



Excerpts from *The Great Physician*
For study related to the Bible Lesson February 22 - 28, 2010

Introductory Note – *The Great Physician*, Vols 1 & 2 were written by Vinton Dearing, Christian Scientist, who was Professor of English at UCLA where he taught the English Bible as Literature for forty years. The book is a composite translation of the four Gospels, organized by event rather than book, and includes a commentary. Because of the composite nature of the translation and commentary, the excerpts below may cover more topics than the citation in the Lesson. The paperback two-volume set of books is available for purchase on amazon.com and a hardback study edition available through amazon.com and at vintondearing.com.

GT – (John 14:12)

THE LAST SUPPER

[John ch. 14-17](#)

Now in John comes that magnificent part which is the main reason it has been called “the Gospel of love.” No more wonderful picture of Jesus was ever given than John’s account of his last tender and yet vigorous preparation of his students for what was about to happen. But we must also recognize that Jesus was also preparing himself for his crucifixion and preparing all his followers for all future attacks upon them. He was not seeking a calm acceptance of opposition but assuring an ultimate triumph over it. In asserting and reasserting his inseparability from God he was making sure that no persecution could strike through his body to his central certainty of his inviolable spiritual being. In asserting and reasserting the inseparability of his followers from himself and God he was making sure that no distortion of his message to mankind could abort its power and truth.

John does not merely tell us the gist of what Jesus said, he gives us a full representation of how Jesus went over the same ground again and again. We live the scene. But we must not suppose, as we read these marvelous words, that they had their full effect immediately. Even Jesus, as we shall see, still had to struggle with his human element.

“Don’t let your heart be troubled. You trust in God [or, Trust in God], trust in me too. In my Father’s house are many rooms. And if not, would I have said to you that I go to ready a place for you? And if I’ll go and ready a place for you I’m coming again and will take you home to myself so that where I am you may be too. And you know the road where I’m going.”²³

“Thomas says to him, ‘Lord, we don’t know where you’re going. How can we know the road?’

“Jesus says to him, ‘I’m the road and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me [living a life like mine, following my commandments]. If you’ve known me, you’ll know my Father too. And from now on you know Him and have seen Him.’²⁴

“Philip says to him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it’s enough for us.’

“Jesus says to him, ‘Am I with you for so long a time and you haven’t known me, Philip? He who’s seen me has seen the Father. How do you say, “Show us the Father”? Don’t you trust that I [am embraced] in the Father and the Father is [imaged forth] in me? The statements that

I say to you I don't speak on my own. The Father who remains in me is doing His works. Trust me, because I [am] in the Father and the Father in me. If not, trust because of the works themselves [that you and I have done and will do]. Truly, truly I say to you, he who trusts in me, the works that I do he'll do, and he'll do greater than these because I go to the Father **[for inspiration and power, and he will too].**²⁵

“And whatever you'll ask in my name **[because you are the Messiah's]** this I'll do, so that the Father will be glorified in the Son. If you'll ask me anything in my name, I'll do it **[in the following way].**

“If you love me you'll preserve my commandments **[whose rightness I have proved to you].** And I'll ask the Father and He'll give you another Comforter so that he may be with you forever **[spiritual healers emphasize the last word]**, the truthful Spirit, which the world cannot receive because it doesn't see it or know [it]. You know it because it remains with you and will be in you. I won't leave you orphaned, I'm coming to you **[through the Comforter].** A little [time] yet and the world sees me no more, but you see me, because I live and you'll live. In that day you'll understand that I **[am embraced]** in my Father and you [are] in me and I **[am shown]** in you. He who has my commandments and preserves them, that's who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I'll love him and show myself in him.²⁶

“Judas not Iscariot [that is, Thaddeus] says to him, ‘Lord, and how has it happened that you're going to reveal yourself to us and not to the world?’

“Jesus said to him in reply, ‘If anyone loves me, he'll preserve my word and my Father will love him, and we'll come to him and will make a place to stay beside him. He who doesn't love me doesn't preserve my words. And the word that you hear isn't mine, but the Father's who sent me.

“These [things] I've spoken to you while remaining with you. But the Comforter, the Holy Spirit, which the Father will send in my name **[because you're the Messiah's]**, that will show you everything and remind you of everything that I've said.

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you. Not at all as the world gives do I give to you. Don't let your heart be troubled and don't let [it] be dismayed. You heard that I said to you, “I'm going away” and “I'm coming to you.” If you were loving me, you'd rejoice because I'm going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. And I've told you now, before it happens, so that when it will happen you'll trust. I won't speak many [things] with you after this, for the ruler of the [material] world [Satan] is coming. And he has nothing in me, but [comes] so that the world will know that I love the Father and [that] just as the Father commanded me, so I do.

“Rouse up, let's go from here.”

Since Jesus continues to speak, many scholars have supposed that the rest of his words at this time were inserted by the author when reworking the narrative. I accept this idea and believe the author made the addition because he felt he had not sufficiently represented the way in which Jesus repeated himself, just as Moses had repeated himself when urging his people to love God and keep His commandments, just as Isaiah and Ezekiel had when giving God's promises of rescue to the captives in Babylon, just as Elihu had when leading Job to understand that God does not afflict.²⁷ We have seen Jesus repeating himself in the Sermon on the Mount, and for the same reason. When men's minds are troubled, the truths that will calm and inspire them need reiteration, not a summary. No matter how many times these truths have been said before, only further patient repetition will restore the light.

“I'm the true vine and my Father's the farmer. Every branch in me not bearing fruit, He

takes it [off], and every [one] bearing fruit, He cleans [prunes] it so that it bears more fruit **[than otherwise]**. You're clean now through the word that I've spoken to you. Remain in me, and I in you. Just as the branch can't bear fruit on its own unless it remains in the vine, so you can't unless you remain in me. I'm the vine, you're the branches. He who remains in me and I in him, he bears much fruit, because without me you can't do anything. If someone doesn't remain in me, he's thrown out as the branch [that is taken off], and dried up and they gather them and throw [them] into the fire and they're burned.²⁸

"If you'll remain in me and my sayings will remain in you, ask whatever you intend and it will happen to you. In this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and you'll be my students. Just as the Father loved me, I also loved you. Remain in my love. If you'll preserve my commandments, you'll remain in my love, just as I've preserved my Father's commandments and remain in His love.

"I've said these [things] to you so that my joy may be in you and your joy will be fulfilled.

"This is my commandment, that you love each other just as I loved you. No one has greater love than this, that someone will put down his life over his friends. You're my friends if you do what I command you. I no longer call you slaves **[saying to you "A slave is not greater than his master"]**, because a slave doesn't know what his master does. But I've called you friends, because everything I heard directly from my Father I made known to you **[and you have proved it for yourselves]**. You didn't choose me, but I chose you and set you [out, like a plant] so that you'd go and bear fruit, and your fruit will remain so that whatever you'll ask the Father in my name He'll give you. These [things] I command you, to love each other.²⁹

"If the world hates you, you know that it's hated me before you. If you were from the world, the world would be loving its own, but because you're not from the world but I chose you from the world, this is why the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, "A slave isn't greater than his master." If they persecuted me, they'll persecute you too. If they preserved my word they'll preserve yours too. But all these [things] they'll do to you because of my name **[that is, because you are my followers]**, because they don't know Him who sent me.³⁰

"If I didn't come and speak to them, they wouldn't have had sin **[that is, as Paul was to say later, no sin is imputed when there is no law against it]**. But now they don't have an excuse about their sin. He who hates me hates my Father too. If I didn't do the works among them that no other did, they wouldn't have had sin, but now they've both seen and hated both me and my Father. But [this has happened] so that the word will be fulfilled that's been written in their Law [and Prophets and Psalms], that "They hated me without a cause."³¹

"When the Comforter will come whom I'll send you from the Father, the truthful Spirit which comes directly from the Father, that will testify about me. And you too testify, because you're [that is, you've been] with me from [the] beginning [of my ministry].

"I've spoken these [things] to you so that you won't be shaken. They'll [not only] make you excommunicants from the synagogue but the hour's coming when everyone who kills you will think he's doing God a service. And they'll do these [things] because they didn't know the Father or me. But I've spoken these [things] to you so that when their hour will come you may remember that I told [them] to you. But I didn't say these [things] to you from the beginning because I was with you [and protected you]. But now I'm going away to Him who sent me.

"And [now] none of you asks me, "Where are you going?" but [instead] because I've spoken these [things] to you sorrow has filled your heart. But I say the truth to you, it's expedient for you that I go off, for if I won't go off, the Comforter won't come to you **[you'll always depend on**

me and not on what I teach]. But if I go, I'll send him to you. And after he comes he'll convince the world [to change its views] about sin and about righteousness and about judgment: about sin, because they don't trust in me **[but everyone will learn that I have no sin]**; about righteousness, because I'm going to the Father and you [will] see me no more **[but everyone will learn that I do only what is right]**; about judgment, because the ruler of this world [Satan] has been judged **[and everyone will learn that I am the judge]**.

"I've many [things] yet to say to you, but you can't bear [them] now. But when he comes, the truthful Spirit, he'll show you the way in all the truth. For he won't speak on his own but whatever he'll hear [from God] he'll speak, and will announce to you coming [events]. He'll glorify me, because he'll receive from what's mine and announce [it] to you. Everything whatsoever that the Father has is mine **[that is, the Father has fully revealed Himself to me]**. This is why I said that [the Comforter] receives from what's mine and will announce [it] to you.

"A little [time] and you [will] no longer see me, and again a little [time] and you'll see me.'

"So some of his students said to each other, 'What's this that he says to us, "A little [time] and you [will] not see me, and again a little [time] and you'll see me," and "Because I'm going to the Father"?' So they were saying, 'What's this "a little [time]" that he says? We don't know what he speaks.' **[A very dramatic representation of the whispering that went on.]**

"Jesus knew that they intended to ask him and said to them, 'Do you enquire of one another about this, because I said, "A little [time] and you [will] not see me, and again a little [time] and you'll see me"?' Truly, truly I say to you, that you'll weep and mourn, but the [physical] world will rejoice. You'll be sad, but your sorrow will turn into joy. A woman when she's in labor has sorrow because her hour came. But when the child's born she no longer remembers the birth pangs because of [her] joy that a person was born into the world. And so now you indeed have sorrow, but I'll see you again and your heart will rejoice, and no one will take your joy from you.

