two questions (v. 42a). After they return their

expected, two-word answer (v. 42b), Jesus asks two more questions, this time quoting Scripture (vv. 43–5). In the narrative conclusion (v. 46) the opponents are unable to respond. This effectively closes off 21:23–22:46, throughout which Jesus has been asked question after question.

Jesus’ questions, unlike those of his opponents, go to the heart of things, for they concern Christology. The first question, ‘What do you think of the Messiah?’ is completed by the second, so that the meaning is: ‘Whose son is the Messiah?’ The answer of the Pharisees, ‘David’s’, is only half the truth. The other half, unpronounced by Jesus but clear from the rest of the narrative, is: ‘God’s’. Jesus’ argument makes two assumptions: (1) in accordance with Jewish tradition, David composed Ps 110 (cf. the superscription) and (2) Ps 110 is messianic (cf. 23:39). It follows that David wrote about ‘the Lord’ (i.e. God) speaking to ‘my Lord’, and that the latter must be the messianic Son of David (cf. v. 42). We have here an apparent contradiction. For how can one standing at the right hand of God and addressed as ‘Lord’ be David’s ‘son’? A son may address his father as ‘Lord’ (cf. 21:29), but a father does not so speak to his son. The Pharisees’ silence shows that they have no solution to the riddle, even though it is superficial for the Christian reader, who knows that although the Messiah is of the lineage of David, he is also exalted to God’s right hand and reigns as ‘Lord’. The ‘Son of David’—neither the title nor its content is rejected or denigrated—is a descendant of King David, and his destiny surpasses that of his forebear.

(23:1–39) Ch. 23 does not criticize isolated beliefs or activities; rather its charges amount to a rejection of Pharisaism itself. Surprisingly, however, Mt 23 does not censor the scribes and Pharisees for failure to believe in Messiah Jesus. Instead it convicts them by their own standards. No scribe or Pharisee would have defended hypocrisy, or commended the slaying of God’s prophets, or affirmed that preoccupation with the lesser matters of the law should be at the expense of the greater. So the text presupposes that the scribes and Pharisees actually know better: they are hypocrites in the full sense of the word. The presupposition is possible because the scribes and Pharisees, like those in Matthew’s community, were heirs to the Jewish tradition. Matthew’s Jesus accordingly argues as a Jew with Jews: the leaders have been unfaithful to their own tradition.

Matthew’s Jesus here passes from woe to woe; his polemic depicts the scribes and Pharisees as

more than hard-hearted: they are already suffering spiritual rigor mortis. Yet surely the best of them were admirable men who faithfully practised their religion and honestly doubted that the Messiah had come. Without either excusing the harsh language or minimizing its historical misuses, one may emphasize the conventional nature of the chapter's polemical rhetoric. Josephus depicted the Zealots or Sicarii as murderers, transgressors of the laws of God and nature, impostors, madmen, hardhearted wretches, 'bastards' and 'scum' more wicked than Sodom, as men guilty of 'barbarity... avarice... impudent undertakings... wicked practices, impiety... tyranny over others... the greatest madness... wild and brutish disposition' (J.W. 4.377–8; 5.401–19, 442–5; 7.252–74). Those who wrote the Dead Sea scrolls laid every sort of pejorative adjective upon 'the sons of darkness', whom they cursed in their rituals. The thoroughly traditional nature of Matthew's polemic is demonstrated by the many Jewish sources in which opponents are hypocrites (1QS 4:14), blind (cf. Wis 2:21), guilty of economic sins (cf. *As. Mos.* 5.5), unclean (cf. *Jos. J.W.* 4.382), persecutors of the righteous (cf. Philo, *Leg. ad Gaium*, 18.120 ff.), like sinful generations of the past (cf. *T. Levi*, 14:6), like snakes (cf. 4Q525 5:1–4), destined for eschatological destruction (cf. *m. Sanh.* 10:1), and the cause of God forsaking his temple (cf. *Jos. J.W.* 2.539). In Matthew's world one's opponents were, as a rule, these things and much else besides. The language of vilification was as stereotyped as the language of praise. Accordingly we have here no more a fair account of Pharisaic Judaism than we have such an account of Christianity in later pagan polemic. Moreover, the ferocity of rhetoric in Jewish texts shows Matthew's polemic need not signal a break with Judaism. It is no more 'anti-Semitic' than the Dead Sea scrolls.

(23:1–12) These verses condemn hypocrisy (v. 3), religious show (vv. 4–6), and self-exaltation (v. 7). They commend obedience to the truth (v. 3), equality (v. 8), and humility (vv. 11–12). The same vices and virtues have been assailed and praised before, especially in the SM and ch. 18.

'Moses' seat' (v. 2) is ambiguous. It may either refer to a literal chair for synagogue authorities or be a metaphor for teaching authority (cf. the professor's 'chair'). In any case only here are the Jewish leaders presented in a positive light: they should be obeyed. Some have suggested we have here a pre-Matthean tradition out of harmony with the rest of the gospel, others that the

command belongs only to the pre-Easter period, still others that it is ironic. It is also possible to regard the 'all' as hyperbole. The sentence indicts the scribes and the Pharisees by parading their inconsistencies. 'Do whatever they teach' is then less practical imperative than proof of a bad character which cannot be excused by ignorance. The focus is not upon Christian obedience but upon the opponents' knowledge, which condemns them. Yet another possibility is that 'whatever they teach you' refers to their reading of Scripture, 'they do' to Pharisaic doctrine and practice.

'Phylacteries' (v. 5) are the two black leather boxes containing parchment Scriptures that, since at least the second century BCE, have been commonly worn on the upper left arm and forehead following the literal understanding of Ex 13:9, 16; Deut 6:8; 11:18. Their ostentatious and superstitious use can be documented (cf. Christian use of medallions and crosses). 'Fringes' (which Jesus himself wears: 9:20; 14:36) consist of blue and/or white threads worn on the four corners of the rectangular outer garment (cf. Num 15:38–9; Deut 22:12). The presumption is that the scribes and Pharisees who make their tassels long (cf. *Sipre Num.* 15:37–41) do so to gain attention. The attack is not against a scriptural ordinance but its observance for self-glorification.

Unlike the scribes and Pharisees (v. 7) Christian authorities are to shun titles. Such titles are inconsistent with the demand for humility and mutuality and the need to restrict certain appellations to God and Christ. It is implied that the scribes and Pharisees enjoy wrongful flattery and think in hierarchical terms.

(23:13–33) The seven woes, in which the judge of the last day humbles the exalted in illustration of v. 12, draws a firm line between two groups by criticizing one. The scribes and Pharisees, here representatives of emergent rabbinic Judaism, are depicted as hopelessly corrupt. The upshot is edification and self-definition, for the debasement of the church's antagonists both indirectly vindicates the faithful and exhibits, through counter-examples, what the church should not be.

The woes, which commence with halakic disagreements and culminate in the murder of God's messengers, mirror the plot of the whole gospel, in which religious disputes lead to Jesus' death. Further, although ch. 23 strikes the reader as distinctive, this is not because its content is new: the woes constitute a climax, not a novum.

All of the major accusations and assertions have already been made (cf. e.g. vv. 13, 15, with 11:21 and 18:7, vv. 13, 15, 25–8 with 15:7 and 22:18, and v. 13 with 5:20). Even the polemical harshness of 23:13–33 is not unique (cf. 22:1 ff.). New is its concentrated repetition alone.

The first woe (v. 13) appropriately prefaces the series as a sort of summary: the scribes and Pharisees, despite their religious efforts, neither enter the kingdom nor allow others to. The second woe (v. 14) indicts the scribes and Pharisees not because they are missionaries, but because their missionary activity, which makes others like themselves, has tragic effects. The problem is not conversion to Judaism but conversion to Judaism without the Messiah.

The third woe (vv. 16–22), which turns to specific halakah, argues first against the distinction between binding and nonbinding oaths (vv. 16–19) and secondly asserts that all oaths are binding because all oaths relate themselves to God (vv. 20–22). In 5:33–7 oaths are attacked. Here their use is assumed. Common to both passages, however, is the idea that to swear by one thing is to swear by another. Indeed, both assert that to swear by heaven is to swear by God's throne. Evidently vv. 16–22 presuppose Jesus' criticism of oaths (understood as hyperbole, not halakah?) and present additional criticism of nonbinding oaths.

The fourth woe (vv. 23–4) condemns not tithing but a lack of justice, mercy, and faith. The lesser things, however useful or needful, must never eclipse the greater. 'Strain out a gnat' refers to straining wine, as in Am 6:6. According to Lev 11:41, 'all creatures that swarm upon the earth are detestable; they shall not be eaten'. This verse was understood to require the straining of wine so as to keep out small insects. When it is added that the camel, like the gnat, was reckoned unclean (Lev 11:4), the point of v. 24 becomes plain: while the scribes and Pharisees strain their wine and so do not swallow the tiniest bugs that defile—a practice not here obviously rejected—they overlook the large things that defile, that is, they swallow the camel (a proverbially large beast: 19:24).

The fifth woe (vv. 25–6) adds to the charge that the scribes and Pharisees do the less important thing to the neglect of the more important. They cleanse the outside of the cup and plate but neglect the inside. They appear to be righteous (cf. 23:2–7, 23a) but inside are full of extortion and intemperance. (vv. 25–6 are about neither the purity of vessels nor legal matters, nor is v. 25 to be understood literally, v. 26

figuratively. Both verses rather speak metaphorically: the leaders are dirty cups and dishes. That is, they are clean on the outside (they have a righteous appearance) but impure on the inside (cf. vv. 27–8).)

The sixth woe (vv. 27–8) likens the scribes and Pharisees to tombs, which they regarded as unclean. The phrase translated 'whitewashed tombs' may refer to monuments or tombstones that were plastered. Porous limestone structures were often plastered with lime to smooth surfaces and add a sheen. One may picture beautiful monuments and their finished splendour.

The seventh woe (vv. 29–33) is the most serious and so climactic. Because v. 33 recalls the Baptist's words to the Pharisees and Sadducees in 3:7 (cf. also 12:34), Jesus again speaks like John, and his message is that of his forerunner: the Pharisees cannot escape eschatological wrath (cf. Rev 6:15–17). It follows that the character of the Pharisees has not changed, that the ministries of John and Jesus have been in one important way without effect.

(23:34–9) These verses, which record a definite rejection of Jerusalem and Israel's leaders, outline Jerusalem's history: (1) a time of overture and rejection, when the city was sent prophets who were murdered (the past, v. 37); (2) a time of abandonment, from the Son of Man's departure to the parousia (the present, v. 38); (3) the time of repentance and reconciliation, in which the Messiah is welcomed (the future, v. 39).

'Zechariah, son of Barachiah' (v. 35) is difficult. Zech 1:1 refers to its author as 'Zechariah, son of *berekya*'. There is, however, no biblical evidence of his death as a martyr; and, as Jerome observed, the temple was in ruins in his time. The one biblical martyr named Zechariah is the son of Jehoiada, a priest whose story appears near the end of Chronicles. Jewish tradition, however, conflated the prophet Zechariah with the son of Jehoiada, and given that the death of the latter became the popular subject of legends, we may assume the same identification is made in our text. The passage refers to the murders of the righteous from Gen 4 (the first murder in the HB) to 2 Chr 24 (the last murder in the HB).

Ch. 23 concludes by referring to two events that are closely related in the next chapter, the destruction of Jerusalem (v. 38) and the Parousia of the Son of Man (v. 39). 'Until you say' probably signals a conditional sentence. The meaning is that when his people bless him the Messiah

will come. While Israel's redemption may be, on the basis of the OT and 19:28, a firm hope, its date is contingent upon Israel's acceptance of Jesus.

vv. 37–9 temper what has gone before. Without these verses the Jesus of ch. 23 issues nothing but judgements, with no tinge of regret. But the the conclusion discloses that the woes are uttered in sadness, that the indignation is righteous. When the threats give way to the image of Jesus as a mother hen lamenting her loss, the reader is reminded of the compassionate Son of 11:28–30. In this way the prophetic judgements are mingled with affection and Jesus becomes, like Jeremiah, a reluctant prophet.

(24:1–35) The introductory scene in which Jesus predicts the temple's destruction (vv. 1–2) provokes a query concerning the timing of things to come, to which Jesus first responds with warnings and predictions about eschatological tribulation: the beginning of the woes in the world at large (vv. 3–8), the intensification of the woes in the church (vv. 9–14), the climax of the woes in Judea (vv. 15–28).

Much of the traditional end-time scenario is untouched. There is, for example, no account of either the resurrection or the eternal state. Mt 24 is not a detailed blueprint (cf. the chronological imprecision). Interest is elsewhere—(1) in supplying the true ending of the Messiah's story so that the whole can be rightly grasped; (2) in foretelling and therefore making bearable Christian suffering; (3) in nurturing hope by showing how a good future can issue from an evil present; and (4) in encouraging battle against moral languor. Concerning this last, imperatives appear in vv. 4, 6, 16–18, 20, 23, 26, and 32. So eschatology does not simply console: it also demands discernment and adherence to Jesus' commands. The eschatological imagination does not displace practical moral concern.

Beyond these generalities the reference of the whole is disputed (a situation largely due to the lack of any direct answer to the question in v. 3). One approach holds that much or most of Mt 24 is fulfilled prophecy—that vv. 3–32 or 35 have to do with the events surrounding the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE within Jesus' 'generation', vv. 36–44 with the parousia, whose date is unknown. A second opinion, which holds that ch. 24 is purely eschatological, is favoured by the 'immediately' of v. 29; for if Matthew wrote much after 70 CE, he could not have thought the parousia would follow immediately upon the destruction of the temple,

which in turn makes it unlikely that vv. 15–22 depict that destruction. A third option urges that our text refers to both the destruction of Jerusalem and the parousia and holds them in close chronological sequence (which would imply a date for Matthew c.70 CE). A fourth approach also thinks of both 70 CE and the end. Unlike the third, however, it finds not a chronological sequence—the destruction of the temple, then (soon) the end—but a single prophecy with two fulfillments.

It seems best to hold that vv. 4–28 are a depiction of the entire post-Easter period, interpreted in terms of the messianic woes. The discourse concerns the past, the present, and the future. What has happened will continue to happen and indeed worsen (cf. 2 Thess 2:7). Whether the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE is directly referred to in vv. 15–22 or is instead indirectly included in the tribulations of that section remains unclear. But if the former, 70 CE does not exhaust the significance of vv. 5–22, which plainly envisage eschatological events to come. So the answer to the disciples' two-part question in v. 3 is this: the temple will be destroyed during the tribulation of the latter days, which runs from the first advent to the second; and after that tribulation the end—whose date cannot be known—will come.

Ch. 24 interprets the interim between the two advents as the time of messianic woe, when Jesus is absent. But 28:16–20—which recalls this discourse in that it also features a mountain, refers to 'the end of the age', alludes to Dan 7:13, and proclaims the Gentile mission—depicts the age of the church as one of Jesus' consoling and all-powerful presence. The two different perspectives on the same period reflect Christian experience. Jesus is even now the present Lord who rules heaven and earth. But he is also the absent master whose delay permits evil to inflict tribulation.

While it alludes to many OT texts, Mt 24 draws especially upon Daniel: cf. v. 3 with Dan 9:26; 12:6–7, v. 6 with Dan 9:26; 11:44, vv. 9–11 with Dan 7:25; 11:33, v. 15 with Dan 8:13; 9:27; 11:31; 12:11, v. 21 with Dan 12:1, and v. 30 with Dan 7:13. These clear allusions and the explicit citation of 'the prophet Daniel' (v. 15) are proof that, in Matthew, the end-time scenario fulfils the words of Daniel and Jesus simultaneously.

v. 2 prophesies the end of the temple (cf. 26:61; 27:40). This is usually thought of as a fulfilled prophecy for the reader, who knows the events of 70 CE. The declaration does not of itself question the legitimacy of the cult.

Other Jewish prophets foretold doom without attacking the Pentateuch. What we have here is a tragic forecast of a disaster fostered by human sin. The destruction of the temple is God's verdict upon the capital.

Regarding vv. 4–5, the first century saw several famous false prophets who made eschatological claims. That any of them (before Bar Kochba) said, in so many words, 'I am Messiah' is not documented. But several of them did identify themselves as the eschatological prophet like Moses, a figure Matthew equated with Messiah. So for him the two things were one. This verse is then about Jewish messianic deceivers.

The climax of the woes concerns three subjects: the abomination which marks the time for flight (vv. 15–20), the shortening of the tribulation (vv. 21–2), and false Christs and prophets (vv. 23–8). 'The desolating sacrilege' (v. 15) is from the prophet Daniel, where it refers to the pagan altar and/or image of Olympian Zeus set up in the Jerusalem temple by Antiochus IV Epiphanes in 167 BCE. Here it could refer to the destruction of the temple in 70 CE, or some future, eschatological defilement and destruction, and perhaps even activities of an antichrist (cf. 2 Thess 2:3–4). In any case the sacrilege sets off a series of frightful events which one should flee. As in 10:23, eschatological flight will be interrupted by the return of the Son of Man (v. 29). Whether one is fleeing from evil or fleeing because God, in response to the abomination, is about to let loose his wrath (cf. Gen 19), is not stated. It is also not stated why one should pray that flight not come on a sabbath. But it is probably because members of Matthew's community still observed the sabbath; and, given the traditional travel restrictions, they would be both hesitant and unprepared for flight on the day of rest.

vv. 24–5 makes three points: (1) Jesus himself has made it plain that signs and wonders are not of themselves guarantees of God's activity: incredulity has its place (cf. 7:21–3); (2) tribulation can be no surprise for it has been predicted and so it must be endured; (3) unlike the false prophets, Jesus' prophecy is true.

v. 28, which ends the review of tribulation, was an old proverb (cf. Job 9:26; Seneca, *Ep.* 95. 43). Here its meaning may be that the coming of the Son of Man will be as public and obvious as eagles or vultures circling over carrion. Less likely is the thought that the eschatological tribulation will be concluded by vultures devouring the flesh of the wicked dead, as in Ezek 39:17.

The paragraph in vv. 29–31 ends the tribulation and narrates the parousia in the traditional language of the OT theophany so that Jesus' coming is the arrival of God's glory. Having, in v. 28, moved the mind's eye from earth to sky, the text now directs our gaze even higher. This imaginative raising of vision leaves distress behind and prepares for envisaging the good help that comes from heaven (v. 30).

The supernatural darkness of the consummation (v. 29) is richly symbolic. Not only does it belong to the correlation of beginning and end (cf. Gen 1:2), but it is a sign of both divine judgement (Am 5:18, 20) and mourning (Jer 4:27–8) and becomes the velvet background for the Son of Man's splendour (24:27, 30). Moreover, on the literary level it foreshadows the darkness of Jesus' death (27:45) while that darkness in turn presages the world's assize.

vv. 31–2 are the dramatic zenith of ch. 24. The coming of the Son of Man—which takes place neither in desert nor inner room but is universally witnessed—is what 24:3–28 introduce and that for which vv. 32–44 call one to look. 'The sign of the Son of Man' (an unparalleled expression) might be the sign which is the Son of Man himself, or rather his coming. More likely 'sign' means the same as the Hebrew *nēs*, 'ensign': the Son of Man will signal the eschatological battle by raising an eschatological sign. In Israel a ram's horn was blown to rally the tribes for war. This act was accompanied by the raising of a standard upon a hill. The standard consisted of a wooden pole upon whose top crosspiece was an insignia, most often an animal. In Isaiah the old custom is put to prophetic use: the Lord himself will raise a standard and call for war (Isa 13:2–4), or the root of Jesse will 'stand as a signal to the peoples' (Isa 11:10). The old tradition that the cross will accompany Jesus at his parousia has a straightforward explanation if 'sign' means *nēs*, for the *nēs* had a crossbar and would naturally have encouraged Christians to think of a cross.

vv. 34–6 recall v. 3. But the reference to 'generation' has seemed problematic because unfulfilled. Some have referred 'all these things' to 70 CE. But it seems best to think of the eschatological signs as outlined in vv. 4–29: the parousia will come to pass before Jesus' 'generation' has gone. In favour of this is the imminent eschatological expectation of many early Christians (cf. 10:23) as well as Jn 21:20–3, which reflects the belief that Jesus would come before all his disciples had died.

Matthew's last major discourse is the only one to treat eschatology exclusively. But the

other four end by turning to the last things. So the pattern of the individual discourses is the pattern of the five taken together: the conclusion is always eschatology. The meaning of Matthew's story is determined not only by its literary ending but by the ending of history itself: if history's conclusion is not Christological, then Christology itself becomes a question.

(24:36–25:30) The declaration of ignorance in v. 36 grounds the entire section: one must be ever prepared for what may come at any time. There follow as illustrations (1) a simile: as it was in the days of Noah, when unexpected judgment suddenly fell, so shall it be at the Son of Man's parousia (vv. 37–9); (2) a description of the division caused by the coming of the Son of Man plus an imperative: one will be taken, one left, so watch (vv. 40–2); and (3) a parable and its application: the Son of Man will come as unexpectedly as a thief, so be ready (vv. 43–4). These sayings and similes preface three long parables—the faithful and wise servant (24:45–51), the wise and foolish virgins (25:1–13), the talents (25:14–30). All three concern the delay of the parousia, preparedness for the end, and recompense at the great assize.

If 24:4–36 should quell uninformed eschatological enthusiasm, the intended effect is not apathy. This is why 24:37–44 seeks to foster an appropriate eschatological vigilance. Ignorance concerning the date of the end (24:36), although necessary, is dangerous, for it can lead to spiritual lethargy. But in Matthew it leads instead to moral preparation. For the parousia (like death) may come at any time. So one must be ever prepared to give an account before the divine justice, from which there is no escape (25:31–46).

24:37–51 conjures up scenes from everyday life—people eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, two men in a field, two women at a mill, a man asleep in his house, a slave doing his duty, a slave not doing his duty. These images of day-to-day existence stand in stark contrast to the unusual, even surrealistic events depicted in 24:4–31—wars, famines, earthquakes, flights, darkened luminaries, a sign in the firmament, the Son of Man on the clouds of heaven. But the transition from the extraordinary to the ordinary serves Matthew's purpose. Those whose imaginations hold the terrors and hope of things to come still live in the mundane present; they must still work in the field and grind at the mill.

24:36 invites the vigilance of eschatological agnosticism. Irenaeus could take the declaration of Jesus' ignorance at face value. But Luke omits the saying, as did certain copyists of Matthew and Mark. Origen wondered whether Jesus was referring to the church of which he is the head. Ambrose attributed 'nor the Son' to Arian interpolation. Athanasius suggested that Jesus only feigned ignorance. But modern theology, emphasizing with the creeds that Jesus was 'truly man', has come to terms with the saying as an expression of *kenosis*, or the self-emptying of the Son of God.

In 24:40–1 one is taken and one is left. But are the righteous taken to meet the Lord in the air? Or are the wicked removed by angels and cast into fire? The former is more likely: the picture of angels taking the saints to meet the Son of Man was probably common in early Christianity (cf. Mk 13:27).

The parable of the servant (24:45–51) is congruent with an agraphon preserved in Justin, *Dial.* 47: 'In whatsoever I find you, in this will I also judge you.' But 24:45–51 may be especially for community leaders, for the 'servant' is set over 'fellow servants' to give them their food at the proper time. Such a reading has been popular from the the early church to today.

The parable of the wise and foolish virgins (25:1–13) is an allegory of the parousia of Christ, the heavenly bridegroom: the virgins represent the Christian community, the delay of the bridegroom is the delay of the Son of Man's return, the sudden coming is the unexpected arrival of his parousia, and the spurning of the foolish virgins is the great assize. The parable teaches three lessons: (1) the bridegroom delays and comes at an unforeseen time; this means yet again that no one knows the date of the Son of Man's parousia; (2) the wise virgins, who stand for the faithful, reveal that religious prudence will gain eschatological reward; (3) the foolish virgins, who stand for unfaithful disciples, reveal that those unprepared at the end will suffer eschatological punishment.

Whether or not one uses the word 'allegory', 25:14–30 is filled with obvious symbols. The master stands for Jesus, his slaves for the church, whose members have received various responsibilities. The master's departure represents the departure of the earthly Jesus, and his long absence is the age of the church. His return is the return of the Son of Man. The rewards given to the good slaves stand for heavenly rewards given to the faithful at the great assize, and their joy is that of the messianic banquet.

The punishment of the evil slave represents those within the church who, through their sins of omission, condemn themselves to eschatological darkness. Most of this is familiar, but the passage is not otiose. Repetition makes for emphasis. Moreover, new are the notions that Christians have received gifts according to their ability (v. 15) and that it is what they make of those gifts which counts in the end.

(25:31–46) Although reminiscent of earlier parables of separation (13:24–30, 36–43, 47–50), this, the poetic and dramatic climax of the final major discourse, is not a parable but a ‘word-picture of the Last Judgement’ (Manson 1949: 249). The previous pericopae have enjoined readers to be faithful, to be prepared, and to invest talents. But exactly what these things entail has not been explicit. This passage makes all clear and so culminates Matthew’s eschatologically grounded paraenesis. One prepares for the parousia by living the imperative to love one’s neighbours, especially the marginalized. By this will all be judged on the far side of history.

The identity of those gathered (*panta ta ethnē*) is disputed, but they are probably all humanity. For the passage belongs to a long section which is full of paraenesis for believers, and one expects here a solemn appeal to those within the church. It also seems best to identify ‘the least of these my brethren’ in v. 40 (cf. v. 45) with the needy in general (and not with all Christians or Christian missionaries or leaders). This identification is consistent with the command to ignore distinctions between insiders and outsiders and with Jesus’ injunction to love even enemies.

The concept of service to Jesus through service to others goes back to Prov 19:17: ‘Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and will be repaid in full.’ What is new in Matthew is the Son of Man’s identification with the needy. This novelty is, however, not explained. Do we have here the real personal presence of the Son of Man in the poor? Or what one scholar has called ‘juridical mysticism’? Or the identification of the world’s king with his people?

Feeding the hungry, welcoming strangers, and visiting the sick are mundane acts. In this sense ‘virtue is not far from us, nor is it without ourselves, but it is within us, and is easy if only we are willing’ (Anthony the Great). The Son of Man does not demand supernatural feats but simple, unobtrusive charity. The former but not the latter can easily be counterfeited (24:24). Charity is accordingly the true test of faith.

The Passion and the Resurrection (26:1–28:20)

(26:1–5) vv. 1–2 + 3–4 together constitute the prologue to the passion narrative. They are parallel in structure but antithetical in content. In the first Jesus prophesies his black future. In the second the chief priests and elders conspire against him (cf. Ps 2:2). (The absence of the Pharisees here and hereafter—except only 27:62—surprises; but historically no doubt Jesus’ opponents at the end were the temple aristocracy. This also explains why the scribes henceforth appear only in 26:57 and 27:41.)

‘After two days’ (v. 2) may allude to the Isaac traditions. Gen 22:4 puts the sacrifice of Isaac on the third day, and in *Jubilees* it is during Passover (17:15; 18:3), while in Ps.-Philo, LAB 32:1–4 Isaac voluntarily offers himself (cf. 4 Macc 16:20). Further, a parallel between Jesus and Isaac is explicit in *Barn.* 7.2 (cf. already Rom 8:32?), and Mt 26:36 could allude to Gen 22:2–5.

(26:6–13) While Jesus is at the home of Simon ‘the leper’—yet another befriended outcast—a woman, with motives unknown, performs an extravagant act which inevitably suggests Jesus’ messianic status: he is the anointed one. (Cf. Dodd 1963: 173: ‘the idea of an anointing, as of a king or priest, which is also an embalming of the dead’, means that Jesus is ‘the messianic King whose throne is a cross’.) Because anointing was evidently customary at feasts (cf. Ps 23:5), one may think the woman affectionately anoints Jesus as part of a celebration (cf. Ps 45:7). The use of ‘head’, however, makes one think of the OT narratives in which kings are anointed. The disciples’ pious denigration is not about the act itself but the luxurious waste. Jesus’ different opinion rejects utilitarian calculation. He praises the woman’s deed as above almsgiving because it shows her ‘personal commitment of love for the specific person of Jesus at a time of urgent need rather than an impersonal giving to the general group of the poor always in need’ (Heil 1991: 26; cf. Deut 15:11). The situation is akin to 8:21–2, where allegiance to Jesus also means leaving a good deed undone. Here such allegiance means not being prudent with resources, even when they could benefit the poor.

(26:14–16) In contrast with the woman who anoints Jesus, Judas (cf. 10:4) acts treacherously. While she unselfishly gives what she has, Judas seeks his own gain; and whereas her sacrifice is costly, Judas strikes his bargain for a relatively paltry sum. In complete antithesis to everything

Jesus has taught, Judas wants money (cf. 1 Tim 6:10). None the less Judas later returns the silver, so his avarice is not unbounded.

v. 15, which anticipates 27:9, stands under the influence of Zech 11:12: 'So they weighed out as my wages thirty shekels of silver.' This text shows that the betrayal is in accord with what God has foreseen. Indeed, the apparent triumph of evil is mysteriously also the work of God—as in Gen 50:20: 'Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good.' There might also be an allusion to Ex 21:32: Judas reckons Jesus worth no more than a slave. Whether that is so or not the amount is surely intended to be trifling; and his action likens him to the guards at the tomb, whose cowardice leads them to lie: they also take silver from the authorities (28:11–15).

When Judas strikes his bargain Jesus' freedom to speak and act is almost gone. This lends emphasis to what follows, for what Jesus does with time running out has special meaning. In other words, vv. 14–16 not only make the time before the arrest tense with anticipation, they also indicate that the narrative is about to depict Jesus' final free acts and in this way enlarge the significance of those acts.

(26:17–29) Jesus, as a law-observant Jew, celebrates the Passover within Jerusalem. vv. 26–9, which record the foundation of the Lord's supper, interpret the tragedy revealed in vv. 20–5 as redemptive: the betrayed Jesus is a sacrifice whose blood is poured out 'for many'. The passage is enriched by its links with other texts. vv. 26a and 27a strongly recall the two feeding stories of chs. 14 and 15: the last supper has been fore-shadowed by the miraculous multiplications. Our passage has also often been connected with the bread of the Lord's prayer, while 'this is the blood of the covenant' takes up Ex 24:8 and makes the act of Jesus resemble an act of Moses. The reference to 'covenant' might also allude to Jer 31:31. 'For many' and 'poured out' probably advert to Isa 53:12 and so imply that Jesus in his death is the suffering servant of Isaiah.

The connections with Ex 24:8 are perhaps particularly important. Mark and Luke make Jesus' last supper a Passover Seder. Jn 6 links the bread of the eucharist with the manna given to Israel during the Exodus. In 1 Cor 10:1–4 participation in the Lord's supper is likened to drinking from the rock which followed Israel in the desert. And Heb 9:15–22 uses eucharistic language in retelling the story of Moses' coven-

antal sacrifice. Clearly it was conventional to view the last supper as part of a new exodus. And so it is in Matthew. The last supper is foreshadowed by stories in which Jesus is like Moses and contains parallels with the Exodus narrative: Jesus celebrates the Passover, vv. 17–18 (cf. Ex 12); the disciples do as Jesus directs them, v. 19 (cf. Ex 12:28); and the blood of the covenant is poured out for the forgiveness of sins, v. 28 (cf. Ex 24:8 and the targums on this). The last redeemer is as the first.

The command to eat, followed by 'this is my body', implies participation in the death of Jesus or its effects: just as those who partake of Passover share in the redemption from Egypt, so too those who take and eat share in the benefits of Jesus' atoning death. While so much is clear, bitter debate has centred upon Jesus' words. There is a natural tendency to think of 'blood' and 'body' as correlative: together they are the elements of sacrifice, or the two elements making up a person. But in Luke and Paul the two elements are separated by a meal. Moreover, the Greek 'body' (*sōma*) can mean simply 'self'.

The identification of the elements with the body and blood of Jesus Christ has made much of the verb, *estin* ('is'), and taken it literally. But others have found here only figurative representation: the bread symbolizes Jesus or what will happen to him. This accords with the use of 'is' in 13:19–23, 37–9 ('this is that' means 'this represents that'). The truth is that *estin* has a range of uses and is in itself ambiguous. Moreover, we cannot determine what Matthew believed about the elements—whether, for example, we should think of him as being closer to Luther than to Zwingli—or whether the categories from later theological debates would even be relevant.

The prophecy of abstinence in v. 29 is another passion prediction: it foretells imminent death as well as eschatological victory. So the Lord's supper is not just commemorative but prophetic. One wonders whether the sequence in Ex 24:8–11 underlies vv. 28–9. In Exodus the establishing of the covenant through blood is followed by eating and drinking and seeing God. In Matthew the proclamation of the eschatological covenant through blood prefaces the promise of the eschatological banquet. Already Isa 24:23–25:8 takes up the language of Ex 24:8–11 to prophesy the future and the eschatological feast.

(26:30–5) From this gloomy prophecy of impending events, which is almost an outline of the remainder of the gospel, we learn the

future (1) of the disciples—they will all fall away and be scattered but later gathered in Galilee to see Jesus; (2) of Peter—he will deny his Lord three times before the cock crows; and (3) of Jesus—he will be killed but then raised and appear to his disciples in Galilee. Because the last supper is a Passover meal, many have referred ‘sung the hymn’ to the custom of singing at Passover the second half of the great Hallel (Ps 114–18). But first-century Christian readers may also or instead have thought of hymns sung with or after the eucharist. v. 30 (cf. 21:1; 24:3) alludes to 2 Sam 15:30 where David, who has been plotted against by his trusted royal counsellor, Ahithophel, leaves Jerusalem and goes up ‘the ascent of the Mount of Olives’. There the king weeps and prays for deliverance (cf. Gethsemane). That Matthew intends the parallelism follows from 27:3–10, where Judas is modelled upon Ahithophel. Perhaps then it is more than coincidence that Ahithophel wants to overtake David at night (2 Sam 17:1; cf. Mt 26:31) with 12,000 men (17:1; cf. Mt 26:53) so that he can strike (*pataxō*, 17:2; cf. Mt 26:31) the king and cause all the people with him (*meta autou*, 17:2; cf. Mt 26:18, 20, 38, 40, 51, 69, 71) to flee (*phexetai pas*, 17:2; cf. Mt 26:56).

v. 31 quotes Zech 13:7. Zechariah’s imperatival ‘smite’ becomes in the NT ‘I will smite’ (cf. Ex 12:13; 2 Sam 17:2, both LXX). This emphasizes God’s activity. The promise of restoration in v. 32 (fulfilled in 28:16–20; cf. 28:7, 10), which offers forgiveness in advance, reverses the scattering and so softens the disciples’ failure. It alone is not disputed by Peter.

(26:36–46) One can embrace death because one hopes it a good (so Plato’s Socrates) or one can resist it because one thinks it an evil (as in Jewish legends about Abraham and Moses). Jesus does neither. Although he recoils from death, or at least crucifixion, his course is fixed by the will of God, and this overrides whatever beliefs or feelings he has about death. For Jesus the issue is not death but submission to the divine will: ‘Thy will be done.’ (This phrase comes from the Lord’s prayer; cf. the address, ‘my Father’ in v. 39 and ‘that you may not come into the time of trial’ in v. 41.)

There are three sources of pathos in this passage. First there is the innocence of the one who suffers: like Job, he is not guilty. Secondly, Jesus, although he has plainly prophesied crucifixion for himself, here contemplates a route around suffering. Obviously he is at war with himself. Thirdly, there is Jesus’ isolation.

Although he comes with his disciples he soon separates himself from them and casts his face to the ground. The physical circumstances are symbolic: Jesus is alone. Despite the threefold *meta* (‘with’) linking him to others, his followers, as though indifferent, abandon him for sleep. Moreover, we likewise hear nothing from heaven. It is as if Jesus’ prayers go unanswered.

Jesus goes to *Gat-šemāni* (‘oil-press’ Heb.), an olive orchard on the Mount of Olives. Following the exposition (vv. 36–8) is an alternating series of triads—three prayers of Jesus and three encounters between Jesus and the sleeping disciples. The three prayers (vv. 39, 42, 44) display much parallelism, as do the scenes in which Jesus speaks with his disciples. The whole is dominated by Jesus’ speech. Four times he speaks to his disciples and three times he prays. (Asking for something three times expresses earnestness; cf. 2 Cor 12:8.) The three parallel prayers exhibit a literary technique found elsewhere (cf. Josh 6:12–14). While Jesus’ first and second prayers are quoted, his third is just summarized (‘saying the same words’). This recalls 20:1–16, wherein we hear the instructions given to the labourers hired at the early hour and the third hour but not the instructions given to those hired at the sixth and ninth hours. Of these last we are simply told: ‘he [the householder] did the same’. Similar is 27:39–44, which quotes the mockery of two groups but says of a third: they ‘also taunted him in the same way’.

The adverbial use of *autou* (‘here’) in v. 36 appears only here in Matthew. Does it allude to Gen 22:5 LXX? In the story of the binding of Isaac Abraham says to his servants: ‘Stay here... the boy and I will go over there...’ Is there a parallel between Abraham’s faith and Jesus’ faith? or between Isaac’s sacrifice and Jesus’ sacrifice? In addition to the parallels of wording and content just noted both Abraham and Jesus take along three people, Abraham and Isaac separate themselves from others for worship or prayer, both episodes are set on a mountain, and each involves ‘trial’ (*peirasmon*; Gen 22:1 LXX: *epeiraxen*).

The words which convey that Jesus’ sorrow is so great as to feel fatal (v. 38) conflate Ps 41:6, 12 || 42:5 LXX with Jon 4:9. His grief, enhanced by his companions’ failure to give him companionship and solace, is such that he prays for ‘this cup’ to pass. In T. Abr. 16:11 the angel of death calls himself ‘the bitter cup of death’ (cf. 1:3). But in the OT, intertestamental literature, and the Apocalypse, ‘cup’ is most often used figuratively

in texts about suffering, especially suffering God's wrath or judgement (e.g. Ps 11:6; 116:13). And in 20:22 the cup Jesus must drink is neither temptation nor death nor martyrdom but rather eschatological sorrow, which will be first poured out upon the people of God (cf. Jer 25:15–29). It is the same here: the crucifixion belongs to the messianic woes. (Cf. further on this passage FGS K.)

(26:47–56) The busy story of Jesus' arrest, which is unusually full of characters, pulls together several strands from earlier sections. The setting at night matches the intention of the Jewish leaders to take Jesus 'by stealth' and avoid a riot (v. 4; cf. v. 16). Judas' presence vindicates Jesus' foresight in vv. 21, 25, and 45. That the crowd is 'from the chief priests and the elders of the people' takes one back to vv. 3–5 and 14–16 and likewise to Jesus' passion predictions. Judas' use of 'rabbi' recalls v. 25 and here as there tells us he is no authentic disciple of Jesus. 'They came and laid hands on Jesus' (v. 50) makes for a literal fulfilment of 17:22. Jesus' passivity and non-resistance harmonize with his decision in Gethsemane and his earlier moral instruction (cf. the SM). The two references to Scripture (vv. 54, 56) resonate with the entirety of Matthew. And the disciples' flight shows Jesus, not his disciples, to be the true prophet (cf. vv. 31–5).

The narrative conveys sorrow through irony. Judas is no stranger but 'one of the twelve' (v. 47). The crowd has swords and clubs (v. 47) while the man they seek does not resist evil. Judas, the betrayer, kisses Jesus and greets him (v. 49). And Jesus' own disciples, instead of standing by him, forsake him and flee (v. 56). At the same time, the sorrow is balanced by Jesus' authority and the motif of fulfilment. The Messiah's fate is his own will: he decides not to ask for legions of angels (v. 53; cf. 4:6–7). Moreover, his resolution is determined by the voice of the prophets (vv. 54, 56), which is to say: Jesus' will is God's will.

(26:57–68) Jesus is neither the victim of tragic, impersonal circumstances nor the casualty of the ordinary machinery of justice. He is rather assailed by wicked people. Jesus' adversaries speak falsehoods (vv. 59–60), accuse him of blasphemy (v. 65), condemn him to death (v. 66), and viciously hit and mock him (vv. 67–8). In the midst of this sinful folly Jesus' identity becomes fully visible. He is the Son of God and Messiah who, in accordance

with 2 Sam 7:14, builds the temple. He is the king of Ps 110:1 who sits at God's right hand. He is the suffering servant of Isa 50:6 whose face is spat upon. And he is the Son of Man of Dan 7:14 who will come on the clouds of heaven. The passage is, like 16:13–20, a climactic confluence of the main Christological streams which run throughout the text.

The chief literary feature of 26:57–68 is its irony (cf. the irony of 26:47–56). The authorities pass judgement on the one who will some day pass judgement on them. They, by seeking false witnesses, and the high priest, by rending his robe, disobey Moses (cf. Lev 21:10) whereas Jesus, by refusing an oath, lives by his messianic Torah. The authorities mock Jesus' claim to be the Davidic Messiah, the fulfilment of OT hopes, while their very actions bring to pass in Jesus OT prophecies. They accuse Jesus of blasphemy and yet it is they who blaspheme the Son of God. Lastly, those who accuse Jesus of saying that he will destroy the temple of God and in three days build another themselves help fulfil that prophecy; for by sentencing him to death they are creating the circumstance that makes it possible for the temple of his body to be raised in three days. So the Sanhedrin has everything backwards and it ironically acts against its own true interests. This is crystal clear to the reader. It will not, however, be evident to Jesus' persecutors until the parousia.

The Sanhedrin violates Torah (cf. Ex 20:16; Deut 5:20) and does not seek the truth. It rather wants only testimony that will incriminate Jesus. But it does fulfil the requirement of Deut 19:15 by getting two witnesses, and so despite itself the Sanhedrin hears true testimony. The words about the temple should be interpreted neither as an ecclesiological statement—Jesus will raise up the church—nor an apocalyptic prophecy about the destruction and rebuilding of Jerusalem's temple but as a passion prediction: 'I am able to destroy the temple of God' means 'I am able to lay down my life', and 'to build it in three days' means 'to rise from the dead in three days'. This is how the prophecy is interpreted in Jn 2:21, and 'in three days' inevitably recalls Jesus' other prophecies of resurrection. Paul, moreover, shows us the possibility of speaking of the individual as a temple (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 5:1).

When the high priest stands—which is what wicked accusers do in Ps 27:12 and 35:11—he asks the fundamental question of the pericope. Jesus' silence probably alludes to Isa 53:7 (quoted in Acts 8:32), for the language of 26:67

in several respects recalls Isa 50:6. But what explains the transition from the temple saying to Christology? Zech 6:12 predicts that 'the Branch' will 'build the temple of the Lord'. And 2 Sam 7:13–14—given messianic sense in both the Dead Sea scrolls and the NT—foretells a royal figure who will build for God a house and be God's 'son'.

Jesus speaks for the last time of the Son of Man and makes a dramatic public confession. He goes beyond the high priest's question and in effect answers the question left unanswered in 22:45. 'You have said so' has affirmative sense (cf. v. 25; 27:11). Why then the indirect response? First, the wording assimilates the trial before the high priest to the trial before Pilate. Secondly, the use of 'you' puts responsibility upon Caiaphas, who knows the truth: he must live with the consequences of knowing the truth. Thirdly, given his teaching on oaths (5:33–7) Jesus may wish to distance himself from the high priest's language.

Jesus' public confession combines Ps 110:1 and Dan 7:13–14. But 'from now on' is not from the OT. The words are enigmatic because a prediction beginning 'from now on' should introduce a continuous state. Some have thought the expression stresses that Jesus' trial marks the moment of God's rejection of the Jewish people, or that the emphasis is upon the contrast between Jesus' humiliation in the present and his vindication in the near future. It is certainly intriguing that 28:18 implies the fulfilment or proleptic realization of Dan 7:14. On the other hand, 28:11–15 does not imply that the authorities are in any way changed by subsequent events; in no sense can it be said that they 'see' the Son of Man. So then maybe the Greek means in effect 'in the future'. Jesus will no longer be seen as he is now; rather will he be seen when he comes in glory, seated on a throne and riding the clouds. In line with this the verse has to do with public revelation ('you will see', 'clouds').

The scene ends with Jesus passively enduring violence and a ritual of dishonour. This makes him the exemplar of the teaching in 5:38–42. For there Jesus exhorts disciples to eschew violence and not resist evil, and several illustrations follow which borrow language from Isa 50:4–9 LXX, which, as already noted, is again alluded to in the present verse (cf. 27:30). So the OT text associated with turning the other cheek is also associated with the passion of Jesus.

(26:69–75) Earlier in this chapter Judas defects. Later the other disciples flee. Now Peter, retreating

from his promise (v. 35), denies his Lord. This is the climax of the disciples' failure. The first to be called is now the last to fall away.

The first accusation is spoken to Peter by a maid, the second to bystanders by another maid, and the third to Peter by bystanders: things become more and more public. Further, the intensity of Peter's denials increases with the accusations: he first denies that he knows what is being said, then he denies with an oath that he knows Jesus, then he denies Jesus with both an oath and a curse (probably of Jesus). Peter's movements, which take him further and further away from Jesus, also add drama: he is in the courtyard, then he goes to the gateway, then he leaves altogether.

In its present context this passage supplies irony by balancing v. 74, where Jesus' prophetic powers are mocked. Although Jesus makes no appearance in our story, it shows that, so far from being a false prophet, he has predicted the events of the evening in detail. 'Before the cock crows, you will deny me three times' (v. 34) comes to literal fulfilment precisely while Jesus is being reviled with 'Prophecy to us, you Messiah!' (v. 68).

Our story also balances the trial, where Jesus, like Peter, who is not far away, faces three sets of accusers (false witnesses, v. 60, the two true witnesses, vv. 61–2, Caiaphas, vv. 63–6). There Jesus is asked whether he is the Messiah, the Son of God. He, although heretofore reticent about his identity, fearlessly confesses that he is. But Peter, who earlier confessed Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of God, no longer acknowledges his Lord: when confronted he becomes a coward. Jesus illustrates the good confession of 10:32, Peter the damning denial of 10:33.

The 'sitting' of v. 69 (cf. v. 58) interests because the disciples sit in Gethsemane (v. 36), the guards (and evidently the high priest) sit at the trial (cf. vv. 58, 62), Pilate sits when interrogating Jesus (27:19), and the soldiers at the cross likewise sit (27:36). All this contrasts with earlier chapters, in which it is Jesus who sits, that is, takes the position of authority and rest (5:1; 13:2; 15:29; 21:7; 24:3; 25:31). But after the last supper he no longer sits or reclines. He instead stands (27:11), falls to ground (26:39), and hangs from a cross (27:35). His posture during the passion reflects his temporary renunciation of authority (cf. 26:53) and the lack of all comfort.

Matthew's gospel does not idealize Peter and the other disciples. Rather does it present them as completely human, as complex and inconstant creatures who resist easy caricature. While

on the one hand they leave all to follow Jesus, on the other they forsake and deny him. And Peter, who confesses Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God, in the end denies that he knows him. Such contradictory behaviour should not surprise. The Bible of the Matthean community, the OT, does not free Noah, or David, or Solomon from their sins. Even Moses is said to have disobeyed God when he struck the rock twice. We may assume that Matthew's readers interpreted the disciples' failures as they did the failures of OT heroes: God can use ordinary people for his extraordinary purposes and, when they fall into sin, he can grant them forgiveness. As Peter says in the Acts of Peter 7:20: 'He who defended me also when I sinned and strengthened me with his greatness will also comfort you that you may love him.' Calvin had it right: 'Peter's fall...brilliantly mirrors our own infirmity. His repentance in turn is a memorable demonstration for us of God's goodness and mercy. The story of one man contains teaching of general, and indeed prime, benefit for the whole Church; it teaches those who stand to take care and caution; it encourages the fallen to trust in pardon.'

(27:1-2) In fulfilment of the prophetic 20:18-19, the Jewish leaders deliver Jesus to the prefect of Judea. The unexplained act probably assumes that the Jews usually did not have the authority to execute criminals (Jn 18:31): such was the responsibility of the Romans. However that may be, throughout 26:1-56 Jesus has been the active protagonist, and one has the impression that he is in charge of his own destiny. Now this changes: he becomes the passive victim, and the text fixes upon those who act against him.

Tradition, impelled to turn Pilate into either a saint or a devil, has offered two contrasting pictures. In one (mostly Egyptian and Syrian) Pilate is, at the expense of the Jews, presented as an unwilling participant in the death of Jesus: he is innocent of Jesus' blood. Tertullian, *Apol.* 21, even makes him 'a Christian in his own convictions', and the Coptic church has canonized him. In the other (mostly Western) picture Pilate bears full responsibility for the death of Jesus and is presented as 'an unjust judge'—weak-willed at best, evil at worst. In the *Mors Pilati* he commits suicide, and his corpse becomes a home for demons. Matthew is closer to this second picture. Pilate's wife, after her dream, warns her husband not to have anything to do with Jesus—but Pilate disregards her; and after Jesus is dead Pilate co-operates with the

Jewish authorities to appoint a guard for the tomb. So the declaration of innocence in v. 24 is ironic: despite his words Pilate is responsible. Washing his hands does not make them clean.

(27:3-10) The most obvious formal feature of this interruption is the parallelism between the scriptural quotation (cf. Zech 11:13) and the narrative, a parallelism that underlines fulfilment:

<i>The narrative:</i>	<i>The quotation:</i>
'taking' (6)	'they took' (9)
'thirty pieces of silver' (3,5,6)	'thirty pieces of silver' (9)
'money' (<i>timē</i>) (6)	'price' (<i>timēn</i>) (9)
'the potter's field' (7,8)	'the potter's field' (10)

There are three other early Christian accounts of Judas' death—Acts 1:16-20 and two fragments assigned to Papias *apud* Apollinarius (of Laodicea) and preserved in catenas to Mt 27 (a short account) and Acts 1 (a long account). Although very different from Matthew and each other, there are common items: (1) money from Judas purchases a property near Jerusalem (Matthew: the chief priests use the money of betrayal; Luke: Judas himself acquires the land); (2) that property was known as 'the Field of Blood' (but whereas in Matthew the name is associated with the innocent blood of Jesus, in Acts it derives from Judas' gruesome end); (3) the fate of Judas fulfils Scripture (Matthew and Luke cite different OT texts); (4) Judas comes to a bad end (Matthew: he hangs himself; Acts: he bursts open; Papias' short version: a wagon runs over him).

What does 'he repented' (v. 3) mean? The accounts in Acts and Papias have Judas die by the hand of heaven: there is no room for authentic repentance. This, and the depiction of Judas throughout much of church history as infamy embodied, have led most to see in Matthew's Judas an everlasting failure doomed for destruction. This accords with 26:24. On the other hand, the verb translated here by 'he repented' is used in Mt 22:29 and 32 of authentic repentance. Further, there are no biblical condemnations or prohibitions of suicide. Indeed, Jewish tradition excuses or justifies the suicides of Saul, Samson, Zimri, and the Roman soldier who killed himself after talking to R. Gamaliel (*b. Ta'an.* 29a); and Josephus, in telling the story of Masada, refers to the participants' 'free choice of a noble death' (*J.W.* 7. 320-401). Moreover, if 4 Macc 17:21 states that the deaths of a mother and her seven sons became 'a ransom for the sin of our nation', 12:19 and 17:1 inform us that the

deaths of that mother and of one of her sons were self-inflicted: 'he threw himself into the braziers and so gave up his life'; 'she threw herself into the fire so that no one would touch her body'. Are we to think that Judas' suicide atones for his sin (cf. *Gen. Rab.* on 27:27)?

There is a parallel of v. 4 in 27:24. Pilate, as he washes his hands, declares, 'I am innocent of this man's blood; see to it yourselves.' But the similarities are really differences. Whereas Judas declares his guilt for innocent blood, Pilate denies his; and while Pilate, seeking to avoid responsibility, tells others to 'see to it yourselves', this is what Judas, who acknowledges his responsibility, is told to do by others.

The story of Ahithophel is recalled by v. 5 (cf. 2 Sam 17:23) making Judas akin to the famous betrayer of David. The correlation between Judas and Ahithophel was traditional. Cf. 2 Sam 15:23 with Jn 18:1; 2 Sam 15:31 with Mt 26:36–46 and par., also Ps 41:5 and 11 (which tradition refers to the incident with Absalom and Ahithophel); 2 Sam 17:1–2 with Mt 26:47–56 and par.; Ps 41:9 (attributed to David; cf. *b. Sanh.* 106b) with Mt 14:18 and Jn 13:18; and 2 Sam 18:28 with Jn 13:18.

To the allusion to Zech 11:12 made with reference to Judas in 26:15, 27:9–10 adds a formal citation of Zech 11:13, which has been prepared for by allusions in vv. 3–8. 'Jeremiah' may be due to textual corruption, or perhaps it is a reference to the entire prophetic corpus, which Jeremiah heads in some old lists, or perhaps the evangelist simply had a mental lapse, or perhaps the text comes from an apocryphon. But the best guess is that the quotation is mixed: words from Jeremiah and Zechariah have been combined. (Mk 1:2 attributes Mal 3:1 + Isa 40:3 to Isaiah, and Rom 9:27 assigns Hos 2:1 + Isa 10:22 to the same prophet.) Jer 18–19 concerns a potter (18:2–6; 19:1), a purchase (19:1), the Valley of Hinnom (where the Field of Blood is traditionally located) (19:2), 'blood of the innocent' (19:4), and the renaming of a place for burial (19:6, 11). Further, Jer 32:6–15 tells of the purchase of a field with silver.

(27:11–26) This passage, which returns to 27:1–2, is crowded with characters—Jesus, Pilate, the chief priests, the elders, Barabbas, Pilate's wife, a crowd. If the subject is the Roman trial of Jesus, which 'sounds less like a formal judicial hearing than a macabre example of oriental bargaining' (France 1985: 388), the focal issue is culpability for Jesus' execution. The main character, the governor, instead of conducting

an objective inquiry and justly acting upon the outcome, rather gives cowardly heed to the hostile Jewish leaders and the crowd they have agitated. The effect is to highlight not just the innocence of Jesus but also the fault of Rome's representative and especially the guilt of the chief priests and elders, who manipulate Pilate and stir up the crowd against the Messiah.

The interrogation is in many respects reminiscent of the Jewish trial. The chief priest(s) and elders are present both times (26:57; vv. 12, 20). On both occasions Jesus is called by others 'the Messiah' (26:63; vv. 17, 22). In both Jesus is silent (26:62–3; vv. 11–14). In both he none the less says to his interrogator, 'You have said so' (26:64; v. 11). Both trials deem Jesus worthy of death (26:66; vv. 24–6). And both are followed by scenes of mockery (26:67; vv. 27–31). The correlations convey futility: the new trial corrects nothing of the first. Roman justice does no better than the Sanhedrin.

When Pilate washes his hands (v. 24) he is more concerned with his own innocence than with justice and the innocence of Jesus. His act is hypocritical; he is not free of responsibility. Pilate's declaration against the facts contrasts with the dramatic cry of 'the people as a whole'. 'His blood be on us and on our children!' is not a self-curse but a declaration of responsibility—in effect: we acknowledge our involvement if the governor will not. The words are an ironic prophecy (cf. Jn 11:50); for surely Matthew, like so many after him, related the cry to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE (cf. 23:35). This accords with the Jewish habit of associating disaster with sin—even (despite Jer 31:29–30) the disaster of one generation for the sin of another. 'And our children' accordingly carries literal sense. We have here an aetiology, an explanation in terms of collective guilt for the destruction of the capital. (The exegete must distinguish between the original intention of verses and their effects, especially here; v. 25 does not refer to all Israel—neither Jewish Christians nor the Jewish diaspora are represented by the crowd—nor should we find here a curse for all time. Nor does the verse explain God's supposed abandonment of Jews or of the end of the Jewish mission.)

Concerning v. 26, 10:17 prophesies that missionaries will be flogged; so once more the story of Jesus, the exemplar in suffering, makes his speech come to life. The 'flogging', perhaps intended to recall Isa 53:5, is not described but only referred to. The Roman act of *flagellum*, of tying non-Romans and slaves to a post and then

whipping them with knotted leather straps (which sometimes held pieces of metal and/or bone), often preceded crucifixion, and sometimes prisoners were whipped on the way to crucifixion. The horrendous punishment (not humanely limited to forty stripes, cf. Jewish law) was so severe that it could expose bone and by itself be fatal.

If the main theological theme of this passage is responsibility, the literary method is irony. Things are upside down, and words have unintended meaning. The judge of the world, instead of sitting upon his judgement seat, stands before the *bēma* of a lesser. The governor does not govern. While the religious leaders of Judaism rail against God's anointed, the truth is revealed to a pagan. The crowds prefer to free a criminal instead of a just man they once acclaimed. The criminal is named 'Jesus, Son of the Father'. Pilate declares his lack of responsibility in word and deed when he is in fact in charge of the proceedings and their outcome. And the crowd willingly accepts responsibility in words which unwittingly prophesy tragedy. As throughout the gospel things are not what they seem, and God's will works itself out in unexpected circumstances.

(27:27–31) This passage (cf. Philo, *In Flac.* 6.36–40), uncharacteristically full of vivid details, partially fulfils the third passion prediction: 'hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged' (20:19) as well as Isa 50:6. It also in several particulars repeats the conclusion of the trial before Caiaphas (see esp. 26:67).

Kings are proclaimed by their soldiers. But when the Roman soldiers give Jesus a robe, a sceptre, and a crown—whose thorns may simulate the light rays supposed to emanate from the heads of divinities—and then hail him king they are making fun of him for their own amusement. Their homage is pretended. Yet in truth the seemingly hapless criminal before them—here Jesus is an utterly passive object—is indeed a king who shall shortly wield all authority in heaven and earth (28:18). In this way the irony of the Roman burlesque is turned on itself, and the scene continues the message of 27:11–26: things are the opposite of what they seem to be.

(27:32–56) This haunting passage depicts Jesus as the suffering righteous one akin to the figures in Ps 22, Isa 53, and Wis 2; and perhaps its outstanding feature is its scriptural language. Although the OT is never once formally introduced, its presence is everywhere:

- 34, wine mingled with gall: allusion to Ps 69:21
- 35, division of garments: borrowing from Ps 22:18
- 38, death between robbers: possible allusion to Isa 53:12
- 39, passersby wag their heads: cf. Ps 22:7; Lam 2:15
- 39–40, mockery: borrowing from Ps 22:7 (cf. 109:25)
- 43, mockery: borrowing from Ps 22:9
- 44, mockery: possible borrowing from Ps 22:7 or 69:9
- 45, darkness at noon: allusion to Am 8:9
- 46, cry from the cross: borrowing from Ps 22:1
- 48, vinegar to drink: allusion to Ps 69:21
- 51–3, earthquake and resurrection: use of Ezek 37; Zech 14:4–5

Matthew does not recount the glorious death of a martyr. Of Jesus' heroic valour and faith we hear nothing. vv. 32–50 do not encourage or inspire but rather depict human sin and its frightening freedom in the unfathomable divine silence. There is terror in this text. The mocking and torture of the innocent and righteous Son of God are not intended to make but to shatter sense, to portray the depths of irrational human depravity. And the patient endurance of God, which is so overdone that the Son himself screams out feelings of abandonment, powerfully conveys the frightening mystery of God's seeming inactivity in the world. vv. 32–50 are the divine absence, a sort of deistic interlude, a portrait (in Luther's phrase) of *Deus absconditus in passionibus*. They are akin to portions of Job, and like the speech out of the whirlwind they can evoke what Rudolf Otto called the *mysterium tremendum*. 'Truly, you are a God who hides himself, O God of Israel, the Saviour' (Isa 45:15).

While vv. 32–50 are seemingly devoid of supernatural activity, vv. 51–4 offer an explosion of the supernatural. One cannot but recall the habit of world mythology and literature to encircle the ends of great figures with extraordinary events. Trees bloomed out of season and powder fell from the sky when Buddha slipped away. The heavens shook when Moses was taken to God (2 *Apoc. Bar.* 59:3). As Francis of Assisi left the body, larks, otherwise only heralds of dawn, sang at night. vv. 51–4 are in one important respect conventional. At the same time, the Matthean signs have their own special meaning. First, most of them—darkness, end of the temple, resurrection, conversion of Gentiles—are eschatological. It follows that the day of the Lord dawns on Golgotha: the divine judgement descends, and the first fruits of the resurrection are gathered. The end of Jesus is the end of the world in miniature.

Secondly, the miracles come only *after* Jesus dies. Before then the Son's passivity is matched by God's passivity—so much so that the bystanders can jeer and proclaim God's indifference. But the preternatural events which follow death refute the mockers: their calls for a sign are more than answered. God does indeed fight for the one who has not fought for himself. The mystery is only why God is tardy, why torment and death must come first. Whatever the answer to that eternal question might be, the sequence itself cannot surprise. For the same pattern appears in Jesus' own preaching, in which tribulation and suffering precede vindication and victory (e.g. 5:10–12; 10:17–23; 24:4–34).

There is resemblance between vv. 51–5 and 28:1–11:

<i>The Death of Jesus</i>	<i>The Resurrection of Jesus</i>
An earthquake	An earthquake
Opening of tombs	Opening of tombs
A resurrection	A resurrection
The guards fear	The guards fear
Witnesses to the events (the resurrected saints) go to the holy city	Witnesses to the events (the Roman guards) go to the city
There are women witnesses (including Mary Magdalene and another Mary)	There are women witnesses (Mary Magdalene and another Mary)

Clearly the resurrection of the saints foreshadows the resurrection of Jesus.

(27:57–66) The stories about the burial and the guard set the stage for 28:15. The tomb that is filled here (in accord with Deut 21:23, before sundown) is emptied there. The stone that is here rolled across the door of the tomb is there rolled back. The guard that here secures the sepulchre there proves ineffective. The leaders who here worry that the disciples will come and steal Jesus' body there put out the lie that just such a thing happened. And the women who here see all become witnesses there to the empty tomb and risen Lord.

A corpse can be either disposed of dishonourably or given an honourable burial. In view of how Jesus has been treated throughout the passion narrative one would anticipate for him the former. But thanks to Joseph of Arimathea's unexpected and reverent intervention, Jesus receives a worthy entombment. Further, like the kings of Israel, he is buried beside Jerusalem (1 Kings 15:8, 24, etc.).

The apologetic tale of the guard at the tomb (vv. 62–6) refutes the criticism of 28:15, that is,

rebutts Jewish slander against the disciples by showing that they could not have stolen Jesus' body—there was a guard and in any case they were nowhere around—and reinforces belief in Jesus' resurrection: given the guard the empty tomb is a very suggestive sign. One can imagine an exchange between Matthew and critical Jews. Matthew: Jesus rose from the dead and his tomb was empty (28:6). Opponent: did Jesus really die? Matthew: a Roman guard kept watch over him; surely he was dead before his body was released (27:36). Opponent: was there a mix-up in tombs? Matthew: the women saw where Jesus was buried (v. 61). Opponent: the disciples, seeking to confirm Jesus' prophecy of his resurrection after three days, stole the body. Matthew: the disciples had fled, they were nowhere near (26:56). Opponent: then someone else stole the body. Matthew: a large stone was rolled before the tomb; it was sealed; and Roman soldiers kept watch (28:62–6). Opponent: the soldiers fell asleep. Matthew: they were bribed to say that (28:12–15).

Ps 2:1 asks, 'Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain?' The theme of human impotence versus divine power runs throughout the Bible, and it is part and parcel of vv. 62–6. Jesus' opponents take every precaution to prevent proclamation of the resurrection: they seal the stone and set a guard. But their efforts are futile: 'he who sits in the heavens laughs'. Human beings cannot oppose earthquakes and angels and the power of God.

(28:1–15) The resurrection is the necessary end to Jesus' story. Without it his words are vacant and his opponents exonerated. With it, Jesus is vindicated, his cause and authority confirmed, and his—and so Matthew's—opponents disgraced.

Matthew's account opens with an angelo-phany (cf. Dan 10:2–14; 2 Enoch 1:3–10) with eschatological motifs (earthquake, resurrection) (vv. 1–8); this is followed by an appearance of the risen Jesus (vv. 9–10) and a story of how unbelievers treated the facts (vv. 11–15). The verbal repetition between vv. 5–7 and 10 makes for emphasis while an additional unifying feature is the artistic correlation between the women and the guards. Both groups gather at Jesus' tomb (vv. 1, 4). Both see an angel (vv. 2–5). Both feel fear (vv. 4, 8). Both leave the tomb in order to tell others what has happened (vv. 8, 11). And both are told by others what they should say (vv. 7, 10, 13–14). The difference lies in this, that while (we assume) the women tell the truth to

the disciples, the ineffectual guards (cf. Dan 3:19–23; Acts 5:17–26)—the last nameless walkers—lie about the disciples.

The women (cf. 27:55, 61), having observed the sabbath and waited until the following dawn, set forth to visit the tomb on the first day of the week. They become witnesses to Jesus' resurrection as well as to his death and burial. Although 'to see the tomb' is unexplained, visitation of the newly entombed was probably an established burial custom. *Şem.* 8:1 records the habit of visiting graves 'until the third day' (cf. Jn 11:17, 39) as a precaution against burying someone alive (examples of which are given in *Şem.*). If this is the premise of Mt 28:1, then the women who go to confirm Jesus' death become instead the first witnesses of his new life. It is not Jesus who is dead but (at least figuratively) the guards ('became as dead men').

v. 11–15 take up 27:62–6 and 28:2–4 and like them are apologetic. Evidently the Jewish opponents of Matthean Christianity (like Reimarus centuries later) did not dispute the historicity of the empty tomb but rather assigned its cause to theft in the cause of piety. Our story answers that slander in kind: the rumour of theft was a self-serving lie fortified by money. Clearly Matthew's Christian community knew and cared about what the synagogue across the street was saying.

(28:16–20) Matthew's conclusion has the same broad outline as Mk 16:14–20; Lk 24:36–49; and Jn 20:19–23. All four texts presumably go back to the same primitive proto-commissioning.

The resurrection marks the end of Jesus' earthly time and inaugurates the time of the post-Easter church. Accordingly this pericope both looks back to summarize Jesus' ministry as a whole ('all I have commanded you') and looks forward to the time of the church to outline a programme. So the passage functions to relate two periods which, although different, have the same Lord and so the same mission.

In addition to the allusion to Dan 7:13–14 in v. 18, some have also found dependence upon 2 Chr 36:23 (the final sentence in the Former Prophets). This is improbable. More persistent has been the proposal, usually tentative and muted, that the passage evokes Moses. The mountain itself, given its Mosaic associations throughout Matthew, is suggestive, as is the circumstance that Moses ended his earthly course on a mountain. Further, the narrative has close parallels in Deut 31:14–15, 23; and Josh 1:1–9, which are all about God, or God

through Moses, commissioning Joshua. Josh 1:2 tells Joshua to 'go' (v. 9) and cross the Jordan. Josh 1:7 enjoins Joshua to 'act in accordance with all the law that my servant Moses commanded you'. And Josh 1:9 (the pericope's conclusion) promises God's presence: 'for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go'. Given the undeniable presence of a strong Moses typology elsewhere in Matthew, one infers that this passage, like the commissioning stories in 1 Chr 22:1–16 and Jer 1:1–10, deliberately borrows from the traditions about Moses. Just as Moses, at the close of his life, commissioned Joshua both to go into the land peopled by foreign nations and to observe all the commandments in the law, and then further promised his successor God's abiding presence, so similarly Jesus: at the end of his earthly ministry he tells his disciples to go into all the world and to teach the observance of all the commandments of the new Moses, and then further promises his assisting presence.

Jesus is interpreted by v. 20 as the authoritative bringer of revelation, and 'all that I have commanded you' refers not to one command or to the SM but to the whole of Jesus' teaching—not just imperatives but also proverbs, blessings, parables, and prophecies. But more than verbal revelation is involved, for such revelation cannot be separated from Jesus' life, which is itself a command. Jesus' final words accordingly unify word and deed and envisage the entire book. The ministry as a whole is an imperative.

This section satisfyingly completes the gospel in part because it is almost a compendium of Matthean theology: 'Galilee' fulfils the prophecies in 26:32 and 28:7 and creates a literary arch with 4:12 that spans the gospel; 'mountain' recalls other mountain scenes, especially 4:8. 'They worshipped him; but some doubted' has been foreshadowed by 14:31–3. 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me' echoes 11:27 as well as Dan 7:13–14, which Jesus has elsewhere applied to himself (24:30; 26:64); it further brings to completion the theme of Jesus' kingship (1:1, etc.). 'Make disciples' reminds one of 13:52 (cf. 27:57); 'all nations' terminates the prohibition of 10:5–6 (cf. 15:24); 'of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit' in connection with baptism reminds one of ch. 3, where the Son is baptized, the Father speaks, and the Spirit descends. 'Teaching' recapitulates a central theme and gives the disciples a task heretofore reserved for Jesus; 'everything that I have commanded you' envisages all Jesus has said and done; 'I am with you always' forms an *inclusio* with 1:23 and is similar to 18:20; 'the end of the age' recurs in 13:39, 40, 49; 24:3, and puts

one in mind of Jesus' teachings about the end. The allusions to Moses reactivate the Moses typology.

The climax and crown of Matthew's gospel is profoundly apt in that it invites the reader to enter the story: 28:16–20 is an open-ended ending. Not only does v. 20a underline that the particular man, Jesus, has universal significance, but 'I am with you always' reveals that he is always with his people. The result is that the believing audience and the ever-living Son of God become intimate. The Jesus who commands difficult obedience is at the same time the ever-graceful divine presence.

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4. Mark

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INTRODUCTION

A. The Earliest Gospel. The Gospel of Mark is probably the earliest of the three synoptic gospels to be written. Although it is disputed by some, the most widely held solution today to the Synoptic Problem, the problem of the relationship between the three synoptic gospels, is that Mark's gospel was written first and was then used as a source by Matthew and Luke. That theory will not be discussed in detail here but will be assumed in what follows. (On this, see discussions on the Synoptic Problem in ch. 61, below and e.g. Tuckett 1992.)

B. Author. 1. About the author of the gospel we probably know very little. Ancient tradition calls him Mark, almost certainly intending to identify him as the John Mark mentioned elsewhere in the NT, a member of the primitive Jerusalem church. A tradition going back at least as early as the second-century Church Father Papias also connects Mark with the apostle Peter, so that the gospel is sometimes

regarded as in some sense Peter's memoirs. The link with Peter has then also led to Mark's gospel being associated with the city of Rome, perhaps reflecting a situation of extreme suffering by the Christian community there in the persecutions instigated by Nero in the 60s after the great fire of Rome.

2. None of this, however, is certain. It seems very unlikely, for example, that the author of the gospel was a Palestinian Jew. He appears to be rather ignorant about local geography (see *mk* 5:1; 7:31), as well as about Jewish customs or laws (see *mk* 7:3–4; 10:11–12). He may well have been called Mark, but the name was a very common one in the Roman empire and we cannot simply equate all the Marks we know!

Any link between our gospel and Peter is also hard to establish. It is true that Peter is regularly one of an inner group of disciples (cf. 1:29–31; 9:2–13; 13), and Peter is regularly belittled (cf. 8:33), a fact which some argue is only explicable if Peter had given explicit sanction to the gospel. However, Peter is not unique in all this, and the negative picture is shared with all the

disciples; in fact Matthew and Luke have more traditions specifically about Peter (Mt 16:17–19; Lk 5:1–11). The link alleged between Mark's gospel and Peter is probably part of a second-century attempt to give the gospel more status by linking it with the leading apostle.

C. Date. The date of the gospel is also uncertain. The traditional view is, as we have seen, that Mark dates from the 60s. Much depends on the interpretation of ch. 13, where Mark's Jesus looks into the future to what is to come, though for Mark no doubt some of what is predicted has already happened. The language there is at times cryptic, and perhaps deliberately so. The view adopted in this commentary is that Mark is looking back to the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE as an event in his past: hence Mark is to be dated after 70 CE (though probably not long after). For discussion of this, see MK 13, especially 13:14–20.

D. Place. By tradition, Mark is to be located in Rome. In support of this one can point to the fact that Mark uses Latin loanwords (e.g. for 'centurion' in 15:39) and seems to think in terms of Roman coinage (see 12:42) and the Roman divisions of time (see 13:35). However, although a Roman origin would fit with this evidence, it is not the only possibility. Latin loan-words and Roman coinage would have been influential in other places than Rome in the empire.

The stress on suffering in Mark's gospel (see below) has also been thought to fit a Roman origin. However, it is not absolutely clear that Mark's stress on suffering is necessarily reflecting the situation of his community: it might just as well be due to his wishing to speak to his community about possibilities and dangers which they were not yet facing. See MK 8:34–9:1. Further, a date after 70 for the gospel would mean that it could not be situated directly in the Neronian persecutions. In the end we probably have to be agnostic and say we do not know precisely where Mark comes from or what community he is writing for.

E. Genre. What kind of a text is Mark's gospel? To what genre does it belong? Ever since the second century the book has been known as a 'gospel'. Yet that is a very unusual term for a literary text, let alone an account of the life and ministry of Jesus (see MK 1:1). Older studies had claimed that the gospels were in some sense 'biographies', comparable to works such as those about Socrates (by Plato) or Epictetus

(by Arrian). However, early in the twentieth century form critics (Bultmann, Dibelius) argued that the gospels were really folk literature, not to be compared with literary works. The evangelists were simply popular story-tellers who did not impose their own ideas on the material. In particular a text such as Mark displayed none of the characteristic features of biography (nothing on Jesus' personality, psychological development, origins, or education). The gospels were thus without analogy and were *sui generis*.

Such a claim is very odd in literary terms. Some understanding of the genre of a text is essential if it is to be understood at all. Further, this rather low view of a writer such as Mark has been radically questioned in more recent study. Thus, whilst it remains true that close parallels to Mark are hard to find, in either the Jewish or Hellenistic world of the period, many have swung back to the view that Mark may be seen as in some sense a biography, although not in the modern sense of the word. There is indeed very little on Jesus' background or personality in Mark. Yet equally, ancient writing claiming to give the lives (Gk. *bioi*) of individuals often lacked some of these features. Thus if one takes a relatively broad spread of ancient 'lives' of individuals, Mark's gospel can be shown to lie within those parameters. (See BurrIDGE 1992.)

Yet this does not determine exactly how the text should be read. It does not, for example, necessarily imply that the text is *ipso facto* historically reliable. Many other 'biographies' were written with an author's own axe to grind. In this Mark is no exception. Certainly Mark presents us with a highly distinctive account of Jesus' life and some of its implications.

F. Key Themes. 1. As already noted, a key theme of the gospel is suffering: Jesus is the one who supremely fulfils his destiny as the one who suffers and dies, and any disciple of Jesus is called to follow in the same way (see 8:34–10:52). Jesus is also the great miracle worker, though one suspects that Mark would not see this as the most important part of Jesus' ministry. Jesus is indeed the great miracle worker, but miracles must, for Mark, be seen in their proper context: they can never be the basis for faith, indeed without an existing context of faith they cannot take place (see 6:5); further, the one who performs all these mighty works is the one who will end up on the cross.

2. Above all the centre of the story for Mark is the person of Jesus. What is crucial for Mark is

the question of Christology. At one level this statement is trite since, for all the evangelists, Jesus is the centre of attention in the story. Nevertheless, for Mark it is above all the question of *who* Jesus is that is paramount. Further, for Mark, it seems that this cannot be answered simply in words or titles. There is an element of secrecy in the story, so that characters in the narrative do not grasp who Jesus is. The reader is told right at the start what are the most appropriate terms in which to understand Jesus (see *MK* 1:1), but even then, Mark has more to say: indeed that is presumably why he writes his *story*, to show what any words of title mean in concrete terms. For Mark, Jesus is supremely 'Son of God', but what Mark understands by this is not fully clarified, even for the reader, until the cross (cf. 15:39). Mark gives us what can be described as a narrative Christology. It is the narrative which, in the end, tells the reader how Mark wishes Jesus to be understood.

3. A theme almost as important for Mark as Christology is that of discipleship. What does it mean to be a follower of the one who is the Son of God in this Markan sense? As already noted, Mark's Jesus gives an extended block of teaching on discipleship as entailing following Jesus in the same way of suffering and death, the way of the cross (see 8:34–10:52). So too the characters of the disciples play a key role in Mark's story. For Mark it is a matter of concern to show something of what is, or should be, involved in being a follower of Jesus within the Christian church.

G. Purpose. 1. Why then has Mark presented his story in the way he has? There is almost certainly no single answer. Mark writes for a variety of reasons and it would be wrong to pin him down to one single purpose. Some quite general factors are no doubt possible: for example, with the spread of the Christian church geographically, and with the passing of time, Christians no doubt needed information about Jesus and his teaching.

2. Nevertheless, Mark's distinctive presentation remains unexplained by such general considerations. As already noted in passing, the traditional view is that Mark writes for a suffering community (perhaps in Rome) to strengthen their faith in a time of intense persecution. This too is possible, though it is noteworthy that, whilst Mark's Jesus has a lot to say about the necessity of suffering, there is very little in the gospel about any positive significance in such suffering. It is just as likely that Mark's very

distinctive account, with the cross so central, is making a positive point to his readers quite as much as reflecting the current experiences of his community. The most extreme form of such a theory is that of Weeden (1971) who argues that Mark is involved in intense Christological debates with a group of people he regards as heretics in his community: they advocate a view of Jesus as a divine man, a super-hero characterized by miracles, glory, and power; Mark opposes them with his view of Jesus characterized by weakness, service, and suffering. Weeden also advocates that, in the story, Mark's point of view is represented by Jesus, that of the heretics by the disciples.

3. Weeden's theory is probably too extreme. His view of the role of the disciples in the story is questionable (see Tannehill 1977 and *MK* 1:16–20), and the language of 'heresy' in a context such as Mark's is probably anachronistic. Nevertheless, the overall theory may have an element of truth in it. Mark's portrait of Jesus may be intended to modify or correct the views of the readers of the gospel (even if talk of 'opponents' is too extreme). Mark clearly wants to present Jesus in one light and *not* another (cf. e.g. 10:45: Jesus as Son of Man came *not* to be served but to serve). Similarly, Mark may be wanting to mould, perhaps change, his readers' views about the nature of Christian discipleship.

4. With his stress on the centrality of the cross, Mark is very like Paul in his views about Jesus and the nature of Christian discipleship. Yet we should not take this for granted, as if Mark could be no different and all first-century Christians were the same. We know from Paul's letters that his own views were frequently controversial and disputed by other Christians within his communities. It may be similar with Mark, whose presentation of Jesus in his gospel is, among other things, a call to his readers to re-evaluate their views about both Jesus and themselves (see also *MK* 16:8). How we read the gospel may be in part determined by how we respond to such a challenge.

COMMENTARY

(1:1–13) Introduction There is widespread agreement that the opening verses of Mark form an introduction to the book as a whole. As such they set the scene for the detailed story that is to come. Moreover, in many respects they identify the characters of the story and define the terms in which Mark intends it to be read. As we shall see, the motif of secrecy is

an important theme in Mark's narrative: on several occasions characters in the story fail to understand who Jesus is or what his ministry is about. Yet for the reader of the gospel there is no secrecy at all: Jesus' identity is disclosed right from the start. On the other hand, not everything is revealed, otherwise Mark's story would be redundant. Thus Jesus is identified as Son of God in these introductory verses; but the full significance of what it means to be a/the true Son of God is maybe only shown by the ensuing narrative. Older editions of the text, and older commentaries, suggested that the introduction comprised vv. 1–8. However, it is now widely accepted that the introduction goes at least as far as v. 13, if not v. 15. Certainly vv. 1–8 are incomplete without the sequel in vv. 9–13 which serve to identify the person of Jesus.

Almost every aspect of v. 1 is debated. The words 'the Son of God' are missing from some Greek manuscripts, but probably do represent the original text of Mark: the importance of the term for Mark's Christology, and the key place of this opening verse to announce the terms of the story to come, make this highly probable. The 'good news' is in Greek *euangelion*, or 'gospel'. Elsewhere in the NT, the gospel is the Christian message which is preached; it is not a literary product which is written or read. The same is probably true here, though this verse may have contributed to the process whereby 'gospel' became the term to refer to a written account of the life of Jesus. It is not clear how this gospel is the gospel 'of Jesus Christ'. Is it the good news *about* Jesus, or the good news preached *by* Jesus? v. 14 (where Jesus proclaims the good news) suggests that the latter is in mind, though it is not impossible that both are intended. The force of the reference to the 'beginning' is also uncertain. Does this mean that v. 1 refers only to the introductory verses (so that the full 'gospel' then follows)? Or is there a sense in which the whole of Mark's story is only a 'beginning', and it is up to each reader to carry on where the story leaves off to find the complete gospel? The nature of the ending of Mark's story, with its startling abruptness (see Mk 16:8), makes the latter possibility an attractive option. But in any case the opening verse makes it crystal clear to the reader who is the subject of the story to come: it is Jesus who is the Messiah and Son of God. Yet what these terms mean is not yet made clear.

vv. 2–8 serve to set the scene in a wider context. They first bring on to the stage not Jesus himself but the figure of John the Baptist,

and in turn John is introduced by a (mixed) OT citation. (v. 2 is a mixture of Ex 23:20 and Mal 3:1; v. 3 is from Isa 40:3. The reference to Isaiah in the introductory words in v. 2 is probably a mistake.) Yet John has little significance of his own in Mark's narrative. Mark tells us nothing of John's own eschatological preaching (as in Mt 3:7–10 and par.), nor of any of his ethical teaching (cf. Lk 3:11–14). The only words John speaks point forward to Jesus (vv. 7–8). Similarly the OT citation (one of the very few explicit citations in Mark) is only brought in to point forward to John. vv. 2–8 are really therefore constructed from the end backwards, where each element points forward to the next. The citation of the OT identifies the time as one of the fulfilment of Jewish eschatological hopes. Moreover, the note in v. 6 of John's clothing may be intended to evoke the clothing of Elijah (2 Kgs 1:8): hence John is cast in the role of an Elijah-figure, and Elijah was the prophet expected to come before the final day of the Lord (cf. Mal 4:5–6). So too the 'wilderness', as the place of John's baptizing activity, was the place from where many Jews expected the final eschatological deliverance to appear. Thus the details of Mark's account serve to place the events to come within a context of the fulfilment of Jewish eschatological hopes. How far all these expectations relate to the historical person of John himself is hard to say. It is not easy to ascribe the words of the saying in vv. 7–8 to the historical John: John may have been expecting the coming of God Himself. Nevertheless, for Mark, the saying now refers to Jesus.

This is made clear in v. 9: the one announced by John is Jesus from Nazareth. Further, Jesus is now baptized by John. Historically it seems very likely that this reflects a real event in the life of Jesus. (Later writers are clearly embarrassed by it: why should Jesus, the sinless Son of God, be baptized for the forgiveness of his sins? However, Mark shows no such embarrassment.) But what the event might have meant in Jesus' psyche we just do not know. The most we can say is that it probably signified Jesus' commitment to John's cause and expressed his agreement with his message. For Mark, the significance of the event is that this is the moment when Jesus' identity is given the absolute seal of divine approval: God himself declares Jesus to be His Son. The reader is now in no doubt: the story to come is the story of the Son of God. The precise meaning of 'Son of God' in Mark is much debated. The words of the voice from heaven here conflate two OT verses in addressing Jesus

as 'Son': Ps 2:7 (suggesting a royal figure) and Isa 42:1 (implying an idea of Jesus as the servant); in addition the words 'the beloved' may recall the words of Abraham about Isaac (cf. Gen 22:2). The phrase 'Son of God' can have a wide range of meanings. Later it came to signify Jesus' full divinity as a member of a divine Trinity. But in the first century the term had no necessary overtones of divinity: it could refer to a royal figure (cf. Ps 2:7), or to the nation Israel (cf. Hos 11:1) or to a righteous sufferer (cf. Wis 2:17). Perhaps it would be wrong to press Mark into too rigid a mould here: Jesus is a royal figure (as will be stressed particularly in ch. 15); but as Son of God he is supremely one who will suffer and die. Indeed it may be Mark's intention precisely to spell out in his story the way in which true divine sonship should be seen. The reference to the heavens being 'torn apart' indicates a theophany (cf. Isa 64:1); and the coming of the Spirit again implies the fulfilment of Jewish eschatological hopes (cf. Joel 2:28–31 cited in Acts 2:17–21). The significance of the Spirit being symbolized as a 'dove' is uncertain, but may allude to the creation story in Gen 1:2 where some Jewish exegetes interpreted the words there as referring to the Spirit 'hovering' like a dove. In that case, the story here may again be indicating the start of a *new* creation.

vv. 12–13 recount the so-called 'temptation' of Jesus ('testing' would be a better description.) The story is much shorter than the threefold temptation story of Jesus in Matthew and Luke. Jesus is in the wilderness for 'forty days' (a time with many OT resonances: cf. Moses in Ex 34:28; Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:8). The 'testing' by Satan is probably to be thought of as a titanic struggle with the powers of evil. The exact details are uncertain (e.g. does the struggle last for forty days? Do the angels minister during, or after, the struggle? What do the wild beasts signify?). But the general thrust of the narrative seems to be that Jesus is victorious in the battle against Satan. Mark probably intends the story to act as the interpretative key for at least part of the narrative to come. Exorcisms and battles with unclean spirits will occupy a significant part of Jesus' ministry. The temptation narrative shows that these are part of a broader eschatological battle with the powers of evil; and also that Jesus is victorious in that battle, as 3:22–30 will show.

(1:14–15) Jesus' Preaching This is something of a transition, in which Mark gives what is probably intended as a summary of Jesus'

preaching. John is almost forgotten (his arrest is mentioned only in passing, and no reason for it is given): all attention is focused on the person of Jesus. Yet Jesus' preaching does not focus on himself, but on God. It is the time of the fulfilment of Jewish eschatological hopes ('the time is fulfilled'), and Jesus proclaims the imminence of the kingdom of God. (The verb 'has come near' represents a Greek word which probably implies that the kingdom is very close, but not yet present.) Reflected here are Jewish eschatological hopes for the intervention of God in the affairs of the world to establish himself as king and for his kingly rule to be acknowledged by all. (The 'kingdom of God' is probably meant in an active sense of God ruling as king, rather than as a spatial area over which he rules.) The time is thus one of the imminent fulfilment of eschatological hopes. In the face of this imminent event, people must 'repent', i.e. change their lifestyle in preparation for what is to come, and 'believe in the good news'. It is worth noting that here, as throughout the synoptic gospels generally, the object of faith is not Jesus himself. Here it is the gospel, the good news, which must be 'believed'. Jesus becomes the object of faith after Easter. Thus Mark seems to reflect the pre-Easter situation quite well in that Jesus does not refer to himself explicitly as the focus of the belief of others.

What is announced here is that the kingdom in its fullness is still to come. However, there is a sense in which the events of Jesus' ministry represent the fulfilment of eschatological hopes, so that the kingdom is in part already present in the work and preaching of Jesus. Thus the eschatological claims in Mark have a characteristic dual element: the eschatological events are proclaimed as due to come—and to come soon—but also they have already partly arrived in the person of Jesus.

After the summary statement of Jesus' preaching the story moves on to a different level with the more historical account of Jesus' ministry in Galilee.

(1:16–20) Call of Four Disciples The first event narrated by Mark is the call, and response, of the first four disciples of Jesus. The story is told in an extremely compressed way. No unnecessary detail of information is supplied. It is thus quite pointless to speculate, for example, on why the disciples responded without demur, or whether Jesus had met them beforehand. Mark is not interested in the psychology of the disciples or of their response. Rather, for him the centre

of the action is once again the person of Jesus: Jesus is the one who calls and summons others to be his followers with the single authoritative word 'Follow me!'; and those who are summoned in this way obey him without any hesitation. Yet whilst it is the case that Jesus is the central character in the story, it remains the case that the disciples will also occupy a key role in the narrative to come. Much has been written on the role played by the disciples in Mark's story, focusing in particular on the very bad press they get later, when they fail to understand Jesus (cf. 8:17–21) and finally desert him completely (cf. 14:50). (See Weeden 1971; Tannehill 1977.) Here it must be said that the portrait of the disciples is entirely positive: Jesus calls them and they obey him instantly and without reserve. The effect of the story is thus to place the disciples in a good light so that the reader responds to them thoroughly positively. Any negative portrayal of the disciples later in the story will have to be balanced against this initial picture.

The phrase 'fish for people' (lit. 'fishers of men/people') is highly unusual, despite its later popularity in Christian hymns and songs: the phrase suggests a somewhat harsh and negative activity of ensnaring for judgement (cf. Jer 16:16; Ezek 29:4–5). Mark refers to 'Simon' here, and only later (after 3:16) does he use the name 'Peter'. All four men called are fishermen; as such they were certainly not destitute in economic terms, apparently owning boats and probably making a reasonable living (cf. 10:28). Jesus' call to others to 'follow' him by joining him physically in his itinerant ministry is quite unlike that of a Jewish teacher having pupils who study the law under him. It is thus difficult to find any close analogies in the immediate Jewish background for the phenomenon of discipleship in the sense envisaged in the gospels. The theme of the authority of Jesus, which is clearly central for Mark, is continued and developed in the next story.

(1:21–8) An Exorcism in Capernaum The action takes place on the sabbath (though no question of a possible breach of sabbath law is raised here). The pericope consists of the account of the exorcism, which Mark appears to have framed between two notes about Jesus' teaching (vv. 21–2, 27). Such a sandwiching technique is very typical of Mark, who seems to use the resultant structure to allow one part of the sandwich to provide an interpretative key for the other part. The story of the exorcism itself

may well be traditional. There seems to be a note of secrecy here, and secrecy is a characteristic Markan motif; but in fact it is really only apparent. The unclean spirit tries to utter Jesus' name (v. 24). The motif can be paralleled in other similar exorcism stories: uttering the other person's name was thought to be a means of overpowering your opponent. Jesus thus silences the demon (v. 25), not to impose secrecy, but in order to stop the demon naming him: the act of silencing is itself the action which gains mastery over the demon. However, as we shall see, Mark develops this motif in a peculiar way later (see 1:34; 3:12). Jesus' activity as an exorcist is well attested. Jesus was by no means unique in claiming the power to exorcize (cf. Lk 11:19), though in the Christian tradition, Jesus' exorcisms are claimed to be the manifestation of the arrival of the kingdom of God (Lk 11:20, cf. Mk 3:22–30). For Mark the emphasis clearly lies on the authority and power shown by Jesus in exorcizing. This is shown in part by the way in which Mark inserts the exorcism story into two notes about Jesus' 'teaching' with 'authority' (vv. 22, 27). The fact that the story itself is not about Jesus' teaching at all suggests that these framing references are secondary; moreover the fact that, so far in Mark's story, Jesus has given virtually no explicit teaching suggests that Mark is at this stage more interested in the fact that Jesus' teaching is authoritative than he is in the contents of that teaching. (The contents will come later, e.g. in ch. 4.)

One other detail should be noted here. Jesus' authority *qua* teacher is said to be 'not as the scribes' (v. 22). (The scribes were the legislators in Judaism, those who decided how the law should be applied in new situations, and made decisions when different laws clashed; but it is not apparent that Mark knows clearly the differences between the Jewish groups he mentions.) The reference here is left hanging, but the scribes reappear soon, i.e. in 2:6, where they are again opponents of Jesus. This is the first hint of a theme that will dominate the whole gospel: Jesus as the authoritative figure who teaches and exorcizes is the one who as such will clash with the Jewish authorities, and that clash will ultimately lead to the cross. The theme is only hinted at here, but will be developed significantly in the next chapter.

(1:29–31) The Healing of Peter's Mother-in-Law As in previous stories, the extraneous detail is kept to an absolute minimum.

Some have suggested that the story may be due to Peter's own recollections: this is possible, but scarcely provable one way or the other. For Mark the story no doubt shows Jesus' continuing authority, here extending to an ability to heal physical illness as well as to exorcize. The story is told in the form of a classic healing story: the description of the illness with a request for healing, the healing itself, followed by a demonstration of the cure or an acclamation. The final phrase ('she began to serve them') might be intended as just a piece of evidence that she really had been cured; alternatively, and more probably, it also shows Peter's mother-in-law performing what is, for Mark, the supreme Christian action of 'serving' others (cf. 10:44–5). In Mark's gospel it is striking how often the women characters are presented in a far better light than the male disciples. Here Peter's mother-in-law does what every Christian is called to do, namely to serve others.

(1:32–4) General Healings and Exorcisms The note about 'evening' (v. 32) indicates that the sabbath (cf. v. 21) is over, and so people are allowed to carry the sick to Jesus. The account is general and the details rather hyperbolic ('all who were sick', v. 32, 'the whole city', v. 33). Mark thinks that this reflects Jesus' usual activity, and it shows the importance Mark places on Jesus' miracles. There is thus no real place for any theory that Mark positively disapproved of this aspect of Jesus' ministry, as some have argued (cf. Weeden 1971); however, as we shall see, there may be a sense in which Mark shows an element of reserve about whether this is the most significant aspect of Jesus' life and work. A characteristic Markan note comes for the first time in v. 34, where Jesus commands the demons to be silent. The motif was present in Mark's tradition (cf. v. 24), but Mark seems to develop it in a peculiar way: now the demons know Jesus' identity and are forbidden by Jesus to make this knowledge public (cf. 100 3:12) so that others remain in ignorance. This is then the first appearance of the so-called 'messianic secret' in Mark. In many respects it is somewhat artificial and probably represents Mark's own interpretation of his tradition. (Certainly v. 34 alongside v. 24 indicates that the secrecy motif has been imposed secondarily as a development of the earlier tradition.) The significance of the secret in Mark is debated (see the survey of views in Tuckett 1983). Perhaps the best solution

is that, via the secrecy charges, Mark indicates to the reader (for whom there is no secret at all! cf. 1:1) that Jesus' identity must remain a secret to human characters in the story—at least prior to the cross. Jesus' identity is finally recognized by a human being at the cross (cf. 15:39), but not before. Mark may thereby wish to indicate that Jesus' identity *can* only be truly perceived in the light of the cross. Hence, in the story-world created by Mark, before one gets to the cross, Jesus keeps his identity secret. (See Räisänen 1990.)

(1:35–9) Extension of the Ministry These verses portray a slight interlude in the narrative. Not all the details are entirely clear. Jesus withdraws to a private place to pray (v. 35); perhaps the note underlines the fact that Jesus is ultimately dependent on God for all that he does. Does the withdrawal indicate also an element of reserve on Mark's part about the importance of the miracles? This is possible (cf. too 8:27–30), though in v. 29 Jesus goes out and about not only preaching but also 'casting out demons'. The disciples are said to 'hunt' for Jesus (v. 30). The verb used is rather unusual, indicating perhaps some kind of hostile pursuit. It is possible that this is the first indication in the narrative of the motif which will be considerably developed later whereby the disciples fail to respond properly to Jesus (ctr. Mk 1:16–20). Perhaps then the story hints here at what will come more fully later. The disciples have, it is true, followed Jesus in one sense: but the true following will be shown later to be rather different (cf. 8:34; 10:52). Jesus' response is to go 'throughout Galilee'. Again we have a summarizing statement from Mark, showing Jesus' universal activity in preaching and healing. The reference to 'their' synagogues in v. 39 may be revealing: does this show that for Mark, the Christian community had separated from the Jewish community? Certainly it is likely that Mark was writing for a Gentile audience and this may be one piece of evidence for this.

(1:40–5) A Leper Healed The next story, only loosely connected with its context, shows Jesus healing a leper. (The condition referred to as 'leprosy' in the Bible probably covers a wide range of illnesses.) A number of details in the story are obscure. Jesus' action is said in v. 41 to be due to his 'pity', or compassion; however, some Greek manuscripts say here that Jesus was 'moved with anger'. In view of the fact that it is hard to see why 'pity' might have been changed to 'anger' by a scribe, but very easy to see how

the reverse change might take place, some have argued that the reference to 'anger' here may be original. Matthew and Luke also both omit the phrase, which would also be easier to explain if the original reference here was to Jesus' anger. References to pity, or compassion, as the motive for Jesus' miracles in the gospels are rare. However, the reason for any 'anger' here is not clear (cf. also below on v. 43). Touching the leper would render Jesus unclean according to Jewish purity laws. Jesus' action here may thus show him seeking to break down the barriers created within human society by such purity laws. (Cf. further MK 5:21–43.) The reference to Jesus 'sternly warning' the man (v. 43) is also difficult. The verb used is a rare one, usually expressing intense anger. But who or what is Jesus angry with? The man? The leprosy? Evil spirits thought to be behind the illness? Perhaps Mark simply understands the note as referring to Jesus' urgency in sending the man to the priests; but in an earlier version of the story, Jesus' anger might have been thought to be directed against evil spirits.

Jesus commands secrecy in v. 44: the man is to say nothing but to go to the priests to have his cure certified (as required by the law in Lev 14: at this point there seems to be no critique of the law at all). Although these secrecy commands after miracles have sometimes been linked with the messianic secret, they should probably not be so interpreted. Here the secrecy commanded in v. 44 is limited, since the man is to make his cure known to the priests. But in any case v. 45 shows that secrecy is not in fact maintained: the man goes out and proclaims openly what has happened. Perhaps this is one way in which Mark's narrative emphasizes the success of Jesus' activity as a healer: despite Jesus' own attempts to keep things quiet, the news spreads like wildfire! This then is rather different from the secrecy of 1:34 where other people in the story do *not* come to share the knowledge about Jesus that the demons had. Thus it is probably right to distinguish between a 'messianic secret' which is kept (as in 1:34) and a 'miracle "secret" ' which is immediately broken (as here). (See Luz 1983.) The story thus ends on a note of Jesus' great popularity. The very next story will show that such popularity is *not* universal.

(2:1–3:6) The next section of the gospel comprises five stories showing Jesus in a series of controversies with the Jewish authorities, and this series reaches its climax in the plot to have

him killed (3:6). Although it is sometimes argued that the collection is pre-Markan, partly because the plot to kill Jesus seems to come very early, such a theory is unnecessary. The note in 3:6 is not isolated: as we shall see there are a number of details pointing the reader forward to the passion to come (see MK 2:7, 20, as well as the references to Jesus as Son of Man). This series may in fact be Mark's way of indicating very early in his story the course which the ensuing narrative will take. For Mark Jesus is supremely the one who will suffer and die, and this theme dominates the account. The collection here, with all its forward-looking references to the passion, may well be Mark's own composition.

(2:1–12) The Healing of the Paralytic The story in its present form is probably composite: a straight healing story (vv. 1–5, 11–12) has been disrupted by the insertion of a debate between Jesus and the scribes about his authority (vv. 6–10). The healing story itself is fairly straightforward, but it is important to note the reference to 'faith' in v. 5: miracles in Mark generally only occur, and can only occur, in a context of faith (cf. 6:5). Yet it should also be noted that this faith is not necessarily faith 'in Jesus', but rather in God who works through Jesus; moreover, the faith here is *not* that of the paralysed man himself, but of his friends. This is then not quite the same as some present-day kinds of 'faith-healing' that emphasize the faith of the sick person. The connection between illness and sin is here assumed and not discussed (cf. Jn 9:2–3); though whether this element was present in the original healing narrative is uncertain. Perhaps it was added as simply the motif to generate the following controversy about Jesus' authority.

The debate in vv. 6–10 focuses on Jesus' authority (cf. 1:22), an authority which is questioned by the scribes (again reminiscent of 1:22: thus the implicit opposition between Jesus and the scribes now becomes explicit). The scribes accuse Jesus of 'blasphemy' (v. 7), which is precisely the charge on which Jesus will be condemned to death at his trial (14:64). The historical problems are acute as Jesus has not technically committed blasphemy, an offence which involved uttering the divine name (*m. Sanh.* 7.5; see MK 14:64). It is possible that, *if* the account here is at all historical, the scribes may have meant that Jesus was guilty of blasphemy in a looser sense than that defined by Jewish law. However, Mark may not have been aware of such details. For him, what is important is to show that the conflict between

Jesus and the scribes here is literally a life-and-death struggle.

The debate is about Jesus' authority, and his authority to forgive. By implication, the story claims that Jesus does have this authority, which is usually the prerogative of God alone (though strictly Jesus does no more than declare God's forgiveness). At this point, Jesus' authority is said to be signalled in part by reference to him as Son of Man. This enigmatic phrase has generated enormous discussion. It is possible that the phrase alone (in Aramaic) simply means 'a man', or 'someone'. Yet this scarcely fits the present context where the issue is the authority of Jesus, not of any human being. Elsewhere in Mark, 'Son of Man' is a term used to refer to Jesus' suffering (cf. 8:31 etc.) and future vindication (14:62 etc.). Although disputed, one very plausible background for the term, certainly at the level of Mark's understanding, is that of Dan 7:13, where a figure described as 'one like a son of man' appears as a symbol for the vindicated people of God in the heavenly court; and since the people concerned in Daniel are presently suffering violent persecution (probably under Antiochus Epiphanes), the figure of Dan 7 may be associated with suffering as well as vindication. (This last point is more disputed.) If so, then the term 'Son of Man' as applied to Jesus by Mark may be intended to evoke this twin idea of suffering and vindication as the role which lies ahead for Jesus.

The present reference to Jesus as Son of Man may seem out of place in such a schema. In fact it is probably thoroughly appropriate. The wider context in Mark is the series of controversies leading to Jesus' death; so here then, Mark may also be indicating allusively (as in v. 7) that the controversy is one which will lead to death: the one with authority is the 'Son of Man', i.e. the one who must suffer and die. Since the reference to 'Son of Man' here makes excellent sense in Mark's literary scheme, and really makes sense only there, it is probably due to Mark himself, though the substance of the saying, without Jesus' explicit self-reference as Son of Man, may be pre-Markan.

(2:13–17) Jesus and Social Outcasts The second of the five controversy stories concerns Jesus' relationship with tax-collectors and sinners. In what may originally have been a separate story, Mark tells of the call of Levi in vv. 13–14. The story, with its stark simplicity and lack of any extraneous detail, is similar in form to the call stories of 1:16–20. Levi appears nowhere

else in this gospel (though Matthew evidently identified Levi with 'Matthew', one of the twelve: cf. Mt 9:9; 10:3). Levi is said to be a 'tax-collector': what is probably meant is not someone who collected taxes for the Romans directly, but an employee of Herod responsible for collecting some of the local tolls. Such people had a uniformly bad name amongst Jews, primarily for their unscrupulousness and dishonesty.

Levi's response to the call is to invite Jesus to his house (v. 15: it is *possible* that the house actually belongs to Jesus—the Greek is ambiguous, speaking only of 'his' house—but this seems unlikely). Again Jesus comes into conflict with the authorities, here 'the scribes of the Pharisees'. The exact nature of the Pharisaic party is debated. They seem to have been an influential group of lay people, deeply concerned to apply the law to ever new situations, if necessary by legislating afresh, and also concerned to maintain a higher than normal level of purity in their everyday lives. Here they accuse Jesus of eating with tax-collectors and sinners. Eating with such people may have signified an offer to associate with them without condemning their faults, and this may have offended a strict law-abiding group such as the Pharisees. The identity of the 'sinners' is even more uncertain. The term might refer to those who did not maintain a Pharisaic interpretation of the law; or it may refer to those who deliberately flouted the law. The former is perhaps more likely: the term is often used in polemical contexts to refer to those who do not belong to the speaker's own in-group; it is then a way of castigating outsiders. If so it may indicate that the Pharisees expected Jesus not to consort with those outside their group, and hence may suggest that in fact Jesus had quite close links with the Pharisees. If that were the case, it might explain better why the Pharisees so bitterly opposed Jesus. For Mark, however, the Pharisees seem to be no longer very relevant for his own community: e.g. in 7:3–4 he has to explain some of their customs for his readers.

Jesus' final reply in v. 17 is enigmatic. Does it imply that there are righteous people who need no call? It is perhaps better taken as ironic. The righteous need no call—but by implication those who think that they are righteous are perhaps thereby showing they are not righteous. Certainly the saying links with the previous story in showing both Jesus' concern with sinners and sin and his unique authority.

(2:18–22) Old and New The next story concerns the issue of fasting. Again the story is probably composite, with vv. 19b–20 representing a secondary allegorizing of an original tradition.

John's disciples and Pharisees are said to be fasting, and Jesus is asked why his own disciples do not. Fasting was required of all Jews at times, though the story here, by singling out the Pharisees and John for mention, suggests that the fasting in question was an extra obligation taken on freely. The very fact that Jesus is asked why his disciples do not join in is a further indication that Jesus may once have had close links with the Pharisees and hence his failure to follow their practices was a matter of surprise to them. Jesus' reply is to refer, in a variety of metaphors, to the totally new situation that now obtains and its incompatibility with the old: it is like a wedding when fasting is simply inappropriate; similarly, the old and the new will not mix, just as one cannot mend a cloak with unshrunk material, or use old wineskins for new wine. By implication, the 'new' is the presence of Jesus in his ministry: as such it is incompatible with the old ways. The new life of the kingdom is one of joy and celebration and renders fasting obsolete. The implicit claim by Jesus is startling in its scope.

vv. 19b–20 probably represent a secondary allegorizing of the tradition, looking ahead (in the story's terms) to the time when the bridegroom (i.e. Jesus) will be 'taken away' (i.e. die). Fasting will then be reintroduced (as we know it was in the early church). These verses may then be looking ahead to the time of the church, and justifying current church practice; but they also draw the reader's attention forward to the moment of the taking away of the bridegroom, i.e. to the death of Jesus. Like the hints in v. 7 and perhaps v. 10, the reader's gaze is directed to the cross which, for Mark, is never far away in the story.

(2:23–8) Jesus and the Sabbath: The Cornfields The final two controversy stories involve sabbath law, the command that one shall do no 'work'. In the first of these stories, Jesus and his disciples go through the cornfields, plucking corn as they go (v. 23). Such action was not in itself illegal, but interpreters of the sabbath legislation decided that reaping and threshing should count as work and hence were not allowed on the sabbath. The presence of Pharisees, apparently spying in a cornfield on the sabbath, strains credulity and is unlikely to be

historical. Possibly we have here then a reflection of a debate in the early church about how far sabbath law should be obeyed by Christians (note it is the *disciples*, not Jesus, who perform the questionable activity); yet it seems equally likely that Jesus himself was engaged in similar debates.

Jesus' first reply (vv. 25–6) refers to the example of David breaking the law by eating the shewbread when he was hungry (1 Sam 21: the reference to Abiathar being high priest at the time is wrong, and Matthew and Luke both omit the note). The example provides some precedent for acting illegally, but scarcely provides a strong argument for breaking such an important law as the sabbath law. The repeated introductions in v. 25 and v. 27 may indicate a seam in the tradition, and v. 27 is more likely to be the original conclusion to the story. The lack of appositeness in vv. 25–6 may betray the secondary origin of this tradition.

Jesus' second reply is far more devastating. v. 27 seems to relativize the whole sabbath law, so that any human need would legitimize not keeping the sabbath. (Jews at the time certainly allowed work on the sabbath if life was in danger, but this verse seems to go much further.) The implication of this saying in relation to the law is very radical. (Matthew and Luke, perhaps because they realize this, both omit the verse.) v. 28 may represent a slight backing away from the radicalness of v. 27: *Jesus* (as Son of Man) is lord of the sabbath. Does this imply that *Jesus* can abrogate sabbath law, but not anyone else? (If we took 'Son of Man' as meaning 'a man', then v. 28 would say the same as v. 27: human need would override the sabbath; but this seems impossible for Mark—for him the Son of Man is Jesus and Jesus alone.) Certainly in Mark's eyes it would seem that the one with the unique authority to dispense sabbath law is Jesus alone. Why then is he referred to as Son of Man? Perhaps again, as in v. 10, it is Mark's way of pointing forward to what is to come: the one who claims this authority inevitably clashes with other authority figures, a clash which will lead to suffering and death, the appointed lot of the one who is 'Son of Man'.

(3:1–6) Jesus and the Sabbath: The Man with the Withered Hand In the last of the five controversy stories here, Jesus is again in dispute over sabbath observance. The occasion is a miracle, Jesus healing a man with a withered hand. But in form-critical terms, the story is not a 'miracle story': the focus of attention is not the

miracle for its own sake, but the controversy between Jesus and the authorities about his right to heal the man on the sabbath. There is debate about whether Jesus' actions here do in fact constitute 'work' and thus breach sabbath law. Strictly speaking, Jesus is recorded as doing nothing that could be deemed to be work. However, in its present form, all the parties concerned in the debate presuppose that Jesus has worked. Jesus' justification for his action would scarcely satisfy a Jewish opponent. The principle of working on the sabbath to save life was accepted by all; but a man with a withered hand was not in danger of losing his life. Jesus' rhetorical double question in v. 4 would have had a clear answer from Jews: one must of course save life on the sabbath; otherwise one 'does good', which means obeying God's law and *not* working. Jesus' saying here seems to presuppose a significant extension of the meaning of saving life: his own ministry is an activity of saving life in a radical sense, and hence justifies relativizing the sabbath law. Yet it is hard to avoid the impression that the story here shows Jesus acting in a rather provocative way in relation to his Jewish contemporaries and their sensibilities regarding what was acknowledged as one of the most important parts of the whole Jewish law.

