



## Excerpts from *The Great Physician* For study related to the Bible Lesson July 19 - 25, 2010

Introductory Note – *The Great Physician*, Vols 1 & 2 were written by Vinton Dearing, 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. These excerpts have been compiled by Doug McCormick. The paperback two-volume set of books is available for purchase on amazon.com and a hardback study edition will be available in August through Amazon.com and at [vintondearing.com](http://vintondearing.com).

### SECTION II – B5 (John 1:14,17)

#### John 1:1-18

John's Gospel begins by explaining Jesus' messiahship, giving his spiritual ancestry, so to speak.<sup>33</sup> "In [the] beginning was the Word [God's expression of Himself], and the Word was with God [inseparable from God], and the Word was God [as a ray of light is one with the sun, sustained by its source]. This [Word] was with God in [the] beginning. [Note that "beginning" refers to logical, not to temporal, priority. There was never a time when God did not exist; instead His self-expression is His primal quality, without which He would not exist.] Everything happened through him [the Word] and nothing that happened happened without him." Hence Christian idealists, knowing also that Jesus said later that God is Spirit and the only good, feel justified in their conviction, a tenet of spiritual healing as I have defined it in Chapter III, that true existence is spiritual and without evil.<sup>34</sup> This John proceeds to say in his own way.

"In him [the Word] was life, and the life was people's light. And the light shines in the darkness and the darkness was not understanding it [because false material existence cannot comprehend true spiritual existence]. A man named John [the Baptist] happened to be sent from God. He came for testimony, so that he might testify about the light, so that all might trust by means of it [for, as the Psalmist had said, we see light by God's light<sup>35</sup>]. He was not the light, but [was sent] so that he might testify about the light. It was the true light coming into the world, which lights everyone [dispels falsehood by revealing truth, and illuminates everyone's consciousness of God, which is what Jesus meant when he said "I'm the light of the world"<sup>36</sup>].

"He [the Word] was in the [spiritual] world, and [this] world happened through him, and the [physical] world did not know him. [In the physical world] he came to his own [places] and his own [people] did not embrace him [as they should have], but as many as received him [accepting, understanding and practicing what he taught], to them who trusted in his name [because they were the Word's<sup>37</sup>] he gave authority [by what he taught them] to become children of God, who were [in fact] not born from bloodlines nor from fleshly intent [that is, need or desire] nor from human intent but from God.

"And the Word became flesh [practical in human experience] and pitched his tent in us [through the message of Jesus, who embodied it, teaching and demonstrating the nature of God and of the world which happened through the Word]. And we saw his glory, glory like that of the Father's only offspring [a spiritual being], full of grace [God's free gift of spiritual understanding] and truth [God's laws governing the universe]." We remember that Jesus said his life purpose was to testify to the truth, that is, to give full

evidence that God's laws are ever in effect.

“And John [the Baptist] testifies about him [Jesus as God's expression], and has shouted, saying, ‘This was [the one] of whom I said, “He who comes after me has a higher rank than I,” for he was in existence [as a spiritual being] ahead of me [as a mortal].’

“For we have all received out of his fullness [of grace and truth], and [a new] grace in addition to [an old] grace. For the Law [defining righteousness and saying that righteousness is a spiritual instinct in us] was given through Moses; the [new] grace and the truth [the understanding of God's laws and how to apply them for the good of all] happened through Jesus Christ.” On another occasion Jesus said, “If you'll remain in my word,” that is, practice what I teach, without addition or subtraction, “you're truly my students, and you'll know the truth and the truth will free you [from slavery],” slavery, that is, to anything unlike the truth.<sup>38</sup> Continuing with John here: “No one has ever seen God; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he explained [Him].”<sup>39</sup>

### Footnotes

33. This fundamentally important passage has been understood in different ways over the ages. For example, the text I have translated differs slightly from the text used by the King James translators. See also the detailed discussion by Wilbert F. Howard, *IB*, VIII, 463-480, or Newman and Nida, pp. 5-27. Trinitarians in particular argue that “the Word became flesh” means that Jesus was the incarnation of the Godhead, or God the Son. They feel also that John records several statements by Jesus which assert his incarnation. I feel on the contrary that in these places Jesus is making it particularly clear that he is not God, but then I belong in the Unitarian camp.