"And in that day you won't ask me anything. Truly, truly, I say to you, whatever you'll ask the Father in my name [because you are the Messiah's] He'll give you. Until now you didn't ask anything in my name. Ask and you'll receive so that your joy may have been fulfilled.

"I've spoken these [things] to you in figures of speech. The hour's coming when I'll no longer speak to you in figures of speech, but I'll tell you in plain language about the Father **[because you will have learned the language of Spirit]**. In that day you'll ask in my name **[because you are my students]**, and I don't say to you that I'll ask the Father about you **[because you will not need my prayers any longer]**. For the Father Himself loves you, because you've loved me and have trusted that I came out from the Father. I came out from the Father, and I've come into the world. I'm leaving the world and going to the Father again.'

"His students say to him, 'You speak in "plain language" now, you see, and you don't say [things in] a figure of speech. [That is,] we know now that you know all **[things, because you knew what we intended to ask]**, and [that] you've no need that anyone will ask you **[something before you can understand his problem]**. Because of this **[power you have just demonstrated once more]** we trust that you came out from God.'

"Jesus answered them, 'Do you trust now? Look, the hour's coming and has come that you'll be scattered, each to his own [concerns], and you'll leave me alone. And I'm not alone, because the Father's with me. I've spoken these [things] to you so that you have peace in me. In the [physical] world you have birth pangs [like a woman in labor], but cheer up, I've been victorious over the [physical] world [and so can you be too].'"

Here the closing prayer begins. “Jesus spoke these things, and lifted up his eyes to heaven and said, ‘Father, the hour’s come. Glorify Your Son so that Your Son will glorify You, just as You gave him authority over all flesh, so that all whom You’ve given him, he’ll give them eternal life. And this is eternal life, that they know You, the only [and] true God, and Jesus Christ whom You sent. I glorified You on earth, I finished the work that You’ve given me to do. And now glorify me, Father, directly from Yourself, with the glory [of spiritual sonship] that I was having directly from You before the world was.³²

“I’ve manifested Your name to the people You gave me from the world. They were Yours and You gave them to me and they’ve preserved Your word. Now they’ve known that everything whatsoever that You’ve given me is directly from You, because the sayings that You gave me I’ve given to them and they received **[them and proved them by their healing work]** and knew truly that I came out directly from You and they trusted that You sent me.

“I pray about them. I don’t pray about the [whole] world but about those You’ve given me, because they’re Yours. And everything of mine is Yours and of Yours is mine, and I’ve been glorified in them **[by their healing and preaching as I taught them]**. And I’m no longer in the world, and they’re in the world and I come to You. Holy Father, preserve them in Your name whom You’ve given me **[because they’re Yours]**, so that they may be [at] one just as we [are].³³

“When I was with them whom You’ve given me, I was preserving them in Your name. And I guarded them, and not one of them destroyed himself, except the son of destruction [Judas], so that the scripture was fulfilled **[Jesus may have been thinking of Psalm 41 again]**. But now I’m coming to You, and I speak these [things] in the world so that they [the students] may have in themselves my joy, which has been fulfilled.

“I’ve given them Your word, and the world hated them because they’re not from the world [but are Your children], just as I’m not from the world. I don’t ask that You take them from the world but that You preserve them from evil [or, from the evil one]. They’re not from the world, just as I’m not from the world. Make them holy in the truth [spiritual reality]. Your word is truth. Just as You sent me into the world, I also sent them into the world, and I make myself holy for their sakes so that they’ve been made holy too in truth.³⁴

“And I don’t ask about these alone, but also about those who trust in me through their word, so that all may be [at] one, just as You, Father [are reflected] in me and I [am embraced] in You, so that they also may be [at one] in us, so that the world may trust that You sent me.

“And the glory [of spiritual being] that You’ve given me I’ve given them **[through my teaching and example]**, so that they may be [at] one just as we [are at] one, I in them and You in me, so that they may have been brought into perfect oneness, so that the world may know that You sent me and loved them just as You loved me.

“Father, the [ones] whom You’ve given me I intend that where I am **[in a full awareness of spiritual being]** these too may be with me, so that **[in what is going to happen]** they may see [understand] my glory, which You’ve given me, because You loved me before the foundation of the world. Righteous Father, indeed the world didn’t know You but I knew You, and these knew that You sent me, and I made Your name known [explained You] to them and will make [it] known, so that the love [with] which You loved me may be in them, and I in them.”

Just as those familiar with spiritual healing study the Sermon on the Mount so they study and exult in these words of Jesus.

Footnotes

23. Most manuscripts have “I go” instead of “that I go,” but not the earliest. The scribe who wrote the earliest manuscript we have, a papyrus of about 200 (P66), first wrote “I go” but then inserted “that” above the line. Omitting “that” and repunctuating produces, “If [it were] not [so], I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (KJV).
24. “You know”: the present indicative and imperative forms of this verb are identical, so the meaning may be “Know.”
25. It has been proposed that “greater” could mean “greater in number,” and indeed the total of a long-lived and earnest Christian’s “works” might exceed Jesus’, but Greek has a distinct word for “more” and the word for “greater” used here seems never to have had the sense of “more.” What could be greater than Jesus’ works is not easy to imagine; perhaps he meant the final redemption of mankind.
26. “Comforter”: *paraklêtos*. The word has sometimes been simply transliterated, “paraclete,” sometimes translated “advocate” or “intercessor.” Jesus may have been thinking of the role played by Elihu in Job, who, as the intercessor Job prayed for, showed him that God does not afflict and so began his healing (Job 16:21, 33:6, 37:23).
27. Deuteronomy, ch. 4-11, 28-32; Isaiah, ch. 40-55; Ezekiel, ch. 34; Job, ch. 32-37.
28. “Once the vines are planted, the farmer prunes the branches Clipping the wood and leaf growth in the first two years strengthens the trunk of the vine; later, cutting back the number of buds on a branch enhances the growth of fruit. Pruning concentrates growth into fewer buds, yet the resulting grape clusters contain more fruit” (Carey Ellen Walsh, “God’s Vineyard—Isaiah’s Prophecy [in 5:1-7] as Vintner’s Textbook,” *BR*, XIV:4 [August 1998], 47-48). Walsh notes also that over-pruning to obtain a bumper crop reduces the next crop thereafter. God’s pruning, we may conclude, maintains His vineyard at a consistent maximum of fruitfulness.
- As before, it is not necessary to equate the fire Jesus speaks of with hell.
29. The words “whatever you’ll ask the Father in my name He’ll give you” should perhaps be differently arranged: “whatever you’ll ask the Father He’ll give you in my name.” Here and in the second paragraph below, “directly from” is *para*; see Chapter IV, note 40.
30. “The word that I said to you, ‘A slave isn’t greater than his master’”: Matthew 10:24-25 = Luke 6:40 (cf. John 13:16). The sentence about preserving (John 15:20b) does not fit very well with the theme of rejection that surrounds it, and so the New English Bible, for example, translates it “They will follow your teaching as little as they have followed mine.”
31. “No sin is imputed when there is no law against it”: Romans 5:13.
“They hated me without a cause”: Psalms 35:19; 69:4.
32. “This is eternal life”: Jesus was expanding on a statement in Wisdom 15:3, “to know Thy [God’s] power is the root of immortality.”
Here and in the next paragraph “directly from” is *para* again; see note 29.
33. “[At] one: as before, the word “one” is a neuter singular, and the problem of translation is the same; see Chapter IV, note 102.
34. “Your word”: In Psalm 119, “word” is a synonym for “law.” We read in verse 142, “Thy law [is] the truth,” and in verse 160, “Thy word [is] true.”

RR – (John 20:24 ... 31)

APPEARANCE TO THE APOSTLES

John 20:19-29

I now quote John. “So on that day, it being evening, the first [day] of the week, and the doors having been shut where the students were for fear of the Jews [Judeans], Jesus came and stood in the midst, and says to them, ‘Peace to you.’

“And after he said that, he showed them [his] hands and side. So the students rejoiced when they saw the Lord.

“So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace to you. Just as the Father sent me, I too send you **[to preach and heal].**’

“And after he said this, he inspired [them], and says to them ‘Receive [the] Holy Spirit. Anyone’s sins you cancel will have been canceled from them, anyone’s you halt will have been halted.’”

Luke says in Acts that the students received the Holy Spirit about a month and a half later, and gives a circumstantial and detailed account of its bringing with it the ability to speak in any language. We may then understand John to mean here, not that Jesus blew the Holy Spirit into them (literally, he says Jesus blew into them, as one blows a flute), but rather that Jesus continued to remind them of what they had already received. George M. Lamsa observes that in modern Aramaic the word corresponding to John’s Greek word meaning “blow” means “give courage.” Although, in common with most scholars, I believe that idioms in modern Aramaic are more likely to come from the Bible than to underlie it (compare our “wolves in sheep’s clothing”), it seems right to me to be reminded that courage was part of what Jesus inspired in his students. It keeps us from taking too abstract and ethereal a view of inspiration, and from failing to reflect on what the students’ needs were.¹⁴⁸

The words I have translated “halt” and “halted” are usually translated “retain” and “retained,” a difference of considerable theological importance, although Christians do not agree as to how the apostles (and their successors) would retain sins. The Roman Catholic Church bases its system of confession and absolution on the idea that Jesus meant forgiving and retaining sins. Protestants say Jesus meant preaching and refusing to preach, or else baptizing and refusing to baptize, the latter a legitimate refusal if the person has not attained to the church’s standards for admission. I believe that we do not have here a parallel to Jesus’ words to Peter about “loosing” and “binding, which are clearly contraries. Instead, I believe, Jesus was talking here about what we might call the therapeutic and prophylactic power of the Holy Spirit with respect to sin, canceling sins already committed and preventing the actualization of latent sins, restoring sinners to morality and preventing moral persons from sinning. It does not fit my sense of divine justice to suppose that God would commission anyone to lock sinners into their sin.¹⁴⁹

Continuing with John. “But Thomas, one of the twelve, spoken of as Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other students were saying to him, ‘We’ve seen the Lord.’