The conclusion to the story—and to the series of five stories—is a plot to kill Jesus (v. 6). The alliance of Pharisees and 'Herodians' seems implausible historically. The Herodians were not a party, but may have been the supporters of Herod Antipas: as such they would normally have been opposed by the Pharisees. It is notable too that the Pharisees rarely make any appearance in the passion narratives themselves. Perhaps the mention of the two groups here is intended by Mark simply to indicate the combined forces of religious and secular power in general. The key point is the note that the authorities plot to have Jesus killed. The controversies are so deepseated that they will lead to Jesus' death. For the reader, the cross is now clearly in view. Jesus' life and ministry inevitably lead to conflict, suffering, and death. The cross for Mark is an inalienable part of what it means for Jesus to be God's Son.

(3:7–12) General Healings Mark now gives another summary statement about Jesus' activity as a healer and an exorcist, similar to 1:32–4. Jesus' popularity and success are again emphasized. As in 1:34, however, a typically Markan motif recurs in v. 12: Jesus commands the demons not to make known his identity (here as Son of God): other

human beings in the story are not allowed to know who Jesus is at this stage. Once again Mark seems to be taking up a traditional motif from exorcism stories (the exorcist silences the demon) and giving it his own peculiar interpretation. As before, for Mark the true nature of Jesus' divine sonship cannot yet be revealed: such knowledge will only come at the cross.

(3:13–19) The Call of the Twelve The appointment of an inner group of twelve disciples is well attested in the earliest Christian tradition (cf. 1 Cor 15:5). Mark does not make a lot of this. The number twelve is probably deliberately intended to evoke the number of the tribes of Israel: the new body round Jesus is the nucleus of a new people of God. The fact that the number is twelve, not eleven, so that Jesus himself is not one of the number, implies an even more privileged place for Jesus. He is the creator and inaugurator of the new Israel. The twelve are said to be 'apostles' here (though the phrase is absent from some Greek manuscripts). Mark uses the term elsewhere only at 6:30. The use of the word may be anachronistic here and reflect post-resurrection usage: it was used in the later Christian church to refer to special authority figures in the movement, but it is doubtful if Jesus himself used the term. The names of the twelve are mainly traditional, and nothing is known of most of them. The extra name of Peter given to Simon is not explained (cf. Mt 16:18); the name 'Boanerges' given to James and John is peculiar to Mark here. Some discussion has taken place over the penultimate name 'Simon the Cananaean' (NRSV). The word for 'Cananaean' has been interpreted as 'Zealot', with conclusions drawn about the possible presence in Jesus' immediate circle of a member of the Zealot party, the political group later very influential in fomenting armed rebellion against the Romans. However, it is almost certain that such a party did not exist prior to the time of the Jewish War in c.66 CE. Hence no conclusions can be drawn about Jesus' possible involvement with the activity of such a group, which is in any case extremely unlikely. The word here may simply imply that Simon was a very zealous character.

The reference to Judas Iscariot once again reminds the reader of the story to come: even at this moment, betrayal and its consequences are not far away.

(3:20–35) Further Controversy This section represents another example of Mark's sandwiching

technique: the story of the Beelzebul controversy with the scribes (vv. 22–30) comes between the two halves of the story of the dispute between Jesus and his family (vv. 20–1, 31–5). Mark thereby shows the increasing hostility and alienation experienced by Jesus: the failure of his family to accept him is shown to be akin to the hostility of the scribes. Throughout the gospel, Jesus becomes more and more isolated, as one group after another—steadily getting closer to home—deserts him. The Beelzebul controversy demonstrates the increasing intensity of the hostility from the ‘scribes’ (cf. 1:22; 2:6). Here they are said to be ‘from Jerusalem’, one of the first indicators in Mark of what will be a strong distinction between Galilee and Jerusalem, with Jerusalem as the place of hostility and, finally, death. The issue is again about Jesus’ authority and power, the scribes accusing him of using demonic power. (‘Beelzebul’—the name varies in different manuscripts—was probably originally the name of a minor demon: this period was a time of great flux in beliefs about demonic figures, with no standardized model of a monolithic Devil figure universally established. However, Mark himself does seem to presuppose such a model and evidently regards the two names as referring to the same figure.) Jesus replies at first in a series of images (literally ‘parables’, v. 23), but all based on the same theme: a power fighting against itself would collapse immediately. By implication, Satan’s kingdom is thought of as still standing: hence it cannot be opposed by its own forces—Jesus’ power must have other roots.

The saying in v. 27 may have had a separate origin. The presuppositions now seem to be different: Satan is the strong man who has now been bound and his property is being plundered, i.e. by Jesus. The image derives from Jewish eschatology (cf. Rev 20:2): the binding of Satan is a feature of the eschatological end-time. The claim being made here is then that the end-time has arrived: Jesus’ exorcisms are not just everyday events, but the final overthrow of the power of Satan. Moreover, Mark’s arrangement of the material, with v. 27 following vv. 24–6, suggests that he regards v. 27 as providing the hermeneutical key for the previous verses. Thus, whatever these sayings may have implied earlier in the tradition, Mark regards Jesus’ argument in vv. 24–7 as claiming to have won the final victory over Satan. The saying in vv. 28–9 reverts to the issue of Jesus’ authority. The Markan version is probably more original than the parallel in Q (cf. Lk 12:10) which speaks of blasphemy against the Son of Man being

forgivable. Here all sins are said to be forgivable, except blasphemy against the Holy Spirit. In context the meaning is clear: blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is a denial of the power of Jesus in his exorcisms. By implication, therefore, Jesus exorcizes by the power of the Holy Spirit (cf. 1:12–13), and a refusal to accept this by the scribes is the unforgivable sin. Yet again Mark focuses all attention on the person of Jesus and the authority by which he acts. For Mark the centre of attention is supremely the Christological question of who Jesus is.

(4:1–34) Parables At this point, Mark gives the first extended block of teaching by Jesus. Up to now, Jesus’ teaching has been important as illustrating his authority (cf. 1:22); here, for the first time, some content is given. The content here consists mostly of parables. The parables are widely thought to be the most characteristic part of Jesus’ teaching, though Mark does not give many examples. Christians very soon interpreted Jesus’ parables as allegories, finding significance in each detail of the story, and we can see that process starting as early as Mark himself (see vv. 14–20). The recognition that Jesus’ parables were not originally allegories in which every detail of the story has significance is now well accepted in modern scholarship. Some though have taken this to the other extreme, arguing that they have only one single meaning. This is probably too rigid: the parables may have been intended to make more than one point, even if a detailed allegorical interpretation by Jesus is unlikely. It is generally thought that Jesus used parables in order to enhance his teaching and to get his message across. As we shall see, this makes Mark’s account of Jesus’ speaking about his own parables in vv. 11–12 here extremely difficult to accept as historical.

This section in Mark is almost certainly composite. The large number of (often unnecessary) introductions (cf. vv. 2, 10, 13, 21, 24, 26, 30), as well as the inconsistency in the settings (Jesus speaks to the crowd in v. 2, withdraws to an inner group in v. 10, but still seems to be speaking to the crowd in v. 33) suggest that originally separate traditions have been combined here. For example, some have argued that Mark has taken over a prior collection of three ‘seed’ parables. Whether there is such a pre-Markan collection here is uncertain. Much depends on one’s interpretation of the difficult vv. 10–13 (see below), and whether one judges

the ideas there to be non-Markan and hence pre-Markan.

(4:1–9) The Parable of the Sower It is generally assumed that Jesus' parables are true to life and not artificially constructed, unrealistic stories. (Such a broad generalization is unlikely to be true always: sometimes they make their point precisely because what they describe is *unexpected* and *extraordinary*.) Much discussion has taken place about whether the details of the parable of the sower are true to life: is the action of sowing seed 'on the path' (v. 4) normal practice? Are the yields of the good earth (v. 8: 'thirty and sixty and a hundred fold') normal or abnormal? Perhaps the issue, at least in relation to the first point, is not too important: this is *not* a story inculcating good horticultural practice! It is a story about how preaching is received. The story is thus almost inherently allegorical—at least to a certain extent, if not down to the smallest detail. The yields in v. 8 *are* probably extraordinary: the result of the seed falling on good earth is not just what 'normally' happens, but a divine miracle.

The overall interpretation of the parable can be taken in two quite different ways: it can be assurance to those who receive the 'seed' that all in the end will be well—the harvest *will* come; or it can be a warning to those who hear the message to ensure that they receive it properly and not be like the three types of unproductive soil. The first interpretation has in its favour the fact that the other two parables in this chapter probably have a similar message. However, there is no reason why all three parables should be saying the same thing; and the fact that all three are included suggests that maybe Mark at least thought they were not simply repetitions of each other in slightly different wording. Further, the considerable detail given to the first three kinds of soil suggests that these are of interest in themselves, and are not simply negative foils to the good soil which is alone the point of the story. Thus it seems likely that the parable is in some sense a warning to people to take care how they receive the preaching of Jesus. It is not just encouragement to the 'good' that all will be well in the end; it is as much a warning to those who listen to make sure that they are 'good soil'. Mark's own interests may come to the fore in his description of the second type of soil (vv. 5–6). The description here is longer than the other three and may have been expanded by Mark: for Mark, 'rootless' Christians are perhaps the cause for most

concern. What this might mean in practice is spelt out later (see on v. 17).

(4:10–13) The Theory of Parables These verses are, by almost universal consent, among the hardest in the whole gospel to interpret. vv. 11–12 seem to ascribe to Jesus the view that he teaches in parables precisely in order to hide his meaning and to prevent other people (the crowds) from understanding him. This is what Mark's Greek clearly means, and it is thus virtually impossible to see this as coming from Jesus himself, who (it is usually assumed) used parables to enable understanding, not prevent it. Hence the saying in its present form is almost certainly the product of someone writing later than Jesus. v. 12 uses the words from Isa 6:9 to say that the failure of people to understand Jesus' message is due to divine predestination. Attempts are sometimes made to rescue the saying for the historical Jesus by claiming that the words 'in parables' in v. 11 originally (in Aramaic) meant 'in riddles', and were unrelated to Jesus' using stories ('parables') to enhance his message. Hence Jesus was simply reflecting on the fact that people had not accepted his message (so Jeremias 1963). However, this scarcely solves the problem of what the saying now means in Mark's Greek: at this level it clearly relates to Jesus' use of 'parables', i.e. stories.

The verses suggest a rigid division between a privileged in-group and a condemned out-group. The latter fail to understand the message as a result of a divinely predetermined decision (v. 12). The text cited (Isa 6:9–10) is one of the classic texts used by Christians to seek to explain the failure by others to respond positively to the Christian message (cf. Jn 12:40; Rom 11:8). In the light of hostility experienced, Christians sought to come to terms with apparent failure by 'explaining' their lack of success as due to predetermined action by God. What we see here, therefore, is probably not any reflection of a conscious decision by Jesus, but an attempt at rationalization by a later Christian group in the light of bitter experience of rejection, but struggling to maintain an overall theistic worldview. The sentiments here may be unattractive in one way; but the struggle to reconcile belief in God with apparent failure in the world's terms is a perennial problem for many.

The in-group are said to be those who have received the 'secret' (NRSV, lit. mystery) of the kingdom. The benefits enjoyed by this in-group of disciples are often read out of v. 12 by reversing

what is said there: the disciples must 'understand'. Perhaps too, taking into account v. 34, the disciples have been privileged to receive 'interpretation' of the parables which is denied to the crowds. This is sometimes then contrasted with the picture elsewhere in Mark (e.g. 8:17–21), and also in v. 13 here, where it seems that even the disciples fail to understand: hence, it is argued, perhaps vv. 11–12 are a pre-Markan tradition which Mark has radicalized by making even the disciples fail to understand.

This however makes Mark into something of an authorial idiot, including verses with which he apparently patently disagreed and which he immediately had to correct. In fact it is not said in v. 11 (or indeed in v. 34) that the disciples actually understand Jesus. In one sense of course they do, as indeed do the crowds: they 'understand' *parables* (cf. 3:23; 12:9) in that the latter are not unintelligible nonsense. Nevertheless, they do not lead everyone to faith: in that sense they do not lead to (deeper) 'understanding'. The disciples are in a different position, which is somewhat ambivalent. They do not yet fully 'understand', indeed perhaps they cannot (in the story-world) yet understand—prior to the cross. Yet they are in a uniquely privileged position. They have been given the 'mystery' of the kingdom. Unlike Matthew and Luke, who both talk of 'knowing mysteries' (plur.) here, Mark talks only of a single mystery. Perhaps the reference is primarily Christological: Jesus himself is the mystery, and the disciples are privileged by being called by Jesus to be 'with him' (cf. 3:14). Their understanding can only—but will—come later.

There is thus no need to drive a wedge between vv. 11–12 and the rest of Mark, even though Mark is maybe trying to say more than one thing here. The crowds' failure to understand—a mirror of the rejection experienced by later Christians—is the result of God's will. The disciples' privileged position is also the result of the same will; yet their failure to understand at this stage in the story is not minimized.

(4:14–20) Interpretation of the Parable of the Sower Mark now gives a detailed, allegorical interpretation of the parable of the sower. Jeremias (1963) has shown that the vocabulary here is almost exclusively language characteristic of the early church, not of Jesus. Hence the interpretation is unlikely to be dominical, even though, as argued above, it is likely that the parable did have an inalienable 'allegorical' slant originally, with the different soils all having

significance. Some have tried to correlate the different descriptions with characters in the story (Tolbert 1989: e.g. the first group are the Jewish opponents; the rocky ground represents the disciples, etc.). This may, however, read too much into the details; in any case, the warnings implied in the descriptions of the different soils seem to be more directly related to Mark's Christian readers who could only with some difficulty identify with, say, the Jewish opponents in Mark's story. The longest description of the poor soil concerns the rocky ground and those who have 'no root' (vv. 16–17, corresponding to the longest description in Mark's version of the parable itself: vv. 5–6). Perhaps this is the danger Mark feels most acutely: the detailed explanation refers to 'trouble or persecution' threatening initial commitment. It is possible that one sees here a reflection of (part of) Mark's own situation of a community facing the threat of persecution and leading to some followers giving up their Christian commitment. Perhaps too the warning against 'the cares of the world and the delight in riches' reflects other problems within Mark's community (cf. 10:17–22). In this interpretation of the parable in Mark, relatively little space is given to the description of the good soil (v. 20): the aim of the interpretation is thus not so much to give assurance that all will in the end be well, but to warn people of the dangers of the present. As noted on the parable itself, the aim is more that of warning than encouragement.

(4:21–5) Collected Sayings Mark now collects together a series of what originally were almost certainly isolated sayings in the tradition. (They appear scattered in widely different contexts in Matthew and Luke.) vv. 21–2 continue the theme of secrecy and openness. The opening of v. 21 is in Greek literally 'Does the lamp come . . . ?' The unusual personification of the lamp, and the significant way in which, for Mark, Jesus has 'come' (cf. 1:38), suggests that Mark sees Jesus himself as the lamp. The aim of Jesus' coming is not in the end permanent secrecy or hiddenness. Rather, any secrecy will in the end result in openness. Exactly when this will happen is not specified precisely here; but the purpose of the sayings seems to stress the inevitable end of any secrecy surrounding Jesus and his person. vv. 24–5 strike a rather different note, with warnings as well as encouragement. Human response is also required in full measure. Perhaps what is in mind is the preaching of the gospel by later Christians. Those who respond positively will be

rewarded abundantly; those who do not will forfeit even what they have.

The section as a whole thus combines assurance and exhortation with warning. As with the previous parable of the sower and its interpretation combined with vv. 10–13, there are both encouraging and warning elements in the Christian gospel. But if the warning side has been stressed so far, the encouragement is not forgotten, as the next two parables show.

(4:26–32) Two Seed Parables Mark gives two parables, very closely related to each other and probably (in his view) with very similar meanings. The first, the parable of the seed growing secretly (vv. 26–9), is peculiar to Mark; the second, the parable of the mustard seed (vv. 30–2) is shared with Matthew and Luke who probably also know a Q version of the parable (cf. Lk 13:18–19). Both parables are said to be parables illustrating the reality of the 'kingdom of God'. Both imply that the kingdom is present in minute, hidden form as a 'seed', but that it will be shown in its full glory in the future. The parable of the seed growing secretly (vv. 26–9) uses the image of the harvest, perhaps alluding to the final judgement (cf. Joel 3:13). The parable of the mustard seed (vv. 30–2) uses the image of the birds flocking to nest in the branches of the tree, perhaps alluding to the Gentiles coming into the kingdom (cf. Dan 4:12; Ezek 31:6). The stress in both parables is on the divine miracle and lack of human influence in the process of growth. There is no hint of any long period of time, nor of any idea of the kingdom 'growing in the hearts of men and women', an idea popular in nineteenth-century liberal theology. Rather, all the emphasis is on the divine initiative and the assurance of the end result.

This might be thought to contradict the emphasis in the earlier part of the chapter on human responsibility and involvement. In one sense, this is true. But perhaps Mark is emphasizing the other side of the coin here: the kingdom will come in its fullness, and of this the followers of Jesus can be assured. Moreover, the kingdom is something which is present already in hidden form (as a seed) now. The reference may again be to the person of Jesus himself: Jesus in his ministry brings God's kingly rule into the present as a reality now. As noted before, eschatology for Mark is both futurist and realized. However, the idea of the presence of the kingdom in an institution such as the church, after Jesus and before the Eschaton, seems foreign to Mark.

(4:33–4) Jesus' Use of Parables The conclusion of the discourse takes up the division outlined in vv. 11–12. v. 33 is often taken as the tradition used by Mark, apparently implying that parables were used to be understood; this was then glossed by Mark in v. 34, suggesting that only the privileged in-group of disciples are allowed to receive the interpretation of the parables, so that everything remains enigmatic to outsiders. As we saw in vv. 11–12, there is a division between disciples and others, Mark in part reflecting on the mixed responses to the Christian message which have been experienced. And the disciples are in a privileged position. But the division is not clearly one of understanding: even though the disciples have had Jesus explain 'everything' to them, they still fail to understand at a deep level who he is and what he is about. The next story will illustrate this. In the narrative, the time for openness is not yet.

(4:35–5:43) Nature Miracles Mark now gives a series of three stories of Jesus' miracles, showing his power over the forces of nature as well as his ability to heal and to exorcise. Although modern interpreters might wish to distinguish between healing/exorcistic powers and claims to be able to change the course of nature, such a distinction would be foreign to a first-century reader or writer. Both alike show the divine power at work in Jesus. But equally, it is clear from these stories that miracles alone have little evidential value: they cannot create faith where none is present.

(4:35–41) The Stilling of the Storm The story is somewhat artificial: fishermen used to the lake and its ways are terrified by a sudden storm, a storm so severe that they panic, and yet through which Jesus sleeps. But Mark is not interested in such niceties; for him, the story shows Jesus' ability to deal with the primeval forces of chaos. The 'sea' in the OT sometimes stands for the primal chaos which God alone can order and calm (cf. Ps 65:7; 74:13), as well as being used often as a symbol for the sufferings endured by human beings (cf. Ps 107:23–32). Mark's verb in v. 39, referring to Jesus 'rebuking' the wind, is the same as that used in 1:25 where Jesus 'rebukes' a demon. Perhaps it is implied that the ability to control the storm shows a victory over the demonic powers of chaos and evil.

The disciples' reaction is not presented positively. Their question in v. 38 ('do you not care that we are perishing?') suggests a harsh

accusation against Jesus. Jesus' reply is to still the storm and then address them with the rhetorical questions 'Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?' By implication they do not. They are as yet blind. They ask 'Who then is this?' (v. 41) and cannot provide an answer. They have not yet reached any insight into who Jesus is, despite their privileged position. The negative portrait of the disciples in the story is thus developed a stage further; and even a stupendous miracle such as this has not created any 'faith'.

The note about the 'cushion' in v. 38 has sometimes been seen as a vivid life-like feature, perhaps indicating an eyewitness account. This seems difficult to prove one way or the other: but the detail could just as easily be invented precisely in order to create a vivid narrative and to make it seem life-like.

(5:1–20) The Gerasene Demoniac Mark follows with a story of a further exorcism by Jesus. The story is told with a wealth of circumstantial detail, designed above all to show Jesus' great power in overcoming such massive opposition in the forces of evil. However, a number of details and inconsistencies within the present narrative suggest that Mark may be combining more than one tradition here into a single story. (v. 6 is awkward after v. 2; v. 8 seems an awkward interruption; v. 15 seems odd after v. 14, since the latter presupposes a considerable time lapse.) But whatever the prehistory of the story in its present form, Mark's narrative serves to highlight the terrible initial state of the man, and hence to magnify the significance of the cure effected.

Some details of the passage remain obscure. v. 1 states that the action takes place as Jesus crosses the Sea of Galilee to the country of the 'Gerasenes' (so most MSS), although Gerasa is c.30 miles south-east of the Sea of Galilee: perhaps this simply indicates Mark's lack of detailed knowledge of Galilean geography. Probably Mark does intend that the incident take place in the partly Gentile territory of the Decapolis.

The battle about the names of the protagonists is similar to that seen before (cf. *mk* 1:22–7). The name given to Jesus by the demon ('Son of the Most High God') uses a description of God often used by, or in relation to, non-Jews (cf. Gen 14:18; Dan 3:26; 4:2). Jesus does not here explicitly silence the demon, perhaps because in the story there are no bystanders at this point. The significance of the name of the demon as

'Legion' is not quite clear: it is possible that this is an attempt to evade giving a name. However, for Mark, such niceties are probably lost: for him, the giving of the name may simply show that the demon cannot resist Jesus' demand for a name, and the name itself indicates the huge power of the demon, equivalent to a Roman legion in number, i.e. 6,000 men. The details of the pigs and their destruction grates on some modern sensibilities in relation to animal welfare, though in a Jewish context pigs were regarded as unclean animals. Their destruction would therefore be seen as appropriate. Trying to discover possible natural causes for the pigs' sudden flight is probably a fruitless exercise.

The story ends with Jesus' refusal to accept the man as an immediate follower (v. 18): Jesus' authority here is absolute. Jesus commands him to tell his friends what has happened (v. 19). It is not quite clear if this is intended as implying an element of secrecy (i.e. tell your friends and no one else). Certainly the sequel suggests otherwise: there is no adversative in v. 20, and it implies that the man obeys Jesus in proclaiming publicly what has happened. (Alternatively, one could interpret v. 20 as implying that the man disobeyed Jesus, as in 1:45.) Either way the net result is the same: Jesus' power as an exorcist is publicized freely and everyone is amazed. There is then no hint of any critique of Jesus' activity in this respect.

(5:21–43) The Haemorrhaging Woman and Jairus' Daughter The final unit in this section comprises two miracles: the healing of the woman with the haemorrhage and the raising of Jairus' daughter. The former is sandwiched in between the two parts of the latter story, a Markan technique already noted. Mark clearly wants the two stories to interpret each other. Both focus on the theme of faith as the important precondition for any miracle to occur (vv. 34, 36), as well as being linked to the number twelve (vv. 25, 42; though whether there is any significance in this is not clear).

The condition of the woman with the haemorrhage is described in terms very similar to Lev 15:25 LXX. The woman's condition rendered her unclean, and also anything or anyone she touched would be unclean. Her action in explicitly touching Jesus' clothes thus brings Jesus into the realm of the unclean. Quite as much as dealing with the disease itself, the miracle thus serves to break down the social and religious barriers created by the purity laws (cf. *mk* 1:40–5). In an aside, the disciples are shown to

be somewhat lacking in insight (v. 31, cf. MK 4:38). By contrast, the woman comes forward and confesses publicly what she has done. Jesus' reply is to commend her 'faith', which is the necessary prerequisite for the miracle to happen. The miracle does not generate faith; rather, faith must be present for the miracle to occur.

A similar point is made in the story of Jairus' daughter: news of the death of the child (v. 35) leads Jesus to address Jairus and exhort him to 'believe', have faith (v. 36). Jesus tells the crowd that the girl is not dead but sleeping, a statement which produce mocking laughter (v. 40). They show no faith. Perhaps this can then explain the strange feature of the story which follows, i.e. the otherwise inexplicable secrecy command in v. 43: Jesus takes a small group of his disciples together with the girl's parents with him, and raises the child to life; but then he commands secrecy about what has happened! For many such a command is impossible historically (how could such an event be kept secret?), but also difficult to fit into any consistent Markan pattern: elsewhere in Mark commands for secrecy after miracles are regularly broken (1:45; 7:36). Should one assume the same here and see the motif as highlighting by implication Jesus' success (cf. 1:45: so Luz 1983)? But this is not what Mark says. Perhaps the point is that the crowds outside have shown no faith at all in their mocking laughter (v. 40). By implication they already have a very superficial explanation of what will inevitably be the public knowledge of the girl's health: she was simply asleep and not really dead at all. The true nature of the action of Jesus, in rescuing the girl from death itself, is only open to the eye of faith and publicizing it in a context of unbelief will not by itself create faith.

Jesus' words to the girl are given in v. 41. Mark uses the Aramaic words *talitha cum*, even though he is writing in Greek. Some non-biblical healing stories do use 'magical' formulae, often a jumble of unintelligible words. Here, however, the words are not unintelligible but simply in a foreign language and Mark does translate them. Cf. too 7:34.

(6:1–6a) Jesus Rejected in his Home Town

The themes of faith, and the growing opposition faced by Jesus, are continued in the story of the rejection of Jesus in his home town. Jesus has come into conflict with the authorities (2:1–3:6) and with his own family (3:21–35). Now the opposition seems to spread to his own home town (not explicitly stated here to

be Nazareth, though cf. 1:9). As in 1:22–3, the occasion is Jesus' teaching (v. 2), and again Mark seems more interested in the negative reaction this provokes than in the actual contents of the teaching. This reaction is articulated in the rhetorical questions about Jesus' origins and his family (v. 3). At one level, all that is said is that Jesus' origins imply that he is a very ordinary person. Whether anything more is implied is not clear. It was very unusual to refer to a Jewish man as the son of his mother, rather than his father. Various possible interpretations of this have been suggested: is this a hint of doubts about the legitimacy of Jesus' birth (Joseph was not really his father)? Is this a hint that Jesus has no human father because he is the Son of God? It is doubtful though if Mark sees any great significance in the words here: any hints of the type suggested are at most extremely allusive. Likewise the mention of Jesus' brothers and sisters (v. 3) is probably to be taken at face value and can only with difficulty be interpreted as referring to, say, half-brothers and half-sisters. The notion of the perpetual virginity of Mary comes from a much later period of Christian history, and Mark shows no awareness of it. Jesus' reply in v. 4 implicitly compares his own position with that of a prophet. The saying may be traditional: Mark nowhere else makes much of the idea of Jesus as a prophet. If anything, the saying is more at home on the lips of the historical Jesus.

The story concludes with the note about Jesus' inability to do any miracle because of the unbelief of the people. (The apparent reference to Jesus' impotence here is toned down by Matthew.) This is the negative side of the positive correlation between faith and miracles seen already in Mark: miracles can and do take place in a context of faith (cf. 2:4; 5:43, 36); conversely, where there is no faith, miracles cannot occur.

(6:6b–13) The Mission of the Twelve Mark records the tradition (probably also found in Q: cf. Lk 10:1–16) of Jesus giving instructions for a 'mission' by the disciples, commanding them to take only the barest minimum by way of clothing or supplies, and with instructions about what to do when they are not accepted. The widespread nature of the tradition suggests that it is old (i.e. pre-Markan), though whether it goes back to Jesus himself is not certain. It seems likely that some Christians did take these instructions to the letter (cf. G. Theissen's suggestions about the existence of 'wandering charismatics' in the early church: Theissen

1978). However, Mark does not make much of it. For him, the story further develops the mixed portrait of the disciples in his story. We have already seen the beginnings of the negative picture that will come more strongly from now on (cf. 1:36; 4:38). But this negative picture is always the counterfoil of a positive side which should not be forgotten (cf. 1:16–20; 3:13): here too the disciples are instructed by Jesus, and they obey his instructions fully and without demur.

Some details remain obscure. Mark allows the disciples to wear sandals (v. 9: Q does not; cf. Lk 10:4). Perhaps Mark is easing an almost impossibly ascetic earlier version to make it more practicable. The significance of shaking the dust off one's feet against unresponsive places (v. 11) may allude to the practice of Jews shaking the dust off their feet when they entered the land of Israel to avoid contaminating the holy land. Does this gesture then imply rejection from the (new) people of God by the disciples? This may have been the case in the tradition. However, Mark seems to know virtually nothing of what may actually have happened on the mission except in the most general terms, and the gesture is not expanded here. So too it seems that Mark envisages the mission as taking place in Jesus' lifetime, and he gives no indication that these instructions are to apply to Christian missionaries in his own situation.

(6:14–29) Herod and the Death of John the Baptist Between the sending out of the twelve on mission and their return (v. 30), Mark inserts the note about Herod's views on Jesus, which leads into a retrospective account of the death of John the Baptist. In literary terms, the insertion serves to fill a gap in the story of the mission (about which Mark seems to have had very little information); but it also serves to intensify the general theme of the fate that awaits Jesus. John is the forerunner of Jesus, and here his violent death is recalled. The reader cannot fail to be reminded of the similar fate that awaits the one to whom John has pointed (cf. too 9:12–13).

The opinions about Jesus echoed in vv. 14–16 may reflect views held by some at the time, though it is unclear whether anyone would have seriously thought that Jesus could be an executed John brought back to life. The structure of the story in the overall narrative (as in 8:28 where very similar opinions are also recorded) suggests that Mark thinks that these opinions are at best inadequate (Jesus is 'one of

the prophets'), at worst quite clearly wrong (Jesus is John returned).

The story of John's death itself has a number of bizarre features and is quite unlike Josephus' account of John's death, where John is executed because Herod fears an insurrection. Mark has probably confused personnel in identifying Philip as the (first) husband of Herodias: Philip was in fact Herodias' son-in-law. However, the relationships of the Herod family were so incestuous and tortuous that anyone could be forgiven for being somewhat confused! The picture in Mark's story of Herod as full of respect for John, but feeling morally bound to agree to honour a 'blank cheque' offered to his/ Herodias' daughter, strains credulity. The account in Josephus seems far more plausible. For Mark though, the function of the story is to point to the similar fate awaiting Jesus. Thus the note about the burial of John at the end of the story (v. 29) is reminiscent of the note of the burial of Jesus (15:45–6). Even in the midst of the apparent success of the mission, the shadow of the cross falls.

(6:31–44) The Feeding of the 5,000 This feeding story has a doublet in the account of the feeding of the 4,000 in ch. 8. Several commentators have pointed to a possible parallel structure in the two sequences of events in 6:31–7:37 and 8:1–26: a feeding story (6:35–44; 8:1–10) is followed by a journey across the lake (6:45–52; 8:10), a dispute with Pharisees (7:1–23; 8:11–13), a discussion about bread (7:24–30; 8:14–21) and a healing involving some kind of 'magical' techniques (7:31–7; 8:22–6). However, too much should probably not be made of this. Mark is certainly aware of the duplication in the feeding narratives (cf. 8:17–21), but not of the other parallels which in any case are at times rather weak (there is no miracle in the crossing of 8:10, unlike 6:45–52; the dispute with the Pharisees in 8:11–13 does not concern the law as in 7:1–23). The sequence may be in part traditional (cf. Jn 6, where the feeding story is also followed by the walking on the water: unless one posits John's dependence on Mark, the parallel structure indicates a common tradition available to both evangelists). For the possible significance of the doublet in the feeding story, see *mk* 8:1–10.

What actually happened is probably impossible to say, though many have tried to do so. The famous 'lunch-box' theory—everyone had brought their own supplies and were encouraged to share what they had brought—can gain a little support from the fact that there is no

report of an acclamation from the crowd that a great miracle has occurred. Nevertheless, it is quite clear that Mark himself regarded the event as a miracle. It is probably more fruitful to ask what the evangelist made of the story.

The account is full of many reminiscences, from both Jewish and Christian tradition. The story recalls the giving of manna in the desert, and perhaps the miraculous feeding by the prophet Elisha in 2 Kings 4:42–4. Likewise the note about ‘sheep without a shepherd’ (v. 34) reminds one of David as the shepherd and the people of Israel as the sheep; since too by implication, Jesus fills the role of the missing shepherd, one recalls various OT passages which speak of the future Davidic leader as a shepherd (Jer 23:1–6; Ezek 34:23).

But the strongest parallel for Mark is probably the Christian tradition of the eucharist: Jesus’ actions in v. 41 of blessing, breaking, and giving bread are the same as at the Last Supper (14:22), and bread and fish very soon became eucharistic symbols. Jesus’ feeding the crowds here is no doubt seen by Mark as a symbol of the feeding of the new people of God through the Christian eucharist in his own day in his community’s worship. This is probably also the relevance of the note about the grass being ‘green’ (v. 39). This is sometimes taken as an indication of an eyewitness account (and is of course by no means trivial: grass in Palestine would not often be green, but very quickly became scorched and brown in the heat). It may though be a symbolic hint: grass is green in the spring, and for a Christian reader this evokes ideas of Jewish Passover, Christian Easter, and everything associated with them, including (for Mark’s readers) the institution of the eucharist. Hence the greenness of the grass may be a further subtle allusion to the eucharistic symbolism and significance of the story.

The gathering of the fragments (in itself a miracle, since more is collected than distributed) no doubt had symbolic significance for John (cf. Jn 6:12), though Mark makes nothing of it. For the possible significance of the numbers involved, see on 8:1–10.

(6:45–52) The Walking on the Water This story was probably already connected with the feeding story in Mark’s tradition (see MK 6:31–44). The historical basis for the account, as with the feeding miracle, is probably irrecoverable, though some have again sought to solve the problem of the miracle by a natural explanation (e.g. Jesus was on solid ground in very shallow

water and the disciples thought he was actually walking on water). As before, this is certainly not the view of Mark, who doubtless regarded the story as a genuine miracle. God’s power to subdue the sea and its forces (see MK 4:35–41) is well attested in the OT, and sometimes described in terms of walking on or through the sea (Job 9:8); so too the miracle of passing through the Red Sea at the Exodus attests to YHWH’s power (Ps 77:19; Isa 43:16). The latter motif may provide some link with the feeding story in so far as the latter is redolent of the manna incident: both stories may then show Jesus as a latter-day Moses, feeding people miraculously and passing on/over the sea. This is however more likely to be characteristic of the pre-Markan tradition than of Mark himself who does not generally make much of Jesus as a Moses figure (such a typology is more prominent in Matthew). For Mark, the story may simply illustrate Jesus’ power over the forces of nature once more.

Jesus’ words to the disciples in v. 51 (NRSV ‘it is I’) are literally ‘I am’ (Gk. *egō eimi*). It is just possible that this is an allusion to the divine name of YHWH himself (the Greek LXX renders the divine name ‘YHWH’ as *egō eimi*). However, the Greek is ambiguous (NRSV’s translation is perfectly possible) and Mark does not clearly take it as a claim to divinity as such.

A typically Markan motif comes at the end in v. 52. After the general note of astonishment in v. 51 (the expected end of a miracle story), Mark records the inability of the disciples to understand ‘about the loaves’. In general terms this portrays the now increasingly negative portrait of the disciples in the narrative: they fail to understand almost everything about Jesus from now on. With ‘their hearts . . . hardened’, they are almost in as bad a position as the Pharisees of 3:5 (but see further on 8:17–21). What it is about the loaves which they should have understood here is not spelt out explicitly. Clearly Mark sees the two stories as closely linked: both show Jesus’ power and authority to act in sovereign freedom and in the power of God.

(6:53–6) General Healings The same power and authority are exhibited in the summary statement which now follows, Mark recording general healings by Jesus in the area. Again there is no hint of a critique by Mark of the miracles performed by Jesus.

(7:1–23) Dispute about Purity Mark now gives a long section of Jesus’ teaching, delivered

apparently in relation to a dispute raised by Pharisees and some scribes. The section is almost certainly composite: the repeated introductory phrases (vv. 9, 14, 18, 20) and changes of venue or audience (vv. 14, 17) suggest that different traditions are being brought together, a view supported by the fact that some of the traditions do not cohere very well with the wider context in which they have been placed here by Mark.

The initial issue raised is why Jesus' disciples eat with unwashed hands. The 'washing' refers here to ritual purity, not to simple hygiene. Mark then seeks to explain the practice of hand-washing for his (almost certainly Gentile) audience in vv. 3–4. Unfortunately, his explanation is, by universal consent, confused and erroneous: Mark says that hand-washing was incumbent upon 'all Jews', whereas we know that such ritual cleansing was only required of priests at this time. (Such hand-washing was practised by all Jews at a later period, after 100 CE.) Clearly Mark is unaware of some of the details of Jewish Torah observance. There is though the question of why this practice should be expected of Jesus' disciples. It is possible that the story is wholly artificial; alternatively, the implicit assumption made here—that Jesus' disciples would obey such rules—may indicate that Jesus and his disciples were closely connected with the Pharisaic movement and hence were expected, at least by other Pharisees, to adopt the Pharisaic way of life which may well have involved the voluntary taking on of such extra purity requirements. Cf. *Mk* 2:16, 18.

Jesus' first reply in Mark comes in vv. 6–8. He cites *Isa* 29:13 to reject the Pharisees' complaint, claiming that their human tradition is jeopardizing the obeying of the Torah itself. The 'reply' is scarcely apposite. It is not said, for example, how the practice of hand-washing has actually led to any abandonment of the written law. Moreover, it is not clear how the Pharisees' behaviour justifies the charge of their being 'hypocrites' (v. 6: generally this refers to saying one thing and doing another, but it is not said that the Pharisees themselves have not washed their hands.) Further, the version of *Isa* 29:13 cited here is that of the LXX, which differs markedly from the Hebrew text, and which can only make the relevant point (about the human, as opposed to divine, origins of the commands) precisely at the points where the LXX differs from the Hebrew. The saying can thus scarcely go back to the historical Jesus, and the connection with the present context is

very artificial. Nor are the sentiments expressed here (maintaining the written law and simply rejecting the later tradition) Mark's last word on the topic. Perhaps Mark simply uses this tradition to castigate Jesus' opponents.

The second reply is even harder to integrate into the context. Jesus refers to the apparent practice of people evading their responsibilities to parents as set out in the Decalogue by appealing to the inviolable nature of an oath which dedicates an offering to the service of the temple. Such practice is condemned here in forthright terms. But other Jews would be equally forthright and would have—and did—stress the primacy of filial obligations. Further, it is not at all clear how this relates to any antithesis between written law and human tradition, since the inviolability of oaths was also part of the written law (*Num* 30:2). Once again, a separate tradition seems to be incorporated here, somewhat clumsily. For Mark, the prime point again seems to be the polemic against the opponents of Jesus.

Jesus' positive reply to the initial charge, at least in Mark's story, comes in v. 15. However, the extra introduction in v. 14, and the summoning of the crowd, may indicate a further seam in the tradition. Moreover, the question of hand-washing seems now to have been left far behind and the issue is now one of the purity of food on its own. Jesus' saying in v. 15 has been extensively discussed, above all because of its possible implications for determining Jesus' attitude to the law. At first sight, the saying appears to deny that any food in and of itself can be unclean, and hence calls into question all the food laws of Leviticus. Those who see the saying as authentic, but find such a radical claim hard to credit to Jesus, have argued that perhaps the negative statement in the first half of the saying is not to be taken too literally but only comparatively: the antithesis (not A but B) means that one thing (B) is much more important than the other (A), not that the other (A) itself is to be rejected. This is possible, though it is not what Mark's Greek says, and Mark himself clearly understands the saying as implying that Jesus *has* abrogated the food laws of the OT (cf. v. 19). Others accept this meaning of the saying, but then deny that Jesus could ever have said it, claiming in part that the subsequent controversies in the early church on the food laws are unintelligible if Jesus had ever said anything as clear as this (Räsänen 1982). It seems hard to deny that in some ways Jesus did play free with the law and claimed the

right to do so. As such, it may explain part of the opposition and hostility he clearly aroused in the Jewish establishment and also amongst the Pharisees. It may be therefore that Mark's understanding of the saying is not so far removed from Jesus as some have claimed.

But whatever the meaning of the saying on the lips of Jesus, Mark is in no doubt: his explanatory gloss in v. 19 says explicitly that Jesus' saying, backed up by an explanation in v. 18 (which is in fact little more than a restatement of the saying) has 'made all foods clean'. Certainly by now Mark has gone far beyond the claims of vv. 6–8 or 9–13, that the issue is simply one of human tradition over against a valid written law. The written law itself is now questioned.

The positive side of what is required of men and women is spelt out in vv. 21–2. This list of inner thoughts and actions is typical of many Hellenistic ethical instructions. The ethic propounded here would thus be at home in the wider Hellenistic world. But *en route* to this, parts of the Jewish legal system, especially the purity laws and the social and religious barriers they create, are radically called into question by Mark's Jesus by the end of this section.

(7:24–30) The Syro-Phoenician Woman It is surely no coincidence that Mark follows the controversy with the Pharisees, where Jesus has implicitly claimed to pull down the barriers separating Jews and Gentiles, by showing Jesus explicitly crossing those barriers himself. Jesus goes to the region of Tyre, i.e. to an area which was at least partly non-Jewish. There he meets a Syro-Phoenician woman who is explicitly said to be a Gentile (lit. 'Greek', v. 26). The woman begs Jesus to heal her daughter. The ensuing dialogue creates many difficulties. Jesus' first statement (v. 27) seems rude and offensive, apparently refusing to help and referring somewhat abusively to the woman and (by implication) other non-Jews as 'dogs'. It seems highly likely that in fact Jesus himself did restrict his ministry almost exclusively to Jews and saw himself as primarily involved in addressing, and restoring, Israel. A saying such as v. 27 is not impossible in general terms on the lips of Jesus. (How offensive the reference to 'dogs' is not certain: it is possible that the dogs concerned are pets and not thought of as distasteful.) Or perhaps the saying is intended to try to evoke a response from the woman.

No doubt for Mark, the woman simply exhibits the necessary response of faith and trust in Jesus. Her initial address of Jesus is in Greek

kyrie—which can be translated as simply a polite form (NRSV, 'Sir!'), or as 'Lord!', expressing a much higher Christology. Mark does not elsewhere make much of the idea (common in Hellenistic Christianity) of Jesus as 'Lord', but it may be alluded to here. Thus the woman makes an exemplary response. Again it is noteworthy that a woman responds in a way that the male disciples have failed to do (see MK 1:31). Moreover, despite any apparent initial reluctance by Jesus to act, the woman's response does create the necessary preconditions for a miracle to occur: hence the girl is healed, and Mark's Jesus has put into practice what was implicit in his teaching about purity immediately prior to this story.

(7:31–7) The Deaf Man Cured There is uncertainty as to whether Mark thinks that the next story, the healing of the deaf mute, concerns a Gentile or not. The route taken by Jesus according to v. 31 (from Tyre through Sidon to the Sea of Galilee) is very circuitous: Sidon is well to the north of Tyre, which in turn is north of the Sea of Galilee. Perhaps Mark does not know very much about Galilean geography (cf. MK 5:1). It is also not clear if Mark realizes that the region of the Decapolis, where the story is sited, is well away from the Sea of Galilee and also predominantly Gentile. Mark's story seems to suggest a return *from* Gentile territory. Certainly little in the story itself suggests a Gentile milieu.

The description of the man's condition, having 'an impediment in his speech' (v. 35), uses a very rare Greek word *mogilalos*. This occurs only once in the LXX, in Isa 35:6. The allusion then seems to be clear: Jesus' action in healing the man is the fulfilment of Jewish eschatological hopes as articulated in such passages as Isa 35. The word Jesus speaks to the man here is given by Mark in Aramaic, as in 5:41. But as in the other context, there is no idea that this word can act as a quasimagical formula. There is an element of secrecy about the healing: Jesus takes the man aside privately (v. 33) and orders him to be quiet afterwards (v. 36). But this results in even more publicity (v. 37). Rather than trying to impose any real secrecy, the motif here probably simply serves as a means of highlighting the success and popularity enjoyed by Jesus as a result of the cure. (See MK 1:44–5.) We should probably distinguish between a 'miracle secret' and the messianic secret proper, and see here only an example of the former.

Jesus here uses a technique which could be conceived of as magical (using spittle). Mark

shows no embarrassment about this, but it may be the reason why Matthew and Luke both omit the story.

(8:1–10) The Feeding of the 4,000 The story is clearly a duplicate of the earlier story of the feeding of the 5,000. A few details disappear here, but the overall structures of the two accounts are so similar that one is forced to conclude that both reflect the same original tradition. Why then does Mark include both accounts?

Much has been made of the possible symbolism in the numbers involved in the two stories, whereby the story of the 5,000 may reflect the gospel going to the Jews, that of the 4,000 reflecting the gospel going to the Gentiles. Thus, 5,000 and twelve baskets may allude to the five books of the Pentateuch and the twelve tribes of Israel; 4,000 may reflect the four corners of the earth, and the seven baskets the seventy nations of the world. Possibly too the different Greek words for the 'baskets' used to collect the fragments in the two stories may be relevant: it is sometimes said that the word used in the story of the 5,000 implies a more Jewish kind of basket, that in the 4,000 a more common Hellenistic basket. However, the most one can say is that this is possible but by no means certain. The symbolism makes at times for a bizarre set of parallelisms. (Surely 'twelve' would be better as parallel to the number of people, and 'five' to what they are fed with, if the above symbolism were in mind.) Moreover it is not at all clear that Mark thinks that Jesus is among Gentiles (see *MK* 7:31). There is nothing in the story itself to indicate that the crowd here is Gentile.

More directly, the story serves in Mark to underline the obtuseness of the disciples. The very fact that the two stories occur so close together in the gospel, and the accounts are so closely parallel, makes the disciples' initial reaction here all the more pointed. They have just witnessed Jesus feed 5,000 people miraculously; exactly the same situation recurs and yet the disciples again ask 'How can one feed these people with bread in the desert?' (v. 4). What they have just experienced should surely tell them how! The duplication in the story thus serves to highlight the growing incomprehension of the disciples. (See Fowler 1981.)

(8:11–13) Request for a Sign The story highlighting the obtuseness of the disciples is followed by a short incident showing the total

blindness of the Pharisees. Immediately after Jesus has performed a clear sign of his credentials, the Pharisees come and ask for a sign from heaven! In the present Markan context, the very existence of the request shows the failure of the Pharisees to grasp anything at all about Jesus. Jesus' blanket refusal to give a sign inevitably follows.

Matthew and Luke (and hence probably Q) have a different version of the incident: here Jesus' refusal is qualified by the phrase 'except the sign of Jonah'. Mark may have omitted this (perhaps because it was unintelligible to his audience); but the Markan account is almost certainly pre-Markan: the words of Jesus' refusal are literally: 'if a sign shall be given', reflecting a Semitic oath formula 'May I be cursed if God gives a sign', a feature which Mark is very unlikely to have created himself. Hence Mark's version is not simply due to Mark's own redaction of the Q version. In any case it is likely that the Markan and Q versions mean similar things: both deny, more or less implicitly, that any sign will be given beyond Jesus' own present activity. Once again in Mark, the story shows that miracles cannot engender a positive response to Jesus if no such response is already present.

(8:14–21) Discussion about Bread The section brings to a climax the theme of the disciples' growing obtuseness. They are in a boat with Jesus and worried about lack of food. In general terms the story is clear: they obviously should have realized what Jesus can do by way of feeding large masses, and yet once again they show their lack of trust and faith (vv. 14–16). Some details are, however, not quite so clear. The significance of the 'one' loaf the disciples do have with them (v. 14) is disputed. Some have seen this as a eucharistic allusion to Jesus as the one bread, others more generally as a Christological allusion to the person of Jesus, others to the one bread sufficient for Jews and Gentiles. Mark, however, gives no direct hint. It may simply be another way of highlighting the disciples' obtuseness: they do have one loaf with them and so, since Jesus has fed 5,000 people with twelve loaves, feeding twelve people with one loaf should be relatively easy; the fact that they still worry brings out their total lack of faith.

The warning of Jesus against the 'leaven' of the Pharisees and of Herod (v. 15) seems at first sight out of place. It is not picked up in the ensuing dialogue which focuses only on the issue of lack of food. Again many possible

interpretations have been suggested as to what the leaven symbolizes here. Luke takes it as hypocrisy (Lk 12:1), Matthew as teaching (Mt 16:14). Leaven in Jewish tradition symbolizes evil (1 Cor 5:6–8; Gal 5:9). The saying may not, however, be out of place in Mark. The Pharisees and Herod have been shown to fail to recognize who Jesus is on the basis of what he has done (6:14–16; 8:11–12); moreover, supporters of Herod have joined with the Pharisees in plotting to kill Jesus (3:6). The ‘leaven’ of Herod and the Pharisees is thus probably the unbelief that refuses to recognize Jesus and hence rejects him.

Jesus’ reply to the disciples in vv. 17–21 highlights all the details (right down to the numbers of baskets and the Greek words used in the two accounts) of the feeding stories. The disciples have failed to understand; as a result they show themselves to have hardened hearts, eyes which do not see, and ears which do not hear. By implication, they are similar to the outsiders of 4:12 to whom Isa 6:9–10 is applied. (The language is very similar here, though the allusion is in fact closer to Jer 5:21.) Yet the situation of the disciples is not quite the same as that of the crowds. Jesus gives only a series of rhetorical questions, rather than any blanket statements of their rejection; and the warning of v. 15 remains as a warning: they are not yet in the position of Herod and the Pharisees. This ambivalent position of the disciples comes to the fore in the next two stories.

(8:22–6) The Blind Man at Bethsaida Jesus’ cure of the blind man here has some affinities with the story of 7:32–7 in that both involve use of a ‘magical’ technique (use of spittle). However, the closer parallel is probably with the story of the cure of Bartimaeus (10:46–52). The two stories of healing blindness form an *inclusio* round a long section of Jesus’ teaching devoted to the meaning of discipleship (8:31–10:45). Probably then Mark intends both stories to illuminate and illustrate Christian discipleship so that the coming to sight of the two men symbolizes the new life and salvation that is available to those who follow Jesus. It is widely agreed that the story here is integrally related in Mark’s narrative to the next story of Peter’s confession: the man receiving his sight serves as an acted parable for the disciples’ coming to insight about who Jesus is. One notable feature of the story is the fact that the man needs two stages in which to be healed. For the possible significance, see MK 8:27–30. The text at the end of the story is uncertain: many MSS add an

explicit command to secrecy, though even the shorter text (implied in the NRSV’s translation) suggests an element of secrecy. The explicit command in 8:30, and the close parallelism between the story of the blind man and Peter’s confession, suggests that a secrecy charge is intended by Mark at v. 26; however, it almost certainly gains all its meaning from 8:27–30, the story that it introduces and that provides for Mark its true significance.

(8:27–30) Peter’s Confession This section is often seen as a watershed in Mark’s narrative. Whether it is a watershed in the ministry of Jesus himself is quite another matter. The work of the form critics suggests that we can place little if any reliance on the chronological sequence of the stories in the gospels: rather, the arrangement of the individual stories is due to later editors. Hence we cannot know where, if anywhere, this story might be placed within the life of Jesus himself. In fact the historicity of the whole story must be somewhat questionable. There may be an underlying tradition: e.g. the reference to Caesarea Philippi, a town well to the north of Galilee, is unlikely to have been invented *de novo*. However, the present story, focusing as it does explicitly on Jesus’ identity, with Jesus himself provoking the question of who he is, seems very strange in the life of Jesus: elsewhere Jesus points away from himself to God as the principal actor and focus of concern. The exclusive focus on the explicit Christological question looks more characteristic of Mark than of Jesus.

At the level of Mark, the proper interpretation of the story is much debated. Especially the significance of the secrecy charge in v. 30 is disputed. Does it indicate that, in Mark’s eyes, Peter’s confession is right, or wrong, or half right and half wrong? Some have argued that the secrecy charge, together with the following remonstrance by Jesus against Peter, indicates that, for Mark, Peter is quite wrong; Peter confesses Jesus as the Messiah on the basis of the stupendous miracles that have happened so far in the story—hence for Peter Jesus *qua* Messiah is the wonder worker; Mark’s Jesus then rejects such a view by putting forward his own view of himself as the suffering Son of Man (so Weeden 1971). Others, however, have pointed to the positive way Mark uses the term ‘Messiah’/Christ elsewhere, including the title to the gospel (1:1): hence Peter’s confession must be viewed by Mark positively.

There is strength in the latter argument. Mark nowhere else indicates any reserve about the

term 'Messiah', and indeed uses it quite positively in 1:1. There is moreover little indication that Mark positively disapproves of Jesus' miracle-working activity. Indeed verses such as 8:17–21 suggest precisely the opposite. Further, the structure of the present story would seem to support the view that Peter's confession is certainly not regarded by Mark as wholly wrong: Peter's confession is set in clear contrast to the views of other people, which the disciples report in v. 28 (and which in turn echo the views expressed in 6:14–15); by implication these views are wrong and Peter's view is therefore not mistaken.

However, there may be a real sense in which Peter's view is not regarded by Mark as expressing the deepest truth about Jesus. At the level of nomenclature, it may be significant that Mark does not have Peter use the term 'Son of God' here, and for Mark it is that term that expresses the most fundamental truth about Jesus (cf. 1:1; 1:11; 9:7; 15:39). Further, whatever words, or title, Peter uses to describe Jesus, the sequel does make it clear that Peter has not understood the most important thing about Jesus—that he must suffer and die. There is much therefore to be said for the view that, in Mark's eyes, Peter gets things only half right here. Peter is thus perhaps in the intermediate state of the blind man of 8:22–6. He has come to some insight about Jesus, and it is a genuine and valuable insight. Unlike some with mistaken views, he recognizes Jesus as Messiah. But whatever Mark thinks of the title itself, words are not enough. Peter evidently does not yet appreciate the proper significance of who Jesus is and what his role in life (and death) is to be. Thus to reach the deepest insight about Jesus, Peter has to be led further: a need which is met by Jesus' further teaching in vv. 31–8.

This then may also be the significance of the secrecy charge in v. 30. For Mark secrecy is imposed not because others without Peter's faith are not to identify Jesus. Rather, in Mark's story, people cannot come to the full realization of who Jesus is until the story is complete and Jesus' full role as the one who dies on the cross has been finally disclosed (see MK 1:34). Quite irrespective of the correctness of any words or titles used, Peter has not yet come to the deepest insight and understanding, and indeed prior to the cross he cannot. Hence Jesus' identity cannot be divulged—yet. If it is, it will be misunderstood, and precisely such misunderstanding is immediately shown by Peter.

(8:31–3) The First Passion Prediction More details about Jesus' future role are now spelt

out by Jesus in the prediction of the coming passion. This prediction is the first element in an extended section of the gospel (8:31–10:45) where Jesus predicts his passion and elaborates on the implications of that suffering not only for himself but also for any would-be followers. The passion itself is predicted three times in Mark's story in relatively quick succession (8:31; 9:31; 10:33–4), which gives added emphasis to the motif; and on each occasion, Jesus follows this up with further teaching on the relevance of this for discipleship. Correspondingly, in this part of the gospel, the stress on Jesus' miracles is reduced and more weight is now placed explicitly on the cross and its significance.

The passion predictions themselves probably owe a lot to later Christian creativity. It is unlikely that Jesus predicted his own trial and death with quite such accurate detail as is recorded here: if he did, the apparently total confusion of the disciples when the events occurred is harder to explain. Jesus may have foreseen in a more general way the opposition his ministry was provoking, and may have realized—and said—that this could lead to violence and even death. Nevertheless, the detail of the predictions, corresponding so precisely to the later passion narrative, is less likely to be genuine.

The passion predictions are all predicated of Jesus *qua* Son of Man. The stress on the necessity of the suffering of the Son of Man is thoroughly characteristic of Mark. The background of the use of 'Son of Man' in the gospels is much disputed, but if one accepts that it lies in Dan 7, with its twin foci of suffering and vindication, there is no need to see any artificiality in the use of the term here in Mark: Jesus quite appropriately talks of his coming destiny involving suffering *and* vindication (the predictions are all of suffering *and* resurrection) in terms of his role as Son of Man (see MK 2:10).

Peter's rebuke, and Jesus' stern counter in v. 33, are widely regarded as based on firm tradition. (It is unlikely that such a negative view of Peter would be invented by later Christians.) Nevertheless, the picture closely matches Mark's progressive story as well: Jesus' role involves suffering, and denial of that is effectively denial of God and of God's chosen way—hence it is demonic. Whoever opposes God is Satanic, whoever that person may be.

(8:34–9:1) The Cost of Discipleship Mark follows Peter's rebuke with teaching by Jesus about

the implications of his suffering for any who would join his cause and 'follow' him. Mark is probably using a variety of sayings which come from various origins: certainly the parallels in Matthew and Luke appear in scattered contexts—almost certainly many of the sayings belonged to Q as well, and were preserved in different contexts. The present arrangement of the sayings is thus probably due to Mark himself. The kernel of the collection concerns the physical dangers which will face any would-be follower of Jesus. Just as Jesus' destiny is to suffer and to die, so any disciple of Jesus must be prepared to do the same. The fact that Mark has this teaching addressed to the 'crowd' (v. 34) as well as the disciples may suggest that Mark deliberately intends this message to be taken to apply to a wider audience than just the twelve as contemporaries of Jesus. The same may be implied by the reference to the 'gospel' in v. 35 (in a phrase omitted by Matthew and Luke, and probably due to Mark). The 'gospel' here is parallel to Jesus himself, so that suffering for the sake of the gospel and for the sake of Jesus are virtually synonymous. Mark has in mind the later Christian community preaching the gospel, warning them that they too must be prepared to suffer.

The saying about cross-bearing (v. 34) has been much discussed. It is very hard to locate this saying with such vocabulary in the ministry of the pre-Easter Jesus. Crucifixion was a punishment administered by the Roman authorities for political rebels. It is very unlikely that Jesus could have foreseen his own *crucifixion*, even if he might have realized that his conflicts with the Jewish authorities would lead to death. It is even more improbable that Jesus foresaw crucifixion as being a real possibility for his followers. It is more likely that the detailed imagery is the language of the post-Easter community, looking back on the manner of Jesus' death and claiming that would-be disciples must be prepared to follow in his footsteps. How literally the saying is meant is also not clear. The very finality of death suggests that some metaphorical element is present: if every disciple literally took up his or her cross and was crucified, the movement would die out immediately! Probably what is intended is a vivid and stark metaphor of the call to give up all security and claims to look after one's own interests, even, if necessary, to the point of death itself.

What these sayings tell us about the situation of Mark's own community is not clear. It is often assumed that sayings such as this imply

that it was suffering violence and persecution, with martyrdoms taking place (possibly in Rome under Nero). On the other hand, there is little here that seems to address such a situation with any note of comfort or help. These sayings give little if anything by way of explanation or interpretation for any suffering. Rather, there is only the somewhat bleak and stark call to be prepared to suffer. It may therefore make more sense if Mark's community were in a situation of relative peace and security, and Mark feels that it needs to be roused out of possible complacency and warned of the dangers that can befall any who claim to be followers of the crucified one.

The saying in v. 38 is couched in wholly negative terms as a warning. (The Q parallel has both a positive and a negative element: cf. Lk 12:8–9.) The Son of Man here is a figure exercising a key role in eschatological judgement. This saying and its Q parallel have provided the strongest evidence for the theory that Jesus looked forward to the coming of a Son of Man figure other than himself. However, Mark clearly regarded the two as identical and saw no difficulty in taking Jesus' reference to the Son of Man in the third person here as a self-reference. The eschatological role of the Son of Man may be the other pole in the twin theme of suffering and vindication as in Dan 7: Jesus *qua* Son of Man is a suffering figure in v. 31; here Jesus *qua* Son of Man is the one who will exercise judgement (cf. Dan 7:14).

The final saying in this section, in 9:1, is also much debated. It seems to suggest that the final consummation of all things, and the arrival of the eschatological kingdom of God in power, will come within the lifetime of the bystanders of Jesus. If that is what is meant, the promise has clearly failed to materialize. Precisely for that reason, many have seen here a genuine saying of Jesus, on the grounds that such an unfulfilled prophecy would not be invented by later Christians. Attempts to explain the saying away (e.g. by referring it to the cross, or even the transfiguration story immediately following) seem unconvincing. So too C. H. Dodd's famous attempt to interpret the saying as one of realized eschatology (people will realize that the kingdom has *already* come, i.e. in the ministry of Jesus) has also failed to convince others. As far as detailed time-scales are concerned, the saying has indeed been an unfulfilled prophecy. Yet Mark himself (and probably Jesus too) is not concerned with detailed time-scales (cf. 13:32). Quite as much as expressing a time limit, the saying also expresses

the ultimate certainty of the establishment of God's kingly rule. It is that belief and that faith which is perhaps in the end more important than any detailed chronologies.

(9:2–8) The Transfiguration The possible historical origins of this story are probably irretrievably lost. Whether anything like this might have happened we simply do not and cannot know. Attempts have often been made to see this as a misplaced, or displaced, resurrection appearance story; however, the differences between this and the gospel resurrection appearances are considerable. Mark's understanding of the story is not much easier to determine. In one way it is clear that the account gives a proleptic anticipation of Jesus' future glory, and thereby serves to give the reader assurance of the claim made in 9:1. So too the heavenly voice's declaration of Jesus as God's Son serves to reinforce the true nature of Jesus' identity, the issue explicitly raised in 8:27–30. In one way, the heavenly voice confirms the truth of Peter's confession, since Messiah and Son of God can be, and are, used in parallel in Mark (1:1; 14:62); and indeed the words of the heavenly voice simply repeat (though in a third-person statement rather than in a second-person address) the words of the voice from heaven at Jesus' baptism (1:11). But perhaps the use of 'Son of God' here also serves to deepen the meaning of Peter's confession of Jesus as (just?) Messiah. For Mark, Jesus' sonship is seen supremely in his obedience which leads to death (cf. 15:39); thus the declaration of Jesus as Son of God here serves to reinforce the passion prediction of 8:31 which has just been given.

The precise significance of Moses and Elijah in the story is not certain, and it is noteworthy that Elijah here precedes Moses. (Matthew and Luke both revert to the more 'natural', or certainly chronological, order of Moses followed by Elijah.) Perhaps both appear here as witnesses to Jesus: Elijah as the anticipated forerunner of the Messiah, Moses as the representative of Scripture.

There may also be an element of mild polemic in the story, seeking to counter any claims that Jesus is on a par with Moses and Elijah. This may be the thrust of the implied rebuke of Peter's suggestion that he build three 'booths' for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. In one way this is another feature of the general incomprehension of the disciples, but it may be implied more specifically that what Peter has failed to understand is that Jesus is so much greater than

Moses or Elijah (perhaps reflected too in Peter's address of Jesus as just 'Rabbi' in v. 5: Jesus for Mark is far more than just a Jewish teacher). Elijah was also famous for not having died; and some Jewish tradition also claimed the same for Moses: in such a tradition, both figures were thus translated to heaven without experiencing death. Jesus' path to heavenly glory is, however, via a different route: he must suffer and die first, and the supreme title or term expressing this is his identity as Son of God. By treading this road, he is so much greater. But equally, any follower of his must tread the same road: hence the command of the heavenly voice to 'listen to him' (v. 7), especially to the teaching which he has just given in 8:34–9:1 on the meaning of discipleship.

(9:9–13) Coming Down from the Mountain

These enigmatic verses contain a number of exegetical problems. The section is probably composite: vv. 9–10 deal with the theme of secrecy and resurrection, vv. 11–13 with Elijah. v. 9 is the clearest statement in the gospel that the secrecy surrounding the person of Jesus has a temporal limit, and provides the strongest support for the interpretation of the messianic secret adopted here: until the cross, Jesus' identity remains a secret, but after that all will be revealed, for then its true nature will be clear. (Mark probably conceives of the cross and resurrection as a single point in time for these purposes.) The disciples' response in v. 10 seems to imply that they do not understand what resurrection in general means. This seems incredible in historical terms: resurrection was a well-known idea in Judaism of the period. v. 10 is thus either a highly artificial note by Mark to bolster his motif of the disciples' lack of understanding, or it refers specifically to the resurrection of the Son of Man: resurrection was generally thought to be a corporate affair (of all, or of all the righteous); an individual resurrection prior to the End is not so easy to parallel in Jewish thought of the time.

vv. 11–13 focus on the person of Elijah. What seems to be reflected is the expectation that Elijah would reappear at the End (cf. Mal 4:5–6). In Malachi, Elijah appears before the Day of the Lord itself; Christian tradition appears to have taken this schema over and modified it so that Elijah appears as the forerunner of the Messiah, Jesus, though such a twofold expectation cannot be found in non-Christian Judaism of this period. In this Christian modification, Elijah is identified as John the Baptist. The full schema

is clearly present in Matthew's parallel to this passage; it is probably present in Mark here as well, though the language is more cryptic. John the Baptist, for example, is not mentioned explicitly, though the allusion seems clear. Whatever the precise background, Mark uses the verses to focus again on the coming passion of Jesus. Elijah's role as a forerunner is made more specific by the claim that 'Elijah' has suffered. In terms of the implied identification of Elijah with John, this suffering has led to violent death: hence a similar fate awaits Jesus. (That such a fate was predicted of the returning Elijah in Scripture (cf. v. 13b) is otherwise unattested. In mind may simply be the suffering the first Elijah endured: cf. 1 Kings 19:2–3.)

(9:14–29) The Epileptic Child This very long story in Mark may represent the coming together of two stories, or of two versions of the same story: cf. the double description of the child's illness (vv. 17–18, 22), and the apparent assembling of the crowd in v. 25, even though the crowd is already assembled in v. 14. The first half of the present story focuses on the failure of the disciples, the second on the faith of the boy's father. Yet fundamental to both parts of the story is the importance of faith—faith not shown by the disciples (v. 19) and the stuttering faith of the father elicited by Jesus (v. 24).

The story has some features of a 'miracle story' in form-critical terms, though the cry of astonishment does not come at the end but at the start of the story (v. 15, in response to the crowd seeing Jesus, perhaps implying that some vestige of his transfigured form still remains). The stress is not so much on the power of Jesus the miracle worker as on the response of the disciples in the story and hence of any would-be disciple in the Christian community. The disciples have been unable to perform the miracle, and their failure leads to Jesus' cry about them and the crowd as a 'faithless generation'. Miracles in Mark can only take place in a context of faith (cf. 2:4; 5:43; 6:5).

The second half of the story focuses on the man's father. The plea to Jesus evokes an almost contemptuous response by Jesus (v. 23) about his ability. It is, however, not quite clear who 'the one who believes' in v. 23 is meant to be. It appears to be Jesus, and yet Jesus is never portrayed elsewhere in Mark as having 'faith', and the sequel focuses on the father's faith. Perhaps it is impossible to be precise and the ambiguity is intentional. 'Faith' in relation to miracles in Mark is not necessarily the faith of the recipient,

nor necessarily the faith of the would-be healer alone. Rather, it is a description of the total human context in which a potential miracle might take place. The man's famous reply (v. 24) shows that faith is both a human response and a gift from outside. Cf. 4:11. Human response is essential, but in the end, for Mark, such response is itself a matter of divine grace.

The final two verses are sometimes thought to be an appendix, not closely related to the rest of the story in that they focus on prayer, rather than faith. However, the motif of Jesus explaining privately to his disciples in a 'house' the deeper significance of what has just happened is typically Markan (cf. 4:10; 7:17; 10:10). Moreover, the difference between prayer and faith as the principal focus can be overstressed: faith for Mark is the absolute trust and dependence on God which can be and is reflected precisely in the activity of prayer.

Mark's vocabulary in vv. 26–7, where the boy appears to be dead and Jesus 'raised him' and he 'arose', is similar to other language in the NT used of resurrection. The words can be used quite naturally here, but Christian readers probably saw deeper significance in them: Jesus' action foreshadows the new resurrection life that is available through Jesus to believers in the new age.

(9:30–2) The Second Passion Prediction This is the least detailed of the three passion predictions in Mark, and has the greatest claims to historicity: certainly the very general language has been least explicitly influenced by the details of the passion narrative. However, the key element of the fact that it is as Son of Man that Jesus will suffer and be vindicated remains constant through the three predictions. In v. 32 Mark once again emphasizes the disciples' failure to understand what is said.

(9:33–50) Further Teaching As after the first passion prediction in 8:31, Mark follows the second prediction with more teaching about discipleship, much of it somewhat disparate and linked by catchword connections. The first unit, in vv. 33–7, concerns the importance of humility and the meaning of true greatness. As in ch. 8, the teaching is provoked by a brief note indicating the disciples' failure to grasp the true significance of what it means to be a follower of the crucified one (vv. 33–4, cf. 8:33). This motif may well reflect Mark's own concerns in developing the negative portrait of the disciples, though the reference to

Capernaum in v. 33, which scarcely fits the wider context in Mark of Jesus passing through Galilee to Judea (9:30; 10:1), may imply the presence of a tradition here. The kernel of the section is the saying on the first and the last and the supreme importance of becoming a servant of all (v. 35). The saying is a popular one and recurs elsewhere in the tradition (Mk 10:43–4; Mt 23:11; Lk 22:26). For Mark, its significance is further developed in 10:41–5. The word for ‘servant’ here is perhaps better translated as ‘slave’. The saying thus advocates a total reversal of the values of contemporary society: all that is regarded as valuable and honoured in human society is here called into question, and the Christian must adopt the role of the lowest and most despised member of the social community.

This is then illustrated by the saying about the child (vv. 36–7). The saying here is a doublet of the similar saying in 10:15. The interpretation is disputed. Matthew clearly takes the child as an example to be imitated, in particular as an example of humility (cf. Mt 18:3). This suffers from some problems: children are not necessarily always humble; further, children in the ancient world were not necessarily as highly valued as they have become in contemporary Western society. Rather, children were considered to be of very low status and of little value. Hence it is more likely that v. 36 sets up the child as an example of the *object* of the disciples’ action: in their role as servants, they are to be slaves of *all*, even to the most lowly and least esteemed members of society, i.e. children. In so doing they will be serving Jesus, and by implication, God Himself (v. 37). The last saying is developed elsewhere in relation to Christian missionaries (cf. Lk 10:16; Mt 10:40–2, and perhaps Mt 25:31–46), but the idea that in helping the poor, one is helping God is well rooted in Jewish tradition (cf. Prov 19:17).

The small pericope about the strange exorcist follows (vv. 38–40). The story may well reflect problems experienced in the later Christian church (cf. Acts 19:13–17). The reaction of Jesus portrayed here is surprisingly open, and diametrically opposed to its Q parallel (cf. Lk 11:23) in its attitude to the neutral and those not explicitly committed to the Christian cause: here anyone who is not an active opponent is regarded as ‘one of us’; in the Q version, neutrality is condemned fiercely. The story condemns any factionalism or triumphalism within the body of those who would be followers of Jesus. Just as faith is ultimately a gift and

not an achievement (cf. 9:24), so what in the end matters is not church allegiance but allegiance to Jesus: the exorcist still carries out his exorcisms in the name of Jesus. Mark thus has a much more open-ended ecclesiology than, say, Matthew does. For Mark, what is crucial is the issue of Christology, the person of Jesus. Everything else is subordinate to that.

The story is followed by a series of sayings, at times only loosely connected by means of catchwords. The first saying (v. 41) may have continued after v. 37 originally, though there is also a catchword link with vv. 38–40 via the use of the word ‘name’. But the saying here does represent a shift from v. 37 in that the recipient of the action is no longer the child but the Christian disciple or missionary (as in the parallels to v. 37). The word ‘Christ’ here seems to be used as virtually a proper name, with all idea of its titular sense (cf. 1:1) forgotten. In its present form, therefore, the saying must reflect the vocabulary and thought of early Christians and not Jesus. For Mark, the saying perhaps continues the thought of vv. 38–40: *any* positive service, however small and insignificant, will be rewarded. Plaudits cannot be reserved for an in-group of privileged ‘church’ members.

The reverse side of the idea of reward is that of punishment and this is developed in the series of sayings in vv. 42–8, linked by the common use of the verb ‘cause to stumble’ (Greek *skandalizo*). The first saying (v. 42) picks up from v. 41 the motif of treatment given to Christian disciples: the ‘child’ from before has become a ‘little one who believes’, clearly a Christian disciple. (Some, but not all, MSS have ‘believe in me’ here: this would then be one of the very rare occasions in the synoptics, and the only instance in Mark, where Jesus is the object of faith. More typically for Mark, Jesus points away from himself to God as the important object of faith.) Here the threat of judgement is probably directed at other Christian disciples (rather than, as some have suggested, persecutors of the Christian movement): the saying is a warning to followers of Jesus, not comfort for disciples threatened by opponents. In vv. 43–8 the attention shifts from the danger of causing others to stumble to the dangers of causing oneself to stumble (i.e. to threaten one’s Christian commitment). In a series of vivid metaphors (which are only metaphors!), Mark’s Jesus stresses the extreme nature of the self-sacrifice to which the would-be disciple is called. The thought is in general similar to 8:34–7: the true ‘life’ of the Christian is far greater than the old life, or even

physical life itself, and can call for the ultimate in self-sacrifice at the physical level. The alternative is to be 'thrown into Gehenna' (vv. 43, 45, 47), a valley near Jerusalem used as a rubbish dump which became a symbol for the place of the future destruction of the wicked. The unquenchable fire of v. 48 (several MSS repeat v. 48 in vv. 44, 46) is probably that which destroys: there is no idea of eternal torment and punishment.

The last two verses of the complex (vv. 49–50) are obscure and the connection of thought (beyond the catchwords 'fire' and 'salt') not clear. The image of v. 49 ('salted with fire') is notoriously uncertain. It is possible that both fire and salt are seen as images of purification. Elsewhere in the NT, fire is seen as a process which can be destructive but also purifying (cf. 1 Pet 1:7). The same may be implied here: the physical dangers to which the Christian disciple is exposed can also act as a purifying agent. The appended sayings about salt in v. 50 defy clear exegesis. The general thought may be that Christian disciples must continually show their true nature as followers of Jesus, otherwise they will be rejected. The final exhortation to live at peace with each other recalls the original occasion of the whole complex: disputes about relative superiority within the community are no part of the life of followers of Jesus who must live harmoniously ('at peace') with one another.

(10:1–12) Divorce The next section is somewhat loosely appended and might appear a little out of place in a wider context dealing with specifically Christian discipleship. Some have even suggested that 10:1–31 constitutes a small preformed household code on the themes of marriage, children, and possessions (cf. Col 3:18–4:1; Eph 5:21–6:9). However, this is not necessary: what is presented here is in some ways the ideal for the Christian disciple and the section is not out of place within the broader context of 8:34–10:45.

Jesus is asked about the legitimacy of divorce. The question is in many ways an artificial one coming from Pharisees, since Jewish law clearly assumed that divorce was legitimate, the only discussion being what were the proper grounds for divorce. (The divorce legislation in Deut 24:1–2 is very vague as to the grounds for divorce and deals more with the procedures of the divorce itself.) Yet if, as seems likely, Jesus did express himself very negatively about the whole principle of divorce (it is very deeply embedded in the tradition: see 1 Cor 7:10, as

well as what is probably a Q tradition in Lk 16:18/Mt 5:32), some such question must have arisen in Jesus' own ministry. Jesus' reply goes behind the divorce legislation of Deut 24 to the principle of creation itself. He claims that divorce was only instituted as a concession to human failure and that the ideal is life-long, monogamous marriage. Although this could be interpreted as an attack on the law, it is not presented as such here. Nor is it necessarily an attack to demand greater strictness than the law technically presupposes. (Further, some of the Qumran texts adopt a position very similar to that of Jesus here, and no one could accuse the Qumran sectarians of playing loose with the law!) Nevertheless, an important part of the law is here relativized, and this shows the great authority implicitly claimed by Jesus. Yet it is important too to note what is proposed. Jesus' saying is not necessarily a legal ruling which brooks no exception (as it has frequently been taken). Rather, it sets up an ideal, and puts forward the divine purpose in marriage. It is an ideal for the Eschaton. (In Jewish thought the end-time was often conceived as representing a return to the primeval conditions of the creation period.) But in a fallen world, that ideal is frequently not met. To apply Jesus' sayings to this situation as a legal ruling forbidding divorce under all circumstances is probably the worst kind of legalism: in the teaching of Jesus, any ideals of the eschatological kingdom would always have to be tempered by the overriding concerns of compassion and love.

In an 'appendix', Mark's Jesus spells out to the disciples further implications of what he has said. In one way the teaching here is strange, since the issue no longer seems to be that of divorce as such, but of remarriage after divorce. Here any such remarriage is branded as adultery. (Further, the parallel formulation in v. 12, placing a woman's action in divorcing her husband alongside a man divorcing his wife, presupposes the conditions of Roman law: in Jewish law a woman had no such right to institute divorce proceedings.) We may have here a saying of the early church, seeking to interpret the Jesus tradition in relation to the concrete problems faced by Christians in the world. The NT generally does appear to ban remarriage after divorce (cf. Lk 16:18; Mt 5:32). Again, whether that should be taken as rigid and eternal legislation for a fallen world seems rather doubtful.

(10:13–16) The Children This small section is often taken as composite: vv. 14c + 15 seem to

interrupt a story about the importance of *receiving* children with a saying requiring being *like* children. This pericope was also used later in the early church to justify the practice of infant baptism. Such an application in a later situation is quite natural, but is not hinted at explicitly by Mark, and would clearly be totally anachronistic at the level of Jesus. The saying in v. 15 forms a doublet with 9:37 and many have regarded the latter context as more appropriate. As noted there, the idea of a child as an example to imitate is not easy to interpret. Children in the ancient world were of the lowest status in society (see *mk* 9:36–7). Perhaps though this is precisely what Mark (unlike Matthew) has in mind. The Kingdom is for those who are like children in the ancient world, i.e. the poor, the hungry, the dispossessed, those without rights and without any esteem amongst their contemporaries. Followers of Jesus can only receive the kingdom, i.e. accept God's rule as king, if they too become like this: they too must recognize their radical dependence on God for all that they have and all that they are, and they must give up all claims to rights over others in the world, a theme which will be developed further in vv. 35–45. Taken in this way, the saying in v. 15 is not so out of place within vv. 13–16: only if disciples become like children in this sense can they be 'received' by Jesus, i.e. become true followers of the crucified one. As such, the pericope is also firmly in place within the broader context of the general teaching on discipleship in 8:34–10:45.

(10:17–31) Riches and Possessions The section is again composite. The story of the rich young man (vv. 17–22) has been expanded by further sayings about wealth and/or the difficulty of entering the kingdom (vv. 23–7), followed by promises about the rewards due to disciples (vv. 28–31). However, the sayings are so closely related in one way (though significantly different in another) that it is hard to envisage totally independent traditions being used here: more probably, Mark has expanded the earlier tradition in his own way to develop the themes of particular concern to him.

The kernel of the section is the story of the rich young man. The evident embarrassment caused to later Christians (e.g. Matthew!) by the story in which Jesus appears implicitly to reject the notion that he himself is 'good' suggests that we have here a genuine tradition. (Matthew, for example, rewrites the story to have the man ask Jesus 'what good thing must

I do?') The man asks about how to 'inherit eternal life', probably meaning the same as to enter the kingdom. (The vocabulary of 'eternal life', or life of the age to come, is rare in the synoptics, though it is greatly developed in the fourth gospel.) Jesus' first reply cites the second half of the Decalogue (but replacing 'Do not covet' with 'Do not defraud'), focusing on those commandments which concern human relationships. The young man's reply indicates that he realizes that obeying the letter of the law is not enough, but his further question ('What more must I do?') perhaps suggests that he is still thinking in terms of a measurable human achievement. Jesus' reply indicates that no such measuring is appropriate: the demand of discipleship is total and absolute.

In the case of the young man, the barrier to his total commitment is evidently his wealth. However, the further development in the teaching now extends the difficulty experienced by rich people in responding to Jesus' call to the difficulty experienced by all. Hence v. 24 says how hard it is for anyone to enter the kingdom. This is then illustrated by the hyperbolic (and perhaps partly humorous) image of the camel and the eye of the needle—though now reverting to the question of riches again. (The slight confusion—is it hard for the rich, or for all, to enter the kingdom?—is what has probably led to some scribes adding a phrase in v. 24 to make it apply only to those 'who trust in riches'.) Entry into new life is thus ultimately not a matter of any human achievement or merit at all. It is in one way impossible for anyone with their own resources to enter the kingdom. In the end, it is all a matter of divine grace (v. 27).

Yet the consequences of the commitment required of the disciple are not lost. Those who give up everything will be rewarded. And indeed Mark's Jesus here implies that there will be reward both in this life and in the age to come. The reference to the rewards in this life indicate that, even though Christians have given up family and possessions now, they will experience a new family and a new social community, i.e. in the church. Mark thus paints a rather different picture from the Q tradition where (at least some) Christians appear to give up all social ties and adopt a wandering life-style with no settled community existence (the so-called 'wandering charismatics': cf. the mission charge in Matthew and Luke). In Mark, Christians are assured of a place in a new social community. However, two features of this new existence are notable. The list in

v. 30 of people/things which will be repaid to the disciple largely repeats the list in v. 29 of things surrendered; but (a) no 'father' reappears in v. 30, presumably because God is Father and cannot be duplicated; (b) v. 30 adds a reference to 'persecutions'. This may reflect the situation of Mark's community; alternatively, it may be a warning to them of things that may come. The final promise of 'eternal life' provides an *inclusio* with the start of this whole complex in v. 17 and the question of the young man about what he should do to obtain eternal life.

(10:32–4) The Third Passion Prediction This is the most detailed of all the predictions and seems to have been written in the light of the details of the passion narrative (a Jewish trial preceding a Roman trial, followed by a mockery involving spitting etc.). As before, the 'Son of Man' reference, and the inclusion of a prediction of 'resurrection', remain constant. v. 32 is a little obscure: how are the amazement and the fear related? And are there two groups of people intended here, or one? Jesus is 'on the way', 'going ahead' of his disciples. In one sense he is simply on a road, but in a deeper sense he is also on the 'way' that leads to Jerusalem which for Mark is the place of suffering and death. Jesus is thus on the way of the cross, and this perhaps is part of the reason why those who 'follow' in this way where Jesus 'goes ahead' are 'afraid'.

(10:35–45) True Service Once again the passion prediction is followed by a feature showing the failure of the disciples to understand the full implications of Jesus' teaching about his future suffering (cf. 8:32; 9:33). Here it is a more extended pericope, the story of the request of James and John for the chief seats in the coming kingdom. The two disciples ask for positions of glory. Jesus' reply is at first a question, asking if they can share his cup and baptism. The image is not explicit but probably refers to intense suffering and death. The 'cup' is used in the OT to refer to divine punishment (cf. Ps 75:8), though such ideas are probably too specific here, and the image may simply refer to great suffering (cf. 14:36). The verb 'baptize' can refer to being overwhelmed or flooded with catastrophes (cf. Ps 42:7; Isa 43:2 for a similar idea, if not the word). James and John's first reply is 'we can', perhaps an indication for Mark's readers of their (past?) martyrdoms. (James was killed very early: cf. Acts 12:2; John's fate is less certain and the traditions vary, some

having him live to an old age, other having him martyred, though the latter are admittedly very late.) However, Jesus' reply to them puts their apparent acknowledgement into another light. They perhaps have accepted suffering as simply a temporary prelude to more assured glory. Jesus tells them that suffering will indeed await them, but future glory is not, and cannot, be assured: it is a matter of God's grace. There may indeed be an element of savage irony here too: James and John have asked to be at Jesus' 'right' and 'left'—for Mark's readers there is perhaps an echo of the two robbers, one on Jesus' right and one on his left, on their crosses. That in some sense is Jesus' glory. (Cf. the fourth gospel where this is more explicit.) Perhaps then they really 'do not know what [they] are asking' when they make their request!

As before, the motif of the disciples' failure to understand leads on to further teaching by Jesus. Here it is on the significance of service. True greatness lies not in having a position of authority over others, but in being the slave of all, a theme that has dominated all Jesus' teaching about discipleship in this section of the gospel. And as a final clinching argument, Jesus adduces himself as an example in his role as Son of Man: the Son of Man himself came not to be served but to serve. By implication, any follower of the Son of Man can do no less.

The final half-verse (10:45b) comprises the famous ransom saying and has given rise to intense debate. It is one of the very few verses in the synoptics where Jesus gives any kind of interpretation of his death. Its authenticity is much disputed, as is the precise meaning of virtually every word in the saying. The saying is almost certainly pre-Markan: it assumes that Jesus' death is unique, and yet Mark uses it in a context where Jesus sets himself up as an example to be imitated by others. The background is often taken to be Isa 53, with Jesus here setting himself up as the suffering servant of this Servant Song, offering his life as a sin offering for others. This is, however, unconvincing. The linguistic parallels between this verse and Isa 53 are virtually non-existent. Jesus is not here called 'servant'; nor is the language of 'ransom' the same semantically as that of 'sin offering'. The present verse does not even mention 'sin' as such. The word 'ransom' (Gk. *lutron*) is in fact used very widely, sometimes in relation to prices being paid, e.g. as the price paid to compensate for a crime, as the money equivalent to the sacrifice of the first-born child, as the money paid to buy back prisoners of war.

Hence the idea in later Christian theology of Jesus' death as some kind of price that is paid (e.g. for sin). But the word is also used without any idea of a specific price paid: thus God's deliverance of his people in the Exodus is frequently referred to as his 'ransoming' or 'redeeming' the people of God, with no idea of any price being paid. This may be the underlying idea here: Jesus' death is presented as in some way the rescue, or redemption, of the new people of God. Why this needs a *death* is not spelt out. Strictly speaking, the preposition translated in the NRSV as 'for' (Greek *anti*) means 'instead of': hence ideas of substitutionary atonement which have been read into, or out of, this verse. But this is by no means necessary. The word may simply mean 'on behalf of', 'for the benefit of' (like the Greek preposition *huper*, which is the most commonly used NT word in this context). Jesus' saying here thus evokes the idea of a new people of God to be created and formed as a result of his life and death. Further, it is by virtue of his role as Son of Man, as the one who must suffer but who will then be vindicated, that this will be achieved. The saying coheres well with a number of other elements which are firmly embedded in the tradition (e.g. Jesus' choice of exactly twelve disciples, perhaps symbolizing the new Israel), and hence may well be genuine.

(10:46–5) Blind Bartimaeus Mark finishes this long section of teaching about discipleship as it started, with a story about the healing of a blind person. As with 8:22–6, this story here almost certainly represents an acted parable: the granting of physical sight to Bartimaeus symbolizes the true 'insight' which is necessary for any disciple of Jesus. Thus the consequence of the miracle is presented in language that is almost certainly deliberately evocative: the miracle is due to Bartimaeus' 'faith' which is said to have 'saved' him, i.e. not only healed him physically but also brought a much deeper and more profound 'salvation'; and Bartimaeus then 'follows' Jesus 'on the way': this is the language of discipleship, and Mark's wording is almost certainly meant to suggest that Bartimaeus becomes a full disciple, 'following' Jesus on the way which Jesus treads, i.e. the way of the cross. It may also be significant that, before he is healed, Bartimaeus calls out to Jesus as 'Son of David' (v. 47). This is a rare term in Mark (used elsewhere only in 12:35–7, and there somewhat negatively), and may be intended to be synonymous with Messiah. The latter is the term

Peter uses in 8:29, and Mark may by his story indicate that this is partly correct, but does not express the fullest truth about Jesus. (See mk 8:29.) Similarly here, Bartimaeus when blind addresses Jesus as Son of David. As such he is partly correct, and certainly shows a sufficient degree of faith to enable Jesus' miracle to take place. But the fuller sight—and the deeper insight into who Jesus really is—follows as a divine gift. Only then does Bartimaeus become a full disciple, 'following' Jesus 'on the way'.

Ministry in Jerusalem

The Passion narrative in Mark is usually adjudged to start at ch. 14, but there is a real sense in which it can be said to start here at the start of ch. 11. Jesus now arrives in the city of Jerusalem, the goal of his journey 'on the way', and for Mark, Jerusalem is supremely the place of opposition and hostility, culminating in Jesus' death. The cross thus now dominates the story. In Mark's account, Jesus' time in Jerusalem occupies apparently one hectic week only (giving rise to the Christian liturgical celebration of Holy Week). In fact it seems very likely that Mark has telescoped things: Jesus seems to be well known in the city (cf. 14:3) and says that he has been teaching continuously in the Temple ('day after day' 14:49). John's gospel implies a much longer stay in the city and this seems historically much more plausible. The same may also be implied in some details of the story that now follows.

(11:1–11) The Triumphal Entry Jesus enters the city in a deliberately unusual way—on a donkey. The later evangelists clearly regard the event as an explicit messianic claim by Jesus, fulfilling the prophecy of Zech 9:9. Mark's understanding of the event is not quite so certain. Any reference to Zech 9 is at best implicit, as the verse is not cited here. Mark probably regarded the crowds' acclamation of Jesus as implying an acclamation of him as Messiah, but again it is not quite explicit: they welcome the 'one who comes in the name of the Lord', and also the coming kingdom of David, which is almost, but not quite, the same as the coming king. (Matthew and Luke make things more explicit here.) Mark probably does understand Jesus' action as implying a royal status, but as with the messianic secret generally, the true nature of Jesus' kingship has yet to be revealed: it will become far more explicit as the cross approaches (see esp. ch. 15).

The earlier details of the story are also ambiguous. The incident about finding the ass may

imply a miracle, though this is again rather cryptic here. The words of the disciples (NRSV 'the Lord needs it') are also ambiguous. The Greek word for NRSV's 'Lord' is *kyrios*, which can be translated as simply 'master' or 'owner'. Nowhere else does Mark clearly refer to Jesus as 'Lord' in a Christologically significant way (though see *MK* 7:28), so the word here may simply mean 'our master', or 'its [the ass's] owner'.

As far as historicity is concerned, the story is clearly deeply embedded in the tradition, being present in all four gospels. Some kind of (veiled) messianic claim seems to be implied: coming into the city on an ass (rather than walking) was highly unusual, and riding on an ass was a royal prerogative. On the other hand, it is odd that the incident is never referred to in the trial narratives, where the issue is explicitly that of the possible messianic/royal status of Jesus. Further, the incident seems to have provoked no reaction at all from the Roman authorities, despite the charged atmosphere of the Passover season. It has, however, often been noted that the actions of the crowds (waving palm branches, and using words from one of the so-called Hallel psalms, Ps 118) is reminiscent of actions prescribed for the Feast of either Tabernacles (in the autumn) or Dedication (in the winter). It may therefore be that, if the incident is historical, it took place rather earlier than Mark's chronology implies. Hence Jesus may have arrived in Jerusalem much earlier than the one week prior to his death as suggested by Mark (cf. also above) and by later Christian tradition.

The crowds cry 'Hosanna', literally 'Save now!' Such a meaning appears to have been lost to Mark (and to later Christian liturgy) where the phrase 'Hosanna in the Highest', virtually meaningless if translated literally, becomes simply a general cry of jubilation.

(11:12–26) The Temple and the Fig-Tree The two incidents which now follow, the cleansing of the temple and the cursing of the fig-tree, constitute the most famous example of Mark's 'sandwiching' technique: the story of the incident in the temple is sandwiched between the two halves of the story of the fig-tree. By this device, Mark clearly wants the one story to interpret the other. Hence the fig tree incident provides the hermeneutical key for the temple account, at least as far as Mark is concerned. Thus for Mark, Jesus' action in the temple is probably not a cleansing (as it is traditionally

described), but a 'cursing', a final and definitive act of judgement against the temple and, perhaps, Israel.

The fig-tree incident has always caused problems in relation to questions of historicity. Jesus' action here seems highly arbitrary, and a pointless act of gratuitous destruction. It is even compounded by the fact that the tree has no figs and yet it is not even the season for figs (v. 13)! Given all these problems, it is very hard to trace any such incident back to Jesus' own ministry. Probably we have here a symbolic narrative, acting as some kind of acted parable, the historical roots of which are lost completely. What lies behind it may be passages in the OT which speak of God looking for figs from his fig-tree, a metaphor used to refer to Israel and her proper response to God (cf. *Jer* 8:13); also the image of the fig-tree in fruit is used to represent Israel in the messianic age. The fruitless tree thus represents Israel who should have welcomed her Messiah, Jesus; yet when Jesus comes to the heart of Israel, Jerusalem and the temple, he is rejected, and the tree has no fruit: the result is inevitably judgement.

The temple incident is thus, for Mark, to be taken in the same way as a symbolic judgement on the temple and on Israel. The national dimension is then clearly highlighted in the version of the words placed on Jesus' lips: quoting *Isa* 56:7 he says that the temple should have been a house of prayer for all the nations. (Matthew and Luke both omit the last phrase.) Set in these terms, the action of Jesus places him on a collision course with Israel herself, and so it is not surprising that the outcome is the renewal of the plot to kill Jesus by the chief priests and scribes (v. 18, cf. 3:6).

Exactly what lay behind this for Jesus is less certain. Some have argued that he had in mind only the renewal of the temple in the new age: his action is thus simply a prophetic sign claiming that the new age had all but arrived (Sanders 1985). This, however, does not really explain why such an action would have been offensive to the authorities (if indeed it was) and why then it led to the plot to have Jesus killed. Others have sought to argue that Jesus was attacking the exploitation and oppression of the poor which the temple system engendered. The issue is debated, but there does seem to be some evidence to suggest that the temple authorities, and the whole system, did lead in many cases to the poor being exploited, poor priests being robbed by richer ones, etc. Hence Jesus' protest may have been against the priestly aristocracy,

rather than against the whole Jewish nation. In that case, the move by the authorities against Jesus might become rather more plausible: Jesus and his teaching, especially if it was engendering popular support among the masses, may have been seen as a threat by the upper social classes to the status quo which enabled them to enjoy their position.

The fig tree 'incident' provides the occasion for further teaching on the importance, and power, of faith and prayer. The saying about moving mountains (v. 23) is proverbial and appears elsewhere in the tradition, as does the saying about the unlimited power of prayer (v. 24, cf. Lk 11:9–10; Jn 14:13). Yet such prayer can only be effective in a context of faith, which perhaps rules out such petitionary prayer being a licence for anything. The saying in v. 25 on forgiveness is very close to Mt 6:14 (as well as the petition for forgiveness in the Lord's Prayer), and this may have led some scribes to add v. 26 in some MSS, which is virtually identical to Mt 6:15.

(11:27–33) Jesus' Authority Mark follows the incident in the temple with a series of controversy stories, similar to 2:1–3:6, showing Jesus debating with the various groups of Judaism, though unlike the earlier series, the issue now is mostly Jesus' teaching rather than his actions. The first story brings all the Jewish leaders on to the stage, asking about the source of his authority in doing 'these things' (v. 28; in Mark's context this probably refers to the temple incident, though it may have had a much wider reference earlier in the tradition, referring to Jesus' teaching and other activity in general). Jesus replies with a counter-question (a feature typical of many debates among Jewish teachers), throwing the issue back and asking his questioners what they thought about John the Baptist. This is somewhat surprising: in Mark's narrative John scarcely figures as a person in his own right with his own 'ministry' amongst the Jews of the time: rather, he simply comes on to the stage to point forward to Jesus (see MK 1:3–8). Similarly his fate prefigures Jesus' coming fate (see MK 9:11–13). Perhaps we have here a reflection of Jesus' own strong belief that his work was very closely tied to that of John (as probably his decision to be baptized by John also indicates). The Jews' musings indicate John's great popularity among the masses (cf. Mk 1:5). Jesus' final statement is thoroughly in line with the whole of Mark's presentation so far. Just as there are no authenticating signs (cf. 8:11–12), so

too there are no verifiable claims or assertions to back Jesus up. Within a context of faith, Jesus' claims can be accepted; without such a context, such claims would be fruitless—hence Jesus' refusal to speak.

(12:1–12) The Wicked Husbandmen The sense of hostile debate continues, though here Jesus takes the initiative by telling a parable, the parable of the wicked husbandmen. Clearly it illustrates the rejection by Israel of God and his messengers down the ages. As it now stands in Mark, the parable is a clear allegory. The language of the opening description of the vineyard clearly echoes the language of Isa 5:1–2 which itself is an allegory of Israel and her dealings with YHWH. The first messengers represent the prophets sent by God, all of whom suffer rejection and violence. Finally the last messenger is the Son, clearly for Mark Jesus as the Son of God, and the killing of the Son prefigures Jesus' own death. The parable thus expresses divine judgement against Israel for her rejection of God's Son. The story seems so heavily allegorized—and Christianized—that many have regarded it as a creation of the early church *in toto*. However, the story does fit well into the social situation of Galilee at the time of Jesus, when many tenant farmers suffered at the hands of absentee landlords who demanded crippling returns from the land by way of rent. The resentment and anger of the tenants in the story reflects this situation well. It is thus possible that the parable goes back to Jesus. Whether the implied identification of Jesus as the 'son' is also genuine is less easy to gauge. The idea of God as Father is deeply embedded in the Jesus tradition; but how Christologically significant this is at the level of Jesus is harder to assess: so much of the Jesus tradition assumes that others also share, or can share, Jesus' relation to God as son to Father (cf. the Lord's Prayer, Lk 11:2). For Mark, however, Jesus *qua* Son is unique, and Jesus' sonship is seen most clearly in his suffering and death (cf. 15:39).

An appended saying in vv. 10–11 cites Ps 117:22–3 LXX. The text is cited elsewhere in the NT (cf. Acts 4:11; 1 Pet 2:7), and the image of the stone applied to Jesus (using Isa 8:14; 28:16) is also attested (Rom 9:32; 1 Pet 2:6–8). The presence of the saying here is almost certainly due to the early church, if not Mark himself, adding a note predicting the resurrection as well as Jesus' death: the rejected stone becomes the chief cornerstone (it is not clear if this is the

main stone in the foundations or the stone at the apex of the arch).

The reaction of the audience is intelligible, but also noteworthy here: whatever 4:11–12 implies, it cannot mean that parables for outsiders are totally unintelligible gibberish! The audience here ‘understand’ at one level all too well what, or perhaps better who, the parable is getting at. 4:11–12 must then mean that such people do not in a deeper sense ‘see’ or ‘hear’, i.e. they do not respond in faith to the challenge posed by Jesus. Instead they persist in their hardness of heart by further resolving to try and arrest him.

(12:13–17) A Question about Tax The story of mounting hostility continues with a series of incidents where Jesus deals with questions on specific topics posed by various different groups. The first concerns the payment of tax to the Roman authorities and is posed by an alliance of ‘Pharisees and Herodians’, a grouping recalling the earlier death plot in 3:6 and perhaps thereby indicating for Mark the (literally) mortal nature of the controversy and conflict that is taking place (cf. too 11:18). The question of the legitimacy of paying taxes to the Roman authorities was a very pressing one. The tax concerned was a poll tax imposed on all those in Judea, Samaria, and Idumea in 6 CE when these areas became a Roman province ruled by a procurator. It was deeply resented by the Jews, symbolizing as it did foreign interference in Jewish affairs. It led to active revolt in 6 CE under Judas the Galilean (cf. Acts 5:37), an event which, according to Josephus, led to the rise of the Zealot party in Judaism which was responsible for the Jewish revolt in 66–70 CE. (In fact it is unlikely that such a party existed in any organized form prior to the Jewish revolt; however, it is likely that the simmering resentment which led ultimately to the revolt remained throughout this period.)

The question is, according to Mark, clearly intended to trap Jesus. If he opposes paying the tax, the Roman authorities will arrest him; if he accepts it, he will lose popular support. The precise meaning of Jesus’ answer has been much debated. As it stands, it is ambiguous. It enjoins paying Caesar what is Caesar’s, and God what is God’s, but does not clarify what is Caesar’s and what is God’s. Certainly it does not specify whose the Roman poll tax is! The saying has sometimes been interpreted as implying a doctrine of two kingdoms—a secular and a religious realm, each with its own sphere of influence. This, however,

seems unlikely, especially in a first-century Jewish context. More plausible is the interpretation that takes the second half of the saying as interpreting and radically qualifying the first half: Caesar is to be paid what is his, but this is only under the more universal presupposition and rubric that God as the all-mighty and all-powerful is owed supreme allegiance. If the claims of Caesar and God clash, then the claims of God must always have precedence. The saying thus does not give *carte blanche* to any claims of the state; but nor does it deny all claims of the state. Rather, it challenges the listener to work out how competing claims of state and God have to be resolved in practice under the general rubric implicit in a monotheistic faith that God in the end must be supreme.

(12:18–27) Resurrection The second question comes from Sadducees and concerns the issue of resurrection. The precise delineation of a ‘party’ of Sadducees in the first century is not entirely clear. They seem to have been primarily members of the aristocratic, priestly families, and generally conservative in their views. Thus they adhered to the written law only, refusing to countenance innovation in later traditions (as espoused by the Pharisees); in particular, according to Josephus, they did not believe in a resurrection, perhaps because it was not mentioned in the law itself. (Belief in a resurrection developed relatively late in Jewish history, appearing in the latest parts of the OT: cf. Dan 12:2.) Jesus’ reply in Mark clearly sides with the Pharisaic viewpoint. (Cf. Mk 2:16, 18; 7:3–4.)

How far the story is historical is not clear. This is the only occasion in the synoptic tradition where Jesus debates with Sadducees. It would no doubt have been useful for later Christian claims about the resurrection of Jesus to be able to appeal to Jesus’ own support for at least the principle of resurrection in general. The story in its present form shows some signs of internal dislocation: Jesus’ first reply (v. 25) seems to focus on the manner of resurrection life, whereas the second reply (vv. 26–7, slightly awkwardly appended with an extra introduction in v. 26) focuses on the fact of the resurrection. At the very least, an earlier tradition has probably been expanded in the Christian tradition history. Since the real question is the fact of the resurrection, it may be that the reply about the manner of resurrection life in v. 25 is a secondary expansion.

The question posed by the Sadducees is in some ways an absurd one. The issue is the

institution of levirate marriage (cf. Deut 25:5–10) which was designed to ensure that a man's name would be preserved and his property inherited. It is uncertain whether such a practice was still current at this period. Jesus' first reply simply states that resurrection life is qualitatively different from present life, 'like angels in heaven'. (For such a difference between present life and resurrection life, cf. 1 Cor 15:35–50; also 1 *Enoch* 104:4; 2 *Apoc. Bar.* 51:10.) The answer seems to be more at home in debates (possibly among Pharisees and/or Christians) about the precise nature of resurrection life, and does not seem to recognize the (deliberately) absurd nature of the situation posed by the question.

Jesus' second reply tackles more directly the real question of the Sadducees about the very possibility of resurrection itself. The argument appeals to the words of the OT (Ex 3:6) and claims that since God says he is the God of the patriarchs, and that he is the God of the living not the dead, the patriarchs must still be alive. The claim is somewhat artificial to modern ears, but would have been far less so in a first-century context. So too the argument itself is unrelated to the specific issue of resurrection as such (it could equally well justify a belief in the immortality of the soul: though for many Jews, full existence was assumed to require a body as well as any immaterial 'soul'). Nevertheless the force of the argument is not lost completely and is not unrelated to the previous pericope, focusing as it does on God alone: if God is truly God, then as the God of the living he will not allow his care and concern for human beings to be destroyed by death.

(12:28–34) The Greatest Commandments The third question posed to Jesus is unlike the previous two in that the questioner appears not to be hostile. The person is a 'scribe', and unlike the scribes elsewhere in Mark, he is presented as friendly. This unusual picture indicates that we have a pre-Markan tradition here, a fact also suggested by the existence of what is probably an independent version of this tradition in Lk 10:25–8. (Matthew may know both versions; there are a number of [relatively small] agreements between Matthew and Luke, hence the Lukan version may have belonged to Q.) Notably, in the other two gospels, the scribe is more hostile ('testing' Jesus: cf. Mt 22:35; Lk 10:25).

The question concerns the 'greatest' commandment in the law. Such a question was not foreign to Judaism of the period and several sought to give one command which formed the

basis for the whole law and from which the rest of the law could be derived. (Cf. Hillel in *b. Šabb.* 31a focusing on the Golden Rule of not doing to others what you would not want done to you, or *T. Iss.* 5:2; *T. Dan.* 5:3, as here, focusing on the love commands.)

In the synoptic gospels, Jesus' reply articulates the double love command—to love God and to love one's neighbour. These are not peculiar to Jesus: both are taken from the OT law itself (Deut 6:5; Lev 19:18). However, each evangelist deals with the tradition in his own way. In Mark (unlike Matthew and Luke) the love commands are preceded by the words of the *Shema* (Deut 6:4), the great monotheistic confession of God's uniqueness; also Mark follows Jesus' words by a response from the scribe which echoes, but also interprets, them by focusing on specific aspects of what Jesus has said. It looks then as if Mark's version intends the scribe's response to provide the hermeneutical key for the love commands. Here the words of the *Shema* are repeated (v. 32): clearly these words are not just seen as an introduction to the command to love God; rather, they evidently articulate for Mark a profound truth about the uniqueness of God, and this may reflect the way in which the tradition was being used in a more Hellenistic environment where polytheism was more of a live issue than in Jewish Israel. The scribe also takes up the love commands themselves, summarizing Jesus' words, but then adding that 'this is much more important than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices' (v. 33). The love commands are thus taken as ethical commands which far outweigh any cultic rites. Such an attitude is quite characteristic of Hellenistic Judaism of the period.

(Mark's version is thus rather different from Matthew's, where the love command is taken as the basis from which the whole of the rest of the law can be derived, cf. Mt 22:40; it also differs from Luke's version, where all attention is on the command to love one's neighbour which is interpreted by the following parable of the Good Samaritan as referring to practical action to help all people, cf. Lk 10:29–37.)

Such an attitude to the cult is of course not foreign to the OT (cf. Hos 6:6) and is at home in Judaism; yet the way in which this story in Mark follows closely on the story of the incident in the temple (11:15–19) suggests that the negative attitude to the cult expressed here is part of a broader polemic and negative attitude to the temple.

The authenticity of the tradition is debated. Some have argued that the Jewish parallels to

Jesus' sayings here suggest that the tradition originated in Hellenistic Jewish Christian circles. However, the fact that Jesus' teaching here is not unprecedented within Judaism by no means implies that it is thereby not genuine. Certainly the general attitude of enjoining exclusive focus on God alone, coupled with care and concern for one's fellow human beings is thoroughly consistent with the rest of the Jesus tradition. Nevertheless, the radically different ways in which the double love command is interpreted in the three synoptic gospels should warn us against deducing too much too quickly about what this might imply about Jesus' attitude to the rest of the Jewish law.

(12:35–7) The Messiah and David In the fourth of the minicontroversy scenes, Jesus himself takes the initiative and poses the question about whether the Messiah can be, or must be, a 'son of David'. The dialogue appears somewhat cryptic: on the surface it is a theoretical discussion about 'the Messiah' without ever identifying who the Messiah might be—though no doubt Mark sees it as referring to Jesus! Such theoretical questioning about Jesus' own person seems alien to his ministry and more in place at the level of Mark for whom the issue of Jesus' identity is crucial (cf. 8:29). Also the messianic use of Ps 110 was widespread in early Christianity, but the existence of such use of Ps 110 in pre-Christian Judaism is difficult to establish. Thus the argument almost certainly reflects a post-Easter composition.

Precisely what is implied here is not clear. Jesus raises the question whether the Messiah can be the son of David, and responds by citing Ps 110:1 where David (the assumed author) seems to refer to someone else as his 'lord'. This someone else is taken as 'the Messiah', and the (rhetorical?) question is raised: if he is David's 'lord', how can he be David's son? It seems that 'son' and 'lord' are taken as incompatible. This might then reflect Christian attempts to defend the messiahship of Jesus in the face of objections that Jesus was not of Davidic descent. On the other hand, the notion that Jesus was a 'son of David' is attested elsewhere (albeit not strongly, cf. Mt 1; Lk 3:23–8; Rom 1:3–4) and is nowhere a matter of dispute. So too Mark records Jesus being addressed as 'Son of David' without any hint of critique (10:47). It may therefore be that physical descent as such is not the issue: what is at stake is not Jesus' genealogical credentials, but his authority: Jesus *qua* Messiah is not subservient to David,

but is David's lord. If so, the scene fits well into the present Markan story-line where the context is one of Jesus' authority being constantly challenged in a situation of mounting hostility and rejection.