It is extremely difficult to determine from the available evidence whether the first Christians were Unitarians or Trinitarians. Being Jews, they would have come to Jesus and his students as proto-Unitarians; did they become Trinitarians at their baptism in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit? *ABD*, III, 401, concludes that they probably did not.

The emperor Constantine, who convened the council of Nicaea in 325, is commonly thought of as having made Christianity the official Roman religion. In fact, he only guaranteed it toleration. It was Theodosius' activities beginning in 380 which led to a vote by the Roman Senate in 388 that (Trinitarian) Christianity was the state religion. Although pagan practices were forbidden, pagan beliefs were not and another thirty years passed before no pagans could be found. And although the Council of Nicaea is commonly thought of as having determined for the whole Church that Jesus was God, in fact the counter doctrine continued to be preached. In fifteen years it “would be well on the way to becoming the dominant theology of the Eastern [Roman] Empire” (Richard E. Rubenstein, *When Jesus Became God: The Epic fight over Christ's Divinity in the Last Days of Rome*, New York: Harcourt Brace & Co. [1999], p. 84) and it remained predominant there for another forty years. The Germanic tribes on the borders of the Western Empire maintained it until the seventh century. Rejection of the Trinity began again among European Protestants almost as soon as there were any. The present Unitarian-Universalist Church traces its roots as an organization to seventeenth-century England, although a specifically Unitarian congregation was not organized until the end of the eighteenth century. Unitarianism in the United States centered first in New England where in the nineteenth century it was taught at Harvard Divinity School (now nondenominational) and preached by Ralph Waldo Emerson. The church today requires no particular beliefs in its members so long as they love truth, serve their fellow man, and worship God. When I use the term “Unitarian” in a general sense in this book, however, I mean the doctrine that Jesus was not God nor just a man but supremely Godlike in every way.

34. I use “idealist” in the philosophical sense, “one who believes that the essential nature of reality lies in consciousness, who believes that God is Mind.” See also pp. 148-149. “God is Spirit”: John 4:24; the only good: Matthew

19:17 = Mark 10:18 = Luke 18:19. God's expression: See James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson [1984], Greek dictionary of the New Testament, p. 45, word 3056; and NIB, IX, 520a. God cannot exist without expressing himself: Eddy, *Science and Health*, p. 470. Mind is not Mind nor is a mind a mind without ideas. In scriptural language, ineffective gods are not gods (see II Kings 19:18, II Chronicles 13:9, Isaiah 37:19, 41:21-24, Jeremiah 2:11, 16:20, Galatians 4:8). True existence is spiritual: see Eddy, *Science and Health*, pp. 231-232.

The Bible Societies' Greek text of John 1:3-4 puts the words "that happened" with the next sentence, making "What happened was life in him." See Metzger, pp. 195-196, with a demurrer by Metzger. NRSV puts the newer translation in its text and the older in a footnote.

35. Psalm 36:9.

36. John 8:12; similarly 12:46.

37. My insertion here (and similar insertions where "in the name of" occurs elsewhere) reflects the words of Mark 9:41, "in my name, because you're the Messiah's," that is, you affirm that his presence, power, and teaching come from God. One of the dictionary definitions of the phrase "in the name of" is "because of," as in "reform in the name of progress." Others may prefer the other dictionary definition, "by the authority of," as in "open in the name of the law."

38. "If you'll remain in my word": John 8:31-32. For Paul's rephrasing of what John 1:14-17 says about receiving grace see Romans 5:6-15.