“But he said to them, ‘Unless I’ll see in his hands the print of the nails and put my finger

into the print of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I won't trust.'

"And after eight days his students were indoors again, and Thomas with them.

"Jesus comes, the doors having been closed, and stood in the midst and said, 'Peace to you.'

"Then he says to Thomas, 'Reach your finger here and see my hands, and reach your hand here and put it into my side; and don't be distrustful but trusting.'

"And Thomas said to him in reply, 'My Lord and my God.'

"Jesus says to him, 'Have you trusted because you've seen me? Blessed are those [now and to come] who didn't see [me, a man] and [yet] trusted [in God].'"

What did Thomas mean by the words "My Lord and my God"? A. E. Harvey says he was making "a profession of faith that Jesus had indeed been Son of God — that is, God's authorized representative and agent on earth," — in other words, we may add, that Jesus was the Messiah or Christ. Many Christians believe, of course, that Thomas meant Jesus was God. Only physical evidence satisfied Thomas, so he may indeed have conceived of a physical God, forgetting that Jesus had said God is Spirit. Considering that Jesus said he could do nothing on his own but always did as his Father directed, that he had pointed to a passage in the Psalms in which men are called gods, and that the emphatic statement, "no one has ever seen God," appears at the beginning of John's Gospel, I think it likely that if Thomas meant Jesus was God there was a rebuke to that idea also in what Jesus then said to him, "Have you trusted because you've seen me? Blessed are those [now and to come] who didn't see [me, a man], and [yet] trusted [in God]." Present-day experience with Christian healing argues similarly. Those who follow Jesus' rules for healing generally recognize that they must reject any tendency to deify themselves or to accept deification by others if they are not to lose their ability to cure. As they see matters, God heals through the Spirit, not through personal ability on their part.¹⁵⁰

Another possibility is that Thomas's words should be translated, "My Lord, [He is] indeed my God," for in spite of the introductory clause, "Thomas said to him in reply," we need not suppose he was directly addressing Jesus. We have, for example, seen instances when this Hebraic expression means "in response" rather than "in reply." Also, Thomas' words are in the nominative case, so while they may be doing the work of the vocative, the case of direct address, they may equally well constitute a statement that requires an inserted word or two to make a normal English sentence. Some of the Old Latin manuscripts prefix "tu es," giving "You are my Lord and my God." If, however, "my Lord" means God, and the word usually translated "and" is an intensive, then Thomas was echoing the words of the Israelites who saw Elijah bring down fire from heaven, "The Lord, He [is] the God, the Lord, He [is] the God." By this interpretation, Jesus' appearance was as decisive to Thomas' trust as the fire from heaven was to the Israelites' and he felt he should use their words to express his conviction.¹⁵¹

Some readers conclude that Thomas obeyed Jesus' command to touch him, and may then express gratitude that he thus proved what would otherwise be doubtful, but Jesus says only that Thomas trusted because he saw, from which other readers conclude that Thomas had made some progress in his understanding.

Footnotes

148. George M. Lamsa, *Idioms in the Bible Explained*, Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers [1971], p.74.

149. "Loosing" and "binding": Matthew 16:19, 18:18. See Chapter IV, note 72.

150. Harvey, p. 166. Jesus is God: see, e.g., *ABD*, VI, 529. God is Spirit: John 4:24. Other words of Jesus: Psalm 82:6; John 10:34 and 5:30; etc.
151. Collation in *Novum Testamentum Graece*, ed. Constantine Tischendorf, ed. oct. crit. maior, Leipzig: Giesecke & Devrient, 1869, John 20:28. The manuscripts cited are “a” (Codex Vercellensis, in the cathedral treasure room at Vercelli, Italy, a fourth-century manuscript) and “c” (Codex Colbertinus, in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, a twelfth-century manuscript).
- “The Lord, He [is] the God”: I Kings 18:39.

SECTION I – B3 (Mark 1:9 ... 15)

BAPTISM

[Matthew 3:1-17](#) [Mark 1:1-11](#) [Luke 3:1-22](#)

When Jesus was about thirty, Luke tells us, his cousin John began preaching that sinners should repent and be baptized, thus earning himself the title of “the Baptist” or “the Baptizer.” Jesus went to John to be baptized. We do not know exactly where John was baptizing at the time. The Gospel of John says he was baptizing at Bethany, east of the Jordan. No such town is now known, though maps sometimes show it either east or west of the river. Origen, who lived in Israel in the third century, found the name Bethabara in a few manuscripts and thought it was correct. Perhaps under his influence, most manuscripts known to us also have Bethabara, which means “fording place.” No such place is now known either.⁹⁸

Matthew and Mark say John baptized in the Jordan river, Luke says he baptized in all the regions round about the Jordan, that is, in the Jordan valley. The traditional site of Jesus’ baptism is east of Jericho, half way between the Allenby Bridge and the Dead Sea, at the monastery of St. John on the west bank of the river, though some early accounts place the site on the east bank.⁹⁹

Mark begins his biography with Jesus’ baptism, following the introductory words, “Beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.” The Gospels now begin both to overlap and to differ a good deal in the way they tell their stories and in the amount of detail they give. Where they overlap I have chosen one to translate and named the other or others in parentheses. Where they differ sufficiently I have noted the differences.

[Matthew 3:1-10](#) [Mark 1:2-6](#) [Luke 3:1-9](#)

Turning then to Luke: “And in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar [A.D. 28 or 29], Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod [Antipas] being tetrarch of Galilee and his brother [Herod] Philip tetrarch of the regions Ituria and Trachonitis [east of Galilee], and Lysanias [II] tetrarch of Abilene [north of Ituria], and Annas and Caiaphas being high priests, a statement of God came to John, Zechariah’s son, in the desert [of Judea],” that is, on the west side of the Jordan and the Dead Sea.¹⁰⁰

Continuing with Luke (and Matthew and Mark): “And he came into all the region round about the Jordan [south of the Sea of Galilee] preaching baptism [as a sign] of repentance [which repentance he said was a necessary preliminary] for the canceling of sins,¹⁰¹ as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet [40:3-5],

In the desert, prepare the Lord’s road,
make His highways straight [in the wilderness].

Every valley will have an embankment across it
and every mountain and hill a cut through it,
and the curves will become straight
and the rough [will be made] into smooth roads,
and all flesh will see God's salvation."

The last line is an explanation of the road-building imagery that precedes it.

Mark says John fulfilled a prophecy in Isaiah, but what he quotes is a mixture of Exodus and Malachi:

**Behold, I shall send My angel before your face
who will build your road [up to God].¹⁰²**

Matthew tells us John preached that "the kingdom of heaven has come near," words Jesus used later to summarize his own preaching. To understand the dynamism of this message we must remember that "heaven" in this context is a pious substitute for "God," and that Moses had defined God as "a God of truth" (Deuteronomy 32:4). Now truth, being real and eternal, puts anything unlike itself constantly on the defensive. No matter how plausible error, falsehood, a lie, may seem, truth puts it under unrelenting pressure to recognize and thereby destroy itself. Sooner or later, anything that is not true is going to give way. It makes little difference whether we say that error must be recognized before truth can appear or that truth must be recognized before error can disappear, the kingdom of heaven has not drawn near only to stand passively just at hand. Instead, the realm of the real is working its way through every crack in the dam that claims to obstruct it, always by its very nature as truth seeking to sweep away "the refuge of lies," as Isaiah put it. The book of Revelation represents Jesus as saying, "I stand at [your] door and knock."¹⁰³

Continuing with Matthew (and Mark). "John himself had clothes of camel's hair and a leather belt around his waist. And his food was grasshoppers and wild honey.¹⁰⁴ Then Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region round about the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan river, confessing their sins."

Continuing with Luke (and Matthew). "So he was saying to the crowds coming out to be baptized by him, 'Offspring of vipers, who's warned you to flee from the anger that is going to be [upon sin]?'¹⁰⁵ So [to change the metaphor] produce fruits worthy of [that is, appropriate for] repentance. And don't begin to say in yourselves, "We've Abraham as ancestor" [to whom God promised descendants forever], for I say to you that God can rouse up descendants for Abraham out of these stones. And in fact the ax is already lying at the root of the trees [that is, punishment for wickedness is near to come]. So every tree not producing good fruit is cut down and thrown into a fire."¹⁰⁶

Luke 3:10-14

Luke adds the following: "And the crowds were asking him, 'So what shall we do?'

"And he was saying to them in reply, 'Let him who has two tunics share with him who has none, and let him who has food do likewise.'

"And publicans [tax collectors or customs officers] also came to be baptized, and said to him, 'Teacher, what shall we do?'

“And he said to them, ‘Don’t take more than you’ve been ordered to.’ [Publicans had a reputation for extortion.¹⁰⁷]

“And soldiers also were asking him, saying, ‘And we, what shall we do?’

“And he said to them, ‘Don’t shake anyone [down] or blackmail anyone, and be satisfied with your pay [alone].’”¹⁰⁸

Matthew 3:11-12 Mark 1:7-8 Luke 3:15-17

Continuing with Luke (and Matthew and Mark): “And while the people were wondering and questioning in their hearts about John, whether he might be the Messiah, he said in response to all, ‘I, it is true, baptize you in water, but one stronger than I is coming, the thong of whose sandals I’m not worthy to untie. He’ll baptize you in [the] Holy Spirit and fire, whose winnowing shovel [is] in his hand, to thoroughly clean off his threshing floor and gather [all] the grain into his granary, but he’ll burn up [all] the chaff with unquenchable fire.’” [Mark omits “and fire . . . fire.”] In speaking of fiery baptism John was alluding to Malachi’s description of the herald of the covenant between God and man who would purify the hearts of his listeners like a refiner of gold and silver. The unquenchable fire is an extension of the same metaphor: the Christ brings the warmth of divine truth and love to bear on the human character until no flaw remains.¹⁰⁹

Matthew 3:13-17 Mark 1:9-11 Luke 3:18-22

Luke adds, “So urging many other [things] also, he was telling the good news to the people. But Herod [Antipas] the tetrarch, being reproved by him about Herodias [whom he had married], the [divorced] wife of his brother, and about all the evil [things] Herod did, added this also to them all and shut John up in prison.” **But this is to anticipate.**¹¹⁰

Continuing with Mark (and Matthew and Luke). “And it happened in those days [that] Jesus came from Nazareth, Galilee, and was baptized in the Jordan by John.”