(12:38–44) Warnings against Scribes Mark concludes this series of controversies with a brief tirade by Jesus against the scribes (vv. 38–40). Mark either does not know, or chooses to ignore, the longer series of woes against scribes and Pharisees which appears in Mt 23 and Lk 11 (and which hence probably derives from Q). Here there is just a single woe, though covering at least two aspects: the scribes are accused of parading their status to curry human favour by wearing special clothes and claiming special seats in public places (vv. 38–9); they are also accused of exploiting widows financially (v. 40). The first accusation is the language of polemic and no doubt reflects as much the bitter divisions between Christians and Jewish leaders in the early Christian church. The charge of financial impropriety is hard to assess. The care of widows (and orphans) in Jewish society was of paramount concern, so the charge here is a serious one. How far it was ever justified, or indeed why scribes as such should be singled out for mention, is not at all clear. (It has been suggested that perhaps some scribes acted as guardians or trustees of estates and took more than their fair share of profits.)

Mark, however, vividly contrasts the behaviour of the scribes with that of a widow who gives a gift for the temple (vv. 41–4). As noted already, women in Mark often function as role models, in contrast to men, for how true disciples should behave (cf. 1:29–31). Here the woman's gift is minute in monetary terms (it has been estimated to be about one sixty-fourth of a denarius, a day's wage for a poorly paid labourer); but it is all she has and hence its value in God's eyes is far greater than the value of anything put in by other, well-off people. Perhaps we are to see here both a negative and a positive example of the love command in practice: the scribes' behaviour indicates that their 'service' to God is sham, and they seek only to profit themselves: they love neither God nor their neighbours. The widow gives her little which is her all: she is the one who is seen truly to love God.

We should perhaps also note another possible interpretation of this story, i.e. that it is an implied critique of the social situation (and of the socially powerful who exploit the situation)

which compels a poor widow to give all that she has and impoverish herself. However, the final saying of Jesus implies no such critique by referring to the compulsion the widow is under: rather it seems to refer to her act as a free act of generosity which as such is commended.

The Apocalyptic Discourse

In ch. 13 Mark records an extended block of teaching by Jesus, the so-called Markan Apocalypse, where Jesus looks to the future and predicts what is in store for his followers. Such predictions are a standard feature of much so-called 'apocalyptic' writing. For the authors of such texts, the predictions are placed on the lips of a figure in the past so that what is ostensibly a prediction of what is to come in the future is in fact for the reader often partly a reference to what has already happened. The same is probably the case here: Mark's Jesus looks forward; but for Mark and his readers, part at least of what is predicted has already happened. This serves to confirm the conviction that what is still future for Mark and his readers will indeed happen. Part of the problem of the chapter is to know exactly where the speech switches from Mark's past or present to his future.

Another stock problem of the interpretation of the chapter is to know what general message Mark is trying to convey. Jesus' predictions take the form not just of exhortations to be vigilant because the End may come at any time (cf. vv. 33–7), but also warnings not to get too excited and think that the End is imminent when certain events take place (this is the thrust of at least vv. 5–8, 9–13, 21–3). This then creates considerable tension in interpreting the discourse as a whole. Is Mark's Jesus trying to encourage eschatological awareness and enthusiasm, or is he trying to dampen it down? The line taken in this commentary will be that the latter is the dominant motif (it certainly occupies more space). But maybe precisely by dampening down some sorts of enthusiasm, in particular by pointing away from the likelihood of any preliminary signs to the coming of the End, and by pointing to the suddenness of the End when it comes, the exhortation to constant readiness and vigilance (vv. 33–7) can be asserted.

(13:1–4) The Occasion of the Discourse The discourse is set in the context of the temple and, at least in part, is presented as an answer to the question about the timing of the destruction of the temple. The disciples' comment about the magnificence of the temple building (v. 1) is

entirely apposite: the temple was a colossal building, with enormous stones, and represented a triumph in engineering and construction. Jesus here predicts that the temple will be destroyed, an event which of course happened in 70 CE. Such a prediction is deeply embedded in the tradition (cf. 14:57–8; 15:29; Jn 2:19; cf. Acts 6:14), and is almost certainly historical. For Mark, no doubt, the destruction of the temple reflected divine punishment for Israel's failure to respond.

In a further, somewhat artificial, development, Jesus is now asked by the inner group of four disciples to explain what he has just said, and in particular to say when this will happen. It is unclear as it stands whether the questions in v. 4 are asking about the time of one event (i.e. the destruction of the temple), the one question being effectively repeated by the other, or whether v. 4 constitutes two genuinely separate questions, asking about two events, the destruction of the temple and the end of the present world order. It seems likely that vv. 14–20 refer to the destruction of the temple (see below); since this does not cover the whole discourse, it may be that the rest of the chapter, referring to the end of the present world order, is an answer to what is a different question in v. 4b. Hence v. 4 should be taken as asking two different questions.

(13:5–8) The Start of the Troubles The main thrust of these verses seems clear in general: the disciples are not to be led astray by various events into thinking that the End is about to come. The section is thus a warning against overenthusiasm: such events must take place first, but they do not indicate that the present world order is about to end.

Despite the clear nature of the section in general, the details are highly obscure, especially the reference in v. 6 to people coming 'in my name' saying 'I am he!' (literally in Greek 'I am'). As Jesus is the speaker, it is not at all clear what such people might be claiming in saying 'I am he!'. Are they claiming to be Jesus himself returning (perhaps from the dead)? Are their words meant to echo the divine name itself ('I am') so that they are claiming to be quasi-divine beings? Are they coming in the 'name' of Jesus as Messiah and claiming to be the (true?) Messiah? Or are they coming as the Messiah's true agents or representatives? Certainty is simply impossible, except to say that the verse is extremely obscure! A similar warning appears in vv. 21–3, though there it is clearly

a reference to messianic claimants other than Jesus. That *may* be so here as well, in which case the repetition of the warning shows its importance for Mark and may indicate that the presence of such false claimants was felt as a real threat in Mark's own day. Mark may have been faced with competing messianic figures and anxious to identify the true Messiah as Jesus: hence his constant stress on the Christological question throughout his gospel.

The prediction of wars and natural disasters (vv. 7–8) has been used by some to try to date the Markan apocalypse more precisely by when such events occurred. Thus it has been argued that perhaps these verses reflect the events of the years c.68–9 CE quite precisely, when there was great civil unrest in many parts of the empire as well as reports of earthquakes (Hengel 1985). However, the prediction of such events is a standard feature of apocalyptic literature (cf. Isa 13:13; 1 *Enoch* 1:6–7 (earthquakes); Isa 14:30; 2 *Bar.* 27:6 (famines); 2 *Esd* 9:34; 13:31 (wars)), so one need not necessarily see any specific events reflected. In any case the general message is clear: such events constitute only preliminary stages to the End: 'the end is still to come' (v. 7).

(13:9–13) Persecution The same applies to the phenomenon of persecution. Probably we see here a reflection of the experiences of various Christians: they have experienced persecution (though the persecution referred to here clearly covers a wide range—in Jewish synagogues and before non-Jewish rulers), though how far this has affected Mark's own community directly is not so clear (cf. 8:34–8). But such persecution, like wars and natural disasters, is not to be taken as a sign of the End.

Similarly, the gospel must be preached world-wide before the End will come (v. 10). Persecution then seems to be set in a context of missionary preaching: it is evangelization itself which has led to persecution; but such persecution will not stop, and the End will not come, until the gospel has been preached to the whole Gentile world ('all the nations'). Once again the thrust of the section is to dampen down at least some kinds of eschatological enthusiasm, namely the view that regarded persecution as a sign of the End.

(13:14–20) The Desolating Sacrilege With vv. 14–20 the emphasis shifts somewhat. In the two earlier sections, the stress had been on steadfastly waiting and not expecting things to

happen. Now the stress is on firm action: 'When you see... then flee!' However, the action concerned makes it very clear that the event concerned cannot be the end of the world and the final judgement; for then any flight would be impossible.

The event itself is described in deliberately cryptic language, using words from the book of Daniel ('the desolating sacrilege' cf. Dan 9:27; 12:11), and Mark himself indicates their cryptic nature by his aside 'let the reader understand'. The desolating sacrilege is 'set up where it ought not to be'. (Grammatically the participle here is masculine in Greek, qualifying a neuter noun: hence the 'thing' concerned is clearly personified in some way.) In Daniel the reference is to the pagan altar set up in the Jerusalem temple by Antiochus Epiphanes (1 *Macc* 1:54–9). Presumably a similar desecration of the temple is in mind here. Although many have argued that what is reflected here is the threat of Caligula to set up his own statue in the temple in 40 CE (Theissen 1992), it is unclear why people should then 'flee' (certainly no one did). Perhaps more likely is the view that this reflects the destruction of the temple at the end of the Jewish revolt in 70 CE, when Titus' soldiers set up their standards in the temple and offered sacrifices. If so then Mark must have been written after 70 CE and this verse may be the strongest evidence for such a theory. It is sometimes argued against this view that, during the siege of Jerusalem, the city was surrounded and no one could have fled to the hills. But Mark may not have known all the details of what happened in Jerusalem itself at this time, so the lack of precise correspondence between these verses and what actually happened is no bar to the view that Mark is writing after 70 CE. If so, then these verses are part of the answer to the first of the disciples' questions in v. 4.

Certainly the action urged is decisive and quick: all must get away as soon as possible for the suffering will be intense. However, within the broader context it is again clear that this event, however painful and catastrophic, is not a sign of the arrival of the End itself.

(13:21–3) False Messiahs and Prophets The same is implied in the next section which *may* (cf. above) repeat the warnings of v. 7 of false Messiahs and false prophets. Such people will even produce 'signs and wonders': Josephus records various such prophetic and/or messianic claimants at this period who claimed to

be able to perform various miracles. It seems then that we are still in the realms of past or present for Mark.

(13:24–7) The Coming of the Son of Man With the next verse, the scene changes dramatically and quite clearly to the future. Now we have a description of the End itself, and the accompanying signs are described in such a way as to show that (a) they are completely unmistakable as presaging the End, and (b) they are not really preliminary at all: they are part of the End itself. The ‘signs’ are in fact the total break-up of the present cosmic order: sun and moon failing, and the whole universe collapsing. The description is traditional (cf. Isa 13:10; 34:4) and no doubt is intended as a mixture of ‘myth’ and reality. The climax is the description of the coming of the Son of Man figure, coming with ‘clouds’ and ‘great power and glory’, gathering the elect from the four corners of the earth. The language is clearly inspired by the vision of Dan 7:13–14, though here the Son of Man is now coming from heaven to earth (in Daniel he goes to heaven, to the throne of the Ancient of Days); and his mission is now to collect the faithful (cf. Isa 11:11), presumably to bring them together as the new people of God.

This description, strictly, brings to an end the apocalyptic prediction of the discourse. What follows are various exhortations and comments to the listeners on how they should behave or react to this vista of the future that is held out for them.

(13:28–32) Various Sayings This may have been a collection of originally isolated sayings, only placed here secondarily. Jesus puts forward a mini-‘parable’ about a fig-tree coming into leaf as a sign of the imminent summer; this is then said to be an image of ‘these things’ which are a sign of the imminent End. Clearly the reference cannot be to the coming of the Son of Man (vv. 26–7) since this is the End itself; it may therefore be the cosmic signs of vv. 24–5 that herald the coming of the Son of Man (though they are almost part of the same event). The point may then be that these signs are so unmistakable that only when one sees them can one deduce that the End is about to come. Other alleged preliminary signs are misleading.

If that is so, the tone shifts markedly in v. 30—from warning against over-enthusiasm to encouraging eschatological awareness: the End will come within the lifetime of the present generation. Certainly then for Mark, a false

enthusiasm based on potentially misleading signs does not preclude a genuine and proper expectation that the End will come—and soon.

v. 31 is yet another independent saying, stressing the abiding validity of Jesus’ teaching. Clearly, if it is genuine, it is a massive claim to authority. In its present context, the saying serves to buttress the validity of the claims made by Jesus in the preceding discourse, and to give added assurance to Mark’s readers of the truth of his prediction of what is for them still in the future. Yet despite any claims about Jesus’ authority, the next verse (v. 32) expresses the limited nature of Jesus’ knowledge about any detailed timings. In its present form, the saying is highly unusual in that Jesus refers to himself as the Son in absolute terms, a feature very rare elsewhere in the synoptics, and hence raising the suspicion that this is a Christian post-Easter creation. On the other hand, it seems very unlikely that later Christians would invent a saying in which Jesus confesses such ignorance. Perhaps a genuine saying of Jesus has been glossed by later Christians so that Jesus now refers to himself as the Son. For Mark the saying no doubt serves to assure Mark’s readers about their own ignorance: if they do not know exactly when the End will come, they can be assured that neither did Jesus himself.

(13:33–7) The Returning Master As a result Mark’s Jesus issues his final call to be continually ready and vigilant. The call is in the form of a parable (vv. 34–6). The parable has various synoptic parallels (cf. Lk 12:35–8, 42–6; 19:11–27), though Mark’s story here seems to confuse two images: a man going on a long journey and entrusting servants with various tasks, and a man going out for an evening and expecting servants to await his return. At least two stories seem to be conflated here. The points of time mentioned in v. 35 (evening, midnight, cock-crow, morning) correspond to the four watches of the night on the Roman reckoning and this may indicate Mark’s own *Sitz im Leben*. The message of the section is spelt out in the final verse, which in turn is explicitly said to apply not only to the four disciples of the story-world, but to ‘all’, i.e. all Mark’s readers: ‘keep awake’, be ready for the End which may come at any time.

This then is the final word of Jesus before the story of his passion and death.

Passion Narrative

Ch. 14 is often thought to be the start of the passion narrative proper. It is sometimes held

that the passion narrative as a connected whole was put together very early and that this version reflects an earlier, pre-Markan account. Mark's story may well be traditional—and certainly a number of unevennesses in the present account are probably due to separate traditions being secondarily put together. On the other hand, it is also clear that Mark's present narrative is an integral part of the broader narrative in his gospel and in many ways it forms the climax of what has gone before.

Mark's account is very stark and unadorned. Yet the passion of Jesus was for Christians never a matter of simply 'plain fact' about Jesus' death. Christians believed that Jesus' death was in some sense 'according to the scriptures', i.e. part of a divine plan and somehow 'fulfilling' the OT. Exactly how this 'fulfilment' took place was conceived in different ways by different writers and different parts of the OT are referred to in this context. For Mark, some of the Psalms describing a righteous sufferer are clearly very important, so Mark writes up some aspects of the account of Jesus' passion in the words of these Psalms, especially Ps 22. Perhaps surprisingly, the evangelists do not make much, if anything, of any parallels between Jesus' death and the suffering ascribed to the servant figure of Isa 53. Generally speaking, the gospels are very reticent about ascribing *atonement* significance to Jesus' death: the story only occasionally implies that Jesus dies 'for us' or 'for our sins'.

(14:1–2) The Plot These verses set the following scene into a chronological framework in relation to the feast of Passover. The chronological details are potentially very significant (was the Last Supper a Passover meal? Did Jesus' trial take place on the feast of Passover itself?). But the exact details are tantalizingly obscure and Mark himself may have been confused.

v. 1 dates the events two days before the feast of Passover, which was at this time the same as the first day of the (sevenday) Feast of Unleavened Bread. Since Jewish days started at sunset, and Jesus was crucified on a Friday, Mark here probably refers to the Wednesday before. The Jews plot to arrest Jesus but say they will not act during the festival for fear of disturbance (v. 2). Yet the story shows them doing precisely that! Could it be that Judas' action (in betraying whatever he did betray) led them to change their minds? Alternatively, this could be an indication that the events concerned took place in a chronology which was rather different from the one presupposed by (some) later parts of Mark's

narrative, so that Jesus died *before* the Passover, as indeed John's gospel implies (cf. Jn 19:31). See further MK 14:12–16.

(14:3–9) The Anointing at Bethany The story may originally have been independent of the passion narrative: Luke, for example, places a similar story much earlier in Jesus' ministry (Lk 7:36–50). For Mark, the story highlights at least three points:

1. It shows an act of true generosity by the woman, in contrast to the penny-pinching objections of the bystanders (vv. 4–5). The woman uses up a huge amount of oil, at least in monetary terms (300 denarii was almost a year's wages for a labourer). Yet Jesus praises such extravagance: his own temporary presence is more important than the constant needs of the poor (v. 7). The Christological significance is obvious, though how much such sentiments might translate into a contemporary Christian social ethic is by no means so clear!

2. The woman 'anoints' Jesus' head. This is explicitly said to anticipate Jesus' burial (v. 8): this action is the start of the sequence of events that will lead to Jesus' death. What may also be in mind is the fact that Jesus' body was not later anointed: the women went to the tomb to do this on the first Easter Day, but found the tomb empty. Hence Jesus' body was never anointed after his death: the woman's action here therefore anticipates his death by the prior anointing of his body.

3. There is probably further significance for Mark in the story. As we shall see, much of the passion narrative is dominated by the idea that Jesus is a king: he will be mocked as a king, and crucified as a royal pretender. So too he has entered Jerusalem in royal fashion (see MK 11:1–10). Anointing is also an act associated with a king: Jesus then is portrayed here as the anointed royal figure who as such, goes to his death.

(14:10–12) Judas' Betrayal The account of Judas' betrayal of Jesus is told starkly and briefly here. (It is elaborated considerably in the other gospels.) No details are given and one can only speculate about possible answers to questions such as: what were Judas' motives? What exactly did he betray to the authorities? (Jesus' whereabouts? Aspects of his message?) However, the incident as a whole is scarcely likely to have been invented by later Christians.

Judas' action is described as 'betraying', or 'handing over', Jesus. The same Greek verb is used in the passion predictions (9:31; 10:33;

cf. 14:41), where it is implied that God is the subject of the action. Perhaps there is a hint here then that even in Judas' act of treachery, God's plan is actively being fulfilled.

(14:12–16) Preparations for the Passover This is the only story in Mark which serves to identify the Last Supper as a Passover meal. The account of the Supper itself makes no explicit reference to its being a Passover meal; and although some details of the meal are consistent with its being a Passover celebration (the meal is eaten at night, wine is drunk, those taking part recline, Jesus interprets some elements of the meal, a hymn is sung at the end), other essential elements of the Passover celebration are notorious by their absence in the narrative (no mention of the bitter herbs, the passover lamb, the explanation of the ritual in relation to the events of the Exodus from Egypt). There are also chronological difficulties raised by Mark's account in relation to the Sanhedrin trial: capital trials were not allowed on a feast-day, nor indeed on the eve of a feast-day, since a second session was required the following day to confirm the sentence (cf. *m. Sanh.* 4:1). Hence, if Mark's chronology here is correct, the Jewish authorities must have acted in a highly irregular or illegal way. (See further *mk* 14:53–65.)

Such difficulties have thus led many to conclude that this section in Mark is a post-Easter insertion (whether by Mark or an earlier tradition) identifying the Last Supper as a Passover meal. The secondary nature of the pericope may also be indicated by the reference to Jesus coming to the room with 'the twelve' in v. 17—even though according to vv. 12–16 two of them have gone ahead to make the preparations. The chronology implied by John's gospel is, of course, different: there Jesus dies as the Passover lambs are being killed, i.e. on the eve of Passover, so that Jesus' last meal cannot be the Passover meal itself. The Johannine chronology may well be theologically determined (Jesus' death coincides with that of the Passover lambs, so that Jesus is the true 'lamb', cf. *Jn* 1:26); but the Markan chronology may be equally theologically determined, though via a different scheme (the Last Supper is the true Christian 'Passover'). Thus while the Johannine chronology is not necessarily accurate in absolute terms, it may be more accurate than Mark's in dating Jesus' death as *prior* to Passover itself (and indeed this may be hinted at in Mark's own account: cf. *mk* 14:2).

Some confusion is evident on Mark's part in the opening time reference in v. 12: the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread would *not* have been when the passover lambs were sacrificed, but would have started in the evening when the feast of Passover itself began.

The events described here are very similar to the events prior to the triumphal entry into Jerusalem (11:1–6). At the very least, Mark has probably written up both accounts to reflect each other. Speculations about whether Jesus might have made prior arrangements are probably quite beside the point as far as Mark is concerned. For him, the story shows clearly that Jesus is fully aware, and in command, of the situation. It thus illustrates Jesus' full authority.

(14:17–21) Prediction of the Betrayal This may also be secondary in relation to vv. 22–5 (the reference to 'while they were eating' in v. 22 seems to repeat v. 18a); the account is also rather artificial in that, in response to the prediction that one of the disciples will betray him, they ask not who the betrayer is, but only 'Is it I?' In its present form, the story serves to highlight again Jesus' full foreknowledge of what is coming and also his obedience to God's will. Jesus' words in v. 20 echo the words of *Ps* 41:9 (cited explicitly in this context in *Jn* 13:18), and show the events taking place 'in accordance with' Scripture. The Son of Man saying in v. 21 again emphasizes the divinely ordained nature of the course of events to come (cf. 8:31): it is as Son of Man that Jesus is to suffer and die, and this is ordained in Scripture ('as it is written of him'). The reference is probably to *Dan* 7. As in v. 11, Jesus is to be 'betrayed', or 'handed over', a verb implying not only human treachery but also divine intention.

(14:22–5) The Last Supper Mark's account is brief and to the point. As already noted (see on 14:12–16), there are no references to the Passover ritual; almost certainly Mark's narrative has been affected by the celebration of the Christian eucharist in his own community.

The development of the history of the tradition about the events of the Last Supper, and especially Jesus' 'words of institution' over the bread and the wine, is not totally clear and the evidence is complex. There are probably two quite independent accounts of the tradition: Mark's narrative here and Paul's citation of his tradition in *1 Cor* 11:23–6. (Matthew's gospel here is probably dependent solely on Mark; Luke's may reflect a conflation of the Markan

and Pauline traditions.) Probably neither Mark nor Paul consistently represents the earlier form of the tradition. The saying over the bread ('this is my body') is very brief in Mark. (The Pauline version adds 'which is for you', perhaps assimilating it to the saying over the cup, and also an explicit command to repeat the rite: the latter is probably not original, since it is far easier to envisage such a command being added secondarily than deleted, though Mark may have assumed that such a command was self-evident anyway.) The word for 'body' (Gk. *sōma*) can mean physical body, but also 'person' or 'self'. The original Aramaic would certainly have had no word corresponding to the Greek verb for 'is'. It is then unlikely that any clear ontological identification between the bread and Jesus' physical body is intended. More likely, what is in mind is that the act of sharing the common bread serves to unite the disciples with Jesus and his cause so that the eating of the bread is some kind of prophetic sign, simultaneously enacting what it signifies, which enables the disciples to be one with Jesus and his cause. For Mark, no doubt, the eating of the bread enables the presence of the risen Lord to be shared and experienced by post-Easter Christians. For Jesus himself, perhaps the act was one whereby he sought to unite his followers with himself in the coming events of the passion. Part of his subsequent desolation may then be due to their failure to stick with him and his having to face his fate in total isolation.

The saying over the cup is longer and the differences between the Markan and Pauline versions are greater. The Markan version seems to equate the cup (or its contents) with Jesus' blood ('this is my blood of the covenant'), whereas the Pauline tradition relates the cup directly to the covenant ('this cup is the new covenant in my blood'), though both clearly agree on the centrality of the covenant idea. The relative age of the two traditions is disputed, but it seems likely that Mark's tradition is in some ways more developed and less original than Paul's: the idea of drinking blood would be abhorrent in a Jewish context; it is easier to see a development from the Pauline version to the Markan, bringing the two sayings into parallel form, than vice versa; also the Markan version as it stands is all but impossible to translate into Aramaic. Hence it is likely that the original form of the saying focused on the covenant established by Jesus' 'blood', rather than on the blood itself (though in any case such an idea is firmly present in Mark as well).

Fundamental therefore is the idea of the covenant established by Jesus: the surrender of his life in death (his 'blood') is the means by which a new covenant relationship is established. Further, since in Jewish tradition the covenant is integrally connected with the establishment of Israel as the people of God, the claim about the new covenant here implies the establishment of a new people of God. The final phrase in Mark ('poured out for many') is a clear indicator that Jesus' death is being seen in sacrificial terms. However, Jewish sacrifice was very varied and by no means monochrome. What is *not* said here is that Jesus' death is a sin offering or a means of dealing with individual sins or sinfulness (Matthew adds 'for the forgiveness of sins' here, but this is clearly secondary). Rather, Jesus' death is interpreted here as a *covenant* sacrifice, the means by which a new *community* is created by God's own initiative (see too on 10:45); by drinking the cup, the disciples share in all the benefits established by Jesus' sacrifice, i.e. they take their places as members of the new people of God, the new covenant community.

The final verse here (v. 25) looks ahead to the eschatological future, a feature shared (in general terms) by both Mark and Paul (cf. 1 Cor 11:26). For Mark, Jesus' 'words of institution' look to the present and/or the past. Here the reference is to the future: the special meal is an anticipation of the time of the kingdom. What is probably in mind is the messianic banquet (cf. Isa 25:6), symbolizing the joy of the new age. This may well be the most primitive aspect of the traditions of the eucharist, connected too with the evidently special nature of the meals held by Jesus during his lifetime: the special meal is a foretaste and anticipation of what is to come in its fullness in the future.

(14:26–31) Predictions of Denial Just as Jesus has earlier predicted Judas' betrayal, so now he predicts the defection of all the disciples, especially that of Peter. The story as it stands is probably composite: the citation of Zech 13:7 in v. 27*b* and the prediction about Galilee in v. 28 seem to intrude before Peter's protestation in v. 29 which would follow much more naturally after v. 27*a*. Hence vv. 27*b*–28 are probably an insertion which, in view of the similarity between v. 28 and 16:7, may be due to Mark himself.

The story as a whole serves to highlight again Jesus' full knowledge of what is to come. Further, Jesus is shown here to be a thoroughly reliable predictor of the future: he foresees and predicts Peter's denial right down to the

smallest details ('three times', 'before the cock crows twice', cf. v. 72). In turn this serves to establish the reliability of Jesus' other predictions whose outcomes are not recorded in Mark's story. Some of these are no doubt past for Mark (cf. v. 28), some are still to come (cf. 14:62). Peter's denial is in one sense the climax of the story of the deepening and radical failure of the disciples to understand Jesus. Yet v. 28 indicates that this is by no means the end of the story. (See further on the Ending of Mark.)

Zech 13:7 is a verse which may well have been used by Christians originally to 'explain' Jesus' death as in some way in accordance with Scripture. In its present context, however, the stress is as much on the sheep (i.e. the disciples) as on the shepherd who is smitten (i.e. Jesus): the defection of the disciples is as much part of the divine plan as is Jesus' death itself. The text form used here is also unusual: contrary to both the Hebrew and LXX texts, the version here has 'I will strike' in place of the imperative 'Strike!'. Clearly God is now the one who strikes. Thus again, the events to come are shown to be not only the result of human failings and sinfulness: they are also the actions of God himself and part of the divine plan.

(14:32–42) Gethsemane The account of Jesus' agony in Gethsemane is one of the most powerful and poignant stories in the whole of the gospel tradition. Its historicity has been questioned (how could the disciples have known what happened if they were all asleep at the time?). However, it is deeply embedded in the tradition (cf. the echoes of the story in Jn 12:27; 18:11; also Heb 5:7–8, as well as the parallels in Matthew and Luke); further, the picture of Jesus apparently doubting his willingness to face the future is unlikely to have been invented by later Christians. Hence it is very probable that the story has firm roots in the tradition. Perhaps Jesus believed that his mission was now a failure; perhaps too he had expected, or hoped, that his disciples would stay with him and share his lot (cf. 10:39; 14:22), but he now found himself totally alone. For Mark, the story is part of the growing isolation of Jesus whereby he is deserted by his friends and, in the end, feels deserted by God himself (cf. 15:34).

If, however, the story may have firm historical roots, this does not mean that every detail is historically accurate. In its present Markan form the account has some redundancies and repetitions (cf. the way in which Jesus goes away twice and comes back three times), suggesting

at least some secondary developments of the story. In particular, the words of Jesus' prayer to God in v. 36 may reflect as much what Christians thought Jesus would have said on such an occasion as anything he did actually say on this particular occasion.

Jesus' words echo the Lord's Prayer (the address to God as Father, 'your will be done'). Jesus' address of God as 'Abba', Father, is noteworthy. Too much has probably been made in the past of 'Abba' as a child's address to its father. Nevertheless, the word is distinctive as showing close intimacy, and the fact that the Aramaic word 'Abba' is preserved here suggests that this was remembered as characteristic of Jesus. However, it is not at all clear how unique this makes Jesus: Jesus himself gave others the same right/privilege (cf. the Lord's Prayer, Lk 11:2), and other Christians certainly followed suit (Cf. Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15). Rather than reflecting any self-awareness by Jesus of himself as a unique Son of God, the use of 'Abba' shows Jesus' close relationship with God which he *shared* with, and offered to, others. Here it is part of a general picture of sonship as denoting obedience and subservience: Jesus as the implied son is the one who submits to God's will, not his own. The reference to the 'cup' here is probably simply an image of intense suffering (cf. 10:38–9), not of any divine punishment (e.g. for the sins of others): such ideas are foreign to Mark.

As well as showing Jesus' own submission to God's will, the story highlights the failure of the disciples. The Greek word here for 'keep awake' (vv. 34, 37, 38) is the same as that used in the commands to watch in 13:34, 35, 37. By sleeping and failing to stay awake, the disciples are failing to obey the command of Jesus given to all his followers (cf. 13:37). Jesus' willing submission in the end to God's will thus contrasts dramatically with the human failings of his followers.

(14:43–52) The Arrest The story of Jesus' arrest may represent the start of an early account of Jesus' passion: from here the synoptic and Johannine accounts of the passion run closely parallel with each other, and the redundant (i.e. for Mark) reference to Judas as 'one of the twelve' in v. 43 may indicate that Mark is using an earlier tradition here. The account suggests more of a disorganized mob than an official party (cf. the reference to 'swords and clubs'). Judas' action in kissing Jesus *may* have been intended to identify who Jesus was (though why this should have been necessary is not clear); but in its present form it highlights

Judas' treachery: an act of respect and/or affection is used as an act of betrayal. The reaction of one of the bystanders in cutting off the ear of the high priest's slave is told here very briefly. The story is elaborated in the later gospels (it is an action of Peter, the victim is named, Jesus responds to the action), but here it is left in isolation. Jesus' response focuses on the violence of his opponents. The words of v. 49*a*, referring to Jesus' continued presence in the temple, conflict with Mark's general chronology, since they seem to imply that Jesus had been in Jerusalem much longer than the one hectic week implied by Mark. This in turn gives some added support to the theory that Jesus arrived in Jerusalem much earlier than Mark suggests (see MK 11:1–10). Jesus' final words (v. 49*b*) emphasize once again that everything takes place in accordance with Scripture and hence with God's will. The final note in v. 50 about all the disciples fleeing also confirms that everything happens as Jesus himself has predicted (cf. v. 27).

The small story about the young man running away naked has led to much speculation. Some have seen here a cryptic autobiographical note by Mark himself; however, it is unlikely that Mark was a Palestinian Jew. Possibly the story has been influenced by Amos 2:16. Attempts to see deeper significance in the 'linen cloth' work by the man (e.g. is this a reference to baptismal clothes 'taken off?') are probably fanciful.

(14:53–65) The Sanhedrin Trial The account of Jesus' trial before the Jewish authorities is one where the historical questions of what actually happened are most acute, and almost intractable. The story as it stands gives rise to innumerable historical difficulties. Above all, there is the fact that Mark seems to think of the events described as some kind of formal 'trial', resulting in a death sentence, and yet the authorities seem to have broken a large number of their own rules in conducting a capital trial in the way described. Our evidence for such rules—mostly from the Mishnah—is admittedly from a later time, but infringements implied here include holding a trial on a feast-day, not having a statutory second session on the following day to confirm the sentence, Jesus being condemned to death for blasphemy yet technically he has not blasphemed (see MK 14:64). Some of these problems are resolved if one takes the event as less of a formal trial and more of an informal hearing, as is implied by Luke's account (which may be independent of

Mark here) and also by John's (though there are the perennial problems of the historical reliability of John), and if one jettisons the Markan chronology which implies that all this happened on Passover itself (cf. MK 14:12–16).

The Markan account has been somewhat embroidered and one certainly cannot simply read it as a straight transcript of what actually happened. How much Mark himself was aware of this is not certain: did Mark deliberately set out to portray the Jewish authorities as breaking all their rules in order to get Jesus killed? Or was he simply ignorant of the finer points of Jewish legal procedure and unaware of the problems his account would cause for later interpreters? In view of the lack of any explicit hints of irregularities in procedure here, the latter possibility seems more likely.

In terms of historicity, there is also the problem of how later Christians would have had access to any reliable information about what actually happened during the hearing. Maybe some general information was available, but the details must have remained unknown. Perhaps part of the difficulties raised by the accounts is due to some information which may have been available being coupled with a general belief on the part of later Christians that Jesus was fundamentally innocent of any 'charge' brought against him.

Jesus is questioned first about an alleged claim to destroy the temple. As it stands, the account is highly implausible: Jesus is accused by false witnesses who cannot agree—but such testimony should then be rejected. Yet for Mark there is a constant theme of dramatic irony running through this account of the passion: what is at one level false is also at a deeper level an expression of profound truth. The 'falsity' may partly derive from the general belief that Jesus was innocent of any charge (cf. above); it may also be partly due to the fact that the falsity applies not so much to the truth of what is said as to the people making the claims. Jesus' prediction of the destruction of the temple is, as we have seen, deeply embedded in the tradition (see MK 13:2). Here such a prediction is expanded by a contrast between the physical temple, which will be destroyed, and a temple 'not made with hands' which will replace it 'in three days'. For Mark and his Christian readers, the reference is certainly to the spiritual temple of the church, established by Jesus in the resurrection (after 'three days'). For many, such an idea is best explained as a Christian development in the light of the

resurrection. However, we now know from some Qumran texts that the Jews at Qumran had a similar interpretation of the 'temple' as the community; moreover, in some of these texts, building this new/metaphorical temple was conceived of as the task of an expected Davidic messianic figure (cf. 4QFlor). Thus Jesus could have conceived his own role as that of a messianic figure whose primary task was to establish a new community as the new people of God, a new 'temple'. With this background of thought, the transition to the next question about Jesus' messiahship, often felt to be difficult to explain, becomes more comprehensible and may thus reflect historical fact rather better than is sometimes claimed.

Jesus' refusal to answer (which could then be taken as a refusal to deny the 'accusation') leads on to the specific messianic question of Jesus' own identity. Jesus is asked explicitly if he is the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed. (The high priest's words avoid uttering the divine name of God.) For the first time in Mark's narrative, Jesus now openly acknowledges his identity. Secrecy is no longer commanded. The reason for Mark may be that the context provides the true hermeneutical key: the one who is Messiah and Son of God is the one who stands as prisoner in the dock and is about to be condemned to death. True messiahship, true divine sonship, for Mark means obedience, suffering, and death. When that is made clear, no secrecy is necessary. Yet, as in ch. 8 when Jesus was alone with his disciples, talk about messiahship is immediately qualified by reference to himself as Son of Man (cf. Mk 8:27–33). For Mark it is the idea of Son of Man that provides the proper key to any talk of Jesus as Messiah. As we have seen on several occasions, 'Son of Man' implies obedience, suffering, and subsequent vindication. Here the stress is on the last of these (cf. too 13:26). The one who is obedient to the cross will ultimately be vindicated by God. Further, the predictions of Jesus which have been fulfilled in the passion itself serve to buttress the validity of this prediction which for Mark awaits fulfilment in the future.

The story in vv. 61–2 clearly reflects key elements in Mark's narrative. How far they are also historical is much harder to say. As we have seen, the sequence from the temple saying to the question of messiahship is plausible. Further, it is almost certain that Jesus was crucified as a messianic claimant (cf. the *titulus* over the cross). Open messianic claims by Jesus are however very rare in the gospels, and their

historicity is suspect. Perhaps the most one can say is that Jesus must have been confronted by such claims at his trial and at the very least refused to deny them (perhaps because they reflected at least some of his positive aspirations, e.g. his wanting to rebuild a new Israel, even if other aspects of messiahship, such as political nationalism, were less appealing).

The high priest claims that Jesus has blasphemed (v. 64). Strictly speaking, Jesus has not, since blasphemy technically involved uttering the divine name (see *m. Sanh.* 7:5) and this Jesus has scrupulously avoided doing. In terms of history, it may be that Jesus was regarded as having made 'blasphemous' claims or assertions in a loose way, though not necessarily uttering the divine name, and it was this that led the authorities to want him killed, even if they may not have been legally empowered to execute him themselves—hence their decision to involve the Roman authorities. (The whole question of Jewish legal powers to execute at this period is a very vexed one: see the survey in Brown 1994: 363–72.) But for Mark, such legal niceties were probably irrelevant. Perhaps he knew that the question of Jesus' identity as Messiah was a key one in the 'trial', and he clearly believed that the Jews did condemn Jesus to death for what they regarded as blasphemy.

The mockery of Jesus which now ensues involves deep irony. Jesus is mocked as a prophet: yet he has just been shown to be a true prophet in predicting the flight of the disciples; Mark's story is about to show his prediction of Peter's denial being fulfilled very literally; and Jesus has just predicted his own vindication as Son of Man. Mocked as a false prophet (by implication), Mark's narrative shows Jesus to be a true prophet, and his apparent demise is in fact the true and only path that will lead to ultimate vindication by God.

(14:66–72) Peter's Denial The story of Peter's threefold denial spans the account of Jesus' trial. (Mark starts the story about Peter in v. 54, but then adds the trial scene to create a typical sandwich structure.) The net effect is to highlight the contrast between Jesus who stands firm and Peter who capitulates to pressure. Mark goes out of his way to show that the events fulfil Jesus' prediction precisely, even down to the cock crowing twice (cf. v. 30). The final sentence is obscure: the verb translated 'broke down' (NRSV) is totally unclear as to its precise meaning. If we are to see in Peter's

tears remorse and contrition, any sequel is left unspoken: this is the last appearance of Peter in the gospel (though cf. 16:7).

(15:1–15) Trial before Pilate The story of the hearing before Pilate raises almost as many historical problems as the account of the Sanhedrin trial. That there was some Roman involvement in the trial and death of Jesus seems undeniable: at the very least we have to explain the fact that Jesus was crucified, and crucifixion was a Roman punishment, reserved primarily for political rebels. The tendency in the Christian tradition, however, is to take the blame away from the Romans and put it on to the shoulders of the Jewish authorities. Undoubtedly we see this process happening here. The scene starts with Pilate abruptly asking Jesus ‘Are you the King of the Jews?’, and, when met with silence from Jesus, seeking desperately to release him. The picture is quite implausible, both in general and in detail. The picture of Pilate here as weak and vacillating, anxiously trying to please the Jews, in no way squares with what we know from elsewhere of the man, viz., a cruel tyrant who would have not had the slightest compunction in executing an odd Jew or two to keep the peace. So too the Barabbas incident defies explanation: no such custom of releasing a prisoner on a regular basis is known, nor is it really credible. Most likely the account here has been influenced by the tendency to shift the blame away from the Romans and on to the Jewish authorities.

The question of Jesus’ kingship, raised here by Pilate, is the one that will now dominate the chapter (cf. vv. 9, 12, 18, 26, 32). The charge of being king of the Jews was almost certainly the charge on which Jesus was crucified by the Romans (cf. the *titulus*, v. 26): it was in any case a political charge (which would naturally lead to the punishment of crucifixion: cf. above), and moreover it was a charge on which someone like Pilate would feel obliged to act: a royal pretender would clearly pose a threat to political power which Pilate could not ignore. Hence some aspects of the story here are very plausible. However, it is much more likely that Pilate simply ordered Jesus’ crucifixion without any compunction at all. For Mark, the issue is no doubt one of Jesus’ kingship—yet not so much Jesus’ identity as king as the nature of that kingship and of the royal power he exercises.

(15:16–20) The Mockery This is brought out in the mockery scene which now follows, a

scene impregnated with almost savage irony. Jesus is clothed by the soldiers in royal clothes—a purple cloak and a ‘crown’ that is an instrument of torture. The soldiers then do mock homage to him and hail him—for them ironically—as ‘king of the Jews’. But the real irony goes one stage further because, for Mark, what is said here in mocking jest is in fact profound truth. Jesus is the king of the Jews. What the soldiers say in jest expresses for Mark the deepest reality.

(15:21–32) Crucifixion Jesus’ cross is carried, under pressure, by one Simon of Cyrene: we know nothing of him (though his sons ‘Alexander and Rufus’ may have been known in Mark’s community—hence their mention here). Jesus is then crucified and given a drugged drink. Possibly the story has been influenced by Ps 69:21 (certainly Matthew, who changes Mark’s ‘myrrh’ to ‘gall’, makes the allusion clearer). Jesus however refuses. The next verse (v. 24), with its reference to casting lots for Jesus’ clothes clearly echoes Ps 22:18, just as the note in v. 29 of the bystanders ‘shaking their heads’ echoes Ps 22:7. Ps 22 has had a powerful (if unstated) influence on the Markan narrative.

The mockery of the bystanders again employs the motif of irony. The charge about the temple is brought up again, including the note about rebuilding a new temple, and the people call on Jesus to save himself and come down from the cross. But the new temple is the new covenant community, brought into being by Jesus’ own death so that Jesus cannot save himself if the prediction of the new temple is to be fulfilled. Similarly, the words of the Jewish leaders, ‘He saved others; he cannot save himself’ (v. 31) are, like the soldiers’ mockery in vv. 16–20, both a taunt and simultaneously at a deeper level a profound truth: Jesus is saving others precisely by being where he is and by not saving himself—he cannot save himself if he is indeed to be the saviour of the world.

A final bitter irony comes with the claim that if Jesus, as Messiah and king, could come down from the cross, they would then ‘see and believe’. Yet Mark and Mark’s readers know that such ‘seeing’ is not available, nor does it lead to the right sort of ‘belief’. Faith for Mark can never be based on miracles: miracles can only occur in the context of already existing faith and commitment (cf. 8:11–12).

(15:33–9) Jesus’ Death The same note of mockery, and possible irony, may continue as

the story moves to its climax in Jesus' death. Darkness falls, an event which is clearly understood as a divine miracle. (An eclipse of the sun would have been impossible at the time of Passover which would have been a full moon.) Jesus then utters his only words from the cross in Mark, the opening words from Ps 22:1. Some have argued that this 'cry of dereliction' should not be taken too negatively: the citation of the opening words of Ps 22 imply that the later part of the psalm (expressing great hope) is also in mind. This seems unlikely. Mark's account has shown a progressive increase in Jesus' isolation and abandonment by others. He has been abandoned by all his friends, condemned by all human agencies, and now he feels himself abandoned even by God himself. Any reading of the text should not water down or dilute the starkness and harshness of the narrative Mark presents.

Jesus' citation of Ps 22:1 (in Aramaic) is taken as a call to Elijah (why this should be so is not clear: such confusion could only occur if Jesus had spoken in Hebrew—as indeed Matthew claims—not in Aramaic). Perhaps what is in mind is the notion, evidenced in some later Jewish traditions, that Elijah, as the one who did not die, would help the righteous in times of trouble. This, however, seems to have been confused with another tradition of a bystander giving Jesus a drink (cf. Ps 69:21 again), either a drug to ease the pain, or vinegar to aggravate thirst—hence a mocking 'help'. The idea of Elijah as possibly coming to help may also be ironic since, for Mark's Jesus, Elijah had already come, been rejected and killed (cf. 9:11–13).

Jesus' death comes—mercifully quickly in the end for a crucifixion. The events which follow are undoubtedly Mark's own theological interpretation of what has happened. The veil of the temple is torn in two, and the centurion confesses Jesus as Son of God. (The words of the centurion could be translated as saying simply that Jesus was a son of a god. However, for Mark, it seems certain that he intends the centurion to make the ultimate Christological confession: Jesus is *the* Son (capital S) of God. For what this means, see below.)

The precise identification of the 'veil' of the temple is uncertain. Two possible curtains could be intended: that which stood at the entrance to the temple building, or that which stood at the entry to the Holy of Holies, symbolically preventing God from being seen by human beings. This Markan verse is often taken as referring to the temple as a whole,

and the tearing of the veil as a symbol of the destruction of the temple and the end of the Jewish cult (cf. 11:16–19; 13:2; 14:58). This is possible, though it seems just as likely that v. 38 should be taken as integral with v. 39 as well: the tearing of the veil enables one to *see now*: and in particular it enables the centurion to *see who Jesus is*: for the first time in Mark's story, a human being now comes to the realization that Jesus is truly 'Son of God'. But what does this mean? At one level the interpretation may be provided by v. 38: the 'curtain' may rather be the one veiling the Holy of Holies, so that, when this is torn in two, the barrier separating God from men and women is ripped apart: God himself is seen. Mark's scene here may thus be vividly and dramatically presenting Jesus *qua* Son of God as the very representation of God himself.

There is, however, a vital corollary. For the context for the confession of v. 39 is not only v. 38 but the whole scene itself, including v. 37. The centurion sees—a dead man hanging on a shameful cross, and says that *this man* is the Son of God. If Mark intends by v. 38 to claim that Jesus *qua* Son of God represents God, then his story also vividly and violently not only says something about what it means to be a Son, it also says something about God. It is not only about Christology, it is also about theology. God is to be seen most clearly and starkly in the abandonment, the weakness, and the powerlessness of the crucified one.

The identity of Jesus has been no secret for the reader from the very start of the story (cf. 1:1). However, the nature and significance of what it means to be Son of God—not only Son but also Son of *God*—are now spelt out in Mark's narrative. The scene is at one level the climax to which the whole of Mark's story has been leading.

(15:40–7) Burial The note about the women watching from afar (vv. 40–1) prepares for the account of the women coming to the tomb on the first day of the week. As we have noted already, in Mark women often do what the male disciples have failed to do. At least these women have not deserted Jesus completely. The account of the burial of Jesus follows, told simply and with little adornment except for the extra conversation between Pilate and the soldiers which simply confirms the reality of Jesus' death.

(16:1–8) The Empty Tomb The sequel to the story of Jesus' death and burial is in Mark's gospel terse and compressed. By universal

consent, the sequel as we have it comprises only vv. 1–8 of this chapter. Continuations of the narrative, either in a short ending or in a longer ending (printed as vv. 9–20 in some English Bibles) appear in some MSS of Mark; but these are clearly not by the author of the text of the rest of the gospel and represent attempts to complete the narrative. Thus the final section we have of Mark's story contains only an account of the discovery of the empty tomb by the women with no actual appearance of the risen Jesus.

The story of the women coming to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body raises a number of well-known historical problems: e.g. if the women had no idea how the stone over the entrance to the tomb could be removed (cf. v. 3), why did they come at all? For Mark, however, such questions are beside the point: the narrative rather shows the miracle of the empty tomb which surpasses all human expectations and thus leads to astonishment on the part of the women.

The 'young man' encountered by the women is 'dressed in a white robe', probably indicating that he is to be thought of as an angel. He tells the women what the empty tomb implies: 'He has been raised; he is not here.' The order of the clauses is striking. The resurrection is almost assumed without question, and the empty tomb interprets it by the (self-evident) fact that Jesus is 'not here'. He is *not* present. There is thus no sense in which for Mark the empty tomb guarantees the reality of the resurrection or assures the presence of the risen Jesus. Almost the reverse is the case: the empty tomb is an empty tomb: Jesus is *not* here to be experienced as a tangible objective proof of anything. If then he is not here, where is he to be found? The next verses provide an answer—albeit enigmatically.

In v. 7, the young man gives a message to the women for the disciples and Peter: Jesus is 'going ahead' of them to Galilee, and they will see him there. The specific reference to Peter makes it highly likely that the 'seeing' involves a resurrection appearance, with the mention of Peter perhaps referring to a special appearance to Peter (cf. 1 Cor 15:3; Lk 24:34). (Hence the reference is not, as some have argued, to the parousia: cf. Marxsen 1969.) Further, the young man's last words ('as he told you') clearly recall Jesus' prediction in 14:28. The reference is thus to a meeting between the risen Jesus and the disciples when the latter will be forgiven and restored; their relationship with Jesus, broken by their failure to stick with him, will be

renewed. Once again they will become disciples, with Jesus 'going ahead' of them, just as he did before (cf. 10:32).

The women's reaction is, however, to ignore what they have been told. They are seized with 'terror and amazement'; they flee away, and say 'nothing to anyone, for they were afraid'. It seems highly likely that, from Mark's point of view, the women's reaction is to be regarded negatively. Although amazement and awe in the presence of the numinous (e.g. an angel) is in one sense entirely appropriate, the 'fear' shown by the women here seems to be wholly bad. 'Fear' elsewhere in Mark is the reaction which contrasts with faith (cf. 4:40); and the women here fail to do what they have been explicitly told to do. There is an almost ironical reversal of the situation earlier in the gospel. Earlier, people were regularly told to be silent about Jesus (and often disobeyed); here, the women are told to speak out openly—indeed the earlier secrecy charge in 9:9 had indicated that the time after the resurrection would be the time for openness; yet they are silent! There seems to be then an underlying pattern of divine command and human failing, which does not stop even here in the story with the resurrection. So too, however much the women in Mark act as correctives to the behaviour of male disciples, in the end they too are shown as failing. Human weakness and failing is thus shown to be universal. But is this Mark's last word? We must consider the problem of the ending.

The Ending

As already noted, Mark's text as we have it ends at 16:8. Other endings found in some MSS of the gospel are clearly (on stylistic grounds) secondary additions, mostly being compressed conflations of the resurrection appearance stories in the other gospels. Did then Mark intend to end at 16:8? Many have felt that an ending at this point is unsatisfactory and extremely difficult to conceive. Grammatically, 16:8 ends very abruptly and clumsily in Greek (with a conjunction). More important perhaps is the question of substance. The very existence of the alternative endings in some MSS testifies to a feeling by later scribes that the gospel was incomplete; and even Matthew and Luke, in some sense Mark's first interpreters, both clearly believed that Mark's gospel needed completion by the addition of accounts of resurrection appearances. Many modern scholars have felt the same, and hence have argued that Mark's gospel

was not intended to end where it does: It must be that either Mark continued with accounts of resurrection appearances and the ending has been lost (by accident or deliberate suppression), or he was prevented from finishing his work (e.g. by illness, or by being arrested).

Neither of these theories is entirely satisfactory: one would expect a lost ending to be restored, and theories about Mark's personal circumstances are entirely speculative. In any case such theories depend heavily on preconceived ideas about what a gospel narrative, in particular the conclusion to such a narrative, 'must' contain. Without such preconceptions, the onus is probably on the reader to try to make sense of the narrative as it stands and to take seriously the possibility that 16:8 is indeed the intended ending.

It seems clear that the end of the narrative is *not* the end of the line of events which start in the narrative itself. For example, the prediction of 16:7 of a renewal of the relationship between Jesus and the disciples must, for Mark, have been fulfilled. Throughout Mark's passion narrative, Jesus has been shown to be a reliable prophet, predicting events to come with great accuracy (cf. on Peter's denial). The whole literary plot of the narrative therefore demands that Jesus' predictions are fulfilled, including those not explicitly covered by the narrative itself. Thus the narrative structure created by Mark compels us to believe that the continuation of Mark's story-world into Mark's real world has led to the meeting implied in 16:7 having taken place.

Hence too the women's silence in v. 8 cannot have been absolute and everlasting. Despite it, the message to the disciples must eventually have got through to them so that they met up with the risen Jesus in Galilee. In any case, Mark's own Christian community must have known of the resurrection of Jesus (cf. the passion predictions which all include predictions of the resurrection as well: again Mark must have believed that they were fulfilled), and this must presume that the message of the young man did (eventually) reach its goal.

Perhaps though the message to the disciples has more significance for Mark than just its surface meaning. They are to meet up with Jesus in 'Galilee' where Jesus is 'going ahead' of them. For Mark, however, Galilee is the place where discipleship starts, and the path of discipleship is one which leads from Galilee to Jerusalem, which for Mark is the place of suffering and death. Similarly, 10:32 makes it clear

that Jesus' 'going ahead' means going ahead on the road that leads to Jerusalem, the place of suffering. The way of discipleship for Mark is the way of the cross (cf. 8:34 etc.). If the disciples are to meet with Jesus in Galilee, then this is not necessarily some glorious panacea that will enable them to forget about the preceding events and mean a glorious, trouble-free existence. It is rather *suffering* discipleship to which they are called, as indeed ch. 13 has made clear.

Moreover, it is an existence that is perhaps permanently characterized by human failure. Just as the disciples have failed during Jesus' lifetime, the women have failed even during the apparent success of the era of resurrection; so the Christian readers of Mark may assume that failure will be a constant feature of Christian discipleship. But equally, as Mark's story implies (but does *not* state explicitly), failure can be and is overcome. The power of forgiveness and restoration is in the end greater than human failure and its consequences.

Mark's abrupt ending violently shifts attention away from what some of his readers may have expected (and from what some of his later readers such as Matthew and Luke evidently did expect). The era of the Christian church for Mark is not one of power and glory which nullifies the previous suffering and death. Stories of appearances of the risen Jesus might give that impression, and Mark does *not* recount these. As with the messianic secret in the earlier story, Jesus' true identity is to be seen as the crucified one; Jesus' divine sonship is seen most clearly and starkly when he *dies* (cf. 15:39). If Jesus is risen, he is risen as the crucified one. The gospel for Mark is thus the good news about Jesus—but it is *Mark's* Jesus that Mark's gospel is about, and for Mark, Jesus is supremely the Son of God seen most clearly in his suffering and death. Further, Mark's narrative may be only the beginning of the gospel (see 1:1). The rest of the gospel is to be completed by the reader, but the reader can only complete the story by following as a disciple of Mark's Jesus, and that means going to Galilee, being prepared to follow in the way of discipleship as spelt out by him, i.e. the way of the cross. There, and only there, will Jesus be 'seen' and experienced. There is then no happy ending to the gospel. There is certainly no objective account of the reality that informs Christian existence for Mark, namely the presence of the risen Jesus with his people: such would be inappropriate for Mark. Maybe Mark's gospel is indeed unfinished. But perhaps that is deliberate. It is up to

the reader to supply the ending—and that is the perennial challenge of this gospel to all its readers today.

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5. Luke

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INTRODUCTION

A. Luke among the Synoptic Gospels. 1. As one of the three Synoptic Gospels, Luke's story of Jesus has much in common with those of Matthew and Mark. Based on the same outline of his ministry, it includes a large number of episodes common to all three and puts emphasis upon many of the same things. It shares with the other two the same overall perspective from which Jesus' life is described and its significance assessed. Jesus is presented as the one who announces the arrival of the kingdom of God, his exorcisms and miracles are interpreted as witnessing to its presence in him and his teaching, often given by way of parables, explains its implications for those who would receive it.

2. Within this common framework, however, Luke's gospel includes many episodes which are peculiar to it and a significant number which, paralleled in one or both of Matthew and Mark, appear in his gospel in a different form and give a particular distinctiveness to his narrative. Among the most important of these are:

(a) Luke's infancy narratives, though agreeing with Matthew's on a number of important points, are, in the story they tell, quite other than his. Preparations for the birth of John the Baptist form a prelude to those of Jesus which they closely parallel—though in a less dramatic way—and with which they are interwoven. Jesus is linked firmly to Israel's prophetic line whose mission he fulfils. Born while all the world is on the move, he is ignored except by a number of Jewish outcasts who alone receive the divine announcement of his birth. Taken to the temple, however, he is recognized by true representatives of its piety who acknowledge that he will cause divisions in Israel but will become a light to the Gentiles, whose response will rebound to Israel's glory.

(b) Luke's narrative introduces Jesus' Galilean ministry with an account of a rejection at Nazareth which Matthew and Mark have much later in their gospels where it becomes Jesus' last visit to a synagogue. Luke's story includes a sermon in which Jesus proclaims himself as the fulfilment of Isaiah's hopes for Israel. He virtually compels his rejection but justifies it on the grounds that no prophet is acceptable to his

own. His lack of works at home is defended by pointing out that both Elijah and Elisha gave attention to foreigners. When the townsfolk rise up against him, their attempt to kill him is thwarted and leads only to a furthering of his progress towards his goal.

(c) All three Synoptic Gospels tell of Jesus' one, determined journey to Jerusalem to fulfil God's purposes for him. Whereas Matthew covers it in two chapters and Mark in only one, Luke devotes some ten chapters to it. Its beginning is marked by a verse of exceptional solemnity (9:51) and frequent references to it remind the reader of its importance. The concept of a journey is obviously significant for Luke. The great majority of its episodes are peculiar to him whilst its contents as a whole offer different aspects of his own particular understanding of Jesus.

(d) Whilst Luke's account of Jesus' teaching in Jerusalem and of his conflicts with the religious authorities there are paralleled in Matthew and Mark, once the passion narrative proper begins with the account of Jesus' last supper, the distinctiveness of his story is apparent. His account of Jesus' actions at the supper is not easily accommodated to theirs and he includes a significant discussion with the twelve which they lack. The agony in the garden and the arrest resemble theirs (though with significant differences) but his story does not have their account of the night examination of Jesus by the Jews. He has but one single session of the council in the morning. No actual condemnation of him to death is made but all is rather regarded as a preparation for the accusations they are to make against him before Pilate, whose unwillingness to accede to their demands is emphasized by a threefold declaration of his innocence. Pilate's favourable judgment is supported by Herod who in Luke alone is given a role in the drama at this point. Eventually, Pilate delivers up Jesus 'to their will' and the Jews take a leading part in bringing him to the cross. His crucifixion scene presents a different picture from that found in Matthew and Mark. Their starkness is mellowed and Luke's, though having the same general contours as theirs, is given in colours that in many ways come closer to those used in John. The cry of desolation is not included and Jesus is serene throughout. He forgives his persecutors, receives the acknowledgment of the penitent thief and promises him a place in paradise, and commends himself into his Father's hands. The picture is of a death which reveals the characteristics that determined the life.

What follows can only be a completion of what is now happening. Jesus' *exodos*, to which 9:31 pointed and which was to be accomplished at Jerusalem, is in the process of being realized.

(e) Whereas Mark expects Jesus' resurrected appearances in Galilee, and Matthew describes his final scene there, Luke's narrative leaves no room for such episodes. At the empty tomb, instead of Mark's promise of a future Galilean happening, Luke has a reference to a past event. All the appearances of the risen Jesus take place in or around Jerusalem. The theologically charged story of the journey to Emmaus is followed by the most materialistic of all the NT resurrection stories. What sets out to show that Jesus really is raised from the tomb becomes the setting for his farewell discourse, which justifies the events as those expected of the Messiah. It grounds in the Scriptures the universal mission that it enjoins. It sees its success as reason for believing in Jesus and as proof of the Spirit's presence in the community. Luke alone has a separate ascension event which both brings the resurrection appearances to a close and also accomplishes Jesus' glorification.

B. Luke's Narrative. 1. Whilst these distinctive episodes serve as a valuable tool in the quest for determining the nature of Luke's work and his purpose in writing, what can be learned from them has to be supplemented, and in part determined, by what the author himself says in his preface (see LK 1:1-4). This is unique in the gospels and in it Luke sets out his aims. His work is offered as an addition to an unspecified number of 'narratives' which have purported to give a basis for an adequate understanding of Jesus. His careful research into the traditions (probably both oral and written) that were available to him results in an 'orderly account' that deepens and maybe even corrects theirs at points. Just what claim he is making for his 'orderly account' is not clear. It is certainly one of providing a firm basis in hard events for the response of faith that Luke hopes to evoke. Luke believes his narrative to be grounded in real history.

2. The gospel's presentation of events, however, is not controlled by historical objectivity. Luke's story of the rejection at Nazareth owes its place at that point in the narrative less to a historical concern than to a desire to make it an introduction to the ministry as a whole. The details of Luke's crucifixion scene suggest that he wants to make it conform to what the gospel

says about Jesus' stance during his life. The death sums up the life and reflects what happened in it. Resurrection appearances were all placed in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem because, in the events that happened there, the eschatological hopes of Israel were seen as actually being realized. The mission to the nations of the world had to reach out from there and start with the remaking of the Jewish people (Acts 2:1–13). Luke's desire to present an account of 'the things that have been fulfilled among us' could be achieved only by bathing the events themselves in a light that enabled their full reality, as the author understood it, to be seen. The 'order' of his account was determined less by a concern that asked 'What actually happened next?' than by a desire to unfold and justify the overall movement in Jesus' life that effected the achievement of his status. Luke's gospel becomes the step by step unfolding of his thesis that Jesus is both 'Lord and Christ' and that it is through him that God has fulfilled the promises of redemption that he had made to Israel and, through her, to the world.

3. The Graeco-Roman outlook to which the preface links its author, and the biblical mould in which he casts his work, come together to make his narrative the expression of a faith that itself determines not only the perspective from which the events are described, but also the way they are actually perceived to have happened. Luke's preface makes claims that are both more convoluted and at the same time more profound than one to historical exactitude.

C. The Question of Sources. 1. The gospel's preface speaks of its author's search for traditions and of his knowledge of other narratives with which he could compare his own. All these contributed in some way to the work, though commentators are by no means agreed upon either their number or the extent of their influence upon the gospel's final form. Conclusions reached are to a considerable extent determined by their advocate's study of the gospels as a whole and what this suggests about the freedom with which their authors handled the material at their disposal.

2. The majority view is that Mark is the primary source of Luke's work. The actual manner of its use, however, remains something of an open question. Many of Luke's episodes differ in varying degrees from their parallels in Mark. At what point the differences are such as to make the move from Mark to another source a distinct probability is a matter of fine judgement.

Some commentators are so impressed by the unity of the final work that they will maximize Luke's creativity. Others, impressed by what they regard as foreign elements in the gospel (e.g. LK 1:67; 4:23; 11:49), see these as strong evidence for sources. If the latter look to Luke's preface for support, the former regard Luke's creativity as largely determined by his concern to write up his narrative in a biblical mould.

3. The position espoused by this commentary is that Luke most probably used Mark as his primary source and that, where they have parallel episodes, his are the result of a relatively free handling of what is found there. The use of supplementary sources to influence the final shape of Luke's episodes cannot be ruled out. So his reporting of Jesus' rejection at Nazareth is seen as determined by the basic pattern of Mark's episode. Its ending is written up as a commentary on Mark's scene which enables it to further the thrust of Luke's gospel. The speech expresses an understanding of Jesus which makes him the fulfilment of OT expectations and justifies his career on the basis of earlier OT prophetic activity. That Luke is here using a source to supplement Mark must be acknowledged as a possibility, but its function as the expression of ideas which are fundamental to Luke's narrative as a whole makes it more likely to have been the evangelist's own composition. The whole episode, shaped and in part created by him, is put at the beginning of the ministry to serve as its statement and the justification of its course as Luke describes it.

4. Apart from this material parallel to Mark, Luke has some 200 verses, mainly of Jesus' sayings, that, in varying degrees of closeness, are found also in Matthew. The majority of commentators assign this to a source, usually designated Q, which was used independently by the two evangelists (see FGS). Those who take this view tend to believe that Luke has introduced it into his gospel in a relatively unrevised form. That he handled what is accepted as a secondary source with such restraint, however, is unlikely if he used Mark, his primary source, freely. Some, impressed by this argument, therefore accept some form of the Proto-Luke hypothesis which, less favoured than it was, holds that the basis of Luke's work is not Mark but a blend of Q and some other sources into which he fitted a number of episodes which he took from Mark (Caird 1963). This, however, would seem to do less than justice to the unity of the final work. A minority of commentators,

impressed by this unity, would actually doubt the existence of Q and would account for the material common to Luke and Matthew by suggesting that Luke knew that gospel and actually made use of it in the composition of his work (Goulder 1989). This suggestion would make Luke an extremely free handler of his sources and would emphasize his creativity to an extent that most interpreters of his gospel would be unwilling to allow.

5. Questions about Luke's sources must remain unresolved. Any serious student of his gospel will regard a synopsis as an indispensable tool, for comparison of his episodes with their parallel forms in Matthew and Mark allows the contours of Luke's stories to be clearly seen; understanding of his stance is helped. Firm conclusions based upon any particular theory of how the gospels are related must, however, be avoided. Though these may make for a sharpened approach, their hypothetical nature must be recognized. To build too much upon them is to construct an edifice upon shifting sand.

D. Luke the Evangelist. 1. Luke's preface suggests that the evangelist writes himself firmly into his narrative. Other gospels do not point to their authors in this way and, though perhaps each leaves a hint of his presence, search for the gospel's setting and the reasons for its production focus primarily upon the community with which it is related. Though some interpreters have approached our gospel in this way, reading it as something of a mirror-image of the community with which it is thought to be associated, the gospel itself does not obviously suggest this approach (though see Esler 1987). It must, of course, make contact with a community of some sort, but it is addressed to it and is the author's response to a situation which is perceived through his own eyes rather than through those of the community itself. Luke's is a personal offering and the address to a person, whatever that may mean (see LK 1:4), suggests that it is the person of the author which determines what is included and the stance which is adopted. His gospel has something of the character of an epistle.

2. The author does not give his name but, from the second century, our gospel has been attributed to Luke who, in Philem 24, is called Paul's 'fellow-worker' and in Col 4:14 is described as 'the beloved physician'. The author of the gospel also wrote Acts and the most obvious reading of his use of the first person plural

at various points in the second half of that volume (16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16) would seem to be that on these occasions he was a companion of Paul.

3. Recent years, however, have seen a widespread questioning of this relationship (Vielhauer 1968). The picture of Paul in Acts differs appreciably from what Paul says about himself. Not only is it hard to fit Acts' biographical details into what Paul maintains, but it suggests a different approach to some of the issues that were at the heart of Paul's beliefs. The author's obvious enthusiasm for Paul is not felt to be equalled by his understanding of him.

4. Luke's description of Paul in Acts has sometimes been defended on the grounds that the apostle's was not always such a rigorous position as his more polemical utterances suggest (Marshall 1980). It is hard, however, to resist the conclusion that it is an interpretation of Paul's own outlook (Wilson 1973). The question is whether it is an illegitimate interpretation or whether it represents a legitimate one by someone who knew Paul, who had learned from his deepest insights, but who did not fully share the implications Paul himself drew from these. He presents Paul as he himself had learned from him, and writes his gospel to reflect this understanding (Franklin 1994).

5. From Paul, Luke learned of God's wide outreach in Jesus, and he received from him his wonder at the gracious inclusion of Gentile outsiders within the people of God. Whereas Paul, however, emphasized the newness of God's act in Christ and saw its otherness from his earlier dealings with both Jews and Gentiles, Luke saw it as continuous with his earlier and, indeed, his wider actions. Luke himself was almost certainly a Gentile and was most probably one of that group of Gentiles—the God-fearers—who, though greatly honouring the Jewish faith, shrank from circumcision and therefore remained excluded from the covenantal people of God. In Christ he found that inclusiveness which had previously been denied him, and it was this that determined his own picture of God's redemption in Jesus. A student of the Scriptures, he presented Jesus as the fulfilment of their promises.

6. Luke probably wrote his gospel around 80-5 CE, not far from the time Matthew produced his work. They responded to a common situation when the vast majority of the Jewish people had rejected the gospel and when its future seemed to lie with the Gentiles. Jewish refusal raised real problems for anyone who

saw Jesus as the fulfilment of the promises contained in the Scriptures. These were probably compounded by the continuing hiddenness of Jesus and the indifference, issuing in occasional hostility, on the part of the Roman power. It was this situation, and probably also some local tensions which are now beyond our ability to describe, that caused Luke to put pen to paper. But his gospel transcends these immediate issues to present to his fellow-Christians a proclamation of God's strange work in Jesus which is set to raise their sights and justify a faith in him as both Christ and Lord (Maddox 1982).

7. Tradition associates Luke with Antioch, and Acts at any rate could suggest connections with that city. He might have written there under the patronage of Theophilus who could as a private person have been impressed by him and have commissioned his work. On the other hand, he could have written, perhaps to that city, from Rome. Luke's work is best understood as written from faith to faith. Directed in the first place at those who were already Christians, it addressed outsiders only indirectly. It set out to give his fellow-Christians a firm foundation for the hope that was in them.

E. Luke's Story. 1. Luke's presentation of the redemptive work of God accomplished through Jesus is controlled by his understanding of its gracious outreach and wide embrace. Jesus' work is one of redemption, of release, of the overthrow of all that holds people in the clutches of powers that restrict the fullness of life that God wills for them (4:18-21; 1:68-79; 6:20-3; 8:26-39; 13:10-17). His God is above all merciful (6:36), reaching out to people in an acceptance that is creative (7:36-50; 19:1-10). The initiative of grace itself creates a response which can, though it is not guaranteed, issue in repentance (15:1-32) and a newness of life that is born out of the disclosure that God's outreach makes possible (8:42-8; 17:11-19; 23:39-43). The Jesus of Luke's gospel is presented as having a special concern for those who are on the fringes of society and of religious respectability. Jesus is said to have made a habit of eating and drinking with tax-collectors and sinners (5:29-32; 7:34; 15:1-2; 19:1-10). Women have an important role. They accompany Jesus and his disciples on the way and provide for them out of their means (8:1-3). They are representative disciples (10:38-42). They are present at the cross, watch at the burial, and are the first believers in the resurrection, for, in contrast to the unbelief of the men, they accept the witness of the two

angelic messengers at the tomb (24:1-12). Luke's is the only one of the Synoptic Gospels to mention Samaritans and to present them in a favourable light (10:25-37; 17:11-19). The poor are blessed and, though Luke uses the term as a designation for the disciples as a whole, the sociologically poor are the special objects of God's redemption (1:46-55; 4:18-19; 6:20-1). Their situation demands God's concern and is seen as making them potentially responsive to his outreach. Conversely, riches are for Luke a burden for they encourage an attitude of self-sufficiency, self-satisfaction, and manipulation of others (16:1-8, 19-31). Mammon is tainted (12:13-34; 16:9-15), its possession is a hindrance to a response to God's call. On the other hand, the rich man, though he resists Jesus' command to follow, is not simply dismissed (18:18-27). The tax-collectors must use their money in the service of others; it is not said that they have to become paupers (5:27-32). Discipleship, however, is not easy. Disciples are to take up their cross daily, to be alert, to be open to the demands of the hour, and to use their gifts in the service of their Lord (9:23-7; 12:35-59; 16:1-9; 17:20-18:8; 19:11-27).

2. Luke's understanding of God's redemption as bringing a reversal of fortunes means that the rich, the religiously secure, the proud, and the exclusive will face judgement (1:46-55; 6:24-6; 18:9-14). All these groups are essentially satisfied with where they are, and so remain closed to the opportunities and challenges that Christ brings. They are not open to his radical message of the grace and outreach of God. This is especially true of the leaders of the Jewish people whose rejection of Jesus was for Luke the ultimate tragedy (20:41-4). He can present Jesus as harsh towards the Pharisees (11:37-54) and in his parables Jesus is highly critical of them and of the religious system of which they are a part (10:25-37; 15:1-32; 18:9-14). Yet he remains in dialogue with them and explains their perversity and that of the Jewish nation at large (4:16-30; 14:15-24). His crucifixion is brought about by the religious/political leaders of Jerusalem with little support from them. Yet the rejection of Jesus by the Jews forwards the purposes of God and results in a wider mission (24:46-9). Caught up in God's plans for the world, it can even be seen to have a positive function. In spite of the critical situation, the Jewish nation is not finally rejected by God, and Gentiles have not taken over the place of the Jews in his covenantal people (4:16-30; 13:34-5; 21:14; 23:34; 24:47). The promises of the infancy narratives

will not be brought to nothing, for the inclusion of the Gentiles will ultimately rebound to the 'glory of Israel' (2:32, 38).

3. For Jesus stands as the climax of God's redemptive work in Israel. He is the culmination of her servants of God, one with them and the fulfilment of their hopes. Luke pictures him in terms of the OT categories, as eschatological prophet, Messiah, at one with Moses, Elijah, the Servant of Deutero-Isaiah, and John. Like them, he is Spirit-endowed (1:26–38) though, being more than them, is wholly possessed by the Spirit. Jesus is the agent of God, the climax of the old order of servants but, by reason of his complete obedience, exalted by way of death to be at God's right hand and to exercise that Lordship to which the psalmist pointed (20:39–44; Acts 2:32–6). The kingdom of God is now a reality in heaven, and the community on earth lives out of its power (11:1–13) and in the hope of its future revelation (21:29–30). Luke does not expect that revelation to be long delayed. (For a development of these themes, see Franklin 1975.)

COMMENTARY

Preface (1:1–4)

This highly-stylized sentence places Luke's writings firmly in the Graeco-Roman world. Just what genre it suggests, however, is not easily determined. Biographies did not often have prefaces and those of historical writings were usually much longer. It has been suggested (Alexander 1993) that it is like those that introduced semi-popular scientific and technical treatises and which were largely designed to hand on the traditions of their particular disciplines. Others ('many' may be for stylistic effect) have written 'narratives', that is purposefully ordered accounts, and Luke joins his own to theirs, not without a hint that he is offering an improvement. The subject of these narratives is 'the events that have been fulfilled among us'. They are not disinterested accounts but their contents are viewed as the outcome of God's purposes and, probably, as the fulfilment of earlier expectations. The sources for these narratives were 'eyewitnesses and servants of the word', most probably a single group who handed down their witness in the service of the gospel. Luke is not claiming to have been their contemporary: his own 'orderly account' rests rather on careful research.

Theophilus ('lover of God') to whom Luke addresses his work is most likely to have been

a real person of some standing and may have been Luke's literary patron. It has sometimes been suggested that he was a Roman official, that he was not a Christian, and that Luke was writing to make a case for Christianity and its political innocuousness. If so, the 'instruction' he had received was false, or at least biased, and Luke was seeking to give him the true picture. Luke-Acts as a whole, however, does not suggest that it was written for non-Christians: it contains too much Christian reflection for that and its stories of the trials of Jesus and Paul express little confidence in Roman justice. Theophilus is more likely to have been one who was knowledgeable about the Christian faith (Acts 18:25) and who was in fact already a Christian. In giving him 'the truth', Luke was seeking to offer him a firm foundation for his beliefs, to confirm them, and perhaps even to strengthen them when they were undergoing some trials. Luke's work is, of course, meant for public consumption and, through Theophilus, he is addressing every reader.

Infancy Narratives (1:5–2:52)

The narratives of the infancy stand in some tension with those of the rest of the gospel. Jesus is accorded a dignity otherwise not bestowed on him before the ascension, the Spirit is active in people in a way which in the narrative proper does not happen until after Pentecost, and Jesus and John are brought together in the closest possible manner which seems to belie their sharp separation later. These differences led possibly the greatest interpreter of Lucan theology of the twentieth century to leave them out from his exposition (Conzelmann 1960). This was undoubtedly a mistake though it remains likely that they were added at the conclusion, if not of the two volumes, then at least of the gospel. They are best understood as the prologue to Luke's whole work, summing up its message, proclaiming it, and giving it a firm basis in Israel's story. To pass from Luke's preface to his infancy narratives is to move into another world. The tight, carefully constructed sentence is followed by a piece where the expansive craft of the storyteller is supreme. Graeco-Roman literary sophistication gives place to a biblical style that makes a fitting vehicle for episodes that in their outlook and atmosphere are one with some of the most characteristic of the OT accounts of God's approach to humankind. They are a pastiche of OT words, sentences, images, and ideas and are formed by a conscious imitation

of incidents taken from various parts of Israel's story. The coming of Jesus into the world is the fulfilment of—and of one kind with—that which was begun in God's earlier activity. The narratives exude the spirit of joy, of wonder, and of worship—though also of a certain puzzlement. God's final redemptive work has been brought about through the life, death, and resurrection of the child whose birth these stories celebrate. That is the faith they express.

(1:5–25) The Annunciation to Zechariah The infancy narratives begin in the temple with the promise of the wondrous birth of John the Baptist who was in Luke's eyes the last and greatest of the Hebrew prophets and the immediate herald of the Messiah. His parents are both of priestly stock and represent all that is good in the temple and its piety. Following all the commands of the moral and ritual law, they were 'righteous before God', accepted and acknowledged by him. Law, temple, and prophecy together were to produce John who, while yet in the womb, would acknowledge his Lord and witness to him (1:44). Zechariah was a member of one of the twenty-four orders of priests who twice a year for a week officiated at the temple services. On this occasion he was within the sanctuary itself where the altar of incense stood immediately before the holy of holies. At this holy place, the angel of God appeared to announce a new climactic stage in God's redeeming work. The main emphasis is upon the task assigned to John. OT tradition looked for Elijah to return to restore a people within Israel who would be acceptable to God when he came to establish his righteousness among them (Mal 4:5–6; Sir 48:10). John, having been made a nazirite (Num 6:3) from the womb to show his permanent dedication to God, will do this 'in the spirit and power of Elijah'. Both Matthew and Mark picture John as Elijah returned (Mt 7:12; Mk 1:6). Luke actually avoids saying this. John, as Elisha before him (2 Kings 2:15) would be like Elijah rather than a new Elijah. This is probably because Luke saw Jesus himself in terms of Elijah and did not wish the Elijah typology to be exhausted in John (4:25; 7:15; 9:57–62).

Agents of God in the OT were often said to have been empowered by the Spirit in order to do their work (Judg 6:34; 1 Sam 11:6; Isa 61:1). As the climax of God's agents in Israel, John would be 'filled with the Holy Spirit from the womb'. His was no temporary commission; it was a full

endowment to be exceeded only by that of Jesus who would actually be conceived by the Spirit. Yet Zechariah demurs. Even for a faithful servant of the covenant, going forward into its climax in Jesus is not easy and he had to receive a demonstration of its truth which was at the same time a judgement on his lack of trust. Elizabeth conceives but remains hidden for five months, rejoicing alone at the sign of God's favour. The note of time binds her part into that of Mary and means that when Mary comes to visit her, the babe is formed enough to acknowledge the one who is carrying his Lord.

(1:26–38) The Annunciation to Mary By placing it 'in the sixth month' Luke binds the annunciation to Mary into that to Zechariah. The parallelism of the two accounts serves not only to join the events together, as part of God's final coming to his people, but also to put the climax on that to Mary for which the angel's visit to Zechariah is but a prelude. The fulfilment of its promise guarantees that those to Mary will not fail. The annunciation scene to Mary outstrips that to Zechariah in the wonder of the birth, the status of the child, the nature of his work, and the response of the one addressed.

Luke is emphatic that Mary, though betrothed to Joseph, was a virgin. Betrothal meant the entering into the legal contract of marriage though consummation did not normally occur until the time when, probably around a year later, the bride left her father's house to join her husband's. The angel's greeting, 'Rejoice', may have overtones of Zeph 3:14–17 and Zech 9:9 where God announces redemption to Jerusalem and her people. Mary is 'the favoured one' in that her life has revealed a response to God that suggests that she will respond faithfully to his further approach to her. She will conceive and bear a son whom she must name 'Jesus' ('the Lord saves').

The declaration of Jesus' status is unfolded in two stages. Gabriel's initial announcement is made in terms of a reading of the OT account of God's promises to David (2 Sam 7:11–16; Ps 132:11–18). Though these passages said that the promise was to be fulfilled in an ongoing line rather than in a single person, the Psalms tended to apply it to an individual king (Ps 2:7; 110:4) and these were later read as referring to a messianic figure. Jesus is to be the recipient of the promises for he will inherit David's throne, will reign over Israel ('the house of Jacob') for ever, 'and of his kingdom there will be no end'. This last part of the promise suggests a rule

wider than over Israel alone. 'Son of the Most High', though found in the Graeco-Roman world, reflects biblical usage where God is addressed as 'Lord of Hosts' (Isa 6:3). Luke uses it more than any other NT writer (1:35, 76; 6:35; Acts 7:48). 'Son of God' could be applied to angels (Job 1:6), to the Davidic king (Ps 2:7), to the individual faithful Israelite (Wis 2:12-18), and, later, to a messianic figure (Dead Sea scrolls). It meant that the one addressed was thought of as having a special relationship with God. Just what the nature of that relationship was, however, it did not specify.

Mary demurs, not like Zechariah demanding some sign to back up the promise, but rather questioning its possibility. This enables a further declaration of Jesus' status which actually strengthens Gabriel's initial statement. God will be wholly operative in Jesus' conception. Whereas earlier agents of God's activity had been possessed by the Spirit to perform a particular task and John had been filled by the Holy Spirit from the womb, Jesus, whose status far exceeded that of John's, was actually to be conceived through the Spirit. His whole creation, his very being, was itself the work of the Spirit. For Luke, the Spirit is essentially the agent and sign of God's eschatological redemptive activity (Acts 2:17-21, 10:44). Jesus, as the one to realize that, is wholly one with the Spirit. The Spirit is associated with God's power (Acts 1:8) which is here said to 'overshadow' Mary.

This total endowment with the Spirit marks Jesus as unique. He is 'holy', that is embraced within God's outreach and reflecting him (Lev 19:2), and 'Son of God'. Though 'Son of God' means the same as 'Son of the Most High', its climactic place here in Gabriel's message suggests that it pushes out beyond the boundaries of the OT imagery. Luke appears to see Son of God as more than a messianic title and endows it with something like Paul's declaration in Rom 1:4 (22:70; Acts 9:20).

In this passage, Luke uses the narrative to present a careful declaration of the nature of Jesus and his work. At the same time, through his presentation of Mary and the relation this has to that of Zechariah in the previous episode, he is able to show the ideal response of the faithful in Israel and to give some picture of discipleship.

Luke insists that Mary is a virgin, and it is this belief that enables the narrative to move to a climax. The declaration of Jesus' sonship does not, however, rest upon that but depends rather upon his total possession of the Spirit which

unites him to God. The virginal conception witnesses to his possession of the Spirit rather than being the cause of it. Though Luke's narrative expresses a firm belief in the virginal conception, it is unlikely to present the basis in history for that belief. To focus a young betrothed girl's consternation on child-bearing rather than upon the wondrous nature of the child she is called upon to bear suggests literary and theological concerns rather than strictly historical ones.

Justification of Mary's response on the grounds either that she mistook the announcement for one of an immediate conception or that she had already entered upon a vow of virginity is to import external considerations into the story (Brown 1977). Rather, in it we have Luke's response to the tradition that he shared with Matthew. Luke gives us little help in assessing the historical basis for the tradition. What he has done is, in the light of the traditions he received and of his belief in the OT's witness to Christ, to present in narrative form his proclamation of the significance of Jesus and to see it summed up in his birth.

(1:39-56) Mary Visits Elizabeth Luke binds the lives of John and Jesus together in this episode which enables the child in Elizabeth's womb to acknowledge the status of the one in Mary's, allows Elizabeth to greet Mary, and makes a setting for Mary's song. Mary remains the ideal disciple even as she is acknowledged as 'the mother of my Lord'. 'Lord' is Luke's most characteristic title for Jesus and his favourite address to him. Breaking out of the nationalistic overtones of Messiah ('Christ') it points to the universality of Jesus' sway (Acts 10:36). Since God is also called 'Lord' (2:45, 46), it points to Jesus' close relationship to him though, because its main influence in Luke's usage is provided by Ps 110:1 (Acts 2:34), it retains that subordination and instrumentality that is so characteristic of Luke's Christology.

Luke brings the episode to its climax with the song of Mary. This has much in common with that of Zechariah which follows closely upon it and a number of commentators would see both (together, perhaps, with that of Simeon in 2:29-32) as incorporated by Luke from some source. It is pointed out that they sit only loosely to their contexts, that this is emphasized by a few MSS attributing Mary's song to Elizabeth, that they are not wholly appropriate for their respective singers, and that they are not particularly closely related either to Luke's theology or his

vocabulary. However, though full value must be given to these opinions, it remains more likely that Luke himself was responsible for them. They are in fact an appropriate expression of Luke's outlook. Mary's song is strongly influenced by that of Hannah in 1 Sam 2:1–10 which, celebrating the birth of the young Samuel, sees the wonder of God's action in this event as an illustration of the nature of his whole work for his people. Hannah's piety makes her a fitting forerunner of Mary, and Samuel's role as prophet and leader under God in Israel makes his work a type of that of Jesus. In choosing Mary as the mother of his son, God has rewarded her 'lowliness' and lifted her high. His dealings with her become a paradigm of the redemption that he effects through Jesus. The militaristic imagery of vv. 49, 51, and 52 is taken over from Hannah's song and is used by Luke, either of God or of Jesus in 24:19; Acts 13:17; 19:20. It is not out of place in a psalm-like canticle that celebrates God's powerful act of redemption through Jesus in biblical terms. The theme of reversal, taken over here from 1 Samuel, is particularly amenable to Luke who has already, in his two annunciation narratives, focused God's work in Jesus upon his approach to those who, out of a piety which looks to God for fulfilment and hope, are open to receive his redemption. As in the Lukan form of the Beatitudes (see LK 6:20–6) this redemption is centred upon the sociologically marginalized for, in accordance with the biblical tradition (Ps 34:6; 72:12), it is they who are thought likely to exhibit this outlook. The reverse side of the coin is that those who are 'proud', 'powerful', and 'rich', and who therefore maintain and exploit their self-sufficiency, are unlikely to be open to God's future. In Jesus, that self-sufficiency has been shown to be foolish and blameworthy (12:13–21; 16:19–31). Luke knows that it is those who are dissatisfied with the present who have responded to the gospel whilst those who have felt already fulfilled have missed out on its challenge and therefore on its redemption.

The use of the past tense in the hymn's proclamation of redemption has sometimes been felt inappropriate at this point in the story and so has been seen as evidence for Luke's having taken the hymn from a source. This, however, is to forget the function of the infancy narratives as the prologue rather than the first chapter of Luke's story. They sum up the whole event of Jesus and look at its beginnings in terms of its end. Mary's song is less one that would have been appropriate for her at that point in time

than a hymn of praise which, through her, expresses the response of the ideal Israelite who had become a Christian disciple to God's whole work in Jesus.

(1:59–80) The Naming of John The circumcision of Jewish male children on the eighth day marked their incorporation into the people of God (Gen 17:11–12; Lev 12:3). It is not clear that naming necessarily occurred at the same time. Though Luke records a similar pattern of events for Jesus, he is not wholly reliable in his information about Jewish customs as they were practised in Israel itself. The story furthers Luke's interest in the fulfilment of prophecy and adds to the wonders surrounding the child. In challenging what Luke regards as the usual practice about names, it points to the new demands of Jesus; there is not an easy progression from the old to the new. The publicity surrounding John contrasts with the total obscurity that marked Jesus' birth. John will later question Jesus and will wonder whether his ministry measures up to what he expected of the figure for whom his own ministry was a preparation (7:19). In the light of these later events, Zechariah's witness in his song takes on an added significance.

Zechariah's song is essentially a witness to God's action in his Messiah, and the preparatory role of John is emphasized. Like the song of Mary, it comments upon the scene in which it is set only to transcend it and to view the actions of which it is a part in the light of the whole event of Jesus on which Luke looks back. It serves to sum up the significance of Jesus within the setting of God's actions in Israel. vv. 68–75 proclaim these as the fulfilment of God's promises to Israel. Through Jesus and the events surrounding him, God comes to establish his presence with his people and to confirm his covenantal promises. He has 'visited and redeemed his people' and has raised up a 'horn of salvation'. 'Horn' is a symbol of strength. Ps 132:17 talks of a horn sprouting up for David, and the song sees this fulfilled in Jesus who is presented as the consummation of God's promises to Abraham, the ancestor of the whole Jewish people and the receiver of God's unconditional commitment to her. As 'prophet of the Most High' John becomes the preparer for him who is Son. He will 'go before the Lord' who here is really both God and Jesus. Through 'bringing forgiveness of their sins' to the people, he will prepare them to receive what is essentially God's redemption in Jesus who is 'the dawn from on high' who will bring 'light', 'life',

and 'peace'. So, in the narrative proper, John will be pictured, both through his baptism and his firm religious and ethical teaching, as preparing the way for Jesus' proclamation of the visitation of God in himself and in redemption.

The proclamation of redemption completed, and the ground prepared for the birth of the saviour, John awaits his proper time and the spotlight now falls on Jesus alone.

(2:1–7) The Birth of Jesus As at the beginning of chs. 1 and 3, Luke is anxious to set the events of God's salvation through Jesus within the context of secular history. Though this has caused some to criticize him for reducing the eschatological dimension of Christianity and for making it into an event within world history (Conzelmann 1960), this relating of the gospel to the world in which it is acted out, and the more positive approach to that world which this displays, is a fundamental instinct that underlies Luke's understanding of Jesus and his work. Unfortunately, the effectiveness of his sortie into world history at this point does not measure up to his reasons for making it. Luke's notice of the census raises many virtually insurmountable problems. We have no evidence for an empire-wide census under Augustus and the likelihood of this including the land of a client king such as was Herod the Great is remote. Indeed, the census held when his son was deposed and Judea was incorporated into the Roman system was seen as such a novelty that it provoked a rebellion (Acts 5:37). Though there is some evidence from Roman sources in Egypt that participants were required to register in their own homes, this meant their present rather than their ancestral abodes. Herod died in 4 BCE and Quirinius was not governor of Syria until 6–7 CE. (See the balanced discussion of the evidence in Evans 1990.) Attempts to reconcile the differences have not met with widespread endorsement. A suggestion that Quirinius served an earlier term as an official in our area and that he was then involved in the census lacks real evidence. Perhaps the best attempt at harmonization is that which suggests that the Greek can be translated to read, 'This registration happened before Quirinius became governor of Syria' (Nolland 1989–93). It is not, however, a natural reading of the Greek and has about it something of the air of desperation (Fitzmyer 1981).

Luke, in contrast to Mt 2:21–3, has Nazareth as the home of Joseph and Mary. The census is used by him as the means of enabling Jesus to

be born at Bethlehem where the tradition on which he bases his proclamation places the birth. That, however, does not exhaust the significance he sees in it. The census is of 'all the world'. Jesus is born at the time when all the world is on the move at the behest of one who, given a divine name, allowed himself to be addressed as Son of God and was regarded as having brought security to the world. Jesus, rather than the Roman power, however, is the real means of salvation from external oppression and the guarantee of unity to mankind. The timing of Jesus' birth proclaims his universal significance. The Roman power which, by the time Luke wrote, was uncomprehending of Christianity, often suspicious, sometimes hostile, and always threatening, unwittingly enabled Jesus to be born in Bethlehem, the place of David. The final power belonged, not to it, but to God.

Jesus' birth was nevertheless hidden, ignored by the world in its quest for security. Jesus, cared for by his mother, is placed in a 'manger', which could be either a feeding trough or a cattle stall, because 'there was no room in the inn'. Luke uses the same word at 22:11 for the 'guest chamber' where the company is to eat the last supper. Jer 14:8 (LXX) uses the word when it laments that God is a stranger, like one who stays in a guest chamber for but a night. For Jesus, there is not room even in the guest-place; his birth points forward to the life of one who has nowhere to lay his head (9:58). No doubt the scene is infused with ideas taken from Isa 1:3.

(2:8–21) The Shepherds At the heart of Luke's understanding of the redemption wrought by Jesus was his knowledge that in him the excluded had been included; the outsider had been brought within the people of God. His story will tell of the inclusion of tax-collectors and sinners, of women, of the poor, of the marginalized, and, ultimately, of the Gentiles. So it is right that his infancy narrative should tell of the message of angels to shepherds and that it should be they, rather than the Gentile sages of Matthew's gospel, who should visit the infant Jesus. David was called to Bethlehem from minding the sheep in order to receive anointing at the hands of Samuel (1 Sam 16:11), and later tradition emphasized the graciousness of the action (2 Sam 7:8). After the Exile, the shepherd's task became devalued and, outside the biblical period, was despised. Luke's story does not reflect that belittling, but it does picture them as outsiders, apart from the general

ordering of society that was taking place at the time of the census. It is to them that the announcement of Jesus' birth is made.

Jesus is revealed as 'Saviour', 'Messiah', and 'Lord', three terms that sum up what the infancy narratives have said about Jesus and what the gospel as a whole will unfold and justify. The OT spoke frequently of God himself as saviour of his people, the one who would rescue them from their enemies and restore them to a relationship with himself (Ps 106:21; Isa 43:3; 60:16). Occasionally it spoke of his giving a saviour to his people (Judg 3:9; 6:14; 2 Kings 13:5). Jesus now brings the salvation of God himself (1:69). For Luke, it is all-important that Jesus is the Messiah of Israel and that he fulfils OT expectations of him (24:26, 45). 'Lord' is his most characteristic term for Jesus, which sums up his exalted status, his universality, and the devotion he receives from his followers. Proclaimed at the birth, these three terms express the Christian response to Jesus which his career and exaltation will evoke (Acts 2:36; 13:23). The song of the angels recalls that of Isaiah in the temple (Isa 6:3) though now it is Jesus rather than the temple that realizes God's glory and enables it to be reflected on earth. As people on earth receive his 'good pleasure', they share in a 'peace' which, much more than an absence of strife, is a wholeness of person and unity with others. (This represents the reading of the majority of the Gk. MSS. Some have 'peace, goodwill among people'. This reading however destroys the parallelism of the song and tends to make 'goodwill' a human response rather than one derived from a relationship with God. The whole outlook of the infancy narratives centres upon God's outreach to his people and the new possibilities he brings them.)

v. 19 (cf. v. 51) has sometimes been used to support the view that these parts of the infancy narratives rest upon reminiscences of Mary. There is in fact little to support this for we have seen that the annunciation story is shaped by literary rather than strictly historical influences. Mary is vitally important for Luke for she represents the ideal Israelite who becomes a disciple. Mary treasures the shepherd's witness and 'pondered it in her heart'. This last expression has sometimes been interpreted as coming to a right understanding of its significance. More likely, however, in Luke's narrative it retains the idea of puzzlement. Here and in the episode in the temple, Mary has not yet come to a complete understanding of the significance of Jesus. Her greatness was to accept in obedience

of faith the divine call, the full implications of which she had yet to enter into.

(2:22–40) Jesus Presented in the Temple This episode allows Jesus to be seen as acknowledging the Jewish religious tradition which was focused in the temple and which ultimately made possible God's final redemption in him. It also enables the temple to make its witness to him. Once more, Luke's purpose in recounting the story controls the way in which he tells it. Here, it has resulted in a slight confusion about the Jewish practices it describes. Three ceremonies are included, those of the purification of the mother, the redemption of the firstborn, and the presentation of a child to the service of God. 'Their purification' is a misnomer, for the ceremony involved the mother alone. After forty days the mother of a male child offered sacrifice as an act of cleansing. Mary makes the offering of the poor (Lev 12:6–8). The redemption of the firstborn is a separate ritual (Ex 13:2, 12–13) though there is nothing to suggest that it could not have happened in the temple and at the same time. Five shekels were paid to the priest. The third element is that of the dedication of the child to God. This was closely related to the redemption of the firstborn, though Luke gives it an emphasis which is no doubt determined both by his understanding of Jesus' significance and by the account of the dedication of Samuel (1 Sam 1:21–8) whose mother's song has already been used as a pattern for Mary's.

It is in the temple that Simeon, who is presented not merely as the ideal observer of the Jewish covenantal obligations, but also as one who is led by them to look for God's further action, comes and acknowledges Jesus as Christ. In the final song of the infancy narratives he makes what for Luke's gospel is the climactic declaration of the wide embrace of the redemption to be worked through Jesus. In words that reflect the Servant Song of Isaiah 49:5–6, Jesus is proclaimed as having a significance for 'all peoples'. He is a 'light' to reveal God to the nations. God's glory which is to be made known to them is to be seen in the child he holds in his arms whose birth in a manger causes the expectations of the earlier songs to be realized in an unexpected way. The salvation of God is to be achieved, not through naked power, but in the surrender of his Son. That salvation will make for the 'glory' of Israel. Her glory will be real but it will come about only as her expectations are confronted and re-formed. Jesus will cause the 'falling and rising of many in

Israel' as he challenges their security and questions their confidence. Many will oppose him, but that will reveal the limited nature of their response to the God who has made them his people. Even Mary, the true Israelite, will be pierced by the sword, not only of suffering, but also of judgement as she herself is called to move into a deeper understanding of the implications of Jesus. To be real, the grounds of the confidence expressed in her song have to be reviewed in the light of the babe who confirms it and makes it possible. Finally, Anna makes her witness to 'all those who were looking for the redemption of Jerusalem'. Jesus is the one through whom it will be accomplished, though again not in the manner that they will be expecting. Jerusalem will reject him and will instead follow a way that will lead to disaster (19:41–4). They will seem forsaken by God, but Anna is a reminder that the disaster is not God's last word: Jesus remains for Jerusalem a sign of hope.

(2:41–52) Jesus at Age 12 The last episode in the infancy narratives stands rather apart from the rest and forms something of an anticlimax. It fits Luke's intention to write a narrative, however, and seems to be influenced by the episode of the child Samuel, which also forms a bridge between his dedication and the ministry he is to exercise (1 Sam 3:1–14). It has the character of a legend but is used by Luke to point to Jesus' natural authority and home in the temple, a point that he makes in his account of Jesus' final visit to Jerusalem (19:45–6). Though the teachers in the temple were 'amazed at his understanding and his answers', their wonder has the potential to turn into hostility. For his parents, too, it represents a learning situation. Jesus rebukes them, though the significance of the rebuke is not entirely clear. NRSV margin suggests the most literal meaning, 'Did you not know that I must be about the things of my Father?' 'In the things of' can mean 'in the house of'. Either way, it represents a challenge to acknowledge him for what he is—son of 'my Father'—and to accept that he is not bound to them or bounded by their expectations. Faithful Israelites are challenged by Jesus to raise their sights and to acknowledge that he cannot be constrained by their own preconceived understandings. He must be allowed to transcend these and move out to the Gentiles. Luke is perhaps here thinking of the conflicts in the early church which had difficulty in coming to terms with the Gentile mission. Like Mary and

Joseph, the Jewish-Christian community had to learn not to constrict the freedom of the outreach which God's action in Jesus demanded. This freedom did not, however, mean a lessening of ties with the Jewish people. Jesus lived with his parents at Nazareth 'and was obedient to them'.

Jesus in Galilee (3:1–9:50)

In this section of the gospel Luke's narrative takes on a shape and outlook which, in spite of its distinctive aspects, are closely aligned to those of Matthew and Mark. Luke shares with them a common understanding of Jesus' time in Galilee. After his baptism by John and the Baptist's forced removal from the scene, he begins a ministry that proclaims the advent of the kingdom of God and reveals this in exorcisms and miracles. His understanding of this new approach of God to Israel brings him into conflict with religious leaders, though crowds follow him; in the main, however, without having a real understanding of him. He gathers a band of disciples and out of them chooses twelve apostles. These come to appreciate his messianic role without as yet, however, perceiving that it is focused upon a way of suffering that is to climax in a cross.

(3:1–20) The Ministry of John the Baptist Once again, Luke sets God's saving work within the context of world history. Though its details are not easily unravelled, its general impact is clear—Jesus' ministry was a real event which brought God's redemption into both the Jewish and the wider world. 'The fifteenth year of... Tiberius' would be 28–29 CE. Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea 26–36 CE, being in the succession of Roman prefects who were appointed to rule Judea after Archelaus was deposed in 6 CE. Herod Antipas, son of Herod the Great, ruled Galilee until 39 CE. 'His brother Philip' was tetrarch (ruler of one of the four parts into which Herod the Great's kingdom had been divided) of the region to the north and east of Galilee into which Jesus made an occasional sortie. Abilene was an area near Damascus. It does not serve as a setting for any part of the gospel story. 'The high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas' is more difficult. Joint office was not permitted. Annas was high priest from 6 CE until he was deposed by the Romans, 15 CE. Caiaphas was in office 18–36 CE. Annas appears only in the Lukan and Johannine writings (Acts 4:18; Jn 18:24).

This historical reference firmly includes John within the action of God to which its sonorous

tones point. 'The word of God came to John' uses recognized biblical language to enhance its affect (1 Kings 16:1; 18:1). As far as Luke is concerned, the adult John has as important a part to play as the infancy narratives have already suggested. John proclaims and administers a 'baptism of repentance which issues in the forgiveness of sins'. John himself points to the difference between the effects of his baptism and those brought about through the 'one more powerful than I'. Nevertheless, though Luke is quite clear that his has a preparatory role, the importance of that preparation could hardly be greater. Luke alone of the evangelists includes an account of John's ethical teaching. The crowds who come for baptism are to 'bear fruits worthy of repentance' and specific teaching is given to a number of particular groups. Seemingly rather haphazard in their selection, they nevertheless reflect important ethical requirements of groups of people who were particularly open to exploiting their fellow human beings. Those well provided for are to share their resources, tax-collectors are not to abuse their legitimate authority, soldiers are not to exploit their powers. Contentment with their wages means that the land in which they serve will not be further denuded of its produce for their benefit. John is here made to share that strong social concern which is so evident in Luke's gospel. His further importance is that, by putting forward these demands, he gives a place to ethical obligations which might seem to be overlooked in the free acceptance by Jesus of those whose lives are not always put under scrutiny. John here really acts as a forerunner for Jesus and becomes an important part of God's action in him. He fulfils Zechariah's expectation that he would 'turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord' (1:17).

(3:21–4:13) The Baptism and Temptation of Jesus Luke's mention—for it cannot be called an account—of Jesus' baptism is surprising and parts company with those of Matthew and Mark whilst sharing some similarity with John (which is also a mention rather than an account). The story of Jesus' having undergone a 'baptism of repentance with a view to remission of sins' obviously caused some embarrassment to the early church (see *MT* 3:14–15). Yet Luke's reason for his surprising treatment of the story goes deeper than embarrassment for he does not attempt to deny the fact. Jesus is baptised 'when all the people were baptised'. 'The people' is a loaded term for Luke and is used as short-

hand for 'God's true people'. Those who underwent John's baptism are identified as God's own people awaiting his redemption; they have been marked out as his. Jesus identifies himself with them: he unites himself to them so that he can incorporate them into the age of the Spirit.

Conzelmann (1960) saw Luke's handling of the baptism as evidence that he was separating out John and Jesus, identifying John with the age of Israel that was now passing away as Jesus brought a new period of God's action into being. Such an explanation, however, ignores not only the infancy narratives but also Luke's account of John's own ministry. John and Jesus are brought together in the closest possible way and as two players, though in no way equal in God's final act of redemption. The reason for this separation of John and Jesus at this point is rather to serve Luke's Christology. As he does so often, Luke sets significant points of Jesus' career within the context of his prayer. After he is baptized, Jesus prays in an act of surrender and dedication to what his baptism has signified. It is his response to what he has recognized as God's call. The descent of the Spirit and the divine voice of approval come in response to his response. Luke's Christology is one which, emphasizing the divine initiative, points to Jesus' response which is then sealed with God's approval. What is set in motion now will climax in the death and resurrection (Acts 13:34). So the Holy Spirit descends upon him 'in bodily form', that is fully, actively and powerfully. The symbolism of the dove 'remains baffling' (Evans 1955). Most probably it is connected with Gen 1 where the Spirit of God broods over the waters and Gen 8:11 where the dove becomes the harbinger of the covenant God makes with Noah. But these may be guesses born of exasperation. The voice from heaven bestows the divine approval of the course he has entered upon. It probably reflects ideas of Ps 2:7, Isa 42:1–4, and, perhaps, Gen 22:2, 16. A number of MSS of Luke have instead the whole of Ps 2:7. Though the genealogy which follows and which traces Jesus back to Adam may suggest the appropriateness of this reading, Luke elsewhere quotes Ps 2:7 in relation to the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 13:33). It is therefore likely that he himself did not use it of the baptism. Nolland (1989–93) notes that 1:35 would make its idea of a begetting or adoption into sonship inappropriate for this point in time.

It is at this point that Luke includes the genealogy which, in view of the biblical attitude to genealogies and its differences from Matthew's,

was designed to be of theological rather than factual significance. Matthew's three groups of fourteen generations is obviously meant to point to a climax in Jesus (Mt 1:17). Luke's does so less obviously. Seventy-seven generations represent eleven weeks, one week short of the twelve which marks finality. Of more significance is the way Luke traces the genealogy back from Jesus via David and Abraham to Adam who is, somewhat surprisingly, designated 'son of God'. Jesus is effecting something for David—the restoration of the people of Israel; for Abraham—the fulfilment of God's promise to him of a wider salvation (Gen 12:3); and for Adam—the restoration of universal sonship which was lost at the Fall. Luke here pictures Jesus as the Second Adam, the restorer of the human race, the means of re-establishing the relationship with God that Adam lost, and the remover of the shackles that had afflicted creation since then (1 Cor 15:20–5; Phil 2:5–11).

Matthew and Mark both have stories of the testing of Jesus by the devil, Mark picturing something of a battle between them, and Matthew telling of a testing of Jesus' Sonship. Luke is closer to Matthew though, like Mark, he has a testing that extends over forty days. The earlier voice from heaven had approved of Jesus' response to his baptism and had proclaimed his Sonship. Now, however, he has that initial response tested. He must make a determined entry upon a way that will really establish his Sonship and enable the restoration of the image of God in people which Adam's disobedience had lost. Our usual understanding of the event is made by following the order of temptations found in Matthew. Luke's account, however, has a different order and climaxes in one to jump down from the pinnacle of the temple. The three temptations tempt Jesus to leave the way of the servant on which he has determined, and which the divine voice has approved, and to assert his Sonship in a different way. That to command a stone to become a loaf of bread is to assert his authority and make use of his status, that to worship the devil is to follow the way of the world and exercise his power, that to jump off the temple's pinnacle is to force God's hand, to leave the way of service and humble obedience and go instead for a dramatic demonstration that would compel recognition of his status. All three temptations would have meant his following in the way of Adam for they would all have involved an exercise in self-assertion. The climax for Luke was that to jump from the temple. It was the complete contrast

to the course of action which God's call placed upon him—a way of humble obedience and service leading to a cross which was the necessary prelude to exaltation. The third temptation points to the end of Luke's gospel and its account of Jesus' exaltation which installed him in the Sonship which was his. To have succumbed to the third temptation would have destroyed his Sonship; victory over it set him off on the way that established it. Matthew and Mark both record how angels came to minister to Jesus after his defeat of Satan. Luke does not, for the victory is only beginning to be won. He tells how the devil departs from him 'until an opportune time'. That time will be Gethsemane.

(4:16–30) Rejection at Nazareth Luke's story of Jesus' ministry begins with his distinctive account of the rejection at Nazareth, which all commentators on his gospel agree plays a programmatic role for him (cf. Mt 13:53–8; Mk 6:1–6). The infancy narratives have already hinted at the divisions Jesus' ministry would cause in Israel and, by the time Luke wrote, the people of Israel as a whole had rejected not only Jesus, but also the proclamation of the gospel. The problem this caused for the early church is reflected in the NT as a whole but perhaps nowhere with more urgency than in Luke's writings. For him, that rejection was a tragedy but it raised the questions, not merely of why it happened, but also of the nature of God's response. Did the Jewish rejection of God's Son mean a rejection of them by God? Was it even determined by God and did it come about as a result of God's decision to abandon his ancient people in the making of a new people? Was he establishing a new covenant that brought about the end of the old? Luke's writings certainly wrestle with these questions, though they are seen in their full intensity in his story in Acts. They come to the surface from time to time in his gospel and nowhere more obviously so than in this episode which is written up as a commentary upon the event that is recorded in Matthew and Mark (not however without their own different interpretations of the reasons behind the rejection). Luke shapes this story in the light of the events that have happened down to his own time. It expresses his own understanding of the tragedy. However, though commentators on Luke are all agreed on the importance of this episode, there is a wide variety of opinion on what he was actually saying through it. (For an interpretation which is quite different from the one given here, see J. T. Sanders 1987.)