Matthew adds, “But John was forbidding him, saying, ‘I’ve need to be baptized by you, and you come to me?’

“But Jesus said to him in reply, ‘Allow [me] now, for it’s right for us to complete every righteous act in this way.’

“Then he allowed him.”

As we shall see, Jesus did not baptize others, although he allowed his students to do so and eventually told them that when they carried on his work without him they were to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, which they understood to mean water baptism that brought with it an infusion of better qualities and new abilities. It would appear that Jesus conceded some value to activities which helped human life approach the divine. Thus he strengthened the institution of marriage even as he taught that it did not exist in heaven. Christians today differ in their understanding of how baptism is to be carried out, but it can be said that Jesus’ coming to John for baptism signified that repentance must come before reformation.

Continuing with Mark (and Matthew and Luke). “And immediately getting up out of the water he saw the heavens divided and the Spirit coming down like a dove on him. And a voice from heaven happened, ‘You are My beloved Son, I delighted in you.’” **Thus was Jesus baptized in Spirit. The incident defines this kind of baptism as a full and present sense of being God’s beloved child, His image and likeness.**

Luke says Jesus was praying when the Spirit descended. He also says, in the usual translation, that the Spirit “descended in a bodily shape like a dove.” The word translated “shape” is *eikon*, from which come “icon” and “iconography.” Those who do not believe God took the form of Jesus, including Christians who take literally the statement in John that “no one has ever seen God,”¹¹¹ may prefer to suppose that the Spirit did not take a bodily form either. In that case, a possible translation is, “descended, to use a physical image, like a dove.” In any case, the dove has become a standard representation of the Holy Spirit in religious iconography.

Footnotes

98. Origen, *Commentary on John*, VI, 140. See the articles in *IDB*, I, 387-388, and *ABD*, I, 703-705, 716-717. In 384 the nun Egeria visited what was then said to be the site, but this location too is in doubt; see *Egeria's Travels*, pp. 108-110, 221, 237-239.
99. Site of baptism: *Egeria's Travels*, p. 111. Kopp, *The Holy Places*, pp. 113-129 and picture 13.
100. The bracketed words “of Judea” are from Matthew 3:1; Luke may have had another area in mind. For Herod [Antipas] and [Herod] Philip see note 110, below. There was only one high priest (Caiaphas), but his father-in-law, Annas, had been high priest and Luke, like John (18:15, 19), gives him his courtesy title.
101. Josephus says John's baptism was “for the purification of the body, supposing still that the soul was thoroughly purified beforehand by righteousness” (*Antiq.*, 18.5.2 in Whiston's translation); the Loeb translation (XVIII, 117) is “as a consecration of the body, implying that the soul was already thoroughly cleaned by right behaviour.” Josephus' works have reached us only through copies made by Christians, and his account of John was suspected by some scholars when suspicion of the biblical narratives was at its height. Suspicion of this passage has died away, apparently (see Lachs, p. 39, n. 3). I see no reason to suspect it myself. In Acts 18:24-19:7 we read of baptized followers of John who were baptized again by followers of Jesus. The rebaptisers defined John's baptism as a baptism of repentance and their own baptism as a baptism for the remission of sins (Acts 19:4; cf. 2:38). We have no record of objections to John as one who forgave sin such as we have to Jesus. Hence the interpretive insertions in my translation. Possibly, however, John was telling those he baptized that they did not now need to offer a sin offering at the temple in Jerusalem, a relatively expensive matter even ignoring the cost of the journey. If so, his doctrine was costing the priests something instead, for they ate part of these offerings (Leviticus 5:13), and that may be why they came to question him. For the cancellation of sins see p. 201.
102. See Exodus 23:20 and Malachi 3:1. Malachi has “messenger” instead of “angel,” but the word is translated “angel” in the Septuagint, which also has “before your face” instead of “before you” in Exodus 23:20. Matthew 11:10 and Luke 7:27 report that Jesus also applied Malachi's prophecy to John, but neither Gospel identifies the source of the quotation and both have “before your face” instead of “before me.” Jesus interpreted Malachi 4:5-6 as referring to John, or at least allowed his followers to do so: Matthew 17:10-13 = Mark 9:11-13 says Jesus gave the interpretation, Matthew 11:14 says he left it up to his listeners to decide. Luke has an allusion to Malachi 3:1 in words spoken by the angel Gabriel to Zechariah (Luke 1:17).
103. Isaiah 28:17. Revelation 3:20. Tradition says the apostle John wrote Revelation. The opening sentence of the book says Jesus is the author and John merely the stenographer.
104. Instead of “grasshoppers” most translations have “locusts.” Locusts are a form that grasshoppers take when there is not enough food for them in their locality and they must migrate. John could have locusts only occasionally, grasshoppers every day.

105. I have consistently used “anger,” “be angry,” and so on to translate the noun *orgê* and the verb *orgizomai*, but others prefer more interpretive renderings. See the discussion in *ABD*, VI, 996.
106. God’s promises to Abraham: see note 16 above. Jesus subsequently rebuked opponents of his who said they were descendants of Abraham (John 8:39-40). In the Sermon on the Mount he used John’s metaphor of the trees, but in a separate parable about a barren fig tree he indicated that God would do all He could to prevent a “tree” from becoming unfruitful (see Matthew 7:19; Luke 13:6-9).
107. Documented in *ABD*, VI, 337-338.
108. “Shake [down]” is *diaseiô*, thoroughly shake (cf. seismic). The verb is usually translated “do violence” or “intimidate,” that is, by shaking someone. I think it gets its meaning from shaking trees to make them drop their fruit, and am strengthened in my belief not only by the translation “rob by violence” in the Revised Standard Version but also by the next verb, *sukophanteô*, which I and others have translated “blackmail,” but which originally meant fig-showing, that is, informing on those who were illegally exporting figs (the English word sycophant has varied from both the original and Luke’s meaning).

The soldiers were probably from the army of Herod’s son Antipas, the southern part of whose territory, Peraea, had the Jordan and the Dead Sea as its western boundary, but the Romans may have taken over the Judean army units as auxiliaries rather than disbanded them when they replaced Herod’s son Archelaus in A.D. 6, and Jews may also have enlisted as auxiliaries. Josephus says that in A.D. 36-37 the army of Vitellius, governor of Syria, included lightly armed soldiers and cavalry, that is, auxiliaries, drawn out of the kingdoms which were under the Romans (*Antiq.*, 18.5.3, Whiston translation; instead of auxiliaries “drawn out of the kingdoms” Loeb [XVIII, 120] says the army “left the kingdoms,” quite a different interpretation); Roman legions were composed of Roman citizens, and at this time, apparently, none was stationed among the Jews; see also “Legion,” *IDB*, III, 110). Some scholars have supposed the soldiers were retired or off duty and were working for the tax collectors. They need not have been Jews: we shall read of a Gentile officer who built the people of Capernaum a synagogue and who asked Jesus to heal his slave.

109. Malachi 3:1-3. Although the words “baptize in” here and in John 1:26, 31, 33, are perhaps a more literal translation, “baptize with” is also a possible meaning (compare the meaning of English “written in pencil”) and is preferred by some.
110. In later life, Herod the Great had four sons, Herod, whose mother was Mariamne; Antipas, who became tetrarch of Galilee and Perea; Archelaus, who became tetrarch of Judea but was soon replaced by Roman governors; and Philip, who became tetrarch of various regions north and east of Galilee (see *ABD*, III, 175; *IDB*, II, 587). The Gospels always call Antipas Herod, as he himself did on his coins (see *ABD*, III, 160) and as Josephus usually does (see *Antiq.*, starting with 18.2.1 [XVIII, 27]; and see *War*, 2.9.1 [II, 16], “Herod surnamed Antipas,” and thereafter Herod). He married Herodias, who had previously been married either to Herod the son of Mariamne (so Josephus, *Antiq.*, 18.5.1 [XVIII, 109-110]), or to Philip (so Matthew 14:3 = Mark 6:17). Josephus says Philip married Salome, Herodias’ daughter by Antipas (*Antiq.*, 18.5.4 [XVIII, 137]). Some scholars seek to keep matters straight by calling Antipas “Herod Antipas” and Philip “Herod Philip.” If the Gospels are independent of one another and of Josephus, as I believe they are, then Matthew and Mark are either correct as to the name of Herodias’ first husband or the error was in their source. See also NIB, VIII, 320. There seems to be no way to decide between the possibilities.

Josephus says (*Antiq.*, 18.5.1 [XVIII, 110, 112]) that Herod (Antipas) planned to divorce his first wife, an Arabian princess, in order to marry Herodias; presumably he carried out his plan after her father went to war against him. Josephus also says (*Antiq.*, 18.5.4 [XVIII, 136]) that Herodias left her

first husband, so that a double divorce made way for the marriage, and that Herodias' action was contrary to Jewish custom, by which he seems to mean that a woman could not divorce her husband, he had to divorce her. As we shall see, women could purchase a divorce from their husbands or agree to provide various services in return for a divorce, or force them to give them a divorce if they found them physically distasteful, as they might become, for example, if they were tanners, whose trade was foul-smelling. Herodias presumably took none of these options.

111. John 1:18.

SECTION I – B4 (John 1:12)

These verses are part of a much larger passage, on which Dearing makes extensive commentary in his book. Please see the book or contact me (doug_mccormick@email.com) for the excerpt if you are interested.

SECTION I – B5 (John 3:16)

NICODEMUS

John 3:1-21

Continuing with John. “There was a man of the Pharisees, Nicodemus by name, a ruler of [person of authority among] the Jews. He came to him [Jesus] by night, and said to him, ‘Rabbi, we know that you come from God [as] a teacher, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God’s with him.’³⁴

“Jesus said to him in reply, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one will be born again he can’t see the kingdom of God.’

“Nicodemus says to him, ‘How can a person who’s an old man [like myself] be born? He can’t go into his mother’s womb a second time and be born, can he?’

“Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one will be born **[not of water and dust or clay but] of water [teaching] and Spirit** he can’t enter into the kingdom of God. What has been born of flesh is fleshly and what has been born of Spirit is spiritual. Don’t be amazed because I said to you, “You [people] must be born again.” The wind blows where it intends, and you hear its voice, but you [Nicodemus] don’t know where it comes from and where it goes. It’s the same with everyone who has been born of Spirit.” **In other words, material life has some awareness of the presence and work of Spirit but does not understand its source and purpose.**³⁵

“Nicodemus said to him in reply, ‘How can these [things] be?’

“Jesus said to him in reply, ‘Are you a teacher of Israel and don’t know these [things]? Truly, truly, I say to you that we speak what we know and testify to what we’ve seen, and you [people] don’t receive our testimony. If I said earthly [things] to you [people, that is, compared the divine Spirit to the wind] and you [people] don’t trust [me], how will you [people] trust if I were to say heavenly [things, that is, as Paul put it, to “compare spiritual things with spiritual”]?’³⁶

“And no one has gone up into heaven except him who came down from heaven, the Son of man. And just as Moses lifted up the [brass] serpent [on a pole] in the desert **[and those who saw it were healed of poisonous snake bites]**, so the Son of man must be lifted up, so that everyone who trusts may have eternal life in him [the Son].”³⁷

Jesus’ words, “no one has gone up into heaven except . . . the Son of man,” appear to be contradicted by his later speaking of Abraham in heaven. Should we assume that he had second

thoughts, or should we understand his words here differently? We may note that many manuscripts and hence the King James Version have “the Son of man who is in heaven.” Also, some of the committee which prepared the Bible Societies’ Greek text felt that this more common reading was correct. If so, then those familiar with spiritual healing are justified in saying that Jesus was here speaking of his true spiritual nature or conscious being, which never left the presence of God and is ever with man, though the man Jesus appeared on and disappeared from earth. Such an interpretation fits Jesus’ words to his apostles at the end of Matthew, “I’m with you always.” We can understand Jesus’ words here then not as separating between the Son of God and other sons and daughters of God but between true spiritual being and seeming earthly being. As Paul put it, “flesh and blood cannot inherit [or, possess] the kingdom of God.”³⁸

Jesus’ words, “the Son of man must be lifted up,” are the first occurrence of an important theme in John’s Gospel (and in his only). It occurs twice more, in chapters 8 and 12. It is quite common for Christians to interpret these words and a later statement in chapter 3, “God . . . gave [the world] His only-begotten Son,” as referring to his crucifixion. We saw in the last chapter that Nicodemus may have known a spiritual interpretation of how the serpent lifted up by Moses brought healing: “Did the serpent keep alive? No; when Israel turned their thoughts above and subjected their hearts to their Father in heaven they were healed.” Jesus may then have meant that contemplation of what his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension proved about God and man would lift his followers’ thoughts above, and subject their hearts to their Father in heaven, the source of eternal life.³⁹

The word I have translated “be lifted up” may also mean “be exalted” or “be recognized for what he is” — indeed, it may have all three meanings at once. The New Testament never says in so many words what Jesus did to bring salvation, and neither does any creed adopted by the Christian church as a whole. Believers may therefore decide for themselves which views they will adopt.

The fact that spiritual healing continues today suggests that Jesus’ example in his life is not much less and perhaps no less important than his death for bringing salvation. As Paul wrote in Romans 5:10, “If, being enemies [of God], we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, by so much the more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his [the Son’s] life.” And as we read in II Timothy 1:8-10, “God . . . saved us and called us . . . not on the basis of our works but on the basis of His own purpose and grace [free gift], given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but now manifested through the appearance of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who not only abolished death but also illuminated life and immortality through the good news [he brought].”⁴⁰

The phrase “born again” has come for many Christians to mean “saved,” in the sense that one has wholeheartedly accepted Jesus as one’s personal savior, a one-time confession of faith that will have its effect when we die and God sits in judgment on our souls. Those familiar with Christian healing as I have defined it think differently. They believe that salvation is the process of recognizing that the child of God has never been and can never be “lost.” The process is not always easy, humanly speaking, but it is part of “the strife of Truth with Falsehood” which truth must win.

The next words in John may be Jesus’, but I think they are more likely to be the author’s. If I am correct, John based what he says here on what Jesus said in Jerusalem at the end of his public ministry, so that the two passages would make another frame around the ministry.⁴¹ In any case, the words here define Jesus’ ministry: “For this is how God loved the world, namely, He gave [it] His only-begotten Son so that everyone trusting in him won’t die but has eternal life.

For God didn't send [His] Son into the world to judge the world but **[to clarify what is right and what is wrong]** so that the world will be saved through him. The person who trusts in him doesn't judge himself, but the person who doesn't trust has already [that is, automatically] judged himself, because he hasn't trusted in the name of the only-begotten Son of God **[that is, he hasn't trusted that he himself is the Messiah's]**. And this is how he's judged himself: the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness more than the Light, for their works were evil. For everyone who makes a practice of wicked [things] hates the Light and doesn't come to the Light, so that his works won't be punished. But the person who does the truth comes to the Light so that his works will be revealed, because they've been done in God." **The meaning of "in God" can be understood from some later words of Jesus, "the Son can't do anything on his own; [he can] only [do] what he sees the Father doing. [What does this fact imply?] First, whatever He does, these [things] the Son also does in the same way."**⁴²

Footnotes

34. "Ruler": *archôn*, a general term but here probably meaning a judge and perhaps specifically a member of the judicial council that met in Jerusalem. See Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, s.v.
35. "Not of water and dust or clay": my interpolation rests on passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls where we find statements that man was made of these (1QHA, cols V, IX, XX; *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, ed. Florentino García Martínez & Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar [Leiden: Brill], 1997-1998, pp. 151, 159, 193).

"Water [teaching]": my interpretation depends on Jesus' words in John 7:37, "If anyone's thirsty [for righteousness], let him come to me and let him drink [learn]." See also Jose b. Jo'ezer's words on p. 97.

The words I have translated "born again" may also be translated "born from above," but, as noted in IB and NIB concerning this passage (John 3:3), "from above" and "again" are alternate meanings of the word in Greek only, not in the language Jesus would presumably have been speaking with Nicodemus. The word "of" in the phrases "born of water," "born of flesh," "born of Spirit," translates the word *ek*, which means "from," "out of." In Hebrew and Greek the words *ruwach* and *pneuma* mean both "spirit" and "wind." Jesus here takes advantage of the fact, just as he did in replying to requests for a sign from heaven by saying that the people interpreted signs from heaven (the sky) daily.

What I have translated as "flesh is fleshly" and "Spirit is spiritual" are literally "flesh is flesh" and "Spirit is spirit." I wished to avoid a possible misunderstanding of the latter words, which might be taken to mean that God and man are the same.

36. "A teacher" is literally "the teacher"; hence TEV paraphrases, "a great teacher." Paul: I Corinthians 2:13.
37. "Gone up into heaven": the question, "who has gone up into heaven?" is found in Proverbs 30:4, where the writer is concerned with finding wisdom, which he treats as synonymous with the knowledge of God. Moses: Numbers 21:6-9.

The order of the phrases in the original, "he who trusts in him will have eternal life," seems to make a sequence "trusts in him," but this sequence occurs nowhere else in the Gospels except Mark 1:15 (what is elsewhere translated "believe in him" or "believe on him" has a different preposition in the Greek, *eis* instead of *en*), so I think that "in him" goes with what follows rather than with what precedes it. Turner similarly says that "in" here and in Mark 1:15 means "in the sphere of" (Moulton, *Grammar*, III, 263).

38. Abraham in heaven: Luke 16:22-23. Bible Society editors: Metzger, pp. 203-204 (John 3:13). "I'm with you always": Matthew 28:20. Paul: I Corinthians 15:50.
39. See John 8:28, 12:32, and 3:16.
40. In *IDB*, I, 312a, C. L. Mitton says, "The 'blood' of Christ is often mentioned [in the New Testament] as of special significance. This cannot mean the physical blood, but rather the life of Christ as it is yielded up to God in complete obedience to his will." But Mitton is not, apparently, thinking of the whole life of Jesus, for earlier he interprets Ephesians 2:13, 18; 3:12 (and other passages) to mean that Jesus' death was a specially important part of his atonement, which others share in by faith in him. For the question of who wrote II Timothy see Chapter I, note 32.
41. John 3:16-21. Compare John 12:44-50.
42. The word I have translated "has judged himself" might be translated "has been judged"; the forms of the reflexive and the passive are the same in this instance. The words "this is how he's judged himself" are literally, "this is the judgment"; the word translated "punished" might be translated "revealed" or "condemned."
"The Son can't do anything": John 5:19.

SECTION II – B8 (John 4:46-53)

FEVER HEALED

John 4:46-54

Continuing then with John. "So he came again into Cana, Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain royal officer [or perhaps a member of the royal family] whose son was sick [of a fever] in Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come from Judea into Galilee, he went off to him and was asking him to come down and heal his son, for he was about to die.⁵⁹

"So Jesus said to him, 'You [people] won't trust [me; that is, you won't take an active part in the healing] unless you'll see signs and wonders.'

"The royal officer says to him, 'Sir, come down before my little boy dies.'

"Jesus says to him, 'Go [about your business], your son lives.'

"The man trusted the word that Jesus said to him and was going [about his business]. And when at last he is going down [to Capernaum] his slaves met him, saying that his son lived. So he asked them the hour in which he got better.

"So they said to him, 'Yesterday between noon and one o'clock the fever left him.'

"So the father knew [the healing occurred] in that hour in which Jesus said to him, 'Your son lives,' and he himself trusted and his whole house [his family and slaves].

"And this [healing of the official's son] again [was the] second sign Jesus did after he came up out of Judea into Galilee."

The King James Version says the father asked his slaves when his son "began to amend." This is certainly a possible understanding of the Greek, in which the verb is in the aorist tense, but the aorist usually denotes a single complete action, not just the beginning of an action, so the more probable meaning is that the father expected an instantaneous and complete healing. In the slaves' reply the verb is again an aorist, indicating that such a healing occurred.