Jesus, in the synagogue on the sabbath day, uses an OT passage to explain both himself and the nature of the salvation that God is bringing through him. The passage is actually a composite one, taken from the LXX version of Isa 61:1–2 into which is fitted a clause, ‘to let the oppressed go free’, from Isa 58:6. Luke’s Jesus presents himself as the fulfilment of Isaiah’s Spirit-filled prophetic figure who proclaimed God’s eschatological redemption. What Isaiah’s prophet anticipated, Jesus brings into being for, not only is he the final proclaimer of the saving act of God, he is actually realizing it in his own preaching and actions: ‘Today, this scripture has been fulfilled in your own hearing.’ He proclaims ‘good news to the poor’, that is to those who, marginalized in the present, are looking for God’s redemption (see *LK* 6:20–6). The ‘year of the Lord’s favour’ is here. What was anticipated in the year of Jubilee, which took place (at least in theory) every fifty years, when ‘you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants’ (*Lev* 25:10), is now becoming a reality. The bonds that oppressed God’s people are being broken. It is noteworthy that Luke has Jesus leave Isaiah in the middle of a sentence without including ‘the day of vengeance of our God’. As in the infancy narratives, Luke understands Jesus’ work primarily as one of redemption.

The people of Nazareth respond favourably; his ‘gracious words’ impress them. ‘Is not this Joseph’s son?’ expresses approval and local pride. Yet it has within it the seeds of misunderstanding and it is but a limited response. So Jesus quotes a proverb (rather more emphatically than the version found in Matthew and Mark) that points to the inevitability of a city’s rejecting the prophetic message of one who is its own (v. 24). Familiarity limits expectations and resents challenge. It presumes upon the relationship and assumes that any message of good news must include natural associates within its sphere (v. 23). It fails to recognize the strength of the challenge that is actually being made. Jesus elaborates on the situation and, in doing so, hardens his stance.

Having spoken of the inevitability of rejection by his own, and therefore of his own inability to perform deeds for them, he uses the instances of Elijah’s dealings with the widow of Zarephath (1 Kings 17) and of Elisha’s with Naaman (2 Kings 5) to show that earlier prophets worked among outsiders even to the seeming neglect of their own. This elaboration has often been seen as a rejection of his own people in

favour of a movement out into the Gentile world. It has been understood as an expression of Luke’s belief that the ministry of Jesus meant a new action of God which virtually drew a line under his covenantal dealings with the Jewish people. He was establishing a new Israel that now inherited the earlier promises made to the Jews.

Another reading of the significance Luke saw in the references to Elijah and Elisha is, however, possible and is one which does not make such a sharp departure from the positive attitude to the Jewish people expressed in the infancy narratives: the proverb of v. 24 explains the inevitability of the rejection and, indeed almost justifies it; regrettable though it is, it is an understandable response. The OT incidents are used, not to support a rejection of the local people, but to show that prophets of Israel worked outside her borders, that they were often unsuccessful at home and that their lack of success denied neither their calling nor their continuing commitment to Israel. Jesus had not turned aside from Israel, any more than had Elijah and Elisha. The nation’s rejection of him had not resulted in its own rejection—either by him or by the God who stood behind him.

Whatever the implications, the sermon provoked a furious response on the part of the listeners who set out to kill Jesus. His challenge to established certainties made them determined to stone him as a false prophet (*Deut* 13:1) (v. 29). They were unable to destroy him, however, but he, ‘passing through the midst of them, went on his way’. Here, Luke uses a favourite verb to express Jesus’ movement to his goal (9:51; 13:53). The rejection by his own, so far from destroying him, furthers God’s purposes.

(4:31–44) A Preliminary Ministry Luke here seems to be following Mark who begins his story of Jesus’ ministry with a quick survey of what has been called ‘a typical day’. Mark has described the temptation of Jesus in terms of a battle with Satan and this ‘typical day’ presents him as throwing back the power of the demonic world (*Mk* 1:21–2:12). Having at Nazareth presented Jesus’ work in terms of bringing freedom from oppressive powers, Luke now takes over some of these healings and exorcisms. They show the presence of God’s kingdom in Jesus. In the synagogue at Capernaum ‘his word is with authority’ and this is substantiated by his power over an unclean spirit. The confrontation is real; the demon (or demons, for v. 34 has the plural) uses Jesus’ name and mentions his status in a real

effort to unmask him and so constrain his power. But Jesus' authority—that of the 'Holy One of God'—overwhelms him. Luke alone adds, 'having done him no harm', for the freeing power of God really is redemptive. The witnesses recognize the marvel and ask, 'What kind of word is this?' 'The word' is a favourite term with Luke, which he uses, as here (vv. 32, 36), to point to the effective power of the gospel.

The healing of Peter's mother-in-law follows and leads into a general ministry of healing and casting out of demons. Luke once more emphasizes that the demons recognize his divine Sonship and acknowledge his power. Jesus, however, would not allow them to speak 'because they knew that he was the Christ' (v. 41). This presents more than an exercise of power; it forbids them from giving a false impression of him. What makes him 'Christ' for people will be an acceptance of his way of the cross. Without that acceptance, any ascription of messiahship would be useless.

At daybreak Jesus leaves that place to go on his way. Crowds try to stop him. They act virtually as the continuation of the temptation. Jesus resists. His exorcisms have to be set in a wider context, that of proclaiming and therefore enabling 'the kingdom of God' (v. 43). The freeing activity of Jesus which this preliminary work has revealed should be seen in the light of his teaching about the nature of the God who does this and of his relationship with humankind. Only then does it reveal the life of the Kingdom. Jesus must go forward and proclaim the Kingdom even if, by living it himself, it leads him to a cross. It was for this reason that he was sent. So, says Luke, 'he continued proclaiming the message in the synagogues of Judea'. The latter word here is to be taken as meaning the 'land of the Jews' as in 1:5; 6:17. It does not suggest an extended ministry in Judea proper.

(5:1–11) Call of the First Disciples Luke postpones the call of the first disciples, which Matthew and Mark describe as the first act of Jesus' ministry, to this point, that is until after Jesus has had some dealings at least with Peter. He describes it in a scene which has close links with a post-resurrection episode in Jn 21:4–8. The 'lake of Gennesaret' is the sea of Galilee, Gennesaret being the district to the south of Capernaum. The episode centres upon Peter and is really an account of a marvel which becomes for him a moment of disclosure. The unexpected catch of fish points to the nature of the one who made it possible. He discerns the presence of God in

Jesus and is moved to make a response that equals that of the prophet Isaiah when in the temple he had his vision of God (Isa 6:5). James and John share in the amazement of those who saw the marvel, though it is not said that they share Peter's discernment. Though the episode, like that in Matthew and Mark (cf. FGS F), describes the call of the inner group of disciples, Luke's narrative focuses upon Peter. For him, Peter has a very special role which is determined, not merely by that which he is given in the general gospel tradition, but also by the part he plays both in the Acts account of the incorporation of Gentiles into the new community and also in the maintenance of its unity (Acts 10–11; 15). Luke claims Peter as the protagonist of his own understanding of the significance of the event of Jesus. He is aware of Peter's weakness but he minimizes it. Jesus does not accept Peter's declaration of messiahship (9:20) but, in the third gospel, Peter does not try to deflect him from his path of suffering. At the last supper, Jesus tells how he has kept Peter from Satan's clutches and that he will be the one to restore his fallen brethren (22:31–4). Luke therefore softens both the failure of the disciples at Gethsemane and the denial of Peter (22:39–46, 54–62). It is to Peter that Jesus appears first after the resurrection (24:34). The original theophany that Peter experiences makes an impression upon him that, in spite of his failings, never leaves him. It enables him to play the leading role which Luke will later ascribe to him.

(5:12–16) Healing of a Leper The next few episodes where Luke is very close to Mark point to the growing tension between Jesus and the religious leaders in the persons of the Pharisees and teachers of the law. The story of the cleansing of the leper emphasizes Jesus' willingness to perform the cure in the face of the leper's own doubt about it. Jesus is bringing precisely that release which the Nazareth sermon promised. It was necessary for a priest to pronounce him free from leprosy before he could take his place again within the community. Lev 13–14 described the sacrificial ritual that effected the restoration. Whatever is meant by 'a testimony to them', Jesus is calling attention to himself. The episode's place at the beginning of a section that points to a growing hostility climaxing at 6:11 suggests that Luke understands Jesus to be already challenging the finality of the Jewish religious institutions. He points the leper into the way of observing the law but from the position of one who already transcends it.

(5:17–26) The Healing of the Paralysed Man In this episode ‘the power of the Lord [which] was with him to heal’ (a distinctively Lucan phrase) is to face its first real challenge: ‘Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ The story raises some difficulties. In the first place, it seems to associate a person’s sickness with his or her sin, a position which the OT itself, in such writings as the book of Job, questions. Secondly, Jesus seems to be appealing to his ability to cure sickness as proof of his greater claims (v. 24). Finally, v. 24 itself reads badly and suggests some haste—perhaps even, as some have suggested, a joining up of two sources. Why, when asked to heal, does Jesus say, ‘Your sins are forgiven?’ The most likely explanation seems to be that he was encouraging those who were requesting his help to raise their sights and to put the physical need within the wider context of their whole relationship with God. Jesus had earlier left the crowds when they threatened to overwhelm him and confine his mission (4:42–4). Here, he was meeting the need but was setting it in a larger framework. He proclaimed a restoration of a relationship with God that included physical redemption but was not exhausted by it. Physical healing came from the restoration of the kingdom of God. The physical ills of the world pointed to the restriction of God’s sway. The prophet Isaiah looked forward to the day when wholeness and harmony would be restored (Isa 35:3–10).

The scribes and the Pharisees recognize Jesus’ action and his interpretation of it as a claim to be acting on behalf of God. Strictly, of course, he was saying that God was forgiving the man, but the point was that he was acting with the authority of one who had the mind of God and could speak for him. Jesus is here for the first time called ‘Son of Man’, his favourite self-designation. Just what he meant by it, however, has produced a lively and still inconclusive debate. Discussion of it would take us far outside the confines of this commentary. More important for our purpose is the Synoptic Gospels’ own understanding of it in which Luke shares. Probably influenced by Dan 7:13, it sees Jesus as an earthly figure, authoritative yet unacknowledged, suffering, vindicated, and exalted to heaven from where he will return in glory. Luke emphasizes the amazement of the bystanders, their ‘glorifying God’, and their awe. For him, the story makes a true witness to the person of Jesus.

(5:27–32) Jesus and Levi Jesus now calls Levi to join his inner group of disciples. He is

‘a tax-collector’, that is, one of a group of minor officials who were employed to collect indirect taxes, mainly tolls. Working for an alien power and widely extortionate, they were regarded with hostility and were marginalized. Luke has Jesus take a special interest in this group. Levi gives a great banquet for Jesus in his house even after Luke has emphasized that he had ‘left everything’. The Pharisees and their scribes complain, for tax-collectors and sinners were those who had opted out of the covenantal people of God; by living outside the Mosaic law, they had excluded themselves from any share in God’s future rule. A meal, of course, had sacral significance and Luke sees its function as an anticipation of meals in the kingdom of God. In this perception, he was probably correctly interpreting Jesus’ own understanding of his actions. Here, Jesus points to his particular concern to call those whose lives are judged unhealthy by current religious requirements. Luke alone adds ‘to repentance’. Though his gospel is one which emphasizes the divine initiative in Jesus and the outreach of God’s grace, he is aware that this outlook could lead to an abandoning of ethical principles and play down the need for a response. He therefore points out that Jesus’ outreach did lead to repentance (cf. 15:7, 10).

(5:33–9) New and Old Having shown God’s new approach in Jesus and the challenge this made to the Jewish religious tradition, this section emphasizes the move forward that was required if it was to be accepted. New material could not be made to fit in with the old: to use it as a patch to complete the old would not work, for not only would it tear the new garment and in effect destroy it, but it would also not match the old. Likewise, new wine needed new bottles. For all his understanding of God’s approach in Jesus as the climax of what he had done in Israel, Luke was aware of its radicality and of the jump that was required if members of the covenantal people were to receive it. v. 39, which is peculiar to him, gives his reason for the Jewish failure to respond to Jesus’ new challenge.

(6:1–11) Sabbath Controversy Luke writes up these two stories, to be found also in Mark and Matthew, in a way that, though having Jesus less critical of the sabbath than he is in Mk 2:27, nevertheless presents him firmly as the sabbath’s Lord. Jesus’ disciples break the sabbath law, not only by reaping, but also (in Luke only)

by threshing. When 'some' (a Lucan addition that mellows the story's opposition to the Pharisees) object, Jesus reminds them that David himself broke the law (though not the sabbath law) when his followers as well as he were hungry. Luke (unlike Matthew and Mark) adds nothing else but goes straight to what was for him the significance of the story: 'The Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath'. David showed his superiority to the law: the son of David who is Son of Man, being greater, has an even greater superiority. A further story strengthens the point. Jesus on a sabbath teaches in the synagogue when a man with a withered hand is present. In the light of the previous story, scribes and Pharisees watch to see whether he will compound his refusal to be bound by the law's requirements. He refuses to be intimidated by them. His action raises one further dimension of his attitude to the law. Was the sabbath designed for the benefit of humankind or for its oppression? Admittedly, his question, 'to save life or to destroy . . .?' (v. 9), puts the alternatives over-sharply and in a way that goes beyond the particular issue. Nevertheless, it makes the point clear and, though maintaining Jesus' freedom concerning the sabbath, makes his action one neither of blatant disregard nor of naked power. The result, however, is their fury and a determination to confront Jesus.

(6:12–49) Jesus' Sermon It is at this point, when opposition is forming and confrontation becomes a certainty, that Luke places his account of Jesus' call of the twelve and follows it immediately with his sermon given to 'a great crowd of disciples' in the presence of a 'great multitude of people' from all over the area. As on other important occasions, Jesus spends the night in prayer. From his disciples, he chooses twelve. Luke's list differs from those of Matthew and Mark in that he has 'Judas son of James' in place of Thaddaeus and describes Simon the Cananaean as 'the Zealot'. This term probably refers to a religious rather than a political zeal. Whereas Matthew and Mark say that Jesus chose the twelve in order to send them out to preach and heal, Luke records no reason for the choice. Instead he simply says, 'He chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles'. For Luke, the Twelve are not merely a distinct group as in Matthew and Mark, their distinctiveness is found in their being 'apostles', a title which he limits to them. Their importance lies not in what they do but in what they are, namely the foundation pillars of the restored,

eschatological Israel that Jesus is bringing into being. So, like Moses before him (Ex 24:1, 3, 12–14), Jesus goes to the mountain, takes with him the leaders of Israel, and comes down to form the people of God. The twelve stand alongside him, witnessing to the nature of the community that is being brought into being as he delivers a sermon that defines its essence. The sermon as Luke gives it has long suffered in comparison with Matthew's (vv. 5–7). The Sermon on the Mount presents a demand for an ethical righteousness the radical nature of which far exceeds that of the law. The demands of Luke's sermon are equally radical but are more focused. They home in upon the need to recognize the nature of the community that Jesus is calling into being and therefore upon the necessity for members of it to respond with mutual love, toleration, and acceptance. The radical demands are seen, not in a high moral tone, but in the overriding concern for love (vv. 27–36), a non-judgemental attitude (vv. 37–42), a life of integrity (vv. 43–5), and a total response to Jesus' call (vv. 46–9).

The Beatitudes which introduce it therefore have a different stance from those found in Matthew (cf. FGS G). Whereas his provide a standard after which members of his community can strive, Luke's state the nature of the new community. They address the disciples directly (NB the second person) as the poor, the hungry, the weepers, and the excluded. Not all are in fact these, though many within the community are. All however are to share in the attitude that characterizes these groups—their looking for God's future and their lack of satisfaction with the present. They look for the Kingdom to redress the inequalities of the present. In the OT the poor are seen as the special concern of God, and the authors of the Psalms of lament can picture themselves as poor in attitude and so as looking for God's vindication (40:17; 86:1). People like these are to be deemed 'blessed' for God can and will vindicate them.

The converse of this is that the rich, the full, the satisfied, and the easily accepted are challenged and made to face the consequences of their lot. This leads to a self-satisfaction and self-sufficiency which is not merely in grave danger of shutting them off from the grace of God but which also encourages a manipulation of their fellow human beings. At a number of points in his gospel, Luke will reveal his strong suspicion of riches and the challenge he believes they present to would-be disciples (14:33; 16:1–15, 19–31; 18:18–30).

Luke's version of Jesus' foundation sermon, then, challenges the community he is bringing

into being to be one which, seeing itself as the eschatological people of God, lives out of grace and in hope of God's redemption. It is to be a sign of that hope. Whereas Leviticus called upon Israel to reflect God's holiness which it saw as the defining character of God (Lev 19:2), and Matthew called his community to a perfection which reflected God's own (Mt 5:48), Luke's Jesus calls rather for mercy because it is that which for him lies at the heart of God. The sermon does not judge a section of the community as does Matthew's (Mt 7:21) but rather somewhat wistfully has Jesus exclaim to all: 'Why do you call me "Lord, Lord", and not do what I say?' Luke does not share Matthew's concern to relate the ethical standards required by Jesus to those demanded by the Law (see Mt 5-7). He pictures a community formed by a response to the grace of God revealed in Jesus and one which lives out of the life of the Kingdom which Jesus established and which the community's life itself anticipates. The sermon's demands are therefore radical. The disciples are to become like their master (v. 40): they are not to try to outdo his non-judgemental attitude. Their good fruit must reflect a 'good treasure of the heart'. The true disciple of the Lord hears his call and acts upon it (cf. 8:15).

(7:1-10) The Centurion's Slave This episode, not in Mark, is found also in Mt 8:5-13 (cf. FGS H). Comparison of the two accounts brings out Luke's particular perspective. In his gospel the centurion does not meet Jesus but instead sends elders of the Jews to intercede on his behalf. Their plea for him is based on the fact that he was favourably disposed to the Jewish people and that he was instrumental in the building of this group's synagogue. He was a Gentile, perhaps a Roman officer who, in Galilee, would be in the service of Herod Antipas. He was probably a God-fearer who, though linking himself to the Jewish community and joining in some part of its life, being uncircumcized remained an alien and outside the covenantal people. Jesus accedes to the Jews' request and begins to go with them to the centurion's house. On their way, however, the centurion sends friends to Jesus to make two points on his behalf. The centurion can make no claims on Jesus; that is why he would not presume even to approach him. Even now, he cannot expect him to enter his house. But, secondly, as a man both under authority and also exercising authority, he recognizes the nature of the authority that belongs to Jesus. A word from him is all that is required.

That is all he dare ask, but it is enough. Jesus marvels at his faith and says for all to hear, 'Not even in Israel have I found such faith.' The difference from Matthew's version of Jesus' wonder makes clear the significance Luke sees in the story. Mt 8:10, 'in no one in Israel have I found such faith', can be heard as pointing to a lack of faith in Israel, whereas Luke's version rather emphasizes the exceptional nature of the centurion's. The centurion's slave is healed as a result of Jewish faith which has actually made the centurion's own faith possible. In the end, however, that of the centurion outstrips the faith shown by the Jews. His lack of all claims enables the wonder of Jesus' full redemptive power to be freed. The healing takes place from a distance.

(7:11-17) The Raising of a Widow's Son Only in Luke, this story seems to owe its position here to Jesus' appeal in 7:22 to his raising of the dead. The story has strong overtones of Elijah's raising of the widow's son in 1 Kings 17:17-24 and has echoes in Peter's raising of Tabitha in Acts 9:36-42. For Luke, Jesus, like John before him, is foreshadowed by Elijah, the archetype of OT prophecy, as he is by Moses. Luke uses 'The Lord' frequently in his references to Jesus when they, as here, point to his role as Christians understand it. Whilst acting in the past, he is revealed as the community's source and strength, and the one who is the object of its devotion. As Lord, Jesus brings the weeping of the woman to an end (6:21). 'Fear' is the response of awe in the presence of the numinous. They 'glorify God', a phrase that Luke uses to introduce significant responses to the actions of Jesus (2:20; 13:13; 23:47). Jesus for Luke is 'a great prophet', indeed the eschatological prophet. In him, 'God has looked favourably on his people'. The same verb is used in Zechariah's song (1:68) to speak of God's redemption of his people. The true in Israel recognize him.

(7:18-35) Jesus and John Luke's infancy narratives have brought Jesus and John together in the closest possible relationship but have, at the same time, shown how the redemption Jesus brings is in some tension with the OT expectations that John expresses. Baptized by John, Jesus sets out on a course of action that is less obvious than John might have expected. He has embraced a way of surrender and, in his sitting loose to the law, has reached out in a manner that appears to do less than justice to John's

prophecy of one with a 'winnowing-fork in his hand' (3:17). John therefore sends two of his disciples to ask whether Jesus really is the one who fulfils the OT hopes and whether in him the final action of God is being realized. In v. 21 Luke points out the wonders that Jesus 'at that time' had been doing. The basis for his response to John is secure. So Jesus appeals to his actions in a list that freely quotes from Isa 35:5-6 and 61:1. For those who have eyes to see, they make his case. v. 23 contains a challenge to, and perhaps a criticism of John. The presence of Jesus demands a willingness to have established beliefs questioned.

Jesus now talks to the crowds about John and his relationship to himself. He begins with a compliment. When they went to hear John, they knew he was not one who would bend with the wind or be ensnared by the power or luxuries of the court. Luke has already told his readers that John had been wrongly put in prison by Herod because he had rebuked him for the evil he was doing (3:18-20). Had they gone out to see a prophet? Jesus gives John a higher status in God's plans than that. He applies to him a mixed OT quotation from Ex 23:20 and Mal 3:1 which, by a slight adaptation of pronouns, makes John the immediate forerunner of himself. He brings this to a climax with a further compliment which is, nevertheless, something of a backhanded one. No one in the world has arisen greater than John, 'yet the least in the kingdom of God is greater than he'. As it stands, this says that John is as yet outside the Kingdom. He still works from within the old expectations. He has not yet come to appreciate the radical challenge Jesus brings to these and the new perspectives from which they have to be viewed. However, this interpretation has been challenged ever since the time of Tertullian. Because the Greek in v. 28 uses comparatives ('lesser', 'greater'), the saying has been taken to refer only to Jesus and John and to their places in the Kingdom. Jesus is younger than John, perhaps originally a disciple of John, perhaps even a servant figure unlike John. He is nevertheless the greater in the Kingdom, though this interpretation would not suggest that John himself was not yet in the Kingdom. This, however, is not the most likely interpretation of the usual NT usage. John has not embraced the outlook of the Kingdom and as yet remains outside it. Those who have acknowledged it are already living within its embrace, out of its grace. They await its future revelation. For John, that embrace awaits the future (13:28).

The part of John in God's redemptive act, however, is emphasized in Luke's comment (vv. 29-30). 'All the people', that is those true Jews who had come to respond to Jesus and so be included within God's redeeming action, 'acknowledged the justice of God', his work of redemption that began through John's baptism that prepared them for their acceptance of Jesus. Those who were to reject Jesus were also the ones who rejected John.

Jesus acknowledges John's part by comparing his contemporaries to children at play. They are like those who fail to respond to all efforts to entice them to take part, whether it be a call to mourn or dance. John challenged them with the demands of God and they accused him of misanthropy. Jesus, on the other hand, presented them with the freeing grace of God and they cast him as a libertine. They will not respond to the challenge found in either proclamation. The section finishes with v. 35 which acts as a counterbalance to the rejection of which vv. 31-4 speak. 'Wisdom' in the OT came (alongside Spirit and Word) to be personified as the expression of God's outreach to humankind in which he made himself known and united them to himself (Prov 8; Wis 7). This verse takes up this thought. God's way is 'vindicated' (the same Gk. verb is used in v. 29), that is acknowledged and praised by all those who through the ministries of John and Jesus have experienced God's embrace and so have recognized his work both in them and in themselves.

(7:36-50) Jesus and the Woman Who Was a Sinner All four gospels tell of Jesus' anointing by a woman (Mt 26:6-13; Mk 14:3-9; Jn 12:1-8) though all three others link the anointing to Jesus' passion and record a complaint about the waste of money. Whereas Matthew and Mark have an anointing of Jesus' head, Luke, like John, tells of the anointing of his feet. Only Luke speaks of the woman as a 'sinner'. The significance Luke sees in the story depends on the actual meaning of a number of verses which are not easily interpreted. Simon, a Pharisee, invites Jesus to a meal; a woman comes into the room, as was possible on semi-public occasions, bathes his feet with her tears and dries them with her hair. She publicly kisses his feet and anoints them with ointment in an extravagant display of affection. Simon feels that Jesus' acceptance of such affection from one who was a sinner was not consistent with a prophet come from God. Jesus replies by telling a parable of two debtors which makes the point that

one who is forgiven much is likely to respond more warmly than one who is forgiven little. So much is clear. The difficulty is in determining how it applies to the two characters. The woman is demonstrating her love. Is this because she has already been forgiven which is what the parable would imply? 'The woman's actions can only be accounted for by reference to something the story does not itself contain' (Evans 1990). On the other hand, v. 47, on a first reading at any rate, does not appear to support this but rather suggests that she has been forgiven because of her love. This is how RSV translates the verse. More recent translations, assuming a consistency in the story as a whole, take the Greek *hoti* to mean, not 'because' but 'with the result that'. So, REB translates, 'Her great love proves that her many sins have been forgiven.' v. 48 then proclaims her forgiveness which such a translation assumes has already been pronounced to her.

Perhaps however we are trying to force into a time sequence something that cannot be so easily ordered. The woman hears of Jesus and of his proclamation of the outreaching redemption of God. God's recreating acknowledgement of the outsiders is being enacted in him, the one who accepts the title of 'the friend of tax-collectors and sinners'. She responds with love and a warmth which is accepted. The story says nothing about her penitence in any formal sense and to assume this is to assume too much. What she brings is rather a response to a lack of condemnation, to an outreach, to a recognition. It is that response of love that Jesus acknowledges, accepts, and meets with a declaration that God has forgiven her. 'The woman does not love because she has been forgiven, but vice versa' (Lampe 1962). She loves, because in Jesus she meets with acceptance. In turn, her love receives the forgiveness for which he stands.

The parable is addressed to Simon and is looking at them both from Jesus' own point of view whilst engaging with Simon's own stance. It is a condemnation of his judgemental attitude and of his lack of openness. Is it suggesting more and saying that he was discourteous to Jesus? On the whole, this is unlikely. Though the lack of provision for the washing of feet is 'surprising' (Evans 1990) the other omissions would seem to be additional courtesies rather than requirements of the host. The story does not suggest that Jesus was singled out from the other guests; that would have meant a hostility that Simon's address to Jesus (v. 40) does not

imply. The contrasts are caused by the woman's actions rather than by Simon's discourtesies. What the contrast emphasizes is Simon's lack of response to Jesus and his message of the gracious approach of God. Simon feels no great need but is rather, if not content, then at least comfortable with the position at which he has arrived. Comparatively, he does need to be forgiven little, but it is that little need that has made him miss out on Jesus' message. He actually needs to learn from the incident.

(8:1-21) Proclaiming the Good News After a fairly static period, Jesus now resumes his itinerant role of proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God (cf. 4:43; 9:6). The Twelve are with him and some women 'who had been cured of evil spirits and infirmities'. They had been psychologically or physically distressed. Mk 15:41 mentions a group of women who had come to Jerusalem from Galilee with Jesus. Luke brings the mention forward to this point so as to link them with the Twelve in their accompanying Jesus. Mary Magdalene is mentioned first, probably because of her role at the tomb which is noticed in all four gospels. Jesus had cast out 'seven demons' from her—a witness to the severe nature of her illness, though not a pointer to any immorality; she is not to be brought into connection with the woman of the previous episode. Joanna the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, a woman of some social standing, is also mentioned at the tomb. Susanna is not found elsewhere. With other women, they provided for Jesus and the Twelve out of their resources. Women of means are found frequently in Acts. The most significant instance is the mention of Lydia who in Acts 16:15 acted as host for Paul and his companions at Philippi in the first of the 'we' passages in Acts. It is not beyond the bounds of possibility that Luke himself lodged there and perhaps even stayed there after the rest of the party had left (Acts 20:6). Luke may have been looking at the part women played in the ministry of Jesus in terms of his own later experience. He is anxious to point to their presence at the cross (23:49), the burial (23:55), the empty tomb (24:10), and when the community waits for the gift of the Spirit (Acts 1:14). He has no appearance of the risen Jesus to them as does Mt 27:9 and Jn 20:18, but this would seem to be because of his concern to have Peter be the first witness of the risen Lord (24:34).

It is in this setting of Jesus' preaching ministry that Luke places the parable of the sower which

for him, as for the other synoptic evangelists, becomes an image of the varied success of the preaching, not only of Jesus, but also of the early church. Jesus tells a parable about a sower and his method of sowing which actually appears to sow seed where there can be no hope of a harvest. A waste of much seed becomes inevitable because of the nature of the ground on which it is allowed to fall. The distinctive feature of Luke's parable when it is compared with the versions given in Mt 13:3–9 and Mk 4:3–9 is his statement that all the good seed yielded 'a hundred fold'. All his good seed produces, if not a spectacular harvest, then at least a bumper one. The reason for this becomes clear in his version of the allegorical interpretation. Before that, however, he includes, as do the other evangelists, a statement in which Jesus is heard giving his reason for the use of parables. It is 'so that looking they may not perceive, and listening they may not understand'. Though this softens Mark's parallel statement (Mk 4:11–12), it shares something of his belief that Jesus' parables were meant to discriminate, to cause discernment in some and to harden others. Jesus' parables were not easy (to imagine they are rather helpful teaching aids is to do them total disservice), and the early church tended to find their challenge difficult to comprehend. This led them to think that they were deliberately obscure and that the key which they used to unlock them was meant for only the chosen few. It is usually accepted that the interpretation of the parable of the sower that follows (vv. 11–15) owes more to the early church than to Jesus himself. Whereas the parable itself is about a sower, the interpretation concentrates not upon him (for he is not even mentioned) but upon the seeds, or rather upon the soils into which the seeds fall. The soils become the hearers, and their attitudes that are described are used to account for the success or failure of the seeds. Most of the seeds are destroyed by the various deficiencies of the soils. Yet the seeds as a whole do not fail. The good soil becomes a symbol for those who exhibit the qualities that the Gentile Luke can appreciate (v. 15). These bear fruit a hundredfold. Luke, in Acts, will go on to show how 'the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed' (Acts 19:20). vv. 16 and 17 promise that future. v. 18 warns of the need to hear 'with patient endurance' and discrimination.

The final episode in the section introduces Jesus' mother and brothers. They come seeking him. When Jesus is told of their presence he answers in a way that, unlike Mk 3:31–5, does

not exclude them from the relationship but extends it. All those who 'hear the word of God and do it' are to be accounted Jesus' mother and brothers. Translations of the saying that make Jesus claim that his natural relations are the ones who are already doing this depend upon a somewhat forced reading of the Greek (Fitzmyer 1989). Mary and Jesus' brothers are, however, in Acts (1:14) among the earliest disciples waiting for the gift of the Spirit. The last episode in the infancy narratives suggests that Mary too had to face a learning experience. This was realized in her response to the life, death, and resurrection of her son. In this way she lived up to the infancy narratives' picture of her as the ideal disciple.

(8:22–56) Redeeming Works All three Synoptics tell of Jesus stilling the storm (Mt 8:23–7; Mk 4:35–41). It is the sign of Jesus' power over 'the deep', which was for them the ultimate symbol of chaos and the home of forces alien to God. Gen 1:2 told how the Spirit of God tamed the waters at creation, whilst Ps 89:10 made use of the old myth that saw the sea as the abode of the monster of chaos, Rahab. Isa 51:9 associates the same myth with God's victory over the sea at the Exodus. Moses and Elijah were associated with command over seas and rivers (Ex 14; 2 Kings 2:8). Jesus, as God's final act of redemption, now reveals his total power over the deep. All three evangelists regard the action as a point of disclosure to the disciples. In Mark, they awake Jesus with rough words; in Matthew they treat him with great respect. Luke takes something of a middle position; Jesus' rebuke is delivered after he stills the storm and their response is made in its light.

Jesus now arrives 'at the country of the Gerasenes' on the other side of the lake from Galilee. The actual name of the place varies in different MSS and all present problems. The really important thing is that the event takes place in Gentile territory. For Luke, who usually avoids having Jesus make contact with Gentiles, it provides a concrete example of an anticipation of the Gentile mission at which he has hinted so strongly and which he will go on to record in Acts. The story should not be pressed for answers to modern questions that were outside the concerns of its tellers who recount it in terms of symbols that were highly significant for them. The tormented man calls Jesus 'Son of the Most High God', a pagan title that is also used by a spirit-possessed slave girl at Philippi (Acts 16:17). Jesus exercises a power over the

demon that makes him reveal his name, 'Legion'. A legion was a unit in the Roman army of something around 6,000 men. The use of the term witnesses to the severity of the possession. The state of the man, his being held in chains and shackles, may well suggest something of the burden of the Roman occupation. The story may have been handed down with the intention of associating Jesus' throwing out of demonic powers with the expectation of the overthrow of the equally oppressive political authorities. The local citizens may well have been understood by Luke as asking Jesus to leave their area because they regarded him as a threat to stability. This would be seen by Luke as one with the situation that he describes frequently in Acts (16:39; 17:14; 20:1).

Jews regarded pigs as unclean, so the request of the demons to be allowed to enter them was one of self-preservation. However, their plea, though accepted, was of little use. The pigs rush down to the sea and the demons are pushed back into the abyss. The previous episode showed that this was not outside the control of Jesus. Jesus does not allow the healed man to go with him. In contrast to his not infrequent commands to silence, Jesus tells him to return and spread 'how much God has done for you'. It was not the 'Most High God' whom Jesus served but the God of the Jews. The Gentile mission had in effect begun.

This healing of a Gentile is quickly followed by an even greater wonder performed for a Jew, 'a leader of the synagogue'. Within that story, however, Luke, as Matthew and Mark, inserts the episode of the healing of the woman with a haemorrhage. Lev 15:25–30 tells how such a tribulation was not merely a physical misfortune, but that it virtually excluded her from her place within the people of God. Anyone touched by such a person was regarded as unclean. Jesus notices that 'power had gone out from me'. This has sometimes suggested to commentators that Luke still worked within the idea of Hellenistic magic that regarded Jesus as possessing a kind of impersonal force that was not entirely under his control (Hull 1974) (cf. 5:17). It should perhaps rather be seen as his oneness with God that becomes a channel of God's outreach to people. Whereas in the OT what was conveyed was the holiness of God that overwhelmed those with whom it made contact (2 Sam 6:6–11), it was the redeeming outreach of God that was bestowed. Luke is perhaps less influenced here by Hellenistic magic than by the admittedly impersonal ideas

of God and the Spirit that play a large part in the OT. Jesus' word to the woman raises the impersonal to the level of faith, and the Greek shows that the wholeness that is given, 'made you well', is interpreted at the deeper level of salvation, 'has saved you' (cf. 17:19).

Before he gets to the house, news is brought that the child had died but, when he arrives, he says, 'She is not dead, but sleeping.' Though sleep is a familiar biblical expression for death, so that this passage can be used as a pointer to a Christian understanding of death in much the way that the Johannine story of the raising of Lazarus can be so used (Jn 11), Jesus' words are recounted, not for this, but to point to the nature of the miracle he works. It is a restoration of the girl to life from death. To make this clear, Luke adds the reason for their laughter at him: 'knowing that she was dead'. Whether v. 55, 'Her spirit returned, and she got up at once', reflects the idea of the survival of the soul or spirit through death, or whether it does no more than use 1 Kings 17:22 is not easy to say. Perhaps, in view of 23:43, it is the former. Luke, any more than the rest of the NT, has no clearly worked out pattern of belief about the afterlife. The message of the story is that Jesus brings life from death.

(9:1–50) Climax in Galilee The climax of Jesus' time in Galilee begins with the sending out of the Twelve which, though close to Mark's account (6:7–13), differs at significant points. Luke, unlike Mark but like Mt 10:10, has Jesus refuse them the use of staff or sandals (22:35). All three evangelists record Jesus' command to extreme simplicity, which goes beyond both the normal requirements of a journey and the dress of the cynic wandering preachers which the evangelists would have encountered in the cities of the Roman empire. Whether Jesus saw both himself and his travelling disciples in terms of these cynic preachers (Crossan 1991) is disputed. The extreme simplicity is most likely a contrast even with them and reflects rather his belief in the challenge and nearness of the kingdom of God. Luke differs more significantly from Mark over the contents of the mission. For Mark, they proclaim that all should repent, and therefore repeat what he understands to be at the heart of Jesus' own preaching (1:15). Luke, who does not have this summary, tells rather of Jesus' proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God (4:43; 8:1; 9:1), and it is this that the disciples also preach. Repentance, though important for Luke (4:32; 15:7), seems to

arise out of redemption rather than being understood as a condition of it (7:47). He does not have Mark's statement that Jesus sent them out two by two (6:7), but keeps that for the mission of the seventy (10:1). This seems to be because, unlike Matthew and Mark, he does not see the mission of the Twelve as a pattern for later work which he reserves rather for his account of the seventy. For Luke, the twelve are a distinct group whose work is not extended into that of later disciples.

Mark at this point has an extended account of the death of John the Baptist which Luke does not take over. Luke will later omit an account of Paul's death and, though he will tell of Stephen's, he will emphasize, not that, but the preaching which is his primary witness (Acts 7:55). He will not isolate the death of Jesus as the moment of redemption (see LK 23:32-48). He records Herod's perplexity, however, for it makes a fitting prelude to vv. 18-20. Herod himself (unlike Mk 6:16), is not said to believe that Jesus is John risen from the dead. He rather contrasts Jesus with John and wishes to see him (cf. 23:8 and see also Acts 26:27-32).

The return of the disciples, as in Mark, leads into the story of the feeding of the five thousand. Moses had fed the Israelites in the desert (Ex 16; Num 10) and Elisha had fed 'the people' enabling them to have more than they required (2 Kings 4:42-4). Jesus as the fulfilment of both these prophets would perform a feeding the wonder of which would exceed theirs. At the heart of the story is the dialogue between him and the Twelve. Their perplexity at Jesus' command, 'You give them something to eat', shows that they have not yet come to appreciate his real nature. Luke uses the miracle as a point of disclosure for the disciples. For him, it is the event that enables their growing perception of Jesus to be realized and brought to the level where Peter can make his declaration of Jesus' messiahship (9:20). It becomes an anticipation of the messianic banquet. Like all the evangelists, he seems to be viewing Jesus' actions as having eucharistic overtones though the verbs he uses to describe Jesus, words over the bread and fish do not make this explicit.

Luke's story of the five thousand, unlike those of the other evangelists, leads immediately into Peter's acknowledgment of Jesus as Messiah. For him, there is a strong connection between the two events. Mark has a whole series of stories, including another feeding miracle, between the two and in this he is followed by Matthew. Luke, if as seems most likely he is using Mark

as his primary source, has chosen to leave them out. They show a Gentile concern which he will not pursue until his second volume, deal with a question of eating meats which he will resolve in Acts 15, and reveal the disciples in a light less favourable than his own. Once more, as on important occasions, Jesus is at prayer. Mark names the place as Caesarea-Philippi. Luke omits this for he would not have regarded Gentile territory as a suitable context for what was in the first instance a necessary and essentially Jewish recognition. The responses of the crowds are inadequate for, in defining Jesus in terms of a return of John, Elijah, or one other of the prophets, they are not merely undervaluing him but are seeking to keep him and the work of God through him within the terms of their own expectations. Though a less hostile response than that of the religious leaders, it ultimately amounts to the same thing (11:14) and shows an equal failure to move forward into the new outlook that Jesus is bringing. Jesus then asks the disciples to express their own perception of him and their level of commitment. Peter responds, 'The Christ of God.' All three evangelists report Peter's response in terms that express either their own understanding or that of their church (Mt 16:16; Mk 8:29). Luke's form expresses his own belief that Jesus' messiahship fulfils OT expectations when these are rightly understood (24:25), and emphasizes his function as the agent of God. Jesus issues a stern command to silence for, though the confession is right as far as it goes, the content of Jesus' messiahship has to be filled with suffering. It is that alone that is to make it a reality.

There now follows (vv. 21-7) the first of three predictions of the passion (9:43-5; 18:31-4). Jesus says that the Son of Man must be rejected, killed, and 'on the third day be raised'. He must get the disciples to understand the necessity for his death, and to believe that this will lead to his vindication by God. This prediction is of supreme importance for all the evangelists and reflects a belief that was fundamental to the early church (1 Cor 15:3-4). The cross made the resurrection possible and was therefore seen as part of the determined plan of God. It was early given saving significance. How far Jesus himself was actually conscious of the necessity of his death is disputed. The Gethsemane scene suggests that he was not necessarily certain of its inevitability. That he was aware from the beginning that his task was very different from what was expected of a messianic figure, and that his understanding of God's redemption made a

clash with Jewish religious susceptibilities inevitable, meant that his rejection and death were a real possibility. But that he went up to Jerusalem deliberately in order to die is much less certain (Moule 1977). The gospels say that the empty tomb did not quickly lead to an understanding that Jesus was raised, and this suggests that his prophecy of a resurrection was far less unambiguous than these passages maintain. These passion predictions have certainly been shaped by the early church, and it is hard to know just how far that shaping extends.

Jesus' revelation of the path of suffering for himself is followed immediately by a call to his disciples to follow the same way. They are to 'deny themselves', the word used of Peter's denial of Jesus, and to take up the cross 'daily'. The last word is a Lukan addition and is sometimes thought to play down the absolute demand that the challenge might otherwise make. Luke demands a daily pursuit of the way that led Jesus to the cross rather than a once for all abandoning of the world. It reflects his more positive approach to the world and also his refusal to make Jesus' own cross into a point of atonement. For him, it is rather one with, though the climax of, his whole life which led to it and which thereby becomes not merely the means of resurrection, but also the means of God's redemption. Luke's version of the command is not a watering down of its absoluteness; it is rather a demand to be remade daily in the image of Christ. It reflects just that concern for daily life that his addition of the same phrase to the bread petition of the Lord's prayer makes obvious (11:2).

The strong demand is justified by an eschatological urgency. Those who refuse to line up with Jesus and his words will find themselves refused by him 'when he comes in his glory'. This verse can hardly refer to anything other than the parousia for it points to the revelation of a glory that had previously been established at his exaltation (24:26). v. 27 brings this urgency to a climax. Unfortunately, the meaning of that climax is not entirely clear. Mk 9:1 speaks of the Kingdom's coming 'with power' and Mt 16:28 suggests that he read this as a reference to the parousia. Luke's omission of 'with power' has sometimes been taken as suggesting that he changed the reference to make it apply, not to the parousia, but to the gift of the Spirit or the growth of the church. However, this is unlikely. Luke expressly associates the Spirit and the mission he enables with 'power' (24:49), and it is precisely this powerful reality of the present

Kingdom that makes Luke drop 'with power' from his reference to the return of Jesus. The Kingdom in power does not await the parousia for its establishment. Already established in heaven, the return of Jesus will reveal its reality on earth (see LK 17:21). Luke, in common with the vast majority of early Christians, anticipated the speedy return of Jesus. Whether this represents a misunderstanding of Jesus' own outlook is a matter that takes us beyond the limitations of this commentary (see Borg 1994; Allison, 1998).

Luke (like Matthew and Mark) links these sayings to the transfiguration by a time reference that is unique in the gospels outside the passion narrative. Some have suggested that this is because the evangelists believed that the promise of v. 27 is fulfilled in its mysterious happening. This, however, is wholly unlikely. Luke presents the transfiguration not as the fulfilment of a promise, but as the anticipation of something greater. The time link is to relate it firmly both to the warning of imminent suffering and to the promise that out of it will come a future glory. The transfiguration becomes a guarantee of that. Luke has 'about eight days after these sayings' in place of Mark's 'after six days'. This may mean little more than a different way of calculating time and like Mark would seem to have Ex 24:15–18 in mind. It may also be mindful of Lev 9:1, a passage that, also concerned with the glory of God, speaks of that glory appearing to Aaron. Luke emphasizes the impact the event has upon the disciples. They 'saw his glory' (v. 32, cf. Lev 9:6) and actually 'entered the cloud' (v. 34). Peter's response, though not a valid one, is regarded as less arbitrary than it is said to be in Mark. His attempt to perpetuate the vision, which is what his request to make 'dwellings' suggests, is less derided than in Mark.

Luke puts emphasis upon the appearance of Moses and Elijah. They also (only in Luke) appear 'in glory'. These two have a strong typological significance for him because, not only were they prophets who suffered greatly in bringing God's redemption to Israel, but Jewish tradition said that both were taken up into heaven. They therefore speak of Jesus' 'departure' (Gk. *exodos*) which he was 'about to accomplish at Jerusalem'. From the beginning of the ministry, Luke has pointed the narrative towards Jerusalem where its purpose is to be achieved (4:9, 30). From the end of the time in Galilee, this movement will become even clearer. At Jerusalem will occur the events that

will accomplish not only Jesus' glorification but also the redemption that God wills for his people.

At the conclusion of the visionary appearance, the voice that earlier came to Jesus (3:22) now addresses the disciples. It expresses the divine approval of Jesus and, in words that follow Deut 18:15, enjoins them to give him their trust and obedience. The three disciples are given a glimpse of the glory that is rightly Jesus' and are themselves therefore strengthened to follow him on the way to his cross and glorification. What they have now seen anticipates both the empty tomb and the ascension, where two men in white will again interpret the events they witness (24:4; Acts 1:11). In Mk 9 and Mt 17, as they come down from the mountain, Jesus commands them to silence about what they had seen until after the resurrection. This is absent from Luke as befits his telling of the story in a way that brings out its divine witness to them. They did, however, keep silence 'in those days'. Perhaps Luke implies that they will use it at an appropriate time which will be—not as in Mark after the resurrection—but at the passion.

The incidents following the transfiguration show, however, just how much these three, along with the rest of the disciples, have to learn. Luke, unlike Mark (cf. Mk 9:14), places the story of the disciples' inability to expel a demon on the following day and thus does not exclude the three from its failure (v. 37). Again, their failure to understand Jesus' prediction of his suffering and their refusal to ask him about it shows how little they have learned (v. 45). The contrast between what Jesus is saying and their inability to enter into it is further strengthened by their discussion about their relative greatness (vv. 46–8) and by the attempt of John, one of the witnesses of the transfiguration, to remain exclusive (vv. 49–50). It is possible, of course, that the exorcist was using Jesus' name in a magical way rather than expressing a genuine response to Jesus. This appears to be the import of a similar situation in Acts 8:14–24. Here, however, in this particular context it seems that Luke is thinking not so much of an opportunist as of one who was not 'following with us', namely a disciple from that wider group that did not travel with them on the road but was influenced and moved by Jesus. Jesus' answer looks for a greater openness and is a rebuke of all exclusiveness. The disciples clearly have much to learn as they follow Jesus on the road.

The Journey to Jerusalem (9:51–19:27)

With 9:51, a verse of exceptional solemnity and loaded with biblical imagery, we enter upon a new section of the gospel that takes Jesus to the very gates of Jerusalem. Though the sense of movement is not always obvious, references to his progress occur from time to time (13:22, 33–4; 17:11; 18:31; 19:11) and show that it is the journey motif which holds this long section together. Geographically, these notices make little sense and together point to a meandering which appears to make little headway. For Luke, their significance is theological rather than factual. They keep Jerusalem as a goal in the reader's mind and point to that city as the climax and focal point of Jesus' ministry. In the light of the infancy narratives, they seek to present that ministry as the climax of God's workings in Israel. With Jesus' movement to Jerusalem, the whole of Israel's history is caught up and brought to a climax in him. In what happens there, Israel is reconstituted and the gift of the Spirit, which his exaltation makes possible, proclaims her eschatological renewal.

Recognizing the importance of this section for Luke, commentators have sought to discover an overarching scheme which gives some coherence and unity to a collection of material that does not easily reveal either a logical development or an easy progression of thought. Schemes which put forward some form of chiasmic structure have not been able to account for the order of all the material in the section. The suggestion that Deuteronomy provided the pattern, though attractive, again falls short of clear demonstration (see Nolland 1989–93; Evans 1990). There are, however, clear links with that book and these are such as to suggest that it is Deuteronomy that gives an insight into the way the material in this section is to be read. Luke has already presented Jesus in terms of the prophet Moses. Clearly visible at the transfiguration as an influence upon Jesus, his experience on Mount Sinai has already been used to shape the events around the choice of the twelve and the delivery of the inaugural sermon (6:12–49). In Deuteronomy, Moses addressed Israel on the way to his 'departure' (which in Jewish tradition became an assumption into heaven) and their movement into the promised land. Deuteronomy was seen as his farewell address, which became a contemporary exhortation to every future generation. It spoke about the nature of their God, his own withdrawal, their life in the future, and their attitude as they faced

disobedience within Israel and temptations from without. What Deuteronomy does for Moses and historical Israel, the journey to Jerusalem does for Jesus and the community of eschatological Israel that he calls into being. Whilst in this section, Luke tells of a past movement and of the learning situation of those who journeyed with Jesus to Jerusalem, he enables him to speak now as the exalted Lord to those who would travel with him in the present (Moessner 1989).

(9:51–62) Eschatological Urgency ‘When the days drew near’ does little to convey the true awesomeness of the Greek, which is better rendered, ‘As the days were being accomplished’. The wheel is turning full circle and coming to its appointed fulfilment. Jesus’ being ‘taken up’ is achieved not merely by the ascension but also by the resurrection and passion—and indeed by the movement to Jerusalem. All is included within the embrace of this eschatological perspective. Jesus is already being seen in the light of that exaltation. To ‘set his face’ is often used in LXX of a threatening action. Luke however does not follow it with ‘against’ but rather with an infinitive of purpose. The servant in Isa 50:7 ‘sets his face like a solid rock’ in obedience to the Lord’s will and it is this imagery that is uppermost in Luke’s mind.

Samaritans refuse him precisely because his goal is Jerusalem and her people. The time of the Samaritans will come, but it will not be until Acts 8:4 when it will happen as a result both of the renewal of Israel and of the disobedience of many of her people. Jesus, unlike Elijah in 2 Kings 1, has no need of the vindication of a miraculous sign. James and John, in wishing to follow in the way of Elijah, reveal just how much they have still to learn.

The new stage of God’s action in Jesus, and its contrast with the preparatory nature of all that went before, is shown in Jesus’ refusal to allow would-be disciples to act in accordance with the outlook of that earlier age (9:57–62). Discipleship now meant journeying with the Son of Man who had nowhere to lay his head. His call required a response that cut across the law’s demand for care of parents. If it refers to more than fulfilling long-term obligations and is to be taken literally, then it demanded the neglect of what was regarded as the most solemn of all obligations. Luke sees that on which Jesus was now engaged as the climactic point of God’s redeeming activity, which, in the benefits it brings, overrides all other acts of piety and natural ties. Less stark, the final call contrasts

the present time with that of Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 19:20).

(10:1–24) The Mission of the Seventy Luke alone has the mission of the seventy—or is it seventy-two? The MS evidence is fairly divided and it is not easy to conclude what Luke actually wrote. Both numbers are linked to the two OT episodes that might be reflected in Luke’s story. Gen 10 has a list of seventy nations of the world, though LXX has seventy-two. Num 11 speaks of Moses choosing seventy elders upon whom a portion of the spirit that was upon him would rest, but since two others shared the gift, this could be taken as seventy-two. Which of these two episodes influenced Luke’s telling of the story is not certain. That they were sent ‘before Jesus to every town and place where he himself intended to go’ suggests the situation of the world-wide church as it preached and witnessed in anticipation of the return of Christ. On the other hand, the woes against the Galilean towns of vv. 13–15 point to Jewish perversity which was not wholly other than that which caused Moses’ appointment of the seventy elders. The episode is certainly related to the continuing mission to Israel and the varied response that this caused. Luke probably sees it as a pointer to the missionary experiences of his contemporaries as they challenged both Jews and Gentiles.

The message they are to preach is that ‘the kingdom . . . has come near’, though its embrace (‘near to you’, v. 9 but not in v. 11) is limited to those who respond favourably to them. This latter fact suggests that the Kingdom is a present reality and that its nearness is likely to be spatial rather than temporal. Yet it hovers over them rather than actually including them; there is an apartness about it, an otherness which means that their relationship to it is as yet tangential; they are not yet actually within its circle. When the missionaries return (v. 17), and rejoice that they have had power over the demons, the Lord bids them to raise their sights and to see that what has happened on earth is a reflection of, and a pointer to, something even more sublime in heaven; ‘I watched Satan falling like lightning from heaven.’ What is ultimately real and final takes place in heaven and it is this, as it is reflected on earth, that enables the world to be more open to God’s rule. Luke has a strong sense of the transcendence of God’s kingdom. It is the victory in that sphere that enables Jesus to bring about God’s redemption on earth. They are to rejoice that their names are written in heaven (v. 20).

The success of the mission and Jesus' vision of triumph in heaven cause him to 'rejoice in the Holy Spirit' (some MSS have simply 'in spirit' and so point rather to his ecstatic state), and to make a thanksgiving to his Father who has brought about this success. In keeping with the Jewish understanding of revelation which thinks in terms of hiding as well as revealing, he points to God's hiding these things from the wise and revealing them to those who are open to receive ('babes'). God's redemption passes by the self-sufficient but is grasped by those who are looking for it. Now follows (v. 22) a saying in which Jesus reveals himself in terms that, going beyond what is usually found in the Synoptic Gospels, comes close to his self-revelation in John. The Father has 'handed over all things' to the Son to give him an authority that is close to his own. That authority is centred on the act of redemption. The Father alone is the one who really knows the Son. Equally, it is the Son alone who really knows the Father. Such is his knowledge of the Father that he is able to make him known to anyone he chooses. Revelation of God through Jesus is not an idea that is elsewhere embraced in Luke. The section ends by pointing out how blessed the disciples are to have shared in this revelatory moment. The whole section has emphasized the reality of the heavenly Kingdom and its influence upon and future presence in the world.

(10:23–37) The Parable of the Good Samaritan At this point we meet the first of the many parables which are such a feature of the central section of this gospel (Bailey 1976; 1980). Luke links the episode firmly to Jesus' revelation of himself (v. 25). A lawyer who would no doubt have claimed that he 'saw', seeks to 'test Jesus', to determine his credentials. Matthew and Mark have a similar confrontation (where Matthew also has 'test') during Jesus' last visit to Jerusalem (Mt 22:34–40; Mk 12:28–31). Luke does not have that episode for, in some way, he sees its purpose satisfied here. Some interpreters believe that he has taken it over as a setting for the parable for which the original context in the life of Jesus was forgotten. This they believe would account for the twist that occurs between the lawyer's question and Jesus' reshaping of it; the parable itself does not follow on from the lawyer's question. On the whole, it is likely that this exhibits undue scepticism. That Jesus was only tested once in this way is not a necessary assumption. The twist between the lawyer's question and Jesus' answer is entirely in keeping

with Jesus' radical stance: he was making the lawyer rethink his presuppositions and telling him that the assumptions with which he started out and which determined his question—'What bounds do I draw around my acceptance of others as my neighbour?'—had to be revised in a radical way. Neighbourliness knows no bounds and must proceed from an attitude of spontaneity and self-forgetfulness. The parable was remembered in its setting which actually gave depth and direction to it.

This, of course, does not mean that Luke has not shaped the episode as we now have it. That the commands to love God (Deut 6:5) and neighbour (Lev 18:5) were joined in this way before Jesus is disputed. Luke's concern to point to the strengths of the Jewish faith may have made him put into the lawyer's mouth a belief that originally was said to have been expressed by Jesus himself. It would then have made a way for his statement that the lawyer attempted to 'justify himself, an attitude that for Luke was largely responsible for the tragedy of the Jewish rejection of Jesus. As Luke sees it, the parable overturns the lawyer's stance and puts before him the challenge of emulating that of a Samaritan who was prepared to go to the aid of one who despised him. The parable in its setting calls for an abandonment of all status, privilege, and exclusiveness, that is, of just those things which for Luke stopped the Jewish people from responding to the outreach of Jesus.

For Luke, the parable is an indictment of the lawyer's attitude. Some have seen this as evidence of his alleged anti-Semitism (J. T. Sanders 1987). It reflects criticism, however, rather than hostility. It challenges rather than condemns. The Jewish religious leaders, the priest and the Levite, are there not as objects of attack but as examples of the deficiencies of the best in Judaism. Their proper consideration of the purity requirements of the law (for contact with a possible dead body would have prevented them from functioning in their proper tasks) led them to make a decision which the action of the Samaritan showed to be wrong. As with the lawyer and his question, the attitude inculcated by the law in the end hindered the exercise of that love which it so clearly enjoined. In his infancy narratives, Luke has already shown just what a leap forward was required if the priest was to move into the new outreach of God. Nevertheless, it was in the temple that that outreach began (1:5–20).

(10:38–42) Martha and Mary The Jewish lawyer had to learn to listen to the law which on his

own understanding was meant to foster the love of God and humankind. It required a spontaneity of action that went beyond that which could be finely calculated and be seen to be under his own control. Earlier, as the journey was about to begin, the disciples had had to learn to give up status and become like children, to accept outsiders, and to eschew quick retaliation (9:46–56). Now, the fundamental requirement of discipleship is illustrated through the story of Martha and Mary. Two sisters welcome Jesus into their home, the one distracted by the burden of hospitality whilst the other, almost oblivious to its demands, sits listening at Jesus' feet. When Martha complains, Jesus rebukes her and, in the most likely reading, says, 'only one thing is necessary', namely, 'the better part' which Mary has chosen and which will not be taken away from her. Though the 'one thing' has sometimes been taken as suggesting that Martha is overdoing the hospitality, it rather refers to Mary's role of listening to Jesus. This is what had been commanded by the voice at the transfiguration (9:35) and the disciples had already shown how hard it was to do this. Martha, like them and the lawyer before her, wanted to be in control. The whole journey section of the gospel emphasizes the need for listening to the Lord. Only so will disciples be able to follow him on the way.

It is hard not to have sympathy with Martha, for Jesus' rebuke is certainly stern. Some recent readings have pictured Martha's as a leadership role which has been questioned in the story, as it was told by the early church, in favour of a more passive one such as is exercised by Mary (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983). Luke would almost certainly not have taken it in this way. For him, it expresses the absolute necessity of the priority of obedience to the call of Christ which is itself understood as a radical challenge to that self-sufficiency that characterized the outlook of those who refused Jesus or who were not easily open to his call.

(II:1–13) Teaching on Prayer Following a statement of Jesus' own prayer (v. 1) and the commendation of Mary's listening to him, it is an appropriate place for Luke to include teaching about prayer. The disciples' request for such teaching becomes the opportunity for including the Lord's prayer. Its Lukan form is shorter than Matthew's (6:9–13) and interpreters are by no means united in determining the relationship between the two. Matthew's shows clear signs of use within the Christian community

and is most probably the form that was prayed in his church. Luke's is also sometimes thought of as that of his church. This, however, is less likely for it certainly shows his hand and reflects his own theological understanding. It expresses a response to Jesus' teaching that brings out what Luke believes are the essential features of it. 'When you pray, say:' allows for no flexibility. It lays down a standard that must be expressed in all prayer: it says what prayer is about. 'Father' is the direct, confident approach to God that Luke sees as characteristic of Jesus' own prayer (22:42; 23:34, 46) and which his exaltation made possible for those who would follow him (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). God's 'name', in accordance with OT imagery, is his very nature which is expressed especially in his merciful outreach to humanity (Ex 33:17–19). To pray for its hallowing, therefore, is to pray that his true nature may be acknowledged by them and his redeeming activity be effective in the world. To pray for the coming of God's kingdom, which for Luke is already a reality in heaven (10:11), is to pray that it may be realized in the world. That for Luke will be at the parousia when what is real in heaven will be revealed to the world and will embrace it (17:24; 8:8). The request for bread (Luke adds 'each day'), which on the surface seems to be the most obvious and immediate of the petitions, is not easily understood. The meaning of the Greek word translated 'daily' is wholly uncertain. The claim that it appeared in a text with the meaning 'daily rations' is not open to verification and therefore can carry little weight. It might mean 'essential', though whether it is then to be understood in a physical or spiritual sense is not clear. It might mean 'bread for the coming day' and have some pointer back to the Israelites in the wilderness and their gathering of the daily manna (Ex 16:4). In the light of the eschatological nature of the prayer as a whole, and following on from the plea for the coming of the Kingdom, many would see it as a prayer for a taste in the present of the eschatological bread of the future Kingdom. May we live daily out of the power of the Kingdom. On the other hand, the following petition about forgiveness and forgiving is wholly about the present. Luke's hand is visible here, for its plea for forgiveness of 'sins' breaks the parallelism of our forgiving of 'debts'. Matthew has 'debts' in both parts of the petition and, because Jesus elsewhere talks of sin as 'debts' (7:41), it is likely that Luke has rephrased it here to make it more intelligible to his non-Jewish readers. The conditionality of the clause

seems to owe its severity to Jesus himself and would fit the emphasis of the evangelist's version of Jesus' foundation sermon (6:20–49). Luke's version of the prayer ends with the petition, 'Do not bring us to the time of trial' (*peirasmos*). This translation would certainly represent Luke's own understanding of the petition's significance and does more justice to its meaning than the weaker 'temptation'. For him, the 'time of trial' was that point when a person is open to the ultimate of Satan's onslaughts such as was expected before the final revelation of the Kingdom. Whereas at Gethsemane, Matthew and Mark see the disciples open to the *peirasmos* when they fall asleep, Luke regards it as a future fall when they would abandon Jesus and enter into the grip of Satan (22:46; cf. Mk 14:41). Since it would not allow a hope of deliverance but would rather witness to Satan's triumph, any petition for deliverance from his power would be superfluous.

For Luke, the prayer has a strong eschatological orientation. It is one for the open manifestation of the Kingdom and a plea that, meanwhile, the disciples should live under its shadow and out of its strength. So the parable, which talks of the need for urgent and insistent prayer, pictures this under the guise of a determined petition for bread. The parable talks of contrasts. God, who wills to answer the disciples' petitions, is contrasted with an earthly person who is indifferent to his friend's pleas, and a request for physical bread is contrasted with the pleas for the Kingdom's food. If the plea for earthly benefit produces a response, how much more will God respond to those requests for things that are in accordance with his will. The parable says that God is not indifferent, and any suggestion that he is arises out of a misreading of the signs of the times.

The section therefore ends with a further contrast, yet one that this time depends on what actually links God and the best of family life. Earthly parents for all their imperfections ('being evil' is a typical Semitic exaggeration which is used to make the point) give good gifts to their children. How much more will God give the 'Holy Spirit' to those who ask him. For Luke, the Holy Spirit is God's power and strength which enables a response to him and a witness to his Kingdom (Acts 6:10; 9:17, 31). His presence is a sign of incorporation into the eschatological people of God and a guarantee of inclusion in his Kingdom which is to be revealed (Acts 1:8, 11). Though it remains most likely that Luke himself wrote the petition for

the Kingdom at 11:2, the few MSS that read, 'May your Holy Spirit come upon us and cleanse us' would not be out of keeping with his thoughts.

(11:14–36) The Beelzebub Controversy Exorcism played a large part in the ministry of Jesus and, indeed, in that of the early church. Demon possession was widely believed in at that time and, as this episode makes clear, Jesus was by no means the only exorcist around. His opponents do not attack him for performing exorcisms, but rather question his motivation and the power by which he was able to do them: he was accused of casting out demons 'by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons'. Beelzebub appears in some ancient Canaanite texts as 'Baal, Lord of the Heavenly House', a local or Syrian deity who was treated by Hebrew thought as an alien power, hostile to YHWH. 'Beelzebub', which appears in some texts, is a corruption of this, meaning 'Lord of the flies'. With a growing appreciation of the power of YHWH, these other gods were undefied and then treated as hostile agents of Satan. Jesus, therefore, is here accused of being an agent of Satan. On what grounds would they make this charge? Unlike any comparable Jewish exorcists, he did not use prayer or claim to draw on the strength of the Jewish tradition. He acted on his own authority and outside the covenant. Moreover, in his sitting loose to the law and its demands, he could be seen to be despising the covenant itself. All this could make him open to the charge of being a godless person.

He points to the basic nonsense of the charge, for Satan was unlikely to be wishing to destroy his supporters. And were their associates also to be charged with being agents of Satan? This is basically a *non sequitur* for, though their activities might look no different from those of Jesus, they themselves presumably still worked within the law and so were not subject to the complaints that were being made against him. More important is his understanding of the significance of his exorcisms. 'The finger of God' is a phrase used in Ex 8:19 by the men of Pharaoh to describe Moses' wonders in Egypt; they were worked by God. If Jesus was doing his works by the finger of God—if he could be acknowledged as a man of God, reflecting his character and his goodness—then his exorcisms, far from witnessing to his service of Satan, witness rather to his being the agent of the kingdom of God. They show that, through him, 'the kingdom of God has come to you'. The translation of REB reads 'has already come upon you' and by

allowing for the Greek preposition, *epi*, does more justice to it. The Kingdom has 'come upon' us, that is arrived to hover over us, to cast its glow over us, to be an effective power out of which we can now live. It is not yet here in its fullness, though we are already living within its embrace. (Cf. further FGS 1.)

If this verse serves as an important witness to Jesus' understanding of the Kingdom, it is equally important as a witness to his understanding of the significance of his exorcisms. They do not prove him, they do not even authenticate him. It is rather he who authenticates them and can enable them to be seen as signs of the presence of the Kingdom. So Jesus sees himself as overpowering Satan. The urgency of the contest is such that a saying (v. 23) is used in a manner that reverses its meaning at 9:50. The same sense of urgency controls the interpretation of vv. 24–6. If it is to endure, Jesus' saving work demands a positive response from those who receive it. So, when a woman in the crowd extols him by way of his mother, Jesus replies by declaring the blessedness of those who not only hear God's word, but actually obey it. If it is to achieve its purpose, grace must be met with a response.

Those who accused him of being in the pay of Beelzebul would not acknowledge what was before their eyes. Jesus himself now accuses those who demand a sign, that is an irrefutable demonstration of proof of his status. Instead, they are offered only the sign of Jonah when he preached to Nineveh (Jon 3–4). The people of Nineveh recognized the force of Jonah's preaching and the justice of his challenge to them. The queen of Sheba recognized the wisdom of Solomon and acted (1 Kings 10). Jesus' contemporaries are able neither to discern nor to respond. The final part of the section uses a saying about a lamp, not this time to talk about a future revelation of what is now hidden (8:16), but to warn that light must be allowed to do its work. It can easily be reduced to ineffectiveness.

(11:37–12:12) Jesus and the Pharisees Jesus in this central section of the gospel is often at meals which for Luke, as probably for Jesus himself, are seen as anticipations of the Kingdom of God. By his teaching, Jesus shows how they reflect or fail to reflect the Kingdom. This passage contains his harshest criticisms of the Pharisees. Much of its criticism is found also in Mt 23 where it is actually heightened and, addressed to crowds and the disciples about the Pharisees, becomes a climactic attack upon

them. In Luke, since his criticisms are made at a meal and are given face to face, they do not mark the end of any relationship with them. There is still a dialogue. Jesus' dealings with the Pharisees were often confrontational, for his approach to purity, which was a major concern of theirs, was quite different from their own. Here, when Jesus is invited to dine with a Pharisee, he does not use the water provided to join in the ritual washing that would have been expected of those who were guests. He meets his host's disapproval with a determined attack upon his group. Their inner attitude does not measure up to their concern for externals. Tithing laws were complicated but Luke's point is that the Pharisees expended too much energy on little things such as tithing herbs which would have been better spent on more important commandments such as justice and love. They are like unmarked graves which actually defile people who come into contact with them.

A 'lawyer', who is a professional exegete of the law of Moses and who, by addressing Jesus as 'teacher' appears to acknowledge an affinity with him, resents these attacks but is in turn himself accused. The Pharisees' interpretation of the law puts undue burdens upon people. It is hard to see how their building tombs for the prophets actually continues their predecessors' persecution of them. It would seem to suggest the reverse. Their actions, however, do not really amount to a dissociation of themselves from the outlooks of their ancestors. They are seen rather as hypocritical. The attack is used as an entry into the final charge (11:49) that 'this generation' (which includes those who are contemporary with Luke) will bring to a climax their predecessors' harassment of God's servants by persecuting and killing Christian prophets and apostles. 'The Wisdom of God said' (11:64) is an unusual expression and, if it means more than 'God in his wisdom', reflects a saying of the early church. Abel was the first victim of jealousy (Gen 4:8). Zechariah is usually identified with the priest who was stoned by the people (2 Chr 24:20–2).

This passage, like that in Mt 23, has caused considerable disquiet for interpreters of the NT because it serves as a basis for that understanding of Pharisaism which, by presenting it as hypocritical in the extreme, is wholly unjust to that religious movement within Judaism to which in many ways Jesus was most closely related. In spite of some claims to the contrary (E. P. Sanders 1985) it is likely that Jesus did engage in disputes with them, but the stories

of these conflicts have come down to us by way of the early church and reflect the growing hostility that later history encouraged. By the time Luke wrote, Pharisaism and the young church were engaged in a battle for the soul of Judaism. Our gospels reflect the heat this engendered and present a picture of Jesus' dealings with them which is coloured by these experiences.

The final component in this section takes up the earlier attack upon the Pharisees to characterize their basic outlook as 'hypocrisy'. 'Leaven' in the Bible is frequently used as a symbol for a hidden but pervasive corrupting influence (1 Cor 5:6–8). Pharisaic hypocrisy will, however, be uncovered. Meanwhile, the disciples must not fear those who persecute them. Everyone who acknowledges Jesus before human beings will be acknowledged by Jesus as Son of Man before the heavenly host (cf. Acts 7:56). Denial, on the other hand, will bring denial; 12:10 seems best understood as underlining this warning. Everyone who speaks against Jesus is open to forgiveness (cf. Jesus' first word from the cross, 23:34). Blasphemy 'against the Holy Spirit', however, is Christian denial of the truths revealed to them by their possession of the Spirit. Seen supremely as apostasy, it is extended to include a denial of the community brought into being through the Spirit (Acts 5:3). People are not to worry about what to say when they are brought to trial for being Christians. The Holy Spirit will himself direct their witness at this point (Acts 4:8; 6:10).

(12:13–53) Alert for the Kingdom Whilst a large number of interpreters have suggested that Luke no longer believed in the imminence of Jesus' return (Conzelmann 1960), there are a number of sections that suggest otherwise, and here we meet the first of them (cf. 17:21). It begins with a request for Jesus to take sides in a dispute over a family inheritance, and this enables Luke to include some teaching about the dangers of riches and of the attitude that concern for material things can encourage. To illustrate the point that one's life 'does not consist in the abundance of possessions' he includes the parable of the rich fool whose concern for material things and his confidence in them made him forget both the fragility of life and its deeper obligations, 'rich towards God'.

Jesus then turns from this more general teaching to address the disciples. They are 'not to worry about' their life (v. 22) Whilst this

might mean 'put no effort into' and thus commend an eschatological detachment from the world, more likely in Luke's context it means 'do not be unduly concerned about'. The parable has pointed out that one has but limited control over one's future, and the teaching which follows stresses God's care. Undue striving for the things of this life actually leads one into the way of the 'nations of the world' which becomes a forgetfulness of God and of the things of the Kingdom. As Evans (1990) expresses it, 'The question then at issue is when a proper concern has become an improper anxiety'. Modern life would suggest the importance of the question, though the ongoing existence of the world and its responsibilities might place the move from one to another at a different point from Luke. Luke sees undue concern for the things of the body and of 'life', that is the business of living in the world, as a definite hindrance to striving for God's Kingdom. Though it is God's 'good pleasure' to give the Kingdom, entry into its sphere demands considerable effort on the part of men and women. It certainly does not allow for one's primary drive to be in the direction of the things of this world. Luke sees a definite either/or, though his challenge to exclusiveness is undermined by his inclusion of Jesus' promise that striving for the Kingdom will bring with it the bonus of these material benefits 'as well'. v. 34 gives the rationale of the antithesis which dominates the whole passage.

Jesus now (v. 35) warns the 'little flock' to be alert and ready for their master when he returns from the wedding banquet. 'The wedding banquet' would seem to be a symbol here for Jesus' enthronement in heaven and points to his return at the parousia. The whole passage carries two convictions. First, the disciples must be ready for a return of Jesus at any moment (v. 40). Secondly, they must allow for a delay that must neither reduce their expectancy nor impede their preparedness (v. 38). Peter's question at v. 41 makes it clear that 'the Lord', that is Jesus as he is worshipped and believed in by those whom Luke addresses, is speaking directly to Luke's contemporaries. The warning is directed to them, in the light of the belief, however (v. 32), that God is anxious to give the Kingdom to them. The urgency of the response demanded is controlled by the greatness of the gift that they are promised. The promise is real, and this suggests that it will not be long delayed. The element of delay points not to the future but to the past. Time has gone on. Luke's readers are in

danger of losing hope and that preparedness that characterized the earliest Christians (1 Thess 4:13–18).

So, in vv. 49–53, Luke includes a passage that points to the need for disciples to respond to the urgency of the times even at the expense of causing divisions within their own families. vv. 49 and 50 contain singularly difficult sayings of Jesus. Set in the context of a particular stage of his ministry, they nevertheless are directed to Luke's contemporaries. What is the fire that Jesus came to bring? In the prophets, fire can be a symbol of purification (Isa 4:4) and, more frequently, of judgement (Am 1:4). Jesus here seems to be referring to the work of the Spirit (Acts 2:19) especially through baptism into the Christian community (3:16). That activity will come about as a result of his own 'baptism' which would be achieved by way of his death and exaltation. A saying at Mk 10:38 understands Jesus' death in this way and links it to the suffering of the disciples. Luke is probably using the same ideas, though, in keeping with his refusal to isolate the deaths either of Jesus or the disciples, he extends its meaning to embrace Jesus' whole way of life which makes his exaltation possible. Luke's readers must be prepared for difficult times.

(12:54–13:35) Jewish Refusal of the Signs of the Times In Palestine, rain clouds come from the west, the Mediterranean, and dry winds from the south or east. People, adept at reading these signs, remain totally insensitive to other signs that are around them. Crises in their lives are settled speedily and before they bring irreversible disasters, yet the greatest crisis of the present is ignored. Luke uses two otherwise unknown episodes to point to the reality of the crisis facing them. Some Galileans were killed by Pilate's men in the temple and some other people, staying in Jerusalem, died when a tower in the city walls collapsed. They were no worse than the people Jesus is addressing who face an equal fate if they do not repent (see Lk 21:20–4). It is now the climactic hour. In a parable, Jesus talks of the last, desperate measures to produce fruit from an unfruitful tree and of the severity of the response that a further failure to produce will bring. 'If it bears fruit next year, well and good; if not, you can cut it down.'

The nature of the problem with the Jewish nation is illustrated by an incident in the synagogue. Jesus, on the sabbath, heals a woman who for eighteen years had been crippled with some spinal injury. The one who had general

responsibility for ordering the life of the synagogue objects on the grounds that, since the illness was not life-threatening, the people, who presumably were understood as encouraging Jesus to respond to the need, might seek such healings at times other than the sabbath. In reply, Jesus points out how this attitude denies the rational approach which they in fact exercise in relation to the sabbath law. More seriously, it fails to acknowledge just what is happening in Jesus' ministry. It does not recognize that what is taking place here is nothing less than the defeat of Satan and the establishment of God's rule (13:16). Two further parables make this point. The Kingdom to which the miracle witnesses is like a mustard plant. In its beginnings, it is small and insignificant; when it is grown, however, it becomes a tree that, like that of Dan 4:21, is strong and embraces the nations of the earth. The parable of the yeast makes the same point. What begins as insignificant and virtually unseen, permeates three measures of flour. Gen 18:16 connects such an amount with Sarah's feeding of her godlike visitors. It has been suggested that in ordinary circumstances, the amount would feed more than one hundred people. In any case, the point here is the power of that which seems to have but little beginnings, and the contrast between the beginning and the end. Something strange and not easily comprehended is happening in Jesus' ministry.

So, Luke reminds his readers of Jesus' journey (13:22), of the urgency it proclaims, and the response it demands. The message of the section is summed up in a further parable where people, invited to enter but failing to respond, will not discern the reality of the situation until it is too late (13:25–30). Their pleas of affinity will carry no weight. Jesus' contemporaries will see the patriarchs and the prophets included but they themselves left outside. Their founding fathers will be joined, not by themselves, but by those from the nations. Those who consider themselves first will in actuality be last. Such is the challenge of Jesus.

The first half of the journey comes to a climax (13:31–5) with a challenge to Jerusalem that actually prefigures the events of Palm Sunday (19:29–44). Some friendly Pharisees warn Jesus of his danger. Jesus' reply in 13:32, 33 allows Luke to give his understanding of the significance of the journey and its conclusion. They carry forward what he has already expressed at 9:31, 51. Jesus in his exorcisms and healings is already sowing the seed of the Kingdom. That will

happen 'today and tomorrow' and will lead into 'the third day' when Jesus will 'finish his work'. In the light of 9:31, 51, what completes his work is the cycle of events in Jerusalem—the passion, resurrection, and ascension—which will enable both his exaltation and the gift of the Spirit on his people. That may well involve his death, but there is the divine necessity about it. The actual words of 13:32 are 'I am being perfected', which uses the divine passive and means 'God is perfecting me'. Jesus, for Luke, is the eschatological prophet of whom Moses spoke (Deut 18:15) and, since he is the agent of God's renewal of Israel, he must like so many of the prophets suffer, and that nowhere other than in Jerusalem. Luke's gospel begins and ends in that city.

Jesus now (13:34) laments over the city, as he will do when he enters it (19:41–4), for he sees her rushing onwards to complete her history of refusal of God's agents. She will choose instead to follow a path that will lead to her own destruction. Jesus is often understood here as speaking as God's wisdom who reaches out to Israel with a tenderness that expresses her feminine concern (e.g. Wis 6:12–20). He reflects her gentleness and desire to draw humanity into relationship with God. Jerusalem rejects him. When he enters the holy city, only his disciples, and not her people, will acknowledge him (19:37–40). Her acknowledgement must await another day.

(14:1–24) A Sabbath Meal with a Pharisee Jesus, at a meal with a Pharisee, is again critical of the assembly, though this time with far less severity than his previous attack (11:37–53). Here, they watch him not with hostility as in 6:6, but with an interest that rises above mere suspicion. To Jesus' question, 'Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath or not?' their silence, though not assent, acknowledges the correctness of Jesus' stance. His further question (v. 5) would seem to recognize that. Sabbath meals in particular take on the character of anticipations of those in the Kingdom. Jesus now gives reasons why their meals fail in this respect. They reflect pride rather than humility (he records the same deficiency on the part of the disciples at the last supper (22:24–7)). They are exclusive rather than outreaching (vv. 12–14). At this point, a guest proclaims the blessedness of those who will share in the banquet of the Kingdom. He no doubt assumes that he will be one of those, and it is to this attitude that Luke directs Jesus' parable of the rejected invitation which is found, in a different setting and with

significantly different details, in Mt 22:1–14. The meaning Luke sees in the parable depends upon the view taken of the 'excuses' which almost certainly express his own ideas. What is suggested of the attitude of those who make them? Do they regard them as legitimate reasons for their non-attendance or are they put forward as excuses born of indifference? Commentators who accept them as reasons suggest that the business deals needed to be completed before the end of the day and that inspection of the merchandise could take place after the deal itself had been agreed. The excuses reflect those of Deut 20:5–7 that allow reasons for not answering the call to take part in a holy war. However, though this might be suggested of the third excuse, it bears little relation to the first two. The parable itself would appear to take them as excuses rather than reasons. Yet the first two are given politely and point to the necessity of the tasks they go to perform. The third, though sometimes seen as less polite, is not really so but, relating to Deuteronomy, assumes its validity. It seems that the excuses appear valid to those who make them. They assume that they will be acceptable to the host. His reaction, which is severe, no doubt caught them by surprise. Where did they go wrong? Their mistake was to presume upon the relationship that demanded more response from them than they realized. They failed to acknowledge the urgency of the summons.

The giver of the banquet reacted fiercely. The invitation was issued to the outsiders of the city and then to those who inhabited the country, to those who rested along the lanes. This double invitation reflects Luke's interest in both the Jewish and the Gentile missions of the church. 'Compel' expresses the urgency of the task. As in 13:22–30, those originally invited will be excluded. Their attitude makes it a self-exclusion. The Jews, the people of God, were failing to see either the truth in Jesus or the urgency of his call. As was suggested in the Nazareth sermon (4:23–4), their confidence in their relationship with God was misplaced.

(14:25–35) The Cost of Discipleship Discipleship may be a response to grace, as Luke's story of Jesus emphasizes, but it makes demands which mean that it should not be entered upon lightly. The requirement to 'hate' is Semitic exaggeration and may reflect an idiom which means 'love less than' as Mt 10:37 correctly interprets it. Luke is certainly emphatic, and the references to 'wife' and 'life itself' may

be due to him. Disciples are to 'carry the cross' in a manner of life which reflects that of Jesus and in a discipleship that goes with him all the way to Jerusalem. They are to recognize the true cost of discipleship and are not to enter upon something that they do not have the resources to pursue. Otherwise, they are in danger of being in the ridiculous position of one who sets out to build a watch-tower—which may be either for the protection of personal property or, more grandly, part of a city's defence—and does not have the resources to complete the operation. A king will not go to war without first realistically assessing both the demands of the task and the resources he needs to meet it. v. 33, like 12:33, expresses the Lucan emphasis upon the complete renunciation of possessions (though see *LK* 16:9–13). Salt is 'good' in biblical thought for giving taste where there is none (*Job* 6:6) and for preserving what otherwise would perish (*Num* 18:19). Whether salt can lose its flavour has been much debated. The point here of course is the contrast in this respect between salt and discipleship. What is difficult if not impossible for one, is relatively easy for the other. Discipleship which loses its commitment is worse than useless.

(15:1–32) At Meals with Tax-Collectors and Sinners Jesus has already been shown at a meal with tax-collectors and sinners (5:30), and 7:34 has called him their friend. Tax-collectors (rather, 'toll-collectors') and sinners were those who, by their lifestyle, had deliberately opted out of membership of the covenantal people of Israel. They were outsiders. Now, the Pharisees and scribes complain that he not only receives them, but is in the habit of eating with them. They acknowledge that, by this action, Jesus is anticipating their inclusion within the kingdom of God. Not only is Jesus claiming to have God's authority to do this but, in his easy acceptance of them, he is from their point of view belittling the holiness of God. In bypassing the law and its standards in this way, he is in danger of denying the righteousness of God and the very outlook on which the Mosaic covenant was grounded. Luke was very conscious of this complaint, that was addressed not only to Jesus but, later, to the early church and that was in fact a subject of disagreement within the young church. In reply, he brings together three parables of Jesus which may or may not originally have been directed specifically to this issue.

Compared with Matthew's version of the parable of the lost sheep (*Mt* 18:12–14), Luke

emphasizes the shepherd's responsibility for the loss (v. 3), the unconditional nature of the search, and the fact that the joy was brought about by the sinner's repentance. Repentance is emphasized in Luke's gospel (5:32; 7:47) but in this parable, as at 7:36–50, it is the outreach of God that is primary. It is his searching and finding which bring about repentance. The move to restore the relationship enables the repentance even though it cannot compel it. The initiative of God and his part in bringing about restoration is further emphasized in the parable of the lost coin. Again, talk of 'repentance' does not quite fit the stance of the parable. It appears to have been introduced, not because the movement of the parable itself required it, but because Luke was sensitive to the charge that emphasis upon the gracious outreach of God could underplay the necessity for response on the part of those it met.

So these shorter parables lead into that of the prodigal son. Its significance has been variously assessed, depending upon which character is thought to be the central means of giving expression to it. This in turn depends upon how those characters are perceived and how their various actions are understood. Recent interpreters have emphasized the outrageous conduct of the younger son. His initial request of the father has been seen as one which totally disregards the fifth commandment (*Ex* 20:12), his realizing of his assets as giving little heed to the Jewish belief in the land as God's gift to his people (1 *Kings* 21:3), his squandering of his money as a sign of his loose living, and his hiring of himself to a Gentile as a witness to his contempt for the covenantal people. This assessment would not appear too negative. The story builds up his offences in a spectacular way to make him a strong foil to the actions of the father which demand some evaluation and on which the point of the story depends. More open to question is the motive which brought about the prodigal's decision to return. v. 17*a* has sometimes been claimed as a Semitism which carries the meaning 'to repent'. This, however, is by no means clear. The Greek can rather mean 'starting to think straight', that is to stop being in despair and to be logical. v. 17*b* bases his rethinking on self-centred considerations, and it is these that determine the words of his approach to the father which could as easily give expression to calculation as to genuine penitence. Some interpreters would see a change of heart at v. 21 and think that this is brought about by the father's initiative.

This appears to be more in keeping with the story as a whole, though a genuine repentance remains a possibility rather than a certainty.

If this is the reading of the younger son which the story demands, it has implications for an assessment of the father's actions. It is generally agreed that the father's act of running to meet his son and the manner of his embrace would be regarded as demeaning for a Near-Eastern parent. A Jewish parable, often compared with that of the prodigal son, portrays a father who, though equally concerned for his son and anxious for his return, takes an initiative which is nevertheless consistent with his own honour (quoted in Young 1998: 149–50). The father of our parable seems peculiarly indifferent to it. It is not at all clear that those who later join the festivities would have approved of his actions and would not have thought that these were going wholly over the top. It is in the light of this that his earlier dealings with this son have been examined. Jewish law made provision for his actions in dividing his 'living' (the Gk. in 12*b* is a stronger term than that used in 12*a* and really suggests 'his means of living'), though Sir 33:19–23 warns against it. A safeguard was possible which, by the use of the phrase, 'From today and after my death', guaranteed the future gift but allowed no use of it until then (see the discussion of the parable in Scott 1989). The father ignores this safeguard. He has acted generously, even foolishly, towards his son's demands.

Luke's use of the parable as the climax of Jesus' reply to the Pharisees places the emphasis upon its last part. Whilst this has sometimes been seen as a Lucan addition—for it certainly serves as a true expression of his understanding of God's relationship with the Jewish people—there seems little reason to demand this. The story of the elder brother serves as the climax of the parable which loses its cutting edge without it. It is this which encapsulates what would seem to be Jesus' own challenge to those who opposed his stance. But how is the elder brother to be assessed? He has often been seen as hard, dutiful but unloving, ungenerous in his actions and dismissive in his judgements both of the brother and his father. vv. 29–30 certainly portray anger, fury even, and resentment. Whilst not meant to present him in a good light, it should not be assumed, however, that they express an outlook that merits instant condemnation. No doubt already critical of his brother, and, indeed, of his father's indulgence of him, he hears of the latest happenings from a servant after a day's work in the fields. Festivities are

happening because of events that concern him fundamentally, and he is left to discover them for himself. The father's indulgence of one son amounts to a seeming indifference to the other. But appearances are wrong. The father is as concerned for him as for the other, and all that he has is his (v. 31). He is faced nevertheless with a radical challenge. If he does go in, the learning experience for him will be almost as great as it must be for the younger brother. He will have to see himself and his relationships with both his father and his brother in a wholly new way.

(16:1–13) The Dishonest Steward Ch. 15 has revealed a clear standpoint which is developed in a unified manner. Ch. 16 is very different. Though not as disconnected as is sometimes suggested, the overriding concern with riches does not permeate the whole chapter, and the parable of Dives and Lazarus (vv. 19–31) is not wholly exhausted by this one theme. If the final parable in ch. 15 is one of those with obvious relevance, the first in ch. 16 is noteworthy for its obscurity. It is not evident that Luke himself does justice to it.

Commentators are uncertain of the extent of the parable, for a number of injunctions about the use of money have been appended to it. Because they relate in different ways to the events in the parable itself, they are likely to come from various occasions in Jesus' ministry and to have been brought together by Luke in a somewhat artificial manner. vv. 7, 8*a*, 8*b*, and 9 have all been suggested as endings of the original parable. That v. 9 is part of the parable is unlikely. It uses the same Greek word, translated 'dishonest' in NRSV in both instances, in a way that is different from its use in v. 8. The servant is 'dishonest' in our understanding of the term. All mammon (NRSV wealth), however, is called 'dishonest' in the sense that it is material possessions understood as the things in which one puts one's trust and that therefore encourage an acquisitive attitude and a self-reliance; it separates one from God (hence 'unrighteous' is probably a better term). 'The meaning is worldly wealth as opposed to heavenly treasure' (Marshall 1978). If v. 9 were part of the parable, it would be encouraging us to use our wealth gained dishonestly in a way that brought us some benefits: it would be virtually condoning dishonesty! On the other hand, it is unlikely that the parable stops at the end of v. 7. The reason this is sometimes suggested is because of the problem of v. 8. Why would 'his master'

commend one who had actually defrauded him even if he had acted shrewdly? The Greek of v. 8 has simply 'the lord' and, since this is the term that Luke uses frequently in the journey narrative to refer to Jesus, the verse is then accepted as a comment by him on the parable. Such a view, however, leaves the parable too open-ended and avoids the shock that is at the heart of so many of Jesus' parables. The real challenge is the master's commendation of the steward. What does this say, not only about the steward but also about the master?

It is sometimes maintained that the master's commendation of the steward does not present a problem. In order to bypass the biblical prohibition of usury, when a loan was made the interest was often added to the capital as a single figure. It is this final figure, that would have included not merely the master's interest but also the steward's legitimate commission, which was being reduced. The master was not being harmed but was actually being made to appear generous to the debtors. Ingenious though this explanation is, it does not account for the parable's description of the steward as 'dishonest'. Moreover, it does not allow for the fact that Jesus' parables are not simple, realistic stories, but rather tales of unusual situations which challenge so much of the accepted and natural order of things.

It seems then that the parable proper ends at v. 8a with 8b being Jesus' own comment on the story. v. 9, 'And I tell you', marks Luke's introduction to the further, but not necessarily related, sayings of Jesus. Read thus, the parable tells a story of an inefficient (v. 1) steward who, facing dismissal for his indolence, meets the crisis with uncharacteristic vigour and ingenuity. The master, though defrauded, recognizes the initiative and, himself working from the perspective of 'unrighteous mammon', actually commends the steward's shrewdness. There is nothing to say that he reinstates him, but sharing in his worldly stance, he can appreciate a sensible move, indeed an ingenious one, when he sees it. 'If only', says the parable, 'the sons of light had the same appreciation of the crisis confronting them in the drawing near of the Kingdom, and the same energy in meeting it.' It is a parable on a par with those of ch. 12.

Luke has the parable addressed to disciples. In its context, they would include those whom Jesus' table-sharing was receiving into the Kingdom, the tax-collectors and sinners. Their reception needed a response and this parable confronts them. v. 9 tells them to 'make friends'

by a right use of 'unrighteous mammon'. These friends may be the poor who will inherit the Kingdom; more likely, it is the heavenly court who will then receive them when the things of this world come to an end. Faithfulness with 'unrighteous mammon' means using it in the service of the poor (v. 11). They must free themselves from its shackles. They cannot be slaves to God and to mammon. Luke's use of the parable has reduced some of the eschatological urgency of the original. It shows how parables can be used outside their original context, but it shows too that such a use can all too easily evacuate the parable of some of its shock and challenge.

(16:14–31) Reply to the Pharisees Pharisees ridicule Jesus' challenge to the tax-collectors; they obviously do not expect them to give up attitudes of a lifetime. Luke calls them 'lovers of money' but this charge should not be seen as a considered historical evaluation of them. It is determined more by the demands of the narrative than by historical fact. They are seen as self-reliant, self-satisfied, and, therefore, as dismissive of others. Jesus, however, justifies his call to the tax-collectors. It is true that his coming marks a new age when the grace of the Kingdom is proclaimed and people are rushing into it (v. 16). But that does not mean the end of the law's demands (v. 17). The tax-collectors must adopt a new attitude to the things of this world. Jesus was also criticized for receiving the sinners too freely. Again, however, that does not mean an end of the righteous requirements of the law. At the heart of its commandments about sexual morality was its high standard concerning marriage and divorce. Jesus said little about sexual attitudes, but he did talk about marriage. Luke therefore includes this saying where he actually intensifies the law's demands. His free acceptance of sinners did not mean an indifferent acquiescence in their standards. Grace exposed and recreated those who responded to its gentle outreach.

Luke includes the parable of Dives and Lazarus, for it continues the theme of the dangers of riches and the self-centredness they encourage. It makes its point by taking over a tale that was widely disseminated in the ancient world. Luke himself possibly found it in the source from which he has taken the parable of the dishonest steward. Proclaiming the reversal of fortunes in the future age, it judges those who neglect the poor. Luke has Jesus direct it to the Pharisees, and it may be this parable that has

encouraged him to call them 'lovers of money'. Its final verse (31), which is an address of Abraham to Dives, would seem to contain Christian thoughts about the resurrection of Jesus. This widens out the meaning of the parable beyond its concern with money. It becomes a comment on the Pharisees who fail to respond, not only to Jesus himself, but also to the Christian proclamation about him. If they had really understood Moses and the prophets, they would, like the loyally devout Jews of the infancy narratives, have responded to him. As far as Luke is concerned (as he will make abundantly clear through his picture of Paul in Acts), Christianity is the fulfilment of the Jewish faith. A responsive Jew will embrace Jesus as Christ (Acts 26:22–3). At 16:31 a section of the journey narrative which began with 14:1 and which is largely concerned with the tragedy of the Pharisees' rejection of Jesus is completed.

(17:1–10) Teaching for the Disciples Ch. 17 begins the last section of the journey narrative. As befits a journey that ends with the disciples greeting Jesus as he enters Jerusalem (19:37–8), the teaching of this last section is aimed at them. Other characters and incidents are included, but the lessons to be learned from them are directed primarily to the disciples who are travelling on the road to Jerusalem with Jesus and who will, in relation to the twelve, become the nucleus of the renewed people of God.

The section begins with four disparate sayings which talk about life in that community. 'The little ones', that is, its vulnerable members, will inevitably be caused to stumble by the actions of some of their fellow-Christians. They will even be made to lose their faith. The punishment of the one who is responsible for this will be great. The sinner within the community must be rebuked, but forgiveness must follow repentance. Individuals must be constant in their forgiveness of those who ask it of them. They must strive after faith, but must avoid all sense of superiority that arises out of the attitude that God is obligated to them.

(17:11–19) The Ten Lepers v. 11 points to Jesus' continuing journey to Jerusalem in terms that have caused considerable difficulty. The Greek text has a number of variations in attempts to have it make better geographical sense. It may be that Luke's knowledge of the geography of Palestine was hazy; certainly, he was controlled more by literary than by geographical concerns.

The odd geographical reference is determined by the need to have a Samaritan leper and Jewish lepers together meet Jesus as he journeyed to Jerusalem. All ten were cleansed, but it is only the one who returns to give thanks who is 'saved' (the Gk. has this significance for Lk 8:12, 36, 50). He is a Samaritan. Like Luke's characterization of the disciples as 'the poor' (6:20), he is an outsider who has been brought in. Christians must retain that sense, and the thankfulness that should go with it, if they are not to become like the Pharisees and cease to act as those who live out of grace.

(17:20–18:8) Eschatological Urgency The passage 12:32–53 had warned the disciples to be alert for the return of Christ. This section takes up this theme and expands upon it, this time, however, climaxing not so much in the warning as in a pointing to the event as an object of hope.

Some Pharisees ask Jesus 'when the kingdom of God was coming'. There is not a straight fit between their question and Jesus' answer for, whereas the former is concerned with the timing of the Kingdom, the reply talks rather about its nature. What is meant by the reply is not easily determined, however, for, as the translations make clear, the meaning in the Greek of its crucial term *entos humōn* is not unambiguous. Most naturally, it means 'within you' and would seem to suggest that the Kingdom is an inner disposition, attitude, and quality. This however would give to the Kingdom a meaning which would be unique in the NT. Elsewhere, the Kingdom is understood as corporate, an activity of God, something which is being established either on the earth or in heaven and which embraces the whole person. Whilst an inner disposition might do justice to the thought of 'receiving the Kingdom', it does not express the idea of 'entering it' or of its visible manifestation in power. The term should therefore rather be understood as 'in the midst of you'. Jesus' refusal of 'things that can be observed' refers to unambiguous signs that enable the coming of the Kingdom to be deduced, calculated, and guaranteed. 'Look, here it is', or 'There it is', are responses to observable facts that give irrefutable witness to its coming. They guarantee its certainty. Jesus denies this possibility but says that, even if they cannot see it, the Kingdom is already present 'in your midst'. As with 7:22, 11:20, and 16:16, it has to be acknowledged in situations in which it can be discerned but which nevertheless remain less than irrefutable

demonstrations of its presence. Jesus answers the Pharisees' question which, though its underlying outlook is quite different, has presuppositions that are not far removed from those of the disciples at 21:7. The different answers meet the different stances of the questioners. Pharisaic scepticism has to be countered in a way that is different from the quieting of disciples' understandable fears.

It is those fears, however, that Jesus now addresses. The disciples will long to see 'one of the days of the Son of Man' and will not see it (v. 22). The use of the plural here is strange. It is used again at v. 26, though there it may simply be occasioned by the use of 'the days of Noah'. Elsewhere in the passage, the single 'day' is used (vv. 24, 30) and this suggests that the plural may have no special significance but simply refers to the period after the initial revelation of the Son of Man in glory. On the other hand, it is possible that it has more significance. If this is so, Luke may be using it to refer to those occasions when, in the ongoing life of the community, a glimpse of the Son of Man is allowed. Luke tells how Stephen has a vision of the Son of Man in glory (Acts 7:56), and it may be that he is thinking of moments like this.

The disciples will long for the revelation of the Son of Man in glory and, in their urgency, may be tempted to fix their hopes on false substitutes. By the time Luke wrote, some disciples were saying that the parousia could be accepted as a present inner experience which had already taken place and which gave them an esoteric understanding and a licence to behave in a way that was unconstrained by the ethical standards of the present order. Paul, in 1 Corinthians, may be combating such an outlook. Luke here has Jesus warn against these untrue, but alluring, substitutes. Disciples must not be led into the false sense of security that they promised and must not enter upon a life of self-indulgence that was based upon nothing other than delusion. Just as Jesus had to suffer and be rejected, those who are his must follow the same path which cannot be avoided (v. 25). The day of the Son of Man will be devastatingly obvious to all and will result in a judgement as severe as that which befell the inhabitants of the earth at the time of the flood and of Sodom at the time of Lot (Gen 19:24-6). The disciples' final question, 'Where, Lord?' (v. 36) seems still lacking in understanding. Its purpose would seem to be to allow the warnings to come to a climax with the proverbial saying of v. 37. Its cryptic but vivid imagery, as anyone who has

thrown a piece of bread to gulls on the seashore knows, points to the suddenness of an appearance, the tumult it occasions, the fierceness of the event, and the inescapable certainty that something has happened.

Warning gives way to hope, for it is that which, for Luke, expresses the main significance of the parousia. The parable of the importunate widow (18:1-8) teaches that the disciples should pray for its coming and that they should not lose heart. If even an unjust judge is moved to respond to a widow's cry for vindication, how much more will the just God vindicate those who set their hopes on him? He hears their cries and will vindicate them 'speedily'. v. 8a has sometimes been translated 'suddenly' in support of the theory that Luke did not expect an early parousia, but the use of the term at Acts 12:2, 25:4, as well as the sense of the parable itself, is against this. The verse promises a speedy vindication of those who long for it, and the sense of the passage as a whole means that this cannot refer to anything other than the parousia. v. 8b, of course, does allow enough time for a loss of faith but, as at 12:35-48, this is already happening. One of Luke's purposes in writing was to combat this.

(18:9-17) Parable of a Pharisee and a Tax-collector and the Incident of the Children Luke has Jesus tell the parable to some who 'trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt'. 'The ones who trusted in themselves' are those who, when they engaged in self-examination, concluded that they were overall acceptable to God; they had a basic confidence that God would look favourably upon them. To suggest that it expresses a trust in oneself rather than in God would be overstressing the meaning, for this is not what is suggested of the Pharisee in the parable and it is unlikely that Luke read it in this way. The phrase serves as a foil to the 'despising' of others. This, for Luke, is a very strong term and is used by him of Herod's mockery of Jesus (23:11). An attitude that expresses disdain is every bit as bad as open physical mockery. Who, though, are the ones whom Luke sees as addressed by the parable? It is certainly not limited to the Pharisees, but are they included within the addressees? This is, in the end, unlikely. To address it directly to a group that included Pharisees would seem gratuitously offensive and would be in danger of encouraging its other hearers to regard them with something of the outlook that the parable

itself condemns. It would not have fitted a Jesus who was often at meals with them. Jesus, rather, uses this parable to address the crowd of disciples, and the incident of the children which follows it actually illustrates the need. Disciples were themselves in danger of becoming as excluding in their way as the Pharisees were in theirs (cf. 9:59–60).

The Pharisee stands apart, 'by himself'. This seems the most likely translation, though the Greek is again ambiguous and could mean 'prayed to himself'. This would then mean that he prayed silently; again, however, it should not be pressed to suggest that his prayer stayed with him and did not ascend to God. The grounds of his confidence are his keeping the rules of his group which, going beyond the requirements of the law which did not require regular fasting, sought to express a purity which exceeded that of most people. He also tithed beyond the requirements of the law. These actions are not condemned. Disciples of John fasted and Luke reports how Jesus accepted the practice for members of the Christian community (5:35). It was the attitude of this particular Pharisee (and it is not suggested that he was typical of all Pharisees any more than it maintains that the one in the parable stood for all tax-collectors) that let him down. His thanksgiving was genuine and was certainly not portrayed as hypocritical. It is an extension of that outlook that is found in the Psalms and expresses a genuine piety (119:65–72). But it has its dangers. Here, the primary one is the separation from humanity as a whole which, in the thanksgiving for one's own acknowledgement by God, denies it to others. So, the tax-collector went away 'justified rather than the other'. His acknowledgment of his sin and his call for mercy make for a bridge between himself and God that the other's attitude did not allow. He was justified, that is, acknowledged by God and open to his reconciling power. Whether his prayer can be counted as penitence is more doubtful, for there is no suggestion that he was turning aside from his actual way of life (cf. the response of Zacchaeus, 19:8). Yet it is precisely this that gives the parable its starkness. He, whilst remaining a sinner, was actually more open to God than was the Pharisee. 'Justified rather than the other' should probably be read as 'more than'. This is how Luke uses the phrase at 13:2, 4, and it makes the startling contrast without either denying entirely the prayer of the Pharisee or approving completely the lifestyle of the tax-collector.

Luke follows the parable with the episode of the disciples and the children. By not having the Markan reference to Jesus' blessing of them (Mk 10:16), he makes the whole point of the story focus upon the rebuke of the disciples. It is to 'such as these that the Kingdom belongs'. It is to those without status and without self-sufficiency that the Kingdom is offered and, indeed, given. It is pure gift and therefore cannot be received unless one takes on the stance of a little child. This should not be seen as simplicity, or innocence, or some other idealistic outlook. It is something much more demanding, namely a consciousness of need, of a total lack of self-sufficiency, and a recognition of one's dependence upon others and so upon God. It is an abandoning of all concern with status. The Kingdom is something that in the end can only be received. Any striving for the Kingdom that is enjoined (12:31) must be exercised only as a conscious response to grace.

(18:18–30) The Very Rich Ruler Luke's is a sympathetic version of the story that is found also in Matthew and Mark. At Mk 10:22 the man is so shocked by Jesus' call to dispose of his goods and follow him that he goes away grieving. Jesus' comments about the snare of riches are addressed to the disciples. In Luke, he is saddened by Jesus' reply for, since he was 'very rich', the demands being made upon him are severe. But he does not immediately go away. Jesus 'looks at him' and tells him about the difficulties that face the rich man's entry into the Kingdom. Luke's version of the story presents a continuing challenge to the ruler. It does not underplay the snares of riches, but, in keeping with what Luke's narrative has said earlier about the tax-collectors (16:1–13) (and with its reporting of the Zacchaeus incident, 19:1–10), it does not rule out the ruler's future response. The suggestion of its impossibility is countered by Jesus (vv. 26–7). Peter's assertion that they have done what the ruler seems unwilling to do is met by the promise of compensation in this age and eternal life in the age to come. They serve as contrasts to the ruler's refusal. That they have not yet perceived the real nature of the demand, however, is made clear by the stark contrast between Peter's outlook and that of Jesus as this is revealed in the following episode.

(18:31–4) The Third Passion Prediction In Matthew and Mark, this prediction occurs at the beginning of the journey to Jerusalem. Luke has now resumed an order of events that

is close to theirs, but, because of his long central narrative, this prediction occurs near journey's end. A number of things are significant in Luke's version and show clear evidence of his hand. The events that are to take place are in 'accomplishment' of all the prophetic witness to the Son of Man (the same verb that is used of Jesus' time in Jerusalem at 13:32). Nothing is said (as at 22:66–71) of his condemnation by the Jews. At the conclusion of Jesus' disclosure, Luke alone points to the twelve's total lack of understanding (cf. 9:45). Luke could hardly have given this a greater emphasis. They still have much to learn. Even though he treats them less harshly than Mark (e.g. he does not have the incident found next in Mk 10:35–45), he continues to show how much understanding they lack (cf. 22:24–7).

(18:35–43) The Blind Man of Jericho In order to accommodate the story of Zacchaeus that Luke uses as a climax, he puts this episode at the approach to Jericho rather than at its exit as the other evangelists suggest. Those who rebuke the blind man are disciples who are at the front of the procession and it is these therefore who are themselves rebuked by Jesus' action in stopping his progress in order to respond to the pleas of the blind man and heal him. The blind man follows Jesus 'glorifying God', a response that is used by Luke on occasions he deems significant (2:20; 7:16; 23:47).

(19:1–10) Zacchaeus 'Chief tax-collector' is not found elsewhere in the NT and probably not outside it. It seems coined by Luke to make this episode climactic in Jesus' dealings with the tax-collectors. For the same reason, he describes Zacchaeus as 'rich'. The cards are stacked against him but his response to Jesus is met by a request, not merely to eat with him, but actually to stay with him. Those who hear it 'grumble', the same response that the Pharisees have earlier made (15:2). Now, it is made by 'all', which must include the disciples who are accompanying Jesus. They complain that Jesus has gone in to be 'the guest of a sinner'. Zacchaeus's words in v. 8 are sometimes understood as descriptions of his present actions: they report his current lifestyle, and Jesus' reply is then taken as an acknowledgement of this. Such an interpretation, however, fails to do justice to Luke's previous stories of Jesus' dealings with tax-collectors. Zacchaeus's response is rather a declaration of intent. Jesus proclaims that it makes him a true son of Abraham and

means that he is included within God's saving act which fulfils his promises to the patriarch (1:55, 73).

(19:11–27) Parable of the Pounds Luke says that Jesus told the parable in order to combat the belief of some that his arrival in the city would trigger the appearance of the Kingdom. Just what is meant by that, however, is not easily determined for, as the parable stands, it does not point to a delay. The introduction therefore suggests that Luke himself saw the parable as a means of meeting the disappointment caused to some of his contemporaries by the delay of the parousia; Jesus himself did not expect it to be immediate. The parable as Luke tells it is likely to have developed from the one which is included at Mt 25:14–30 where it is also given an eschatological setting. Luke replaces talents with pounds which were coins of much smaller value; he does not differentiate between the disciples' gifts of grace (cf. 8:8), and the ten stand for everybody. He nevertheless deals with only three of the servants. Luke's version of the parable is made more complicated by the addition of a subplot in which the nobleman goes away to receive a kingdom and, on his return, acts as a monarch. Though it is usually read as an allegory of Jesus' ascension and parousia, this is not really obvious, for it is unlikely that Luke would have presented Jesus as a claimant to his throne. He sees his kingship rather as bestowed on him by God because of his obedience and surrender; Jesus certainly does not claim it (3:9–12). The story-line owes much to the events of 4 BCE, when Archelaus went to Rome to claim his father's throne and encountered strong resistance. To picture Jesus in terms of such an incident would be extremely odd. That the nobleman-become-king stands for Jesus is made more unlikely by the third servant's wholly unflattering description of him (v. 21) as rapacious and a fraudster, an assessment that the king does not deny (v. 22). If his reply were to be taken as an accommodation to the servant's assessment of him, that in itself would seem to confirm the judgement. It is more likely, however, that he is described as acknowledging the truth of the servant's description. The king is not a pleasant character.