"Destroy fear and you end fever" is a rule in Christian healing within the general rule to always begin by silently reassuring patients that they are exempt from disease and danger. If you wholly

remove the fear the patient is healed. If the patient is a child, the work must be done mainly through the parent's thinking because parents embrace their children in their thinking and impress their own fears upon them. Sometimes when healing children, even restoring them to life, Jesus simply told their parents not to be afraid, but this father had a fixed notion of how the healing ought to be accomplished and a strong sense of personal responsibility for it. He expected Jesus to touch the sick boy in some way and to be present himself in a supervising role when the healing occurred. A fixed notion of this kind is a form of fear, and so Jesus led the man to relinquish it and replace it with trust. Trust plays an active part in healing, even if it is only trust in the healer, as any physician will attest. In spiritual healing, trust in the healer is trust at second hand that God will do the work, for the spiritual healer knows he has no personal power to heal. Jesus was later to say that he could do nothing except what his Father did, and when he was about to leave his apostles to carry on by themselves he told them, "Have trust in God." We may note that the boy's father showed his freedom from fear and burdensome responsibility not just in his words to Jesus but also in not rushing home to Capernaum. Although we do not know the exact location of Cana in Jesus' day, it was at most only about fifteen miles from Capernaum as the crow flies. As the narrative states, the father's road back was downhill, and, as a royal official or person, he would have had an animal to ride, so he could easily have got home the preceding day if he had had any doubts.⁶⁰

It was not necessary for Jesus to go to the child whom he healed because he invoked the healing power of an omnipresent God. Today those who seek spiritual healing and need help late at night sometimes telephone halfway round the world so as not to have to waken someone nearer home to pray for them.

Destroying fear and relying on an ever-present God for the healing are only two aspects, fundamental though they are, of Jesus' healing method. As we proceed we shall see various additional practices and teachings that will give us a fuller picture, particularly of Jesus' love for those he healed and his demand that his followers express love. The Gospels unfold them much the way a novelist unravels a plot, and, as in other great works of literature, the significance of the accumulating details becomes clearer and excites more appreciation on each rereading. It has been pointed out that we may increase our appreciation if we imagine we are friends of those in need and rejoice when Jesus heals them, just as we would if we knew them. Today, too, we are not confined to simple faith or to what Coleridge called "willing suspension of disbelief" as we read. Many do in fact know people who have been healed by spiritual means and rejoice at every evidence of this healing method, new or old.

59. The man is called a *basilikos*, the exact meaning of which is not known. The King James Version calls him a nobleman, but the word suggests some relationship with a king (*basileus*). He could have been Chuza, Antipas' steward, whose wife, Luke tells us, was healed by Jesus and then followed him helping him with her wealth (Luke 8:3, 24:10).

60. The rules of spiritual healing which I cite here and below are set out more fully in Eddy, *Science and Health*, ch. 12. For Jesus' words about not being afraid, see Matthew 14:31 and Mark 5:36 = Luke 8:50; for his words about being able to do nothing on his own see John 5:19, 30 and 8:28, 54; and for his saying to have trust in God see Matthew 8:26 = Mark 4:40 = Luke 8:25 and Mark 11:22.

The Bible gives an earlier example of spiritual healing in which a fixed notion of how it was to be accomplished had to be rooted out, an example, as it happens, that we shall find Jesus referring to in the next few pages. Naaman, a Syrian general who was a leper, came to Elisha's house for healing,

but he expected that Elisha would come out to meet him and, in the King James language, “stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper.” Instead, Elisha sent him a message to go wash in the Jordan seven times. It took considerable persuasion by Naaman’s servants before he would do so. See II Kings 5:1-14.

SECTION III – B10 (Matthew 14:14)

These verses are part of a much larger passage, on which Dearing makes extensive commentary in his book. Please see the book or contact me (doug_mccormick@email.com) for the excerpt if you are interested.

SECTION III – B11 (Matthew 17:14-21)

A LUNATIC OR EPILEPTIC BOY HEALED

Mark 9:14-29 Matthew 17:14-21 Luke 9:37-43

Matthew and Mark give the impression that the next event followed at once, Luke says it took place six days later. Mark gives far more details of it than the other authors.

“And they came to his students and saw a great crowd around them, and scribes arguing with them. And immediately the whole crowd saw him and was amazed [we do not know why] and running to him was greeting him.

“And he questioned them, ‘What were you arguing [about] with them?’

“And one of the crowd answered him, ‘Teacher, I brought my son to you, who has a dumb spirit [Matthew has, “who is moon-struck”], and whenever it seizes him [Luke adds, “he cries out and”] it throws him down and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. [Luke adds, “And it doesn’t go away easily but leaves him rubbed out.”] And I said to your students to throw it out, and they weren’t strong enough.’

“And he said to them [his students] in reply, ‘O distrusting [Matthew and Luke add, “and perverse”] age, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I [be here to] listen willingly to you? Bring him to me.’⁸³

“And they brought him to him. And when the spirit saw him it immediately contracted his muscles and he fell on the ground and was rolling about foaming at the mouth.

“And he questioned his father, ‘How long a time has this been happening to him?’

“And he said, ‘From boyhood, and it would many times throw him into a fire and into water to kill him. But if you can do anything, help us and have pity on us.’

“But Jesus said to him, [As for] “if you can,” one who trusts [has] all abilities.’

“Immediately the boy’s father cried out and was saying, ‘I have trust. Help my distrust [help me to take a more active part in the healing].’

“But when Jesus saw that a crowd was running together, [instead of saying more to the father] he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, ‘Dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and don’t go into him again.’

“And after shrieking and convulsing him a great deal it went out, and he became like a corpse [clear evidence of mental disturbance], so that the rabble said, ‘He died.’ But Jesus, grasping his hand, roused him up and he stood up.”⁸⁴

Luke adds, “And he gave him over to his father. And they were all wondering at the sublimity of God.”

Although Jesus dealt with the malady as a case of demon-possession, because that was the

diagnosis of the time and determined the nature of the fear Jesus had to combat, and although exorcists and some faith healers today would accept that diagnosis, most people today prefer a different understanding of the case. Matthew's term "moon-struck" used to be translated "lunatic," which is Latin for "moon-struck"; nowadays it is translated "epileptic." In this child's case both terms are appropriate, one emphasizing the symptoms of mania — temporary inability or refusal to hear and speak, and self-destructive acts — and the other the convulsions. Epilepsy takes many forms and combinations that are not neatly classifiable and have been given different names over the years. What we are told about this child indicates that he was the victim of what has been called psychomotor epilepsy, a term covering a wide variety of unnatural states and actions.⁸⁵

No other of Jesus' healings exhibits so many aspects of his practice. First, he determined that the father had been fearful for the son since he was small and began at once to replace the father's fear with trust, his regular procedure in child cases. Second, he kept the healing as little public as possible, again his regular procedure. Third, he spoke to the disease by name, "deaf and dumb spirit," as he had done with another tough case, the demoniac at Gergesa. Fourth, he at once challenged the bad mental atmosphere in the place, which had infected his students, and met and mastered the mental opposition of the rabble expressed in their accusing words "He died," just as he had faced down those who had opposed him when he was healing the paralytic let down through the roof. Fifth, he ordered the demon not to reenter the child, something we have not seen before, although Jesus must have spoken in the same way often, either audibly or silently, for what he was doing is recognized today as an important consideration in spiritual healing. Spiritual healing deals tenderly with individuals, but looks beyond single onsets of a disease or disability. Because it attains its results by removing the patient's fear, it cannot say, you are healed this time, come back when the problem comes up again, without being self-contradictory. Yet it must recognize that without specific prevention fears may recur. Therefore spiritual healers today insist mentally or audibly after a healing that it is permanent, irreversible, that the patient's new and clearer view of God cannot be dimmed by any counter-claim whatever. Then, to use Jesus' terminology, the person is really a freedman, freed from fear of a relapse, permanently healed and aware of the fact.

Last, and as always, Jesus was imperturbable. His words indicate that he was absolutely certain nothing could burst through God's inviolable care for man. We should note that Jesus began the healing when he said to bring the son to him, if not before, as we can see from the times he healed people without going to them. Yet when the son was brought, the symptoms manifested themselves in full force. Faced with an aggravation of symptoms, today's Christian healers recognize that the danger is over, that sin or sickness is being brought to the surface and forced to pass away as understanding of man's true spiritual being works its transformation. They then direct their attention less to the disease or sin than to the idea that there can be a frightening crisis, and insist vehemently that God, Spirit, is the only presence and power. The efficacy of this practice today, taken with Jesus' words and actions at other times, strongly suggests that he recognized in the son's very convulsions that healing was under way.⁸⁶

A delayed healing or chronic condition indicates to today's Christian healer — as usual I am using the term as defined at the beginning of Chapter III — that there is a latent fear in his mind or the patient's and perhaps some failure to love all men equally with a pure spiritual affection, or insufficient attention to the general disbelief in or hostility to the Holy Spirit, matters which he then asks God to reveal so that they may be attended to in prayer for himself, if necessary, and in

the healing prayer. Jesus had no latent fear, but we see him uncovering it in the boy's father. Jesus' love is not in question, but we see him explicitly affirming the complete effectiveness of his healing method, saying, "one who trusts has all abilities." Jesus' trust was well fortified by long and consistent experience, but we may be sure, as I have just said, that he made a mental reply as well to those who said the boy had died under his care, excluding their thinking from any influence on his own or his patient's or his patient's father's. All in all, we can be very grateful to Mark for giving us a detailed account of this healing, which today's spiritual healing can then validate as a correct record and be validated in turn as working in Jesus' way.

Continuing as before. "And after he went into a house his students questioned him [individually] when they were alone."⁸⁷

Luke's sources gave him no information about these discussions. Mark's sources told him one or more students asked "[Why] couldn't we throw it out?"

"And he said to them, 'This kind can't go out by anything except by prayer' that is, by daily and hourly communion with God before the call comes to heal, and, if there is an adverse reaction or the healing is otherwise delayed, by continued and confident affirmations of God's all-power on the one hand, and on the other hand of the utter powerlessness and unreality of anything ungodlike. It may seem strange to equate powerlessness with unreality, but as we have said the Old Testament does so repeatedly, saying again and again that the unreality of any gods but the One is proved by their powerlessness.

Matthew gives a different answer to the students' question, "And he says to them, 'Because of your little trust. For truly I say to you, if you've [as large] trust as a mustard seed [the smallest seed they knew], you'll say to this mountain, 'Be moved from here to there,' and it will be moved, and nothing will be impossible for you.'" Trust, too, does not come and go, it is a continuing state of mind that sometimes needs insisting on but always builds on its own results. And note that as Jesus uses the word here the fundamental and ultimate trust is trust in God, not just in His messenger.

As with the differences in the Gospel records of Jesus' explanation of the parable of the sower, we may harmonize Matthew and Mark here if we wish by saying that they record different explanations given to different students, or simply by saying that there is no significant difference between prayer and trust, each implying the other. There is also another way to harmonize them. Essentially all but the two great fourth-century manuscripts of Mark, Sinaiticus (before it was corrected) and Vaticanus, say that Jesus spoke of "prayer and fasting," not just of "prayer." And what he spoke of according to Matthew might be translated "faithfulness" instead of "trust." Prayer may be brief, but fasting needs time to take effect. Both writers, then, may be telling us that Jesus said his students had not been persistent enough in silencing resistance to spiritual power. And so, perhaps, he later gave them his parables of the unjust judge and of the importunate neighbor to reinforce his explanation here. Perhaps, too, we may note that both these parables are humorous and that they tell the spiritual healer, then, to be light-hearted in his persistence.⁸⁸

Footnotes

83. "And perverse" is from Matthew 17:17 = Luke 9:41, and is also found in a few manuscripts of Mark.

"How long shall I [be here to] listen willingly to you" is usually translated "how long shall I put up with you," which seems unlike Jesus to me. See BAGD, s.v. *anechō*, 2.

84. "The rabble": *tous pollous* (accusative of *hoi polloi*), usually translated here as "many" or "all."

85. William Gordon Lennox, *Epilepsy and Related Disorders*, Boston: Little, Brown and Co. [1960], I, 227-

321. The case most resembling the boy's is described on pp. 255-256.
86. See Eddy, *Science and Health*, pp. 168-169, 410, 421 (imperturbable in crisis), 411 (calling the disease by name), 412 (building the parent's trust), 419 (making the healing permanent), 424 (privacy, facing mental opposition).
87. I equate *kat' idian*, "alone," in Mark 9:28 with *kat' idian tois idiois*, "alone individually," in Mark 4:34. Just as there Mark's words account for the differences in the explanations of the parable of the sower, so here they account for the differences in the discussions of the healing.
88. Metzger suggests on the one hand that scribes inserted the words "and fasting" when fasting became popular in Christianity (*Textual Commentary*, p. 101, note on Mark 9:29) and on the other that scribes made Matthew agree with Mark (p. 43, note on Matthew 17:21). It is just as possible that the omission in Mark was caused by an eyeskip from the "and" of "and fasting" to the same word at the head of the next sentence, "And from thence," even though the Greek word there (Mark 9:30) is a contraction (*kakeithen*, i.e., *kai ekeithen*), for *kai* was sometimes abbreviated as a special form of *k* with a long tail.
- The same problem arises with I Corinthians 7:5, where Sinaiticus (before it was corrected), Vaticanus, and a considerable number of other early manuscripts have "prayer" where the rest have "prayer and fasting." Once again Metzger (p. 554) explains the longer text as having been made "in the interest of asceticism." It would be equally easy to ascribe it to harmonization with Mark and Matthew.

For a definition of "fasting" as "refraining from admitting the claims of the senses" just as, in the usual use of the term, one who fasts refrains from admitting the claims of hunger, see Eddy, *The First Church of Christ, Scientist, and Miscellany*, p. 222.

Samuel (second-third centuries) said, "If royalty says, I will uproot mountains, it will uproot them and not go back on its word" (Baba Bathra, 3b [I, 1]). His use of the image differs from Jesus', however.

SECTION IV – B14 (Matthew 16:13-18)

PETER'S CONFESSION

According to Matthew and Mark Jesus now went beyond Galilee into Syria. Luke says Jesus had been praying by himself before they set out. For a time also the three Gospels agree verbally better than before, and I shall follow any two that agree exactly, without specifying which they are, only choosing Mark when they all disagree.

Mark 8:27-30 Matthew 16:13-20 Luke 9:18-21

"And Jesus went out, and his students, to the villages of Caesarea Philippi [now Baniyas or Baniyas, at the headwaters of the Jordan on the eastern slopes of Mt. Hermon.]

"And on the road he questioned his students, saying to them, 'Who do people say I am?' [That is, 'How do they think I am able to heal people's minds and bodies?']

"And they said, 'John the Baptist; and others [say] Elijah, and others one of the prophets.' [In other words, 'You are not yourself doing the work.']

"And he questioned them, 'But who do you say I am?' [Considering the amount of incomprehension Jesus was still finding even in the apostles we may well conclude not only that he rejected the common reports but that he was yearning to be understood on this fundamentally

important matter, namely, how he was able to heal.]

“Peter says to him in reply, ‘You’re the Messiah.’”

Matthew continues: “And Jesus said to him in reply, ‘You’re blessed, Simon Bar Jona [that is, son of Jona or John], because flesh and blood didn’t reveal [this] to you, but my Father in heaven. And I say to you that you’re Peter [Petros] and on this bedrock [petra] I’ll build my congregation, and the gates of Hades [that is, death itself] won’t overpower it. I’ll give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatever you’ll bind on earth will have been bound in heaven, and whatever you’ll loose on earth will have been loosed in heaven [that is, you will always judge in accordance with God’s will].”⁷¹

Binding and loosing do not mean only forbidding and allowing; as the two halves of a dichotomy they represent everything — in this case every kind of decision-making, all kinds of thinking. Jesus meant, “your thoughts will always express God’s will.”

Peter’s words are called his “confession.” We have seen that John records a similar confession when some of Jesus’ students left him: perhaps that was John’s version of the present incident, perhaps Peter repeated himself (we shall shortly find Matthew saying that Jesus repeated his words about binding and loosing when speaking to all his students). I have translated the future perfect tenses of the verbs literally, “will have been bound” and “will have been loosed.” They are usually translated as simple futures, “will be bound” and “will be loosed,” which translation may be thought to mean that a man can control God. I do not believe Jesus taught his students that they could control God, not when he was so careful to say always that he himself did nothing on his own. For the same reason we can say that he was not building his congregation on Peter as a fallible mortal but on the kind of thinking he was expressing.⁷²

Roman Catholics assert that all powers granted to Peter, who, as they understand the matter, was the first bishop of Rome, belong in turn to all his successors, the popes. Eastern Christians and Protestants deny the Catholic assertion. Stirred up, it seems to me, by the possibility that earth can control heaven, there is an immense amount of discussion of this passage as it is usually understood. Almost no one, apparently, has insisted on translating the verbs of binding and loosing as future perfects.

Continuing with the three Gospels as before: “And he rebuked them so that they would not speak to anyone about him.” These orders were for their protection. Telling them not to put their trust at risk was one kind of protection, and Jesus now proceeded to the second kind, preparing the students to protect themselves. He continued this work as long as he was with them, and promised them that the Holy Spirit would finish it.

Footnotes

71. *Petros* as a word for “stone” had gone out of use by Jesus’ time, having been replaced by *petra*. Moulton, *Grammar*, III, 22, citing J. Wackernagel’s *Syntax*, says Peter’s name was not a restoration to use of *petros* but a new formation based on *petra* (*petros* is masculine, *petra* is feminine in grammatical gender). My translation, “bedrock,” depends on the use of *petra* in the parable of the houses on the rock and sand (Matthew 7:24-25). A foundation of ordinary rock will not withstand a flood. Controversy continues over whether Jesus’ pun could have been such in Hebrew or Aramaic, in either of which languages he could have addressed Peter. See *BAR*, XIX:1 (January/February 1993), 68-70, and XIX:3 (May/June), 18-19, 76.

“The gates of death” are mentioned in Job 38:17, “the gates of Hades” in Wisdom 16:13, both times as entrances to the place of the dead. Jesus uses the rhetorical figure “the part for the whole.”

Hades was said to have gates by the Babylonians and Greeks as well as the Hebrews (*ABD*, III, 15). See also note 153 below.

72. Peter's confession in John: John 6:68. Binding and loosing in Matthew: Matthew 18:18.

"Will have been": J. R. Mantey, "The Mistranslation of the Perfect Tense in John 20:23, Mt 16:19, and Mt 18:18," *JBL*, 58 (1939), 243-249, argued for the literal translations "will have been bound," etc., and they may be found in the New American Standard Bible and in Charles B. Williams' and J. B. Phillips' translations of the New Testament. Phillips has a special note to Matthew 16:19 and 18:18; see *The New Testament in Modern English*, rev. student ed., New York: Macmillan [1984], p. 552. J. Duncan M. Derrett, "Binding and Loosing (Matthew 16:19; 18:18; John 20:23)," *JBL*, 102 (1983), 112-117, argued that the future perfect can and should be translated as a simple future, as it usually is. When the verbs are translated as futures, the passages become bones of contention between Catholics, who take them as scriptural authority for papal supremacy, and Protestants, who do not. The continuing controversy may be traced in the pages of *JBL*, e.g., 104 (1985), 233-250, 297-300. *ABD* has an article on the subject (I, 743-745).

SECTION V – B15 (Matthew 16:21)

JESUS SAYS HE WILL BE KILLED

Mark 8:31-33 Matthew 16:21-23 Luke 9:22

Continuing as before. "And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer in many ways, and be thought unsatisfactory by the elders and the high priests and the scribes, and be killed, and the third day rouse up [from death]." Mark adds, "And he was speaking the word plainly [that is, without any metaphors, because there were only students present]."⁷³

"And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him."

Matthew gives Peter's words: "[God will be] gracious to you, Lord; this [fate] won't be for you."⁷⁴

"But he turned back and seeing his students he rebuked Peter, and says, 'Go behind me, Satan, for you're not thinking the [thoughts] of God but the [thoughts] of men.'"

A rebuke always has a potential for improving the one rebuked. Those who regard Jesus here as casting Satan out of Peter recognize the reformatory purpose of his words, though his students apparently did not, as we shall see later.

73. "In many ways": taking *polla* as an accusative of general reference (Robertson and Davis, par. 342(k), p. 222, citing the same word in James 3:2).

74. "[God will be] gracious to you": *hileôs soi*, usually rendered "Be it far from you," or "God forbid."