The parable therefore is unlikely to be an allegory, but is rather, in the words of Evans (1990), 'another of the risqué parables...in which the central figure is a reprehensible character'. In pointing to the demands made by the manner of the Kingdom's appearing in Jesus,

Luke has used this device, not only in the parable of the dishonest steward (16:1–9), but also, and with a close parallel, in that of the importunate widow (18:1–8), where one is encouraged to pray for its coming, and the friend at midnight (11:5–8) where one is told to ask to live out of its power. All these use unlikely characters to point to the crisis which the coming of the Kingdom brings to those who would be ready to receive it. Their use emphasizes the radicality of its demands. This does not mean, however, that the third servant is to be admired as someone who refuses to play by the lord's corrupt rules (Herzog 1994). He made a wrong response to the demands of one whose character he had rightly assessed and whose service he had entered into. His lord required of him a commitment and a willingness to venture all which he was not able to meet. Fear and self-protection held him back. For him there might be some excuse. There is none, says the parable, for those who have willingly committed themselves to discipleship in the service of him who is not to be feared but loved and whose treasures do not consist of unrighteous mammon but of the life of the Kingdom itself. Disciples must risk all for the Kingdom and not let its gifts come to nothing either by acquiescing in the present or by despairing of its future (17:22–18:8).

Jesus in Jerusalem (19:28–24:53)

(19:28–44) The Entry into Jerusalem All four gospels tell of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem. Luke's narrative has a number of distinctive features. He emphasizes the connection of the event with the Mount of Olives which stands some 2 miles east of Jerusalem. Like Matthew and Mark, the story begins on the approach to the mount (v. 29) but, unlike them, he has the acknowledgement of Jesus take place on the top of the mount itself, just as Jerusalem is coming into view (vv. 37–8). In Acts the ascension takes place there and, in view of Acts 1:11, this is where Luke expects the return of Jesus (cf. Zech 14:4). In keeping with the last section of the journey narrative, Jesus is acknowledged by the disciples alone (vv. 36, 37). Jesus' reply to the Pharisees (v. 40) suggests that Jerusalem's inhabitants are silent. The disciples stand for her true people and, if they had kept quiet, the stones of the city would have had to respond to Jesus because Jerusalem herself could not have allowed him to enter her unacknowledged. The response, as Luke tells it, addresses Jesus as king

but does not have Mark's reference to the coming Kingdom. It stresses Jesus' messianic entry into his inheritance (Zech 9:9) but, in a revised version of the angels' song (2:14), emphasizes that this is first realized in the heavenly realm which is all-important for Luke. What is to happen on earth follows from what happens there (cf. 10:18).

Luke alone tells how Jesus weeps over the city (vv. 41–4). This is the time of her 'visitation', a term which, though in the OT can be one of either judgement or redemption, in the light of 1:68, 7:16, is here to be understood in the latter sense. Because Jerusalem rejects this and follows her own determined path, her destruction is inevitable. Though this is described in terms which are taken from the OT, it suggests knowledge of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Jewish rejection of Jesus and his way of peace leads them into confrontation with Rome with its inevitably disastrous results. Though the biblical language catches these up into the purposes of God, the description as a whole does not suggest that the events are understood by Luke as actually determined by him. Israel is the cause of her own ruin.

(19:45–8) Jesus and the Temple In Mark, what is usually described as Jesus' 'cleansing' of the temple is pictured as its rejection and, at his trial before the Sanhedrin, false witnesses accuse him of saying that he would destroy it. In Matthew Jesus takes possession of it and it is there that his messiahship is acknowledged; at the trial, false witnesses say rather that he claimed to be able to destroy it. Luke's episode is much shorter. Jesus drives out the money-changers and complains about the temple's misuse. There is no reference at the trial to any threat against it. In the light of the way Luke has reported Jesus' lament over Jerusalem, it seems that he wishes to dissociate Jesus from the destruction of the temple which he knows has already happened by the time he writes. He does, however, share Matthew's picture of Jesus' taking over the temple. It witnessed to him at his infancy and, as a boy, he was already showing his authority there (2:25–51). Now, he reasserts that authority and teaches daily in it. From there the leaders of the nation seek a way to kill him but are as yet helpless because 'the people' (a favourite Lukan term denoting God's covenantal community) were 'spellbound' by what they heard. The temple acknowledged him, the leaders reject him; the people are spellbound by him. At Nazareth earlier, when their

expectations were not realized, their wonder soon turned to hostility (4:21–30). Luke's narrative begins to unfold the inevitable progression to the cross.

(20:1–47) Controversies in the Temple In common with Matthew and Mark, Luke now has a number of incidents in the temple where Jesus is in conflict with the leaders of the Jerusalem community. Unlike them, however, he does not include Pharisees in these hostile incidents and he also has Jesus continuing to teach 'the people' who are still presented as favourably disposed to him. As they now stand, these incidents reflect the experiences of the early church and the attitudes these engendered. The first controversy story (20:1–8) concerns the authority of Jesus. Elsewhere, when Jesus is questioned, and even when the question is motivated by hostility, he deals with it seriously (10:25; 17:20). Here, he engages in a form of one-upmanship that would seem to be shaped by later Jewish-Christian debates. The logic behind the appeal to the Baptist is not obvious though the general Christian acceptance of him as a new Elijah (in which however Luke does not share, see *LK* 1:5–25) might mean that *Mal* 3:1 forms a link.

The parable of the wicked tenants (20:9–19) is the only parable to appear in all three Synoptic Gospels in the same setting. Comparisons of the three versions, however, show that it has been strongly shaped by the beliefs of the three evangelists as well as by the oral traditions which lay behind their gospels. Much of that shaping has taken the form of a more thorough allegorization to enable it fully to reflect both the life of Jesus and the history of Israel. Added allegorization, however, has only carried on what was latent in its beginnings. Jesus told a parable that spoke of his place in God's dealings with Israel and which reflected his understanding of his relationship with her. Luke, like Mark, has the vineyard owner send one servant after another in a generous, but ultimately unrealistic, attempt to bring the tenants to a recognition of their responsibilities. In Luke, however, they do not kill any of the servants. This, rather than Matthew's confrontational groups of servants, is at one with the action of sending the son in a last, desperate attempt to bring them to their senses. v. 13 recognizes the wishful thinking that this involves but which is made inevitable by the father's desire to commend rather than impose his authority. Recent interpreters have pointed to the father's change of outlook that

is brought about by the killing of the son, and have wondered how far this reflects early church elaboration since it appears scarcely consistent with one who before was unwilling to take revenge. It almost suggests that the father regarded the servants as expendable in a way that the son was not. Certainly, the three evangelists present the father's reactions in different ways. Luke's inclusion of the people's 'God forbid' (v. 16) to the threatened destruction may point to his belief that it was not inevitable. v. 17 with its quote from *Ps* 118:22 pictures the vindication of Jesus as the climax and he could have seen this fulfilled at the resurrection and ascension. Luke has a reference (v. 18) to *Isa* 8:14 which is also found joined to the quotation from *Ps* 118 at *1 Pet* 2:8 and occurs again in some versions of *Mt* 21:42. Individuals who are opposed to Jesus or who merit his wrath will be dealt with firmly. *Acts* shows how Luke sees this happening (*Acts* 1:18; 5:6; 12:23).

Jesus' message about the coming of the Kingdom may not have been overtly political (though this is disputed), but it certainly had strong political and social implications. The question about the legitimacy of paying taxes to Caesar (vv. 20–6) recognizes this and is asked in an attempt to discredit him in the eyes either of those who looked for the overthrow of Rome or of the civil authorities who were quick to act against political agitators. Mark's statement that it represents a combined attack of Pharisees and Herodians suggests a fairly even-handed approach. Luke's introduction, on the other hand, shows that he regards it as a deliberate attempt by the Jewish authorities to make Jesus espouse a stance that would enable them to denounce him to the Romans as a threat to the state. This is precisely what they will do later (23:2) when they hand him over to Pilate. Luke sees Jesus' answer as a slick side-stepping of the trap. It gives them no grounds for their later charge which is exposed as perverse and fraudulent. Recognition of this has often led interpreters of Luke's work to suggest that it was written with the aim of rebutting the charge that Christianity was a threat to Rome; claims that it was seen to arise out of Jewish hostility. Whilst this is true in so far as no Roman official in *Acts* ever condemns Paul, Christianity is often regarded by them as a threat to Roman stability, and both Jesus and Paul are judicially executed by the Roman power. Luke knows that Rome was perplexed by Christian claims and was always in danger of acting against them. Christians are those who 'turn the world

upside down' (Acts 17:6). Jesus' reply (v. 25), though not unambiguous, left room for a conflict of interests for it said that both God and the state had legitimate claims on the coin and what it stood for. This made for an inevitable tension which could be resolved only by denying the legitimate sphere of one party or by compartmentalizing their claims in a way that did less than justice to the overarching concerns of God.

The Sadducees then put something of a trick question to Jesus (vv. 27–40). Members of the religious and political establishment in Jerusalem, they were conservative in both areas. Using the Mosaic rule of levirate marriage (Deut 25:5) to make their point, they question the sense in which life after death can be meaningful. Jesus' reply points to the newness of God's eschatological, recreative act. It is not simply the continuation of what now is. vv. 35–6 give to Luke's reporting of Jesus' answer a deeper dimension than that found in the other gospels as he struggles to express what he sees as its meaning. This is true also of his handling of the use of Ex 3:6 ('the story about the bush') where he adds v. 38b to what is presented as a typical piece of scribal reasoning which ignores the original meaning of the quotation. The scribes, however, are impressed by this exegetical *tour de force*. Jesus has outwitted his opponents.

In the light of this victory, Jesus, using the same scribal methods, himself goes on the attack. Psalm 110:1 plays a large part in NT apologetic (Mk 14:62; Rom 8:34; Eph 1:20; Heb 1:3; 1 Pet 3:22). It gives biblical justification for believing in the exalted nature of Jesus. For Luke, the passage exercises a great deal of control over his presentation of Jesus, as Acts 2:34 makes clear. 'Lord' is perhaps his most fundamental title for describing Jesus' relationship to both God and his disciples. Its basis in Ps 110:1 means that he can retain Jesus' subordination to the Father as he describes his role in terms that remain largely functional. Though the passage reflects the usage of the early church, this does not necessarily mean that it was not used by Jesus of himself in an attempt to enlarge his contemporaries' limited expectations about the nature of messiahship. Whether it is believed to reflect his use, however, is ultimately determined by the wider question of whether Jesus himself thought in terms of his own messiahship. On this, there is little scholarly consensus. As though himself dissatisfied with the pedestrian nature of this reasoning, Jesus is said to have gone on to attack the scribes who were responsible for its use (vv. 45–7).

(21:1–38) Jesus' Apocalyptic Discourse All three Synoptic Gospels present this extended discourse as the conclusion of Jesus' ministry and the immediate introduction to the passion narrative. On the one hand, it brings to a climax Jesus' teaching about the Kingdom, the hostility this provokes, and the challenge it makes to the disciples, and, on the other, it acts as the backcloth against which the passion and resurrection of Jesus is to be viewed. It brings all these happenings into relation with the future experiences of the disciples as they face the problems of maintaining faith in the midst of a hostile world. Past and present will together issue in the open revelation of God's kingdom which the appearance of Jesus as Son of Man in glory will establish. The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus have revealed his ultimacy. In the light of this faith, the present of Luke's readers can be seen as contributing to the final revelation of him and of the Kingdom that he guarantees.

Three interwoven strands run through the chapter and determine its structure. These talk about persecutions which the disciples will face in the world and in which they must maintain their witness, historical events whose turmoil will bring a perplexity which is, nevertheless, not devoid of hope, and the expectation of the coming of the Son of Man in glory. History, myth, belief, and imagery come together to create a vision the strength of which is not in its details but in the overall impression it conveys as it takes up the whole event of Jesus and views it from the perspective of the finality and ultimacy that it believes it to be.

Luke's introduction (vv. 5–7) differs substantially from those of Matthew and Mark in that, whereas they have the discourse delivered away from the temple and in some sense over and against it, Luke has Jesus give it in the temple itself and as part of his general teaching to the people (v. 38). He has Jesus pay more attention to the destruction of the temple for its own sake and does not see it as the inevitable prelude to the end of the age (v. 7, cf. Mt 24:3; Mk 13:4). The historical events have an importance in their own right and are not to be seen purely as signs of his coming (v. 8), for the end is not an immediate event (v. 9). Nevertheless, political catastrophes will be preludes to natural ones (v. 11). vv. 12–19, however, break this interconnectedness to concentrate upon the witness of the disciples when they are persecuted and brought to trial because of their allegiance to Jesus and his saving work ('my Name', cf. Ex 33:17–19). These are not merely a prelude to his

future revelation but are an inevitable part of their discipleship. Though he may seem absent, Jesus himself is actually present then, seeking to inspire their witness (v. 15) (cf. Acts 7:55). Whereas 13:13 points to their vindication at the parousia, Luke places it in 'the gaining of their souls' (v. 19), that is, in a heavenly life into which the present leads (20:38; 23:43). It is in this sense that the promise of security in v. 18 is to be understood; no part of their real being will be lost or be brought to nothing. Once more we see how the heavenly dimension is very real to Luke and how the ascension of Jesus enables those who follow him to enter into it.

At v. 20 Luke, in line with Matthew and Mark, brings the destruction of Jerusalem, which by the time he writes will have already occurred, into relation with the programme of the last things. Unlike them, however, he does not invest it with the dimension of apocalyptic mystery (Mk 13:14). For him it remains an event that is important in its own right. As with 19:41–4, he describes the historical events of its fall in biblical terms which present them as the fulfilment of prophetic expectations (v. 22). This verse is his closest approach to expressing a belief that God was involved in its destruction; Luke generally does not make this assertion (23:31). The fall of the city begins 'the time of the Gentiles' which is to go on until the point at which its purpose is completed. This suggests an end to Jerusalem's captivity and a restoration of her by God. He has not turned his back upon her but has used even her destruction to further his purposes which will rebound to her ultimate good (2:32). The period of her desolation (which is not necessarily short) will lead into the time of the imminent end when cosmic disasters will occur that will climax with the 'Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory'. This quotation from Dan 7:13 has been altered by Luke so that the 'cloud' in the singular may bear reference to the ascension of Jesus (Acts 1:9, 11) which for him is both a pointer to, and guarantee of, the parousia. He has no mention of the gathering together of the elect at the parousia (Mk 13:27) for he does not emphasize it as a time of negative judgement upon the world. For him, it is the time of 'redemption' (v. 28) and, since the people are not excluded from Jesus' audience, the hope that this offers is not denied to them. v. 31 (peculiar to Luke in its particular emphasis) sets 'these things'—including the trials and the fall of Jerusalem—against the backcloth of the reality of the Kingdom that has been established through

Jesus. Though this present heavenly reality must be their primary compass point for determining their attitude to all that happens, it does not do away with a lively expectation of the appearing of the Son of Man. v. 32 includes that within the events expected in 'this generation'. Luke stretches that to include the period of his own contemporaries, but there is nothing to suggest that it could be extended much further. Meanwhile, they must pray for a faithfulness that will enable them to face his return with confidence (v. 36) (cf. 18:8).

Luke's is a free handling of the tradition which he most probably took over from Mark. Though it is often maintained that he reduces the expectation of an early parousia, there is little in this chapter to suggest it. What he does is to separate out a number of events that Mark sees as leading directly into it. The fall of Jerusalem will have happened by the time Luke wrote and he could look back on times of persecution. The parousia remained his ultimate hope, however, and this continued to impinge directly upon the present. The confidence with which he could proclaim it came from his belief that Jesus, now exalted to the right hand of God, guaranteed the Kingdom as a present reality. Its very nearness in spatial terms meant that its open revelation would not be long delayed in time.

The confidence of the early church that emphasized the hope of the imminence of the parousia was doomed to disappointment (2Pet 3:8–10). The beliefs that determined the apocalyptic images in which those hopes were expressed had to be reassessed as the full significance of God's action in Jesus came gradually to be understood. How far Jesus himself used that imagery, what he meant by it if he did, and how much its use in the Bible depends not on him but on the outlook of the early church, remain important, though hotly disputed, questions. All a commentary on this one gospel can say is that Luke's handling of it shows that he was aware that he was dealing with images that could be reshaped to express new outlooks. Nevertheless, as a first-century man, he did not evacuate them of all historical content or undervalue the radical nature of what they were proclaiming. Luke still looked for a direct and powerful intervention of God in the world and he did not expect it to be long delayed.

(22:1–38) The Last Supper The apocalyptic discourse that bases all its thought upon the reality of the Kingdom leads directly into the

passion narrative that shows how it was established. Luke alone of the synoptic writers (22:3, 31–4, 43, cf. Jn 13:2) sets the earthly events of the passion in the context of an eschatological battle with Satan. He emphasizes that it is the passover meal that Jesus shares with the apostles (22:1, 7, 8, 13). This obviously has some important significance for him (9:31).

Discovering the meaning he gives to it, however, is complicated by the fact that Jesus' interpretative words over the bread and cup(s) are given in two versions with the shorter of them ending at 19*a*, 'this is my body'. After a period of near-universal espousal of this shorter text, interpreters have moved decisively in favour of the belief that Luke himself wrote the longer text that ends with v. 20 and that one manuscript tradition shortened it (though cf. REB and Evans 1990). In spite of this growing consensus, however, and the weight of manuscript evidence in its favour, there is much to be said for the view that Luke himself wrote the shorter text. The longer version bears all the marks of a hybrid resulting from the contributions of many hands to bring Luke into some sort of conformity with the general eucharistic traditions of the early church. The shorter text is the more distinctive and, indeed, more difficult reading and, if Luke himself is not responsible for it, it is hard to see why anyone should have shortened what he wrote to arrive at this unusual and not easily explained interpretation of Jesus' actions. Its ending reflects the Markan 'bread' word which Luke appears to be following at this point. His earlier description of the beginnings of a passover meal (vv. 15–18) has been influenced by Mark's version of Jesus' eschatological statement that forms the climax of his account (Mk 14:25). The passover meal itself already gave expression to this dimension, and it is this eschatological emphasis that Luke sets at the heart of his narrative. Whether Jesus eats and drinks or abstains (the former being more likely)—for the text is again doubtful—he brings the meal into close relation with his entry into the Kingdom which will be established by his exaltation (vv. 16, 18, cf. 22:69). Luke has one cup (v. 18) to which he gives this eschatological significance. It binds together those who share the meal in an anticipation of their part in the Kingdom. He distributes the bread to 'the apostles' (v. 14, cf. Acts 1:3) and calls it 'my body', 'me', not broken in death, but his living presence that enables them to live out of his life. Luke does not give sacrificial significance to either the bread or the wine, for he

does not understand Jesus' death as itself the point of atonement. His narrative of the crucifixion will present it otherwise. In Acts, the eucharist is the 'breaking of bread' (2:42), and the Emmaus episode shows that Luke finds its significance in the way it enables those who participate to share with Jesus in the life of the Kingdom.

Judas breaks this eschatological unity and is wholly condemned. The disciples are in danger of doing so by reason of their seeking after positions of glory (vv. 24–7). Luke gave no place to an earlier instance of this outlook which the tradition contained (Mk 10:35–45), presumably not to spare their blushes but to save it for this dramatic context. In place of that tradition's reference to Jesus' death as a ransom (Mk 10:45), Luke sees his saving work accomplished through his service, climaxing in the cross and controlled by it but, nevertheless, not actually isolated in it. From such a perspective, Jesus can bestow upon the apostles a share in the Kingdom which his father has conferred upon him (vv. 28–30). They will judge Israel and those who are associated with her when she is restored, that is when Jesus' Kingdom is revealed.

Before Jesus can enter his Kingdom, however, he must undergo his final act of surrender and make his climactic response to the way of obedience upon which he embarked when he rejected the blandishments of Satan (4:1–13). Satan is decisively active at this point and is about to release his power against the apostles. Jesus has interceded for Peter (vv. 31–4) and, though he will slip, his faith will not desert him. When he has recovered, he is to strengthen his brethren. Luke will present Peter as the first witness of the resurrection (24:34) and will portray him in Acts positively as the one who will lead the church into its universal witness. Now is the eschatological hour, the time of crisis which calls for a different stance from that which characterized their earlier work for Jesus (9:1–6; 10:1–12). The episode of the two swords (vv. 36–8) is peculiar. Luke is aware of the tradition (which he uses) of some violence at the arrest (22:5) and he is emphatic in his presentation of Jesus as crucified in the midst of evildoers (23:32). He presents Jesus as the fulfilment of Isaiah's suffering servant (Isa 52:13–53:12). v. 37 contains Jesus' only direct quote from there, and the disciples' possession of swords is seen as a part of that passage's witness to him.

(22:39–53) On the Mount of Olives Luke's story of the agony in the garden is shorter than those given elsewhere, not, it seems, in

order to reduce Jesus' distress, but to play down the ineptitude of the disciples. Peter, James, and John are not singled out, and Jesus finds them asleep only once and 'because of grief' (v. 45). 'The trial' that they are to pray not to enter becomes, not their time in the garden, but rather what is yet to happen (v. 46). It is a time when Satan is wholly rampant and they are unable to escape his clutches (cf. 11:4). The result of this shortening is to throw all the emphasis upon Jesus' prayer that his will may be aligned to the Father's. The prayer itself expresses confidence in his own constancy. vv. 43–4 are absent from many MSS though they are found in some early writings. Recent interpreters have tended to regard them as additions to what Luke wrote (Nolland 1993). Though doctrinal considerations could have been responsible for either their inclusion or omission, the latter is more likely and they are not out of keeping with Luke's belief that this incident represents the focal point and climax of Jesus' obedient surrender to his calling. Their mention of an angel now brings to mind the absence of angelic succour from Luke's temptation narrative, and his expectation of a renewed struggle with Satan (4:13). This emphasizes the 'stress' that Jesus expected to accompany his 'baptism' (12:49) and, if it fulfilled it, would account for the move into that quiet confidence that characterizes Luke's account of the arrest and trial, and the crucifixion itself.

The time of the disciples' trial begins, even while Jesus is still speaking (v. 47). It is at this point that the atmosphere of Luke's narrative moves away from Matthew's and even more from Mark's in the direction of John's (cf. $\text{FGS } \kappa$). Jesus is more in control, not obviously as in John, but with a gentle confidence of one who has had his struggles and now moves serenely to complete what has been given him to do. Jesus addresses Judas before he kisses him, stops any resistance, heals the harm done, and sets the actions of those who have come to take him—who in Luke include the chief priests and elders themselves and not merely their officers—within the context of eschatological evil (v. 53). What is happening is invested with cosmic significance. Jesus is fully aware of the shift in aeons that is taking place. Everything he has done has led up to this moment. There is no mention of the disciples' flight (Mk 14:50).

(22:54–65) The Evening Wait Luke has no night session of the council (Mt 26:57–68; Mk 14:53–65) which does not meet, either formally

or informally, until the morning. This has the result of removing the mockery of Jesus, which took place during the night, from the members of the council and also of lessening the contrast between Peter's weakness and Jesus' steadfastness. The failure of Peter is made less drastic in both Matthew and Luke by the inclusion of only one cock-crow. The reference to Peter's 'going out and weeping bitterly' (v. 62) is absent from at least one MS. Whilst later hands may have added it to Luke's narrative, it is more likely to be his own conclusion to his dramatic mention of Jesus' glance (v. 61). It marks the beginning of the Lord's rescue of Peter and the preparation for his strengthening of the others (vv. 31–2).

Members of the council are spared the indignity of being involved in the horseplay with Jesus. The cry of mockery, 'Prophesy! Who is it that struck you?' is often pointed to as one of the most important agreements of Matthew and Luke against Mark (Goulder 1989). It has been accounted strong evidence for the belief that Luke knew Matthew and used him in the composition of his gospel. On the other hand, it has been used by others to support the theory that Q contained a passion narrative. Its taunt is appropriate for the Lukan assertion that it was made by the guards who were holding Jesus. Mt 26:68, on the other hand, has it made by the council to a Jesus who is not blindfolded.

(22:66–71) Jesus Before the Council In Luke's gospel, the council meets formally in the morning when the examination of Jesus takes place. It has less characteristics of a trial than have Matthew's and Mark's night session, however, for there are no witnesses, no formal accusations, and no condemnation of Jesus. Whilst this might reflect a greater historical awareness, little can actually be built on it for the differences may simply be the result of theological rather than historical concerns. Luke's gospel gives little basis for any suggestion that Jesus was hostile to the temple which rather acknowledges him as its lord. On the principle of there being no smoke without fire, therefore, he would not want suggestions of Jesus' hostility to the temple to be recorded (cf. Acts 6:13–14). The council rather addresses directly the question of Jesus' status: 'If you are the Christ, tell us'. Jesus' reply has two parts. vv. 67b–8 point to their total perversity. They will neither believe, nor even acknowledge, the truth. They will not accept him as Christ in the manner that they should, but they would like to hear from him a declaration of messiahship which could be

reported to Pilate as subversive. Jesus refuses to fall into their trap but answers in a way that defines his status in terms which transcend their categories. From this point in time (emphatic in Luke), he will be exalted to the right hand of God. As opposed to Mark's version of his reply, Luke makes no mention of a future, visible coming (Mk 14:62). Jesus' exaltation will be for the eyes of faith alone. It is that event which forms the contents of both his claims and the disciples' belief. The council acknowledges the significance of the declaration, however, and 'all of them' ask, 'Are you therefore the Son of God?' This for Luke has a deeper significance than 'Christ'. It recalls the second part of the angel's declaration to Mary (1:35) and foreshadows the preaching in Acts (9:20; 13:33). In the light of Mt 26:64, Jesus' reply seems to be an acceptance of the implications of the question and a witness to their recognition of them. Their perversity however makes them disown him and refuse their own insights. Their accusations before Pilate reveal just how great that perversity is (23:2).

(23:1–25) Before Pilate Luke's version of this episode emphasizes Pilate's reluctance to act against Jesus, brings out, therefore, the Jewish initiative in the crucifixion of Jesus, and introduces an appearance of him before Herod. Luke alone has Jesus appear before Herod (vv. 6–12). As an event in history, it makes strange reading for, though it is possible that Roman justice could allow a man to be tried in the place where he lived (Acts 23:34), to hand over responsibility to a non-Roman would be unusual. Pilate, however, seems to be associating Herod with his own involvement rather than handing over the case to him. The purpose of this remains entirely obscure and the incident is therefore best interpreted as a Lukan story occasioned partly by the influence of Ps 2:1–2 which is quoted at Acts 4:25–6 where it is seen as fulfilled in the actions of Pilate and Herod, partly by the appearance of Paul before another Herod (Acts 25–6), and partly by Luke's earlier references to Herod's interest in Jesus. At 9:7–9, Herod is both perplexed by and interested in Jesus, and at 13:31 is reported as being hostile to him. By including him, Luke (since he leaves Pharisees out of the hostile actions in Jerusalem itself), is able to present what is happening as the outcome of the whole career of Jesus and, at the same time, to emphasize the perversity of the Jerusalem authorities whose insistence brings about his death, not, however, without their

contributing to the divine plan. The Roman power unwittingly enables God's plan to be fulfilled at the death of Jesus just as it did at his birth. Herod does not even have that dignity. He himself joins in the mockery of Jesus. Yet his encounter does not leave even him unaffected (v. 12).

When Pilate asks him if he is 'the Messiah, the king of the Jews', Jesus' reply is probably meant by Luke to be taken in the affirmative, for it is as such that he is crucified (23:38). Pilate, like the Jewish leaders, has completely misunderstood the implications of what he mouths. Yet he three times declares Jesus innocent (vv. 4, 15, 22) of the charges they bring against him, for Luke is at pains to show that Jesus' role was not a political one. All is to be kept on the level of the religious. Pilate succumbs to the Jewish pressure but his surface acceptance of their charge (v. 38) shows the incredibility of it and, unwittingly, witnesses to the truth.

v. 13 reintroduces 'the people' who have been absent since 21:38 where they were presented as favourable to Jesus. Now, however, their mood changes and they are included among those whose 'voices prevailed' (v. 23). The people share in the perversity of their leaders but they remain dignified with that term and, even as they contribute to the fulfilment of the divine plan (Acts 4:27–8), they avoid the excesses of their leaders (23:35) and remain dissociated from their more grotesque actions (23:27, 48).

v. 25 brings the scene to an end with a Lukan comment on the magnitude of the tragedy. The Jews as a whole (v. 18) asked for a murderer to be released and to be given Jesus to do with 'as they wished'. It is they who crucified him (Acts 3:13–15); the representatives of the political power do not come to the surface again until 23:36 when they join in mindless mockery (cf. 22:63–4; 23:11).

(23:26–49) The Crucifixion Luke alone of the evangelists has a Jewish crowd accompany Jesus to his execution. 'A great number of the people' follow him, including some women who, perhaps taking on a role that was not uncommon on such occasions and which may originally have had some quasi-religious significance, lament on behalf of the one who was going to his death. Addressing them as 'daughters of Jerusalem', he speaks to them as representatives of the true among the people of that city. They are to lament the future, for a time of great distress is coming (Hos 10:8). What that occasion is can be determined only from the cryptic

saying of v. 31. If it is to be given a specific reference, that is most likely to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. Compared with Jesus, Jerusalem and her people take on the characteristics of a dead tree. 'They' who will treat her harshly will be the Romans or, perhaps more likely, a combination of the powers who together brought Jesus to his cross. Luke has earlier twice brought the suffering of Jerusalem in relation to both Jesus' own and those of the disciples (19:41-4; 21:20-4). Jesus himself remains the true son of Jerusalem.

Luke's crucifixion scene is distinctive. Whilst this might be the result of his use of special sources, the overall unity of outlook between this scene and the gospel as a whole suggests that any sources that he did use were handled freely so as to become effective vehicles for the expression of his own particular insights. What happens at the cross, as Luke tells its story, is completely at one with his gospel's presentation of Jesus as he moved determinedly towards it.

Jesus' plea for the forgiveness of his persecutors (v. 34) is textually doubtful and, on the textual evidence alone, would most likely have to be regarded as an addition to what Luke himself wrote. It would then be seen as either included because of the availability of a tradition unknown to Luke, or added as appropriate in the light of Stephen's response to his persecutors as this is found at Acts 7:60. It is just that response, however, that makes it most likely that Luke himself included Jesus' prayer. He describes Stephen's martyrdom in terms of Jesus' own, and it is wholly unlikely that he would have had him outstrip Jesus in that merciful outlook that he has earlier declared to be of the essence of God himself (6:36). Acts 3:17 also suggests ignorance as a mitigating factor for the Jews and, since Jesus' prayer is in Luke made primarily on their behalf, Peter is there again drawing on Jesus' example. The plea is virtually demanded by Luke's overall presentation of Jesus.

The story of Jesus and the criminal (vv. 39-43), which Luke alone has, is again wholly at one with Luke's total picture. To call the criminal 'penitent' goes further than the story itself suggests. His plea is rather a recognition of that which in Jesus has drawn the outsider to him in a response of hope which, in turn, was always acknowledged and included in a greater work (7:36-50; 8:43-8; 17:11-19). This episode is entirely in keeping with those earlier stories of Jesus' open acceptance of the outsider. The new dimension in Jesus' promise is determined

by the difference in the shared circumstances of the one to whom it is made and of the one who makes it. To suggest that it points to a new situation brought about by the saving cross (Fitzmyer 1985) does less than justice to Luke's distinctive understanding of the place of the cross in the redeeming work of Jesus. For him, the cross is the climax and determining fact of Jesus' whole ministry which, taken up at the ascension, becomes God's outreaching redemptive act. He does not isolate the cross to make it the point of atonement or to suggest that something is achieved by it in itself. As earlier (16:19-31; 8:55; 20:38; 21:19), Luke seems to allow for the continuity of life through death. 'Paradise', originally meaning a park or garden, came to be regarded as a perhaps temporary abode of the righteous departed after death. For Luke this is appropriate, for he regards the ascension as the point of Jesus' entry into his kingdom.

With v. 44, Luke (as Mark) moves into the final stages of Jesus' crucifixion. However, there are big differences at this point. Like Mark, he has the three hours of darkness which signifies the awesomeness of what is taking place. He places the tearing of the temple's curtain before Jesus' last cry rather than at his death (Mk 15:38). The temple's holy of holies gives place to Jesus' whole life rather than to what is achieved through death alone, for it is that life as a whole which becomes the place where God is known. Jesus' crying 'with a loud voice' (v. 46) is not, as in Mark, one of desolation (see Mk 13:33-6), but of confidence. Jesus quotes, not Ps 22:1, but Ps 31:5. The agony, which is real, is caught up into the obedience that enables a secure confidence. The compulsion that has driven Jesus has allowed him to maintain the certainty of God's vindication. His last cry expresses the surrender born of the knowledge of a course well run. Like Mark, Luke has Jesus 'breathe his last'. He records a real outpouring, a complete emptying of himself.

In Luke, unlike Mark, where his response is to the death of Jesus (Mk 15:39), the centurion witnesses to 'what had taken place', that is to the whole demeanour of Jesus as he hung on the cross. By his response, he 'glorifies God', that is he makes what Luke regards as an appropriate witness to the significance of the event which causes it (7:16; 18:43). NRSV and REB both give his witness as 'This man was innocent'. This is without doubt a translation that does less than justice to Luke's meaning (Doble 1996). The Greek is *dikaïos*, a word that Luke has used earlier to describe the status of the true in Israel

who, being open to God's ways, acknowledged Jesus as the redeemer of his people (1:6; 2:25). The word as used by Luke witnesses to a religious rather than a judicial status. It is a word with strong LXX influence. Used in the Psalms of the righteous person who is the taunt of enemies but who is vindicated by God (Ps 37, cf. 5:12; 34:19; 55:22; 118:20), it is developed in Wis 1–6 to give a picture of the persecuted righteous one who is vindicated by God, lives through death, and will witness the discomfiture of his enemies (2:12–20; 3:1–9; 5:15–20). Closely aligned with this picture in both Psalms and Wisdom is that of the suffering servant of Isa 53 who is called *dikaïos* and is said to be both justified by God and the one who serves many well (LXX). Luke's picture of Jesus on the cross recalls that of the servant in that he is clearly set with the transgressors, makes intercession for his captors, serves those who are crucified with him, and awaits God's vindication which will make him the vindicator of others. Luke does not take over the idea of the servant as sin-bearing nor that of his death as vicarious, but the close links with that picture make Jesus more than an example. He will actually make many like him.

Luke pictures Jesus as more than the first martyr and as more than an example. He is the redeemer who in Acts, through his name and through the Spirit, reproduces his likeness in those who follow him.

Luke's narrative ends more positively than Mark's in that the crowds 'beat their breasts' and Mark's women are joined in their witness of the events by 'all his acquaintances'. Using the language of Ps 38:11, this is probably intended to include the apostles who are not reported as fleeing at the arrest and who at Acts 1:21 are said to have been constantly with him.

(23:50–24:12) The Tomb Luke's account of the events at the tomb is closer to Mark than to either Matthew or John. Joseph is described as a member of the council rather than as a Christian. He lays Jesus in the tomb, the women watch what is happening and then go away to prepare spices so that they might anoint him after the sabbath rest is over. Whereas Mark says that the women watch 'where' Jesus is laid, for it must not be thought that they later were to go to the wrong tomb, Luke, though sharing this concern, says 'how' he was laid, that is, unanointed. Anointing of the corpse was necessary to hinder the process of decomposition which would almost certainly

have begun before the delayed anointing by the women. Luke does not name the women at this point. They have watched Jesus on the cross, seen the burial, prepared the spices, will witness the empty tomb and receive the message of the two men. In Luke, the women are the faithful witnesses. The 'two men' are angelic beings who also appear at the ascension (Acts 1:10). The message of the angels is for the women, rather than given to them in order to be passed on to the disciples (Mk 16:7). There is no command to go to Galilee, for Luke insists that all must happen within the environs of Jerusalem (24:49). The women respond to the message and 'remember'. They acknowledge its truth and their names are now given. The apostles, however, do not believe them. v. 12 is textually doubtful and it could be taken over from John; its 'linen cloths' are in his account and were not used earlier by Luke (23:53). On the other hand, its thought is entirely at one with Luke's picture of Peter who was to be kept from Satan's clutches (22:31–3). He does not share the scepticism of the others which represents the nadir of their discipleship. The women are the first witnesses to the resurrection; Peter is ready to be the first witness of the risen Lord (24:34). In Luke, the women play the part which, in the Fourth Gospel, is reserved for the beloved disciple (20:8).

(24:13–49) Resurrection Appearances Luke's resurrection narratives are quite distinctive and reflect his own particular concerns. The form in which he narrates them is determined by the fact that he alone of the evangelists witnesses to an ascension event which is separated out from the resurrection, brings the resurrection appearances to an end, and takes up the physical body of Jesus into heaven. The ascension becomes the point at which it is deemed appropriate to 'worship' him (24:52). Until then, his followers neither recognize the significance of the resurrection, nor appreciate the full import of his life. The resurrection appearances become points of teaching and convincing. In themselves, they are 'something of a half-way house' (Evans 1970).

The Emmaus story (24:13–27) tells of Jesus' appearance to two otherwise unknown disciples who, somewhat apart from the rest, are making a 7-mile journey from Jerusalem. It plays the part in the resurrection narratives that the mission of the seventy plays in the body of the gospel (10:1–24). Like that episode, it roots actions which will be at the heart of the

life of the Christian community in the life of Jesus. To ask how two people could walk 7 miles without recognizing someone who was not only familiar to them but was also at that time in the forefront of their concerns, is to misread the nature of Luke's story, which is told, not so much as to describe a past encounter, as to show how the eucharistic meals of his church unite them to the living presence of the risen Lord. Acts will put the 'breaking of bread' at the heart of the life of the young community (2:42). That formed the climax of the action of Jesus at the last supper as Luke tells of it (22:19a), and it is that action that realizes and discloses his presence after the resurrection (24:35). The story, both in its characters and its significance, stands somewhat apart from the gradual development that marks Luke's narrative as a whole. It really conveys the actions of one who is already ascended and contemporary with Luke's community. Jesus' witness to himself which he gives within the story speaks of him as being already 'glorified' (v. 26). This, however, does not suggest a different source which is not fully in line with Luke's own outlook, nor does it put a question mark against the ascension as the point of glorification. The story reflects the times and outlook of the life of the community as Luke would have it be after the ascension. His own understanding made the time between the resurrection and the ascension a period of teaching and convincing. He had to place it then. But, unlike the rest of the stories, it speaks not of a past event but of one that is contemporary with every age. Jesus, unrecognized, travels with his church on its pilgrimage and in its perplexity. Its heart is warmed as it hears the Scriptures (v. 32), but Jesus himself is discerned in 'the breaking of the bread'.

Jesus now appears in what is in fact the most unashamedly materialistic of all the resurrection narratives. Lacking the unwillingness of Thomas actually to put the witness of Jesus to the test (Jn 20:26–8), the story tells how Jesus himself answers their doubts by eating in front of them. If it is accepted that the Emmaus story reflects Luke's thoughts about the later church and her relationship with her Lord, this story, which leads straight into the ascension, reveals Luke's emphasis upon the actual physicality of the Lord's body in a way that outstrips the thinking of the other NT writers. Everything in Luke depends upon the certainty of the resurrection. Whilst this story may be composed in the service of combating Gnosticism (Talbert 1966), it is more likely described in this way in

order to maintain the reality of the eyewitness testimony. The women beheld his death, burial, and the empty tomb. Disciples do not believe their testimony for they need more certain evidence. When Jesus does appear to them—even after his appearance to Peter—they still need convincing. Others had been summoned from the dead (1 Sam 28:13). Jesus, however, was no ghost but was the very person with whom they had walked, lived, and engaged from those early days in Galilee. They have to become convinced and reliable witnesses to the resurrection (Acts 1:22). Jesus now 'open[s] their minds to understand the scriptures'. For Luke, it is fundamental that Jesus' whole career fulfilled the Scriptures—but it needed the risen Jesus to make the real connection, for they do not obviously find their fulfilment in his life. They do so only when they are read with the prior conviction that Jesus is the Messiah, and, even then, there is more tension between the promise and the fulfilment than Luke allows. Jewish ignorance of that connection was not necessarily blameworthy (Acts 13:27). Jesus commands the disciples to remain in Jerusalem until after the gift of the Spirit, for that event will accomplish the eschatological renewal of Israel which, from Luke's point of view, must take place before the universal witness can be begun. They will be clothed with 'power from on high', for the Spirit will empower their witness and move it out until it becomes world-wide (Acts 6:10; 9:17; 10:47; 19:21).

(24:50–3) The Ascension It is not certain that this passage describes an ascension of Jesus, for the two crucial clauses that would make it so are omitted from some MSS. That Jesus 'was carried up into heaven' and that the disciples 'worshipped him' are not included in a number of versions. After a long period when they were described as additions, introduced to bring the gospel to a firm conclusion, the majority of commentators now opt for their integrity. They believe that the two clauses were omitted because, with their inclusion, the gospel passage seemed to be at variance with the more obvious description of the ascension with which Luke begins Acts. It is just that contradiction, however, that makes it difficult to accept the ending of Luke as another account of the one event. The real problem is that, whereas Acts talks of Jesus' period of teaching and confirming as lasting forty days (Acts 1:3), Lk 24 has this final scene on Easter day itself. This time difference should not, however, be pressed. We have

already seen that the Emmaus story stands somewhat outside the sequence of events, and it is this that actually sets the timing whilst itself causing difficulties for including everything within the one day. Time is subservient to what Luke was certain had to be done between the resurrection and the ascension. The forty days of Acts 1:3 witnesses to this same emphasis and should no more be pressed than the time sequence in Lk 24. Other differences between the two accounts are minimal. The cloud is emphasized in Acts because it not only receives Jesus, but also veils him from the disciples. It is their perplexity that dominates the Acts story and that is countered by the gift of the Spirit and the success of the mission. In the gospel, Jesus has already demonstrated his credibility. The ascension sets the seal on that. It represents in story form the fundamental belief that Jesus is Lord. What the infancy narratives proclaimed, what the voice which accepted his response to his baptism acknowledged (3:22), what Moses and Elijah at the transfiguration discussed in glory (9:31), and what everything from 9:51 has moved towards is now completed. The whole of that life is now caught up into God's presence. Jesus blesses his community and that blessing is brought into the present. Acts will show just how effective that has been. The disciples worship. The gospel ends as it began, with the praise of God in the temple.

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6. John

RENÉ KIEFFER

INTRODUCTION

A. Special Features of the Gospel of John. 1.

In comparison with the Synoptics, John's gospel is much more unified in content and style. It has sometimes been called 'seamless, woven in one piece' (cf. Jn 19:23). The differences between John and the Synoptics have been used in both positive and negative ways, especially concerning their reliability. But one should not forget all that unites John with the other gospels: it is about Jesus' public life, death, and resurrection, with concrete biographical indications that may not always satisfy a modern historian.

2. My view is that John in his structure and in many details has been inspired by Mark, perhaps even by Luke (or common traditions behind Luke and John). But John also has his own information, which allows him to treat his material in a sovereign way (Kieffer 1987–8; 1992). He wants primarily to show that Jesus really is the Messiah and the Son of God (cf. Jn 20:31). Matthew has already dared to group Jesus' preaching into five or six longer discourses in order to favour his own theological purpose; John is even bolder when he freely organizes his material according to his theological views, making no stylistic difference between what Jesus, the Baptist, or he himself has to say.

3. The Johannine presentation is permeated with contrasts between light and darkness, life and death, truth and falsehood, heaven above and the earth below. Ambiguous expressions are used to create a kind of suspense. Subtle ironic devices suppose that the reader is shrewder than those who meet Jesus without understanding. The Master who stands in the centre of the text is described with the help of lively metaphors. His encounters, his words, and his miracles often have both a concrete and a metaphorical meaning. One could speak of a kind of progressive 'metaphorization' of words and deeds in the Johannine text (Kieffer 1989). Sayings of Jesus in the Synoptics, and even in the *Gospel of Thomas*, are stamped by simple images and parables. In John these give way to long and complicated monologues and dialogues, with a rather limited vocabulary used very skillfully.

4. In the Prologue Jesus Christ is identified with the Word of God. Already in the beginning of his activity he cleanses the temple, a symbolic

action that, like the miracle at Cana in ch. 2, announces that the new cult around the risen Christ will replace Jewish feasts and ceremonies. In chs. 3–4 the discussions with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman show that the Son of Man, who comes from above and will be elevated on a cross, will give his Spirit, independently of Jewish and Samaritan places of worship. In chs. 5–6 the reader is informed about Jesus' life-giving power. The polemic with the Jews in chs. 7–8 and the healing of the blind man in ch. 9 concern Jesus' identity, a subject that continues throughout chs. 10–12. In the farewell discourses in chs. 13–17 Jesus finally reveals for his disciples his deep connection with his Father and the Spirit whom he will send after his death and resurrection (chs. 20–1). Despite his main theological purpose, the evangelist shows a vivid interest in geographical and historical details, which makes his gospel sometimes a better source of historical information than the Synoptics.

B. The Gospel of John in a Historical Perspective. 1.

The unity of the gospel is sometimes marred by contradictions: twice Jesus brings his activity to an end (10:40–2 and 12:37–43). Jesus' first sign in Cana is followed by different signs in Jerusalem, but in 4:54 a miracle in Galilee is called the second one. In 7:3–5 Jesus' brothers speak as if the Master had not done any signs in Jerusalem, despite 2:23 and ch. 5. In 16:5 Jesus seems to ignore the questions Peter and Thomas had already put in 13:36 and 14:5. In 14:31 Jesus says, 'Rise, let us be on our way', yet he continues his farewell discourse. In 20:30–1 the reader is given a conclusion but the book continues in ch. 21. Some of the contradictions are not very important, but it is impossible to ignore the question of an evolution behind our present gospel.

2. Different theories have been proposed: (1) Rearrangements: the best known hypothesis is that originally ch. 6 was placed before ch. 5. Bultmann (1971) proposes many other rearrangements, which are hardly acceptable. (2) Sources: in his commentary Bultmann also proposes three different sources behind our gospel: a sign-source, a Gnostic source, and a passion narrative source. Moreover he thinks that a later redactor has reworked the gospel, adding to it

sacramental and traditional eschatological material (for other source analyses, see Fortna 1970; 1988; Boismard 1977). I am sceptical about the possibilities of reconstructing different sources behind the Gospel of John. (3) Different editions: with other exegetes such as Lindars (1972), my belief is that parts of the gospel have been added in a second edition, e.g. chs. 6; 15–17; 21. Probably the evangelist himself reworked his gospel in a process of 're-reading' to which others also have contributed. (4) The history of the Johannine community: in Brown (1979) we find a reconstruction of the history of the Johannine community. Between 50 and 90 there were two groups, one centred around a man who had known Jesus and would become the 'beloved disciple'; this group accepted Jesus as a Davidic Messiah. Another group was critical about the temple cult and understood Jesus against a Mosaic background. The fusion of these two groups was the catalyst for the development of a high Christology, which was expressed in a first version of the gospel. About 90 CE the community became more anti-Jewish under the influence of converted pagans. This was reflected in a new version of the gospel. Around 100 CE a faction gathered around the author of the Johannine letters and fought against the Docetists who overinterpreted the divine aspect in the gospel and neglected Jesus' humanity. Such reconstructions are interesting but are difficult to prove. They simply project contradictions in the Johannine literature onto a historical axis.

3. My own view is that the main author, whom I call 'the evangelist', tries to unite his community by transmitting the testimony of the beloved disciple. This person is presented in such a way that the reader who knows the synoptic tradition can identify him with John the son of Zebedee. Historically it is possible that somebody other than the apostle John was the mediator, but the evangelist wants us to identify the beloved disciple with the apostle. This is quite in agreement with an old tradition we find in Irenaeus (*Adv. haer.* 2.22.5; 3.1.1; cf. Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.20. 4–8). The final version of the gospel was probably produced about 90–100 in Ephesus (see details in Hengel 1993).

C. Structure. 1. The first part (1:19–12:50), now often called 'the book of signs', is regularly distinguished from a second one called 'the book of glory' (13:1–20:31; see Brown 1966). In that outline ch. 21 is usually considered as an appendix written by a member of the Johannine school (and

7:53–8:11 as a non-Johannine text; see JN APP). It is difficult to come to a consensus concerning the first part. One can state that it is punctuated by seven miracles (two at Cana and Capernaum, two near the Sea of Galilee, two in Jerusalem and one at Bethany near Jerusalem), and by different tableaux and discussions (the meetings with the Baptist and his disciples, with Nicodemus and with the Samaritans, the temple cleansing in Jerusalem, the disputes in Jerusalem, the acclamation near Jerusalem, the anointing at Bethany). One can often find chiasmic and concentric schemes in the text, but it is difficult to establish the author's plan with their help alone.

2. The whole book may be considered as a unity. If the geographical indications are studied, four cycles become apparent. A first grouping (1:19–3:21) leads from the region across the Jordan (1:28) to Cana (2:1, 11) and Capernaum in Galilee (2:12), and finally to Jerusalem (2:13, 23). A second grouping (3:22–5:47) starts in Judea, probably across the Jordan (3:26), and takes the reader through Samaria (4:4) to the second stay at Cana in Galilee (4:46) and finally to Jerusalem (5:1). A third grouping (6:1–10:39) starts on 'the other side' of the Sea of Galilee (6:1–16; cf. 6:17, 22, 25) and leads again to Jerusalem in Judea. The last grouping (10:40–21:23) carries one from the region across the Jordan (10:40) to Jerusalem (12:12), through Bethany (11:1), and finally back to the Sea of Tiberias in Galilee (see Gyllenberg 1960; 1980; Kieffer 1985). The regions across the Jordan and on the other side of Galilee are somehow starting-points. Galilee and Samaria are, with the exception of the end of ch. 6, regions where Jesus is well received, whereas in Judea violent discussions during Jewish feasts lead to various threats to kill him (5:18; 7:1, 19–25; 8:37, 40; 10:31–9; 11:53).

3. If one considers more closely the Christological aspects in the Fourth Gospel, one can observe a dramatic progression from Jesus' initial signs and encounters (2:1–4:54), his works and discussions at Jewish feasts in Jerusalem (5:1–10:39), the climactic sign of raising Lazarus and the bridge section on the coming of Jesus' hour (11:1–12:50), to Jesus' farewell at the Last Supper (13:1–17:26), and finally his hour of passion, death, and resurrection (18:1–21:23). The Prologue and the encounter with the Baptist can be considered as two Christological introductions, and both 20:30–1 and 21:24–5 as two conclusions (see a slightly different version in Mlakuzhyil 1987).

4. In presenting the material I shall draw attention to these different geographical and

dramatic groupings without putting them into the centre of the commentary; proper analysis of the structure and development of each single scene is more important.

D. Suggested Outline.

Prologue: The Word became Flesh and Revealed the Father (1:1–18)

First Book: Jesus Reveals his Glory to this World (1:19–12:50)

1:19–3:21: *First geographical grouping:*

The Baptist's Testimony (1:19–34)

Jesus' First Disciples (1:35–51)

The First Sign at the Wedding in Cana (2:1–12)

Temple Cleansing in Jerusalem (2:13–25)

Dialogue with Nicodemus (3:1–21)

3:22–5:47: *Second geographical grouping:*

The Baptist's Last Testimony (3:22–30)

Jesus Comes from Above (3:31–6)

Jesus' Work in Samaria (4:1–42)

The Second Sign at Cana: The Healing of the Royal Official's Son (4:43–54)

Jesus Heals a Lame Man: He Gives Life to Whom he Wishes (5:1–47)

6:1–10:39: *Third geographical grouping:*

Jesus Feeds 5,000 and Walks on the Sea: He is the Bread of Life (6:1–71)

Jesus at the Festival of Booths (7:1–8:59)

Jesus Restores Sight to the Blind Man (9:1–41)

Jesus is the Door and the Good Shepherd (10:1–21)

Jesus at the Festival of Dedication (10:22–39)

10:40–21:25: *Fourth geographical grouping:*

Back across the Jordan (10:40–2)

Jesus who Raises Lazarus Must Himself Die (11:1–54)

Jesus is Anointed and Acclaimed before his Death (11:55–12:36)

Faith and Unbelief (12:37–50)

Second Book: Jesus Reveals the Glory of his Death and Resurrection to the Disciples (13:1–21:25)

Jesus Washes the Feet of his Disciples and Points out the Traitor (13:1–30)

The First Part of the Farewell Discourse (13:31–14:31)

The Second Part of the Farewell Discourse (15:1–16:4a)

The Third Part of the Farewell Discourse (16:4b–33)

Jesus' Prayer to his Father (17:1–26)

Jesus' Passion, Death, and Burial (18:1–19:42)

The Risen Christ (20:1–21:25)

COMMENTARY

Prologue: The Word became Flesh and Revealed the Father (1:1–18)

In a kind of overture the narrator gives his readers the impression that his story will be told 'from a transcendent and eternal vantage point' (Stibbe 1993: 22–3). The author uses subtle imagery to sum up main themes in the following work. As elsewhere in the Jewish tradition, light, life, and darkness, which are elements of the creation, are meant to symbolize spiritual realities. Life and light which were created in the beginning by the word of God (Gen 1) are manifested in the Word both before and after creation. The theme of light leads to that of the visible glory of the Word (v. 14) whereas the theme of life gives birth to that of the fullness from which believers receive (v. 16). The prologue begins with what appeals to the ear, the Word, and finishes with what the eye cannot see, God (v. 18). Through the Word, who is both light and life, the invisible and unheard God is revealed.

There has been much discussion about a pre-Christian or Christian hymn which the author may have used and adapted to fit his purpose. On these hypotheses, vv. 6–8 and 15, on the Baptist, are generally considered as later additions (see different reconstructions in Rochais 1985; cf. Schnackenburg 1977–9: i). But these views are open to objection; the whole prologue may have been written by the same author in a kind of solemn prose, with chiasmic phrases which are developed by amplifications and contrasts. Moreover there is a kind of concentric construction with a centre in vv. 12–13 and different sentences that correspond to each other around this centre. This is especially clear for vv. 6–8 and 15 on the Baptist, but also for the beginning in vv. 1–3 and the end in vv. 17–18 (cf. Culpepper 1979–80).

The evangelist may have had in mind the gospel of Mark: 'The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God' (Mk 1:1). He wanted to prolong this 'beginning' by going back to God and the creation. In his prologue he mentions John the Baptist who in Mark opens the gospel proper. But, like Mark, he gives the reader a key to interpret his book: it will be about the revelation of Jesus who is both Christ and the Son of God, Jn 1:18 (see the purpose of John's book in 20:30–1; cf. Hooker 1974–5).

(1:1–11) The evangelist shows first how the Word which was with God came to what was

his own. vv. 1–2, the author alludes to Gen 1:1, but describes what was *before* the creation. If he has Mk 1:1 in mind, he wants to show that the gospel begins with the Word which was with God. God's Wisdom is created at the beginning (Prov 8:22), but John tells us about the uncreated Word. John usually uses *pros* with an implication of movement and one might therefore translate 'the Word was turned towards God' (so the Fr. TOB). This could be paralleled by an alternative translation of *eis* in v. 18: 'the only Son, who turns *towards* the Father's bosom'. Such a translation could fit the gospel's description of the Son's orientation towards the Father. But the preposition *eis* in v. 18 is probably used in place of *en*. The parallelism between vv. 1 and 18 favours therefore the usual translation of v. 1, 'was with God'. The Greek verb *ēn* has three different meanings in v. 1: an existential (the Word was), a relational (was with God), and an identificational (the Word was God). *Theos*, 'God', is used without the article, which is normal in a predicate, but the author could have used it if he had wanted to underline a complete identification of the Word with God. Jesus is God (1:1, 18; 20:28), but normally it is his Father who is *theos* with a precedent article in Greek. v. 3, the expression *hō gegonen*, 'what has come into being' at the end of v. 3 probably must be taken together with v. 4, which was the normal interpretation among the Church Fathers before the heretics of the fourth century used it to prove Jesus' inferiority. Moreover, the joining of 'what has come into being' to v. 3 would yield a strange Greek sentence, which would be correct only if the expression were changed to *hōn gegonen*. There is a parallel text in 1QS 11:11: 'without Him not a thing is done'. The author now describes the Word's function in creation, as either the instrument by which God created, or as the fountainhead which made creation possible. The whole creation is marked by God's Word and reveals God, in opposition to later Gnostic speculations where the world is created by an evil demiurge. The Word in John is both an instrument and a model, similar to Col 1:16, 'all things have been created through him'. But in this text creation is also 'for him', whereas in John the goal of creation is the Father. vv. 4–5, 'What has come into being in him was life.' One could also translate: 'In what has come into being, there was life'; 'In what has come into being, he was life'; or 'What has come into being, was life (alive) in him'. But the NRSV translation best fits the context. Life and light have in these verses soteriological

connotations: the creating Word of God is the fountainhead of spiritual life and light for all people. The author is specially interested in a moral choice between light and darkness. The image of a cosmic battle corresponds to humankind's spiritual struggle, and therefore the translation 'did not overcome it' fits the context better than 'did not understand it' or 'did not accept it'. vv. 6–8, these verses interrupt the cosmic viewpoint and introduce the description of the Word's incarnation. In a similar way Luke introduces Jesus' birth by the preparatory birth of John the Baptist (Lk 1–2). The expression *para theou* in v. 6 can mean, as in classical Greek, 'from God' or, as in later Greek, 'by God'. John the Baptist is only a witness to the light of the Word, whereas Jesus himself is the light (Jn 3:19; 8:12; 9:5; 12:35–6). Jesus' testimony is greater than the Baptist's (5:36). This is probably an attack against disciples of the Baptist who considered him as a messianic figure (see also John's negative utterances about himself in 1:20–7). vv. 9–11 could be translated, 'There was the true light that enlightens everyone who is coming into the world,' but in that case 'everyone who is coming into the world' would be redundant. Another translation could take the remote 'Word' as the grammatical subject of the sentence (as in vv. 10–11), but NRSV is probably right when it considers the just-mentioned 'light' as the subject of a periphrastic construction. Theologically it is the light of the Word who comes to a world created through him. Therefore one can say that he comes to what is his own (v. 11). Some exegetes think that vv. 9–11 describe the presence of the Word in Israel during the OT period and that v. 12 alludes to the faithful remnant of Israel. But the concentric structure of the prologue makes it more probable that vv. 9–11 describe the time of Jesus' activity, since they correspond to v. 14 about the Word who became flesh. John's testimony in vv. 6–8 introduces vv. 9–11 and his testimony in v. 15 confirms v. 14. Moreover, in the rest of the gospel those who reject Jesus' witness can easily be identified with his own people who did not accept him. What v. 5 describes as a cosmic conflict is in vv. 9–11 applied to the human world, which does not recognize or accept Jesus.

(1:12–13) All that was said about the Word before vv. 12–13 and that which follows after has its centre in those who received the Word and became children of God. This agrees with the

aim of the entire gospel that 'through believing you may have life in his name' (20:31). The contrast between those who receive him in v. 12 and those who do not accept him in v. 11 is fundamental throughout the gospel. In 1:19–12:50 different attitudes in relation to Jesus are described, in 13:1–17:26 everything is concentrated on the disciples, 'his own', whom Jesus has loved to the end (13:1). Those who become disciples are allowed to be called 'children of God' and are in relationship with the only one who in the Fourth Gospel is called 'God's Son'. v. 13, children of God cannot be born in a carnal way. The Greek has 'blood' in the plural, which might allude to the rabbinic doctrine (derived ultimately from Aristotle), that man's seed, considered as 'blood', is in the act of conception mixed with woman's blood. The mention of 'the will of man' reflects the prevailing idea that the male was the only active party in procreation. Some MSS have changed the plural 'bloods' into the singular in order to allude to the virgin birth of Jesus.

(1:14–18) The evangelist finally shows how the Word become flesh has revealed the Father. v. 14, in contrast to what is said in v. 13 about the 'carnal will', the Word that was with God becomes flesh. The author repeats *logos*, 'the Word', that he mentioned in v. 1, but has had in mind all the time. The concrete word *sarx*, 'flesh', is used probably in order to refute Docetic views similar to those we meet in John's letters (1 Jn 1:2–3; 4:2; 2 Jn 7). 'Lived among us', or literally 'put up his tent among us' is used of Wisdom in Sir 24:10. The temple in Jerusalem replaced the tabernacle in the desert as a dwelling-place for God. God's Wisdom is thus present in Israel and in its temple, but the presence of the Word in the flesh is physical. 'Among us' and 'we have seen' underline the Johannine witness to God's initiative. The Word's glory is dependent on the Father's presence in his only Son (cf. 17:5). *Monogenēs* can mean 'only', 'unique', 'precious' (cf. Heb 11:17 about Isaac), or 'born from the one'. It is used four times in John (1:14, 18; 3:16, 18), and once in 1 Jn 4:9. It seems to sum up the very special relationship between Jesus and his Father. 'Full of grace and truth' is best connected with 'only son', rather than with 'glory'. The expression reflects God's revelation to Moses as 'merciful and gracious' (Ex 34:6), i.e. 'full of loving initiative and of fidelity'. In the Word made flesh humanity can meet God's glory. v. 15, in vv. 6–8 John testified to the light, but now he attests that the one who

came after him in fact ranks ahead of him because he precedes him in time as God's Word. This anticipates v. 30. v. 16, the verse resumes what was said in v. 14, but concentrates on the word *charis*, 'grace'. Even if the preposition *anti* normally means 'instead of', the context favours NRSV 'upon' (cf. Philo, *De posteritate Caini*, 145). The word *plērōma*, 'fullness', does not yet have the later Gnostic meaning of the pantheon of deities, but the normal one (as in e.g. LXX Ps 23 (24):1). 'We' are all those who in v. 12 become children of God, in contrast to v. 11, 'his own people'. v. 17, what was given by Moses is not depreciated (as it often is in Paul), but 'grace and truth', already mentioned in v. 14, are considered as of higher dignity and fulfil the former revelation. The prologue now makes it explicit that the Word is identical with Jesus, the Messiah. v. 18, in contrast to Moses, who could not see God without dying (Ex 33:20), Jesus is said to be in the Father's bosom and is himself 'God' (probably the original reading, attested already in P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵). The 'bosom' expresses the intimacy Jesus shares with his Father (see 13:25 on the beloved disciple), in his pre-existence, his mission on earth, and his return to the Father (cf. 17:5). He is therefore the proper revealer of God. Those who adhere to Jesus can in their turn see God (14:8–9).

First Book: Jesus Reveals his Glory to this World (1:19–12:50)

(1:19–3:21) First Geographical Grouping

(1:19–34) **The Baptist's Testimony** In 1:19–51 the evangelist develops some aspects of the prologue by means of a more concrete introduction to Jesus' activity. The testimony of the Baptist and the first disciples' discovery of Jesus introduce the reader to different features of the gospel's Christology. In contrast to the Synoptics the Gospel of John does not mention the events that surround the Baptist's activity and does not describe how Jesus was baptized by him. The evangelist wants the reader to see the decisive difference between the Baptist and Jesus, with the help of the former's testimony concerning himself (vv. 19–28) and concerning Jesus (vv. 29–34).

(1:19–28) The evangelist first lets the Baptist testify that he is not the Messiah, the prophet, or Elijah. v. 19, 'the Jews' in the Fourth Gospel is often used negatively for the authorities who are opposed to Jesus, especially the Pharisees and high priests, but sometimes also for

ordinary people (6:41, 52). The expression can be treated in a neutral way (e.g. 5:1) or even have a positive connotation (4:22). The Jews are sent from Jerusalem, the centre of resistance to Jesus' message. They are associated with two religious factions, priests and Levites, probably as specialists on Jewish purifications which are so important in chs. 1–2. In v. 24 a second group is that of the Pharisees. vv. 20–1, just as in vv. 6–8 the Baptist underlines what he is not; there he was not the light, here he is not the Messiah, Elijah, or the prophet. The Hebrew *māšīah* and the Aramaic *mešīcha*⁷, which in 1:41 and 4:25 are transcribed in Greek, mean 'the anointed one', a word derived from the anointing of kings. In Dan 9:25 a future anointed agent of God is expected and in the Dead Sea scrolls two such messianic figures are looked forward to, 'one of Aaron and one of Israel', i.e. a priestly Messiah and a kingly Messiah, who would be a descendant of David (see 1QS 9:11). In Lk 3:15 people also wonder if the Baptist is the expected Messiah. According to Mal 3:1 and 4:5 (HB 3:23), Elijah would be sent as a messenger to prepare the way of the day of the Lord. In the Synoptics the Baptist is normally identified with Elijah as the forerunner of Jesus the Messiah (Mk 9:13 par. and Lk 1:17; 7:27). In the Fourth Gospel Jesus himself seems to be a figure like Elijah (see Jn 1:27), as he is in some Lukan texts (Lk 4:24–6; 9:51; Acts 1:2, 9–11). The expectation of the prophet is derived from Deut 18:18 and is also present in 1QS 9:11 ('until the coming of a prophet'). It plays an important role especially in Jn 4 and in Samaritan theology. vv. 22–3, in his self-presentation the Baptist quotes only Isa 40:3 and not Mal 3:1, unlike the Synoptics which identify him with Elijah. The evangelist adapts the citation to the only role the Baptist may assume, that of a voice preparing the way of the Lord. vv. 24–5, 'Now they had been sent', the Greek text can also be translated: 'Also some Pharisees had been sent', as a participle. Some MSS have added the article *hoi* in the beginning of the sentence: 'Those who were sent were Pharisees'. In any case, the author does not describe the situation during Jesus' time when the Pharisees often were opposed to the priests and the Levites. After 70 CE the Pharisees could more easily be identified with 'the Jews'. The new question put to the Baptist supposes that in order to be allowed to baptize he must be a kind of messianic figure. It may reflect discussions between Christians and the followers of the Baptist (see also 3:22–3; 4:1–2). vv. 26–7, just as in the Synoptics, the Baptist underlines that

he baptizes only with water. Instead of mentioning Jesus' baptism with fire, however, here he points out their inability to recognize the one who stands among them. In a way similar to the synoptic tradition he stresses his unworthiness in comparison to Jesus, but with different words (Mk 1:7–8 par.). v. 28, Bethany across the Jordan is difficult to locate and has therefore been changed to Beth-barah (see Judg 7:24) by Origen and in some MSS after him.

(1:29–34) Now the evangelist refers to the Baptist's testimony about Jesus. In vv. 29–31, different days in Jesus' first week are mentioned: 'the next day' in 1:29, 35, 43, and 'on the third day' in 2:1. There will also be a last week before Jesus' death (12:1–19:31), and a week of appearances after the resurrection (20:1, 19). The evangelist replaces the synoptic baptism of Jesus (Mk 1:11 par.) by the Baptist's double testimony before the people of Israel: about Jesus as the Lamb of God (Jn 1:29–31), and about Jesus on whom he has seen the Spirit descend (vv. 32–4; Richter 1974). The image of the lamb has, in the tradition behind the gospel, a double connotation: both the Suffering Servant (see 12:38), who is like a lamb led to the slaughter (Isa 53:7), who bears our infirmities, and is crushed for our iniquities (Isa 53:4–5)—both 'bear' and 'take away' are possible translations of the Hebrew word *nāṣā*⁷ in Isa 53:4, 12—and the passover lamb, alluded to at the death of Jesus (Jn 19:31, 34). Even if the passover lamb has no atonement function in Judaism, it receives this in the Christian tradition by its association with the death of Jesus and of the Suffering Servant (cf. 1 Cor 5:7 and 1 Jn 3:5). v. 30 resumes the same thought that was expressed in the prologue (v. 15). If the expression 'after me comes a man' alludes to Elijah, Jesus is considered as the hidden Elijah, who already existed before the Baptist. But the latter also underlines Jesus' pre-existence (cf. 8:58), and, in contrast, his own ignorance (v. 31). vv. 32–4, in the Synoptics the Baptist testifies to the baptism with the Holy Spirit before his encounter with Jesus. In the Fourth Gospel both the descent of the Spirit on Jesus and the baptism with the Holy Spirit are described as the object of the Baptist's witness. The scene culminates with the confession that Jesus is the 'Son of God', a reading already present in P⁶⁶ and P⁷⁵, which probably is better than 'the Elect of God' we find in other MSS. As in the Synoptics the dove is a symbol for the Spirit; John adds that the Spirit remains over Jesus. In contrast to the Baptist's mission as a

mere witness, Jesus is sent by his Father with a unique task and message.

(1:35–51) Jesus' First Disciples The text tries to link together two traditions, one on the Baptist's own activity and one concerning his meeting with Jesus, which in its turn results in the first disciples' encounter with Jesus. Two days are described: one when Jesus meets two of the Baptist's disciples and Andrew's brother Simon, vv. 35–42, and another when he encounters Philip and Nathanael, vv. 43–51. In both episodes a disciple expresses his joy to have found the expected Messiah (vv. 41, 45). Jesus invites some of them to 'come and see' (v. 39) or to 'follow' him (v. 43). The whole text underlines the concrete and the symbolic meaning of different ways of 'seeing' Jesus or of 'being seen' by him, of 'coming' to him and of 'finding' him.

(1:35–42) Jesus first meets two disciples of the Baptist, and then Simon. vv. 35–7, in vv. 29–34 the Baptist testified before a larger crowd, whereas in vv. 35–7 his witness is directed towards the two disciples who leave him for Jesus. v. 38, the address 'Rabbi', usual in Matthew and Luke, is explained in Greek (*didaskale*, teacher). In Jn 3:26 the Baptist is also addressed as 'Rabbi', but elsewhere in the Fourth Gospel the title is reserved for Jesus. v. 39, 'Come and see' is usual in rabbinic literature, but gets a special meaning here by the double sense of *menein*, 'to stay' and 'to remain' with Jesus, and by an exact indication of time ('the tenth hour'). vv. 40–2, as the evangelist is probably acquainted with the Gospel of Mark the anonymous disciple is best identified with one of the sons of Zebedee (see Jn 21:2), and presumably with the apostle John, since James had already died in 44 CE. Andrew confesses that Jesus is the 'Messiah'; as in 4:25 the reader is given the Greek equivalent, *christos*. Simon Peter is the son of John, as in 21:15–17 (contrast Mt 16:17, in Aramaic *bar-yōnā*). Jesus calls Simon 'Cephas', which is explained by the Greek *petra*, 'rock', as in Mt 16:16–18. But the Fourth Gospel puts the renaming of Peter early, after his brother's confession rather than his own. Matthew seems to have combined Simon's confession at Caesarea Philippi with the change of name in order to emphasize his importance in the church.

(1:43–51) Jesus now meets Philip and Nathanael. vv. 43–4, according to Mk 1:29 Simon and Andrew lived in Capernaum, but the Fourth Gospel seems to correct this by locating them at

Bethsaida across the Jordan, which according to Jn 12:21 is in Galilee (more properly Gaulanitis). As in the synoptic tradition, Jesus explicitly calls a disciple to follow him (cf. Mk 2:14 par.). Philip is one of the twelve (Mk 3:18 par.) but probably not identical with the evangelist Philip (Acts 6:5; 8:4–8, 26–40; 21:8). v. 45, the Hebrew name Nathanael means 'God gives'. Some have tried to identify him with Matthew or Bartholomew, but he rather represents all Jews who understand the great gift of God. The particular man Jesus from Nazareth is seen as a messianic figure announced by Moses and the prophets (cf. Lk 24:37). But there may also be an allusion to a prophet like Moses in Deut 18:15–18. Jesus is the son of Joseph (as in Lk 3:23 and 4:22, but in contrast to Mk 6:3 where he is the son of Mary). v. 46, a typical Johannine irony makes Nathanael admit in the following discussion that something good comes from Nazareth (see Jn 1:49). v. 47, truly (*alēthōs*) underlines the signification of 'Israelite', perhaps as 'one who can see God', *horōn ton theon* (e.g. Philo, *De mutatione nominum*, 81). v. 48, the fig tree symbolizes in rabbinic literature the place where one studies the Torah (see *Eccles. Rab.* 5:11). That Jesus knows 'under' which 'tree' Nathanael was can also be compared with Daniel's prophetic knowledge (Sus 54, 58). v. 49, the title 'Son of God' has in the Fourth Gospel a much profounder meaning than in the Jewish tradition, where it can be applied to an angel, a king, Israel, a judge, or a just man. Also the title 'King of Israel' fulfils an important purpose as will be shown in the discussion with Pilate (Jn 18:33–8a) and in the inscription on the cross: 'King of the Jews' (19:19–22). vv. 50–1, the reader is invited to expect greater things, that Jesus will soon reveal his glory (2:11), a beginning that will be concluded with the glorification on the cross. The final words of Jesus are still addressed to Nathanael, but also include all encounters with Jesus. By interpreting the gospel, the reader will see heaven opened. The angels of God ascend and descend not upon a ladder as in the dream of Jacob/Israel (Gen 28:12), but upon the Son of Man, who is the link between the Father and the world of humankind. The believing community will be able to see the unique revelation of the Son of Man (Neyrey 1982).

(2:1–12) The First Sign at the Wedding in Cana In 2:1–4:54, which leads the reader from Cana back to Cana, the reader is confronted with Jesus' initial signs and works in Galilee, Jerusalem, and Samaria. In 2:11 the narrator draws

attention to the account of the miracle in Cana by calling it the first of Jesus' signs. The healing of the official's son is considered as the second sign (4:53). In 20:30 the evangelist indicates that he has chosen only a few signs of Jesus. There have been learned and rather contradictory hypotheses about a 'signs-source' which the evangelist might have used (Fortna 1970; 1988). The actual gospel invites the reader to count the different miracle-stories that are reported. One can easily come to the number seven before Jesus' death and resurrection: after the first two signs we have the healing of a lame man in 5:1-9; the feeding of the five thousand in 6:1-13; the walking on water in 6:16-21; the healing of a man born blind in 9:1-12; and as a climax the raising of Lazarus in 11:1-44, which anticipates Jesus' own death and resurrection. The main point of the wedding in Cana is therefore Christological and not to underline the sacramental aspects of water, wine, or wedding, or to show how important Jesus' mother is. The messianic time is inaugurated when Jewish purifications give way to the revelation of Jesus' glory (Olsson 1974). The miracle has been compared with stories about Dionysus, but OT models, such as the feeding miracles of Elijah and Elisha (1 Kings 17:1-16; 2 Kings 4:1-7, 42-4), are closer to it.

(2:1-2) It is difficult to know whether the author already has the Twelve in mind or only the disciples named in ch. 1. Their invitation is mentioned after that of the mother of Jesus who has a special connection with Galilee (cf. 1:46). She is never called Mary in the Fourth Gospel, perhaps in order not to confuse her with other Marys (11:1; 19:25). The third day may be an allusion to the day of resurrection, but it also completes Jesus' first week. vv. 3-5, in preparation of the miracle Jesus' mother takes the initiative, both before and after her son's answer. Jesus addresses his mother with 'woman', which has no derogatory significance (see also 19:26). By his apparent rebuke ('what concern is that to you and to me?'), Jesus wants her to understand that a miracle in Cana will lead to the hour of glorification on the cross. vv. 6-8, the water jars are made of stone because they are used for purifications. The quantity of water is enormous for a private person, 120-80 gallons, but the miracle of the wine has rather an illustrative function. The number 'six' may symbolically express incompleteness, and the jars filled to the brim completeness. The second injunction of Jesus in v. 8 indicates indirectly that the miracle has taken place. vv. 9-10, we

do not get the reaction of the guests, but the steward expresses their astonishment. Ironically enough the one who is normally responsible for the meal does not know where the wine has come from, whereas his servants know. There is a comic aspect to the story in the allusion to the guests' drunkenness. The bridegroom appears in the story only here, but soon the Baptist will speak of Jesus himself as the bridegroom (3:29). The wine's quantity and quality hint at the time of the messianic wedding (cf. Am 9:13-14; Isa 25:6; 54:4-8; 62:4-5). vv. 11-12, the reader is given the narrator's viewpoint on the miracle, and an echo from vv. 1-2, with the happy conclusion that the disciples believed in Jesus. The 'brothers' make an appearance here, accompanying Jesus to Capernaum. In 7:3-5 they will show a rather sceptical attitude towards him.

(2:13-25) **Temple Cleansing in Jerusalem** v. 13 is a rather abrupt transition from the sign in Galilee to the cleansing of the temple in Jerusalem, whereas vv. 23-5 describe the narrator's understanding of the people's reactions and forms a bridge to the following discussion with Nicodemus. The narrator's point of view is 'an enlightened, post-resurrection' one (Stibbe 1993: 51), which is especially apparent in vv. 17 and 22. In the synoptic tradition the cleansing of the temple is the main cause of Jesus' arrest, whereas in the Fourth Gospel the raising of Lazarus has that function. Therefore the temple scene is placed much earlier as an illustration of how Jewish institutions (as already seen in the case of Cana), are meant to be replaced by Jesus. The actual scene is described in a way which differs markedly from the synoptic account. Through the reactions of the Jews and the disciples the purification of the temple becomes a sign of the destruction and raising of another temple, Jesus' body. The metaphors go in two directions: from Jesus' zeal for the house of God to his body, and from his risen body to the cleansing of the temple.

v. 13, the Passover is mentioned also in 6:4 and 11:55. Here it introduces Jesus' allusions to his last Passover when he will die and rise from the dead. vv. 14-16, in the Fourth Gospel people sell not only doves as in the synoptic tradition, but also cattle and sheep, which was quite possible to do in the outer area of the temple (*hieron*) at the time of Caiaphas. The whip of cords, not mentioned in the synoptic tradition, is probably only meant for cattle and sheep.

The money-changers are named *kermatistai* in v. 14, but in v. 15 *kollubistai* as in the synoptic tradition. They exchanged Roman and Greek coins, with the image of the emperor (cf. Mk 12:16) or of gods, for Tyrian money which was allowed in the temple area. Unlike the synoptic account, in John Jesus does not cite Scripture (Isa 56:7; Jer 7:11) but speaks with authority about his own Father's house (cf. Lk 2:49). vv. 17–18, the evangelist contrasts the disciples' understanding of Jesus' messianic action (in the light of Ps 69:10 where the present tense is replaced by the future) and the negative attitude of the Jews who ask him to legitimize his behaviour by signs. This request for 'signs' here and in Jn 6:30 is similar to the synoptic one (cf. Mk 8:11–12 par.). vv. 19–22, in contrast to vv. 14–15 Jesus speaks now of destroying the inner temple area (*naos*). The eschatological catastrophe for Jerusalem and its temple became an important item in the lawsuit against Jesus (cf. Mk 13:2 par.). Perhaps he was also charged for his prophecy about its reconstruction. 'The third day' may be inspired by Hos 6:2. By a typical Johannine misunderstanding the Jews continue to think of the forty-six years of rebuilding the temple. According to Josephus (Ant. 15:380) Herod started it about 20/19 BC. The scene would then take place about 27/8 CE, a satisfactory Johannine chronology to fit Jesus' death on the 14 Nisan in the year 30. vv. 23–5, the reference to Passover and Jerusalem resumes what was said in v. 13. The author has mentioned only one sign in Jerusalem, but he probably includes what has happened in Cana. By his close relation to the Father Jesus has a profound knowledge of people and therefore cannot trust their rather superficial faith.

(3:1–21) Dialogue with Nicodemus This scene contrasts Nicodemus' earth-bound understanding with Jesus' wide perspective on God and the Spirit. The mysterious origin and direction of the wind prepares the reader for the heavenly things that Jesus is about to reveal. The Son of Man will be lifted up on the cross as a link between heaven and earth, and as a sign of God's love. The text moves from the night in the beginning of the dialogue to the light which those who do what is true will receive. Three short questions of Nicodemus receive three answers which progressively become longer and in vv. 16–21 end up in a kind of commentary (by Jesus or by the evangelist). Nicodemus in this chapter still hesitates before Jesus' claims. In 7:50–1 and 19:39 he will

spiritually evolve and become a secret disciple of Jesus.

vv. 1–2a, Nicodemus, a Pharisee, a teacher, and a 'leader of the Jews' (cf. 7:26, 48, 50–1), is presumably a member of the *synedrion*, a legal assembly which may at this time have comprised c.70 members representing three groups: the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes, of whom some were Pharisees. He encounters the personification of a higher wisdom. In Lk 18:18 a certain ruler also questions Jesus, but in the Fourth Gospel the discussion with an important representative of the Jewish faith takes place at the beginning. 2b–3, Nicodemus, like the people in Jerusalem, is probably impressed by the Jesus' signs (Jn 2:23), but he still has to learn in what sense Jesus 'has come from God'. Jesus answers him with a solemn double 'Amen', a revelation formula characteristic of the Fourth Gospel. He does so indirectly by speaking of how one is able to 'see' (in v. 5 to 'enter') the kingdom of God. Only in these two verses does the Fourth Gospel mention the synoptic theme of the kingdom of God, but in 18:36 Jesus answers Pilate that he is king in a kingdom which is not from this world. According to the ideas of that time a child was conceived by his father. In a similar way a child must be born from above (cf. 1:12–13 and 1 Jn 3:9). But the answer of Nicodemus shows that the evangelist also considers the mother's contribution to birth. The Johannine sayings are similar to the synoptic theme of becoming like a child in order to enter the kingdom (Mt 18:3 par.). vv. 4–8, the Greek expression *anōthen* in the Fourth Gospel generally means 'from above' (Jn 3:31; 19:11, 23), but Nicodemus interprets it as 'again', which is quite possible in Greek. Moreover, the evangelist lets him imagine the irony of an old person entering his mother's womb. Jesus alludes to Christian baptism, which the Baptist has already predicted in 1:33 (cf. also 7:38–9). There is no textual evidence supporting Bultmann's hypothesis that 'and water' has been added by a redactor (Bultmann 1971: 138). In order to explain the difference between natural birth and birth as a child of God (cf. 1:12–13) Jesus opposes flesh and spirit. The short parable on the 'wind' (the same word as 'Spirit' in both Hebrew, *ruah*, and Greek, *pneuma*) prepares the reader for the mysterious origin and destination of the Son of Man which will be revealed in the following verses. vv. 9–15, the third question of Nicodemus in v. 9 is short and gives Jesus an occasion to reveal who he is and how he will influence humankind's rebirth. But before that Jesus rebukes the teacher of

Israel for his lack of understanding (vv. 10–11), an indirect attack on the Jewish contemporaries of the evangelist who do not accept the Christian testimony. As Son of Man Jesus is pre-existent and will ascend to heaven (v. 13), which is far more difficult to understand than the more earthly matter of baptism Jesus was speaking about (v. 12). At the end of v. 13 most MSS, of different text types, add 'who is in heaven'. This difficult reading may be original and have been suppressed in important Alexandrian witnesses (among them P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵, and B). It underlines that even during his life on earth Jesus still has direct contact with heaven and can therefore testify to what he has seen (v. 11). The 'we know' in v. 11 contrasts with the 'we know' in v. 2. Nicodemus' solemn declaration about what he knows as a representative Jew is insignificant in comparison with Jesus' personal knowledge of God. Nicodemus can now disappear and let Jesus reveal heavenly things about the Son of Man (vv. 13–15) and about the Son of God (vv. 16–18). Jesus is the light that attracts all believers (vv. 19–21). In the Jewish tradition we have different heroes who have seen heavenly visions (e.g. Enoch, Isaiah, Daniel), but only Wisdom, the Word, or the Spirit are presented as coming from God. The perspective of crucifixion (v. 14) in the gospel tradition is a common way of introducing the theme of the Son of Man. In Num 21:9 the serpent is placed upon a pole, but already in the targums the serpent is put in an elevated place (see *Neofiti 1* and *Pseudo-Jonathan*; cf. Wis 16:6–7). That the Servant of God is exalted and lifted up in Isa 52:13 may also have contributed to the interpretation of the crucifixion as an elevation and a glorification. To see or enter the kingdom of God (Jn 3:3, 5) is reformulated in v. 15 as having eternal life. vv. 16–21, after the prologue this is the first time the evangelist speaks of God's initiative. It is also the first time the theme of 'loving' is introduced, which will play an important role in the rest of the gospel. In v. 16 we have a kind of gospel in miniature, where Jesus' death is combined with God's love for humanity, in order to give it eternal life. v. 17 develops what is hinted at in v. 16a, whereas v. 18 gives some precision on the importance of faith which was mentioned in v. 16b. The idea of a judgement, which was implicit in v. 18, is developed in vv. 19–21 with the help of the sharp contrast between light and darkness. The whole section is concentrated on the sending of the Son and the double way people respond to it. In 12:46–8 the evangelist will evoke the last

judgement, whereas here the judgement is already present in this life. In 3:16, 18 Jesus himself reaffirms what was said about God's only Son in the prologue (1:14, 18). In the rest of the gospel Jesus often speaks of himself simply as the Son. In the beginning of the dialogue with Nicodemus baptism was evoked (cf. Mk 16:16), in the end all is concentrated on faith.

(3:22–5:47) Second Geographical Grouping

(3:22–30) The Baptist's Last Testimony In the beginning of this scene different rites of purification with water are mentioned: the Baptist's, the Jews', and Jesus'. They serve to introduce the Baptist's second testimony about Jesus the Messiah. vv. 22–4, the evangelist does not indicate precisely where in the Judean countryside Jesus is baptizing. The discussion in v. 26 alludes to Jesus' meeting with the Baptist across the Jordan. Perhaps the evangelist supposes that Jesus is now baptizing there, a normal starting-point for his ministry. He will return there in 10:40–1. The Baptist has gone to 'Aenon near Salim', probably near Scythopolis (Lagrange 1936: 92–3). His move permits Jesus to take his own initiative, though this is partly corrected in 4:2. Contrary to the Synoptics, the Fourth Gospel does not describe the Baptist's imprisonment and death. vv. 25–6, the evangelist only mentions different kinds of baptisms, without indicating their differences. He also alludes to conflicts between disciples of John and disciples of Jesus. He lets the Baptist himself solve the conflict. vv. 27–30, the Baptist does not directly answer the question put to him, but he simply describes his own function as subordinate to that of Jesus. The evangelist reworks here the synoptic tradition where Jesus calls himself the bridegroom (Mk 2:18–22 par.), and makes this the object of the Baptist's testimony. In Jn 1:20 the Baptist denied that he was the Messiah or Elijah, but now he seems to allude to Mal 3:1 and consider himself as Elijah who is sent ahead of the Messiah (cf. Mk 1:2 par.). The Baptist, in Jn 1:23, was presented as a *voix* crying in the wilderness. He decreases now to the degree that his joy is fulfilled by listening to the bridegroom's *voix*. The 'friend of the bridegroom' corresponds to the *šōšebîn* mentioned in the Mishnah (*m. Sanh.* 3:5). According to 1 Macc 9:39 there was more than one such friend.

(3:31–6) Jesus Comes from Above The Johannine style marks the whole gospel and makes it difficult to decide whether vv. 31–6 belonged originally to the dialogue with Nicodemus, or

are a continuation of the Baptist's testimony, or finally are the evangelist's personal summary of 3:1–30 (which is most likely; a similar difficulty occurs at Jn 2:16–21). The contrast between earthly things and heaven is the point of departure for a meditation about the difficulties of accepting the Son's own testimony. v. 31, this verse reflects the contrast between 'earthly things' and 'heavenly things' in v. 12. It also makes clear that vv. 3 and 7 are fulfilled in Jesus who is the one 'who comes from above' and 'is above all'. vv. 32–3, as in the prologue, the evangelist underlines the testimony which comes from spiritual insight and hearing. This witness is not accepted by all (cf. v. 11), but those who receive it set a seal on it, which means they recognize that God speaks the truth through the testimony of Jesus. v. 34, by accepting the testimony of the one who has been sent, the believer can verify that he speaks the words of God. The Spirit was mentioned in vv. 5–8. In our verse it is not clear who is meant by 'he' who gives the Spirit, but in the context it is more likely that it is God than Jesus. The expression *ou gar ek metrou* is not good Greek, but probably means that God lets his Spirit remain over Jesus (cf. 1:32). This sense is also specified by the following verse. vv. 35–6, for the first time the Father's love for the Son is mentioned (cf. 5:20; 10:17; 15:9–10; 17:23–4, 26). In the expression 'has placed all things in his hands' (cf. 10:28–9; 13:3) the Greek *en* does not mean 'by means of his hand' but is used for *eis*. In the gospel different powers are given to the Son by his Father: to judge (5:22, 27), to have life in himself (5:26), to have disciples (6:37; 17:6), to speak God's words (12:49; 17:8), to receive the name and the glory from God (17:11–12, 22), to have authority over all people (17:2). Here what is given into his hand is the message pertaining to different responses to the Son. Therefore humankind is divided into two groups. The power of Jesus' hand protects those who believe and gives them eternal life (cf. vv. 15–16), but becomes implicitly also God's hand that punishes those who do not believe.

(4:1–42) Jesus' Work in Samaria The theme of the new cult that Jesus inaugurates is now further developed by his encounter with Samaritans, who stand outside normal Jewish faith. The dialogue with the Samaritan woman gives the reader more profound instruction on the living water (vv. 7–14) which Jesus the Messiah and true teacher can give (vv. 16–26). After the woman's testimony (vv. 27–30) and the

dialogue with the disciples on spiritual food and the mission's result (vv. 31–8), Jesus meets the Samaritans who come to believe in him (vv. 39–43). Jacob's well, the woman's many husbands, the food that the disciples bring to Jesus, the time of harvest, are concrete starting-points for discussions about spiritual matters. With the exception of vv. 1–3 there is no reason to consider this narrative as composite (as e.g. Bultmann 1971: 176 ff. does; for arguments against him, see Olsson 1974).

(4:1–3) These three verses try to explain Jesus' return to Galilee, where he fulfils his second miracle. His departure seems to be the consequence of the Pharisees' negative reaction to his success in Judea, but that reason remains unsatisfactory, because the Pharisees also had some influence in Galilee. Perhaps the author (or a redactor?) wants the reader to understand that just as the Baptist left Bethany for Aenon, so Jesus has to leave Judea because of the Pharisees, who are the controlling authorities in Jerusalem (cf. 1:24). The author also corrects 3:22, 26 by noting that Jesus did not baptize himself. In the rest of the gospel neither Jesus nor his disciples baptize. Many good MSS have in v. 1 *kyrios*, 'the Lord' in place of 'Jesus', but this is probably a correction in order to improve the text where Jesus is twice the subject.

(4:4–15) These verses describe Jesus' first dialogue with the Samaritan woman. vv. 4–5, in the Fourth Gospel the Greek (*e)dei*, 'must', often indicates a work or an operation according to God's will (see 3:14, 30; 9:4; 10:16; 12:34; 20:9). Jesus has come to Samaria in order to do God's work. Sychar is not mentioned in the OT, but is probably *Sôker* which is in the Mishnah and the Talmud. One can identify it with the modern 'Askar, about 1.5 km. from Jacob's well. The evangelist alludes also to Sikem, today Tell Balata, when he mentions 'the plot of ground' given to Joseph (cf. Gen 33:19; 48:22; Josh 24:32). v. 6, 'about noon', literally 'at the sixth hour', as in 19:14, a rather unusual time to travel. The Greek word *pēgē* in vv. 6, 14, seems to indicate that the well is supplied by a living source of water. It is probably covered with a stone, so Jesus can sit on it (Gk. *epi*, 'upon'). Although there are many wells in Genesis, not one is directly called 'Jacob's well'; however, Jacob meets Rachel at a well (Gen 29:1–12). In 1:51 the evangelist has already alluded to Jacob/Israel. vv. 7–15, Jesus' words, 'Give me a drink', and the mention of Jacob's well, are probably

meant as an allusion to two scenes in the OT: the demand for water in the desert (Ex 17:2) and the gift of water at Beer (Num 21:16), which is celebrated by a famous song: 'Spring up, O well! Sing to it' (Num 21:17). In the LXX and in the targums 'Beer' is considered as a 'well' and not as a place. In the targums the place Mattanah is interpreted as 'gift'. Therefore the targum *Pseudo-Jonathan* considers the well as God's gift. In the Dead Sea scrolls the well is a symbol of the law given to Israel (CD 6:4–11), whereas Philo considers it as an image of wisdom (*De ebrietate*, 112–13; *De somniis*, 2.267–71). This is more or less the background of Jesus' first dialogue with the Samaritan woman. Jesus' demand for water is only an introduction to the counter demand of the woman for living water (v. 15). The water Jesus can give is a 'gift of God' (v. 10). Those who drink of it will never be thirsty (v. 13). Jesus is greater than the ancestor Jacob, because his teaching will replace the law or wisdom that the Jews or the Samaritans regard as God's gifts. The fullness of grace that was mentioned in the prologue (1:16) becomes very concrete in the image of the living water, which becomes a spring gushing up to eternal life (v. 14). In a similar way Paul alludes to the spiritual drink from the spiritual rock that followed the people in the desert (1 Cor 10:4). The theme of living water appears often in the OT as an image of salvation (e.g. Isa 12:3; 55:1; Ezek 47:1–12; Zech 14:8; Sir 24:21). What is new in the Fourth Gospel is not only that the faithful are thirsty but that the spring of water (a symbol of Jesus' teaching and of his Spirit) is now in them as God's gift. Some ancient authorities omit the remark in v. 9 on the Jews and the Samaritans, but there are good attestations for it in different textual traditions. The observation is very similar to others in John.

(4:16–26) The evangelist now describes Jesus' second dialogue with the Samaritan woman. vv. 16–18, that the woman has had six men is strange; it reflects the Jews' negative attitude towards Samaritans who are thought to remarry more often than is normally allowed to a woman (two or three times). On this natural level the purpose of the text is to show Jesus' prophetic knowledge. But the distinction Jesus makes between the five husbands and the last one who is not her husband can also favour a symbolic interpretation of the text. The woman represents the Samaritan people, just as Nicodemus in ch. 3 represents the leaders of the Jews. According to Josephus (*Ant.* 9.288) the

Samaritans were composed of five different nations, each one having its special god. The woman's five husbands could symbolize these five gods whom the Samaritans had formerly worshipped, and the one who is not the husband could be YHWH whom the Samaritans are only partly linked to, because they worship him at a different place from that of the Jews (see v. 22). A minor problem with this interpretation is that 2 Kings 17:24–34, on which Josephus' story is built, tells us of five nations two of whom had two gods each (making seven altogether). vv. 19–20, the woman identifies Jesus with the coming prophet (Deut 18:15–18), who will vindicate the place of worship on Mt. Gerizim, the mount of blessings (Deut 11:29) where the Samaritans thought Jacob had his heavenly vision (Gen 28:11–17). The Samaritans call him *tāhēv* ('the one who will come again') and consider him as a teacher and political leader rather than as a kingly Messiah. vv. 21–2, the evangelist underlines that Jesus himself is a Jew (cf. v. 9) and that salvation comes to the nations through the Jews (cf. Isa 40:1–31 and the synoptic tradition). But at the same time Jesus questions the two places of worship, Mt. Gerizim and Jerusalem. vv. 23–4, 'in spirit and truth' is a double phrase with a single sense, similar to 'Spirit of truth' in 14:17; 15:26; 16:13. It means an openness towards the Spirit whom Jesus gives (3:6; 4:14) and the truth that he reveals (1:14, 17; 14:6). 'God is spirit' has nothing to do with the Enlightenment description of the nature of God, but underlines that God will give his Spirit through his Messiah. The new cult revealed by Jesus will supplant Jewish and Samaritan worship, as much as it replaces Jewish purification rites (1:33; 2:6–11; 3:25–30) and the temple cult in Jerusalem (2:13–22). vv. 25–6, when speaking of the Messiah the woman goes beyond normal Samaritan expectations. The purpose of the dialogue is to have her recognize Jesus not only as the expected prophet but also as the Jews' Messiah. In 1:41 Andrew asserted that he had encountered him; in 1:19–23 and 3:28–30 the Baptist admitted that he himself was not the Messiah. To the Samaritan woman Jesus explicitly reveals that he is the Messiah. When he answers *egō eimi*, one cannot avoid seeing a link with the absolute use of the revelation formula in 8:24, 28 and 13:19.

(4:27–38) The evangelist portrays Jesus' dialogue with the disciples. vv. 27–30, the woman's missionary activity among her people makes it possible for them to be 'on their way' to Jesus.

In the meantime Jesus is engaged in a dialogue with his disciples. That the woman leaves her jar has been interpreted in various ways (readiness to leave everything; desire to forget her past actions; wish to come back; readiness to go to her people). The best explanation is probably that she now relies on Jesus' promise in v. 14. vv. 31–4, unlike the dialogue with the Samaritan woman, Jesus here is not the initiator, but the misunderstanding concerning the food to be eaten is similar to that of the water to be drunk. Whereas Jewish traditions could regard Wisdom as the substance of a meal (e.g. Prov 9:5; Sir 24:21), Jesus considers the will of God (cf. 5:30; 6:38) to be his food. The will of the Father is that the one he has sent (i.e. his 'apostle') completes his messianic work (cf. 5:36; 17:4). In the Fourth Gospel all missionary activity starts with the Father and leads back to him. vv. 35–8, the harvest is mentioned in the synoptic parables on the growth of the kingdom of God (Mk 4 par.). The Fourth Gospel adapts Jesus' words to the actual situation in Samaria. He uses two proverbs, one on the interval between sowing and harvesting (v. 35a), and one on the difference between the sower and the reaper (v. 37). Concerning the first proverb Jesus says that a miraculous event has occurred, as he has just sown the Father's message in Samaria and can already gather a harvest. That this proverb forms an iambic trimeter is probably accidental. The other proverb is often used in a negative way in the OT (e.g. Deut 20:6; 28:30; Job 31:8; Mt 25:24), but Jesus gives it a positive meaning in Jn 4:38: both sower and reaper can rejoice together (v. 36). Who are the others who have laboured? Several answers have been given: the prophets in the OT; the Baptist and his disciples; Philip in Samaria (Acts 8:4–8). But the most natural interpretation in the context is to consider Jesus and his Father as those who have laboured, and the disciples as those who after Jesus' exaltation on the cross (cf. 12:32) will harvest what they have not sown. In this sense what is told in Acts 8 is only the result of the work Jesus has done in Samaria as the Father's 'apostle'. In a similar way the mission to the pagans in 12:20–1 is related to Jesus' work (cf. 7:35).

(4:39–42) Finally we get information concerning the Samaritans' meeting with Jesus. The evangelist has skilfully let the woman inform her people while the disciples had the discussion with their master. Now the Samaritans themselves meet the prophet and Messiah, and

can, during two days as eyewitnesses, confirm the testimony of the woman. The evangelist is much concerned about how people come to faith by the testimony of the disciples (cf. 17:20), and about those who believe without having seen (20:29). There are now many more who come to a personal faith in Jesus as the Saviour of the world (cf. 3:16–18). In this way the schismatic Samaritans manifest a deeper understanding than the Jews in Jerusalem (2:23–5). The title 'Saviour', *Sōtēr*, is used for Jesus especially in later NT writings, as it could be associated with the cult of the emperor. Naturally for the evangelist Jesus is a Saviour in a more profound sense than the emperor, since the world has been created in and by him, the *Logos* (1:3–14).

(4:43–54) The Second Sign at Cana: The Healing of the Royal Official's Son Twice the narrator recalls the first sign at Cana (4:46, 54). The two miracles take place when Jesus comes to Galilee and in both the reader is reminded of that location (2:1, 11 and 4:43–7, 54). The narrative model is similar: Jesus' mother and the royal official ask the Master to interfere but his attitude is at first negative (2:4; 4:48). When both insist Jesus finally decides to intervene (cf. 2:5, 7–8 with 4:49–50). The miracle is described through the people's reactions (cf. 2:9–10 with 4:51–3) who come to believe in Jesus (2:11; 4:53). In contrast to the following miracles in John there is no sceptical discussion before or after the intervention. Thus the narrator suggests that Jesus was successful in Galilee, in contrast to what happened in Judea. If the royal official is a pagan we can observe that faith now spreads not only to the schismatic Samaritans but also to the Gentiles. The miracle illustrates how Jesus is a source of life, a theme which was important in 3:1–4:14, and will be continued in chs. 5–6.

There are strong links between the Johannine scene and the account of the healing of the centurion's son or servant in Matthew and Luke (Mt 8:5–13; Lk 7:1–10; see Neiryneck 1984a), but the evangelist has also other information. He seems to have reworked his material with the help of the narrative of the healing of a Gentile woman's daughter in Mk 7:24–30 (cf. Mt 15:21–8).

(4:43–5) These verses have been composed either by a redactor or by the evangelist in a later edition of his gospel. He seems to have a direct knowledge of Mk 6:1–6 (both, alone in

the NT, have the expression *exēlthen ekeithen*, 'he left that place'). He reworks the tradition of Mk 6:1–6 par. and has the prophet's 'own country' allude not to Nazareth but to Judea or perhaps more precisely to Jerusalem. The contrast in vv. 43–5 gives a positive description of Galilee and a negative one of Judea. Only after the miracle of the bread are there negative reactions also in Galilee, but Jesus is never threatened with death as he is in Judea. According to 7:42 the Messiah comes from Bethlehem in Judea. So it is in Judea that Jesus as prophet and Messiah has no honour. vv. 46–7, 54, the Greek word *basilikos* (a 'royal') could designate a person of kingly dignity, but in the context it is probably a person who serves the king as a soldier or in his household. If he is a soldier he is a pagan like the synoptic centurion. A new introduction to the miracle indicates its link with the first sign. Like the centurion in Mt 8:5, but unlike the one in Lk 7:3–10, the royal official begs Jesus himself and not through intermediaries. vv. 48–50, in Matthew and Luke the centurion's words provoke Jesus' admiration and willingness to heal the son. In John the royal official is first criticized like all the others who are eager to see signs and wonders. The evangelist wants the reader to come to faith without seeing miracles (20:29, 31), but he also knows that Jesus revealed his glory by accomplishing his work. vv. 51–3, the royal official gets a confirmation of the miracle by his slaves on his way home. Perhaps the evangelist is aware directly or indirectly of Luke's different delegations from the centurion. For the reader it is important to have the miracle controlled by the father so that the glory of Jesus becomes manifest to all, including the official's household (cf. Acts 10:2; 11:14; etc.). The faith that the official had in Jesus' word is now strengthened.

(5:1–47) Jesus Heals a Lame Man: He Gives Life to Whom he Wishes Chs. 5:1–10:39 describe Jesus' confrontation with the Jews, both in Jerusalem and in Galilee. In Jerusalem the hostility leads to different threats to kill him (5:18; 7:1, 19–25; 8:37, 40; 10:31–9). His activity is presented in the framework of Jewish feasts which Jesus replaces by his own person. The exegetes who place ch. 5 after ch. 6 have not been able to give decisive arguments for their hypothesis; but it is possible that ch. 6 has been added in a second edition of the gospel, causing some tensions in the presentation of the material.

The evangelist has created a subtle contrast between the healing of the man at the pool

Beth-zatha in ch. 5 and that of the blind man at the pool of Siloam in ch. 9. The former is merely a passive object of Jesus' work, whereas the latter illustrates the active response of a man with a growing faith. The special technique of the evangelist transforms the healing at the pool Beth-zatha into a kind of illustration of the transformation from death to life. The sick man is healed (vv. 9, 15) but Jesus himself is threatened by imminent death (v. 18). Nevertheless, this threat is ineffective, because the Father raises the dead, and the Son can give life to whom he wants (v. 21). This theme introduces the consideration regarding the dead who come out of their graves (vv. 28–9). The negative judgement on those who do not believe is evoked (vv. 29, 45–7). The opposite theme is that of the Father's love for his Son (v. 20), and the joint life-work of the Father and the Son (vv. 17, 21, 26). Jesus is described as the life-giving Son who is not obliged to observe the sabbath laws.

(5:1–9a) The evangelist describes first the healing, which has some similarities with that of a paralysed man at Capernaum in Mk 2:1–12 par. v. 1, 'a festival', without definite article before *heortē*, is probably the original reading and vaguely indicates one of the Jewish feasts. In v. 9 it is considered a sabbath, which makes it unnecessary to identify it with Passover or Pentecost. v. 2, the Copper Scroll (3Q15 11:12–13) refers to *Bethesdatayin* and its water basin, which seems to confirm *Bēthesda*, but Beth-zatha (NRSV) seems to be more satisfactory, as Bethesda may have been substituted because of its meaning, 'house of mercy'. Even less satisfactory are the variants *Bēthsaida*, *Bēzatha*, *Belzetha*. Near the temple area and St Anna's church archaeologists have found two connected pools, but the five porticoes are missing. At the time of Hadrian there was a cult devoted to the healing god Asklepios. v. 3, the Greek *xēroi* designates those who have malformed limbs, or who are 'paralysed', whereas *chōloi* are those who are lame (in one foot or both feet). The addition in vv. 3b–4 concerning the angel who stirs the waters is old but not original. It may go back to a local tradition and is inspired by v. 7. vv. 5–7, Jesus takes the initiative to heal the sick man, who in a naive way describes his situation. Contrary to the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus does not require him to believe but asks only if he wants to be made well. The stirred water may be due to a system of pipes conducting the water from one pool to the other, or is a confusion with movement of

water at the pool of Siloam. The addition in v. 4 attributes it to an angel. v. 8, Jesus' admonition is nearly identical with that of Mk 2:9, 11, one of the many indications that the author of the Fourth Gospel had a direct knowledge of Mark (Kieffer 1992). v. 9a, in a similar way the evangelist mentions the sabbath rather late in the narrative on the healing of the blind man (9:14). From 2:13 onwards the Jewish feasts play an important role in Jesus' stay in Jerusalem. By walking the man shows that he is healed, as in Mk 2:12, but there the mat he carries has a natural function. Contrary to the two first miracles the healing does not lead to faith in Jesus, but to violent discussions in vv. 9b–18.

(5:9b–18) The fact that Jesus healed on a sabbath leads to difficulties with the Jews. vv. 10–11, as early as Jer 17:21 and Neh 13:19 it was not permitted to carry a burden on a sabbath (cf. also the Mishnah, *Sabb.* 7:2). The healed man refers to Jesus' authority in response to the prohibition. vv. 12–14, Jesus disappears for a while in order to allow a discussion to be raised with the man who was healed (cf. a similar device in ch. 9). When he meets him in the temple, Jesus seems to establish a link between sickness and sin, just as in the synoptic tradition (Mk 2:5–12 par.), but contrary to Jn 9:2–3. The sick man is depicted in a rather negative way, in contrast to the blind man in ch. 9, who is an example of how to believe in Christ. vv. 15–18, thanks to the healed man identifying Jesus, the evangelist can introduce his main theme of the Jews' persecutions. Jesus' provocative statement is reinforced when he compares his activity with God's creative work even on a sabbath. For the first time the Jews want to kill him as a blasphemer. This will be stated even more clearly in 10:33.

(5:19–47) Jesus Gives the Jews a Thorough Answer

(5:19–30) In the first part of his long answer Jesus elucidates v. 17 on the joint work of the Father and the Son. It anticipates the sign of Lazarus' resuscitation and Jesus' own resurrection. vv. 19–20a, just as in 1:51; 3:3, 5, 11, the formula 'very truly' (in the text a double *amen*) introduces here and in vv. 24–5 a solemn revelation. At that time a son learned much from his father; the work of the Son is presented as entirely dependent on that of the Father. This goes beyond what is said of Moses in Num 16:28. The evangelist uses here the word *phileō* for the Father's love for the Son, but elsewhere *agapaō* (3:35; 10:17; 15:9; 17:23–6). vv. 20b–23, the

'greater works' are those mentioned in vv. 21–2: to give life and to possess the power to judge now (v. 22; cf. 3:31–6). This is intended to anticipate what will happen at the end of the world (vv. 28–9). As the agent of God Jesus is worthy of the same honour as the Father (v. 23; cf. 15:23). vv. 24–5, in 3:15 it was faith in the Son of Man that led to eternal life, now it is belief that the Father has sent the Son. In both cases the believer accepts the one who has been sent. As in 4:23, the link between the future and the present is underlined. The evangelist describes the present situation with the help of eschatological expressions. Later Gnostic speculations reinterpreted this passing from death to life in the framework of the soul's delivery from its imprisonment in the body (e.g. *Ap. John*, 30:33–31:25). vv. 26–7, v. 26 reformulates v. 21 with the help of creational terminology (cf. the prologue). Just as in the Greek translation of Dan 7:13–14, there is no definite article before Son of Man; so one could translate 'a son of man', but the context shows that the evangelist refers to the early Christian tradition of Jesus' coming as eschatological judge. This is an exception in the Fourth Gospel, where the theme of the Son of Man is normally connected with Jesus' pre-existence, incarnation, death, and resurrection (cf. 1:51; 3:13–15; 6:27, 53, 62; 8:28; 12:23, 34; 13:31). vv. 28–30, without sufficient reason vv. 28–9 have been considered as redactional (e.g. Bultmann 1971: 261). On the contrary, the entire passage in 5:19–30 shows the connection between future and present judgement. There is a subtle correspondence between vv. 19 and 30, 20 and 28–9, 21–3 and 26–7, 24 and 25. The evangelist wants to show that the traditional last judgement already begins in this life. The resurrection of life is for those who have done good (v. 29) and believe in Jesus and his Father (v. 24). The resurrection of condemnation is for those who have done evil (v. 30; cf. 3:18). We meet this double resurrection also in Acts 24:15 (cf. Dan 12:2), whereas other Jewish traditions let the unrighteous remain in their graves. According to John the resurrection will take place at the voice of the Son of Man, whereas in 1 Thess 4:16 Paul uses Jewish apocalyptic imagery: the commandment from God, the archangel's call, and the sound of God's trumpet. In John Jesus' judgement follows the Father's decrees (cf. v. 30).

(5:31–47) In the second part of his answer Jesus is concerned about the fourfold testimony that justifies the great claim he makes to judge and

to give life, as his Father does. vv. 31–2, an implicit objection to what Jesus has hitherto said could be: 'You consider yourself as judge, but we judge your testimony as not valid' (cf. 8:13). Therefore Jesus relies upon the supreme testimony of his Father. At the same time the evangelist perceives that the Son's testimony has great value, because Jesus knows where he has come from and where he is going (cf. 8:14). vv. 33–6, the Baptist's testimony to truth in 1:19–36 was only a human testimony and cannot therefore be compared to the greater one of the Father, which leads to the third testimony, the Son's works (cf. 10:25; 14:10–11). The Baptist is again presented as inferior to Jesus: only a shining lamp, but not the light (cf. 1:7–8). In v. 35 the audience is implicitly criticized for not having understood the Baptist's witness (v. 33). This could also imply that the Baptist is now dead. vv. 37–8, the evangelist continues to move in a kind of circular demonstration: only a positive relation to the Son who has been sent can enable you to grasp the testimony of the Father! Those who have not heard the voice of God or seen him are implicitly contrasted to Jesus who has both seen and heard the Father (cf. 1:18; 5:19, 30; 6:46). Those who believe in Jesus see how the Father's testimony is present in the Son. vv. 39–40, 'to search' is a technical expression (Heb. *dāraš*). One could also translate *ereunate* as an imperative (so Origen, Tertullian, and probably the Egerton Papyrus 2 from the second century). But the indicative goes better with 'because you think'. The fourth testimony is that of Scripture, but the Johannine community knows by experience that many Jews cannot discern its testimony. vv. 41–4, one of the reasons for their shortcomings before the different testimonies is a lack of love for God and for his glory (cf. 12:43). Jesus underlines his own contempt for human glory, a theme that we also find among philosophers who prefer to speak the truth than to earn human glory (e.g. Dio Chrysostom, Or. 32:11). But the evangelist is moreover especially interested in the Son's and the Father's glory (Gk. *doxa*; cf. 1:14; 2:11; 7:18; 8:50, 54; 9:24; 11:4, 40; 12:41, 43; 17:5, 22, 24). Jesus also contrasts his own coming from the Father with those who come in their own name, perhaps an allusion to antichrists (cf. 1 Jn 2:18). At Jn 5:44 MSS as early as P⁷⁵ and P⁶⁶ leave out *theou*, 'God', but this is probably due to the copyists' error, and overlooked because its abbreviated form resembled too much the final vowels in the preceding word *monou* ('alone'). vv. 45–7, in Jewish tradition Moses is

often depicted as Israel's intercessor or advocate before God (cf. Ex 32–4; Deut 9–10; Aurelius 1988). In John he is turned into the accuser of those who do not believe in Jesus, because they do not really read what Moses has written. The evangelist either alludes to the coming Prophet (Deut 18:15; see In 1:21; 4:18; 7:40), or more generally to the books of Moses, as in 5:39. The audience reads the Scriptures in a superficial way and does not see how the Father's testimony becomes evident in Jesus' mission and work, to which even Moses testifies.

(6:1–10:39) Third Geographical Grouping

(6:1–71) Jesus Feeds 5,000 and Walks on the Sea: He is the Bread of Life Ch. 6 is a well-defined unit about Jesus as the bread of life. Even vv. 51–9 belong originally to this unit (against Bultmann's redactional hypothesis, see Kieffer (1968: 152–4)). Possibly ch. 6 has been inserted between ch. 5 and ch. 7 after a first sketch of the gospel, or in a second edition, causing an interruption of the discussion in Jerusalem from ch. 5 to ch. 10. Nevertheless, chs. 2–4 have prepared the reader for Jesus' travels to Galilee. The whole of ch. 6 can also be considered as a concrete example of how Moses wrote about Jesus (5:46).

The approach of Passover in ch. 6 anticipates the last Passover in chs. 13–17, where the evangelist replaces the words spoken over the bread and the wine with the washing of the disciples' feet. As in ch. 5, a miracle is the occasion of a long discussion. The stage-setting begins with Jesus' stay on a mountain and the contrast between the five barley loaves and two fish on one side, and on the other the superabundant food for the five thousand people (vv. 1–15). The greatness of Jesus is also expressed by his walk on the sea during a storm and his leading of the disciples to the land (vv. 16–21). The following discussion (vv. 25–59) is introduced by vv. 22–4, and because of the contents and the different protagonists can be divided into four parts (vv. 25–7, 28–40, 41–51, 52–9). Jesus opposes the perishable food to that which endures for eternal life. Even the bread that Moses gave in the desert is contrasted to the bread of life that the Father gives from heaven. The concrete allusions to Jesus' flesh and blood (vv. 52–9) give rise to sharp reactions from the crowd and the disciples. Peter's confession contrasts with Judas' future betrayal (vv. 60–71).

Ch. 6 has much in common with the two miracles in Mk 6:30–52 par., and even with Mk 8:11–13 (the sign requested), Mk 8:14–21

(discussion on bread), Mk 8:27–30 (Peter's confession), Mk 8:31–3 (the Son of Man's rejection). The evangelist seems to follow Mk 6:30–52 and 8:11–33, omitting the duplicate feeding miracle in Mk 8:1–10 par., but adding his own material and his personal theology.

(6:1–15) The evangelist describes the feeding of the five thousand. vv. 1–4, only the Fourth Gospel underlines in this context the crowd's interest in Jesus' signs. That prepares the reader for Jesus' criticism in vv. 26–7. The location of the miracle is more vague than in the Synoptic Gospels. The starting-point of Jesus' journey seems to be Capernaum, mentioned in 2:12 and 4:46. If John follows Mark, the 'other side of the Sea of Tiberias' is not too far away from Capernaum, so that people can arrive on foot ahead of Jesus (Mk 6:33). But in Jn 6:23 one gets the impression that the place is also near Tiberias (mentioned only in John). Still, most important is the location on 'the other side', perhaps the pagan area of Decapolis or Bethsaida (cf. 1:44; 12:21). The 'mountain' has a symbolic meaning of proximity to God's authority, as in Mt 5:1 and 28:16. That Jesus sits down with his disciples (probably the twelve mentioned in 6:71) possibly underlines his special function as a teacher (cf. Mk 4:1; 9:35; Mt 5:1). The miracle takes place shortly before Passover, an indication that is absent in the Synoptic Gospels. It is possible that parts of the Johannine text were used in a Christian Passover feast where the eucharist was celebrated. Therefore Jesus' words are reformulated as a kind of homily on readings from the Jewish synagogue. vv. 5–9, in the first synoptic feeding miracle (Mk 6:30–44 par.) the disciples take the initiative, whereas here and in the second feeding (Mk 8:1–10 par.) it is Jesus who does so. In John the Master does not ask collectively all the disciples but only Philip. Andrew also intervenes and mentions the boy with the five loaves and the two fish, whereas in the first synoptic account the disciples themselves had the five loaves and the two fish (in the second, seven loaves and some fish). It is clear that the author of the Fourth Gospel has made the stage-setting more dramatic by indicating Jesus' test. He also underlines Jesus' sovereign attitude and knowledge. v. 10, if John follows Mark, he replaces the finer word *anakinomai* ('sit down') with the more common *anapiptō* found in Mk 6:40 and 8:6. The grass is also mentioned in the first miracle of Mark and Matthew; in Mk 6:39 it is even 'green', which suits the Passover in John. v. 11,

as in most synoptic accounts of the feeding of the people, the evangelist uses words that recall the eucharist during Jesus' last meal. John underlines the thanks-giving in connection with the bread (cf. Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11:24), whereas the fish play a minor role. Strangely enough he does not mention that Jesus broke the loaves, a detail we find in all other descriptions of the feeding miracles and of Jesus' eucharistic meal. vv. 12–13, as in all feeding miracles the evangelist emphasizes that the people were satisfied and that there was much left over. In the first synoptic feeding miracle there were twelve baskets of fragments of bread and fish, in the second only seven. In John Jesus himself orders the people to gather what is left. Again the evangelist is only interested in the bread. vv. 14–15, after the miracle the people think that Jesus is the expected prophet according to Deut 18:15–18 (cf. Jn 1:21; 4:19; 7:40). Only the Fourth Gospel mentions that the people want to make him a king, which Jesus refuses because he is 'king' in a quite different sense (cf. 18:33–4).

(6:16–21) Jesus Walks on Water. In Mk 6:48 Jesus comes to the disciples in the morning, in John when it is dark (Jn 6:16). The disciples have rowed 'twenty-five to thirty stadia' (v. 19, lit. tr.), about 5 or 6 km.; that means that they are in the middle of the sea. The stage-setting separates Jesus from the crowd and prepares the disciples for the following heated discussions where they have to decide about their own relationship to their master (vv. 60–71). We can compare two kinds of synoptic texts: Jesus walking on the sea (Mk 6:45–52 par.) and Jesus stilling the storm (Mk 4:35–41 par.). In both cases there is a strong wind blowing which Jesus calms, but in the first case Jesus is apart from the disciples whereas in the second case he is with them, sleeping in the boat. It is possible that both stories go back to the same event. In Mk 6:45–52 the evangelist shows that the disciples do not really recognize the saving epiphany of Christ, whereas in Mt 14:22–33 the scene is concluded with the disciples' confession: 'Truly you are the Son of God'. In John the epiphany is in the foreground, with the formula 'it is I', *egō eimi*. This sentence is used in John either with a complement, or without, as here. In three cases, in 8:24, 28, and 13:19, the absence of a complement makes the expression allude to *ānī hū* which designates YHWH in Deut 32:39; Isa 43:10; 52:6. It is possible that even in Jn 6:20; 18:5–6, 8, there is more than a simple statement 'it is I'. The miraculous landing during a storm is similar to that which

is attributed to YHWH in Ps 107:23–30. There may also be an allusion to Jewish passover readings on the crossing of the Red Sea under Moses' guidance (Giblin 1983).

(6:22–4) The introduction to the discussion is awkward and may reflect a redactor's work (cf. Jn 4:1–3; 4:43–5). The diminutive *plouarion* ('a little boat') is used three times instead of the former *plouion* (in vv. 17, 19, 21–2). The words 'after the Lord had given thanks' in v. 23 are found in different old textual traditions and are probably original, but the designation *kyrios* reflects a Christology of the Lord which the evangelist normally reserves for the texts after the resurrection. The discussion with the people can take place only if they come to Capernaum where Jesus and the disciples have landed. But the author also wants the crowd to discover that Jesus had not used the disciples' boat (v. 22). The boats which come from Tiberias (v. 23) are meant to create a link between the unspecified place where Jesus fed the people and the locality of the discourse. The textual tradition in v. 23 is rather confused.

(6:25–7) These verses introduce a discussion on seeking Jesus in a wrong way (cf. 7:34–6), instead of looking for the eternal life he can give. In vv. 14–15 the people considered Jesus as the Prophet and wanted to make him a king, but now they address him as a teacher. In the following discussion he will speak as a revealer of wisdom. The reader already knows the extraordinary way in which Jesus came to Capernaum, but the Master rebukes the people for seeking him because of the signs and the food. The food he wants to give is salvation offered by God in the Son of Man. The allusion to the eucharist will come later in Jesus' discourse. In Isa 54:9–55:5 the Lord invites his people to be fed by his word. In a similar way Jesus speaks of a spiritual hunger. In v. 27 the seal which the Father has set (cf. 3:33) consists in his attestation of the Son's role, perhaps an allusion to 1:32.

(6:28–40) In this passage Jesus speaks about God's work and the bread of heaven. The citation in v. 31 is decisive for the whole discourse up to v. 59. vv. 28–9, as often in the Fourth Gospel the discussion is carried on with the help of a catchword, in this case 'the work of God', in v. 28 in the plural and in v. 29 in the singular. The people have not understood that the point is not to achieve many things but to let God do his unique work through a living

faith in the Son he has sent. vv. 30–1, even if Jesus has already given a sign by feeding the crowds, they want a further sign from heaven, as requested in Mk 8:11–13. They express their solidarity with the Patriarchs, and especially with Moses and his signs (cf. Ex 16:4–5). vv. 32–3, in v. 31 the people had quoted Ps 78:24 (combined with Ex 16:4, 15): 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.' In a typically rabbinic way Jesus underlines that 'he' alludes to the Father and not to Moses; one ought to say 'gives' and not 'gave', as the consonants *n-th-n* in Hebrew can be read both as *nāthan* ('he gave') and *nōthen* ('he is giving'). So God is the origin of both the manna and the true bread which gives life to the world. The God of the OT is called 'my Father'. Jesus' mention of 'true bread', as opposed to both manna and ordinary bread, is reminiscent of the Lord's prayer, addressed to the Father for bread for tomorrow (Mt 6:9–13). In v. 33 the Greek definite article *ho* may refer to Jesus ('he who comes down') or better, as in NRSV, to the bread ('that which comes down'; cf. v. 34). v. 34, just as the Samaritan woman had a very limited understanding when she said 'give me this water' (Jn 4:15), so the people's simple demand 'give us this bread always' is only a starting-point for Jesus' fuller revelation in the following verses. v. 35, in Greek *egō eimi* can be used in different contexts. It can answer the questions: 'Who are you?', 'What are you?', and 'Of whom are we speaking?' In the first case it underlines a person's identity, in the second his or her qualifications, and in the third that one recognizes him or her. In vv. 35, 41, 48, 51, we have to do above all with this third kind of understanding: it is Jesus who is the bread of which we are speaking (cf. also 8:12; 10:7, 9, 11, 14; 15:1). 'The bread of life' means the bread which gives eternal life (cf. v. 27: 'the food that endures for eternal life') and is synonymous with 'the living bread' in v. 51. Similar expressions are found in Isa 55:1–2 (to thirst and be hungry for the word of God). Perhaps there is even a subtle allusion to the contrary statement in Sir 24:21: 'Those who eat of me will hunger more, and those who drink of me will thirst more.' In vv. 31–5 the author has passed from the OT 'bread from heaven' to 'bread of God' and finally to 'bread of life' (cf. *Joseph and Asenath* 16.8–9). v. 36, this critique is similar to that in v. 26. It interrupts Jesus' self-revelation, which will be continued in the following verses. Since this corresponds to a typical Johannine technique there is no reason to displace the verse, as Bultmann (1971) and Brown (1966) do. vv. 37–40,

in these verses v. 38 is in the centre of a composition where v. 36 is the opposite of v. 40 and vv. 37 and 39 express a similar idea. v. 37 introduces the main theme: the Father gives the believers to Jesus. The three other verses describe the connection between the Father and the Son (v. 38; cf. 5:30), and the relationship of the believers to the Father and to the Son. Even if there is no direct link between vv. 36–40 and the theme of the bread of life from heaven in vv. 35 and 41, these verses give information on connected themes about Jesus being sent from heaven and the difficulty of believing in his self-revelation. 'Everything' in v. 37 corresponds to Aramaic *kol dē*. The evangelist likes to consider believers as the totality of people who have been given to Jesus by the Father (cf. 6:39; 17:2, 24). In Mt 18:14 it is the Father's will that not one of these little ones should be lost, whereas in Jn 6:39 it is the will of the Son. The Father's will is that believers should have eternal life, but it is the Son who will raise them on the last day (cf. v. 44), a rather unique affirmation in the NT. Contrary to 5:28–9 here the evangelist mentions only the believers' resurrection. In v. 40 to see the Son is nearly synonymous with believing in him.

(6:41–51) repeats certain affirmations made in vv. 28–40, but at the same time prepares the reader for the identification of the bread with Jesus' flesh in vv. 51–8. vv. 41–2, the evangelist replaces the crowds by the 'Jews' who murmur (*egoggyzon*; cf. vv. 43, 61), as did the people in the desert (Ex 16:2, 7–12). He probably thinks of Galileans who know Jesus' family and therefore challenge his heavenly origin. They resist Jesus, but without threatening him with death as the Jews in Judea do. They call him 'the son of Joseph', as in 1:45 and Lk 4:22, whereas in Mk 6:3 par. Jesus is 'the son of Mary'. Jesus' mother has been already mentioned in 2:1–12 and will be present at the crucifixion in 19:25–7. vv. 43–7, Jesus answers in an indirect way by speaking of his heavenly Father's work in those who believe (cf. vv. 37–40). In v. 44 the Father draws the believers to Jesus, whereas in 12:32 it is the elevated Jesus on the cross who draws all people to himself. Probably the evangelist is alluding to love's power to attract (cf. Hos 11:4; Song 1:4; Jer 31:3 (= 38:3 LXX)). As in v. 40 Jesus himself will raise the dead. The quotation in v. 45 from Isa 54:12–13 LXX is very free (perhaps with the help of Jer 31:34). Just as in the prologue, the evangelist in vv. 46–7 encourages the reader to rely on the Father and on the Son who alone has

seen him. Once again the believer is said to have eternal life (cf. 3:15–16, 36; 5:24; 6:40). vv. 48–51, in v. 31 Jesus had emphasized that it was God and not Moses who gave the manna. Now he underlines that the manna, in contrast to the bread from heaven, could not prevent the ancestors from dying. In v. 49 Jesus says 'your ancestors' as if he himself were not a Jew. The evangelist writes from a later perspective when Jews and Christians were already separated (cf. 7:19; 8:17; 10:34). To eat of the bread in v. 50 prepares for the eating of Jesus' flesh in v. 51. The Greek word *sarx* ('flesh'), like *sōma* ('body') in the other eucharistic texts, is a translation of the Aramaic *besār*. Possibly the evangelist chose *sarx* in order to underline that the Word really became flesh and blood (cf. 1:14). Implicitly Jesus alludes to his own death which gives life. In vv. 35 and 48 Jesus spoke of 'the bread of life', in v. 51 he speaks of the 'living bread', just as in 4:10 he mentioned the 'living water'. These metaphors describe Jesus as the Saviour of the world (cf. 4:42). The discussion has moved from the scriptural texts on the manna to the Son who has been sent from heaven in order to give life to believers.

(6:52–9) This explicit statement on the eucharist is the climax of the whole discussion and leads to strong reactions in vv. 60–6. v. 52, the Jews' negative reaction at the content of v. 51 is the starting-point of Jesus' even clearer statements in the following verses. vv. 53–4, in contrast to v. 51 Jesus also emphasizes the importance of drinking the Son of Man's blood, which is even more provocative (cf. v. 35). He uses both a negative and a positive formulation to characterize those who do or do not partake of the Son of Man's life. In v. 40 the importance of faith was underlined for those who will be raised by Jesus, whereas here it is the importance of the eucharist. v. 55, the reading *alēthōs* (adv. 'truly') is probably original, since it is attested in different textual traditions, in contrast to *alēthēs* (adj. 'true', NRSV), which probably arises from an early alteration in the Alexandrian traditions. The use of *alēthōs* as specifying the predicate is typically Johannine (cf. 1:14; 4:42; 6:14; etc.; Kieffer 1968: 152 ff.). 'Flesh' and 'blood' underline again Jesus' real humanity. vv. 56–7, just as he will in the image of the vine and the branches (15:1–11), Jesus stresses the mutual abiding of the believer and himself. The expression 'the living Father' is rare (cf. *Gos. Thom.* 3), but may have been coined in parallel with 'living bread' in v. 51. The Greek

preposition *dia* with accusative normally means 'for the purpose of', but in our context it has nearly the meaning of 'by', 'through' (cf. 1 Jn 4:9). There is a link between the sending of the Son and the fact that the believer can live through the Son (who himself lives through the Father, cf. 5:26). In vv. 55 and 57 the future life is mentioned, whereas in v. 56 the present relationship is in view. v. 58, the evangelist sums up what has been said hitherto. The shortest reading 'the ancestorsate' is probably original, as the copyists were tempted to add words borrowed from v. 49 ('the manna' and 'in the wilderness'). v. 59, because of the absence of an article in *en synagōgēi* one could translate 'in an assembly', but since John probably knows Mk 1:21–8 he is thinking of the synagogue at Capernaum.

(6:60–71) After the mention of the Jews' repeated complaints we now get the disciples' reactions. The miracles at Cana resulted in faith (2:11; 4:53), whereas the healing of the lame man in Jerusalem provokes the Jews to such a degree that they seek to kill Jesus (5:18). The miracle of the bread and the following discussion meet both positive and negative responses, but this time even some of Jesus' disciples leave him. v. 60, 'many of his disciples' will leave Jesus in v. 66 and are distinct from the twelve in vv. 67–71. One can also translate: 'who can listen to him?' (the Greek *autou* can refer either to 'his teaching' or to Jesus). v. 61, the evangelist often stresses that Jesus knows what people are thinking or doing (e.g. 1:47–8; 2:25; 6:64). v. 62, there is no main clause in the conditional sentence, therefore different ways have been proposed to complete it: 'then the offence will be even greater'; 'then the offence will be diminished'; 'then the offence will be both greater and diminished'. This last suggestion fits the context best, because the ascension of the Son of Man will be as mysterious as his descent from heaven and the consumption of his flesh and blood. In this interpretation v. 62 corresponds not only to v. 61, vv. 48–50, or 51–8, but to the whole foregoing discussion. v. 63, the flesh and blood of the Son of Man must be understood in the light of Jesus' connection with the living Spirit of God (cf. 3:5–8; 4:24; 7:38–9). Jesus lives through the Father (v. 57) and after the resurrection will transmit this life through the eucharist. v. 64, the remark on Jesus' knowledge refutes possible objections concerning the choice of Judas. v. 65, the Father's action is mentioned in v. 44 (cf. also 6:37; 8:47). v. 66, The strange Greek expression *apēlthon eis ta opisō* is also used in 18:6 and means

literally 'they went away, backwards'. In Isa 1:4 and 50:5 a similar Hebrew expression means 'to leave'. v. 67, the twelve are mentioned here and in vv. 70–1 for the first time and will appear also in 20:24. It is possible that they already are understood to be with Jesus in 6:3. The narrator assumes that the reader knows them as a chosen group, but (in 1:35–51) he describes the call of five disciples only. The question with *mē* (not: lit. 'Not also you wish to go?') introduces here not the expected negative answer but an indecisive one. vv. 68–9, Peter answers in the name of the twelve. He says rhetorically, 'to whom can we go?'; he accepts what Jesus has said in v. 63; he makes a solemn declaration about Jesus, similar to that at Caesarea Philippi in Mk 8:29 par. 'The Holy One of God' is the best reading, whereas many MSS have changed the text under the influence of Mk 8:29; Mt 16:16; and Jn 11:27. As the evangelist has already shown that Jesus is the Messiah, he stresses here another aspect of Jesus. vv. 70–1, the evangelist knows that according to the Synoptics Jesus chose the twelve (cf. 13:18; 15:16), even if he does not describe the circumstances of their call (cf. Mk 3:14 par.). The devil is named Satan in 8:44 and 13:2. Judas betrays Jesus under the influence of Satan (cf. 13:2). In the Synoptics and in Jn 12:4 and 14:22 Judas is called Iscariot, whereas here and in 13:2, 26 this is his father Simon's surname. Perhaps the original name was *Scarioth* (Codex Bezae; cf. Kieffer 1968: 201–4).

(7:1–8:59) Jesus at the Festival of Booths With the exception of 7:53–8:11, which originally did not belong to the Fourth Gospel (see JN APP), these verses form a narrative unity devoted to Jesus' stay in Jerusalem during the festival of Booths (or Tabernacles). Some verses describe how Jesus the Messiah replaces the Jewish rites at Tabernacles, both the ceremony with water (7:37–9) and the celebration of light (8:12). At the same time the conflict with the Jews in Jerusalem is increasing: they do not understand Jesus' identity and therefore discuss in a polemical way the Messiah, the son of David, the law of Moses, their kinship with Abraham. In 7:32 and 7:45 the reader is for the first time informed that the Pharisees and the chief priests try to arrest Jesus but do not succeed. This anticipates their new initiatives in chs. 9–12 where they finally achieve their plans. In 7:15–24 the discussion in ch. 5 is continued, just as 7:37–9 extends the theme of water in chs. 1–4. The theme of the light in 8:12 will be in the centre in ch. 9,

and the relation of Jesus to God, discussed in chs. 7–8, will be treated extensively in chs. 13–17.

The chronological indicators, the content of the discussion, and the people's different interventions can help us to divide the text into seven sections: (1) Jesus hesitates to go up to Jerusalem at the festival of Booths (7:1–13). (2) Jesus' teaching and Moses' law (7:14–24). (3) The mysterious origin of Jesus (7:25–36). (4) Jesus, Messiah and prophet (7:37–52). (5) The Father's testimony to Jesus (8:12–20). (6) Jesus' return to his Father (8:21–30). (7) Jesus and Abraham (8:31–59). These sections are organized into three scenes. About the middle of the festival Jesus suddenly appears at the temple (sect. 2–3). The next scene is on the last day of the festival (sect. 4). The third scene is introduced in 8:12 with a vague indication, 'again', and takes place in the treasury of the temple (cf. 8:20; sects. 5–7). The three scenes are linked together with the help of three main actors: Jesus, the people, and the official authorities (see among others Rochais 1993).

(7:1–13) Jesus hesitates to go up to Jerusalem at the festival of Booths. His secret journey from Galilee to Jerusalem and its temple is only a reflection of his even more mysterious journey from the Father to this world and back to him (cf. vv. 25–36 and 8:21–30). But what Jesus expresses clearly is not understood by the Jews, who know only his human origin and instead of seeking God rely upon their law (cf. 7:14–15). v. 1, 'After this' (Gk. *meta tauta*) is a typical Johannine transition (cf. 5:1, 14; 6:1; 19:38; 21:1). Sometimes it is changed to *meta touto* (2:12; 11:7, 11; 19:28). The variant reading 'was not at liberty' is probably not original, since it is less well attested in different textual traditions than NRSV's 'he did not wish'. Jesus' hesitation is due to the threat in 5:18. vv. 2–5, between the Passover in ch. 6 and the festival of Booths in chs. 7–8 is a time-span of about six months. Jesus' brothers have already been mentioned in 2:12. In the Synoptics they are named: James, Joses, Judas, and Simon (Mk 6:3; Mt 13:55). A comparison with Jn 19:25 makes it probable that in the Fourth Gospel they are half-brothers or cousins. In Mk 3:21, 31–2 Jesus' relatives fail to understand his mission. In a similar way the brothers in John are incredulous, in contrast to the beloved disciple. The disciples may be either those named in 2:23 and 4:1, or (better) those who left him in 6:66 and want to see a spectacular sign in Jerusalem (cf. 6:14–15). The sceptical brothers seem to reformulate a sentence of Jesus that we find

in the Synoptics (Mk 4:22 par.). The evangelist knows that Jesus will in fact show himself to the world (cf. 18:20). vv. 6–9, as in 2:1–11 Jesus wants to keep the initiative. He knows that when the time of his clear manifestation will come, it will provoke hatred from the world, a theme developed in 15:18–25. Only here does the evangelist use the word *kairos* ('time') and not his usual *hōra* ('hour'), perhaps under the influence of Mk 1:15 par. In v. 8 P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵, and B have *oupō* ('not yet') in place of *ouk* ('not'), but that seems to be an early correction in order to avoid a contradiction between what Jesus says in vv. 6–8 and what he finally does. vv. 10–13, in v. 10 the NRSV's 'as it were' renders *hōs* which we find in many important MSS, but which is missing in others. It might have been added very early in order to soften the meaning. The Jews in v. 11 probably represent the official authorities, as in v. 13. They want to seize Jesus (cf. vv. 32 and 45). They are not identical with the crowds in v. 12 or the people of Jerusalem in v. 25 who react in quite different ways. The 'complaining' in v. 12 is probably a 'muttering' as in v. 32, unlike the stronger complaining recorded in 6:41, 43, 61. Very early the Jews accused Jesus of deceiving the crowds (cf. v. 47 and Mt 27:63–4; in Lk 23:2, 5 this even becomes a legal charge). Later Jewish and Christian sources refer to Jesus as a magician who has seduced Israel (b. *Sanh.* 43a; 107b; Justin, *Dial.* 69; 108). John answers those accusations. Jesus himself warned against those who would lead the disciples astray (Mk 13:5–6).

(7:14–24) These verses compare Jesus' teaching with Moses' law. In 2:13–22 Jesus had cleansed the temple and spoken of his risen body as the new temple. In chs. 7–8 he is showing how he replaces the law of Moses and the Jewish festival of Booths. v. 14, the evangelist distinguishes between the beginning of the festival which Jesus does not want to attend (v. 9), the middle when he is teaching (v. 14), and the last day (v. 37) when he cries out his solemn message. It is impossible to know which day is meant in v. 14 (the third, the fourth, the fifth?), but perhaps it is on a sabbath (cf. vv. 22–3). Jesus' teaching in the temple of Jerusalem is given greater esteem than that in the synagogue at Capernaum in 6:59. v. 15, as the word *grammata* (learning) also appears in 5:47 some exegetes want to insert vv. 15–24 immediately after 5:47 (see Bultmann 1971: 268 ff.). But in 5:47 the word means what Moses has written, his 'teaching', and in 7:15 the instruction in the Scriptures, the 'learning'. vv. 16–18, Jesus' self-defence is similar

to that in 5:19, 30, 41, 44: he does not speak on his own, he does not do his own will, or seek his own glory. Only in the Fourth Gospel is Jesus' teaching directly attributed to God who has sent him. To do the will of God is the necessary presupposition for recognizing that Jesus seeks only God's glory. He is true, as God himself is true in 3:33 and 8:26. This implies also the negative statement that there is no falsehood (*adikia*) in him. This word is not found elsewhere in John, but we have it in 1 Jn 1:9 and 5:17. v. 19, Jesus speaks as if he himself was not a Jew (cf. 8:17; 10:34). The text is written from a later perspective when Jews and Christians had parted their ways. To keep the law is to do God's will. Therefore the Jews go against his will when they want to kill the one whose teaching comes from God. Possibly there is also the reflection of a later polemic against Jews who are proud of their law but circumcise on a sabbath (v. 22). v. 20, the crowd is divided concerning Jesus (v. 12), and therefore, unlike the authorities, does not make plans to kill him. But they think he is possessed, an assertion we find in Mk 3:20–2, and which Jesus will refute in Jn 8:48–52; 10:20–1. vv. 21–3, Jesus defends his healing of the lame man on a sabbath (5:1–9) by citing the circumcision the Jews themselves practise on a sabbath (cf. the Mishnah, *Ned.* 3:11; *Sabb.* 18:3; 19:2). He uses a rabbinic argument, *qal wahômer*, which proceeds from a lesser case (circumcision of a man's foreskin) to a greater one (the healing of a man's whole body). A similar argument is found in *b. Yoma* 85b and *t. Šabb.* 15:16. The remark concerning the patriarchs can reflect a later Christian polemic against Jews who attributed circumcision to Moses' law, whereas it originated in the time of Abraham (Gen 17:10; 21:4; see also Paul's argumentation in Gal 3 and Rom 4). v. 24, if the aorist *krinate* is the original reading, one ought to translate, 'Cease judging by appearances'. In 8:16 Jesus will speak of his own judgement as a valid one, because it is entirely dependent on his Father's judgement.

(7:25–36) The discussion turns towards the question of Jesus' origin. vv. 25–7, the people of Jerusalem (*Hierosolymitai*) are in the NT named only here and in Mk 1:5. In contrast to the people who have come to Jerusalem for the festival they are informed about the authorities' plans to kill Jesus (5:18; 7:19). As they let Jesus speak openly they seem to accept him as the Messiah. Ironically the evangelist notices that the people of Jerusalem both know and do not know where Jesus comes from. Their expectation of a

hidden Messiah corresponds to elements of Jewish literature, as attested by Justin (*Dial.* 8:4; 110:1; cf. 1 *Enoch*, 48:6; 4 *Ezra* 13:52). vv. 28–9, Jesus' answer is introduced by a solemn 'cried out' (*ekraxen*; a verb used for Jesus in 7:37 and 12:44, and for the Baptist in 1:15). The audience knows only Jesus' human origin and not that he comes from God, who alone is true (cf. 1 Jn 5:20). In 5:46 Jesus said that if they really believed in Moses they would also believe in him. Now he is contrasting his own knowledge of God and of his origin in God with their lack of knowledge. vv. 30–2, those who try to arrest him are probably inhabitants of Jerusalem. They do not succeed because the 'hour' has not yet come, just as the official actions from the authorities in vv. 32 and 45 are without result. But some of those who came up to Jerusalem have a more positive attitude towards the signs of Jesus. Here the evangelist reflects the Christian conception that by his miracles Jesus proved himself to be the Messiah, which corresponds to Jewish expectations according to Josephus (*Ant.* 18.85 ff.; 20.168 ff.). The favourable attitude of the crowd provokes the Pharisees and the chief priests to send the police which are at the disposal of the official council (cf. 18:3). v. 33, for the first time Jesus describes his death as a departure in order to go to God (cf. 8:14, 21–2; 13:3, 33, 36; 14:4–5, 28; 16:5, 10, 17). The theme of the 'little while' before the death will reappear in 12:35 and 13:33. In 14:19 and 16:16–20 it is transformed into the 'little while' the disciples will not see Jesus and then see him again. All these passages express Jesus' sovereign power over human time, which is short in comparison with the time before his incarnation and after his return to his Father. v. 34, hitherto the Jews have sought Jesus in a negative way, in order to arrest him (7:11, 19–20, 25, 30). Now seeking has a positive quality but is frustrating when one cannot find Jesus (cf. *Gos. Thom.* 38). Perhaps the evangelist alludes in an ironic way to the synoptic saying, 'search, and you will find' (Mt 7:7; Lk 11:9). The Jews will not find Jesus if they refuse to recognize his divine origin. In a similar way Wisdom says: 'They will seek me diligently, but will not find me' (Prov 1:28). There is no need to understand *hopou eimi egō* ('where I am') in connection with the formula *egō eimi* we have encountered before. The present tense stands probably for a future, 'where I shall be' (after my departure). vv. 35–6, the Dispersion among the Greeks may designate the area of the Decapolis. The evangelist is interested in those outside Judaism who believe

in Jesus (e.g. the Greeks in 12:20–2; other people in 10:16; 11:52; 17:20–4). The Jews' naïve interpretation of the words of Jesus contains an ounce of truth: they prophesy that the teaching of Jesus will be spread among the Greeks.

(7:37–52) Jesus is both the Messiah and the prophet. Even if this part of the discussion takes place on a day other than that of vv. 14–36 we meet the same three aspects: Jesus' teaching (vv. 37–9), the people wondering about who Jesus is (vv. 40–4), and the authorities' project to arrest Jesus (vv. 45–52). v. 37, NRSV, JB, and TOB link 'and let drink' (*kai pinetō*) in v. 37*b* with 'who believes' in v. 38; others, such as many Greek Fathers and P⁶⁶, prefer to relate it to v. 37*a*: 'come to me and drink'. In the first interpretation one can connect 'out of the heart' (lit. belly) in v. 38 with Jesus or the believer, in the second it is more natural to connect it with the believer. Because of v. 39 and the witness of P⁶⁶ we prefer this second reading. The last day is either the seventh or the eighth. On the seventh day there was a procession with water from Siloam to the temple, and a ceremony of light in the women's court (cf. *Sukk.* 3–5). These ceremonies were missing on the eighth day, but people could still mentally associate them with Jesus' teaching (see vv. 37–9; 8:12), just as in chs. 4 and 6 one can see the connection with Isa 55:1, 'Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters'. During the water ceremony people sang, 'With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation' (Isa 12:3; *b. Sukk.* 48*b*). The water was not drunk but was taken up to the temple. The combination of these two passages of Isaiah shows that the believer can now drink the water of salvation from Jesus. vv. 38–9 Bultmann (1971), Brown (1966), and Schnackenburg (1977–9: ii) think that the waters flow from Jesus; NRSV, Barrett (1978), and Lindars (1972), from the believer. The comment on the Spirit in v. 39 favours the second interpretation. The believer who receives the living water from Jesus has it in his heart (lit. his belly) through the influence of the Spirit. The water becomes in the believer 'a spring of water gushing up to eternal life' (4:14). Those who favour a Christological interpretation often establish a link with 19:34, but there blood and water come from Jesus' side (*pleura*) and not from his belly (*koilia*). These exegetes are obliged to consider v. 39 on the Spirit as secondary. It is difficult to know which passages of Scripture the evangelist is alluding to in v. 38, perhaps such texts as Prov 18:4; Isa 58:11; Sir 24:30–4. In a Jewish environment it is

usual to compare the Spirit with water (e.g. 1QS 4:18–21). In the later *Midrash, Gen. Rab.* 70:8, the water at the festival of Booths symbolizes the Spirit. In the early Christian tradition the Spirit is linked with the water of baptism (Jn 1:35; 3:5). Paul makes explicit the connection between drinking water and being baptized in water (1 Cor 12:13). There may therefore be an implicit allusion to Christian baptism even in Jn 7:39. In the Fourth Gospel the Spirit is given after Jesus' death and resurrection (cf. 14:16, 26; 15:26; 20:22). vv. 40–4, the discussion on Jesus' messianic origin, which began in vv. 25–31, is now continued. Some people think that Jesus is the prophet like Moses (Deut 18:15; cf. Jn 4:19–29; 6:14). The evangelist wants to show that he is both the prophet and the Messiah. He also implicitly accepts that Jesus comes both from Galilee (cf. Isa 9) and from Bethlehem (v. 42). He seems to be informed about Jesus' birth at Bethlehem but wants to underline that his divine origin is much more important (cf. vv. 25–31 and 8:14–19). Those who want to arrest him could be the men whom the Pharisees and the chief priests had sent out in v. 32 (cf. also vv. 45–9). vv. 45–52, there is some irony in the statement that the temple police could not arrest Jesus, because they were impressed by his teaching. The Pharisees therefore stress that the authorities, in contrast to the vulgar crowd, do not believe in Jesus. Nicodemus is a Pharisee who probably belongs to the *synedrion* (cf. Jn 3:1). His prudent advice, which may be based on Lev 19:15 and Deut 1:16–17 is rejected by his colleagues, because Jesus comes from Galilee, contrary to messianic prophecies (see Jn 7:40–4). Despite the fact that the prophet Jonah came from Galilee, the Jews can assert v. 52, that the Scripture nowhere affirms that a prophet will arise from Galilee. Moreover Galileans are often considered as unclean by the inhabitants of Jerusalem because they live in close proximity to pagans.

(7:53–8:11) see JN APP.

(8:12–20) In 7:25–52 the Jews discussed the qualifications of the Messiah and the prophet, whereas Jesus underlined his own divine origin. Here Jesus speaks of his Father's testimony, a subject he has already treated in 5:31–8. In 8:21–30 he will allude to his going back to his Father, and in 8:31–59 he will invite the audience to become his disciples. v. 12, this solemn declaration is similar to Wisdom's disclosure (e.g. Prov 8–9). In Wis 7:26 wisdom is described as

a reflection of God's eternal light. Light in the Jewish tradition is often an image of salvation (e.g. Isa 9:2; 42:6; 60:19). The people have to choose between two ways, between light and darkness (e.g. Jer 21:8; Deut 30:15; 1QS 3:3). In the Synoptics Jesus fulfils the prophecies concerning the future light (e.g. Mt 4:16; Lk 1:78–9; 2:32), and his disciples are in their turn 'the light of the world' (Mt 5:14). Even if we have there a similar formulation to v. 12, Jesus' self-revelation is of a higher order: in him the world meets the fountainhead of light (cf. Jn 1:5, 9; 9:5; 11:9–10). There is also an implicit allusion to the festival of Booths with its ceremony of light in the women's court (see above). Jesus fulfils the deeper meaning of the feast. vv. 13–15, contrary to the Pharisees' objections against his own witness (cf. 5:31), Jesus argues first that they judge by human standards, knowing neither where he comes from nor where he is going. vv. 16–18, the reading *alēthinē* ('right') attested in v. 16 by among others P⁷⁵, B, D, and W is probably original, since it is different from the nearby occurrences of *alēthēs* ('valid', NRSV) in vv. 13–14, 17. Jesus' second argument is that he is not alone when he judges or gives his testimony. So there are two witnesses, as the Jewish law prescribes (cf. Num 35:30; Deut 17:6; 19:15). But in fact it is through Jesus that the audience is given information on the Father's testimony. Just as in 5:31–47, the arguments are circular: only those who accept Jesus' divine origin can understand both his and his Father's witness, and conversely those who accept the witness of each can see in Jesus the Son whom the Father has sent. It is possible that the sentence, 'I judge no one' (cf. 3:17) encouraged an editor to insert the pericope on the adulteress in this Johannine context. vv. 19–20, the audience has hitherto not really understood the relation between Jesus and his Father. The reason is that they know neither Jesus nor his Father. This time the discussion is *near* the treasury of the temple (the Greek preposition *en* is scarcely used here in the sense of 'inside'). The treasury is probably the room for the people's gifts, near the women's court (cf. Mk 12:41).

(8:21–30) Jesus' return to his Father is unique. v. 21, the discussion continues with a vague 'again he said to them', as before, in v. 12. A new aspect in comparison with 7:32–6 is that the audience will die in their sins, because they do not believe (cf. v. 24). v. 22, according to vv. 30–1 many of the Jews believed in Jesus. But others do not understand what Jesus is saying

about his return to the Father. In 7:35 they thought he would go to the Greeks, now that he intends to commit suicide. But Jesus will freely give up his life without committing suicide (10:11, 17–18). v. 23, in Jewish apocalyptic literature there is a contrast between this world and that to come. In the Fourth Gospel God and the world from above replace the world to come. The Johannine dualism between two worlds is different from later Gnostic systems because it is moral (Jesus' message from above is rejected) and not cosmic (even this world was created by God). v. 24, the *egō eimi* has no complement (see Jn 6:16–21). It is possible that this 'I am he', spoken as it is during the festival of Booths, is also an allusion to YHWH (cf. *Sukk.* 4:5). v. 25, the words *tēn archēn* can mean 'at all' (NRSV) and be an expression of exasperation. But since *archē* is important in the theology of the Fourth Gospel (1:1–2; 2:11; 6:64; 8:44; 15:27; 16:4) the literal translation 'at the beginning, which is what I tell you' might be better, with the force, 'I am the One at the beginning, which is what I keep telling you' (see Miller 1980). vv. 26–9, the judgement of condemnation supplements the promise of salvation in 3:17 and 12:32, 34. It will be more explicit with the sending of the Helper in 16:8. Jesus once again underlines his close link with the Father: he says what he has heard from him, he is not left alone, and he does what pleases the Father (see 5:19–47). But the *egō eimi* in v. 28 concerning the uplifted Son of Man, which extends the thought of v. 24, adds a new dimension to the question of Jesus' identity. Only believers will be able to recognize the divine 'I am' revelation on the cross. v. 30, the Jews who believe in Jesus still need further teaching, as is shown by vv. 31–59.

(8:31–59) The question of truth in vv. 32, 40, 44–6 gives rise to a discussion about Jesus and Abraham. vv. 31–2, in 5:31 Jesus criticized the audience for not having God's word abiding in them. Now he admonishes the Jews who believe in him to abide in his word (cf. also v. 51), if they want to be truly his disciples. This anticipates the teaching Jesus will give his disciples after his last supper (chs. 15–17). There are different ways to believe in Jesus, the superficial way as in 2:23–5 and 6:14–15, 26, and the deeper way of real discipleship that is described here and in 13:35; 15:8–9. The truth that makes the disciples free is not obtained by their own investigations but is revealed from above. v. 33, the Jews often boasted of being the descendants of Abraham, which Paul criticizes by showing that the

pagans are also included in Abraham's faith (cf. Galatians and Romans). But already the Baptist (Mt 3:9; Lk 3:8) had attacked the Jews' superficial attitude when he noted that God can raise up new children to Abraham (cf. also Jesus' critique in Mt 8:11–12; Lk 13:28–9). The Jews have often been politically dependent on foreigners but they have kept their own religion. vv. 34–8, the Jews cannot be free if they sin by wanting to kill Jesus, who declares what he has seen in the Father's presence. There is a sharp contrast between the disciples who share all the rights of the Son, and the slaves of sin who have no rights. In a similar way Paul opposes the son of the free woman, Sarah, and the son of the slave woman, Hagar (Gal 4:21–31; cf. also Heb 3:5–6). In v. 38 NRSV understands *poieite* as an imperative: 'you should do what you have heard from the Father'. Because their father in v. 44 is identified with the devil, it is probably better to take *poieite* as a present indicative and translate: 'you do what you have heard from your father'. vv. 39–40, since the explicit identification of their father with the devil has not yet been made, the Jews continue to consider Abraham as their father. This causes Jesus to reply that they should then do the good deeds that were connected with his faith (cf. Jas 2:22). Abraham believed in God and relied on God's truth, which is contrary to their intention to kill the one who tells them the truth from God. In my opinion both *este* (you are) and *epoieite* ('you would do') in v. 39 are original. Different MSS have tried to improve the poor Greek of this sentence. vv. 41–5, Jesus still does not explicitly say who their father is. The Jews insist on their legitimate claims to be the children of God, probably in contrast to all Gentiles (cf. 1 Thess 4:3, 5). There might be an implicit accusation that in this respect they are different from Jesus whose father is unknown (cf. the accusations of Celsus in Origen, *Contra Celsum*, 1:28, and later Jewish literature). But this point remains uncertain. If God were their Father they would accept Jesus who comes from him (cf. 5:43). Jesus now gives the explicit reason for their resistance: their father is the devil (cf. 1 Jn 3:8), who is the father of lies and a murderer from the beginning. Probably the evangelist alludes to Cain who was from the evil one and killed his brother (1 Jn 3:11–12). The strong contrast between truth and falsehood resembles the one we find in the Dead Sea scrolls between the spirit of truth and the spirit of deceit (e.g. 1QS 3:18ff.; cf. also the Man of Lies in 1QpHab 2:2; 5:11). vv. 46–47, since Jesus does not sin when he

speaks the truth about God, those who do not believe in him cannot have God as their Father. vv. 48–51, the Samaritans were considered by the Jews to be an unclean people (cf. Jn 4:9). They could be considered as 'illegitimate children' (8:41), but also as possessed by a demon. The evangelist, unlike the Synoptics, does not explicitly present Jesus as an exorcist, but it is possible that he is here alluding to the scribes' accusations that Jesus drives out demons with the help of Beelzebul (Mk 3:22–30 par.). Jesus refutes the Jews by stressing his own interest in God's glory (cf. 5:44) and appeals to God's judgement. vv. 52–3, just as in the discourse on the bread of life, Jesus promises eternal life to his disciples. Without knowing it the Jews indirectly speak the truth: Jesus is greater than Abraham who died, just as he is greater than Jacob (4:12). vv. 54–6, Jesus once again affirms that his glory comes from his Father and that he keeps his Father's word. The Jews' question in v. 53 allows him to affirm that in fact he is greater than Abraham, since the latter rejoiced that he could see Jesus' day. Perhaps the evangelist is thinking of Gen 17:17 when Abraham laughed at the promise of a child. The comparison with Gal 3:16 shows that in Isaac Abraham could greet his descendant, the Christ. There are also texts that underline Abraham's prophetic knowledge of the future (cf. Heb 11:13 and the Jewish texts quoted in Str-B ii. 525–6). vv. 57–9, the evangelist is interested in chronology, but 'fifty years' is a conventional indication. Some MSS have transformed it into forty years in order to fit Lk 3:23. Since Abraham is the most important figure for the Jews, they now ask how Jesus can have met him. Jesus answers with an *egō eimi* formula different from that in vv. 24 and 28, because it is part of a normal sentence. He contrasts Abraham's birth with his own sovereign being that transcends time. One might compare Ps 90:2, 'Before the mountains were brought forth... you are God.' Jesus has been able to see Abraham because he was before him. This assertion is considered as a blasphemy and therefore the Jews want to stone him (Lev 24:16). Jesus escapes from them in the same way as before (7:30, 32, 45).

(9:1–41) Jesus Restores Sight to the Blind Man

As in ch. 5, a miracle takes place in a pool on a sabbath day, and provokes violent debates. But whereas in ch. 5 Jesus was directly the revealer, the progressive insight of the blind man is in the centre of the controversies in ch. 9. The motif of his blindness from birth is enriched by the

themes of night and sinfulness. In contrast to that, Jesus is the light of the world. His divine work among humankind is symbolized by the mud he makes with his saliva (cf. Gen 2:7). The blind man must wash his eyes in the pool of Siloam. At the festival of Booths the water of salvation was fetched from Siloam (see JN 7:37–9). The evangelist underlines that Siloam means ‘Sent’ (v. 6), so that Jesus who has been sent by his Father (v. 4) is also present in this water. There may be a hint at the importance of water in Christian baptism. The blind man comes to a complete faith in Jesus. In contrast to him some of the Pharisees remain in their sin. Certain aspects of the story recall synoptic miracles on blind people (Mk 8:22–6; 10:46–52 par.; Mt 9:27–31; 12:22–3 par.), but on the whole the evangelist seems to rely on his own information.

The scene is well organized: a discussion between Jesus and his disciples (vv. 1–5) introduces the proper miracle (vv. 6–7). The man blind from birth is interrogated on different occasions, first by his neighbours and those who have met him (vv. 8–12), then by the Pharisees (vv. 13–17), and after the enquiry from his parents (vv. 18–23), a second time by the Jewish authorities (vv. 24–34). After all these interrogations he finally meets Jesus himself who is revealed to him as the object of faith, and who criticizes the Pharisees (vv. 35–41).

(9:1–5) From the information in v. 8 one can guess that the blind man was sitting as a beggar at the entrance to the temple. The discussion between Jesus and the disciples gives the meaning of the miracle story in advance; it replaces the synoptic description of how blind people ask to be cured (Mk 10:47–8 par.; Mt 9:27–8). Jesus’ answer to the problem of suffering is similar to that in Lk 13:2, but different from Jn 5:14. Jesus does not accept rabbinic discussions concerning who has sinned (see the examples in Str-B ii. 527–9), but stresses God’s ability to transform difficult situations. Jesus has to do the work of his Father before he himself will be condemned to death. The NRSV is probably right when it chooses as original the apparently contradictory ‘we’ and ‘me’ in v. 4. vv. 6–7, in the first two miracles Jesus’ mother and the royal official took the initiative (2:3; 4:47). At the pool of Beth-zatha and here it is Jesus who initiates the miracle. In 5:6 Jesus asked, ‘Do you want to be made well?’ Here he simply accomplishes the miracle as part of God’s plan.

(9:6–12) The evangelist combines two kinds of synoptic miracles, those by contact (the mud on the eyes in v. 6), and those by distance (the healing at the pool in v. 7). In Mk 7:33 and 8:23 Jesus heals with the help of saliva, which at that time was considered as a remedy (cf. Tacitus, *Hist.* 4.81 and Suetonius, *Vesp.* 7). But in John Jesus makes mud with the dust of the earth, which might symbolize his creative power (cf. Gen 2:6–7.; Job 10:9; Irenaeus, *Adv. haer.* 5.15.2). The blind man seems to represent the Christians who by their baptism (cf. 3:5) are able to ‘see’ the one who has been sent by the Father. vv. 8–12, just as in the miracle at Beth-zatha, and in contrast to the two first miracles in Galilee, there are at first negative reactions to Jesus’ action. But in the end the healed one will come to an explicit faith. In contrast to all those who hesitate concerning his identity, the once-blind man confesses what Jesus has done for him. He does not mention that the mud was made with the help of saliva. He only knows that the healer is called Jesus, but does not know where he is. This prepares the reader for his arrival in v. 35. In v. 11 the Greek word *aneblepsa*, which properly means ‘I saw again’, is used of the one who was born blind (cf. Dittenberg., *SIG* 1173. 15–18).

(9:13–17) By the information in 1:24; 3:1 and especially in chs. 7–8 the reader is accustomed to consider the Pharisees as Jewish authorities who sometimes are also simply called ‘the Jews’ (see 9:18, 22). The evangelist seems to describe the judicial capacity of the Pharisees in the light of their importance in the *bêt dîn* after 70 CE. Their power in the Sanhedrin before 70 was rather limited. The healing and the making of mud by Jesus could be interpreted as works that were forbidden on a sabbath (cf. *Šabb.* 7:2). The Pharisees who doubt Jesus’ origin from God go against what Nicodemus formerly had admitted (3:2). The healed man considers Jesus as a prophet, just as some in the audience will do in v. 31. But both in the OT and the NT a sinner can also perform miracles which lead people astray.

(9:18–23) The parents of the man witness that their son was born blind, but prefer to let him speak of the miracle on his own behalf. They represent the Christians who after 70 CE hesitate to confess Jesus as the Messiah, because they might be put out of the synagogue. Later Jewish documents distinguish between three forms of exclusion, two temporary ones, for a week or

for at least thirty days, and a more decisive one, the 'ban' (*hêrem*). It is possible that such a definitive exclusion was first introduced about 80–90 with the *birkat hamminim*, a prayer of 'benediction' (= 'malediction') against pagans, perhaps even against Christians. The *apostynagôgos* in 9:22; 12:42; 16:2 might refer to this severe exclusion from the Jewish community (cf. Forkman 1972: 87–114), even if some scholars today contest this interpretation.

(9:24–34) 'Give glory to God' in v. 24 means simply to speak the truth (cf. Josh 7:19; *Sanh.* 6:2). The authorities now accuse Jesus of being a sinner, just as some of the Pharisees had already done in 9:16. The once-blind man, on the contrary, is of the same opinion as the other Pharisees in v. 16. He implicitly opposes Jesus' authority to that of the law (cf. 5:17). Ironically he remarks in v. 27 that they perhaps want to be Jesus' disciples. They naturally reaffirm their own fidelity to Moses (cf. Mt 23:2: 'the Pharisees sit on Moses' seat'). They claim that Moses has spoken to God, whereas Jesus' origin is obscure to them, despite all that has been said in chs. 7–8. The evangelist reflects here the conflict which took place in his time between disciples of Jesus and those of Moses (cf. 5:45–7). The man becomes more adamant and explicitly states that Jesus comes from God (vv. 30–3; cf. 3:2), reaffirming what Jesus himself had maintained after the miracle at Beth-zatha (5:19–24). The audience refuses to be taught by a man born in sin, but Jesus has already denied this interpretation in vv. 2–3 and he will affirm in v. 41 that on the contrary it is the unbelieving audience which is sinning.

(9:35–41) During the whole controversy Jesus was absent, but his miracle was the main subject of discussion. The healed man has progressively become more confident about Jesus' origin from God. He is now prepared to confess his faith in him who reveals himself as Son of Man. A few MSS such as P⁷⁵ and Sinaiticus omit the whole of v. 38 and the beginning of v. 39. Contrary to Brown's hypothesis on a liturgical addition (Brown 1966) the text is original since it is well attested in different textual traditions. Jesus' revelation to the blind man is similar to his self-disclosure as Messiah to the Samaritan woman (4:26). The healing of the blind man concludes with an emphasis on the sign of faith. Jesus speaks of the actual judgement which will also be the Son of Man's final judgement (cf. 3:17–21 and 5:27–30). He alludes to Isa

6:9–10, a text that the Synoptics apply to the reception of God's rule (Mk 4:12 par.). In the early Christian communities this text was also used against Jews who did not believe in Jesus (cf. Acts 28:25–8 and Jn 12:39–40). Jesus employs the word 'blind' in two ways: inability to see, and unwillingness to understand. The Pharisees who do not want to understand are immersed in a deeper moral and spiritual blindness than those who are physically blind from birth.

(10:1–21) Jesus is the Door and the Good Shepherd The shepherd's care for his sheep is a frequent theme in the synoptic tradition: Jesus has compassion for the crowds who are like sheep without a shepherd (Mk 6:34; Mt 9:36), or are sent into the midst of wolves (Mt 10:16; Lk 10:3). There may be ravenous wolves who come in sheep's clothing (Mt 7:15). In the parable of the lost sheep according to Mt 18:12–14 Jesus describes God's care for all those who might get lost. In Lk 15:3–7 the same parable, directed against the Pharisees and the scribes, is applied to a sinner who repents from his sins. The little group of disciples is addressed by their master as a flock to whom the Father is giving the kingdom (Lk 12:32; cf. Mt 25:32–4). Finally Jesus alludes to his death with the help of Zech 13:7: 'I will strike the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered' (Mk 14:27; Mt 26:31), a situation which is also described in Jn 16:32.

In these verses two main lines from the synoptic tradition are developed: Jesus is identified with the shepherd as in Mk 14:27 par. He takes active care of his sheep as in Matthew and Luke. But the perspective is different: Jesus speaks of the shepherds who do not fulfil their vocation, and alludes to the OT expectation of God becoming Israel's true shepherd in the future (cf. Isa 40:11; Jer 31:10; Ezek 34:11–16). This prospect could also be applied to David who shepherded the people of Israel (2 Sam 7:7) and became the figure of the predicted Messiah (cf. Jer 23:4–8; Ezek 34:23–4; 37:24). But in Jn 10 Jesus is less a messianic figure than one sent by the Father who loves him. In Jn 21:15–17 Jesus' function as a shepherd will be transmitted to Peter if he loves his master (cf. Acts 20:28–30 on Paul).

In Jn 10 the shepherd does not seek what was lost but keeps his sheep from all dangers. He is even willing to give his life for them, struck as the shepherd is in Zech 13:7. More clearly than in the Synoptics Jesus himself takes the initiative to give his life (cf. Isa 53:5–8 and 1 Pet 2:24–5).

A special feature in John is that even the gate through which the sheep pass becomes

important, giving rise to another parable on thieves and bandits. Contrary to Bultmann's (1971) opinion, there is insufficient reason to think that this theme derives from Mandaean literature.

(10:1–3a) The solemn 'very truly' introduces a narrative which in v. 6 is called a 'figure of speech' (*paroimia*), and which corresponds to a synoptic parable, something always difficult to understand (Mk 4:11–13 par.; cf. Jn 16:25, 29). Both words translate the Hebrew *māšāl*, with the difference that the Johannine *paroimia* prepares for Jesus' self-revelation in 10:7–18. The first parable in vv. 1–3a contrasts the man who enters by the gate, and the thief or the bandit who climbs in by another way. The normal image in this type of parable would be the burglary of a house or a palace (cf. Lk 12:39), but the evangelist has obscured this by speaking from the beginning of a sheepfold and a shepherd. One can associate this in the Synoptics with the narrow gate that leads to life (Mt 7:13–14; Lk 13:24–5). The evangelist possibly thinks of a sheepfold close to a house and of the shepherd's own sheep in contrast to others (vv. 3–4).

(10:3b–6) The second parable is about a shepherd who knows his own sheep by name and can therefore lead them out of the sheepfold, in contrast to the stranger whom they do not follow. Comparison should be made with Ezek 34:11–16, where God in the future will be the shepherd of his people. Since in both parables the gate and the shepherd remain unidentified the audience (i.e. the Pharisees of 9:40 and others) at first does not understand.

(10:7–10) The obscure figure of speech is partly explained by Jesus' self-identification with the gate. But he avoids a total allegorization of the first parable by not elucidating who the gate-keeper, the thief, and the bandit are. Jesus is the gate in two ways: first, in vv. 7–8 he is the gate through which the shepherds have to go to reach the sheep. The thieves and the bandits (possibly identified with the Pharisees and all the false prophets who have preceded them), do not want this. Secondly, in vv. 9–10 he is the gate through which one can come in and go out to find pasture. Here it is not the shepherd who goes through the gate but the sheep. This is similar to the synoptic narrow gate which leads to life, and Jesus' saying: 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father

except through me' (Jn 14:6–7; cf. also Ps 118:20). In order to understand how the gate leads to pasture one has to consider the function of Jesus as shepherd. He guides his sheep to life just as he earlier promised living water and bread from heaven. In opposition to this the thief comes only to kill and destroy (v. 10).

(10:11–18) vv. 11–13 form a short parable, in addition to what had been said in vv. 1–5. There the shepherd was opposed first to the thief and the bandit, then to the stranger. Now a second theme is developed: the hired hand runs away, vv. 12–13. New aspects are introduced: the wolf who attacks the sheep and scatters them takes over the negative function of the thief and the bandit. Jesus identifies himself with the good shepherd, in contrast to all those who in Israel did not behave as such (cf. Ezek 34; Zech 11:4–9; CD 13:9–10). In a similar way, in 6:32–40 he was the true bread from heaven and in 15:1 will be the true vine. In contrast to the hired hand he is willing to give his life for his sheep, as there is a deep solidarity between him and them. This is expressed with the help of reciprocal knowledge, which had been foreshadowed in vv. 3–4 and will be described in 15:1–11 as a reciprocal abiding in love. In 10:16 suddenly the perspective is widened with the reference to 'other sheep', probably an allusion to pagans (cf. 7:35; 11:52; 12:20–2). It is not clear whether the one flock will also be in one sheepfold. In vv. 15, 17, and 18 Jesus' leadership is anchored in the plan and love of his Father. In v. 18 there is even an allusion to Jesus' initiative in his future resurrection.

(10:19–21) Just as the Pharisees had different opinions concerning the miracle in ch. 9, the Jews (who include the Pharisees of 9:40) are now divided into two groups. As in chs. 7–8 some believe that Jesus has a demon, which in vv. 22–39 will lead to even sharper accusations. Those who defend Jesus do so by referring to his healings of the blind.

(10:22–39) Jesus at the Festival of Dedication During the festival of Dedication (Gk. *ta ekkainia*, Heb. *ḥānukkā*) Jesus is surrounded by Jews who are not his sheep, and therefore cannot understand either his unity with the Father or his identity as Messiah and God's Son. In contrast to those who hear Jesus' voice they try to stone him for blasphemy. Jesus is strong by virtue of all his links with the Father and therefore nobody can snatch his sheep out of his hand.

He is simply doing his Father's work, being the Messiah (vv. 22–30), and God's Son (vv. 31–9).

(10:22–30) Jesus is truly the Messiah. vv. 22–3, the Festival of Dedication took place three months after the Festival of Booths, with similar ceremonies (cf. 1 Macc 4:47–59; 2 Macc 10:6–8). Winter in the Near East is particularly the month of December. Jesus comes back to the temple which he left after the Jews had attempted to stone him in 8:59. According to Acts 3:11 and 5:12 the portico of Solomon was a gathering place for the first Christians. Josephus records that it ran along the east side of the temple (*Ant.* 15. 396–401; *J. W.* 5. 184–5). v. 24, since in 12:13 a verse from Ps 118 is quoted, and in 10:9–10 another verse seems to be alluded to, 'gathered around' may be due to Ps 118:10–12 where the word occurs three times. In the discussion in chs. 7–8 the audience was divided concerning Jesus as Messiah, despite the demand from the brothers of Jesus that he should make himself more widely known (7:4: *en parhēsiai einai*). Therefore the audience in 10:25 wants him to tell them plainly (*parhēsiai*) if he is the Messiah. vv. 25–8, Jesus has already explicitly said to the Samaritan woman in 4:26 that he is the Messiah, and to the blind man in 9:35 that he is the Son of Man. His teaching has been so clear that Peter could confess him as 'the Holy One of God' (6:69). Moreover, during the festival of Booths some people were able to understand that he was the Messiah (chs. 7–8). But the audience in ch. 10 does not want to come to faith (cf. Lk 22:67); it wishes only to accuse Jesus, because it has no positive relation to him. Some exegetes would like to connect vv. 27–30 about the sheep with v. 15a, but the evangelist may have consciously wanted to link together chs. 7–10 with the help of two themes: seeing (ch. 9) and listening (ch. 10). For those who are able to understand, Jesus the good shepherd replaces both festivals. Those who refuse to understand are blind (ch. 9), and do not belong among his sheep (vv. 26–7). According to v. 28 Jesus gives his sheep eternal life (cf. v. 10), and he can protect them against those who want to snatch them away, such as the wolf in v. 12. vv. 29–30, according to the translation in NRSV the things the Father has given Jesus are greater than all; according to JB and TOB it is the Father who is greater than all. If in the original reading the definitive article had been the masculine *hos* there would probably not have been any problem. Therefore the neuter *ho* in our MSS is original and at the same time the

masculine *meizōn* is also original: *ho patēr mou ho dedōken moi pantōn meizōn estin* (cf. Birdsall 1960; Lindars 1972: 369–70; Schnackenburg 1977–9: ii. 385–6). The literal translation is 'The Father is, as to what he has given me, greater than all'. 'What he has given' is a typical Johannine expression (6:39; 17:2, 24), which underlines the Father's initiative. Jesus' strength comes from his Father who is greater than all. There is a profound unity between both (cf. 5:19–20; 7:16–18), which in 17:11 will also include believers.

(10:31–9) The evangelist continues to stress that Jesus is God's Son. vv. 31–3, first in v. 33 the Jews indicate blasphemy as the reason why they want to stone Jesus (cf. Lev 24:16). As in 8:59 it is an attempt to kill him without official trial. In the synoptic tradition Jesus is accused of blasphemy when he forgives sins (Mk 2:5–7 par.), and when he speaks of the coming Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power (Mk 14:62–4 par.). Probably all propositions that questioned God's uniqueness were considered as blasphemy in Jesus' time (cf. 5:18). Ironically the Jews speak the truth: for the evangelist Jesus is in a certain sense 'God'. 'Good' is used in 2:10 of the wine, and in 10:11, 14 in reference to the shepherd. The good shepherd is sent by the Father, and therefore his work exhibits the Father's goodness (cf. v. 25). vv. 34–6, Jesus uses an argument *a fortiori*: if the Scripture refers to those who received the word of God as 'gods', the one whom God has sanctified cannot blaspheme when he says that he is God's Son. The argument holds only if you accept that the one sent by God is of a higher standing. Just as in 7:19 and 8:17 Jesus speaks of 'your' law, as if he himself were not a Jew. The 'law' here is synonymous with Scripture (cf. 12:34; 15:25). Jesus quotes Ps 82(81):6a LXX. In the psalm the subordination of the pagan gods to Israel's God is described, but Jesus' point is that 'god' can also be applied to those other than Israel's God. In Ps 82:6b 'the sons of the Most High' may have facilitated the transition from 'gods' to 'God's son'. Perhaps the word 'sanctified' is used in v. 36 to fit in with the festival of Dedication during which Num 7:1–89 was read (cf. *Meg.* 3:6). In Jn 17:18–19 Jesus sanctifies himself for the disciples' sake so that they may be sanctified in truth. vv. 37–9, Jesus resumes the question of his works, first in a negative formulation (v. 37), then in a positive one (v. 38). The latter is surprising because it invites the Jews to believe at least in Jesus' works even if they do not believe in him.

There may be a hint here of the evangelist's fatigue in finding new arguments for his contemporaries in favour of faith in Jesus. In fact, it is not easy to understand the deep unity between Jesus and his Father (v. 30), or the mutual 'indwelling' (cf. 14:10–11; 17:21). As in 7:30 and 8:20, 59 Jesus is able to escape from their hands, but his inability to engage with the Jews will lead to the final plan to put him to death (11:53, 57).

(10:40–21:25) Fourth Geographical Grouping

(10:40–2) Back across the Jordan In comparison with what happens in Jerusalem the events across the Jordan are positive. Even across the Sea of Galilee Jesus is not threatened with death. We have seen a positive attitude towards him both in Galilee and Samaria. After the dramatic episodes at the two festivals in Jerusalem Jesus must retire to the 'friendly' place where John first baptized. To Galilee, which he left after ch. 6, he will return only after his resurrection (ch. 21). By mentioning the place across the Jordan the evangelist can make a final comparison between Jesus and the Baptist. The latter has not done any miracles and therefore could not be the Messiah. The number of people who come to Jesus and believe in him in the place where he had called his first disciples verifies that the testimony of the Baptist was true. This is an invitation to the reader to believe in Jesus, the crucified and risen one.

(11:1–54) Jesus Who Raises Lazarus Must Himself Die The raising of Lazarus is the seventh and most important sign, since it directly foreshadows Jesus' own death and resurrection. Lazarus' illness both does and does not lead to death. Therefore Jesus can successively say that his friend has fallen asleep and that he is dead (vv. 11, 14). The reason is that Jesus has his own view on what real life is about. The passage from death to life corresponds to the transition from unbelief to faith. This is clear when, despite her brother's death, Martha confesses her faith in the Lord. Lazarus in his tomb embodies the power of death. When he comes out of the tomb and is unbound (vv. 43–4) he is an illustration of the capacity of faith. Jesus accomplishes the work of light among humanity: those who walk with him do not stumble (cf. vv. 9–10) in the dark.

But the death and raising of Lazarus also suggest before-hand what will happen to Jesus who goes to Judea in order to die and be raised from the dead (cf. vv. 7–16). People think that

Mary goes to the tomb to weep there, but she meets Jesus (vv. 31–2). She prefigures Mary of Magdala who weeps at the tomb where the risen Jesus is revealed to her (20:11–16). Like her sister Martha she knows that if Jesus who is the resurrection and life (v. 25) had been there, her brother would not have died (v. 32). Jesus weeps and is deeply moved by Lazarus' death, which forecasts his own departure (vv. 35–8).

But there are also contrasts between the deaths of Lazarus and Jesus: Lazarus has been dead for four days (v. 39) but Jesus will rise on the third day (cf. 2:19–22). The reader is invited to join those who believe that the risen Lord will give them eternal life. Through his death and resurrection he will gather into one all the dispersed children of God (v. 52).

The scene is well composed: after a delay (vv. 1–16) Jesus goes to Bethany and meets Martha (vv. 17–27), and Mary (vv. 28–32) separately. He then goes to the tomb (vv. 33–41a), and raises his friend (vv. 41b–44). In vv. 45–54 the evangelist describes the consequences of Jesus' ultimate sign.

(11:1–16) Jesus delays his intervention in Bethany because it is linked to his own death. In the Synoptics Jesus restores to life two persons who have just died, Jairus' daughter and the son of a widow at Nain (Mk 5:21–43 par.; Lk 7:11–17). In John Lazarus dies while Jesus is absent, but has been buried for four days before Jesus arrives and raises him. The revival is therefore more dramatic. vv. 1–2, in Lk 16:19–31 another story is told about a poor man, Lazarus, who dies and is honoured in heaven in contrast to the rich man who before his death had no pity for him. In Lk 10:38–42 Mary and Martha are also named in another context. John alone speaks of their brother Lazarus, and he identifies Mary with the anonymous woman, who according to Mk 14:3–9 and Mt 26:6–13 anointed Jesus in the house of Simon the leper at Bethany (in Lk 7:36–50 the woman is a sinner). vv. 3–6, because the sisters speak of 'whom you love' (*hon phileis*) some exegetes want to identify Lazarus with the beloved disciple, but for him the evangelist uses (with one exception) the verb *agapaō*. Jesus knows that Lazarus will die but it will not be a definitive death. It will reveal God's glory in his Son. The two days of delay are necessary to prepare the statement in v. 17 that Lazarus had been in the tomb four days. vv. 7–10, the decision to go to Judea establishes a link between Lazarus' death and Jesus' imminent condemnation. In 9:4 Jesus declared explicitly that he was

the light of the world. Now he states it indirectly by calling the sun the light of the world. According to ancient physics the light was in the human eye (cf. Mt 6:22–3; Lk 11:34–5). There is therefore an interplay between the sun or Jesus and the human eye. One can compare Gos. Thom. 24: ‘There is light within a man of light.’ vv. 11–14, as in other languages, in Greek one can use the euphemism ‘to sleep’ for ‘to die’ (cf. Mt 27:52; 1 Thess 4:13–15; 1 Cor 15:18, 20). But the evangelist likes to play on words (see JN 3:4). This permits him to allude to the raising of the dead while using the word ‘awaken’. Jesus finally tells them plainly that Lazarus is dead. vv. 15–16, the evangelist presupposes that Jesus’ presence would have prevented Lazarus from dying (cf. v. 21) and thus from being raised. Thomas (which in Aramaic means ‘twin’) plays an important role in the Fourth Gospel (cf. 14:5; 20:24–9; 21:2) and in the *Gospel* and the *Acts of Thomas*. An old Syriac tradition which is scarcely reliable considered him as Jesus’ twin and identified him with Judas, a brother of Jesus according to Mk 3:18. On the spiritual level Thomas is right that the believer dies with Christ (e.g. Rom 6) but he has not yet understood what Jesus meant in vv. 9–11. Perhaps the evangelist is suggesting that for Thomas there is nothing beyond Jesus’ death (cf. 20:24–9).

(II:17–27) In Bethany Jesus first meets Martha. v. 17, the four days Lazarus has been in the tomb prove according to Jewish conceptions that the soul has definitively left the body (cf. Str-B ii. 544–5). In v. 38 it becomes clear that the tomb is a cavity, either in the soil or, more probably, in the rock, with a stone in front of it (cf. 20:1). vv. 18–19, the evangelist clearly distinguishes between two places, the Bethany across the Jordan, where the Baptist first baptized (1:28), and the Bethany near Jerusalem, generally identified with today’s Eizariya. This second Bethany is named in the Synoptics in relation to Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem (Mk 11:1 par.) and the anonymous woman in Simon’s house (Mk 14:3 par.). In Lk 24:50 Bethany is also the place from which Jesus is carried up to heaven. Thirty days of mourning was usual for women. To console them was one of the important Jewish duties (cf. Str-B ii. 592–607). vv. 20–2, Mary stays at home, probably in order to take care of the guests. In v. 29 we learn that she did not know that Jesus had arrived. As in Lk 10:38–42 Martha is the one who takes the initiative. She expresses her confidence in the power of Jesus. vv. 23–6, the dialogue between Jesus and Martha

is built on a major misunderstanding: Martha thinks that Jesus is speaking about the resurrection at the end of time, but Jesus asserts that he himself is the resurrection and life, so that soon Lazarus will be raised. Those who believe in Jesus will be able to overcome their own physical death. v. 27, Martha expresses a complete faith in Jesus, the faith which the evangelist himself wants to promote (cf. 20:31).

(II:28–32) In ch. 4 the meeting with the disciples followed the dialogue with the Samaritan woman and prepared for the meeting with the Samaritans. In a similar manner the dialogue with Martha gives way to a short meeting with Mary, in order to introduce Jesus’ visit to the tomb (vv. 33–41a). Martha calls Jesus ‘the Teacher’. In 1:38 the Greek *didaskalos* translates the Hebrew *rabbi* and in 20:16 the more solemn *rabbouni*. Jesus is also called ‘teacher’ in 3:2 and 13:13–14, and ‘rabbi’ in 1:49; 4:31; 9:2. More often he is addressed as *kyrios*, ‘Lord’ (11:21, 32). Mary weeps—and suddenly sees Jesus, anticipating what Mary of Magdala will do at the Lord’s tomb. Like her sister, she affirms that Jesus could have healed her brother, but the dialogue does not continue.

(II:33–41a) Jesus comes to the tomb. vv. 33–5, the transition from the scene with Mary to the next scene is smooth. The Jews who followed Mary come to Jesus and are weeping with her. The NRSV ‘was greatly disturbed’ translates the Greek *enebrimēsato*, which implies anger. The hypotheses that have been produced about a possible Aramaic or Syriac background (cf. Black 1967: 240–3) do not sufficiently explain our actual text. Probably Jesus’ anger is not so much directed against the lack of faith of those who are weeping (so Bultmann 1971: 407) as against the power of death he is now confronted with (cf. 12:27; 13:21). Jesus’ own sorrow is real (cf. v. 35), but at the same time he envisions his fight against Satan, the ruler of this world (cf. 13:27, 30; 14:30). vv. 36–7, as with all that Jesus says and does, his weeping can be interpreted in opposite ways. The negative interpretation of Jesus’ tears leads us back to the polemical situation after the miracle with the blind man (chs. 9–10). vv. 38–41a, the preparation for the miracle underlines the contrast between the real death of Lazarus and the glory of God revealed to those who believe, but only the disciples have formerly heard about this (v. 4). Martha’s statement concerning the decay of her brother’s corpse can be interpreted as a

friendly warning, because Jesus has not yet told her explicitly what he plans to do.

(II:41b–44) In 2:7–8; 4:50, and 6:10 we have already encountered Jesus' orders in preparation for the miracle. Here he commands people to take away the stone, and Lazarus to come out. The loud voice reminds us of what was said in 5:28–9. Jesus looks upwards (cf. 17:1; Mk 6:41; Lk 18:13) in an attitude of prayer to his Father, in agreement with his practice in some miracles in the synoptic tradition (cf. Mk 6:41 par.; Lk 3:21; 9:28). Still here as in Jn 9:31 the miracle is presented as God's answer to Jesus' prayer. In Mk 14:36 Jesus addresses God with *'abba*, an Aramaic expression that corresponds to the simple *patēr* in Jn 11:41 (cf. Lk 11:2). In place of asking God's help Jesus expresses his profound link with the Father (cf. 12:27–30; ch. 17), who glorifies his Son and is glorified by him. Just as the voice from heaven in 12:20 is for the people's sake, so is the mention of his prayer. The strips of cloth in v. 44 may correspond to the *othonia* in 19:40 and 20:5–7, and the *soudarion* (head cloth) to the one mentioned in 20:7. The evangelist does not concern himself with how Lazarus can come out of his tomb before the strips of cloth were unwound.

(II:45–54) The raising of Lazarus provokes opposing reactions. vv. 45–6, the faith of many Jews is counterbalanced by the unbelief of those who denounce Jesus to the Pharisees. vv. 47–8, John simplifies by associating the chief priests of the Sanhedrin with the Pharisees alone. The main concern of the council is to avoid the destruction of the holy place (which at the time the evangelist wrote had already happened). In Mk 14:1–2 the plot of the chief priests and the scribes to arrest Jesus precedes the anointing at Bethany and the eucharistic meal, but the official hearing comes later (Mk 14:53–65 par.). John on the contrary places an official meeting of the council before the anointing at Bethany. Later there will be different hearings but no formal verdict. In this way Jesus is sentenced to death in his absence, whereas in the hearings he sovereignly answers the questions of his judges (cf. Jn 18:19–38). vv. 49–53, according to Josephus (*Ant.* 18.35, 95) Caiaphas was chief priest from 18 to 36 CE, and naturally not only in the year Jesus was crucified. Ironically Caiaphas prophesies the truth, but the evangelist adds that Jesus will die not only for the Jewish nation but also for all the dispersed children of God (cf. 10:16).

There may be a conscious contrast between Jesus' gathering of the children, and the council's gathering in v. 47. Jesus' death is implicitly a propitiating sacrifice (cf. 1:29; 19:14, 36), but the evangelist especially underlines his obedience to the Father (cf. 10:17; 13:1–33; 19:30). v. 54, according to 7:51 the council's death sentence is illegal (cf. 7:51). Just as Jesus in 10:40 retired across the Jordan, so he leaves Bethany for Ephraim, perhaps the modern Et-Taiyibeh, about 20 km. north of Jerusalem. Thus these two quiet places enclose the supreme sign of the raising of Lazarus.

(II:55–12:36) **Jesus is Anointed and Acclaimed before his Death** It is not easy to know how the evangelist organizes the material between the raising of Lazarus and the last supper discourses. In 12:37–50 he seems to comment on the whole first part of his work. In 11:55–12:36 he relates what happened shortly before Jesus' last supper. After the festival of Dedication in 10:22–44 we encounter in 11:55 and 12:1 the mention of Passover, which is resumed in 13:1. It will also be named in the interrogation before Pilate in 18:28, 39; 19:14. vv. 11:55–12:36 seem to be a kind of summary of what happened when Jesus' last Passover was near.

Three different scenes prepare the reader for what soon will happen to Jesus:

1. The anointing at Bethany in 11:55–12:11 shows that Jesus' future burial will not be accidental but is already prepared for by Mary's pious action.
2. In connection with the anointing, the solemn acclamation near Jerusalem in 12:12–19 points Jesus out as Israel's king in a deeper way than the crowds can grasp.
3. The discourse with the Greeks and the people in 12:20–36 gives a final meaning to Jesus' imminent death. It shows how death leads to life (vv. 20–6), how Jesus goes through a kind of 'Gethsemane' (vv. 27–30), and how a struggle between light and darkness is now going on (vv. 31–6).

In different ways these three scenes attempt to illuminate the two aspects of death and life that are revealed in Jesus' last Passover. The meal in the presence of the raised Lazarus is the context for Jesus' revelation of his approaching burial. The acclamation near Jerusalem allows a big crowd to meet the one who has raised Lazarus. The Greeks and the people witness Jesus' distress before his death but also his acceptance of the decisive hour.

In ch. 11 Lazarus was in a certain sense in the foreground, now on the contrary it is Jesus himself who occupies centrestage. He is anointed and acclaimed, and he takes the initiative to obtain and ride a young donkey. In contrast to Mary's affectionate attitude we encounter Judas's mean remarks, which anticipate his future betrayal. The crowds who praise Jesus behave in a way quite different from the caustic Pharisees and the high priests who plan to put Lazarus to death. Many want to see Jesus, who informs them that a grain of wheat must die in order to bear fruit.

(11:55–12:11) In Mk 14:3–9 and Mt 26:6–13 the anointing at Bethany comes after the acclamation in Jerusalem and is dated differently from John: two days before Passover, when the high priests and the scribes have already decided to kill Jesus. In Lk 7:36–50 a sinner in Galilee anoints Jesus, but there is no connection with Jesus' burial. vv. 55–7, since Jesus had left Bethany for Ephraim after the raising of Lazarus, these verses introduce a new scene at Bethany. As early as 2:13 and 6:4 we met the formula that the Passover of the Jews was near, so that Jesus' official life in John comprises at least two or three years. According to some estimates about 100,000 pilgrims came every year to Jerusalem. Josephus evidently exaggerates when he writes that in the 60s 2,700,200 people were sanctified by 256,500 sacrifices (*J.W.* 6. 422–5). The purifications could start a week before Passover, and were accomplished according to Ex 19:10 and Num 9:6–12 (cf. also *Pesah.* 9:1 ff.). Contrary to 7:11 the people are looking for Jesus in a positive way, but the authorities have already decided to kill him (vv. 53, 57). Still they will wait until Judas has betrayed him (13:18–30; 18:2–3). 12:1, the six days before Passover indicate that the anointing at Bethany is connected with Jesus' last Passover, just as the death and raising of Lazarus is. 12:2–3, as in Lk 10:38–42 Martha serves Jesus, and Mary is sitting at the Lord's feet, but now in order to anoint them and wipe them with her hair, just as the sinner in Lk 7:38 (who moreover bathes them with her tears and kisses them). In Mk 14:3 and Mt 26:7 an anonymous woman pours the ointment on Jesus' head. In John the scene seems to have different functions: Mary's action anticipates Nicodemus' kingly burial of Jesus in 19:39. It introduces the acclamation of Jesus as anointed king of Israel (even if the anointing is done to the feet and not the head). Jesus himself interprets the anointing in v. 7 in connection with his future burial, but

since the tomb is the place from which he will rise it is also a preparation for his glory. Mary who anoints and wipes Jesus' feet anticipates also the scene where Jesus will wash and wipe his disciples' feet. Judas has a similar negative function in both scenes (12:4–7; 13:2, 21–30). The fragrance of the perfume may symbolize the fame of Mary's good action and correspond to Mk 14:9 and Mt 26:13, 'what she has done will be told in remembrance of her'. The rare word *pistikos* found in both Mk 14:3 and Jn 12:3 probably means 'pure'. Only John indicates a measure of one *litra*, 327 grams, which is an enormous quantity, corresponding to the kingly amount of myrrh and aloes in 19:39. 12:4–6, the MSS do not agree on whether Judas or his father Simon is called Iscariot (see Jn 6:71). v. 5 probably depends on Mk 14:4–5, but there 'some' criticize the waste of ointment (in Mt 26:8 'the disciples'). Judas keeps the common purse as in 13:29, but moreover steals from it, an information we do not have in the Synoptics. Perhaps the thief and bandit in the parable of the shepherd in 10:1–5 has influenced the story here. 12:7–8, one can translate v. 7, *aphes autēn, hina eis tēn hēmeran tou entaphiasmou tērēsēi auto*, as NRSV does (adding 'she bought it'), but perhaps better 'leave her alone, so that she might perform this for the day of my burial'. In Mk 14:8 it is clear that the woman has anointed Jesus beforehand because neither at his burial nor on the day of resurrection could the women do it. But since in Jn 19:38–40 Nicodemus comes with a mixture of myrrh and aloes, it is best to understand Mary's anointing in John as a symbolic precedent that Nicodemus will complete later on. The whole of v. 8 is found in Mt 26:11, whereas Mk 14:7 adds 'and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish'. Perhaps it is only a coincidence that Matthew and John omit the same words. 12:9–11, these rather ironical verses underline the link between the two scenes at Bethany, and between what happened to Lazarus and will happen to Jesus. To kill Lazarus, the living sign of Jesus' future resurrection, is to extend the decision taken in 11:47–53. Nothing is said about the authorities' success in their new plans.

(12:12–19) In all four gospels Jesus' last days are introduced by the people's acclamation. In the Synoptics the messianic homage is directly linked to the following temple cleansing, which shows Jesus' zeal for God's house (cf. Mark 11:1–19 par.). In Mark and Matthew moreover the Master curses a fig-tree, a symbolic

action against those in Israel who are unfaithful. All this leads to the trial against him. Since John has put the symbolic cleansing of the temple at the beginning of Jesus' official activity, the raising of Lazarus becomes the chief reason for arresting Jesus. In the Synoptics there are two stages in the scene of acclamation: first Jesus sends out two disciples to bring a donkey or a colt to him, and then he rides on it and is acclaimed. In John we have first an acclamation outside Jerusalem, and then Jesus finds himself a young donkey to sit upon (vv. 12–15). v. 12, 'The next day' is counted from the time reference at 12:1, i.e. Sunday before Passover. Two groups are present, those who had come to the festival, and those who had witnessed the raising of Lazarus (cf. vv. 17–18). v. 13, the branches of palm trees are probably conceived as a *lūlāb*, used at the festivals of Booths and of Dedication. 'Hosanna' means 'save!', a prayer used in Ps 118:25–6, particularly at the festival of Booths. In Luke Jesus is acclaimed as 'the king', in John as 'the King of Israel' (cf. Jn 1:49). In contrast to Mk 11:10 and Mt 21:9 neither David nor his son are mentioned. Thus John underlines Jesus' royal function without linking it to David's dynasty (cf. 18:33–8). vv. 14–15, due to different interpretations of the Hebrew and the Greek text of Zech 9:9, the young donkey (*onarion*) in v. 14 and the donkey's colt (*pōlos onou*) in v. 15 are in Mk 11:2 and Lk 19:30 a colt (*pōlos*), in Mt 21:2, 7 both a donkey and a colt (*onos* and *pōlos*). The word 'comes' is used in both Ps 118:26 and Zech 9:9, and may explain the link between both quotations. v. 16, the disciples understand the events better after Jesus' resurrection, as in 2:17, 22. vv. 17–19, these verses attempt to link the acclamation with the raising of Lazarus. In contrast to the positive attitude of the crowds, we have in v. 19 the Pharisees' impotence. 'The world' (*ho kosmos*) corresponds to Hebrew *kol hā'ōlām* and means 'all people'. But perhaps there is also an allusion to the theological theme of Jesus' coming to this world (1:9–10; 3:16–17). Ironically the Pharisees anticipate Jesus' own prophecy that he will draw all people to himself (12:32).

(12:20–36) Jesus Speaks about his Imminent Death Some Greeks ask to see Jesus through the mediation of the disciples (cf. 1:44–5). Jesus reveals the mystery of his imminent death to them and to the rest of the audience. The grain of wheat that dies in the earth symbolizes the rich future harvest. The voice from heaven is a sign addressed to the audience, so they will understand that the Son of Man who will be

lifted up is really the light present among them. vv. 20–6, these verses show how Jesus' death will lead to life. The Greeks are either proselytes or God-fearers like Cornelius in Acts 10–11. Already in 7:35 the evangelist alluded to the mission among the Greeks. The intermediaries Philip and Andrew both have Greek names. The hour which formerly had not yet come (2:4 and 7:6, 8; cf. 7:30; 8:20) is now at hand. It is not only the hour when Jesus will be arrested, but also the hour of his glorification (cf. 13:1–32). From now onwards the crucifixion will be seen in the light of Jesus' future resurrection and glorification. Paul uses the simile of the grain to illustrate humankind's future resurrection (1 Cor 15:37–58), whereas in John it has to do with the missionary harvest (cf. Mk 4:1–9). The Christian community will not 'remain alone' (lit. tr.) after Jesus' death but will be united in the same faith. The logion on loving or hating one's life is in the Synoptics expressed in at least three different ways: Mk 8:35 and Lk 9:24; Mt 10:39; Lk 17:33. The Johannine formulation 'love' and 'hate' may be more original than the synoptic 'save' and 'lose', but the evangelist has probably added 'in this world' and 'eternal life'. The other logion in v. 26 also has parallels, in the synoptic theme of 'serving' and 'following' (Mk 8:34 par. and 10:43–5 par.), but John stresses the importance of serving Jesus (and not only humankind) and of being honoured by the Father (cf. 14:23; 16:27, where the believers are loved by the Father). vv. 27–30, these verses correspond in some respects to the synoptic scene at Gethsemane (Mk 14:34–6 par.). The evangelist probably knew Mark's text: he alludes to a garden across the Kidron (18:1), he names the cup (18:11), and is inspired by Mark's mention of the hour (Mk 14:35). v. 27, in John the Lord's trouble before his imminent death has already been expressed in Jn 11:33, 38. But typically enough, the Johannine Jesus does not hesitate to accept the hour which is approaching. v. 28, the glorification of the Father's name seems to allude to the first part of the Lord's prayer (Mt 6:9; Lk 11:2). The voice from heaven reminds us of the voice at Jesus' baptism and transfiguration (Mk 1:11 par.; 9:7 par.), but the message is typically Johannine: God is glorified by Jesus' work on earth (cf. 17:4) and he will be glorified by Jesus' acceptance of the hour (cf. 17:5). vv. 29–30, thunder in the OT is often a manifestation of God's voice (e.g. in Ps 29:3; Job 37:4). The angel can remind us of Luke 22:43, but in John he appears for the benefit of the audience and not in order to comfort Jesus. The crowd needs

Jesus' interpretation to understand what is going on. Thus Jesus' private agony is transformed into a public confession of his obedience to his Father's will. vv. 31–6, the ruler of 'this world', understood here in a negative way, will be judged by Jesus' death (v. 31). vv. 32–3, Jesus is lifted up on the cross from which he exercises his Lordship by attracting all people, a thought already adumbrated in v. 19. This attraction is dependent on the Father's will (cf. 6:44). vv. 34–5, the audience ironically speaks the truth when it stresses the common expectation that the Messiah remains forever (e.g. *T. Levi*, 18:8; cf. de Jonge 1972–3). Jesus, the Son of Man, will indeed remain forever with the Father, but as light in the world his time is limited. v. 36, the audience has a unique opportunity to become children of light (cf. 'children of God' in 1:12). Jesus' sudden departure expresses symbolically that the period in which he instructed the people is now finished. It is also a transition to the next section, concerning unbelievers whose eyes are blinded.

(12:37–50) Faith and Unbelief In 3:31–6 we saw a passage that could be understood as words of Jesus, or of the Baptist, or that could simply be the evangelist's commentary on the foregoing discussion. In vv. 37–50 it is even clearer that the author speaks on his own behalf, quoting what Jesus had said, in order to conclude the first part of his gospel. We meet a faint echo from the Prologue: the light that has come to the world, the words that come from the Father, Jesus' glory, the importance of faith. The text is divided into two parts: the people's faith and unbelief, with a quotation from Isaiah as the starting-point (vv. 37–43; cf. Rom 10:16); different sayings of Jesus on faith and unbelief (vv. 44–50). Many commentators underline the repetitive character of these verses, and some attribute them to a less gifted redactor. As the audience is not named some have also proposed displacing the passage. But in my opinion all these theories neglect an important feature of Johannine technique, where repetition is used to stress the implied author's point of view.

(12:37–43) The many signs do not lead to faith, contrary to the other mention of signs in 20:30–1. vv. 38–40, two quotations from Isaiah are combined: 53:1 and 61:10. The first is taken straight from the LXX, while the second one follows neither MT, nor the LXX, nor the Aramaic targum. It does, however, coincide with the LXX in the three last words: 'and I shall heal

them'. John omits the reference to the hearing ears, and reverses the order, starting with 'he has blinded their eyes' before the hardened heart. He has different words from the LXX for 'he has blinded', 'he has hardened', 'understand', 'turn' and even 'so that'. Moreover God is the subject ('he has blinded'), whereas in the LXX it is the people. In Acts 28:26–8 the quotation of Isa 6:9–10 is linked to the unbelief of the Jews and the acceptance of the Gentiles. vv. 41–3, it is possible that John, like Isaiah, alludes to a proclamation among Gentiles (cf. v. 20), with the regret that so many Jews (and probably even Christians) do not dare to confess Jesus because of both fear of the authorities (cf. a similar remark in 9:22), and vain human glory (cf. 5:44). In v. 41 John has a wording that recalls the targum on Isa 6:1–5, where it is said that the prophet saw only 'the glory in the *shekina* of the King of the *aeons*'. The glory of God in v. 41 may be either that of the pre-existent Christ, or better, an anticipation of the glory that Jesus has come to reveal (cf. Abraham's joy to see Jesus' day in 8:56). vv. 44–50, without indication of time and place Jesus suddenly cries aloud as in 7:28, 37. These verses could have come as part of the scene described in 12:20–36, but they are here integrated into the author's general commentary on the first part of his work. In connection with the two quotations from Isaiah Jesus speaks of faith and unbelief. vv. 44–6, Jesus sums up what he has said earlier on his being sent as the light into this world (cf. 1:5; 8:12; 12:35–6). A new theme in v. 45 is the link established between seeing Jesus and seeing the Father (also in 14:9 and cf. 13:20). In v. 46 those who believe in Jesus are now assured that they will not remain in the darkness. vv. 47–8, those who do not believe are said to be judged not by Jesus but by his words at the last judgement (cf. 3:18; 5:24). vv. 49–50, Jesus stresses once more that what he says comes from the Father (cf. 5:30; 7:16–17). This could be compared with what is said about the 'prophet like [Moses]': 'I will put my words in the mouth of the prophet, who shall speak to them everything that I command' (Deut 18:18). 'Eternal life' is the goal of believers, as in 5:24 and 6:54.

Second Book: Jesus Reveals the Glory of his Death and Resurrection to the Disciples
(13:19–21:25)

(13:1–30) Jesus Washes the Feet of his Disciples and Points out the Traitor A kind of rereading of 13:1–14:31 seems to have been at

the origin of the new well-composed unity of 13:1–17:26. One can distinguish five subdivisions (see, among others, Schnackenburg 1977–9: ii): Jesus' last meal (13:1–30), the first part of his discourse (13:31–14:31), the second part of his discourse (15:1–16:4a), the third part of his discourse (16:4b–33), and finally his prayer to the Father (17:1–26). The first and the second part correspond respectively to the fifth and the fourth, with the third at the centre of the whole concentric structure. The passage on the last meal can in turn be divided into five items: the introduction (vv. 1–5), the dialogue between Jesus and Peter (vv. 6–11), the footwashing as an example (vv. 12–17), Jesus' words about the disciples (vv. 18–20), Jesus' designation of the traitor (vv. 21–30). In the Synoptics the last supper is a passover and eucharistic meal, without footwashing and without longer discourses (with the exception of Lk 22:25–38). It is possible that the concentration on the footwashing made it difficult for John also to have a eucharistic meal. He does not agree with the Synoptics on the date of the Passover, since in his gospel Jesus' death takes place on the day of Preparation, when the Passover lambs are slaughtered (cf. Jn 19:31, 36; cf. Ex 12:21, 46). In ch. 6 he has inserted his own conception of the eucharist, possibly in a second edition of the gospel.

The footwashing in John is not a symbol for the institution of the eucharist, but it is similarly linked with Jesus' sacrificial death. A cosmic drama is described in connection with the festival of the Passover: Jesus who has come from the Father and will return to him has loved his disciples to the end, as is shown by the symbolic action of the footwashing. But Judas leaves the circle of disciples in order to betray his master (cf. Richter 1967).

(13:1–5) In a skilful way the evangelist combines the introduction to the second book (v. 1) with the introduction to the footwashing (vv. 2–3). In the Greek text vv. 1–4 can be taken as a single long sentence, in view of the double *eidōs* ('knowing') in vv. 1 and 3. It is in the light of Jesus' close knowledge of his Father's purpose that we have to consider the meaning of the footwashing. The Son's Passover is 'to pass over' from this world to the Father from whom he came. The footwashing has therefore a soteriological aspect. vv. 1–3, v. 1 points forwards to the cross, whereas v. 2 underlines how Jesus' love for his disciples is really *eis telos*, which means both 'to the end' and 'perfect'. This is realized

both in the footwashing and in the acceptance of imminent death. In v. 2 the aorist *genomenou* is a variant reading for the present *ginomenou*. It is the more difficult reading, but can be translated '[as the meal] had already begun'. The link between the footwashing and Jesus' death is stressed by the mention of Judas's betrayal. The Father has given all things into Jesus' hands because he loves him (3:35). Nobody can snatch them out of his or his Father's hands (10:28–9). vv. 4–5, after the first three theological verses the evangelist describes what Jesus actually did. That he takes off (Gk. *tithesin*) his outer robe may be an allusion to the good shepherd who lays down (*tithesin*) his life for the sheep (10:11). Footwashing was a sign of hospitality (cf. Lk 7:44), but normally it was the servants who performed the act and not their master (cf. *Jos. Asen* 7.1).

(13:6–11) In a dialogue with Peter we get a first approach to the meaning of the footwashing. Peter, disciple from the beginning (1:40–4), confesses that Jesus is the Holy One (6:67–8.). In chs. 18–21 he has a prominent place, but his insight is sometimes deficient compared with that of the disciple whom Jesus loves. In ch. 13 we have a similar lack of understanding. The dialogue with Jesus prepares for the prophecy of Peter's defection in 13:36–8. vv. 6–8, in 2:22 and 12:16 the evangelist underlined that the disciples would understand after Jesus' resurrection. Now the Lord seems to say that even his explanation in 13:12–20 will later on require a deeper understanding. Since Jesus in 14:3 refers to the place he will prepare for them, the 'share' (Gk. *meros*) might allude to that which Peter will have with the Father (cf. 17:24). vv. 9–11, because Peter does not understand the deeper meaning of the footwashing he asks for more washing, a misunderstanding similar to those we have met in chs. 3 and 4. In v. 10 JB and TOB omit, with some ancient authorities, 'except for the feet'. But the longer reading accepted in NRSV is probably original, since the difficult text invited copyists to omit the words. How ought one to understand 'one who has bathed'? In my opinion it is primarily an allusion to the Jewish bath before the festival of the Passover (cf. 11:55 and 13:1). Those who have already purified themselves by a bath need now only a footwashing, as is normal when one is received at a Jewish home. By association Jesus passes from bodily to moral cleanness, which allows him to implicate Judas. The sharing with Jesus mentioned in v. 8 and the explanation given in vv. 12–15 invite

the reader also to associate the footwashing with Christian baptism.

(13:12–17) Jesus gives a fuller explanation of the footwashing as an expression of his own love (cf. vv. 1–3), and as an example for later disciples. In these verses there are several contacts with synoptic sayings (Mk 10:42–5; Lk 6:40; 22:27; Mt 10:24). vv. 12–14, in John *kyrios*, ‘Lord’, is often nearly synonymous with ‘teacher’. But in the passages after the resurrection and in 6:23 and 11:2 it designates the risen Lord. Jesus uses a typical argument *a fortiori*: what the person of higher status has done must also be practised by the one of lower status. v. 15, this is the only time Jesus calls one of his actions an ‘example’ to follow. In the changed social circumstances of the church, footwashing was practised only sporadically. It seems therefore to have been understood more as a spiritual example. vv. 16–17, John uses the word ‘messenger’ (*apostolos*) only here, but he has a developed theology of mission: Jesus who has been sent by his Father sends his disciples into the world in order to lead the believers to the Father (Dewailly 1969). ‘If you know these things’ is probably a commentary not only on v. 16 but on the meaning of the footwashing.

(13:18–20) Jesus speaks of both the traitor and the sending of his disciples. vv. 18–19, the treason of Judas preoccupies the evangelist (see vv. 2 and 10; cf. 6:70). He indicates two motives why Jesus chose him: the first is that the Scripture must be fulfilled, the second is that Jesus’ prophetic knowledge about Judas will help the disciples to believe. The quotation of Ps 41:10 belongs to the passion narrative (Mk 14:18), but is here adapted to the context, differing both from MT and LXX. For the formula ‘I am’, see JN 8:24. v. 20, this verse continues the reflection in v. 16. The evangelist has often expressed the intimate connection between the Father and the Son, e.g. in 5:17–30; 7:17–18 and 12:44–50. It is therefore not surprising that whoever receives Jesus receives the Father. In 14:9 the same idea is expressed with other words: to see the Son is to see the Father.

(13:21–30) Jesus points out the traitor, who in turn leaves the group of disciples. vv. 21–2, the solemn announcement of the betrayal is similar to that in the Synoptics (Mk 14:18 par.), but John introduces the whole scene by indicating for the third time how Jesus is troubled before his passion (cf. 11:33; 12:27). vv. 23–5, the beloved

disciple, who is explicitly introduced here for the first time (cf. 19:26; 20:2; 21:7), is asked to mediate Simon’s question to Jesus, whereas in Mk 14:19 and Mt 26:22 each disciple asks Jesus directly. vv. 26–7, Mk 14:20 par. probably describes the special passover ceremony of dipping into the same bowl of spices, whereas in John it is the eating of an ordinary piece of bread (cf. v. 18), which in this gospel alone Jesus hands over to Judas. The Hebrew *sātān* (‘the adversary’; cf. Job 1–2) is elsewhere in John replaced by the Greek *diabolos* (‘devil’, in 6:70; 8:44; 13:2), or by ‘the ruler of this world’ (12:31; 14:30; 16:11). vv. 28–9, as some disciples misunderstand Jesus’ words in v. 27 (‘do quickly what you are going to do’), the drama increases. v. 30, because Jesus is often described in John as the light of this world, Judas’s departure during the night has probably a symbolic meaning.

(13:31–14:31) The First Part of the Farewell Discourse Both in Greek and Jewish literature there is a special genre called ‘testaments’ (see e.g. Plato’s *Phaedo*, Paul’s speech in Acts 20:17–35, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*). Before his death the hero foresees his friends’ sorrow but encourages them to be united in love and to keep his message. In 13:33 we have a main outline of the first discourse: the disciples cannot follow now, which is shown in 13:36–8; in 14:1–14 Jesus announces that he is going to the Father; in 14:15–24 he indicates how the Holy Spirit, the risen Christ, and the Father will later on be with the disciples. The whole discourse is introduced by Jesus’ announcement of his departure, and is concluded by different logia on the Spirit and on peace. The text is wrestling with the difficult question of God’s presence with the disciples after Jesus’ departure. In contrast to the reciprocal love between the Father, the Son, and the disciples, the text describes the powerless hostility of the ruler of this world (see JN 14:30–1). The discourse is interrupted by different interventions of Peter, Thomas, Philip, and Judas (not Iscariot).

(13:31–8) Jesus Announces his Departure and Peter’s Future Defection vv. 31–2, the aorists in these verses make Jesus speak retrospectively at the time of fulfilment. The omission of v. 32a in important MSS is probably due to the similar endings *en autō*. The evangelist wants to impress his reader through repetitions of the same theme. In 11:4 he underlined how the Son of God was glorified through the illness of Lazarus. In 12:23, 27–8 Jesus spoke to the crowds about the arrival of his hour of glorification.

Now, when Judas has left, he says the same thing to his disciples. In 17:1–5, in his prayer to the Father, he will be much more explicit: the Father has given him authority over all people through the glorification on the cross; the Father is glorified by the work the Son has accomplished, and he will glorify his Son with the glory he had before the world existed. In 13:31–2 part of this is expressed only briefly. In the Johannine use of *doxazō* ('glorify') there is a subtle combination of the Greek *doxa*, 'honour', and the Hebrew *kābōd* ('glory'). Through his resurrection Jesus elevated on the cross is both honoured and glorified with his Father. v. 33, 'Little children' is not employed elsewhere in the gospel, but is usual in 1 John. This affectionate designation prepares the personal message on love in vv. 34–5. Jesus' time on earth can be called short in comparison with his eternal stay with the Father (cf. 7:33; 14:19; 16:16–19). The words to the Jews to which Jesus refers (7:33 and 8:21–30) function differently for the disciples, because the latter will be able to follow him later on (14:3). vv. 34–5, the departure makes Jesus think of the task the disciples will have in the world (see JN 13:6–11 on the meaning of the footwashing). In John the 'commandment' (Gk. *entolē*) in the singular is used for the mission Jesus received from his Father (10:18; 12:49–50), or for his assignment to the disciples (13:34; 15:12). In the plural it specifies Jesus' or his Father's prescriptions (14:15, 21; 15:10). The love commandment is 'new' in that the reciprocal love is founded on Jesus' own love (13:1–4; cf. 1 Jn 2:8; 2 Jn 5). In 15:9–12 it will even be based on the love of the Father for Jesus. In our text the reciprocal 'glorification' of the Father and the Son is the background for the love between the disciples. John has nothing to say about the love of one's enemies (Mt 5:43–8; Lk 6:27–8). It is possible that the word 'new' also alludes to the new covenant mentioned in Lk 22:20 and 1 Cor 11:25, with its OT link to Jer 31:31–4. For the Jews a commandment is normally associated with a covenant. Jesus' love unto death is in that sense the starting-point of a renewed covenant. vv. 36–8, Peter takes up what Jesus said in v. 33. This gives the Master an opportunity to touch upon the theme 'to follow'. In the first instance Peter will not lay down his life for his master but deny him three times (cf. 18:17; 25–7). According to 16:32 all the disciples will abandon Jesus. But afterwards Peter will follow him unto death (21:18–19). Jesus' prediction is part of the synoptic tradition (Mk 14:29 par.), but John alone alludes to Peter's future perfect discipleship.