SECTION V – B16 (Mark 16:9 ... 20)

APPEARANCE TO TWO STUDENTS

Mark 16:12-13 Luke 24:13-35

Continuing with "Mark": "After these [things], he appeared in another form to two of them, as they were walking and going into the country. And these went off and announced [it] to the rest, and [just as they had not trusted Mary Magdalene] they did not trust those either."

The full story is in Luke. “And that same day, you see, two from among them were going to a village seven and a half miles distant from Jerusalem, the name of which [was] Emmaus, **[We do not know its exact location.]** And they were talking together about all these [things] that had occurred. And it happened [that] while they were talking together and discussing, Jesus himself drew near and was going with them, but their eyes were being ‘held’ **[from looking closely at him by their own concerns]** so that they did not know him.¹⁴⁰

“And he said to them, ‘What words are these that you’re throwing back [and forth] to each other as you walk?’”

“And they stood still, sad. And one, Cleopas by name, said to him in reply, ‘Are you only a stranger [to] Jerusalem, and don’t know what has happened in it in these days?’¹⁴¹

“And he said to them, ‘What sort of [happenings]?’”

“And they said to him, ‘About Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and [about] how our high priests and rulers gave him away to judgment of death and crucified him, and we were hoping that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. But even in addition to all these [things], this day is the third since these [things] happened, but some women, too, of our group astonished us, who were early at the tomb, and when they didn’t find his body, came saying they had seen a vision of angels who said he’s alive. And some who were with us went off to the tomb and found it exactly as the women had said, but didn’t see him.’ **[We cannot be sure that Luke gives us the men’s very words, but he certainly gives us a sense of their confusion of thought in these rambling sentences.]**

“And he said to them, ‘Fools, and slow of heart to trust all that the prophets spoke. It was necessary for the Messiah to have suffered these [things], wasn’t it, and to enter into his glory?’ And beginning with Moses and [continuing] with all the prophets he thoroughly explained to them in all the Scriptures, the [passages] about himself.”

Any or all of the scriptural passages the Gospel authors applied to Jesus may have come to them from what he said on this occasion. No doubt he explained the significance of the Psalms he had quoted on the cross. Other passages that would have been particularly relevant at this time would have been Deuteronomy 18:15, God’s promise that a prophet like Moses would come; Isaiah 52:13-52:12, describing the sufferings of God’s servant; Jonah 1:17, telling of Jonah’s three days and nights in the fish; and Hosea 6:2, which says God will raise up Israel after two or three days.

Continuing with Luke. “And they neared the village to which they were going, and he acted as though he was going farther, but they constrained him, saying, ‘Remain with us, because it’s toward evening, and the day has already declined.’”

“And he went in to remain with them. And it happened, as he reclined with them [eating], [that] he took bread and blessed [it], and having broken [it] was distributing [it] to them. And their eyes were opened, and they recognized him; and he became invisible to them. **[By Pharisaic precepts, because they were reclining instead of sitting, they would not each have said his own grace but have chosen one to say grace for all. Perhaps it was Jesus’ assumption of the role of host that “opened their eyes.”]**¹⁴²

“And they said to one another, ‘Our heart was burning in us, wasn’t it, as he was speaking to us on the road and as he was opening the Scriptures to us?’”

“And they stood up the same hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven gathered, and the [ones] with them, saying, ‘The Lord’s really been roused up and appeared to

Simon.’ [This is our only record in the Gospels of this appearance to Peter. Paul mentions it, as we shall see, but because Luke was a follower of Paul they are probably not independent witnesses.]

“And they were telling the [things that had happened] on the road, and how he was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread.”

Footnotes

140. Seven and a half miles is literally sixty stadia. See Chapter IV, note 9. For possible locations of Emmaus see Wilkinson, p. 163, and *ABD*, II, 497-498.

141. Cleopas: perhaps the same as the Clopas mentioned on p. 227 (see *ABD*, I, 1063-1064, 1066).

142. Grace at meals: Berakoth, 42a (VI, 4).

Mark 16:14-18

“Mark” continues, “And afterwards he appeared to the eleven themselves as they reclined [eating], and reviled their distrust and hardness of heart, because they did not trust those who saw him after he had been roused up.”¹⁴³

“Reviled” is a strong word, used by Matthew to describe how those crucified with Jesus spoke to him. Those familiar with spiritual healing will recognize that Jesus was not addressing his students but, as “Mark” says, the distrust and hardness of heart that had come upon them. Experience with spiritual healing shows that to personalize sin infixes it in its victim and makes its eradication harder. The sinner must be roused to a sense of the sinfulness of what he has been doing, for no one will abandon what seems natural and good to him, but he must then be further roused to an awareness of his true being as a child of God.

There were two reasons why it was vital for Jesus to destroy the sins of doubt and hard-heartedness that had begun to take root in his students. First, if unattended to, these sins would have led the students to doubt the evidence of their senses, blinding them to his final proof of what he taught. Then, second, the students would have lost their recognition that his resurrection was the logical outcome of what he taught about God, man and immortality. A cause needs its effect just as much as an effect needs its cause to be recognized for what it is.

At this point in “Mark” comes the insertion found in a single manuscript, but one of the earliest we have: “And those [students] defended themselves, saying, ‘This age of lawlessness and distrust is under Satan; it doesn’t permit the impure, [who are] under the [power of evil] spirits, to lay hold of God’s truth [and] power. For this reason, reveal your righteousness now,’ they said to Christ.

“And Christ replied to them, ‘The limit of the years of Satan’s power has been reached, but other afflictions are at hand, and I’ve been handed over to death for the sake of those who sinned, so that they may return to the truth and no longer sin, so that they may inherit the spiritual in heaven and the immortal glory of righteousness.’”

The usual text of “Mark” continues, “And he said to them, ‘Go into the whole world and preach the good news [that the kingdom of heaven has drawn near] to the whole creation. And he who trusted and was baptized will be saved; but he who doesn’t trust will be condemned [to a life of continuing experience of evil]. And these signs will follow the [ones] who trust: in my name [because they’re the Messiah’s] they’ll throw out demons; they’ll speak with new tongues [that is, their tongues will speak a new language]; they’ll take up serpents in [their hands], and if they’ll drink any deadly [poison] it won’t hurt them. They’ll put [their] hands on the sick, and

they'll recover.” Those familiar with spiritual healing regard Jesus' command as imperative and his promises true for all time and in every place, so that they too are imperatives. They see spiritual healing also as proof that “Mark” gives a true teaching of Jesus; they identify the new language as the pure language of Spirit, which heals spiritually; they extend the meaning of “serpents” to every ill that flesh is heir to; and they understand laying on of hands as a metaphor for bringing an awareness of God's power.¹⁴⁴

Luke and John give fuller narratives, but they differ with “Mark” and each other. If we wish we may harmonize them by supposing that they supplement each other, at least in their accounts of what Jesus said. First Luke.

Footnotes

143. In the fourth and fifth centuries it was said that the apostles met where they had eaten the Last Supper (*Egeria's Travels*, pp. 38-39).

144. See Eddy, *Science and Health*, pp. 38, 328; *Miscellaneous Writings*, pp. 24-25.

ASCENSION

Mark 16:19-20

If the witnesses to Jesus' resurrection had difficulties in expressing what they had felt and seen, how much more the witnesses to the final disappearance of his body, since called his ascension, when he rose above his students' comprehension. The Gospel authors who saw Jesus ascend do not describe the event — supposing they were, as tradition says, the apostles Matthew and John. As we have just seen, Matthew ends without even saying anything about the return of the apostles to Jerusalem. John, as we have seen, says Jesus told Mary Magdalene at the tomb that he was going to ascend, and instructed her to tell his students, but John also ends without describing the return to Jerusalem or Jesus' disappearance. Peter, too, who was certainly present, makes no reference to Jesus' ascension in his preaching as Luke records it in Acts, nor does he do so in his own writings.¹⁶⁴

“Mark” does not describe the ascension either, but says, “So then after the Lord spoke to them [the apostles], he was brought into heaven and sat on the right of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with [them] and confirming the word with following signs.”¹⁶⁵

Thus “Mark” ends by citing the messianic work of the Church as proof of its teachings.

Luke did not attempt to resolve the differences in the accounts he garnered but put one in his Gospel and the other in Acts. Once more, then, we lack an account that can be called historical, this time of the climactic event in Jesus' career. We must ourselves decide what happened.

Footnotes

164. Peter's preaching: Acts 2:14-40, 3:12-26, 4:8-12, 10:34-43. Peter's letters: many scholars feel that II Peter was not written by the apostle but in the next generation (they take 3:3-4 not as prophecy but as a statement of fact, i.e., they believe prophecy is impossible).

165. “Brought”: *anapherô*. The verb is regularly translated “carry up,” and one meaning of *ana* is “up,” but I believe the sense here is metaphorical.

The narratives in Acts, and Galatians 2:9, say that Peter became the head of the church and visited various places in the coastal plain of Judea. Galatians 2:11 says he visited Antioch in Syria.

Galatians 2:9 says that John was associated with Peter in leading the church. Acts 12:2 says that Agrippa I killed John's brother James. The Muratorian Fragment (about A.D. 190) says Andrew and John went to Ephesus on the west coast of Turkey. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3.1 (Williamson trans., p. 107), says Peter went to many parts of Turkey and then to Rome, that Andrew went to Ukraine, and that Thomas went to Iran. Eusebius also says that Thaddeus went to Iraq (1. 13, 2. 1 [pp. 67, 73]); that Philip went to Hierapolis in west central Turkey (3.31 [p. 141]), and that Bartholomew went to India (5.10 [pp. 213-214]). Traditions recorded later say that John was a prisoner, not just a visitor, on Patmos in the Aegean, that John's brother James went to Spain, that the other James went to Egypt or Iran, that Andrew went to Greece and southern Albania, that Thomas died in India, that Bartholomew also went to Iran, Iraq, and various parts of Turkey, that Thaddeus also went to Syria and Arabia, that Matthew went to Alexandria in Egypt, and that Simon the Zealot went to Egypt and Britain or to Iran and Iraq. Some of the traditions had begun to conflict by Eusebius' time, and scholars today are very doubtful about the accuracy of any of them. All the apostles, by one account or another, died violently, but Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III, i, says of John only that he "died at Ephesus."