(14:1–14) Jesus is Going to his Father v. 1, as the imperative is used in 1a, both occurrences of *pisteuete* in 1b are probably to be taken as in the imperative (as NRSV) rather than the present indicative, just as in v. 11. v. 2, the 'many dwelling places' (Gk. *monai pollai*) resemble those found in 1 Enoch 39:4; 45:3; 2 Enoch 61:1 ff., and other Jewish texts, but distinctively the evangelist does not insist on the different kinds of dwellings in heaven. The main point for Jesus is 'abiding' (Gk. *menō*) in his Father's house (cf. 2:16). In v. 2a one can translate the Greek *hoti* with 'for': 'if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go', or better as NRSV with 'that' ('if it were not so would I have told you that I go...?'). Jesus then alludes to what he has already said about his special way to the Father (cf. also 12:26), a theme he will develop in vv. 4–12. v. 3, the first Christians expected Jesus to return at the end of time. The evangelist anticipates this return in the spiritual presence of the risen Lord among his disciples (cf. vv. 15–23). There are some points of contact between this verse and 1 Thess 4:16–17 where Jesus will descend from heaven to meet the faithful, and all finally 'will be with the Lord for ever'. Perhaps John suggests that Jesus' return takes place in a sense when disciples die. vv. 4–5, Jesus describes the way to the goal he has proposed in vv. 1–3. Thomas, who in 11:16 did not fully understand Jesus' purpose, even now hesitates about the goal and the way of which Jesus speaks. v. 6, this verse does not mark out Jesus' identity, but it describes who he ought to be for the faithful disciples: a leader on the way which leads to eternal life with the Father, because Jesus himself has revealed the truth he has learned from him. v. 7, most MSS have pluperfect in both verbs of 7a, indicating a condition contrary to the facts: 'If you had known me, you would have known...'. This variant, which is accepted in TOB, seems to have arisen under the influence of 8:19. Therefore the reading adopted in NRSV, with a perfect and a future tense ('if you know me, you will know...'), seems to be preferable, even if there are fewer witnesses in its favour. Those who see Jesus by faith can see the Father who has sent him (cf. 6:40; 12:45). v. 8, Philip is naïve when he thinks that he can already see God's glory (cf. the similar demand of Moses in Ex 33:18). vv. 9–11, Jesus once again explains the special relationship between himself and the Father: to see or to hear Jesus is to see or to hear the Father. In a more ontological meaning Jesus is in the Father and the Father in him. Even his works manifest his deep link

with the Father. In short, his whole person is a revelation from the Father (cf. 3:34; 7:17–18; 8:28; 12:45, 49). vv. 12–14, the works of the disciples presuppose Jesus' missionary activity (cf. ch. 4 and 12:20–6) and his glorification with the Father. They are 'greater' only because they are done in the name of Jesus. Several ancient versions and some MSS omit v. 14, either by accident or because it was considered as a repetition of v. 13. Moreover it could be thought to contradict 16:23. In the different farewell discourses the words 'in my name' are used five out of seven times in connection with prayer. On three occasions Jesus speaks of prayer in his name: here, in 15:16, and in 16:23–6. In this text Jesus underlines the importance of faith and of his departure to the Father. In the second text he speaks of the missionary work of the disciples, and in the third of their prayer after his resurrection. Here Jesus is the one who hears the prayer, in the two other texts it is the Father. In his own prayer Jesus replaces the formula 'in my name' with 'in your name' (17:11–12, cf. 17:6, 26). There is therefore a close link between the names of Jesus and of his Father, just as there is a reciprocal relationship between the Son and the Father. In the synoptic material we have only one explicit text about prayer in the name of Jesus (Mt 18:19–20), but in Acts the disciples baptize and do miracles 'in his name'.

(14:15–24) The Holy Spirit, the Risen Christ, and the Father will be with the Disciples Soon After Jesus' Glorification v. 15, the imperative *tērēsate* ('keep!') is well attested in the MSS but fits the context less well than the future *tērēsete* ('you will keep'), accepted by NRSV from several important witnesses. Jesus underlines that to keep his commandments is to remain in his love. On 'commandment' (*entolē*) in the plural, see JN 13:34. vv. 16–17, one can distinguish five passages on the Helper: here, 14:26; 15:26–7; 16:7–11; 16:13–17, all well integrated in their context. The word *paraklētos* is a verbal adjective, often used of one called to help in a lawcourt. In the Jewish tradition the word was transcribed with Hebrew letters and used for angels, prophets, and the just as advocates before God's court. The word also acquired the meaning of 'one who consoles' (cf. Job 16:2, Theodotion's and Aquila's translations; the LXX has the correct word *paraklētores*). It is probably wrong to explain the Johannine *paraklētos* on the basis of only one religious background. The word is filled with a complex meaning: the Spirit replaces Jesus, is an advocate and a witness,

but also consoles the disciples. He encourages them to remember Jesus' work and leads them into the whole truth. He has his own personality (see Johansson 1940; Betz 1963; Franck 1985). In this text the Spirit of truth is considered as 'another Advocate' (or better, 'Helper'), with an allusion to Johannine traditions where Jesus himself is the first advocate with his Father (1 Jn 2:1). The Helper is a Spirit of truth, as in 16:13. In 1 Jn 5:6 the Spirit is simply identified with truth, because he is a witness (cf. Jn 15:26). He is naturally dependent on Jesus who is the truth (14:6), i.e. the revelation from the Father. The Spirit of truth in John has often been compared with the same phrase used in Qumran texts (1QS 3:18; 4:23). But there he is a spiritual force who influences man's moral dispositions, whereas in John the Spirit mediates truth. Still the fight of Beliar against the angelic figure of truth in 1QS 3:18–4:26 is similar to that of the 'world' which refuses to accept the revelation of God's truth in Jesus. In ch. 14 it is the Father who gives the Spirit at the demand of Jesus (vv. 16 and 24), whereas in chs. 15 and 16 Jesus himself sends the Spirit (15:26; 16:7). But as the Father sends the Spirit in Jesus' name (14:26) one can say that even in ch. 14 the Spirit is implicitly sent by Jesus. After the Master's departure the Helper will be permanently with the disciples. vv. 18–21, Jesus comments on the 'little while' (13:33) when the world will no longer see him. The disciples will in the near future see the risen Christ and understand their reciprocal indwelling and love, but also the love from the Father. There is a parallelism between vv. 15–17 on the Helper and vv. 18–21 on Jesus: the world cannot receive the Spirit (v. 17a) and cannot see Jesus (v. 19a). The disciples on the contrary know the Spirit who abides in them (v. 17b), just as they have their life in Jesus (v. 19b). Those who love Jesus keep his commandments (v. 15), and conversely those who keep his commandments love him (v. 21a). The evangelist is convinced that the Spirit is given after Jesus' glorification. In a certain sense Jesus himself returns with the Helper. But the disciples will also have the joy of meeting him as the risen Christ. The Father's and Jesus' love to which they will respond by their own love will be a new presence of Jesus. It is possible that the evangelist even has the definitive return of Christ in mind (cf. JN 14:1–3). Augustine expresses this paradox nicely: 'Now we love when we are believing in what we shall see; but then we shall love when we see what we have believed in' (*In Johannem*, 75:4). vv. 22–4, Judas seems to misunderstand the word 'reveal'

and thinks that Jesus is speaking of a public manifestation. Perhaps the evangelist is reflecting the problem of why the risen Christ was seen only by the disciples (cf. Acts 10:40–2). Jesus answers indirectly by repeating what he has said on love in vv. 15 and 21, but now he adds that the Father will also be with them. Since ‘the Word became flesh and lived among us’ (1:14) the Father and the Son are both present with those who receive the revelation in faith and love. They worship God in spirit and truth (4:24). But those who do not love Jesus and his commandments also reject the Father who has sent him.

(14:25–31) These verses round off the first farewell discourse by adding new material. v. 25, ‘I have said these things to you’ occurs six other times: in 15:11; 16:1, 4, 6, 25, 33. Normally the formula concludes a passage, either directly as in 16:4, 33, or indirectly by introducing a summary of what has been said (here; in 15:11; 16:1, 25). In 16:1–4 and 25–33 the formula is repeated in order to frame a passage. v. 26, the ‘Holy Spirit’ is mentioned in 1:33 and 20:22, but only here is he identified with the Helper. As a teacher the Helper is entirely dependent on what Jesus has said (cf. 16:13). v. 27, in the OT friends who are parting wish each other peace (e.g. 1 Sam 20:42; 29:6–7). Jacob blesses his sons at the end of his farewell speech (Gen 49:28). The peace that Jesus gives to his disciples is a kind of blessing, anticipating the peace he will give after his resurrection (20:19, 21, 26), when the disciples will receive the Holy Spirit (20:22). In this way the evangelist stresses the spiritual presence of Jesus and his Spirit among his disciples. This prevents their hearts from being troubled, something the *Pax Romana* was not able to do. vv. 28–9, a new aspect in this summary is that the disciples ought to rejoice at Jesus’ departure, because the Father is greater (cf. 10:29). This caused problems when the patristic writers discussed the relationship between Jesus and his Father. John often stresses that the Father and the Son have everything in common and love each other, but still the Father is the origin of the Son’s sending and is also the goal of his mission. vv. 30–1, as in 12:31 the ruler of this world is mentioned, but Jesus underlines that he is powerless before the Son’s loving obedience to his Father. The final words indicate that the (first) discourse is concluded.

(15:1–16:4a) The Second Part of the Farewell Discourse The actual farewell situation that has

dominated 13:31–14:31 is suddenly interrupted in ch. 15, where the timeless union between the Master and his disciples is in the foreground. Perhaps this is a later insertion, added when the community reflected on its union with Christ. There was in ch. 6 (which might also have been added later) a subtle allusion to the eucharist. The parable concerning the vine leads the thought in the same direction. In Mk 14:25 par. Jesus says: ‘Truly I tell you, I will never again drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom.’ John seems to have meditated on this text and the significance of the eucharist. The believer has to eat the bread from heaven in order to live for ever (6:58–9). In a similar way he has to abide in Jesus the true vine, if he wants to bear fruit. But still there is no precise indication here of the eucharist itself. The text in 15:1–16:4 has been subtly adapted to the context. The commandment to love in 15:11–17 has been touched upon in 13:34 and 14:15, 20–1. The answering of prayer in 15:7, 16 has its counterpart in 14:13–14, while the complete joy in 15:11 will be referred to again in 16:24. The world’s hatred mentioned in 15:18–16:4 has been touched on in 14:17–27 and will be taken up again in Jesus’ prayer in 17:14–16. What is said about the Helper in 15:26–7 naturally has connections with the other four mentions of him (14:16–17, 26; 16:7–11, 13–15). This shows that the text has been reworked to fit into the larger arrangement of chs. 13–17. Above I have suggested that it is in the centre of the whole composition, which would not be surprising if it echoes a profound reflection on the meaning of the eucharist. The text is well structured: the first part on love (15:1–17) starts with the short parable of the vine and its explanation in vv. 1–10, which is further developed in vv. 11–17. The second part on hatred (15:18–16:4a) describes the world’s hatred (vv. 18–25) and the Helper’s testimony (vv. 26–7), and concludes in 16:1–4a. There are many similar texts in the Synoptics: on the vine (Mk 12:1–12 par.; Mt 20:1–16; 21:28–32; Lk 13:6–9) and a number of logia: the hatred of the world (Mk 13:13 par.); the servant and his master (Mt 10:24); the Spirit who witnesses (Mk 13:11 par.); the disciples who witness (Mk 13:9 par.); the disciples who are killed (Mk 13:12 par.).

(15:1–10) The Parable on the True Vine Explained by the Master In ch. 10 we saw how Jesus in the parable of the sheepfold identified himself with both the gate and the good shepherd. In the parable of the vine we meet the

same technique, but this time the identification in vv. 1 and 5*a* frames the parable. Unlike the synoptic tradition the Johannine parable (Heb. *māsāl*) mixes up the explanation with the narration. vv. 1–5*a*, whereas Jesus in v. 1 presents himself as the true vine and his Father as the vinegrower, in v. 5*a* he underlines the link between himself, the vine, and his disciples who are the branches. Subtly Jesus moves from the cleansing of the branches by his Father (vv. 1–2) and by his own proclamation (v. 3) to their abiding in him (v. 4). There is in the Greek a wordplay between ‘he removes’ (*airei*), ‘he prunes’ (*kathairei*) and ‘you have been cleansed’ (*katharoi este*). In spite of the use of the designation of Israel as the true vine in Jer 2:21 (LXX), it is more probable that the evangelist wants in v. 1 to contrast Jesus as the true vine to Israel which has been deceitful (cf. Isa 5:1–7; Borig 1967). In v. 4 the reciprocal indwelling of Jesus and his disciples leads to the description of the negative consequence if they live apart from him. vv. 5*b*–10, in v. 5*b* Jesus reformulates what he said in v. 4. In v. 6 we get the negative picture of one who does not abide in Jesus: he is thrown away, withers, and is burnt, probably an allusion to the last judgement (cf. Mk 9:43–7 par.). In vv. 7–8 the abiding of the disciples in Jesus leads to two positive consequences: the efficacy of their prayer and the glorification of the Father. In vv. 9–10 the theocentric aspect of the parable is stressed: the disciples’ love is rooted in the reciprocal love of the Son and his Father. Thus the parable of the vine visualizes different subjects and objects of love (from the Father to the Son, from the Son to the disciples, from the disciples to the Son and the Father) which have already been touched upon.

(15:11–17) These verses underline the commandment of love, in connection with the parable of the vine. The evangelist seems to have taken vv. 7–10 as his model, but in reverse direction: vv. 12 and 14 take up the link between love and obedience to Jesus’ commandments, as in v. 10. In v. 15 the Father and Jesus’ love for his disciples are mentioned, as in v. 9. In v. 16 we have the combination of prayer and bearing fruit as in vv. 7–8. v. 11 seems to be at the centre of the whole passage (i.e. vv. 1–17), with the mention of joy in connection with reciprocal love (cf. above 14:28). But at the same time the formula, ‘I have said these things’ separates vv. 12–17 from vv. 1–10. Twice Jesus speaks of his commandment to love one another (vv. 12, 17). In v. 12 Jesus’ love is indicated as model and

ground (‘as I have loved you’). v. 13 describes Jesus’ own sacrificial attitude (cf. 13:1), an example for his friends (v. 14). In vv. 15–16 the Master stresses his sovereign choice of disciples (cf. 6:70; 13:18), whom he calls his ‘friends’. In the OT Abraham and Moses are God’s friends (Isa 41:8; Ex 33:11). Philo calls wise men ‘friends of God’ and not his slaves (*De Migr. Abr.* 45; *Leg. All.* 3:1). Jesus’ gift implies an obligation on the disciples to bear fruit. Just as in vv. 12–17, the reciprocal love between disciples in 1 John is seen as a consequence of God’s love (e.g. 1 Jn 2:29; 3:7, 11, 18, 22–3; 5:2–4).

(15:18–16:4*a*) The Disciples are Warned against the World’s Hatred; but are at the same time encouraged by the Helper’s testimony and Jesus’ words. 15:18–25, the ‘world’ has different meanings in John: it is created by God’s Word (1:10) and is the object of his love (3:16–17; 17:18); it needs Jesus as its Saviour (4:42). But when it refuses God’s revelation it is considered as hostile. The evangelist underlines the relationship between Jesus and the disciples in a future missionary situation. They must then remember that they are meeting the same hatred that Jesus and his Father have met (vv. 18–19). Though they have just been called ‘friends’ (v. 15) they are still servants who must share their master’s lot (v. 20; cf. 13:16). There is perhaps a slight irony in v. 20*b*: they will keep your words as well (and as badly) as they kept my words. Already in the synoptic tradition the logion on the master and his servants is linked to a situation of persecution (Mk 13:13 par.), but John adds to it his specific theme about the world’s ignorance (v. 21). In vv. 22–5 Jesus sums up the confrontation he had had on the festival of Booths (chs. 7–8). Behind these verses one can imagine the harsh discussions which the Christians had with the ‘Jews’ who excluded them from their synagogues (cf. 16:1–4). The disciples are to be encouraged by the fact that they will meet the same difficulties as their master. In v. 24 the accusative object of ‘they have seen’ is probably the ‘works’ (not ‘me and my Father’). In v. 25 Jesus uses the word ‘law’ for the scriptures, and moreover keeps his distance by calling it ‘your’ law (cf. 8:17; 10:34). The ‘fulfilment’ quotation is probably taken from Ps 69:5 (= Ps 35:19), since this psalm is alluded to also in Jn 2:17 and 19:28. 15:26–7, unlike the two first logia on the Helper, this logion seems to interrupt the flow of thought. The remark on the exclusion from the synagogues in 16:1–4 would be a natural continuation of 15:22–5. Nevertheless one should

remember that the Helper comes in order to remind the disciples of Jesus. Here his witness confirms the words and works mentioned in vv. 22–5. John's gospel gave rise to a dogmatic dispute concerning the introduction in the west of the *filioque* in the Nicene Creed. The eastern church insisted on the fact that in v. 26 the Spirit of truth 'comes from' (*ekporeuetai*) the Father, whereas the western church underlined that both the Father (14:16, 26) and the Son (15:26; 16:7) 'send' (*pempō*) the Helper. In v. 27 the evangelist stresses the importance of the disciples' witness in connection with that of the Spirit. 16:1–4a, the future exclusion from the synagogue was alluded to in 9:22 and 12:42, but now it is Jesus himself who foretells it in order to help his disciples. We have met a similar positive motive concerning Jesus' predictions in 13:19 and 14:29. In the synoptic tradition Jesus prophesies that his disciples will be persecuted (see Mk 13:3–13 par; Mt 10:16–42). But there the disciples will be brought to trial and will be beaten in synagogues, whereas in John they will be *excluded* from the synagogue, which probably marks a later time (see also above on 9:18–23). The 'Jews' think that they are worshipping God by killing the disciples (v. 2), but ironically enough it is the disciples who will worship him. The reason for the persecutors' shortcomings is their lack of knowledge of God and of Jesus. In v. 4a 'their', which is found in many MSS and is accepted in TOB and NRSV, is probably original; it has been omitted in some MSS because of another 'their' in v. 4b. The expression 'their time' is similar to 'your hour' in Lk 22:53.

(16:4b–33) The Third Part of the Farewell Discourse In 16:4b–33 the reader is called back to the farewell perspective of 13:31–14:31, but he is also reminded of the hostile world which was condemned in 15:18–27. Before his departure Jesus tries to console his disciples by speaking of the joy that they will receive from the Helper. The difficult time they have to go through can be compared with a woman's labour, but when the child is born, the feeling of joy entirely dominates. This section repeats things that have been treated in ch. 14, but adds some new aspects. The Helper now has a clear forensic function that he did not have before. The short time mentioned in 14:19 is developed in 16:16 into two different periods. The author also recalls the world's hatred that was discussed in 15:18–25. Since the dominant aspect of this section is consolation, one can rightly call it a 'speech of consolation before Jesus' departure'.

For the community after Easter it is also an important encouragement in their missionary work (see Painter 1980–1).

One can distinguish four parts: (1) In vv. 4b–11 the same question is dealt with as in 14:1–12, but as if it had not been spoken of before. Concerning sin, righteousness, and judgement the Helper will have a threefold indictment against the world. (2) In vv. 12–15 we meet the same encouragement about the Spirit of truth as in 14:25–6. (3) In vv. 16–24 the short time mentioned in 14:18–21 is developed with more details. It is concluded with a logion on prayer that reminds us of 14:13–14 (4) vv. 25–33 are framed by the words, 'I have said these things [or this] to you'. We get a clear conclusion here both for vv. 4b–24 and for the two first parts of the farewell discourse. Logia on prayer and on peace, which have already occurred in ch. 14, are added and prepare the reader for the Son's prayer in ch. 17.

(16:4b–11) Jesus' Departure and the Helper's Mission v. 4b, by retaining 'from the beginning' from 15:27 and by changing 'you have been with me' to 'I was with you', the author (or a redactor) links the second and third parts together. vv. 5–6, the new discourse seems to ignore that in 13:26–14:11 Peter, Thomas, and Philip have already put questions to Jesus. In v. 6 the word *hupē*, 'sorrow', is introduced for the first time in John and will be taken up in 16:20–2, where the theme of joy is also developed. The main purpose of the new speech is to console the disciples in their sorrow. vv. 7–11, the Helper comes to replace Jesus who goes to his Father. As in 14:27–8 the disciples are asked to rejoice in Jesus' departure (v. 7). A special reason for this might be that the Spirit will first be given after Jesus' resurrection (7:39; cf. 20:17, 22). vv. 8–11, the Helper is an advocate for the disciples whom he consoles, but an accuser and a judge in a trial against the world. In 15:26–7 the logion about the Helper interrupted the development on the world's hatred. In 16:8–11 the Helper is more specifically the one who accuses the world. The Greek word *elengchō* in v. 8 has a general meaning of 'to show' or 'to prove'. The Helper will accuse the world of unbelief (v. 9), a sin already high-lighted on many occasions (e.g. 1:11; 3:19, 36; 8:24; 10:37–8; 15:22–5). The Master's righteousness will be proved by his glorification (v. 10; cf. 5:30), and his victory is a judgement on the prince of this world (v. 11; cf. 12:31; 14:30; 16:33). We encounter here a cosmic trial against sin and evil. What takes place at the end of

the world in the Synoptics is anticipated already by the action of the Helper in the Fourth Gospel.

(16:12–15) The Spirit as the Disciples' Guide v. 12, The sentence, 'I have many things to say you,' separates the following logia on the 'Spirit of truth' from those on the 'Helper' in vv. 7–11. Since Jesus has not yet been glorified, his disciples cannot bear all he would like to say. vv. 13–15, in vv. 7–11 the 'Helper' was presented as the accuser of the world, now the 'Spirit of truth' is seen in his function of transmitting Jesus' teaching to the disciples. As at 14:26 the Spirit is dependent on what Jesus has said, but now he also will glorify the Son (just as the Father glorifies him). A strong link is established between the Father, the Son, and the Spirit of truth. For the evangelist the 'truth' is that which Jesus has received from his Father (see 14:6). Therefore the 'Spirit of truth' acts in relation to Jesus just as the Father does. The Son has been charged to accomplish the Father's work, but after Jesus' departure the Spirit makes his work present among the disciples, because it is 'the spirit that gives life' (6:63; cf. 1 Jn 3:24; 4:13). But he does not add new revelations to those of Jesus.

(16:16–24) 'The little while' Before and After Jesus' Death In 7:33; 12:35, and 13:33 Jesus has already spoken of the little while he was spending among humankind. According to 14:19 the world, unlike the disciples, would no longer see Jesus. This is developed in a new way here. v. 16, Jesus speaks of two different periods, one before and one after his death. vv. 17–18, with the help of rhetorical repetitions, the evangelist underlines the puzzle of Jesus' saying. vv. 19–22, in a sovereign way Jesus knows what the disciples are discussing. His answer in v. 19 resumes what he already said in v. 16. After a solemn introduction ('very truly') he proclaims that there will be a first period of sorrow for the disciples and of rejoicing for the world, but afterwards a second period when their pain will be changed into permanent joy. In order to illustrate what will happen at his own hour, Jesus alludes to the hour of a woman's labour, an image used in the Synoptics to picture the eschatological afflictions (Mk 13:17 par.; cf. also Isa 66:7–10).

(16:25–33) Conclusion on Love, Prayer, and Peace v. 25, 'I have said these things to you' introduces the end of the third part of the discourse, just as it did in 14:25 for the first part.

The Greek word *paroimia*, 'proverb' or 'figure', was used in 10:6 without further explanation. In 16:26, 29 it is contrasted to 'plainly' (*parrhesiai*), which gives *paroimia* a meaning of 'enigmatic speech'. The Hebrew *māsāl*, which lies behind the synoptic word 'parable', is probably also the background of the Johannine 'figures of speech'. What Jesus has said in enigmatic language will later on be clearer thanks to the gift of the Spirit. vv. 26–7, in 14:13–14; 15:7, 16; 16:23–4 there were similar logia about how the Father or the Son hears the disciples' prayer. Now it is added that the Father himself loves them, just as they love Jesus and believe in him. But even their faith and love are divine gifts. Instead of 'from God' some important MSS read 'from the Father', probably by assimilation to the following verse. v. 28, Jesus sums up what he has already said on different occasions about his coming from the Father and going back to him (see especially the Prologue and chs. 3; 7; 8). vv. 29–30, the disciples misunderstand Jesus' plain speech; thinking that they understand his divine origin, they nevertheless will not accept his painful way back to his Father. Their self-confidence is as exaggerated as that of Peter in 13:36–7. vv. 31–2, Jesus perceives in advance that the disciples will 'be scattered', an allusion to Zech 13:7 ('Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered'), which has already occurred in Jn 10:12. The evangelist seems to know Mk 14:27 par., but forgets that according to his own account the beloved disciple is not 'scattered' with the others (cf. Jn 19:26–7). v. 33, Jesus' prophecy will later on be a consolation for the disciples who abandoned him. As in 14:27 Jesus assures them of his peace despite all the persecutions they will meet. The farewell discourse is concluded with the main motive of consolation for the disciples: their master's victory over the world (cf. 16:11).

(17:1–26) Jesus' Prayer to his Father In the sixteenth century this chapter was for the first time explicitly called *precatio summi sacerdotis*, 'the prayer of the high priest', by D. Chytraeus, but some Church Fathers had already used similar expressions. Yet in John Jesus is not really a high priest as he is in Hebrews, even if his death according to Jn 17:19 is a kind of sacrifice. One can compare Jesus' prayer to Jacob's benediction in Gen 49, to Moses' prayer in Deut 32–3, or to similar prayers in Jewish intertestamental literature (e.g. *Jub.* 1:19–20; 20–2). But in a certain sense Jesus' prayer is unique, since he has already left the world and is coming to his

Father (see Jn 17:11); the prayer has a kind of timeless aspect. Bultmann's (1971) proposal to insert it between 13:1 and 13:30 and other hypotheses of displacement have not been successful.

In the farewell discourse we have on different occasions encountered Jesus' encouragement to his disciples to pray in his name (14:13–14; 15:16; 16:23–6). Jesus' last prayer is directly addressed to the Father and the formula 'in my name' is replaced by 'in your name' (vv. 11–12). It is also the name of the Father that Jesus has made known according to vv. 6, 26. The link between Jesus' name and the Father's name is reinforced, when Jesus in his prayer expresses the reciprocal relationship between himself and his Father.

The words, 'Father, glorify your name', which in 12:27–9 resemble the first demand in the Lord's prayer in Mt 6:9 and Lk 11:2, are further developed here (vv. 1, 6, 11–12, 26). The two last demands of the Lord's prayer are also alluded to in vv. 11 and 15: 'do not bring us into temptation' and 'rescue us from the evil' (or 'the evil one', Mt 6:13; cf. Lk 11:4). Even doing the will of God is hinted at in v. 4 (cf. Walker 1982). Just as in both 11:41–2 and 12:27–9, Jesus expresses in this chapter his profound unity with the Father and his dedication to his mission. In Jesus' prayer we meet the same sovereign attitude as in 13:1–30, with references to what has been said in the farewell discourse. Different literary forms are combined: demands (vv. 1b, 5, 11b, 17, 24), commentaries on prayer (vv. 9–11a, 15–16, 20–1), indications on the presuppositions of prayer (vv. 2, 13, 18–19), a confession of faith (v. 3), summaries on the work Jesus has accomplished on earth (vv. 4, 6–8, 12, 14, 22–3, 25–6a).

There have been many discussions on the structure of Jesus' last prayer (see Schnackenburg 1977–9: iii; Malatesta 1971; Segalla 1983). I am not convinced by the arguments of those who consider some verses as redactional. Segalla is probably right in stressing the missionary aspect in vv. 17–19, but I am sceptical about his rather artificial concentric construction. Therefore I propose the following structure:

1. Jesus asks the Father to be glorified (vv. 1–5).
2. Jesus prays for the disciples (vv. 6–19).
 - a. The disciples have been chosen (vv. 6–11a).
 - b. The disciples are protected (vv. 11b–16).
 - c. The disciples are sanctified (vv. 17–19).
3. Jesus prays for the unity of all the believers (vv. 20–3).
4. Jesus prays for the disciples' love (vv. 24–6).

(17:1–5) Jesus Asks the Father to be Glorified
 Two themes are interwoven: 'glorification' in vv. 1, 4–5 and 'eternal life' in vv. 2–3. v. 1a, the short introduction establishes a link between Jesus' farewell discourse and his last prayer. Probably the whole of ch. 17 was conceived when chs. 15–16 were added to the first part of the farewell discourse. To look up to heaven is a common posture of prayer both in the Jewish and the Graeco-Roman world (cf. also 11:41). v. 1b, the address 'Father' is the same as that in Jesus' prayers in the Synoptics. It will be repeated in vv. 5, 21, 24. In v. 11 the evangelist adds 'holy' and in v. 25 'righteous'. As in 12:23 and 13:1, the 'hour' has come, contrary to what was the case in 2:4; 7:30; 8:20. It is the hour of Jesus' crucifixion and glorification. In 17:1 the Son glorifies the Father as a consequence of being himself glorified, whereas in 13:31 it seems to be the reverse. But the difference is only apparent, as in both passages the accomplishment of Jesus' work is presupposed. It is difficult to decide whether *sou* ('your') after the second *hyios* ('Son') is original or not. v. 2, since v. 5 speaks of Jesus' glory before the world existed, the authority over all people (lit. all flesh) could be from the creation or from his incarnation (cf. 1:1–3, 14). But in the context of the 'hour', it is more normal to think of the crucifixion and the resurrection (11:51–2; 12:32; cf. also 5:20–7). The Greek *pan ho*, 'all that', corresponds to Hebrew *kol āšer*, and denotes 'humankind' that has been given to Jesus. The evangelist often underlines that it is the Father who is the origin of all gifts to Jesus (cf. 3:35; 5:22–7; 6:37; 12:49; 17:6, 8, 11–12, 22). v. 3, on 'eternal life', see Jn 3:15. Because this verse is a kind of confession of faith, many commentators consider it a later addition, but the style is typically Johannine and the verse fits well into the context. In 5:44 Jesus confessed his Jewish faith in 'the one who alone is God' (cf. Isa 37:20). Despite its very high Christology, the Fourth Gospel remains in the framework of monotheism (Hartman 1987). vv. 4–5, whereas vv. 2–3 describe the importance of Jesus' work for humanity, vv. 1, 4–5 deal with different aspects of Jesus' and his Father's glorification. v. 4 redefines Jesus' work on earth as a glorification of his Father; v. 5 resumes the perspective of divine preexistence in the Prologue (cf. 1:1–3).

(17:6–11a) The Disciples have been Chosen
 All those whom the Son has received from his Father (see vv. 2–3) are in vv. 6–19 described as disciples, and in vv. 20–3 as future believers. v. 6, probably there is an allusion to the Lord's

prayer, 'hallowed be your name'. In v. 26 the same idea is expressed with 'I made your name known'. In the OT the Lord's name remains enigmatic (e.g. Ex 3:14), but Isa 52:6 promises that 'my people shall know my name'. According to 1:18 no one has ever seen God, but the Son has made the Father known. Likewise in 1:11–12 there is a sharp contrast between the world and those who belong to Jesus. vv. 7–9, before the explicit demand in vv. 11b–19, Jesus summarizes in vv. 6–11a his work among the disciples. They have been given to him by his Father (vv. 6, 9) and, quite differently from the audiences in 8:21–9 and 10:22–39, they have believed that he and his words came from God. This positive description, which contradicts 16:32, presupposes a post-resurrection perspective. It is also after Jesus' departure that the disciples will meet difficulties in their mission in the world in which they remain. vv. 10–11a, as in 16:15 and in ch. 10 Jesus stresses his strong links with the Father to whom he soon will return.

(17:11b–16) The Disciples are Protected Two verbs in the imperative punctuate Jesus' prayer for the disciples: 'protect' (v. 11b) and 'sanctify' (v. 17). They will be continued by the demand for all believers 'to be one' (v. 21). The three expressions are close to one another and encourage the readers to keep together communities that are threatened from the outside (cf. 1 Jn 2:24; 3:11–24). v. 11b, the adjective 'holy' is used only here for the Father (otherwise for the Spirit). It prepares the reader for what in vv. 17–19 will be said about the sanctification of Jesus and the disciples. In the Greek text the sing. *hōi* ('the name that you have given me') is probably original. The reading pl. *hous* ('the disciples that you have given me') is probably due to the influence of v. 6. As Jesus has revealed the Father's name, one can also say that this has been given to the Son. In other texts Jesus' (13:34–5; 15:12) or the Father's (15:9) love has been presented as the origin and model of human love. Now the unity between the Father and the Son is the fountain-head of the unity among the disciples, as it was in the parable of the vine in ch. 15 (cf. also 17:20–3). v. 12, here also it is the name that has been given, not the disciples. The future protection is similar to that which Jesus himself gave to his disciples. That nevertheless the unnamed disciple could betray his master is explained by a reference to 'the scripture'; this is reminiscent of Ps 41:10 which was quoted in 13:18. The Greek expression

ho hyios tou apōleias, 'son of perdition', is Semitic (cf. 2 Thess 2:3) and suggests perhaps that Satan had an influence on him (cf. 6:70; 13:2, 27). It is even possible that the Johannine community considered Judas as a kind of prototype of the antichrist (cf. 1 Jn 2:18–22; 4:3). vv. 13–16, as in the farewell discourse, Jesus speaks both of the joy he has transmitted to his disciples and of the world's hatred. In the same way as in the last petition of the Lord's prayer, there is an ambiguity as to whether the Greek *ek tou ponērou* in v. 15 means from 'the evil' or 'the evil one', Satan. Since 'the ruler of this world' occurs several times (12:31; 14:30; 16:33), it is probable that it is he who is referred to. vv. 14 and 16 underline that the disciples share their master's fate in their relationship to the world.

(17:17–19) The Disciples are Sanctified The truth that comes from the Father through the Son will be their weapon in missionary work. vv. 17–18, in vv. 14–15 the word of God protected the disciples, but now 'the word of truth' sanctifies them. The meaning of 'sanctify' is determined by the fact that the Father has sent his Son (cf. 10:36). v. 19, the preposition *hyper* ('on behalf of', 'for') and the reflexive *emauton* ('myself') give the word 'sanctify' a meaning other than in v. 17. It now implies a 'sacrifice' for their sake (cf. also 10:11, 15; 15:13). We should remember that the death on the cross will coincide with the sacrifice of the paschal lambs (19:31, 36; cf. 1:29, 36). vv. 20–3, not only the disciples' protection (v. 11), but also the future believers' unity (cf. also 10:16) is important. One can guess that difficulties similar to those described in the Johannine letters are important obstacles to the missionary activity of the church. By showing Jesus at prayer for the future church, the evangelist invites today's reader to apply this prayer to a fragmented church struggling to unite; a kind of fusion takes place between the times of Jesus, the evangelist, and the reader. vv. 20–1 can more easily be applied to future believers than can vv. 22–3. Even in Moses' farewell speech in Deut 29:14–15 there is a distinction between those present and others: 'I am making this covenant, sworn by an oath, not only with you . . . but also with those who are not here with us today.' vv. 22–3, vv. 22b and 23 repeat with some modifications what was said in v. 21. The glorification and the perfect unity are destined for the disciples who will soon gather round the risen Lord. Their unity has its fountain-head in the Father and the Son; as their union is a prototype

of later communities, these are also included in the prayer.

(17:24–6) Jesus Prays for the Disciples' Love
 v. 24, Jesus wants his disciples to share his eternal glory (cf. 14:2–3). A new point is that the Father loved the Son before the creation of the world (cf. also v. 5). The same mystery of Jesus' preexistence is hinted at in the Prologue. In 1 Jn 4:8 'God is love'. The reading *ho*, 'that [which you have given me]' is more difficult and attested in several ancient traditions. It is therefore probably original and has been changed into the easier reading *hous* ('those [whom you have given me]'). But the meaning is nearly the same. vv. 25–6, Jesus returns to the concrete situation in which the disciples are still living. The Father is called righteous, because on the one hand the world already is judged (cf. 16:10–11), and because on the other hand the Father loves the disciples who believe in Jesus' words. The Master sums up what he has already said in vv. 6, 8, 11–12, 23. 'I will make it known' probably alludes to the Helper who comes in Jesus' place (cf. 14:26–7; 16:13–14). In v. 23 the Father's love for Jesus and the disciples was mentioned; in v. 26 the same thing is said in a more expressive way, concluding chs. 13–17. These chapters started with the expression of love in the foot-washing, found their centre in ch. 15 around reciprocal love illustrated by the parable of the vine, and are concluded with a prayer for love before the sacrifice of the passion narrative takes place.

(18:1–19:42) Jesus' Passion, Death, and Burial
 In the four gospels the passion narratives follow a similar structure: arrest, trial before the Jewish and Roman authorities, condemnation, crucifixion, and burial. The four evangelists record the disciples' deceitful behaviour, and specially Judas's treason and Peter's three denials. The Jewish and the Roman officials threaten Jesus, the soldiers mock him as a Jewish king, whip and torment him. But with the help of quotations from the Scriptures, the evangelists underline how Jesus' humiliation fulfils a divine plan. They know that his death will lead to victory on the day of his resurrection. They are believers who transform the cruel story into an edifying narration for the reader. He or she is reminded of the difficulties the disciples meet after their decision to follow Jesus. Judas's treason and Peter's denial are warning examples. That the crowd wants Jesus crucified and the criminal Barabbas released is a tragic fact. But there

are also positive roles which the reader can meditate upon: the women who are present during the crucifixion (in John also Jesus' mother and the beloved disciple); the disciples who bury Jesus with piety; in the Synoptics Simon of Cyrene who bears Jesus' cross, and the centurion who confesses that Jesus was innocent (Luke) or God's Son (Mark–Matthew). The passion narrative is therefore not an ordinary historical account of what happened, even if there are many aspects which can be related to contemporary Roman and Jewish legal proceedings and to the punishments they inflicted (see Brown 1994).

In the Fourth Gospel the crucifixion coincides with the hour of Jesus' glorification (cf. 3:14; 8:28; 12:32–3); by his death Jesus will be glorified with his Father (13:31–2; 17:1–5). Therefore the evangelist stresses the majesty of Jesus despite his humiliation. Already when he is arrested, the repeated 'I am he' causes the soldiers to step back and fall to the ground. The interrogations before the high priest and before Pilate are occasions where Jesus continues his public teaching. On the cross Jesus makes arrangements for his mother and the beloved disciple (19:25–7). He fulfils the scriptures by saying 'I am thirsty' (19:28) and comments upon his own work on earth by saying 'It is finished' (19:30). The burial is that of a 'king'.

A comparison between the gospels shows that Matthew follows Mark but adds his own material in order to augment the dramatic effect of the narrative. Luke is less dependent on Mark than Matthew because he has his own information. He underlines more than Matthew and Mark that Pilate considered Jesus to be innocent. The author of the Fourth Gospel probably knows Mark's account (*contra* Brown 1994), but he has much material of his own which he applies in a very free way. He has already used certain aspects of Mark's passion narrative earlier in his gospel; others do not fit his own main theological purpose. He tries to show that Jesus was sentenced to death as the king of the Jews and not as a bandit. Like Luke he emphasizes Pilate's knowledge of Jesus' innocence. He underlines the responsibility of the Jewish authorities, but tries to diminish that of Pilate, even if he also criticizes him for his lack of integrity. He eliminates Jesus' desperate cry and stresses the Master's regal character in the face of death. In place of groups who mock Jesus he recounts the affectionate scene between Jesus' mother and the beloved disciple.

That John omits that the curtain of the temple was torn in two and the darkness at the moment of Jesus' death has been used as an argument against his dependence on synoptic texts. But such a mention was unnecessary since he had a theological equivalent in the temple cleansing in Jn 2:13–22 and in his descriptions of the battle between darkness and light. The symbols of water and blood flowing from Jesus' side were more suitable to his own purpose of describing Jesus' death as a glorification.

It is impossible to reconstruct with certainty the documents that Mark used. If John knew Mark, it is remarkable that he dared to correct him, just as Luke does in his own way. In many regards John's account is more satisfactory than Mark's with its meeting of the Sanhedrin at night. In John the meeting before Annas during the night is only a preparatory inquisition. The evangelist seems to be better informed than the Synoptics when he has Jesus die on 14 Nisan, when the paschal lambs were slaughtered to be eaten that evening (i.e. the beginning of 15 Nisan).

Some Jewish and Christian scholars have tried to transfer the whole responsibility of Jesus' death to the Romans. They are right when they criticize Luke's and John's apologetic motives in connection with Pilate's sentence, but still the Jewish authorities probably had their own share in the arrest of Jesus. It is historically doubtful whether there was ever an official gathering of the Sanhedrin before Pilate's judgement. In any event, Christians ought to combat all anti-Semitic feelings in connection with the trial against Jesus.

The Johannine passion narrative is well organized: (1) Jesus is arrested (18:1–11) and Annas interrogates Jesus while Peter denies him (18:12–27). (2) The trial before Pilate (18:28–19:16a) is divided into seven scenes by the alternation between what is happening outside or inside Pilate's headquarters. (3) Jesus is crucified and dies (19:16b–30), which gives the author the chance to provide a theological commentary (19:31–7) and describe Jesus' burial (19:38–42).

(18:1–11) The arrest of Jesus is linked in different ways to the interrogation before Annas in 18:12–27. In both scenes Peter is active: in the first scene as an over-courageous defender of his master, in the second as a coward who denies him. In the first scene the question of Jesus' identity is raised, in the second that of his teaching; the two aspects are complementary. By introducing the passion narrative with the

arrest and not with the spiritual fight at Gethsemane, John can show Jesus' majesty in the face of his adversaries. vv. 1–3, in a first edition of the gospel v. 1 probably followed immediately after 14:31. The references 'across the Kidron' and 'garden' can be fitted in with the synoptic topography: 'to the Mount of Olives' (Lk 22:39) and 'a place called Gethsemane' (Mk 14:32; Mt 26:36). The Johannine garden is then simply a plantation of olive trees. Whereas the synoptic Judas points Jesus out by a kiss, in John he only indicates the place, which, since the Johannine Jesus had been in Jerusalem several times, was known to Judas. A *speira* ('detachment') is composed of 600 soldiers. Their presence is strange, since Pilate in 18:29–30 does not seem to be informed about it. Perhaps the evangelist only wanted to show symbolically how Jewish police and Roman soldiers collaborated in their actions against Jesus. vv. 4–8a, the evangelist often underlines that Jesus knows everything in advance (cf. 1:47–8; 6:6, 61, 64; 13:1). In contrast to the Synoptics Jesus in John takes the initiative himself to go to Judas and to the others. Jesus is also called 'of Nazareth' in the inscription in 19:19. Since John with the help of *egō eimi* sometimes suggests Jesus' divinity (see Jn 8:24, 28; 13:19), there may be here more than a simple statement 'I am he'. This is at least suggested in v. 6 when all fall to the ground because of the revelation of Jesus' identity. Judas is stereotypically called in vv. 2 and 5 the one 'who betrayed Jesus'. The Jews take over his role when they hand Jesus over to Pilate (18:30, 35). Pilate in his turn will hand him to the Jewish authorities (19:16). vv. 8b–9, Jesus indirectly accepts becoming their prisoner when he asks that the disciples be allowed to go. This time it is not Scripture but Jesus' own words that are fulfilled. The quotation is not exact, but one can refer to 6:39; 10:27–8; 17:12. Still there is a change of perspective, since these three texts are concerned with eternal life, whereas the concern here is with the disciples' escape from actual dangers. vv. 10–11, unlike the Synoptics John indicates the disciple's identity (Simon Peter) and that of the slave (Malchus). In a subtle way the evangelist alludes to the Gethsemane scene by referring to the cup that the Father has given him to drink (cf. esp. Mt 26:42).

(18:12–27) Jesus' questioning before the high priest Annas is organically linked with Peter's three denials, in order to augment its dramatic aspect (Fortna 1977–8). Since a kind of trial by the Sanhedrin has already taken place in

11:47–50, the evangelist alludes only to a gathering before the present high priest Caiaphas (see vv. 24, 28) but fills it out by mentioning a more private questioning before Annas, the former high priest. vv. 12–14, the Roman soldiers and the Jewish police work together (cf. vv. 1–3). The evangelist is well informed about the relationship between the two high priests. Annas was high priest 6–15 CE and in normal fashion retained his title. He was influential even later, since his five sons became high priests (Josephus, *Ant.* 18.26, 34; 20.198). The evangelist probably knows that Caiaphas was not functioning as high priest only for that year (according to Josephus, *Ant.* 18.34–5, 95, he held office from about 18–37 CE). Caiaphas's prophecy in 11:50 and 18:14 seems in 18:8–9 to be applied to the disciples: they can escape because Jesus gives his life for them. vv. 15–18, even if the reading 'another disciple', without the definite article, is original, the evangelist is probably thinking of the beloved disciple whom he introduced in 13:23 and who will reappear in 19:26. If he is identical with John, the son of Zebedee, as chs. 1 and 21 suggest, one wonders how a simple fisherman came to be known to the high priest. But the evangelist has his own reasons to present the things in this way. Whereas this disciple follows Jesus into Annas's courtyard, Peter, whom he introduces there, becomes a renegade. The reference to the woman who interrogates Peter occurs also in Mk 14:66 par., but uniquely in John she guards the gate. Only John indicates that it was cold and that the fire was made of charcoal. vv. 19–21, the high priest Annas tries to show that Jesus is a false prophet (cf. 7:45–52). Ironically enough he asks Jesus about his disciples, at the very moment when Peter is denying him. Jesus answers only the question about his teaching, which has been quite open (cf. 7:4; 11:14). One would expect Annas also to interrogate those who had heard Jesus' teaching but he seems not to be interested in the truth. vv. 22–4, in Mk 14:65 members of the Sanhedrin spit on Jesus and the guards beat him. In Lk 22:63 only the guards insult Jesus. Jn 18:22 is a kind of combination of both: only one of the police strikes Jesus. In John alone Jesus insists that he has not offended the high priest (cf. Ex 22:27 and Acts 23:5). vv. 25–7, Peter is still in the courtyard just as he is in Lk 22:55–62, whereas in Mk 14:68 he goes out into the forecourt and in Mt 26:71 he proceeds to the porch. That one of the slaves was a relative of Malchus intensifies Peter's denial in the Fourth Gospel. The cock crows once, as in Matthew and Luke,

whereas in Mk 14:72 he crows twice, in accordance with Jesus' prophecy at Mk 14:30. Contrary to the Synoptics John does not report anything about Peter's reaction after the third denial, but in Jn 21:15–17 Jesus will ask Peter three times if he loves him. The third time Peter feels hurt.

(18:28–19:16a) In a subtle way the trial before Pilate moves from a first accusation that Jesus is a criminal (18:30) to the charge that he made himself 'Son of God' (19:7), and finally that he claims to be a 'king', which is a revolt against the emperor (19:12). Three times Pilate declares Jesus innocent (18:38; 19:4, 6), but the Jewish accusers try by every means to have him condemned to death. The alternation of the seven scenes is highly dramatic: the accusers are outside Pilate's headquarters and Jesus is inside but comes out in the end as the mocked king of the Jews.

1. 18:28–32. Ironically enough, the Jews want to be able to eat the Passover without ritual defilement, but they are actively pursuing the death of Jesus, who is the real paschal lamb (cf. 1:29, 36; 19:31, 33). As they accuse Jesus of being a criminal, Pilate asks them to judge him according to their own laws. The Jews are therefore obliged to make a precise request for the death sentence, which only the Romans could grant. In his discussions with the Jews Jesus has already stated that when they seek to kill him, they are acting against their own law (7:51; 8:37–47). The evangelist stresses that Jesus knew he would be lifted up on the cross (3:14; 8:28; 12:32–3), the normal Roman punishment. Pilate, who was governor in Judea from 26 to 36 CE, had his headquarters (*praitōrion*) probably at Herod's palace near the Joppa Gate, and not at Antonia, the Hasmonean palace (Benoit 1961: 332–3).

2. 18:33–8a. The question in v. 33 and Jesus' answer in v. 37 are similar to Mk 15:2 par., but the rest of the dialogue is typically Johannine. The Greek substantive *basileia*, normally translated 'kingdom' or 'kingly rule', seems in these verses to mean 'royal dignity'. The Jews have informed Pilate about Jesus' claims to be the Messiah with royal dignity. Jesus accepts the title King of the Jews (cf. 1:49) with a quite special meaning: his royal dignity comes from his Father who has sent him to testify to the truth (cf. 8:32–47). His royal dignity is similar to that of a shepherd to whom the sheep listen (10:16, 27). But Pilate does not belong to them and is therefore sceptical about truth.

3. 18:38b–40. Pilate seems to conclude that he has to do with typical Jewish questions and

that Jesus therefore is innocent. In the Synoptics the bandit Barabbas is likewise released and Jesus condemned to death (Mk 15:11 par.). The custom of an amnesty at Passover is also mentioned in Mk 15:6 and Mt 27:15, but uniquely in John it is Pilate himself who refers to the custom. Contrary to the Synoptics, John postpones the Jews' shouting 'crucify him' in order to increase its dramatic effect (cf. Jn 19:6).

4. 19:1–3. The four gospels agree on two humiliations: one before Caiaphas or Annas (Jn 18:22–3), and one before Pilate (in Luke before Herod). The Roman soldiers dress him as a king with a crown of thorns. In Mt 27:28–9 they even put a reed in his right hand, mocking his royal power. In John they strike Jesus on the face, in Mk 15:19 and Mt 27:29–31 they strike his head with a reed, spit upon him, and kneel down in homage to him. In all three gospels the soldiers say ironically, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' Matthew and John seem both to depend on Mark whom they dramatize in different ways. John leaves out the spitting and the ironical kneeling which he probably considers offensive. Since Pilate continues to consider Jesus innocent, the flogging is only a kind of warning.

5. 19:4–7. As in Lk 23:14, 20–3 Jesus' innocence is underlined, but only in John does Pilate come out of his headquarters with the mocked royal Jesus. The words 'here is the man!' may be an allusion to 'Son of Man', which in Aramaic means precisely 'a man'. But John has given the expression a deeper meaning, with Dan 7:14 as a model (see esp. 5:27). In fact, during the trial in the Synoptics Jesus alludes to the coming of the Son of Man (Mk 14:61–2. par.). That the simple word 'man' can hint at 'Son of Man' becomes even clearer in the following scene, where Jesus is accused of having claimed to be the 'Son of God' (Jn 19:7). A first climax is reached with the authorities' double 'Crucify him!' It is now clear that the accusation against Jesus is religious, but in the further trial it will be given a political character (vv. 12–16a).

6. 19:8–11. 'Son of God' is a worrying expression to Pilate, who wants to know more about Jesus' origin. Jesus' silence is also a motif in Mk 15:3–5 par., where it concerns a refusal to respond to the authorities' accusations. In v. 9 Pilate's lack of sincere enquiry deserves only silence in reply. He therefore reformulates his question as one about power. Jesus discloses a paradox: Pilate who has his power from above thinks that he can exercise it over the one who comes from God! Jesus thus reveals that he fully accepts God's will. Once again Pilate's guilt is

diminished in comparison with that of Judas and of the Jewish authorities.

7. 19:12–16a. The seventh scene is decisive for Jesus' crucifixion. vv. 12–13, 'friend of the emperor' (Gk. *philokaisar*) was in fact an honorific title given to Herod Agrippa I. Contrary to what Jesus said to Pilate about his royal dignity, the Jews now present him as a man with political ambitions that go against the emperor's interests. In the Greek text it is unclear whether Pilate or Jesus sat on the judge's bench. But since Pilate is afraid of Jesus' power (v. 8), it is unlikely that he would mock him. In any case, Pilate's judgement is not a formal one. The Aramaic *Gabbatha* in v. 13 ('bald head?' 'eminence?') does not really correspond to the Greek *Lithostrōton* (Stone Pavement). It was usual to have stone pavements inside palaces and outside in the courtyards. vv. 14–16a, normally the word *paraskeuē* means the preparation day for the sabbath (cf. vv. 31 and 42). But in v. 14 it seems to be the preparation day for the Passover, that means 14 Nisan (cf. 18:28). It coincides in John with the preparation day for the sabbath. When Pilate in v. 5 said 'Here is the man', the Jewish authorities replied with a double 'Crucify him!' When in v. 14 he presents the mocked royal Jesus with the words, 'Here is your King!', they cry out twice, 'Away with him!' and add, 'Crucify him!' The Johannine irony comes to a climax when the Jewish authorities seem to forget all their own messianic expectations in favour of their loyalty towards the Roman emperor.

(19:16b–42) Jesus' Crucifixion, Death, and Burial

(19:16b–30) We can distinguish five moments in this part: in vv. 16b–18 Jesus carries his cross; in vv. 19–22 Pilate has an inscription written; in vv. 23–5a the soldiers divide Jesus' clothes; in vv. 25b–27 the women and the beloved disciple are standing near the cross; in vv. 28–30 Jesus finally dies. The different scenes are separated by repeated words in the beginning and at the end of each scene: 'Jesus' in vv. 16b–18; 'write' in vv. 19–22; 'soldiers' and 'clothes' in vv. 23–5a; 'mother' in vv. 25b–7; 'finished' in vv. 28–30. vv. 16b–18, the Jewish authorities to whom Pilate hands Jesus over in v. 16a have not themselves the right to crucify him but let the Roman soldiers do it (cf. v. 23). John underlines that Jesus carries the cross by himself, without the help of Simon of Cyrene (Mk 15:21 par.). Some exegetes think that the evangelist alludes to Isaac who carries the wood of the burnt offering

(Gen 22:6). In the normal way, Jesus would have carried only the cross-beam (*patibulum*), on which he will be nailed at Golgotha and elevated on the pole which already stands there. The Greek *kranion*, 'skull', is a correct translation of the Aramaic Golgotha and probably denotes a hillock. Only John emphasizes the fact that Jesus is in the middle between the two others. vv. 19–22, the Fourth Gospel alone stresses that the inscription (cf. Mk 15:26 par.) had a universal character by being written in three languages, and that Pilate himself had ordered it. John adds here 'of Nazareth' (cf. 18:5) in order to stress the origin of the 'King of the Jews', but in v. 21 he has the shorter formula of Mk 15:26. The evangelist considers Pilate's initiative as prophetic. Since the charge in Mt 27:37 and Lk 23:38 is placed over Jesus' head, the tradition has not represented the cross as *crux commissa*, in the form of a T, but as *crux immissa*. vv. 23–5a, the Greek *himation* normally designates a robe in the singular (cf. vv. 2, 5), and all kinds of clothes in the plural. But since the *chitōn* in v. 23 is a tunic under the robe, *himatia* seems to be a robe just as in 13:4. In Mk 15:24 par. there is only an allusion to Ps 22(21):18, whereas John quotes the Psalm according to the LXX. He distinguishes between the 'clothes' (the robe) and the 'clothing' (the tunic), whereas the psalmist only used parallel expressions to designate the same object. In order to underline God's protection the tunic is not divided, which probably has a symbolic meaning of unity similar to that in 21:11. vv. 25b–27, in Mk 15:40–1 par. the women are at a distance, which is more probable during a crucifixion. But in John they stand near the cross to hear Jesus' words. The name of Jesus' mother is not indicated, as in Jn 2:1–12 and 6:42, probably in order not to confuse her with the three other Marys: Lazarus' sister (ch. 11) and the two Marys named here. In the Greek text 'Mary the wife of Clopas' could be in apposition to 'his mother's sister', but as the women are contrasted to the four soldiers, it is more likely that they also are four. In Mk 15:40 par. the mother of Jesus is not named at all. Mary Magdalene appears in all four gospels. Commentators who want to harmonize John with the Synoptics identify 'the wife of Clopas' with the synoptic 'Mary, the mother of James and of Joseph'; 'his mother's sister' in John is then identical with Salome (Mk 15:40) and the mother of the sons of Zebedee (Mt 27:56). In that case Jesus' aunt Salome would be the mother of James and John. The scene where Jesus entrusts the beloved disciple to his mother would have a

basis in a family relationship if this disciple were John, the son of Zebedee. But these are guesses, which do not fit Lk 8:3 and 24:10 (cf. also our remark above on 7:3). There is no textual reason to see in Jesus' mother and in the beloved disciple representatives of two different communities, the Jewish-Christian and the Gentile-Christian (as Bultmann 1971: 673). Mary is not yet the 'mother of the Church' of later Catholic tradition. According to chs. 14–16 the Helper would lead the disciples into the whole truth. In a similar way the mother of Jesus and the beloved disciple transmit Jesus' message: they are together ideal representatives of the Christian faith (cf. also 19:35 and 21:24). vv. 28–30, once again the evangelist stresses Jesus' sovereign will in fulfilling the Scripture, alluding probably to Ps 69:22 ('for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink', cf. Mk 15:36 par.). Only John underlines that Jesus is thirsty, which is said only indirectly in the Psalm. In Mk 15:36 the sponge is put on a stick, but in John it is on a branch of hyssop, an allusion to the paschal meal (cf. Ex 12:22). Even the words 'it is finished' have in Greek a meaning of fulfilment: probably the work of his Father (cf. 14:31; 17:4). Jesus willingly (cf. 10:18) gives up the spirit which remained upon him in 1:32. He accomplishes for the first time his promise in 7:37–9, giving the Spirit to the faithful around his cross. In 20:22 the risen Christ will be more explicit about the gift of his Spirit.

(19:31–7) There have been many discussions on the composition of this theological commentary. Some believe that vv. 34b–35 on blood and water are later additions to the soldiers' action in vv. 31–4a and to the fulfilment of the scripture in vv. 36–7. Others think that even vv. 34a and 37 are additions. All these reconstructions are merely hypothetical. The evangelist himself distinguishes between two actions: the breaking of the legs in vv. 31–3 and the piercing of the side in v. 34. In vv. 35–7 he comments on both actions. vv. 31–3, the sabbath coincides with 15 Nisan (cf. v. 14). According to Deut 21:23 a corpse hanged on a tree must be buried before nightfall. For purity reasons this is especially important before Passover. Only John has the breaking of legs (*crurifragium*), which was used either as punishment, or as here in order to hasten suffocation. v. 34, Jesus' pierced side is also mentioned at the resurrection in 20:20–7. The soldier determines if Jesus is dead. Immediately after death, blood and a watery substance from the lungs, can emerge. The evangelist stresses the

paradox that two important components of life appear in Jesus' dead body. If the evangelist is informed about 'mixed blood' that was thrown at the altar on Passover (cf. Mishnah, *Ohol.* 3:5; *hul.* 2:6; *Pesah.* 5:8), we would have here a further allusion to Passover. But probably it is better to compare 1 Jn 5:6–8, where Jesus Christ is said to have come by water and blood, which means by his baptism and his death. According to Jn 6:53–6 blood is connected with the eucharist, and according to 3:1–15 water with baptism. The evangelist may be alluding these two sacraments. The Spirit who is mentioned in 1 Jn 5:6–8 is also present at Jesus' death in Jn 19:30. The Church Fathers thought that even the church was born out of Jesus' side, but in contrast to Paul the evangelist does not develop the theme of Jesus as a new Adam. v. 35, similarly to 21:24 we have one who testifies, the beloved disciple (cf. 18:15–16 and 19:25–6), and another who states that his testimony is true, probably the Johannine community. It is unclear whether 'he knows that he tells the truth' is said of the Johannine group, the beloved disciple (preferable), Jesus or God (less probable). vv. 36–7, the quotation in v. 36 alludes to Ex 12:46 and is at the same time dependent on Ps 34(35) LXX. Jesus dies as the passover lamb whose legs are not broken (cf. Jn 1:29, 34), but also as the righteous man of Ps 34 (cf. Lk 23:47). It is more difficult to see how the soldier who pierced Jesus' side fulfils the scripture. In v. 37 there is a quotation of Zech 12:10b (Heb. text), similar to that of Rev 1:6. Possibly the first Christians utilized Zech 12:10b to point out Jesus whose hands had been pierced with nails. John applies the quotation to the pierced side.

(19:38–42) The narrative concerning Jesus' burial was important for the first Christians, because of the connection between the empty tomb and the resurrection (perhaps implicit in 1 Cor 15:4). In the four gospels we have a similar main narration: Joseph of Arimathea asks Pilate for permission to bury Jesus. John, however, adds the figure of Nicodemus and other details. vv. 38–9, according to Mk 15:43 and Lk 23:50–1 Joseph is a respected member of the council who is waiting expectantly for the kingdom of God. In Mt 27:57 he is a rich man who had become a disciple of Jesus. John's Joseph is similar to Matthew's, but his Nicodemus resembles Joseph in Mark and Luke. The evangelist does not clearly say that Nicodemus had become a disciple of Jesus, but his sympathy for Jesus has developed since 3:1–21 and 7:50–2.

Fragrant spices weighing 100 lb. are just as impressive as 1 lb. of costly perfume used by Mary to anoint Jesus in 12:3–8. vv. 40–2, Nicodemus fulfils what Mary had done in advance: Jesus gets a kingly burial. One can compare the quantity of spices used at the death of Herod (Jos. *Ant.* 17:199; cf. also Jer 34:5). The linen cloths (Gk. *thonia*) are also mentioned in Jn 20:6–7, whereas in 11:44 they are called *keiriai*, 'strips of cloth', different from the cloth round the face. In Mk 15:46 par. it is a single linen cloth (Gk. *syndōn*). Some have tried to combine John and the Synoptics: the synoptic *syndōn* could be the material out of which the Johannine cloths are made, or the Johannine cloths in fact only one single piece. Others think that a *syndōn* was fixed with the help of strips of cloth. Historically it is more probable that the spices were carried to the tomb at the burial than on the day of the resurrection (Mk 16:1–2 par.). John alone indicates that the tomb was near the place of crucifixion. The next reference to the garden will be at 20:1.

(20:1–21:25) **The Risen Christ** In the canonical gospels Jesus' resurrection is both the object of faith and a concrete event. Unlike the apocryphal *Gospel of Peter* (39–44) the gospels do not describe exactly how Jesus rose from the dead, but they insist on two aspects: the empty tomb and the appearances to the disciples. John reflects more than the Synoptics on how all certainty about Jesus' resurrection is linked to faith (cf. 20:27, 29). The two conclusions in 20:30–1 and 21:24–5, for example, summarize the relation between the witness of faith to the signs performed by Jesus and belief in him as Messiah and God's Son.

In recent commentaries it has been usual to consider ch. 21 as a later addition by a redactor, because 20:30–1 seems to be a natural conclusion of the whole gospel. Since the 'we' in 21:24–5 is distinguished from the beloved disciple, it has been suggested that a later redactor is responsible for ch. 21, and even for other additions in the gospel. But there are objections to this position: the narrative technique in ch. 21 is very similar to that in chs. 1–20, and the style is nearly the same. Just as themes in chs. 13–14 are completed or replaced in chs. 15–17, so ch. 21 develops aspects that have been adumbrated (e.g. the theme of following Jesus) or introduces new material. The main author ('the evangelist') may have reworked his first sketch of the gospel and added new material to it (e.g. chs. 6; 15–17; 21). He has kept 20:30–1 as commentary on the

revelations in Jerusalem, but he wanted to complete these with an appearance by the lake of Tiberias. This gave him the opportunity to inform the reader about the disciples' activity in Galilee that we find in the Synoptics. A redactor may then have reworked this chapter, especially the new conclusion in vv. 24–5.

The whole gospel is given a kind of unity by the alternation of different places where Jesus is present: Galilee, Judea, and 'the other side'. Three times we pass from Galilee to Jerusalem, and in the end once from Jerusalem (12:12–20:31) to Galilee (ch. 21). The week of Jesus' resurrection in chs. 20–1 corresponds to the first week in 1:19–2:11 and to the last week in Jesus' life in 12:1–19:42. In ch. 20 Jesus appears to his disciples in Jerusalem as in Lk 24; in ch. 21 he appears in Galilee as it is hinted at in Mk 16:7 and Mt 28:7, 10, and described in Mt 28:16–20.

The following seven sections can be distinguished: (1) Mary and two disciples at the tomb (20:1–10); (2) Mary sees the Lord (20:11–18); (3) the disciples see the Lord (20:19–23); (4) Thomas sees the Lord (20:24–9); (5) first conclusion of the book (20:30–1); (6) Jesus shows himself to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias: (a) the miraculous catch of fish and the meal; (b) Peter and the beloved disciple (21:15–23); (7) second conclusion of the book (21:24–5). The relationship between chs. 20–1 and the synoptic texts is very complicated (see Neiryck 1984*b*; 1990).

(20:1–10) Mary and Two Disciples at the Tomb The evangelist wants to frame the running of the two disciples to the tomb with two narratives on Mary Magdalene. She reports first on the empty tomb, then (in vv. 11–18) on Jesus' resurrection. Inconsistencies in ch. 20 are due to the author's many references to synoptic material that he supplements with his own information (cf. Neiryck 1984*b*). vv. 1–2, Mary Magdalene was first introduced near the cross in 19:25. In Mk 16:1 there are three women at the tomb, in Mt 28:1 two, and in Lk 23:55–24:10 more than three. In Mark and Luke they come with spices to anoint Jesus, but in the Fourth Gospel this has already been done. Possibly the evangelist has special information concerning Jesus' first appearance to Mary alone (cf. Mk 16:9). The stone was not mentioned at the burial, in contrast to Mk 15:46 and Mt 27:60, 66. In Mk 16:4 par. it was rolled away (in Mt 28:2 by an angel). John probably refers to the angel's message in Mk 16:7 when he has Mary inform Peter and the other disciple. The Johannine Mary thinks that grave-robbers or the authorities

have stolen the body, whereas Mt 28:11–15 mentions the allegation by the Jews that the disciples stole the body. The 'we do not know' is an inconsistency deriving from the synoptic account about several women at the tomb. vv. 3–8, we find a similar tradition in Luke: in Lk 24:12 (which is original despite the lack of attestation in the Western tradition) Peter goes to the tomb, while in Lk 24:24 it is 'some disciples'. The 'other disciple' in John is presumably the beloved disciple (see Jn 13:23; 18:15). He has more insight than Peter (cf. 13:23–5; 19:26–7), whom he outruns, but still he respects Peter's privilege to go in first. The linen wrappings which are left and the cloth rolled up by itself indicate that the body was not stolen but rather rose miraculously. Whereas Peter only looks at them, the other disciple can decipher the signs by faith. vv. 9–10, as in 1 Cor 15:4 the resurrection fulfils the Scripture, but no precise passage is referred to. There is an apparent inconsistency when even the other disciple, who believes, does not understand Scripture (cf. 2:22; 12:16). Perhaps the evangelist wanted to point out that even he had to increase in understanding. The two disciples go home and allow Mary to meet Jesus alone (vv. 11–18).

(20:11–18) Mary Sees the Lord This narrative is close to the synoptic account, where several women see God's angels, and even Jesus himself, on their way to the disciples in Mt 28:9–10. John seems to have fused together two different scenes from Mt 28:1–10: Mary sees first two angels (Jn 20:12–13), then the Lord himself (vv. 14–16). vv. 11–13, it is possible that *exō*, 'outside', has been added to improve the text. Mary remains outside the tomb, unlike the disciples in vv. 7–8 and the women in Mk 16:5 and Lk 24:3. She bends over to look in as the beloved disciple does in Jn 20:5, but instead of the linen wrappings she sees two angels. They are witnesses of Mary's desolation, but unlike the synoptic accounts they have no message for the disciples; Jesus himself will provide it in v. 17. Only John indicates that the angels are sitting where Jesus' head and feet had been located. This supposes a tomb of the *arcosolium* type, where there is more room for the corpse than in the *kōkīm* type, where the body is put into a wall cavity. vv. 14–16, Mary thinks that Jesus is the gardener who has taken away the body. Jesus addresses her in the same words as did the angels in v. 13, but adds 'For whom are you looking?' When he calls her by her name, she recognizes him as her teacher, in a way similar

to sheep recognizing the voice of their shepherd (10:3–4). The Aramaic *rabbouni* (cf. Mk 10:51) is by its length more solemn than the simple *rabbi* (see JN 1:38). v. 17, the present imperative *mē mou haptou* can be translated either ‘do not continue to touch me’ or ‘do not touch me’. The evangelist seems to be commenting on Mt 28:9 where the women take hold of Jesus’ feet in a gesture of worship. The reason why Mary ought not to hold on Jesus is that he is on his way to the Father. In the Fourth Gospel the resurrection and the ascension seem to coincide. Therefore Mary needs to hear that after Jesus’ appearances, faith, in the absence of physical contact, is the only important thing (see the scene with Thomas in vv. 24–9 and cf. 14:22–3). Jesus calls the disciples ‘brothers’ in a different sense from that of his sceptical natural family at 7:4 (cf. Mt 28:10). The risen Christ associates the disciples in his community with God the Father, but also marks a difference by referring to him with the pronouns ‘my’ and ‘your’. v. 18, in Mk 16:7 and Mt 28:7 the angel(s) give the women the mission to inform the disciples concerning Jesus’ later appearance in Galilee. In Lk 24:33 the two disciples from Emmaus return to Jerusalem to meet the eleven. But in John, Mary reports both on her meeting with Jesus and on his message.

(20:19–23) The Disciples See the Lord In the Christian tradition it remains unclear how often the risen Christ manifested himself to his disciples. Paul names five appearances: to the twelve, to more than five hundred brothers and sisters, to James, to the apostles, and last of all to himself (1 Cor 15:5–7). According to Mk 16:7 Peter and the other disciples would meet Jesus in Galilee; in Mt 28:16–20 this is described as a farewell scene where the eleven disciples are sent out to the whole world (cf. also Mk 16:14–18). In Lk 24:36–49 Jesus appears to them in Jerusalem, wishes them peace, shows them his hands and feet, and eats the fish they give him. He gives them a mission to all people and promises them the gift of the Holy Spirit. Jn 20:19–23 and 21:13 resemble the Lucan narrative in many respects. v. 19, just as in Lk 24:29, 36–53, Jesus appears in Jerusalem in the evening of the day he rose again. John alone mentions that the door was locked, perhaps in order to underline that the risen Christ is no longer bound by normal space conditions. The peace greeting prolongs what Jesus had said in his farewell discourse (Jn 14:27; 16:33). v. 20, the hands and the side are also mentioned in vv. 25 and 27,

whereas in Lk 24:39 Jesus shows his hands and feet. vv. 21–2, the missionary work of the disciples depends on the mission of the Son and on the gift of the Holy Spirit. In his farewell discourse Jesus had promised that he would send the Helper. A first gift of the Spirit was already described in 19:30, but now the disciples are so to speak ‘baptized’ by the risen Christ’s Spirit. v. 23, as Lk 24:47–49, the forgiveness of sins is linked to the gift of the Spirit and the disciples’ missionary work. But John transforms the Lukan understanding of forgiveness with the help of material similar to Mt 16:19 and 18:18. Matthew stresses Peter’s and the other disciples’ power to ‘bind’ and ‘loose’ certain rules in the assembly, whereas John speaks of retaining (binding) sins or forgiving them. Despite the present and the future tenses in many MSS, the variant *apheōntai* (perfect passive, ‘they are forgiven’) is probably original. The Christian tradition early linked together Matthew and John in its understanding of penance.

(20:24–9) Thomas Sees the Lord Thomas’ encounter with Jesus is modelled on the previous scene. His experience is meant to help all future believers who have not seen the risen Christ. vv. 24–5, the same expression, ‘one of the twelve’, is applied to Judas in 6:71. The Greek *didymos* means both ‘twin’ and ‘double’ or ‘twofold’. In 11:16 and 14:5 Thomas had difficulties understanding Jesus, now he hesitates when confronted by his resurrection. The disciples relate their vision of the Lord, as Mary did in v. 18. In the original Greek text the ‘mark’ of the nails is first *typos*, and then probably *topos* (‘place’). The MSS have muddled the two words. The palpable marks have an apologetic function for the reader. vv. 26–7, the week following the resurrection corresponds probably to the first week in 1:19–2:1 and to the last week in Jesus’ life in 12:1–19:31. Just as in the previous appearance to the disciples, Jesus enters despite the shut doors. Jesus accepts Thomas’ daring demand, but tactfully the evangelist does not describe its fulfilment. v. 28, Thomas’ doubts give way to a climax in Johannine Christology. In 13:13–14 Jesus used ‘teacher’ and ‘lord’ as synonyms, but now ‘my Lord’ designates the risen Christ. ‘My God’ resumes the description of Jesus in the Prologue as ‘God’ (1:1, 18). In the OT Lord and God are associated terms (e.g. Ps 7:2–3; 30:3). This is more likely to be the background than the pagan acclamation of the emperor as Lord and God (but see Suetonius, *Dom.* 13: ‘dominus et deus noster’). v. 29, besides 13:17, this is the

only formula using 'blessed' in John. It concerns the future believers (cf. 17:20–4) who have not seen Jesus. Thomas should have believed without seeing the marks. Still his clear confession is an act of faith, as was that of the hesitant Nathanael at the beginning of the gospel (1:43–51).

(20:30–1) The author suddenly expresses himself in a first epilogue to what he calls this book. v. 30, the word 'sign' is a key for the reader to understand both the risen Christ's appearances and their link with the 'signs' during his public life. Those who presuppose a sign-source behind this gospel consider vv. 30–1 as its natural conclusion. But we have seen that the Fourth Gospel forms a unity despite its redactional problems. In this case the 'signs' are not only the seven miracles we have enumerated, but also other scenes and words of Jesus. These signs are no riddles, since the reader is from the beginning informed about the Word, Jesus Christ. But the reader has to penetrate the mystery of Jesus' revelation of his divine glory. v. 31, it is difficult to decide whether the original subjunctive was an aorist *pisteusēte* or a present *pisteuēte*. In the first case one could translate as NRSV, 'that you may come to faith', in the second case, 'that you may continue to believe'. In 19:35 the variant that has the aorist tense seems to be preferable, but in our verse both variants are well attested. It is not certain that the evangelist himself would in this case make a clear distinction between the two tenses. In any event, he seems to address Christian readers, whom he wants to gain life in Christ by deepening their faith in Jesus as Messiah and Son of God.

(21:1–23) In this chapter Jesus reveals himself a third time to the disciples, but now by the Sea of Tiberias. The evangelist wants to complete the appearances in Jerusalem with the data of Mk 16:7 and Mt 28:7, 10, 16–20. He also completes Jn 1:35–42 with the help of what we know about the occupation of the disciples from Mk 1:16–20 par. The evangelist has read either a source similar to Lk 5:1–11 or that text itself. There a miraculous draught of fish is combined with the disciples' call. Our passage has a similar relationship to Lk 24:41–3 where the risen Christ eats a piece of the fish.

The author has used different kinds of material but has put them together into a well-organized unity. In a first scene we meet seven disciples who on the word of the Lord catch many fish.

In the second scene the risen Christ gives Peter a special mission and speaks about the beloved disciple's destiny. The first scene describes different actions, whereas the second consists of a dialogue between Jesus and Peter. The two scenes are linked together through the different relationships between the risen Lord and the two main disciples.

(21:1–14) The miraculous catch of fish and the following meal are closely interrelated. v. 1 the typical Johannine 'after these things' does not indicate a chronological but a thematic progression (cf. 6:1). The same formula 'to show oneself' as in 7:4 is now used in reference to the risen Christ (in 21:14 in the passive form). Strangely enough the word 'disciples' occurs seven times in vv. 1–14, matching the seven disciples named in v. 2. In 6:1 the Sea of Tiberias is mentioned as a synonym for the Sea of Galilee. v. 2, the use of 'together' (Gk. *homou*) is different from that at 4:36 and 20:4, but similar to Luke's in Acts. Three of the seven disciples occur in Lk 5:1–11: Peter, James, and John. Peter and Thomas have been important in the appearances in Jn 20. Nathanael who is mentioned in 1:45–51 is now presented as coming from Cana in Galilee, perhaps under the influence of the wedding in ch. 2. In the synoptic tradition James and John are often presented as sons of Zebedee (Mk 1:19–20 par.; 3:17 par.; 10:35 par.). With Simon and Andrew, who were named in Jn 1:35–42, they form a special group. We have seen that the anonymous disciple in 1:40–2 is best identified with John, one of the sons of Zebedee. He will be called the other disciple, or the one whom Jesus loved, in the rest of ch. 21. The two other disciples in 21:2 could then be Andrew and Philip (see 1:40–4; 6:7–8; 12:22). vv. 3–4, as in Lk 5:5 they have fished during the night. Why they do this after the appearances in Jerusalem has no importance for the author. Despite Greek *epi*, 'on' (the beach) in many MSS, *eis* is probably original, but has here the same meaning as *en* or *epi*. In contrast to v. 12 the disciples at first do not recognize Jesus, though he has already revealed himself to them in Jerusalem. But in this case ch. 21 is not concerned to be consistent with ch. 20. vv. 5–6, Jesus addresses the disciples with tenderness, by using a diminutive form *paidia* (cf. 1 Jn 2:14, 18), similar to *teknia* in Jn 13:33 (and 1 Jn). The right side signifies blessing, prosperity. In Lk 5:4 Jesus says: 'Put out into the deep water'. Since the miraculous catch has missionary aspects both in Lk 5:10 and in Jn 21:15–17 'to haul in the fish'

may allude to this symbolic meaning. In Lk 5:6–7 the partners in the other boat have to come and help. vv. 7–8, as in ch. 20 the beloved disciple understands more quickly than Peter. Respect for the Lord makes Peter do contradictory things: he puts on some clothes before he jumps into the water, probably in order to reach Jesus first (cf. Mt 14:28). The other disciples are only secondary characters, who go with Peter (v. 3) and drag the net (v. 8). vv. 9–10, in a subtle way the story of the catch moves into one of a meal, resembling Lk 24:41–3. But John does not explicitly say that the risen Lord himself ate: he only prepares the fish and the bread (v. 9) and gives them to the disciples (v. 13). v. 11, in the Greek text (*anebē*, ‘went up’) it is not clear whether Peter went back to the boat (NRSV; TOB; JB) or went up on the shore (Bultmann 1971). The 153 fish have been interpreted as the totality of the kinds of fish known at that time (Jerome, *In Ezekiel* 14.47.9–12). A better explanation is to see 153 as the sum of all the numbers up to 17. Moreover there were 12 baskets filled with the fragments of the 5 loaves in 6:13, and that makes a total of 17 (cf. Lindars 1972). Other exegetes have proposed calculations based on *gematria*, the value of Greek or Hebrew letters, but this leads to arbitrary hypotheses. In any case, the evangelist symbolically suggests a totality of people recruited through missionary work. vv. 12–13, the author describes in concrete terms how the risen Lord gives the true bread from heaven that was mentioned in ch. 6 (see Hartman 1984). That the disciples do not dare ask Jesus contrasts with Thomas’s behaviour in 20:24–9. v. 14, the evangelist frames vv. 2–13 by resuming v. 1 and adding that this revelation was the third one to the disciples (taking into account 20:19–23, 24–9). It is impossible to make this agree with Mk 16:7 and Mt 28:16–20, where the appearance in Galilee is the first one to the disciples (cf. Mk 16:14).

(21:15–23) The comparison between Peter and the beloved disciple which was hinted at in the first scene becomes explicit in the second one. vv. 15–17, the Greek sentence in v. 15 can be understood in three different ways: ‘Do you love me more than you love these things?’ (*toutōn* is then understood as a neuter pronoun); ‘do you love me more than you love those (persons)?’; ‘do you love me more than those do?’ (this is best in the context). The three questions and the three answers are formulated differently and lead to a climax where Peter feels personally hurt. In a certain sense he makes up for his

threefold denial in 18:15–27. Jesus addresses Peter three times as ‘son of John’, just as he did in his first call (1:42). At that time Peter loved his master whom he was willing to follow (cf. also 13:36–8). There Jesus called him Cephas or Peter, ‘rock’ (from Aram. *kēfā* and Gk. *Petra*). After the three denials Peter must three times confess his love if he is to be the shepherd of Jesus’ flock. vv. 18–19, now Peter is ready to follow Jesus: as the pastor of Jesus’ sheep he will give his life, just as the Master himself laid down his life for them (cf. 10:15, 17–18). In v. 19 the author explains what Jesus prophetically formulates in v. 18: Peter will die on a cross (on Peter’s death as martyr under Nero, see 1 *Clem.* 5:4). vv. 20–3, in a natural way Peter asks about the destiny of the beloved disciple, who was first explicitly mentioned as such in 13:23. The answer is even more mysterious than that concerning Peter: he will remain until Jesus comes. In his comment in vv. 23–4 the writer (probably a redactor) suggests that the beloved disciple will finally die, but that he will remain until Jesus comes. This has a symbolic meaning: his message will remain.

(21:24–5) Probably a redactor, who had already reworked the preceding verses, is responsible for this second conclusion to the gospel and perhaps also for 19:35 to which he alludes. By speaking of ‘we’ he designates the group who has approved the testimony of the beloved disciple, reflected in the gospel. The evangelist has transmitted the message and testimony of the beloved disciple, whom he wants the reader to identify with John, the son of Zebedee. As Christians must still wait for Jesus’ return, the witness of the beloved disciple helps them even after his death and completes Peter’s pastoral function. The words ‘many other things’ amplify what was said in the first conclusion in 20:30.

Appendix: 7:53–8:11

This passage, though canonical, does not properly belong to the Gospel of John, since it is missing in the oldest textual witnesses (e.g. P⁶⁶, P⁷⁵, Sinaiticus, Vaticanus, old translations). Most MSS that have the text put it after Jn 7:52, probably because of the words ‘neither do I condemn you’ in 8:11, which can be compared with 8:15. Some MSS, however, place it after 7:36, 7:44, or 21:25; the Ferrar group after Lk 21:38. Several witnesses mark the text as doubtful.

Papias seems to allude to it in c.130 CE, if we can trust Eusebius, *HE* 3.39.17. In the fourth

century we find it in a simpler form in the Syrian *Didascalia Apostolorum*, 8.2, and in Didymus' commentary on Eccl 7:21–2. The style reminds us of Luke and the story may be compared with Lk 7:36–50. It could be called a biographical apophthegm, in which a saying of Jesus has been developed into the story of a woman caught in adultery. Just as in the Synoptic Gospels, here Jesus does not reject the law directly but criticizes those who apply it mechanically. The law must be interpreted in the light of God's mercy for sinners.

(7:53–8:11) Jesus teaches in the temple as he does every day in Luke (Lk 19:47; 20:1; 21:37). He goes to the Mount of Olives as in Lk 21:37. Just as in the synoptic tradition, the scribes and the Pharisees suddenly come to test the Master. The woman seems to be married, as the text emphasizes that she had committed adultery. 8:3b–6, the legal basis of the accusers' action is not specified, but it may refer to Lev 20:10 and Deut 22:21. According to the Mishnah (*Sanh.* 7:4; 11:1), an adulterous betrothed girl should be stoned and a married woman strangled, but this legislation is later than the time of our text.

Jesus' silence makes the story more lively. Perhaps what he was writing referred to Jer 17:13: 'Those who turn away from me shall be written on the earth'. The accusers are not the appropriate persons to be judges. vv. 7–8, 'without sin' does not imply only sexual sins. Jesus' saying is in harmony with Mt 7:1: 'Do not judge, so that you may not be judged' (cf. Lk 6:37). The accusers have to face God's judgement upon their own sins. According to Deut 13:9 the witness should be the first to throw a stone. vv. 9–11, as the elders in the Sanhedrin have not been mentioned before, *presbyteroi* designates probably the oldest men. Perhaps there is even an allusion to the elders of Sus 28 and 41. With much skill the author has delayed the dialogue with the accused woman to the end of his story. In the synoptic tradition Jesus can forgive sins (cf. Mk 2:5; Lk 7:46). Something similar is suggested here, when Jesus says: 'from now on do not sin again' (cf. Jn 5:14), which supposes her contrition.

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7. The Four Gospels in Synopsis

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OUTLINE

- A. Gospel as a Literary Genre
- B. The Basic Interrelationship of the Gospels
- C. Proposed Solutions to the Synoptic Problem
- D. John and the Synoptic Gospels
- E. The Features of the Several Gospels Compared

Trial Pericopae:

- F. The Call of the First Disciples
- G. The Beatitudes
- H. The Second Sign at Cana or Capernaum
- I. The Controversy over Beelzebul
- J. The Walking on the Water
- K. Jesus' Prayer in the Garden

A. Gospel as a Literary Genre. **I.** Mark opens with the words, 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ' (Mk 1:1). A modern reader would

unhesitatingly see the writing that follows as the gospel of Jesus Christ. In fact the concept of 'gospel' is not without its problems. We shall begin with the name 'gospel' before going on to examine the use of the term.

The English word 'gospel' (originally 'godspell' or 'good tidings') is the translation of the Greek *euaggelion*, but it is not obvious that the writers of the four documents applied this term to their writings. Luke at any rate never uses the noun (except in Acts), though he frequently uses the corresponding verb for the activity of spreading the good news (e.g. 1:19; 4:18). He seems to consider his work rather in terms of a narrative (*diēgēsis*) or an orderly account (1:1–3). Both noun and verb are used frequently by Paul, who may rely on one or both of two backgrounds. In the religious cult of the emperors the term was used of a piece of imperial good

news of salvation, such as a victory or the birth of an heir, which was flashed round the empire, and to which the various provinces, city-states, and other political units were expected to respond with congratulatory gifts. The elements of novelty, salvation, joy, and response, as well as the religious connotations, would have made the term a suitable one for Paul to use for 'my gospel' (Rom 16:25; Gal 1:11). Paul may also, however, be drawing on the use of the word in Isa 61:1, 'the Lord has anointed me to bring *good tidings* to the afflicted'. This usage may go back to the proclamation of Jesus himself; it certainly occurs on his lips in Mt 11:5 and Lk 4:18 (see Stuhlmacher 1983).

Neither Luke nor John uses the noun, and when it began to be used as a title of the four writings is disputed. Koester (1989: 380) holds that the term was 'always and everywhere understood as the proclamation of the saving message about Christ or the coming of the kingdom' until Marcion in the mid-second century applied it to the written works. In his six usages apart from the heading, Mark certainly uses the term for the proclamation of the saving message, so that in his first verse also it is reasonable to take it in this sense rather than as 'The beginning of the *written record*' (see MK 1:1–13). In Matthew the word is used twice for Jesus' own proclamation of the kingdom (4:23; 9:35) and twice with the addition of 'this gospel' (24:14; 26:13); in the former case the whole gospel message seems to be meant, and in the latter Matthew may possibly intend to restrict Mark's meaning to the particular incident of the gospel message, the anointing at Bethany. Stanton (1992a), on the other hand, argues persuasively that usages of the term as early as the *Didache*, 8:2; 11:3; 15:3–4, seem to refer to our written gospel texts, and argues further that as soon as more than one of them existed they must have been known as something!

Finally it is important to realize that none of the four gospels originally included an attribution to an author. All were anonymous, and it is only from the fragmentary and enigmatic and—according to Eusebius, from whom we derive the quotation—unreliable evidence of Papias in 120/130 CE that we can begin to piece together any external evidence about the names of their authors and their compilers. This evidence is so difficult to interpret that most modern scholars form their opinions from the content of the gospels themselves, and only then appeal selectively to the external evidence for confirmation of their findings.

2. As recently as 1970 the type of writing now called 'gospel' was considered to be without parallel in the ancient world. Norman Perrin (1970–1: 4) could write assertively that it was 'the unique literary creation of early Christianity. This is a statement I would make with confidence... If we are to come to terms with this genre we must concentrate our attention upon the Gospel of Mark'. Perrin sees a gospel as being a narrative of an event from the past, in which interest and concerns of the past, present, and future have flowed together, since the events of Jesus' ministry are interpreted in the light of the writer's own time and of things expected of Jesus' future coming.

In 1987 Christopher Tuckett could, with misgivings, still give as the majority opinion the view that there was no close parallel to the genre of the gospels. In the last decade, however, it has become clear that the literary genre of 'gospel' can no longer be considered as completely unique. To enable a reader or listener to understand a document it must be possible to a certain extent to categorize it into a known type. Tuckett (1987: 75) wittily gives the example of 'Vicar gives directions to Queen? Just the opposite', to be understood as a newspaper headline or as a crossword puzzle clue for REVER-SE. The features of a particular genre of literature form a conventional set of expectations, a sort of implied contract with the reader that enables the reader to categorize the document. The expectations are not necessarily always identical in all respects with what the reader finds, but at least provide a family resemblance. Burrige (1992) has shown that the gospels fall within the varied and well-attested Graeco-Roman concept of biography. Of this genre there are many subdivisions, inevitably including cross-border borrowing with other genres, such as political propaganda, encomium, moralistic encouragement, and travelogue. Even religious biographies in the broad sense were not unknown. The respectful atmosphere found in the gospels, 'tinged with praise and worship' (ibid. 211) occurs also in such works as Tacitus' *Agricola* and Philo's *De vita Mosis*. What is, however, unique to the gospels, and constitutes them as an unprecedented subgroup, is the importance and salvific claim of their message, expressed most clearly by Jn 20:31, 'these things are written that you may believe... and that believing you may have life'. It is not, then, an unprecedented type of writing, so much as the conviction of the writers that their subject and message had the power to change the world for

those who accepted them, that is unique. But this does not exclude the gospels from the broad category of Graeco-Roman biography.

B. The Basic Interrelationship of the Gospels.

The three gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke are clearly related very closely to one another, much more closely than John is related to any of them. They share the same basic outline, roughly the same order of events, the same way of telling stories and relating sayings, and even the basically same portrait of the good news of the kingdom and its preaching by Jesus.

This similarity among the first three gospels is best seen by contrast to John. The geographical outline is different: in the first three gospels Jesus goes to Jerusalem only once during his ministry, for the final week, whereas in John he pays several visits to Jerusalem. The order of events is different, for example the cleansing of the temple comes early in John, introducing Jesus' ministry (Jn 2:13–22), whereas in the other three gospels it forms the climax (Mk 11:15–19). John relates many fewer miracles, but almost invariably these are developed by means of a subsequent long discourse of Jesus or by a controversy that brings out the sense and meaning of the event (for example the cure at the Pool of Bethesda continues into a discourse on the works of the Son, Jn 5; the multiplication of loaves flowers into the bread of life discourse, Jn 6:1–15, 22–66). While the Jesus of the first three gospels turns attention away from himself to the kingship of God, in John the kingship of God is mentioned only in 3:3–5; the Johannine Jesus teaches about *his* kingship only in 18:6, and otherwise concentrates rather on his gift of eternal life. In the first three gospels story-parables are an important vehicle of teaching, whereas the fourth gospel barely uses them, preferring instead extended images such as that of the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:1–18).

The similarity between the first three gospels may be roughly described in terms of the number of verses shared. Of Mark's 661 verses, some 80 per cent feature in Matthew and 60 per cent in Luke. Conversely, only three pericopes of Mark (the seed growing secretly, Mk 4:26–9, the healing of the deaf-mute, Mk 7:31–7, and the blind man of Bethsaida, Mk 8:22–6) have no equivalent in either Matthew or Luke. Time and again such long stretches show almost *verbatim* agreement between Matthew and Mark or Mark and Luke that some literary relationship at the textual level must be postulated between them. Similarly Matthew and Luke have some

220 verses in common, mostly of sayings-material, so that some literary relationship between these two is undeniable. The possibility of viewing these three gospels together has led to the appellation Synoptic Gospels, and the difficulty of reaching an agreed solution to account for their interrelationship has been dubbed the 'synoptic problem'. The issue is so complicated that some scholars regard it as little more than an intellectual game. Brown (1997: 111) opines that 'most readers of the NT find the issue complex, irrelevant to their interests, and boring'.

Three proposed solutions to the synoptic problem will be outlined (c), which will be tested in a discussion of six pericopes (F–K).

C. Proposed Solutions to the Synoptic Problem. 1. The Griesbach Hypothesis.

Truly scientific study of this problem did not begin until in 1776 J. J. Griesbach produced a critical edition of a Synopsis of the Gospels, printing the gospels in parallel columns and thus enabling the reader to see in detail the similarities and differences between them. His conclusion, published in 1789, was that Mark was nothing but a combination of Matthew and Luke. The same conclusion had been reached slightly earlier by the little-known Oxford scholar Henry Owen in 1764, so that this view is sometimes called the Owen-Griesbach hypothesis. It later fell into obscurity, but has been revived by William R. Farmer in 1964, and has since become known strictly as the Two-Gospel Hypothesis. For brevity and to avoid confusion it will here be named the Griesbach theory.

The theory is that the first gospel to be written was that of Matthew, the most Semitic of the gospels, written for Christians of Jewish extraction. Next, for Christians of Gentile origin, but still before the destruction of Jerusalem, Luke was written. Finally Mark combined the two. The fundamental argument for this hypothesis, both for Griesbach and for Farmer, lies in the order of pericopes. Wherever Mark departs from Matthew's order, he supports Luke's; if there is a difference between the order of Matthew and Luke, Mark zigzags between the two, following first one, then the other. In addition, the supporters observe, Mark always proceeds forward, never turning back in the order established by Matthew and Luke. These observations are correct, but are not enough to prove the point that Mark combines Matthew and Luke, for in the same way the order of Matthew and Luke can be explained at least as

well (see c.2) if Mark is taken as the starting-point.

Support for the theory is claimed also from the material within pericopes. Mark has many double expressions, of which half occur in Matthew and half in Luke. The paradigm case is Mk 1:32, 'That evening, at sunset', where Matthew has in the corresponding passage (8:16) 'That evening', and Luke (4:40) 'when the sun was setting'. The explanation given by the Griesbach theory is that Mark takes one phrase from each of the other gospels and combines them. There is a number of instances of this phenomenon (e.g. Mk 1:42, 'the leprosy left him, and he was made clean'; Mk 8:3, 'his leprosy was made clean'; Lk 5:13, 'the leprosy left him'; similarly at Mk 10:29, 'for my sake and for the sake of the good news').

The Griesbachian explanation, however, is not compelling. Opponents claim, with good evidence, that duality of this kind is a feature of Mark's own style, specifically a feature of his oral style, in which a certain repetitiveness aids the hearer (see E.1). Rather than Mark combining his predecessors, he serves as a quarry for his successors; the phenomenon noted could equally well be the result of Matthew taking one of Mark's two elements and Luke taking the other. It might seem that here again the argument may run either way, except for another observation. On many occasions Matthew keeps both Mark's elements while Luke has only one (Mk 4:5, 'other seed fell on rocky ground where it did not have much soil'; Mt 13:5 has both elements; Lk 8:6 has only 'some fell on the rock'); on many occasions Luke keeps both elements while Matthew has only one (Mk 4:39, 'the wind ceased and there was a dead calm'; Luke, 'they ceased and there was a calm'; Mt 8:26 has only 'and there was a dead calm'; similarly at Mk 6:36); on many occasions Matthew and Luke choose the same half of the double expression (Mk 2:25, 'were hungry and in need of food'; Mt 12:3 and Lk 6:3, 'were hungry'; similarly at Mk 3:26; 12:23). Double expressions occur also in Mark even in those few passages where there is no parallel in Matthew or Luke (Mk 4:28, the double 'head'; Mk 8:24, 25, the double 'looked' in each verse). How widespread a feature it is of Mark's own style has been fully documented by Neiryneck (1988). There is therefore no need to postulate that it derives from the combination by Mark of Matthew and Luke.

The greatest difficulty for the Griesbach theory is, however, why Mark should have written a gospel (and why the church should have

accepted it) in which he deliberately omitted so much that is valuable: the infancy stories, the beatitudes, the Lord's prayer, the resurrection appearances, and many other important and favourite passages which had already been included in Matthew and Luke.

2. The Two-Source Theory. Since it was extensively proposed by C. Lachmann in 1835, seconded by C. G. Wilke and H. Weisse in 1838, the Two-Source theory has won overwhelming acceptance, at least as a working hypothesis. It still holds the dominant position in NT scholarship. The theory is that Mark is the first gospel, and was used independently by Matthew and Luke, neither of whom knew each other's texts. The large quantity of material shared by Matthew and Luke (but not by Mark), mostly sayings material, derives from a common source. Since an article by J. Weiss in 1890 this common source has been known as 'Q' (Neiryneck 1978; 1979). The acceptance of this common source has been greatly assisted by the mention by the early second-century Bishop Papias (quoted by Eusebius) of a collection of Sayings of the Lord in Aramaic made or used by Matthew. Although few scholars accept all Papias' evidence, his mention of the collection of sayings has been widely taken to support this theory.

Despite the hypothetical nature of the very existence of Q, studies have progressed which have established what this document would have been like, e.g. Piper (1995), magisterially summed up by Kloppenborg (2000). It was caricatured by Meier (1994: 181) as a 'grab bag', without any coherent theology or genre. Its most striking feature was, however, that it contained no account of the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus, and indeed showed no interest in these events, containing no hints that they were to occur. Kloppenborg suggests that Paul's stress on these events could be a deliberate corrective to their neglect in this very early document. The most important stress is on the threat of the coming judgement; this frames the whole document (Luke 3:7-9, 16-17 and 19:12-27; 22:28-30), as well as many of the fourteen sub-units isolated by Kloppenborg. Combined with this is a 'deuteronomic' criticism of the continual rejection of the prophets (Luke 6:23; 11:47-51; 13:34-5), and a promise of fulfilment through 'the one who is to come' (Luke 7:18-23; 13:35). Many of the sections isolated show a common structure, beginning with programmatic sayings, introducing a series of imperatives and concluding with affirmations of the

importance of its message (Luke 6:21–49; 9:57–10:24). Kloppenborg (2000: 187) likens it to the ‘widely attested genre in Near Eastern literature’, the instruction or sapiential discourse. According to some scholars (e.g. Burton Mack) the principal function of its authors is social critique and the destabilization of a corrupt society, after the manner of itinerant Cynic teachers. There is reference to the rule of God, but—by contrast to the canonical gospels—there is no interest in exegesis of the Torah. This carefully elaborated characterization is, however, obviously secondary to proof of the existence of Q. The strongest arguments for this theory are the order of pericopes, the detailed editing, and the mutual independence of Matthew and Luke.

With Mark as starting-point it is possible to explain the order of pericopes in Matthew and Luke. However the crucial point here (by contrast to the Griesbachian zigzag claim, see B) is that whenever they diverge from Mark’s order it is possible to give clear and plausible reasons for this divergence. Matthew follows Mark’s order of pericopes strictly except when he is composing two series, the collection of miracles in Mt 8–9 and the discourse on mission in Mt 10. For these two collections he takes material that occurs later in Mark (Mk 1:40–5; 3:9–13; 3:13–19; 4:35–5:43; 13:9–13). It is quite clear that Matthew is a careful and orderly teacher who likes to assemble into complete collections all the material on one subject. Thus all the changes in Matthew’s order are explained as anticipations in accordance with his teaching methods. Luke’s changes of the Markan order are not to be explained so simply and schematically, for Luke is far more creative in his writing and independent of his sources than is Matthew. So he puts the rejection of Jesus at Nazareth (Mk 6:1–6) earlier and builds it up into the programmatic opening speech with which Jesus begins his ministry at Nazareth (Lk 4:16–30). On the other hand Luke postpones until 5:1–11 the call of the first disciples (Mk 1:16–20) and builds it into an important lesson in discipleship (see F). Luke’s most far-reaching change in order is the construction of the great journey to Jerusalem (9:51–18:14), by which he locates much of Jesus’ teaching on the final journey to his death at Jerusalem. All other distracting geographical names are there suppressed, to subserve the typical Lukan concentration on Jerusalem, where Jesus will die as a prophet and from where the gospel will spread to the ends of the earth. Luke’s order varies so widely and imaginatively from that of his predecessors that Luke’s supposed rearrangement of Q’s order was mocked in 1924

by B. H. Streeter as that of a ‘crank’, a charge disputed by Goulder (1984). An alternative explanation of Luke’s order is given in the same volume by H. B. Green (1984). A full explanation of the changes in order by Matthew and Luke, on the hypothesis of Markan priority, is given by Tuckett (1984a).

The argument from the detailed editing can hardly be briefly summarized. Some impression of it will be given by the pericopes discussed below (F–K). The outlines, however, are:

(a) There are numerous occasions when both Matthew and Luke improve the grammar and style of Mark’s unsophisticated Greek; it seems perverse to argue in the opposite direction that Mark deliberately roughens a more cultured presentation.

(b) Some features of Markan style and composition appear also in Matthew and Luke where and only where Mark uses them. It is more reasonable to suppose that Matthew and Luke derived them from Mark than that Mark adopted all the instances from both Matthew and Luke. One example of this is the Markan afterthought-explanation with a past tense of *eimi* and *gar* (‘for they were fishermen’); this is a feature of Markan style which occurs in Matthew and Luke only in passages parallel to those of Mark: in Mk 2:15; 5:42; 16:4 the construction occurs only in Mark; in Mk 1:16, 22; 6:48; 14:40 it is paralleled in Matthew, in Mk 10:22 it is paralleled in both Matthew and Luke.

(c) There are several theological differences between Mark, Matthew, and Luke which may perhaps point (though uncertainly) in the direction of a development from Mark to Matthew and Luke rather than in the opposite direction. Thus Matthew and Luke show a distinctly more explicit Christology than Mark. Again, Mark is highly, even shockingly, critical of the disciples’ lack of faith and understanding; Matthew and Luke both weaken this criticism, in a way that might be expected to have occurred at a time when reverence for the first leaders of Christianity was increasing.

The mutual independence of Matthew and Luke is a point crucial for establishing the extent and indeed the existence of Q. If Luke knew Matthew (or vice versa), the links between Matthew and Luke can be accounted for without the intervention of any Q. The large number of minor agreements (some calculate there are as many as 1,000) between Matthew and Luke against Mark demands some explanation in the sources. It may, however, be approached at various levels:

1. The minor agreements. In texts of this length it is quite possible that many agreements may occur where Matthew and Luke make the same change to their version of Mark by sheer coincidence. This will especially be the case where they share the same principles, either linguistic (objection to Mark's primitive historic present and wearisomely repetitive conjunction *kai/kai euthus* = 'and/and immediately') or theological (increasingly explicit Christology or reverence for the disciples). It cannot be considered surprising that two Christian writers sometimes share the same reaction to a primitive Christian text. It requires explanation only if the identical expression of this becomes remarkable by its frequency or its extent. There can be no verdict on the likely frequency of such similarity, and little agreement on the significance of individual cases. The most striking single case is Mt 26:68 || Mk 14:65 || Lk 22:64, where both Matthew and Luke have 'Who is it that struck you?', lacking in Mark. So difficult is this of explanation that determined advocates of the theory that Matthew and Luke are totally independent of each other sometimes turn to the desperate expedient of declaring all the MSS corrupt. There are, however, scholars who are prepared to rebut the claim for each passage that Luke knew Matthew, e.g. Tuckett (1984b). Another significant minor agreement is in the order of pericopes: an important support for the Q-theory is the claim that the Q-material always occurs in different places in Matthew and Luke. But in three instances both these gospels have material in the same sequence: the Baptist's preaching of repentance (Mt 3:7-10; Lk 3:7-9) comes between the same triple-tradition pericopes; the testing in the desert (Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13) occurs in both between the baptism and the first proclamation in Galilee; the parable of the leaven (Mt 13:33; Lk 13:20-1) in both follows the parable of the mustard seed.

2. Clusters of agreement between Matthew and Luke occur in a limited number of pericopes. Since B. H. Streeter it has been accepted that there are passages where the agreements between Matthew and Luke against Mark are so pronounced that there must be literary contact between them apart from Mark, either directly or at least through Q; these are known as 'Mark-Q overlaps'. Streeter listed five major passages (John's preaching, the temptation, the mustard seed, collusion with Satan, and commissioning the twelve) and eleven others where this Mark-Q overlap occurs. In all these passages put together there is a total of 50 verses in which Streeter finds *verbatim*

agreement between Mark and Q. This causes two major difficulties:

(a) The source-question is therefore in fact simply pushed one stage further back: what is the literary relationship between Mark and Q? This widespread agreement must be explained; *verbatim* agreement in 50 verses must presuppose some literary connection. If Mark used Q for some passages, why did he not use Q more widely, especially to include some of those precious passages mentioned in c.1? Was only a partial edition of Q available to him? The number of unknown documents begins to proliferate, for example by different editions of Q. Alternatively, if the whole of Q was available to Mark, why did he omit so much?

(b) While it is accepted that on many occasions both Matthew and Luke show major inventiveness, editing their sources with imagination and steady theological purpose, on these occasions their inventiveness is assumed to have deserted them. For instance, in the case of the mustard seed, they have carefully stitched together the versions of Mark and Q simply for the sake of using both versions without any large theological advantage.

3. Recourse to other editions of Mark is a possible expedient to account for a number of agreements, both positive and negative, between Matthew and Luke against Mark. If both Matthew and Luke include a phrase absent from Mark (a positive minor agreement), it may be that they had an earlier text of Mark that included this phrase. There was therefore an earlier version of Mark (Proto-Mark) on which both Matthew and Mark drew.

Conversely, if Matthew and Luke both lack a phrase, it may be that the phrase was added to Mark after they used that gospel. Sanders (1969) offers a list of such suggested additions to Mark after it had been used by Matthew and Luke, e.g. 'and Andrew with James and John' in Mk 1:29; or 'carried by four of them' in Mk 2:3; or 'and there he prayed' in Mk 1:35, a phrase that would have fitted Luke's emphasis on prayer, but is lacking in Luke's parallel passage; or Mk 2:27. This 'Deutero-Mark' theory will explain many negative minor agreements (that is, where Matthew and Luke agree on omitting a Markan phrase), and the lack of phrases in Matthew or Luke that might be expected to appeal to the particular evangelist. The suggestion is that Mark is the first evangelist, but these phrases were simply not contained in the edition of Mark used by the later two. The difficulty about this theory is that many of the phrases

are consistent with the style and methods widespread in and characteristic of the main part of the gospel. If they are consistent with the author's style, it seems unjustified to attribute them to a second editor. Deutero-Mark is, however, a possible way to evade some of the difficulties of the minor agreements.

The suggestion that a Matthean form (Proto-Matthew) existed before Mark is, however, attractive as a solution to some passages where Matthew seems more correct (or more faithful to the Jewish background) than Mark. For instance, in the pericope on plucking corn on the sabbath, Matthew's version makes far more sense than Mark's. In Mark's version (2:23) the disciples simply tear up the corn to make a path; this leads to a badly focused legal dispute. In Matthew's version (12:1) they pluck ears of corn to assuage their hunger as they pass through the field, in accordance with Deut 23:26; this gives rise to a good legal dispute about threshing on the sabbath. On the Proto-Mark theory Matthew would be drawing on an earlier version of Mark, which was later misunderstood and simplified by an author unfamiliar with niceties of Jewish law; finally Matthew would have simplified the legal issues and adopted some expressions from the final edition of Mark. The question is whether it is more economical to postulate this earlier version of the gospel, or to suppose that Matthew used Mark, but correctly spelt out and narrated the legal situation that alone makes sense of Mark's story. (However, Casey (1998) maintains that Mk 2:23–3:6 is itself the translation of a very ancient Aramaic document.)

Similarly, in the story of the empty tomb, the women's motive in Mt 28:1 (to pay a pious visit to the tomb) accords with Jewish custom, and with good sense, better than the motive in Mk 16:1 (to anoint an already decaying body, blocked off by a great stone). Has Matthew made better sense out of Mark's version, or has Mark misunderstood and simplified the story from an earlier version used by Matthew?

3. The Multiple-Level Hypothesis. This theory, put forward by M.-E. Boismard and other distinguished members of the French Biblical School in Jerusalem, goes a step (or several steps) beyond the theories of Proto-Mark and Deutero-Mark just outlined. It is little known beyond the French-speaking world, but is nevertheless important. The basis of the theory is that all the hypotheses hitherto put forward are too simplistic. There were several basic versions of the gospel material, which have

interacted on one another at more than one stage of the development of the tradition to its final form. Traces of such development may also be garnered from divergent, nonstandard quotations of the gospels in very early church fathers. These are often attributed to faulty citations by the fathers from memory, but in this theory it is suggested that they are genuine relics of earlier versions of the gospels.

Boismard (1972) holds that there are four documents at the basis of the tradition. One (A) is a Palestinian version, stemming from Judeo-Christian circles. The second (B) is a Hellenistic reinterpretation for use in the non-Jewish Christian circles. The third (C) is less well defined, an independent version, probably of Palestinian origin. Document A gave rise to an intermediate version of Matthew, into which fed also Q (possibly not a single document itself). This Intermediate-Matthew had no contact with B, C, or the Markan tradition. It was only subsequently that large sections of this tradition were replaced by sections drawn from an intermediate version of Mark, and further editorial changes were made by an editor whose style is in some ways remarkably similar to Luke. Such 'criss-crossing' is shown by the appearance in one gospel of expressions characteristic of another. It may well be attributed to the influence of each gospel on the others at a late stage of the tradition.

Boismard's method is to look for a pure and simple form of a story, eliminating the least illogicality or unevenness. He attributes any illogicality or development to a written source, until the characteristics of the final authors are reached. One example of this method may be seen in his treatment of the return of the apostles (Mk 6:30–4 and par.). Mt 14:13 has the same pattern as Mt 12:15 and 19:1–2, which shows that it stems originally from an earlier version of Matthew, and has received further Markan vocabulary at a later stage. According to one version (mostly vv. 32–3) Jesus goes away to a deserted place, where the local people recognize him and hurry to meet him; this comes from Document A. According to another version (mostly vv. 31–2) the crowd is already present and sees Jesus and the apostles depart in a boat; this version is from Document B. It is, of course, no longer possible to separate out the two versions completely now that they have been combined.

This particular case (which Boismard claims is a strong one for his schema) presents difficulties for the Two-Source Theory, since there

are three positive minor agreements in two verses of Matthew and Luke against Mark: 'withdrew', 'the crowds followed him', and the mention of healing; Matthew and Luke also agree in three omissions against Mark. It does therefore seem likely that there is some direct relationship between Matthew and Luke. But there is no need at the documentary stage for the complications suggested by Boisnard. Such a criss-crossing process may well have occurred at the stage of oral tradition. It fits better the more fluid consistency of a body of oral tradition, passing backwards and forwards between many witnesses.

4. Mark as the Single Source. This final theory is that of Goulder (1974; 1989), a revival and elaboration of a position put forward by Austin Farrer in 1955, 'On Dispensing with Q'. Goulder holds that Mark is the first gospel. Matthew's only written source was Mark, which he edited and developed through his own theological resources. The material in Matthew which is not drawn from Mark shows a consistency of method and approach that can only be the stamp of one mind. This approach extends to the material taken over from Mark, to the material shared with Luke, and to the material proper to Matthew alone. The elements said to be characteristic of Q (a concern for eschatology, the threat of judgement, the need to bring forth good fruit, the importance of the Christian community) are in fact characteristic of Matthew, and expressed in Matthean language, so that there is no need to postulate (let alone reconstruct) any such hypothetical source. Two reservations about the original statement of Goulder's theory have been repeatedly and strongly expressed: Matthew should not be tied to any theoretical arrangement of a lectionary, which is too nebulous. Nor should Matthew's process of elaborating Mark be termed 'midrash', for midrash can be done only on a sacred text, and Mark has not yet this status. Neither of these reservations affects the main thrust of the theory, though it would certainly strengthen it if it could be shown that Matthew was doing only what many other midrashists had done.

In order to show the uniformity of Matthew's style and theology Goulder 'finger-prints' Matthew not only by means of vocabulary, but principally by means of the consistent use of imagery and patterns of speech (e.g. pairs or double pairs of images, pairs of parables, consistent use of contrast in parables; such contrast is a feature of all Matthew's own storyparables,

and is also introduced into parables taken over from Mark), see E.2.

The same finger-printing technique is applied to Luke. The new material in Luke is largely parables and other stories, and in these not only a characteristic vocabulary but also a characteristic method of storytelling can be charted (entries and exits, conversation, soliloquies of the chief character, varied, lively, and often disreputable personalities). Vocabulary, techniques of storytelling, and recognizable theological interests (concern for the poor and underprivileged, stress on the need for repentance) are discernible throughout, not only in passages proper to Luke but also in Luke's treatment of passages shared with Mark and Matthew. Once Q has been set aside, the way lies open to explain the many agreements between Matthew and Luke, which remain such a bugbear for the Two-Source Theory, by Luke's knowledge and use of Matthew.

Three major difficulties remain with this theory. The first is the different position of much of the teaching material in Luke from that of Matthew. The Sermon on the Mount becomes the Sermon on the Plain. Matthew's long, carefully structured discourses are cut up and cut down. Goulder explains this by Luke's theory that only a limited amount of teaching can be digested at one time; Luke therefore discards some material and redistributes other. Luke, in any case, shows no hesitation in relocating material (the rejection at Nazareth, the call of the disciples) if it suits his purpose. The second difficulty is that the theory attributes considerable freedom of inventiveness to both Matthew and Luke. This is particularly true in the parables, where both evangelists would have introduced whole stories which they did not receive from the Jesus-tradition. However, Goulder shows convincingly how Luke consistently builds his own stories out of existing hints. For example, Luke's parable of the prodigal son (Lk 15:11–32) is a characteristically Lukan version of Matthew's parable of the two sons (Mt 21:28–30). Luke's infancy stories could be his own retelling, according to his own theology, interests, and style, of minimal data derived from Matthew's. Similarly Luke's story of the ten lepers (Lk 17:11–19) could well be Luke's own remoulding, according to his own techniques and theology, of the healing of the leper in Mk 1:40–5. The third difficulty, somewhat intangible, is the doubt whether such a careful, modern, scissors-and-paste method of editing two previous texts may be postulated of an ancient author.

This difficulty is, however, common to almost all explanations of the interrelationships of the gospels. It may be less extreme if the texts on which the later evangelists worked are regarded not as written documents but as texts held firmly and word for word in the memory, and thus allowing greater flexibility. However, proponents of the Two-Source Theory point out that the first two of these (the Baptist's preaching of repentance, and the testing in the desert) could scarcely occur anywhere else, leaving only the third case to be explained as a partial coincidence.

The attack on Goulder's theory has increased in intensity during the last decade. A particularly strong attack is mounted by Tuckett (1995: 31–45). Principally, Goulder's answer to Streeter's argument has been exploded. Streeter argued that it would be 'the order of a crank' if Luke meticulously followed Mark's order but changed the order of almost every pericope which he took from Matthew. Luke seems carefully to have scraped off every Matthean addition to Mark and then inserted many of them (but not all, e.g. Mt 12:5–7; 16:16–19; 27:19, 24, and why not?) elsewhere. Goulder's explanation of Luke's break-up of the long Matthean discourses—that Luke considered they provided too much richness to be digested at a single gulp—flies in the face of the long speeches in Luke 21, Acts 7 and elsewhere. Goodacre (1996) also casts doubt on Goulder's central vocabulary argument: are the 'Matthean' words which Luke is claimed to have adopted indeed specifically Matthean? In a number of cases it can be argued equally well that the borrowing is in the opposite direction.

D. John and the Synoptic Gospels. 1. The basic differences between John and the Synoptic Gospels have been outlined at the beginning of this article. The relationship between them continues, however, to be highly disputed, several different opinions being put forward. In 1974 Norman Perrin held that John must have known the Gospel of Mark directly. In Denaux (1992) Rene Kieffer held that John knew Mark or a source very similar to Mark, while Frans Neirynck argues for the direct textual dependence of Jn 5:1–18 on Mark. On the other hand in the same work Peder Borgen maintains that John is not using the actual text of the Synoptics, but rather an underlying oral tradition which they have in common; he compares John's use of the synoptic tradition in several passages to Paul's use in 1 Cor 11:23–34 of the

tradition of the institution of the eucharist reflected also in Mk 14:22–5.

In detail the links between John and the synoptics are diverse.

(a) Some stories are closely similar in both John and the Synoptics, including verbal and structural similarities, though reworked to express the special theology of each author (e.g. the multiplication of loaves and the walking on the waters, see 1.1–3).

(b) In other cases Johannine miracle-stories are based on stories of the same type as the synoptic stories: controversial healings on the sabbath, Jn 5 and 9, a dead person, Lazarus, is raised to life, as Jairus' daughter or the son of the widow of Nain are in the Synoptics. It may be argued that in John the raising of Lazarus is so crucial to the decision to get rid of Jesus that, had it been known to the synoptic tradition, it could not have been omitted.

(c) There are sayings so close that they may simply be different translations of the same original (e.g. Jn 1:26–7; 2:19 compared to Mt 3:11 and Mk 14:58 respectively). In such cases the very form of the saying may be affected by the theology of the writer, and its positioning and use can certainly impart to it a different force.

(d) Some sayings in John appear in the form of stories in the Synoptics (e.g. Jn 12:27 and the prayer of Jesus in the Garden, see κ.5). The saying of Jn 3:3, 5, is very similar to Mt 18:3; it is the only mention of 'the kingdom' in John, and makes the same point as the Matthew-saying. In the passion narrative John has no scene corresponding to the decision of the Sanhedrin in Mark/Matthew to deliver Jesus to Pilate, but there may be traces of the same discussion and decision in the meeting of the chief priests and Pharisees related in Jn 11:47–53.

A special link between Luke and John is apparent. Luke and John share several omissions from the Mark–Matthew tradition (e.g. the mention of the Baptist baptizing Jesus). Some passages show a close relationship between Luke and John (the call of the disciples in Lk 5:1–11 and Jn 21, see F.5; the anointing in Lk 7:36–50). The link between John and Luke is clearest in the passion and resurrection narrative. Normally it is assumed that, if there is any direct dependence, it is John who is dependent on Luke. It has also, however, been argued by Lamar Cribbs (1971) that dependence goes in quite the opposite direction, and that Luke depends on John. There is a remarkable series of 20 passages where Luke departs from the

Mark–Matthew tradition precisely to agree with John. It remains, however, most probable that John's link with Luke, as with Mark and Matthew, remains at the oral level (see 1.1).

E. The Features of the Several Gospels Compared.

In recent years scholars have devoted considerable attention to discerning the features proper to each evangelist, both in style and in theology. Such study cannot be divorced from the synoptic problem, that is, from the question of the order in which the gospels were written. Obviously features verbal, linguistic, and theological, present in both Matthew and Mark, will owe their origin to whichever of the two has been found to be the earlier, being borrowed thence by the later writer.

Word-lists have long been published, such as those of Hawkins (1909). His criterion for a word characteristic of Matthew and Luke is that the word occur at least four times in that gospel (three times in the case of Mark) and at least twice as often (in the case of Mark, more often) than in the other two Synoptic Gospels together. It has, however, been objected that mere frequency is no indication of origin, for a particular word found in a gospel may take another author's fancy, in which case the derivative author may use frequently a word originally derived from another evangelist, who uses the word only once or twice. Frequency of usage on its own is therefore no criterion of origin, particularly since Matthew and Luke are roughly twice as long as Mark. More progress may be made by means of particular usages of words, such as Mark's repeated transitional phrases, 'and immediately' and 'again'. It has proved possible to establish clusters of linguistic usage associated with such phrases by which Mark structures his stories. So, starting from Mark's highly characteristic and unusual use of 'again' to refer back to a previous incident, Peabody (1987) established that the same hand is responsible for the composition of the whole of Mk 1:16–4:1.

1. Mark. *Narrative Style.* A whole series of features in Mark may be connected to his distinctively oral style of storytelling. On the grammatical level these include parataxis instead of syntaxis (a series of parallel short sentences, where a more literary writer might use subordinate clauses) and the frequent historical present (which often disappears in translation, and is often 'corrected' by Matthew and Luke). On a more stylistic level Markan duality has been thoroughly documented: Mark's thought often

proceeds by two steps, the second frequently defining and focusing the first, 'That evening, at sundown' (1:32), 'in the morning, a great while before day' (1:35), 'the leprosy left him and he was made clean' (1:42). This duality shows also in the frequent double questions ('Do you not yet perceive or understand?', 8:17) and double commands ('Peace! Be still!', 4:39, or 'Take heed, beware!', 8:15). Another frequent oral technique is the afterthought explanation with 'for': 'for it was very large' (16:4), 'for they were afraid' (16:8). These are means by which the oral storyteller imparts his information gradually, at a pace at which it can be absorbed.

Two other oral techniques deserve mention, the frequent triple repetition to stress important points (the three great prophecies of the passion, Jesus' triple return to the sleeping disciples in Gethsemane, the triple accusation of Jesus before the high priest, Peter's triple denial, Pilate's triple appeal to the people in his attempt to set Jesus free), and Mark's knack of focusing his audience's attention on one object easily visualized: Jesus in the boat 'asleep on the cushion' (4:38) or John's 'head on a platter' (6:28). It is these techniques that make Mark such a superb and memorable storyteller.

Mark's Irony. Perhaps the most important feature of Mark's style of writing from the theological point of view is his consistent use of irony. His storytelling operates on two levels, so that events have for the informed reader a sense which the actors in the drama do not comprehend. From the beginning the reader knows the identity of Jesus (1:1; and the voice from heaven at the baptism, in Mark addressed to Jesus, not the onlookers, 1:11), while the actors in the story discover it only gradually. Ironically, it is the blind men at Bethsaida (8:25) and Jericho (10:47) who see clearly who Jesus is, while even in his confession at Caesarea Philippi Peter earns a rebuke for his lack of understanding (8:33). In the passion story this irony reaches a climax, as Jesus is repeatedly mocked for falsely claiming to be what he in fact is: a prophet (14:65) even while his prophecy of Peter's denial is being fulfilled, king (15:18), and saviour (15:31). Such irony serves both to drive home the lessons of the story and to bring readers to examine their own positions and commitment.

Education Levels. Despite, therefore, Mark's often inelegant and popular language, the artistry of composition and arrangement shown by his work is evidence of a considerable degree of education. In the first century primary

education was widespread, and at this level, or at any rate before embarking on higher education in rhetoric, children were taught to expand, contract, reform, and refute passages handed to them. It can no longer be considered acceptable to categorize the earliest Christians as exclusively uneducated riff-raff of the slave classes. Luke (especially in Acts) is perhaps overanxious to emphasize the respectable status of those who listened to and were attracted by Paul's message, but the evidence of Paul's letters shows that the community had considerable resources. They were able to travel, own slaves, eat meat, offer their houses for meetings, behave arrogantly and unfeelingly towards less wealthy members. Meeks (1983) opines that the most active and prominent members of Paul's circle were upwardly mobile. There is no reason to suppose that such a group would have selected a primitive ignoramus to write the gospel, or would have accepted it if one had done so.

The Failure of the Disciples. One of the most notable features of Mark's gospel is its criticism of the disciples. They initially respond with unhesitating obedience (1:16–20), and are congratulated as the grain giving a good yield (4:8) and for their first mission (6:30–1), but they continually fail to understand. They fail to rely on Jesus (4:38–40). They are sarcastic towards him (6:37). Time after time he rebukes their lack of understanding (7:18; 8:17; 8:29–33). In the first half of the gospel they are thrice rebuked on the lake for their lack of faith or understanding; in the second half of the gospel, at each of the three great prophecies of the passion they fail to understand that Jesus must suffer and that the disciple must share the lot of the Master. Finally when it comes to the passion they all desert Jesus. They have left all to follow Jesus; now the young man in the garden leaves all, even his makeshift clothing, to escape (14:52). Despite his earlier protestations of loyalty Peter thrice denies his Master, just as Jesus thrice stands up to his accusers. That these instances of failure are not mere historical reportage but bear Mark's emphasis is shown by the fact that they are all shot through with the colouring of his personal style such as dualism and triple repetition.

Various explanations have been offered for Mark's insistence on the disciples' failure. Weeden (1968) suggested that Mark was concerned to correct a group of Christians who saw Jesus only as a miracle-worker and undervalued the

importance of his passion. Best (1986) saw a pedagogical element, Mark hinting how hard it was to assimilate the full message of Jesus. A feature of the gospel possibly related to, and contrasting with, the failure of the disciples is the success and praise of those who take the initiative in approaching Jesus: the SyroPhoenician woman (7:25–30), the father of the epileptic boy (9:18), Bartimaeus (10:46–52), the woman at Bethany (14:9). Mark may be pointing the lesson that a first approach to Jesus is easy enough, but that enduring commitment brings its own difficulties. At any rate the gospel must be reacting to a testing situation of the persecution of Christians in which some (perhaps even some of the leaders of the community) have failed to understand that suffering for the sake of the gospel is an integral part of discipleship.

The Kingship of God. The focus of Jesus' proclamation of the Good News in Mark is, however, the kingdom, or rather kingship, of God. This is the object of his first proclamation, the conclusion of the Markan introduction (1:15). The proclamation is closely followed by Jesus' first miracle, the expulsion of an unclean spirit (1:21–8). As Jesus interprets his power over evil spirits as being a sign of the triumph of the kingdom of God over the kingdom of Satan (3:23–4) his miracles of healing may also be understood as a sign of the advent of God's kingship and rule, the triumph of God over evil, so long awaited in Judaism. From the first teaching of John the Baptist (1:3) Mark has made clear that acceptance of this sovereignty of God will require a conversion and reorientation of life, though he is far less explicit than Matthew (e.g. the Sermon on the Mount) about the details of conduct required. There is a certain tension between two aspects, whether the kingship of God is already activated or is still to come. As Jesus' passion and resurrection approach, Mark gives a series of sayings that suggest that in some sense these events will bring the kingdom in power (9:1; 14:25, 62). At the same time the eschatological discourse leaves no doubt that all is not yet accomplished, and there is still to occur an overwhelming 'coming of the Son of Man in power' (13:26), preceded by a final great persecution of the disciples as they proclaim the Good News to all the nations (13:10).

The Person of Jesus. Reliance on the person of Jesus is the central condition for acceptance of God's sovereignty. The story Mark tells may be seen as an unveiling of the mystery of who Jesus is. The reader is told succinctly at the start that

he is Messiah and Son of God (1:1). Through Markan irony (see above) the actors in the drama discover only painfully and slowly who Jesus is. But the believing reader, already enjoying knowledge of the resurrection, also shares in this discovery, learning as Mark's story unfolds what these titles mean. The reader benefits from the recognition of Jesus by the voice from heaven at the baptism (1:11) and the transfiguration (9:7) and by the unclean spirits as they are expelled (acknowledgements seemingly unnoticed by those present, 3:11; 5:7), but this knowledge is still denied to those who encounter Jesus. No human witness of Jesus reaches full acknowledgement of him as Son of God until the centurion at the cross. The quest pervades the gospel, as those who encounter Jesus attempt to puzzle out who he is (2:7; 4:41; 8:21, 29; 11:28; 14:61). It is made more laborious by Jesus' repeated order to 'tell no one about what they had seen until the Son of Man had risen from the dead' (9:9), the so-called 'messianic secret' (see MK 1:32–4).

The dominant impression of Jesus is one of authority. When he calls the disciples they follow unhesitatingly (1:16–20). He teaches and heals with authority (1:22, 27). The wind and the sea obey him (4:41). Even his unexplained commands are obeyed without question (11:1–6; 14:13–16). Amazement and astonishment follow him everywhere (2:12; 5:20; 6:51; 7:37). A challenge to his authority is easily defeated (11:27–33), until 'no one dared question him any more' (12:34). He acts like the prophets of old (6:15; 8:28), even providing bread in the desert for his followers as Moses did (6:35–44; 8:1–9). He arrogates to himself powers that only God possesses, forgiving sin (2:1–12), claiming to be lord of the sabbath (2:28), rebuking the storm (4:39; cf. Ps 107:23–9), walking on the sea (6:48; cf. Job 9:8). The final blasphemy—again Markan irony—is when he proclaims that the high priest will see him 'seated at the right hand of the Power' and "coming on the clouds of heaven" (14:62), a claim to share the very throne of God (see Donahue 1973). It is against this background that the titles given to Jesus, such as 'Son of Man' (see MK 2:1–12) must be understood.

2. **Matthew. Narrative Style.** Mark and Matthew differ in two major respects. While Mark is concerned primarily to present a picture of the wonder of Jesus' personality Matthew concentrates on the teaching of Jesus. It has been calculated that Mark contains 240 verses of teaching, and Matthew 620. Invariably

Matthew expands the Markan teaching, just as he contracts the miracle stories. The guidance for the Christian life provided by Matthew is certainly one of the reasons why his early became the most popular and widespread of the gospels. Another reason—and this is surely at the heart of Matthew's popularity—is the poetic, rhythmic, and linguistic skill shown in Matthew's teaching sections, making the teaching attractive to remember and to quote.

Matthew tends to think in simple contrasts, using contrasting images, rock and sand (7:24), broad and narrow road (7:14), sun and rain (5:45), as well as many other pairs of images, birds and lilies (6:26–9), speck and log (7:4), moth and rust (6:19–20), and sometimes pairs of pairs, grapes, thorns, figs, thistles (7:16), stone, bread, snake, fish (7:9–10). His parables similarly point contrasts. Goulder (1974: 54) describes all Matthew's thirteen long parables as 'black and white caricature contrasts'. All of them contrast personalities (normally stock contrasting personalities, devoid of human interest or subtlety, the two builders (7:24–7), the two sons (21:28–31), the two servants (18:23–35), the wise and foolish wedding-attendants (25:1–13), and are themselves often in pairs (the mustard-seed and the leaven, 13:31–3, the treasure and the pearl, 13:44–6, the watchful householder and the faithful servant, 24:43–7; the talents and the sheep and goats, 25:14–46).

Nor is it only the liveliness of the imagery that attracts. Matthew has also a balanced rhythm which is far more frequent in his sayings than in the other Synoptics; one of the most frequent forms is described by Goulder (1974: 71) as a 'four point antithesis which has a paradoxical element'. Of these Goulder counts forty-four in Matthew, e.g. 6:3; 7:16; 9:37; 10:16. Where they are shared by Mark and Luke the form given by Matthew is often sharper and more succinct (e.g. Mt 16:26 compared with both Mark's and Luke's versions, or Mt 10:26 with Mk 4:22, or Mt 20:16 with Lk 13:30). Two special types of these four-point sayings may be mentioned, one in which two of the four terms are the same ('You received *without payment*, give *without payment*, Mt 10:8, my itals.), and the other in which the four terms fall into pairs ('with the *judgement* you make you will be *judged*, and the *measure* you give will be the *measure* you get, Mt 7:2 (my itals.)—much more succinct—12 words only—in Matthew's Greek, and quite lost in Lk 6:37–8). If Mark was chosen to relate the Good News for his skill in storytelling, it

could well be that Matthew was selected to write a gospel because of the memorably poetic quality of his oral version of the teaching of Jesus.

Matthew's Jewishness. The other feature that contrasts Matthew's style with that of Mark is its Jewishness, and more precisely its rabbinic quality. It is not simply that Matthew leaves Semitic words unexplained (e.g. *rāqā* in 5:22), or that he shows constant interest in Jewish matters, such as the three classic good works of Judaism (alms-giving, prayer, and fasting) or tithes, phylacteries, and the law. Nor yet that he several times demurs from Mark's cavalier treatment of legal observance (e.g. he omits Mk 7:19c, 'Thus he declared all foods clean') and in Mt 12:1–8 is careful to justify the disciples' plucking ears of grain on the sabbath with more arguments than Mark, omitting the sweeping liberalism of Mk 2:27. More positively he frequently uses rabbinic methods of argument, a heading followed by examples (in rabbinic writing known as *ābwētōlēdōt*) in Mt 5:17 before the six great completions of the law in 5:21–48 and in 6:1 before the classic good works, the 'light and heavy' argument (Heb. *qal wāhōmer*, Lat. *a minori ad majus*) in 12:12, and *kēlāl* or 'summing up' in 7:12.

It is notable that of all NT writers Matthew's formulas to introduce scriptural quotations are closest to those used at Qumran (cf. Fitzmyer 1970–1). His use of Scripture, linked to the word rather than the meaning of texts, is similarly often characteristic of Jewish exegesis of the time (cf. Barthélemy 1963). This reaches its extreme when Jesus is represented as mounted on both the ass and the colt in Mt 21:7, in order to fulfil Zech 9:9 literally.

Most significant on this topic is Matthew's treatment of scribes. Mark shows little interest in the scribes, and has few good words to say for them. Matthew, on the other hand, is careful in his treatment of them, systematically removing them from passages where they could, in Mark's narrative, seem to have a part in the death of Jesus (passages corresponding to Mt 21:23; 26:3, 47; 27:1). On other occasions Matthew makes it clear that particular hostile scribes belong to the Pharisee party (7:28–9; 22:34–40) or he simply substitutes 'Pharisees' for 'scribes' (9:11; 12:24). More positively, scribes are joined to prophets and wise men as those who are to be sent out as messengers in 23:34—Luke, in his corresponding passage, joins them together as 'prophets and apostles'—so that with good reason the approving sketch of the 'scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven' is

seen as Matthew's own self-portrait (13:52). Some scholars conclude that Matthew was writing for a community of Christian Jews, possibly at Antioch (Meier 1982; Sim 1998).

Matthew's Christology. In accord with this Jewishness Matthew sees the message of Jesus as bringing the teaching of Judaism to completion. Thus on twelve occasions he shows Jesus acting 'in order to fulfil' the scripture (1:23; 2:6; 15, 18, 23; 4:15–16; 8:17; 12:18–21; 13:35; 21:5; 26:56; 27:9–10) as though with no other motive for action. He sees the miracles of Jesus as the fulfilment of Isa 61 (Mt 8:17; 11:5–6) and the resurrection of Jesus as the sign of Jonah (Mt 12:39; 16:4, whereas Mk 8:12 misses this significance, saying that no sign will be given). He sees Jesus as the new Moses, reflecting Moses' career in his infancy (this is the chief theme of Mt 2), in his lawgiving (Mt 5:1), and in his final charge on the mountain (Mt 28:16). Consequentially, the people of Jesus forms the new Israel, replacing the old. In Mt 16:18 'my church' (or more exactly 'my community/congregation') mirrors the people whom God called to himself in the desert, and they are the nation to which the kingdom will be given when it is taken away from the unresponsive tenants (22:43). The repeated promise of his presence among them (1:18; 18:20; 28:20) corresponds to the presence of God among the people of Israel.

Not unexpectedly, therefore, Matthew's Jesus is a more dignified and hieratic figure than Mark's, almost as though he were already the risen Christ. Many of the human touches of emotion found in Mark are missing in Matthew (e.g. Mk 1:43; 3:5). The thronging crowd scenes of the Markan miracles of healing give way to a solemn lone confrontation between the Healer and the beneficiary (cf. Mt 8:14–15 and 9:20–2 with their Markan equivalents). If Jesus worked no miracles at Nazareth because of their unbelief, it was not that he *could* not (Mk 6:5) but simply that he *did* not (Mt 13:58).

While in Mark the disciples consistently fail to understand Jesus and his message, in Matthew this is no longer possible (cf. Mk 6:52, 8:21 with Mt 14:33, 16:12). Whereas in Mark Jesus is commonly called 'teacher' by friend and foe alike, and 'Lord' only by sapient unclean spirits and the cured, in Matthew the disciples address him as 'Lord'. Only outsiders call him 'teacher', and—Judas at the moment of betrayal (26:25, 49)—'Rabbi'. This dignity of Jesus is naturally expressed by Matthew primarily in terms of the fulfilment of Judaism. He is greater than the

temple, Jonah, or Solomon (12:6, 41, 42). He is the son of David (a title used by Mark only twice, by Matthew six more times, and the adoption of Jesus into the House of David is the principal theme of Mt 1). Above all, he is the new Moses, succeeding in the desert where Israel had fallen to the testing (Mt 4:1–11). As the new Israel he is also God's son, frequently calling God 'Father'. This unique relationship is mysteriously portrayed in the virginal conception and the comparison to God's son in Egypt (2:15). It becomes the central assertion of Peter's two confessions of faith, as the climax of the scene of the walking on the water (14:33) and of the confession of Caesarea Philippi (16:16). Finally it becomes the central object of the ironical mockery of Jesus on the cross (27:40, 43).

3. Luke. It is impossible to discuss the gospel of Luke in isolation from the Acts of the Apostles, with which it shares so many characteristics that few serious scholars have ever disputed the joint authorship of the two volumes. Luke stands out from the other evangelists by his degree of sophistication. This is apparent first of all in his style of writing, on the level both of linguistic and of narrative style. His vocabulary is far more elevated than that of the other evangelists; he uses many compound words, constructions, and grammatical forms (he is the only evangelist to use the optative mood) which are more at home in literary Hellenistic Greek than is the homely language of Matthew and Mark. Luke is familiar with the conventions of Greek historiography: just as in the Acts he uses speeches as a way of conveying editorial comment, so in the gospel he follows the Greek convention of using meals as occasions of teaching (7:36–50; 22:24–38). Two particular points which would have caught the attention of a more sophisticated audience deserve mention: first, both gospel and Acts open with a formal Hellenistic preface (each related to the other), which places the work in the literary category of scientific treatise or monograph (see ACTS 1:1–4); it is intended to be a factual, well-ordered account. Secondly, many of the concepts involved would appeal to a Hellenistic audience, for example 'salvation', a term familiar to those acquainted with the 'salvation' offered by Hellenistic mystery-religions: Luke alone of the gospel-writers (apart from Jn 4:22, 42) uses the term or calls Jesus 'Saviour'; correspondingly, the beneficiaries of Jesus' miracles are described as 'saved' in a way that suggests that their cures bring more than merely physical salvation (8:36, 50; 17:19).

Luke's narrative skill is particularly distinctive. His scenes are carefully crafted, often like dramatic scenes with 'stage-directions' of entrances and exits and liberal use of direct speech and dialogue, for example the little scenes of the infancy stories in Lk 1–2, or Martha and Mary (10:38–42), the ten lepers (17:11–19) or the journey to Emmaus (24:13–32). Luke's skill in presenting theology by means of such dramatic scenes is thrown into relief by similar scenes in the Acts, for example the baptism of the Ethiopian (Acts 8:26–40) or Saul's conversion (Acts 9:1–9). Luke's characters are colourful and varied; contrast the warm family atmosphere and joy of Luke's infancy stories with Matthew's, in which no human being speaks to any other, or the three main characters of Luke's parable of the prodigal son (15:11–32) with Matthew's skeletal and wooden characters in the parable of the two sons (Mt 21:28–32). A special feature is Luke's mixed characters, the blackguard Zacchaeus who makes good (19:1–10), the characters who do the right thing for the wrong reason (the friend at midnight, the crafty steward, the unjust judge).

Luke frequently uses patterns and parallels to convey his message. In the infancy stories the similarity and contrast between John the Baptist and Jesus, and between their parents, is carefully painted. The parallel between the gospel and the Acts shows the continuity between the ministry of Jesus and that of the Spirit (for example, the descent of the Spirit at Jesus' baptism followed by his programmatic speech at Nazareth is paralleled in the Acts by the descent of the Spirit at Pentecost and Peter's speech thereafter; the healings worked by the apostles in the power of the Spirit parallel those worked by Jesus himself). The four Beatitudes are balanced by four Woes (6:20–6). Luke is particularly enamoured of lists of four items (6:37–8; 14:12–13; 17:27). The infancy stories are bracketed by balancing scenes in Jerusalem (1:5–22; 2:41–50), and the Jerusalem ministry itself by prophecies about the fate of the city as Jesus reaches and leaves the city (19:41–4; 23:26–31).

The geographical framework, and especially Jerusalem, have marked significance for Luke. This is not unexpected, in view of the importance of journeying in the Acts, the whole of the second half of which is devoted to Paul's missionary journeys. If the author was indeed a travelling-companion of Paul, journeying was a normal part of his way of life. Many of Luke's greatest stories occur in the framework of a journey (the journey to Emmaus, the

conversion of the Ethiopian and of Saul himself). A major section of the gospel consists of the journey to Jerusalem (9:51–19:27).

In the gospels it is chiefly from Luke that we can glimpse the importance of Jerusalem. At every level it held an important position in Jewish hearts. As the city of David it was the city of God's promises. As the city of the temple it was the place of God's presence, the centre of pilgrimage for all Jews. Even by the Gentile Pliny it was described as 'by far the most distinguished city of the East' because of Herod's magnificent construction. For Luke it is the hinge-city of salvation. The gospel begins and ends there, the annunciation to Zechariah being located in the temple itself, and the resurrection appearances being confined to Jerusalem and its surroundings. While in Mark and Matthew the prophetic action of Jesus in the temple is construed as a demonstration of the barrenness of Judaism, Luke removes the image of the barren fig-tree of Israel and makes the action a cleansing of the temple, so that Jesus continues to use it 'daily' (19:47; 21:37) as his pulpit for teaching. When the chief priests challenge his authority, it is not, as in Mark and Matthew his authority to signal the destruction of the temple, but his authority to use it for teaching (20:1–2). The affection of Jesus himself for the holy city is underlined by the repeated expression of his sadness at its failure to respond and to recognize 'the way to peace' (19:42); this marks the mid-point of his final journey up to Jerusalem (13:34–5), and brackets the Jerusalem ministry itself, culminating in the tragic prophetic pronouncement on the way to Calvary (23:28–32). In the Acts Jerusalem is first the birthplace of the church, the home of the ideal community of the followers of Jesus, where they live together in harmony, prayer, and community of goods, and undergo their first persecutions. Then it is the centre from which the message spreads to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), to which Paul returns regularly to ensure the unity of the church.

The fate of Israel is for Luke a related pre-occupation. The atmosphere of OT piety which pervades the infancy stories, and the deliberate cultivation of biblical language in the style of narration there used, shows that Jesus is born into the bosom of Israel as the fulfilment of God's promises to Israel, the fulfilment also of their longing for the promised deliverance (1:68–75; 2:25, 38). But Luke, like Paul in Rom 9–11, must also face the problem that Israel largely rejected its Messiah. Luke's solution is

strikingly different from Matthew's. For all his Jewishness (see E.2), Matthew leaves no doubt that Israel's rejection of Jesus brings on itself its own rejection. From the beginning there is a sharp contrast between the murderous rejection of Jesus by Herod the Jew and the reverence paid him by the Gentile magi. So to the parable of the wicked tenants Matthew deliberately adds, 'the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit' (Mt 21:43). In the parable of the wedding feast the guests originally invited refuse to come, with the result that their city is burnt (Mt 22:7—on the natural level a typical Matthean overreaction). Finally, at the trial before Pilate the people as a whole cry out, 'Let his blood be on us and on our children' (27:25). Does Matthew consider them as representatives of the people as a whole, or only of those who reject Jesus?

By contrast Luke insists that at least part of Israel accepted the promised Messiah. He makes a sharp distinction between the people and their leaders. The people are continually favourable to Jesus, and Luke carefully uses for them the word *laos*, as a technical, biblical term for the people of God (1:10; 3:15; 6:10; 23:27, etc.). At 7:9 where Matthew has 'In no one in Israel have I found such faith' Luke reads 'Not even in Israel...' (my italics), implying the presence of some response in faith among at least a part of Israel. In the final scenes the leaders are hostile to Jesus, stir up the people, and jeer at the crucified Messiah, while the people stand watching and return home beating their breasts, the first sign of turning to discipleship (23:35–48). The same pattern continues in the Acts, where the response of the people is enthusiastic (Acts 2:41, 47; 6:1, 7, etc.), while the authorities are again uniformly and bitterly hostile. Paul does indeed three times solemnly turn from the Jews to the Gentiles with a biblical gesture of rejection (in Asia, Acts 13:46–51; in Greece, 18:6; in Rome, 28:25–8), but in each case only after numbers of the Jews had been drawn to Christianity.

The prophet to Israel is, accordingly, one of the chief ways in which Luke represents Jesus. Like the biblical prophets, Jesus is 'filled with the Spirit', 'led by the Spirit' (4:1, 14, 18). Indeed, the scene at the Jordan is, in Luke's case, better described as 'the descent of the Spirit on the occasion of the baptism' rather than 'the baptism of Jesus'. From the beginning the biblical prophetic atmosphere is strong. Zechariah points out the child John as a prophet (1:79), but Jesus will be 'a light for revelation to the

Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel' (2:32). Jesus already shows his prophetic qualities in dialogue with the teachers in the temple (2:47). In the crucial 'Nazareth manifesto' (one of Luke's most carefully composed historico-theological scenes, see E.3) Jesus likens his mission to that of Elijah and Elisha (4:24–7); like a prophet, he is not accepted in his own country. After the raising of the widow's son he is publicly hailed as a prophet (7:16). His death at Jerusalem is shown with increasing intensity to be the death of a prophet, firstly by the conversation at the beginning of the journey with the two great prophetic figures of the OT about his *exodos* at Jerusalem (9:31), secondly by the interpretation of the great journey as a journey of destiny to die as a prophet at Jerusalem (13:33), but most of all by the constant prophetic activity on that journey. On the road to Emmaus the disciples sum up Jesus' activity as that of a prophet, and he himself acts as a prophet in interpreting the Scriptures. Finally the ascension shows the likeness of Jesus to the prophet Elijah, taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:11).

That Jesus is more than a prophet is shown by Luke in many ways, particularly by his use of the title 'Son of God'. In Mark this is already used significantly (see E.1, *Person of Jesus*); Luke enlarges this use, so that it is 'moving beyond a functional understanding of Jesus' sonship' (J. B. Green 1995). The significance of the mysterious conception of the Son of the Most High through the Spirit of God without Mary having sexual intercourse (1:35) is confirmed by Jesus' saying about really belonging in his Father's house (2:49). The declaration of the voice at the baptism is given further prominence by the genealogy that follows immediately, linking Jesus 'son, as it was thought, of Joseph' directly to Adam 'son of God' (3:23, 38). The frequent expressions of intimacy between Jesus and his Father (10:21–2; 22:43) reach their climax in Jesus' last words of trust on the cross (23:46). They are reinforced by Luke's stress on Jesus' constant practice of prayer (5:16), and his being found at prayer at all the decisive moments of his ministry (baptism, choice of the twelve, transfiguration, teaching of the Lord's prayer, agony in the garden).

Furthermore, Luke's use of the title *kyrios* of Jesus with the article ('the Lord') hints at a divine status for Jesus, for in contemporary documents the Hebrew and Aramaic equivalents are used of God. Mark uses this title of Jesus only in the vocative (except in the enigmatic Mk 11:3), in

which usage it may mean no more than 'Sir!' The title is used overwhelmingly by Luke in narrative sections (e.g. 10:1; 11:39; 17:5), so that Fitzmyer (1979: 203), notes, 'In using *kyrios* of both Yahweh and Jesus in his writings Luke continues the sense of the title already being used in the early Christian communities, which in some sense regarded Jesus as on a level with Yahweh.' The same status is also hinted by such passages as 8:39, where the beneficiary of the miracle is told to 'report all that God has done for you' and in fact 'proclaimed throughout the city all that Jesus had done for him'.

Luke has been described as 'the gospel of the underprivileged' from the emphasis that Luke places on Jesus' invitation to several neglected classes. Foremost among these are women. Luke alone mentions the women who accompany Jesus and minister to him (8:1–3). He habitually pairs women with men as recipients of salvation: Zechariah and Mary (1:11–38, and in their balancing songs of praise, 1:46–55, 68–79), Simeon and Anna (2:22–38), the widow of Zarephath and Naaman (4:26–7), the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow (7:11–15 and 8:41–56, a double crossover of the sexes), a man searching for a lost sheep and a woman searching for a lost coin (15:4–10). In the same vein, by contrast to Mk 3:31–5, he represents Mary, the mother of Jesus, as the first of the disciples and as their model in her response to God's word (1:38, 46–55; 8:21; 11:27–8).

From the infancy narratives onwards it is clear that Jesus has come to bring comfort to the poor. In Mary's canticle God has 'filled the starving with good things' (1:53). In this Luke echoes the theme, so prominent in the post-exilic writings of Judaism, of God's blessing on the poor and unfortunate who put their trust in him. No house can be found for Jesus to be born in, and he is welcomed by hireling shepherds, themselves inspired by the joyful song of the angels. The text for Jesus' opening proclamation at Nazareth is 'he has anointed me to bring good news to the afflicted' (4:18, quoting Isa 61:1–2). In the Lukan Beatitudes the blessings are not (as in Matthew) on the 'poor in spirit' but on those who are actually 'poor now, hungry now, weeping now' (6:20–1); they concern a social rather than a religious class. This is complemented by Luke's frequent warnings about the dangers of wealth and possessions (the terrible parable of the rich fool, 12:16–21; the excuses of the invited guests, 14:18–19; the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, 16:19–31; Luke's severity towards the rich ruler, 18:18–30). This

is all the more striking since Luke's own background and circumstances seem to be reasonably comfortable: his style and language are possibly the most sophisticated of all the NT writers; his images drawn from economics (banking, interest-rates, loans, the sums of money mentioned) bespeak a certain familiarity with finance; in his world the status given by special places at table is important (14:7–14); his anxiety to show that reputable and even high-class persons accepted Christianity, and his horror of shame and humiliation (16:3; 18:5), all suggest a background of middle-class values.

Luke shows Jesus' special care not only for the poor and for women, but also for other classes despised in Judaism, sinners and Gentiles. That Jesus came to call sinners was always at the heart of the gospel, but Luke places additional emphasis on this aspect. Story after story in Luke illustrates Jesus' welcome to sinners and the joy in heaven at repentance: the woman who was a sinner, the lost sheep, the lost coin, the prodigal son, Zacchaeus, the good thief. To be a sinner and to recognize one's state of sinfulness is almost a precondition of being called by Jesus (5:8; 15:2, contrast the spite of the dutiful elder son in 15:25–30 or the arrogance of the observant Pharisee in 18:9–14).

In the gospel of Mark Jesus has contact with Gentiles only in the person of the Syro-Phoenician whose daughter he heals. This contact is seen as exceptional, and the mission of Jesus is limited to his own countrymen. The future mission of the church to the Gentiles is hinted only by the recognition of Jesus as Son of God by the Gentile centurion at the foot of the cross. By contrast to Mark, Luke is concerned, even in the gospel, to show that the good news of Jesus extends also to those beyond Judaism. He is thus preparing for the mission to the world that will take place in his second volume, the Acts. Already Simeon proclaims the child as a 'light to the Gentiles'. In his opening proclamation at Nazareth Jesus announces that he will follow the example of the prophets Elijah and Elisha in bringing his message to those beyond the borders of Israel. This is fulfilled in the cure of the centurion's boy, during which the centurion's merits are warmly praised (7:1–10). Luke's special interest in the salvation of the Gentiles is shown by his rare allegorization of the parable of the great supper (14:16–24): after the messengers have brought in the crippled and beggars of the city (representing the outcasts of the Chosen People), they are sent out a second time into the highways and byways

beyond the city, to gather in the Gentiles. A special interest is shown in the Samaritans, the neighbours of Judea to the north, and often especially hated and despised by the Jews. In the parable of the good Samaritan (10:29–37) and the cure of the ten lepers (17:11–19)—both arguably Lukan compositions—the Samaritans are presented mainly in an attractive light which contrasts favourably with Jews.

Running through the whole gospel as an undercurrent is teaching on discipleship. Luke presents Jesus as a model for his disciples. The early followers of Jesus in fact are shown in the Acts to be providing a mirror-image of his preaching, his miracles, his perseverance under persecution, and his witness unto death. Luke stresses the need for constant imitation of Christ. Disciples must take up their cross *daily* and follow him (9:23), just as Simon of Cyrene carries the cross behind Jesus (23:26). Jesus teaches his disciples to pray in imitation of his own prayer (11:1), and gives the whole scene of the agony in the garden as a lesson in prayer in time of temptation (22:40, 46). Beside the imitation of Jesus, the most striking factor in Luke's teaching on discipleship is that it involves a total reversal of current practice and values. This is in line with Luke's stress on the need for conversion at all levels (3:3, 8). The great journey to Jerusalem and the last supper are for Luke valuable occasions for teaching on discipleship, and it is this instruction that comes back again and again. Disciples must first of all recognize their sinfulness, and then leave not merely their possessions but *everything* (5:28; 14:33; 18:22). Luke's social world was built on a network of mutual relationships of patron and client, in which patron expected service from client and client protection from patron. In the community of Jesus' disciples there is to be no such *quid pro quo*. All are to give without hope of return (6:36–8; 12:33–4) and the great are to be servants of all (22:24–7). In this way Luke looks ahead to the life of the Christian community after the resurrection.

4. The Historicity of John. Despite the similarity of tradition behind the Fourth and the Synoptic Gospels, the pattern of John is very different from both a literary and a theological point of view. Gone are the days when it was scholarly orthodoxy to maintain that John was the least reliable of the gospels historically. From Dodd (1955–6) to Dunn (1983; 1991) it has become accepted that John contains sayings that are as primitive as or more primitive than their versions in the synoptic tradition.

Similarly John often shows local knowledge superior to that of the Synoptics, especially in the Jerusalem and passion sequences (Siloam, Bethzatha, Kidron, Golgotha). In a number of incidents John seems to be building on parallel historical traditions. Especially in the account of the passion his alternatives to the agony in the garden (Jn 12:27–9) and the meeting of the Jewish authorities (11:47–53) are serious rivals.

The Composition of John. From a literary point of view the Synoptic Gospels are composed, as it has been classically described, like beads on a string, from short, independent episodes and sayings joined together by the several evangelists to form a pattern. The fourth gospel has fewer, longer incidents and far fewer isolated sayings. Both miracles and sayings tend to be prolonged into dialogues and often monologues which bring out the meaning of these signs. Thus the healing of the sick man at the Pool of Bethzatha develops first into a series of dialogues about the miracle and then into a monologue by Jesus on judgement (5:1–9, 10–18, 19–47 respectively).

John's Christology. With this is allied the greatest difference of all: in the Synoptic Gospels the subject of revelation is the kingship or reign of God, of which Jesus is the messenger. In John the primary object of revelation is Jesus himself and his glory, or rather the revelation of God's glory in him, climaxing in the hour of the exaltation and glorification of Jesus, the cross and resurrection. The crucifixion is no longer a shameful humiliation which has to be explained as the will of God expressed in Scripture; it is a royal progress which enables the divinity of Jesus to shine through, and leaves Jesus reigning from the cross until he himself triumphantly signifies that all is fulfilled.

Nevertheless, it is a secret Jesus who is being revealed, and the theme of seeking Jesus runs through the gospel from 1:38 'What do you seek?' to 20:15 'Whom do you seek?' One feature of this is the series of puzzled questions by which the dialogues are advanced (e.g. 3:4, 9; 4:9, 11, 29, 33; 6:9, 28, 42, 52, etc.). Another is the irony that runs through the gospel. This is principally in the mouth of the opponents of Jesus, who make exaggerated and self-important claims about their knowledge, just where they are most ignorant (4:12, 7, 27; 8:41, 47). Such irony becomes all-embracing in such incidents as the cure of the man born blind, when the Pharisees think they see but in fact are blind, and by their insistent refusal to accept the evidence gradually nudge

the cured man towards full faith in Jesus; and the incident of the trial before Pilate, when in fact Jesus presides over the self-condemnation of those who think they are condemning him. But the disciples too can be ironical, often through bewilderment and overconfidence (1:46; 11:16; 16:29), as can Jesus himself, often with unanswered questions (3:10; 7:23, 28; 10:32). *Double entendre* is fundamental to all John's language. Just as Nicodemus quite legitimately misunderstands the Greek *anōthen* as 'again' when Jesus means 'from above' (3:3–7), so also the Son of Man 'lifted up' (3:14; 8:28; 12:32–4) means on one level 'lifted onto the cross' but on another level has a far more profound sense. At the same time it is a striking feature of John's language that he thinks in a series of contrasts—John has dualism in his bones', writes Ashton (1991: 237)—expressed in the bipolarity of life and death, truth and falsehood, slavery and freedom, light and darkness, worldly and heavenly, openly and in secret, and other countless little contrasts.

John's portrait of Jesus can at last be described as 'incarnational', for this gospel both contains the two unambiguous assertions in the gospels of the divinity of Jesus, bracketing and so setting the tone for the whole gospel, 'the Word was God' (1:1) and 'My Lord and my God!' (20:28), and shows a Jesus subject to human exhaustion (4:6), loneliness (6:67), grief for a friend (11:35), and shrinking from death (12:27). What this means is shown principally in two ways. The first is more obviously dependent on Judaism. In the prologue the Word is shown to be the culmination and fulfilment of the tradition of a personified, life-giving Wisdom, who is both God at work in the world and yet not simply identical with God. The Word is also the culmination of the revelation of God, greater than that made to Moses (1:17), explicable only as the revelation of the awesome glory of God (Ex 33:17–23; Isa 6:1–5). This revelation takes place throughout the ministry of Jesus, but reaches its climax in the exaltation or glorification of the cross (8:28; 12:32–4; 13:32; 14:13).

The Johannine Jesus also takes over for himself the allusive divine title of Deutero-Isaiah, 'I am he'. This is used both absolutely and with a predicate. Used absolutely it is a self-identification, with scarcely veiled divine overtones. Thanks to the ambiguity of Johannine language it is impossible to exclude this awesome connotation when Jesus comes walking on the water (6:20), and it is certainly intended when the detachment, arriving to arrest Jesus, reacts to it by falling to the ground (18:5–8—the biblical

reaction to the divine). It is so understood even more obviously by the Jews in 5:28, 58. Used as a predicate it attributes to Jesus awesome manifestations of the divine from within Judaism, which reach their full reality in him, 'I am the bread of life' (6:35), 'the light of the world' (8:12), 'the good shepherd' (10:11), 'resurrection and life' (11:25), 'the true vine' (15:1).

The second way in which the divine quality of Jesus is shown is by his relationship to the Father. The title 'Son of Man' is used frequently by Jesus in all the gospels, the simple title 'the Son', however, only on three occasions in the Synoptics but 20 times by the Johannine Jesus, denoting a close and simple relationship to the Father. There is an intimacy in this language that has no parallel elsewhere. The Son is sent by the Father—the Father, the one who sent me' is a formula that occurs 21 times in John—and the relationship has been analysed in terms of the Jewish institution of the *shālīāh*, an envoy sent out with the same powers as his principal to do the same work, to receive the same honour and to report back to the principal. Whereas the modern, Hellenized mind may define equality in the static terms of being, the Semitic mind, nowhere more clearly than Jn 5:19–30, defines the relationship in the dynamic terms of equality of action and authority, unity of purpose and of honour received. The central importance of this revelation of Jesus determines many other orientations of the gospel.

In John the ethical requirements of the Kingdom, so fully set out in the teaching sections of Matthew and Luke (the Sermon on the Mount and on the Plain, etc.), become simplified into the basic requirement of belief in Jesus 'that you may have life in his name' (12:44–50; 20:31). The only response demanded is love (17:36), an echo of the love that is shared by the Father and the Son, reaches its climax on the cross, and is granted also by Jesus to his followers (13:1; 14:21–31; 17:23–4). The poor, so prominent especially in Luke, are barely mentioned. Indeed there is little of the Galilean peasant feel about this gospel: the action is more frequently in Jerusalem, and many of the people encountered (Nicodemus, the royal official at Capernaum) have a certain grandeur.

Eschatology. The perspective on the future is different. In the Synoptic Gospels there is a constant tension between the present and the future: the kingship of God is in some ways already a present reality, and yet it is still to be brought to reality in the future. There is a vivid

expectation of the coming of the kingship in power when the Son of Man comes in his glory with the holy angels (Mk 9:1; 14:25, 62; Mt 24:30–1; 25:31). In John the concept of the kingship of God has virtually vanished—it is mentioned only Jn 3:3, 5—and has been replaced by that of 'eternal life' which is a present reality in Jesus (1:4; 6:35, 63; 11:25) already possessed by believers (5:24; 6:47; 10:28). Since the perspective of the gospel is already resurrectional, Jesus can say already 'the hour is coming and now is when true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth (4:23)', or 'when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God' (5:25). This perspective of John has classically been designated 'realized eschatology'. This is not to say that all expectation of the future has vanished, for those who have done good will still 'come forth to the resurrection of life' (5:29). But the decisive moment has already come in the 'hour' of Jesus which reaches its climax in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Judgement. As far as the individual is concerned one is reminded that throughout the gospel the decisive moment is that of encounter with Jesus. Judgement is not, as in the Synoptics, a 'day of the Lord' in the future, rather the coming of Jesus is a moment of *krisis* or judgement, and the whole gospel is in a sense a great judgement-scene. To 'judge' or 'condemn' (the same word in Gk.) occurs 4 times in Matthew, 5 times in Luke, 19 times in John. The Father has given all judgement to the Son (5:22) but it is not the Son who executes judgement; rather each individual exercises judgement by a personal reaction of faith or unbelief in Jesus (3:17–18). Thus the gospel represents a series of judgements: the disciples at Cana believe and see his glory; 'the Jews' refuse belief at the cleansing of the temple; Nicodemus shows goodwill but not yet belief, and so on until finally 'the Jews' tragically judge themselves before Pilate by rejecting God as king: 'we have no king but Caesar' (19:15)—if God is not king, then Judaism has no reason to exist. Forensic terminology is ubiquitous in the gospel: 'to bear witness' (once each in Matthew and Luke, 32 times in John), 'witness' (Mark thrice and Luke once, both at Jesus' trial, but 15 times in John). The witnesses to Jesus are the Baptist, Moses, his works, the crowds, the Paraclete, and above all his Father. Supporting these are terms like 'testimony', 'accuse', 'condemnation'.

John and Judaism. The side-lining of Judaism comes to expression in the way Jesus in his own person, one after another, supersedes the

institutions of Judaism. Already at Cana Jesus provides the wine of the marriage-feast to replace the water of the law. Immediately afterwards his own body is seen to replace the temple (2:21). In 5:1–18 he takes possession of the sabbath, claiming that as God has the right to work on the sabbath, so has he. At the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus claims to provide the living water which was such an important feature of the feast, symbolizing the blessings of the messianic age (7:37–9). In giving sight to the blind and claiming to be the light of the world (8:12, cf. 1:9; 3:19–21; 12:35, 36, 46) he again usurps the function of the law. Finally his death, at the time of the slaughter of the paschal lambs (19:24), replaces the passover sacrifice. But there is more to John's treatment of Judaism than this. Although at some levels of the gospel it can be acknowledged that 'salvation is from the Jews' (4:22, presumably in the sense of origin), on the whole the term is used to distinguish rites and festivals from the Christian way (2:6, 'the Jewish rites of purification'; 11:55, 'the Passover of the Jews'; 7:2, 'the Jewish festival of Booths'). More hostilely it designates those who will not accept Jesus and are responsible for his death, replacing in this respect not only the Pharisees and the authorities of the Synoptic Gospels, but also the crowds of Jerusalem. Significant of the evangelist's own attitude may be 9:18–23, where 'the Jews' is used as a term for those designated in what may have been an earlier version of the story as 'the Pharisees', and attempts have been made to show that 'the Jews' is used in this hostile sense only in one layer of the gospel (von Wahlde 1989). The fear of the blind man's parents that they will be 'put out of the synagogue' for confessing Jesus may well reflect the hostility between Judaism and Christianity towards the end of the century. In the farewell discourses (perhaps representing a different layer) the same opponents seem to be designated by 'the world' (which can elsewhere be used in a positive sense, 1:9; 3:16–19;

12:46), but their identity is made clear by the phrase 'their law' (15:25) and the similar threat to put you 'out of the synagogue', 16:2.

The Spirit in John. The centrality of Jesus is not compromised but rather enhanced by the importance of the Spirit. There is a sense throughout the gospel that the Spirit is necessary to complete the work of Jesus. The descent of the Spirit at the baptism will enable Jesus to baptize in the Spirit, which is represented to Nicodemus as the means to rebirth and life (3:5–8). The Samaritan woman is taught that worship in the Spirit is the sole true worship (4:23–4). In the bread of life discourse the Spirit is the means of life (6:13). But the Spirit will not be given until after Jesus has been glorified (7:39), and the sense that all these passages envisage the life of the future community is strengthened by the dual reference during Jesus' 'hour'. On the cross his final act is 'he bowed his head and handed over [my tr.] the Spirit' (19:30—is it to this that the climactic 'It is completed' refers?). The purpose of the first resurrectional appearance to the disciples is expressed as 'Receive the Holy Spirit' (20:22). The role and function of the Spirit are made clear principally in the five Paraclete or Counsellor sayings in the farewell discourses, when Jesus is laying out the future constitution of his community (14:15–17, 25–6; 15:16; 16:7–11, 13–15, see JN 14:16–17). It is to continue and further the presence and work of Jesus after his departure.

Sections F–K give six trial pericopes in which the theological outlook of the different evangelists may be seen, and the arguments in favour of the different solutions to the synoptic problem assessed. Apart from section 1, different pericopes have been chosen than those discussed by Sanders and Davies (1989).

In these examples I frequently use my own translation, in order to reflect more exactly the detailed similarities and differences between the Greek texts of the several gospels.

F. 1. The Call of the First Disciples (Mt 4:18–22 || Mk 1:16–20 || Lk 5:1–11, cf. Jn 1:35–50)

Mt 4:18–22

¹⁸As he walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁹And he said to them, 'Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.' ²⁰Immediately

Mk 1:16–20

¹⁶And passing along by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew the brother of Simon casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷And Jesus said to them, 'Follow me and I will make you become fishers of men.' ¹⁸And immediately

Lk 5:1–11

¹Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, ²he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. ³He got into one of the boats, the one

they left their nets and followed him. ²¹And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them. ²²But they immediately left the boat and their father and followed him.

they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹As going on a little he saw James son of Zebedee and John his brother, who were in the boat mending their nets, ²⁰and immediately he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. ⁴When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch.' ⁵Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets.' ⁶When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. ⁷So they signalled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. ⁸But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, 'Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!' ⁹For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; ¹⁰and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people.' ¹¹When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

According to three of the four gospels the first action of Jesus in his ministry is to gather a group of disciples, thus already forming his community. Through the number of the twelve corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel, they will constitute his new Israel. The accounts of Mark and Matthew are closely related. Luke postpones the first call of disciples. He keeps it geographically similar, but integrates it into a tradition placed by Jn 21 after the resurrection. John himself attaches the call of the first disciples to the ministry of the Baptist, thus implying a location by the Jordan.

2. In Mark's account the stories of the call of the two pairs of disciples are closely similar to each other. The style of the whole incident is significantly Markan and shows that Mark's is the original account: the Markan phrase 'and immediately' occurs in vv. 18, 20; Mark's introductory 'and' + participle occurs in vv. 16, 18, 19, 20b; the duplication of 'Simon and Simon's brother' in v. 16 is typical of Mark's oral style.

By contrast to many biblical calls by the Lord, which begin with some such double vocative

and answer as 'Abraham, Abraham!'—'Here I am!', the call of each pair is modelled on the call of Elisha by Elijah in 1 Kings 19:19–21:

1. The prophet sees the disciple, son of X.
2. The disciple was working at his trade.
3. The prophet calls him.
4. The disciple leaves his trade and family and follows.

The call of the second pair is perhaps marginally more closely modelled on Elisha's call. The second pair leave their father without hesitation, in deliberate contrast to Elisha, who asks permission to take leave of his father. On the other hand, the first pair's desertion of their nets, their means of livelihood, links to Elisha's destruction of his yoke and oxen. Each of these factors underlines the immediacy of their response to the uncompromising call. Even if some preparation for or explanation of the call occurred in fact, Mark deliberately omits any mention of it, and thereby lays more stress on the astounding authority of Jesus. Two other slight touches in the call of the second pair also relate to Elisha's call: 'and they in the boat' (v. 10)

corresponds to 'and he with the twelfth (1 Kings 19:19). The final 'followed behind him' also echoes 1 Kings 19:20. If the call of the second pair is the original narrative, the call of the first pair is inserted before it because it is fitting that Simon should be called first of all. It is also to the first pair that the function to 'fish for people' is given; they are not only disciples but also apostles.

3. Matthew follows Mark's account very closely, with only minor adjustments, mostly literary. Matthew is a careful teacher, even sometimes pedantic. He superfluously (perhaps fussily) inserts the mention that both pairs were two brothers. With similar meticulousness he tells us, before they leave him, that Zebedee was present, whereas in Mark their leaving Zebedee is the first indication of his presence on the scene. Matthew also adds two theological clarifications. First he explains that Simon 'is called Peter'. Consonantly with his concern for the community throughout his gospel, Matthew draws attention right from the start to the office which will be his (Mt 16:16–19). He frequently stresses Peter's prominence, especially by use of this title, though significantly he omits it when Peter fails his Master in Gethsemane (Mk 14:37)! Secondly Matthew mentions explicitly that the second pair leave the boat as well as their father, perhaps to suggest their total renunciation.

4. The Lukan narrative is basically quite different: it concerns primarily Simon Peter and his apostolate. It is perhaps for this reason that Luke transfers the call till later, when they have already witnessed some of Jesus' teaching and miracles. Simon's partners remain faceless until the last two verses, when their names are awkwardly tacked on with 'and so also were . . .'; it is really a bit late to tell us that the sons of Zebedee were his partners when we have already known about his partners for some time!

Some relationship of the story in Lk 5:1–11 to Jn 21 is undeniable, perhaps at the oral level: there is the night-long unsuccessful toil, the word of Jesus leading to the almost breaking net, and finally the authorization of Peter. It is difficult to be sure which was the original setting of the story. Simon's humble confession of his sinfulness fits Jn 21 better, after his triple denial at the time of the passion. Perhaps also the suggestions of the divine ('Lord', 'Do not be afraid') fit better a resurrection setting, though they do not demand it. Much the same reaction occurs when the disciples see Jesus walking on

the water, see J.1. Two typical Lukan touches are the insistence that Peter must confess his sins before he is called to be a disciple (as Zacchaeus repents, and as is stressed in the mass conversions of Acts. Secondly, when they accept the call they leave 'everything', a total renunciation often stressed by Luke (14:33): Levi at his call leaves all (5:28), and the very rich young ruler is advised to sell everything he has (18:23).

5. John's account of the call of the first disciples is significantly different:

(a) Again there are two pairs of disciples, to the first pair of whom Simon Peter is attached. The identity of the first disciples is, however, different. The first pair consists of Andrew and an anonymous disciple, the second of Philip and Nathanael. There is no explicit sign of the sons of Zebedee, who feature in Mark's and Matthew's accounts.

(b) The location is different. For the first three disciples there is no suggestion of the Lake of Galilee, though Jn 1:44 does note that Philip, Andrew, and Simon were 'from Bethsaida' on the shore of the lake, and the call of Philip and Nathanael takes place after Jesus' decision to go to Galilee (Jn 1:43). The association of the first pair with the Baptist and his activity 'in Bethany across the Jordan' (Jn 1:18) suggests a fair distance from the Markan location at the north end of the lake. This suggests that the rapid succession of days ('the next day' in Jn 1:29, 35, 43) may be an artificial schema, uniting disparate material to form a first week of Jesus' ministry (see Jn 1:29–31).

(c) The theological emphasis is different. Instead of the magisterial call by Jesus the keynote of the first meeting is on the initiative of the disciples themselves in seeking and finding Jesus as teacher, Messiah, king of Israel, and Son of God. To this search Jesus responds by inviting the disciples to stay with him (1:38–9). On the second occasion the initiative lies with Philip, who leads Nathanael to Jesus.

(d) Simon is the third, not the first to become a disciple. However, his special position is indicated by Jesus' imposition of a name, Peter, described much later by Mt 16:16–18.

5. The most interesting feature of all is that the first two disciples are nudged towards Jesus by John the Baptist. Especially since the discovery of the Qumran literature it has been suggested that Jesus himself was originally a disciple of John, and this strengthens the link between them.

6. The Beatitudes (Mt 5:3–12; Lk 6:20–3, 24–6)**Mt 5:3–12**

¹Blessed are the poor in spirit,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven,
²Blessed are those who mourn,
for they will be comforted.
³Blessed are the meek,
for they will inherit the earth.
⁴Blessed are those who hunger and
thirst for righteousness,
for they will be filled
⁵Blessed are the merciful,
for they will receive mercy.
⁶Blessed are the pure in heart,
for they will see God.
⁷Blessed are the peacemakers,
for they will be called children of God.
⁸Blessed are those who are persecuted
for righteousness' sake,
for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
⁹Blessed are you when people revile
you and persecute you and utter all kinds
of evil against you falsely on my account.
¹⁰Rejoice and be glad
for your reward is great in heaven,
for thus they persecuted the prophets
before you.

Lk 6:20–6

²⁰Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹Blessed are you who are hungry now,
for you will be filled.

Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.
²²Blessed are you when people hate you,
and when they exclude you, revile you and
defame you on account of the son of man,
²³Rejoice in that day and leap for joy,
for surely your reward is great in heaven,
for that is what their ancestors did to the
prophets.
²⁴But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.
²⁵Woe to you who are full now,
for you will be hungry.
Woe to you who are laughing now,
for you will mourn and weep.
²⁶Woe to you when all speak well of you,
for that is what their ancestors did to the
false prophets.

The form of a beatitude, announcement of a blessing on certain classes of people, is common in the Bible (see MT 5:3–12) and frequently occurs in such groups as the present collections. It is perhaps to be noted that collections of eight occur also in Sir 14:20–7 (with a ninth added as an explanation, just as the ninth in Mt 5:11 provides a transition to the rest of the Sermon on the Mount). In both Matthew and Luke there are clear eschatological overtones, dependent on Isa 61:1. This text is used elsewhere by both evangelists, especially in Mt 11:5–6; Lk 4:17–21; 7:22–3. The same eschatological fulfilment of Isa 61:1 featured prominently in the messianic expectation of the Qumran community, 11QMch 16–18 and 4Q521.

The source of the beatitudes has been much debated. Matthew has eight as opposed to Luke's four beatitudes, but Luke has four 'woes' corresponding to his four beatitudes. It has become scholarly orthodoxy to hold that at least the material shared by the two evangelists is drawn from Q, though perhaps from slightly different versions of Q. For many this seems the most important test-case of all. In many of the cases the arguments are evenly balanced, so that

it must be admitted that several explanations are possible, though one explanation may be much more appealing than another, and make better sense. If it is possible to show that Matthew's beatitudes form such a carefully composed and engineered whole that they cannot constitute an edition of any previous document, the existence of a Q for this pericope is not merely less likely, but is positively excluded.

If both Matthew and Luke are dependent on Q, Matthew has expanded the original four beatitudes and Luke has added the four 'woes'. In favour of this position it is obvious that Matthew is more interested in the spiritual dispositions demanded (Matthew has 'in spirit', 5:1) and brackets the whole with his characteristic 'kingdom of heaven' (vv. 3, 10), instead of the more commonly found expression 'kingdom of God' used by Luke. On the other hand the 'woes' show clear linguistic signs of Lukan editing in the repeated 'now' and other features which disappear in translation (*oi anthrōpoi, kata ta auta*), as well as the more obvious Lukan interest in the real poor and hungry, characteristic of his general concern for outcasts, and his repeated warnings of the dangers of wealth and comfort.

It has been suggested that a document underlies them both, to which Luke is the closer (Tuckett 1983). In order to exclude the possibility of Luke being dependent on Matthew, Tuckett considers two alternatives, either that Luke uses Matthew only or that he uses Matthew and another source (for the 'woes'). The parallelism between the woes and the beatitudes is so close that these woes could have had no independent existence, which excludes the latter alternative. The former alternative is excluded—according to Tuckett—by the Lukan use of the word 'laugh' (Lk 6:21, 25) which does not occur in Matthew's beatitudes and is not a Lukan word, so must be derived from another, non-Matthean source. To this Goulder replies by refusing to attribute to a source all words used only once by Luke. On the contrary, Luke has a large and inventive vocabulary, and in the section Lk 4:31–6:19 (where he is overwriting Mark) among the 606 non-Markan words, 13 are not used elsewhere by Luke. In any case 'laugh' is a reasonably common word, and is introduced by Luke as an exact contrast to 'weep', as in Eccl 3:4. That 'weep' in Lk 6:21 is a Lukan version of Matthew's 'mourn' is clear from the clumsiness with which Luke feels compelled to retain both words in v. 25. Thus Luke's version can, after all, be explained on the basis of Matthew's.

Matthew's beatitudes form a coherent whole which must have been composed at one draft in Greek (Puéch 1993). The question is whether this composition can be a Matthean elaboration of Q. The careful structure of the composition is unmistakable, the principal points being:

1. It is bracketed at beginning and end by the identical phrase 'for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'.

2. The word-count of the four pairs of beatitudes is symmetrical: 20–16–16–20. This must be deliberate, for it is achieved not without difficulty; for example the word-count must have dictated the inclusion of the definite article with 'righteousness' in v. 6, and its omission in the corresponding v. 10.

3. In the first four beatitudes those blessed all begin (in Greek) with the letter 'p'.

4. The blessings correspond symmetrically: 1 and 8 'for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'; 2 and 7 use the same Greek word *klēthēsontai*; 3 and 6 future active, 'will inherit', 'will see'; 4 and 5 future passive, 'will be filled', 'will be pitied'.

Such careful structure with exact word-count is characteristic of beatitude-collections, as is seen in the Hebrew collections of Sir 14:20–7 and 1QH

6.13–16 and 4Q525. Other features such as the eschatological overtones, the extra, final, transitional beatitude, biblical and Qumranic phrases such as 'poor in spirit' (cf. 1QH 6.14; 1QM 14.7; 4Q491.8–10) show that Matthew's composition fits exactly into a familiar pattern. It is difficult to accept that Matthew could have elaborated this complicated structure on the basis of any existing document that also served as a basis for Luke's beatitudes. It would also be a strange coincidence that both these writers should have independently chosen the beatitudes to head their great sermons. Luke's beatitudes and woes may therefore be explained as Luke's own edition of Matthew, rather than as similarly derived from Q. In outline the process would have been: if Luke is dependent on Matthew, it must be held that he cut the eight to four, a favourite number of his, omitting elements concerned with spiritual dispositions ('the meek') because he wished to concentrate on the aspect of discipleship and its demands, the Christian vocation to poverty and persecution. Luke elsewhere stresses that disciples must leave 'all', so that they are bound to be poor and destitute. Luke likes polar oppositions, so sharpened the reversal of situations to 'hungry' and 'filled', 'weeping' and 'laughing', in place of Matthew's 'hunger and thirst for justice' and his 'merciful' and 'receive mercy'.

The woes do show significant echoes of Matthew, despite being verbally unmistakably Lukan (*plen* = 'but', Lk 6.24, used by Matthew 5 times, Mark once, Luke 15 times, and Acts 14 times; 'woe to' with dative plural, none in Matthew or Mark, 5 times in Luke; 'rich', 3 times in Matthew, twice in Mark, 10 times in Luke; pleonastic 'all', as Lk 6:26, frequent in Luke). The form of a series of threatened woes could be taken from Mt 23. But whereas Matthew reserves the contrast with the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount until his final discourse, Luke makes the contrast more immediate. There are other traces of dependence of Luke on Matthew in the beatitudes. Lk 6:21 substitutes 'weep' for Matthew's 'mourn', but in the woes Lk 6:25 includes both verbs. Similarly in Lk 6:26 'speak well' corresponds to Mt 5:11 'speak evil' rather than to Lk 6:22 'revile'. Luke's formula in the second person plural (Matthew's eight beatitudes are in the third person) is less consonant with the background formula than Matthew's. It is, however, typical of Luke's immediacy of style (as Lk 6:2; 7:34 compared with their parallels).

In this instance, therefore, it is possible to argue either way, and the solution of the problem must be dependent on the overall solution of the synoptic problem.

H. 1. The Second Sign at Cana or Capernaum (Mt 8:5-13; Lk 7:1-10; Jn 4:46-53)

Mt 8:5-13

¹When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him appealing to him ²and saying, 'Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress.'

⁷And he said to him, 'I will come and cure him.'
the centurion answered, 'Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof;

but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me, and I say to one, "Go", and he goes, and to another, "Come", and he comes, and to my slave, "Do this", and the slave does it.' ¹⁰When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, 'Truly I tell you in no one in Israel have I found such faith.'

¹¹I tell you, many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

¹²while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

¹³And to the centurion Jesus said, 'Go, let it be done for you according to your faith.' And the servant was healed in that hour.

Lk 7:1-10

¹After Jesus had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. ²A centurion there had a slave whom he valued highly, and who was ill and close to death.

³When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders to him, asking him to heal his slave. ⁴When they came to Jesus, they appealed to him earnestly, saying, 'He is worthy to have you do this for him, ⁵for he loves our people, and it is he who built our synagogue for us'

⁶And Jesus went with them, but when he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to say to him, 'Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; ⁷therefore I did not presume to come to you. But only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, "Go", and he goes, and to another, "Come", and he comes, and to my slave, "Do this", and the slave does it.' ⁹When Jesus heard this, he was amazed at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, 'I tell you not even in Israel have I found such faith.'

Lk 13:28-29 ²⁸There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and you yourselves thrown out. ²⁹Then people will come from east and west, from north and south, and will eat in the kingdom of God.

³⁰When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health.

Jn 4:46-53

⁴⁶Then he came again to Cana in Galilee where he had changed the water into wine. Now there was a royal official whose son lay ill in Capernaum.

⁴⁷When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea to Galilee, he went and begged him to come down and heal his son, for he was on the point of death. ⁴⁸Then Jesus said to him, 'Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe.' ⁴⁹The official said to him, 'Sir, come down before my little boy dies.' ⁵⁰Jesus said to him, 'Go, your son will live.' The man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him and started on his way.

⁵¹As he was going down, his slaves met him and told him that his child was alive. ⁵²So he asked them the hour when he began to recover, and they said to him, 'Yesterday at one in the afternoon the fever left him.' ⁵³The father realized that this was the hour when Jesus had said to him, 'Your son will live.' So he himself believed, along with his whole household.

The relationship between the three accounts of the miraculous cure of the official's boy at Capernaum poses unusual problems. It is the only healing story shared by John and the Synoptic Gospels, and the only miracle story in the material normally assigned to Q (i.e. double tradition of Matthew and Luke without Mark). There are also unmistakable similarities with two other stories, one the story of the Syro-Phoenician woman's daughter (similarly healed

at a distance) and the other a miracle-story about Rabbi Hanina ben Dosa.

2. First the link with the Markan tradition of the cure of the Syro-Phoenician's daughter (Mk 7:25-30||Mt 15:22-8) should be outlined:

1. In each gospel this is the only miracle worked for a Gentile.
2. The parent comes to Jesus asking for the healing.

3. The dialogue between Jesus and the suppliant is reported.
4. The faith of the Gentile is contrasted with that of the Jews.
5. Jesus praises the parent's faith.
6. The cure is effected at a distance.

Such detailed similarity cannot be wholly coincidental. One explanation is that there was an outline story in the oral tradition which took on the two or three slightly different forms in the tradition expressed by Mark, Matthew/Luke, and John.

Hanina ben Dosa was a well-known rabbi in Palestine in the generation after Jesus. Of him several wonders are related, among them this story:

Once Rabban Gamliel's son fell ill. He sent two learned men to R. Hanina ben Dosa to beg God's mercy for him. R. Hanina saw them coming and went to an upstairs room and asked God's mercy for the boy. When he came down he said to them, 'Go! The fever has left him.' They asked him, 'Are you a prophet?' He replied, 'I am not a prophet or the son of a prophet. But this I have received from tradition: if my prayer of intercession flows unhesitatingly from my mouth, I know it will be answered; if not, I know it will be rejected.' They sat down and wrote and noted the exact moment at which he said this. When they got back to Rabban Gamliel he said to them, 'By the Temple Service, you are neither too early nor too late but this is what happened: in that moment the fever left him and he asked for water.'

This story teaches the lesson that R. Hanina, though not a prophet (despite the allusions to 1 Kings 17:19; Am 7:14), had the healing gift and intercessory power of a prophet. It shares with the gospel story the following elements:

1. Cure of a child at a distance.
2. Messengers sent by the father to ask for divine help.
3. Stress on simultaneity of the statement and the cure.

The story of R. Hanina also has the added wonder that he goes to pray without needing to be told. In the Jesus story his prophetic quality is not stressed—as it is stressed in Jesus' similar healing of the widow of Nain's son (Lk 7:16). Emphasis falls on the faith of the recipient rather than on the charisma of the miracle-worker.

3. In the Matthew–Luke story of the Capernaum cure there are significant differences between

the two evangelists. Firstly, Matthew has assimilated the Capernaum story to that of the Syro-Phoenician, including in each three features which are not in the Markan version of the Syro-Phoenician cure:

1. The sick child's parent comes to Jesus, asking for the cure in direct speech, to which Jesus replies.

2. The longer speech by the suppliant, the full expression of faith that earns the cure, is therefore the suppliant's second statement.

3. Jesus' final statement to the suppliant, and the announcement of the cure, are almost identical in the two cases: 8:13: 'Let it be done for you as your faith demands'. And the servant was cured at that moment'; 15:28: 'Let it be done for you as you desire.' And her daughter was cured from that moment.'

On the whole Matthew shortens rather than lengthens Mark's miracle-stories. The purpose of each of these additions is to underline the faith of the suppliant and its reward. But Matthew's most significant addition to the centurion story is of 8:11–12, Jesus' saying that points the contrast between the faith of the Gentile and the disbelief of Israel; this is full of Matthean expressions and vocabulary. Such a contrast is stressed often by Matthew (the magi contrasting with Herod, 2:1–17; the vineyard taken from its custodians and given to others, 21:43; the guests at the marriage feast, 22:1–10).

4. The absence from Luke's version both of this couplet, and of all the Matthean assimilations of this story to the cure of the Canaanite girl, has frequently been used as an argument that Luke presents the more primitive version: he follows the order and content of Q, which has been changed by Matthew. But traces of Lukan editing are also clear. Most recently Franklin (1994: 283), says, 'It is hard to see how the creative hand of Luke could be denied at this point.' Luke likes to show that the history and miracles of the early church continue and mirror those of Jesus. So he assimilates this centurion to the centurion of Ac 10, who

1. is the first Gentile in the book to come to the faith;
2. sends messengers to Peter, as this centurion to Jesus;
3. is similarly praised by the messengers as helpful to the Jewish nation.

In order to prevent the centurion actually meeting Jesus (which would make the first embassy rather pointless) Luke is compelled awkwardly to put his speech of unworthiness (7:6–8), with all its circumstantial detail, into the mouths of the second set of envoys. The emphasis on his own unworthiness (in Luke it comes twice, by contrast to Matthew's once) compares to Simon Peter's protestations of sinfulness in Lk 5:8 and those of Zacchaeus in Lk 19:8. Luke always insists that at least some in Israel were converted (several groups are converted during the crucifixion, a large number at Pentecost, and some in each of the towns visited by Paul). So here Luke avoids the sharp contrast between Gentile and Jew seen in Matthew. If, as in the Goulder theory, Luke is dependent on Matthew, he alters Jesus' statement by the change of two letters, 'in no one in Israel have I found such great faith' (Mt 8:10) to 'not even in Israel have I found such great faith' (Lk 7:9). This leaves room in Israel for at least some faith. A softening of the polemic against Israel could also be the reason for omitting Mt's 8:11–12. When he does use this saying in Lk 12:28–9, he gives it in a less absolute version: others will indeed come from east and west, but at least 'the sons of the kingdom' will not be 'thrown out into exterior darkness', as in Matthew.

Especially a small verbal indication may show that Luke is dependent on Matthew rather than on any Q-version. This would solve the anomaly of a miracle-story in Q, the collection of Sayings of the Lord (if it existed), but would also show a significant dependence of Luke on Matthew. Luke uses a number of words that are favourites of his, but are not in Matthew's narrative. But significantly Luke starts and ends the story (7:2–3, 10) with a 'slave' of the centurion (adding with typical tenderness that this slave was valuable to him); the Greek word used by Matthew, 'boy', may, in Greek as in English, also mean a servant. But in 7:7 Luke once slips into the Greek word, 'boy', used by Matthew. This is described by Goulder as editor's 'fatigue', and taken as evidence that Luke was editing Matthew's story. The same phenomenon occurs in the words used for 'bed' in Lk 5:18–24 || Mt 9:2–7.

5. The story of the healing of the son of the royal official at Capernaum in Jn 4:46–54 is unusual in John, being the only healing-story

which does not extend after the healing into a discussion or discourse of Jesus. It has obvious similarities to the synoptic stories just considered:

1. Capernaum enters into the story.
2. An official appeals to Jesus for the cure of his son, who is at the point of death (this is clear in Luke, less clear in Matthew; John is often closer to Luke than to the other Synoptics).
3. Jesus cures the child at a distance.
4. An intermediate group comes from the sickbed with a new message (another link to Luke rather than to Matthew).
5. The emphasis of the story is on the faith of the official.

There are also, of course, significant differences. As often, John's historical detail is persuasive: it is more likely that a royal official of Herod should be at Capernaum (which was a border town in Herod's territory, and not under direct Roman rule) than that a Roman centurion should be stationed there. Some of the differences are characteristic of John, and may well have been introduced by him for theological reasons:

1. The structure of the story is similar to that of the first miracle at Cana. These are the only two occasions on which Jesus at first demurs.
2. The reproach to faith that requires miracles (v. 48, as Jn 2:23–4; 20:29). In fact the two vv. 48–9 may well have been added to the original story. They can be cut out without spoiling the story, and only here is the victim called 'little boy'; elsewhere he is 'son'.
3. In Matthew and Luke the father's faith is praised before the cure. In John it comes at any rate to its full flowering only at the attestation of the cure 'at that hour' (4:58), as in the first sign at Cana the disciples find faith only when they see his glory at the end of the story (2:11).

There are comparatively few exact verbal similarities with the synoptic accounts, though some are notable (the healing occurs 'at that hour', Mt 8:13; Jn 4:53). But the similarity is more at the level of events and circumstances. The link between John and the two Synoptics may therefore be grounded on oral tradition rather than any written text.

I. The Controversy over Beelzebul (Mt 12:24–32; Mk 3:22–30; Lk 11:15–23 + 12:10)

Mt 12:24–32

²⁴They said, 'It is only by Beelzebul, the ruler of demons, that this fellow casts out demons.' ²⁵He knew what they were thinking and said to them, 'Every kingdom divided against itself becomes a desert, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. ²⁶If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself, how then will his kingdom stand?

²⁷If I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own exorcists cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁸But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you. ²⁹Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house.

³⁰Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. ³¹Therefore I tell you, people will be forgiven every sin and blasphemy but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. ³²Whoever speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven but whoever speaks against the holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come.'

One of the most critical passages in the Synoptic Gospels is the Beelzebul controversy. The prominence in the gospel tradition of the accusation that Jesus casts out evil spirits by being in league with Beelzebul, the prince of evil spirits, suggests that it was one of the major ways of discounting Jesus' miracles used by his opponents. Moreover there are also parallels in John to the synoptic tradition, since there also Jesus is accused of having an evil spirit (Jn 7:20); on another occasion Jesus cites his power to work miracles in reply to such an accusation (Jn 10:20–1). The parallels are, however, sufficiently loose to be explained as dependent on oral rather than written tradition; the common point may be merely the memory that Jesus was accused of having an evil spirit. In John the accusation is made twice that Jesus 'has an evil spirit', and on the second occasion this is

Mk 3:22–30

²²And the scribes who came down from Jerusalem said, 'He has Beelzebul, and by the ruler of demons he casts out demons.' ²³And he called them to him and spoke to them in parables,

'How can Satan cast out Satan? ²⁴If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. ²⁵And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. ²⁶And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come.

²⁷But no one can enter a strong man's house and plunder his property without first tying up the strong man. Then indeed he may plunder his house.

²⁸Truly I tell you, people will be forgiven their sins and whatever blasphemies they utter; ²⁹but whoever blasphemes against the holy Spirit can never have forgiveness, but is guilty of an eternal sin' — ³⁰for they said, 'He has an unclean spirit.'

Lk 11:15–23

¹⁵He casts out demons by Beelzebul, the ruler of demons.' ...

¹⁷But he knew what they were thinking and said to them, 'Every kingdom divided against itself becomes a desert, and house falls on house.

¹⁸If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand?—for you say that I cast out demons by Beelzebul.

¹⁹Now if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your own exorcists cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. ²⁰But if it is by the finger of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you. ²¹When a strong man, fully armed, guards his castle, his property is in safe.

²²but when one stronger than he attacks him and overcomes him, he takes away his armour in which he trusted, and divides his plunder. ²³Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

12 ¹⁰And everyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, everyone who blasphemes against the holy Spirit will not be forgiven.'

backed up with the question, 'Can an evil spirit open the eyes of the blind?' The circumstances of the accusation in the Synoptics and in John are entirely different. In the Synoptics the starting-point of the discussion is expulsion of evil spirits; it is more specific than in John: 'They said that he has Beelzebul and casts out evil spirits through the leader of evil spirits.' It then leads on to a full-blown controversy.

The use of this particular tradition is different in each of the gospels. In Mark it is the centre-piece of a typically Markan 'sandwich', showing how Jesus was misunderstood by different groups of people. This then leads on to the recourse to parables in Mk 4. It is, then, part of Mark's demonstration of Jesus turning away from the crowds to instruct his special disciples, an important hinge in the structure of the first part of Mark's gospel. In Matthew the passage

provides a commentary on the important quotation in Mt 12:18–21 of Isa 42:1–4, including, 'I shall place my Spirit upon him'; its message is, therefore, the contrast between the Spirit of Jesus and the spirit of Beelzebul. Not dissimilarly, in Luke the main part of the passage comes in the section on discipleship after the Lord's prayer and the promise (11:13) that the heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. It serves to contrast the spirit of the disciples with that of Jesus' opponents. Finally in John, the passages are part of the confrontation between Jesus and the temple authorities in Jerusalem, as part of the judgement theme that is so important in John.

From the point of view of the synoptic problem this passage has an importance all its own. Any solution to the problem must, of course, be shown to be valid for all the pericopes of the synoptic tradition. Nevertheless each theory has its special pericopes for which the proponents of the theory claim that their solution is obviously the best, while there are other pericopes where this solution is less obviously the best, and *prima facie* another solution would fit the facts equally well or perhaps even more easily. In the case of this pericope, however, it is claimed as primary evidence for their own theory by proponents of each of the principal solutions to the synoptic problem. The relationships between the synoptic passages have been claimed as evidence by proponents of the Griesbach theory, as evidence of Mark-Q overlap (in which Luke is closer than Matthew to Q) by proponents of the Two-Source theory, and by single-source theorists as evidence of editing of Mark by Matthew and Luke successively.

The basic relationship between the three synoptic texts is shown in Table 1.

One of the chief arguments of proponents of the Griesbach theory is the claim that Mark combines Matthew and Luke by zigzagging between them: when Mark departs from the order they share, Mark follows first one and then the other (see c.1). This is claimed to be exemplified here. So, it is dubiously claimed, Mk 3:22*b* agrees with the order of words in Luke against Matthew. Then Mk 3:25 agrees with Matthew (there is nothing corresponding in Luke). Mk 3:26 agrees with both. Still, after a gap, Mk 3:27–8 agrees with Matthew. Finally, Mk 3:29 corresponds to Lk 12:10*b* (the aorist of the verb *blasphēmēō, eis to pneuma to agion*). The zigzag is, however, in this case hard to sustain. In fact Mark shares overwhelmingly with Matthew, never in this passage with Luke, though there are occasional elements in the triple-tradition verses where Mark is closer to Luke than to Matthew. In Mk 3:22*b* the phrases are indeed in the Lukan order (Beelzebul first, not second as in Matthew), but the relationship between the verses is more easily explained as independent improvement by Matthew and Luke of Mark's clumsy double-phrase. In Mk 3:29 there are equally strong correspondences with Matthew. The argument is perhaps plausible, but by no means compelling.

On the Two-Source theory it is considered a passage of Mark-Q overlap. It is one of the five principal passages accepted as such by Streeter (along with the preaching of John the Baptist, the temptations, the mustard seed, and the commissioning of the disciples, see c.2). Matthew and Luke share 6½ verses absent from Mark, and in the triple-tradition verses there is persistent minor agreement between them against Mark. Some explanation must be given of these agreements, and if the Mark-Q

Table 1. Relationship between Synoptic Texts

Mt 12:24 <i>b</i> =	Mk 3:22 <i>b</i> =	Lk 11:15	(complex relationship)
25 <i>a</i>	24	17	(6 minor agreements Matthew/Luke against Mark)
25 <i>c</i>	25	–	
26	26	18	(6 minor agreements Matthew/Luke against Mark)
27	–	19	(1 minor disagreement Matthew/Luke)
28	–	20	(one important difference)
29	27	21–2	(Luke's wording very different)
30	–	23	(identical)
31	28	–	(several small differences)
32 <i>a</i>	–	12.10 <i>a</i>	(one characteristic difference Matthew/Luke)
32 <i>b</i>	29	10 <i>b</i>	(one minor agreement of Matthew/Luke against Mark)
–	30	–	(typical Markan dualism, not in Matthew/Luke)

overlap theory makes sense at all, it is a possible candidate as the explanation. Therefore a three-stage process is postulated: first comes Mark, then Q develops this tradition, then Matthew and Luke independently combine this Q tradition with their version of Mark.

In order to show, however, that at least in this case Mark-Q overlap is the most economical explanation it is necessary to show that Luke's version is the more primitive, and Mark has subsequently been edited by Matthew. So advocates of the Mark-Q overlap claim that Matthew has taken verses from various places in Q (the elements occur in three different sections of Luke) to make a skilfully unified composition, but that the elements of this composition are still visible in their original form in Luke. Advocates of this theory are posed the formidable task of showing that underlying Luke and/or Matthew is a unified theology or style that is distinct from that of the final authors, and can be considered characteristic of Q. So Kloppenborg (1987: 121–7) argues vigorously that Luke is the more primitive version, more coherent than Matthew's form. Luke's parable of the stronger man in 11:21–2 evokes warfare, which better fits the mention of 'kingdom' in the previous verses than does Matthew's household burglary. Matthew would then have adopted the earlier verses from Q, but reverted slavishly to Mark for the burglary. After the little Q-saying of Luke 11:23, Luke would have added another passage (originally separate in Q, and used by Matthew at 12:43–5) to stress that mere expulsion of the evil spirit is not enough without a further positive response to the kingdom. For Kloppenborg both Mark and Q versions have the same origin: 'the starting-point for this complex of Q-sayings is the traditional Beelzebul accusation and its refutation in Mark 3:20–6' (ibid. 127). But Q has enlarged the scene in two ways, first by attributing the accusation not (as does Mark) to the scribes from Jerusalem but to 'your sons' in general, and secondly by applying Jesus'

threat not only (as Mark) to those who accuse Jesus of complicity with Beelzebul, but to all who oppose Jesus (Lk 11:23–6).

Opponents of the Mark-Q overlap must show that the Matthean passage is so typical of Matthew that there is no trace of any written source other than Mark. So Goulder (1974: 332) maintains that the changes are best explained as introduced first by Matthew. He points out that in Mt 12:25 the balance of two similarly shaped phrases is a typically elegant Matthean improvement on Mark's rough phrase. Goulder then argues phrase by phrase that the expansions of Mark are so characteristic of Matthew that it would be a mistake to postulate any Q. Particularly the rhythm of vv. 31, 33, 35 is typical of Matthean formations, and such antitheses as 'gather/scatter', 'good/bad'. It is then necessary to argue that Luke can best be explained as derived from Matthew. To begin with, it is pointed out that Luke often breaks up longer Matthean sections, and that the method of so doing is in this case typical of Luke (see c.4).

On the other side it is argued that Luke, with his stress on the Spirit, would never have substituted 'finger of God' (Lk 11:20) for Matthew's 'Spirit of God' if he had been following Matthew. This is taken as an indication that 'finger of God' must have been the original form in Q (e.g. Stanton 1992a: 177 n.3); to which Goulder (1989: 504) replies that this allusion to Moses' miracles in Ex 8:15 is typical of Luke, and that 'Spirit' occurs only twice in Luke's accounts of Jesus' teaching.

In this particular case it is unlikely that either side will finally convince the other. The particular question must be judged in function of the more general question whether a Mark-Q overlap makes sense, and particularly whether this overlapping Q is so close to Mark that some literary dependence of Mark on Q would need to be postulated. This in turn would raise the question of why Mark omitted so much of Q.

J. 1. The Walking on the Water (Mt 14:22–33 || Mk 6:45–52 || Jn 6:16–21)

Mt 14:22–33

²²Immediately he made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side while he dismissed the crowds. ²³And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came he was there alone.

Mk 6:45–52

⁴⁵Immediately he made his disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side to Bethsaida while he dismissed the crowd. ⁴⁶After saying farewell to them he went up the mountain to pray. ⁴⁷When evening came, the boat was out on the lake, and he was alone

Jn 6:16–21

¹⁶When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake ¹⁷got into a boat, and started across the lake to Capernaum. It was now dark and Jesus had not yet come to them

²⁴but by this time the boat, strained by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. ²⁵And early in the morning he came to them walking on the lake. ²⁶but when the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified, saying it was a ghost, and they cried out in fear. ²⁷But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.' ²⁸Peter answered him, 'Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water.' ²⁹He said, 'Come.' So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. ³⁰But when he noticed the strong wind he became frightened and, beginning to sink, he cried out, 'Lord, save me!' ³¹Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, 'You of little faith, why did you doubt?' ³²When they got into the boat the wind ceased, and those in the boat worshipped him, saying, 'Truly you are the Son of God.'

on the land. ²⁸When he saw that they were straining at the oars, for the wind was against them. early in the morning he came to them walking on the lake. He intended to pass them by, ²⁸but when they saw him walking on the lake they thought it was a ghost and cried out. ²⁹For they all saw him and were terrified. But immediately he spoke to them and said to them, 'Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid.'

³¹Then he got into the boat with them and the wind ceased and they were utterly astounded, ³²for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened.

³³The lake became rough because a strong wind was blowing. ³⁴When they had rowed about three or four miles, they saw Jesus walking on the lake and coming near the boat and they were terrified.

³⁵But he said to them, 'It is I; do not be afraid.'

³⁶Then they wanted to take him into the boat with them, and immediately the boat reached the land towards which they were going.

The three evangelists who narrate this incident all use it to express their own theology. It is arguable that John's account is the closest to the oral tradition that lies behind them. Luke omits the story, perhaps because, along with other pericopes in the central section of Mark's gospel, he considers them unnecessary duplication. Before the content of the passage is discussed two preliminary problems must be aired.

The position of the incident is significant. It is rare that John and the Synoptics share any sequence of incidents, but in this case in both traditions the episode follows the miraculous feeding. In the case of John this is decidedly awkward, in that it splits the feeding (Jn 6:1-14) from the bread of life discourse (6:22-71); normally the related discourse in John follows immediately the miracle on which it comments. This suggests that the juxtaposition of the two incidents was considered significant in the previous oral tradition. This juxtaposition may have paschal overtones. Jn 6:4 mentions that the Passover was near, and in both the original Exodus incident and its liturgical commemoration the gift of manna and the crossing of the sea are associated. The OT typology is only slightly altered in the gospel accounts: the order of events is reversed, with the manna coming before the crossing, and Jesus does not

cross the sea from one side to the other, but walks towards his distressed disciples in the middle of the sea.

The similarity between the accounts of John and Mark is notable especially in the order of the narration:

1. The disciples start off across the sea;
2. it is evening;
3. the disciples are in difficulty with the wind;
4. the distance covered (John) and time passed (Mark) is mentioned;
5. they see Jesus walking on the sea and are terrified;
6. Jesus says, 'It is I; do not be afraid';
7. they want to take him (John), actually take him (Mark), into the boat and all is well.

The exact verbal similarity is also striking, not all of it dictated by a scene of rowing on the sea. Matthew has an addition link with John in the description of the distance in stades (NRSV miles).

It has been commented that in John Jesus is walking *epi* the sea, which could be translated merely 'at' or 'beside' rather than 'on'. In this case there would not necessarily be any miracle involved, and the original lesson would be that without Jesus the disciples are helpless and distressed (John symbolizes their distress by 'it

was now dark', 6:17, as in 8:12; 12:46, cf. 13:30). This would accord with their reaching land 'immediately', before they succeed in their intention of taking Jesus into the boat. But it would be difficult to account for the terror of the disciples, unless it is at the theophanic appearance of Jesus. The significance of Jesus walking on the sea comes from its scriptural echoes (see MT 14:23–36). In Israel the sea was always regarded as a frightening evil power, controlled and dominated only by the Lord (see also MK 6:45–62). Jesus' self-identification is made in the words *ego eimi*, which, at least for John, have the special significance of the divine name (see JN 6:16–21).

2. Despite sharing oral tradition and a number of similar words with John, Mark's narrative is unmistakably written by him. The style includes many of his typical features (see E.1): the characteristic 'immediately' (vv. 45, 50), the afterthought explanation with *gar* (vv. 48, 50, 52), double expressions (v. 45, 'to the other side, to Bethsaida'; v.50, 'spoke to them and said'; 'take heart, do not be afraid'; v. 52 'they did not understand, their hearts were hardened'), and others invisible in translation. It is reasonable to assume that he himself composed the narrative from oral tradition. Boismard maintains that the narrative existed in different versions in Document A and Document B (see C.3) on the grounds that, if Jesus was alone on the shore 'when evening came' (from the supposed Document B), he could not be said to wait to come to them till 'early in the morning' (from the supposed Document A). John lacks the latter element, so used only Document B. In fact, however, John has traces of the disciples' prolonged wait in the form of the 3 or 4 miles' rowing.

With typical Markan irony (see E.1 and cf. Camery-Hoggatt 1992:147) the climax of the story is the failure of the disciples to understand

about the loaves. Mark many times stresses the incomprehension of the disciples. On this occasion, despite their utter astonishment, he links it to the miracle of the loaves, which included (6:37) one of the worst examples of their sarcasm to Jesus. Just as, in the second half of the gospel, they thrice fail to understand the formal prophecies of the passion, so in this first half their failure to understand is three times noted on the lake (also 5:41; 8:17–21).

3. Matthew makes some minor adjustments, though he does not file the story down as much as he does many of the healing miracles. He omits Mark's v. 48c, perhaps because it suggests the unworthy thought that Jesus intended to neglect his followers (who no doubt, as in the calming of the storm, see Mt 8:23–7, stand for the Christian community), and that he changed his mind. He omits also Mark's v. 50a because he dislikes such afterthought explanations. Matthew's most important change, however, is the introduction of Peter's walking on the water. Typically for Matthew, Peter starts well and then comes a cropper (as at Caesarea Philippi and at the trial-scene), but at least his enthusiastic leadership comes to view, and his trust in Jesus merits a controlled compliment from the Lord. As in Mark, the disciples may stand for the community who have difficulty in accepting the full message of Jesus, especially with its implications of persecution, perhaps in Matthew Peter stands for the community, enthusiastic but still too hesitant and repeatedly failing. But the disciples' final confession—so much at variance with Mark's conclusion—leaves little to be desired: it is already at least as full as that of the centurion at the foot of the cross in Mark. The repeated 'Lord' (vv. 28, 30) and 'worshipped him' are also hints of the reaction proper to the divine.

K. 1. Jesus' Prayer in the Garden (Mt 26:36–46 || Mk 14:32–42 || Lk 22:39–46)

Mt 26:36–46

³⁶Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane,

and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.'

³⁷He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be grieved and agitated. ³⁸Then he said to

Mk 14:32–42

³⁷They went to a place called Gethsemane,

and he said to his disciples, 'Sit here while I go over there and pray.'

³⁸He took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be distressed and agitated. ³⁴And he said to

Lk 22:39–46

³⁶He came out and went, as was his custom, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples followed him. ⁴⁰When he reached the place, he said to them, 'Pray that you may not come into the time of trial.'

them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here and stay awake with me.' ³⁹And going a little farther he threw himself on the ground and prayed

'My Father, if it is possible let this cup pass from me; yet not what I want but what you want.'

⁴⁰Then he came to the disciples and found them sleeping and he said to Peter, 'So, could you not stay awake with me one hour? ⁴¹Stay awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

⁴²Again he went away for a second time and prayed, 'My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.'

⁴³Again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.

⁴⁴So leaving them again, he went and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. ⁴⁵Then he came to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? See the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. ⁴⁶Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.'

them, 'I am deeply grieved, even to death; remain here and keep awake.'

³⁹And going a little farther he threw himself on the ground and prayed that, if possible the hour might pass from him. ⁴⁰He said, 'Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.'

⁴⁰He came and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter, 'Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour? ⁴¹Keep awake and pray that you may not come into the time of trial; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' ⁴²And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words.

⁴³And once more he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to say to him.

⁴⁴He came a third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Enough! The hour has come; the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.' ⁴⁵Get up, let us be going. See, my betrayer is at hand.'

⁴¹Then he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, knelt down, and prayed.

⁴²'Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me, yet not my will but yours be done.' [⁴³Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength. ⁴⁴In his anguish he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down on the ground.]

⁴⁵When he got up from prayer he came to the disciples and found them sleeping because of grief, ⁴⁶and he said to them, 'Why are you sleeping?'

Get up and pray that you may not come into the time of trial.'

Jn 12:27-9

²⁷'Now my soul is troubled. And what should I say—"Father, save me from this hour"? No, it is for this reason that I have come to this hour.

²⁸'Father, glorify your name.' Then a voice came from heaven, 'I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.'

²⁹The crowd standing there heard it and said that it was thunder. Other said, 'An angel has spoken to him.'

Jn 18:11

Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword back into its sheath. Am I not to drink the cup that the Father has given me?'

2. The account of Jesus' prayer before his passion is a particularly rich example of how the several synoptic evangelists have adapted the tradition they received in order to express their own theology. There are also interesting links to the Fourth Gospel which most probably reflect an oral tradition about the prayer of Jesus

at the pre-gospel stage. As a working hypothesis in the discussion of this pericope it will be assumed that Mark is the first of the Synoptic Gospels, used by both the other two.

A long series of scholars has suggested that Mark is here combining two accounts, e.g. one source is 14:32, 35, 40, 41, the other is 14:33-4, 36-8. More probable is the view that Mark is spinning out a minimum of material to convey his own message according to his own manner. It is shot through with elements of Mark's own style. As throughout the passion narrative, a principal motif is to make sense of the stunning events by showing that what happens fulfils the scripture. A little hint of this is the allusion to Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac in 'going a little further' (14:35, as Gen 22:5). But especially marked is the reminiscence in Jesus' words of the laments of the persecuted just man in the Psalms (Ps 41:6 in Mk 14:34, etc.). The accent is on two factors, the obedience of Jesus to his Father's will and—by contrast—the failure

of the disciples. Thus, with typical Markan duplication, the prayer of Jesus is given first indirectly (v. 35), then directly (v. 36).

Probably for the prayer itself Mark is using or imitating already the formulae of early Christian prayer, with the Aramaic *abba* immediately followed by its Greek translation (*ho patēr*). This double formula of a particular Aramaic word, regarded almost as a talisman, occurs elsewhere in the NT (1 Cor 16:22; Rev 1:7). Jesus' consciousness that God was his Father was treasured by the early community; this usage, stemming from Jesus himself, was greatly extended, especially in John. However, the use of *abba* for God is not, as Jeremias (1978) contended, unique to Jesus, indicating the affectionate relationship of childhood; children called their father *abi* rather than *abba*, and *abba* does occur occasionally in Jewish prayers. As elsewhere, Mark emphasizes the intensity of Jesus' prayer by the triple repetition beloved of popular story telling (see E.1). But, as in Peter's triple denial, he has barely enough material to trick out the full triad: the prayer is given fully the first time; for the second time the prayer is merely 'the same word', and on the third occasion it is only the return of Jesus rather than his prayer that is mentioned.

Thus the chief emphasis is on the failure of the disciples to take their share in their Master's final trial. Throughout the gospel they have repeatedly failed to grasp the message of suffering; now they are thrice found asleep while their Master prays, and their definite desertion at the arrest will be confirmed by Peter's triple denial at the moment when Jesus thrice faces his accusers. The bitterness of this occasion is underlined by the special involvement of precisely those three disciples who had been favoured with special revelation at the transfiguration (the link is stressed: again in their abashed confusion: they 'knew not what to answer'). James and John had also stoutly protested that they could share Jesus' cup (Mk 10:39).

3. In Matthew's account, besides many little characteristic verbal changes of style, three changes of emphasis are visible. Firstly, Matthew tones down the lurid colours in which Mark paints Jesus' agony of mind: for Mark's word for Jesus' almost stunned distress, Matthew has the more seemly 'grieved'. Instead of Mark's uncontrollable 'falling [repeatedly, if the imperfect is taken seriously, as though Jesus were simply stumbling] to the ground', the biblical attitude of reverent prayer is indicated by 'fell face to the ground in prayer' (26:39, my tr.).

This is in accord with Matthew's generally more dignified, and even hieratic, presentation of Jesus.

Secondly Matthew fills out the second prayer of Jesus. After the Jewish manner of respect for the Lord, both prayers are impersonal: 'let this cup pass from me', instead of Mark's direct request, 'remove this cup from me'. Matthew gives content to the prayer by using the Lord's prayer, which he has set down at the very centre of the Sermon on the Mount, 'Your will be done' (26:42; 6:10). It may be presumed that, since Jesus is the model for his disciples, he will pray the same phrases as he taught them to pray. The intimacy of both first and second prayers is stressed by the affectionate address, 'My Father' (26:39, 42); this perhaps indicates both similarity and distinction between Jesus and his disciples, who are instructed to pray with the plural 'Our Father' (6:9). At the same time, a certain hesitancy is shown—perhaps the hesitancy of respect—by the repeated 'if it is possible' (26:39), 'if it is not possible' (26:42), instead of Mark's confident 'for you all things are possible' (14:36). After this elaboration of the second prayer, Matthew can transfer to the third prayer Mark's minimal account of the second, 'saying the same words' (Mk 14:39; Mt 26:44).

Matthew's third concern is to underline the solidarity that should exist between Jesus and his disciples. As always he tones down their failure, here by omitting Mark's critical 'they did not know what to say to him' (Mk 14:40). He also takes the spotlight off Peter by removing Jesus' intimate and disappointed question to him, 'Simon, are you asleep?' (Mk 14:37), and by putting into the plural the criticism, 'could you not stay awake with me one hour?' (Mt 26:40). This now concerns not only Peter but all the disciples. Twice he adds 'with me' to 'stay awake' (26:38, 40); they should share in his passion, just as frequently in Matthew Jesus' community will benefit from his permanent presence (1:23; 18:20; 28:18–20) and will share in his ministry of forgiveness (9:8; 18:18).

4. Luke's version of the scene on the Mount of Olives (there is no mention of 'Gethsemane'; he often omits odd-sounding place-names, and has little interest in the topography of Jerusalem) is drastically shortened and unified. There is only one prayer and one return to the disciples. It is bracketed at beginning and end by the command, 'Pray that you may not come into temptation' (22:40, 46), exemplifying once more the Lukan theme of prayer, and more especially of the disciple praying after the

model of the Master. In their persecutions and martyrdom, as in their working of miracles, the Acts of the Apostles will show the disciples mirroring exactly and continuing the life of Jesus into the era of the church. In the passion narrative too this carefully painted imitation comes to view in such details as Simon of Cyrene carrying the cross 'behind Jesus' (23:26). All stress has been taken off the failure of the disciples, both by eradication of the triple repetition and by a couple of subtle changes in 22:45: instead of 'sleeping' they are now (despite NRSV) 'lying down from grief', that is, their sympathy with Jesus is so intense that they could not stay on their feet. Nevertheless, when he firmly 'stands erect' after his prayer he comes to them and tells them too to join him in this posture (22:45, 46).

The most notable difference in Luke is the account of Jesus himself. Quite definitely, though not yet so emphatically as in John, Jesus is in control of his passion and death: he will be arrested only when he has exercised his healing ministry (22:51) and given the arresting party his consent, 'This is your hour' (22:53), and dies only when he has commended his spirit into his Father's hands (23:46). So now, Jesus does not collapse onto the ground, but 'knelt down', as Christians later do in prayer (Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:36; 21:5). There is no sign of distress: his single prayer is calm and resigned, with the same resignation shown later by Christians (Acts 21:14). But there is nothing lacking to the intensity of his prayer.

The verses 22:43–4 are missing in some MSS, but are widely quoted in the second century. If they are considered part of Luke's gospel they contain two features, showing the preparation of Jesus for his passion. Both have analogies in the books of Maccabees to which the genre of Luke–Acts is so similar. First, Jesus is represented as an athlete about to enter a contest, with his adrenalin up, rather than terrified and horror-struck as in Mark. There is no question of sweating blood; it is merely that his sweat flowed like blood. This is the physical condition of those preparing for martyrdom in the books of Maccabees (2 Macc 3:16; 15:19; 4 Macc 6:6, 11). Secondly, an angel appears to show that Jesus' prayer is regarded, just as in Mk 1:13 at the earlier testing in the desert, and as two angels came to strengthen Eleazar at his martyrdom (4 Macc 6:18). After his prayer Jesus stands confidently upright, and comes to tell his followers to do the same in their prayer during temptation.

5. John has no equivalent scene of the prayer in the garden, but there are clear echoes of the same tradition. Similarly, he has no scene of the trial before the Sanhedrin (Mk 14:53–64), but an echo of this scene appears earlier in the Pharisees' decision to kill him in Jn 11:57. John portrays the passion of Jesus not as the moment of his humiliation but as the hour of his exaltation and glorification (see Jn 18:1–19:24). John's Jesus is nevertheless fully human, so that his soul is troubled by the approaching trial (12:27a). However, since it is the moment of his glorification and that of his Father (12:28), to which he has looked forward (2:4; 7:30; 8:20) and will look forward (13:1; 16:32), he thrusts aside the thought of praying to be delivered from it. The image of the cup of suffering seen in the synoptic accounts of the prayer in the garden is also present at his arrest in the garden (18:11). Here it is explicit that Jesus accepts the cup in an atmosphere of triumph, for it comes at the conclusion of the arrest scene. During this scene his divinity has shone through by his use of the mysterious divine 'I am he' (18:5, 6, 8) and the awestruck reaction of the arresting party in falling to the ground. He can be arrested only after he has given this consent. There are further echoes of the tradition in the Letter to the Hebrews, in the mention that 'Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to the one who was able to save him from death' (Heb 5:7). The echoes of the prayers of the persecuted just man in the psalms are evident here. As already in the wording of the prayer in Mark, Brown (1994: 229) suggests that this prayer 'came from an early Christian hymn of praise constructed of a mosaic of psalm-motifs'. Behind it would be the same tradition as that of the synoptic and Johannine prayer in the garden.

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