## **SECTION II – B6 (Matt 9:35)**

### WIDESPREAD TEACHING AND HEALING

Matthew 9:35-39

**Continuing with Matthew.** "And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom [namely, that it had drawn near], and healing every disease and every infirmity. And when he saw the crowds, he pitied them because they had been distressed and scattered like sheep not having a shepherd.<sup>205</sup>

"Then he says to his students, 'The harvest [is] certainly great, but still the workers [are] few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.'"

**As we shall see, Luke says Jesus used the same words to begin his ordination sermon, so-called, to seventy-two of his students, so he and Matthew may have had a written source for them, but because the idea would seem to be easy to remember in the same words each time, we may instead have independent testimony to what Jesus said, as well as further testimony that he repeated himself.<sup>206</sup>**

#### **Footnotes**

205. "Had been distressed and scattered": literally, "had been skinned and thrown away"; I take the verbs as pleonastic past perfects.

206. See Luke 10:2. See also John 4:35-38.

## **SECTION II – B7 (Matt 13:2 ... 48)**

Matthew 13:1-53 Mark 4:1-34 Luke 8:4-18, 13:18-21

**I shall now follow Matthew unless the others agree against it or supplement it. The parables are:**

**Sower**

Lamp (not in Matthew)  
Seed Growing Secretly (Mark only)  
Wheat and Weeds (Matthew only)  
Mustard Seed (elsewhere in Luke)  
Leaven (not in Mark; elsewhere in Luke)  
Explanation of Wheat and Weeds (Matthew only)  
Hid Treasure (Matthew only)  
Pearl of Great Value (Matthew only)  
Net (Matthew only)

I shall leave my comments to the very end, except to say that all the parables explain aspects of the kingdom of God and some are prophecy.

“On that day [the day Jesus’ mother and brothers came] Jesus came out of the house and was sitting by the Sea [of Galilee]. And great crowds were assembled to him, so that he got into a ship to sit down, and the whole crowd stood on the shore. [Presumably this was the same place where he had taught from a boat before, the bay just west of Capernaum.] And he spoke many [things] to them in parables, saying:

“A sower went out to sow [grain], you see, and in the sowing, some [seeds] fell beside the road [on which the field abutted], and the birds came and ate them up. And others fell on stony ground where [the sowing] did not have much earth, and it sprang up immediately because it had no depth of earth. But when the sun came up it was scorched, and because it didn’t have a root it was dried up. And other [seeds] fell into the thorn bushes [that hedged the field] and the thorn bushes grew up and choked them. And others fell on good earth and gave fruit, some a hundred[fold] and some sixty and some thirty. He who has ears, let him hear [that is, you will understand my parables if you attune your thought to their spiritual meaning].’

“And his students came and said to him, ‘Why do you speak to them in parables?’

“And he said to them in reply, ‘It’s been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but it hasn’t been given to them. For whoever has, it will be given to him, and he’ll have more than he needs, but whoever has not, even what he has [Luke says “seems to have”] will be taken from him [he can’t insure himself against misfortune]. This is why I speak to them in parables, so that when they see they don’t see, and when they hear they don’t hear or understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah [6:9-10] is fulfilled, which says,

In hearing, you [people] will hear and not understand  
and seeing, you will see and not know,  
for this people’s heart was thickened  
and they heard heavily with [their] ears  
and they closed [their] eyes  
lest they will see with [their] eyes  
and hear with [their] ears  
and understand with [their] heart  
and turn back [from evil]  
and I [God] will heal them.”

God’s words, dictated when he called Isaiah to be a prophet and speak for Him, have been interpreted as a promise that He would nevertheless prevent people from understanding what Isaiah was to say. Note however that Isaiah then asked, “How long will You do this?” and God replied, “Until almost all of them have

lost their lives and the remnant has learned by suffering” (vss. 11-13). That is, God was speaking of the results of Isaiah’s labors, not their purpose: “When you tell people what they don’t want to hear they will close their minds against you, being unwilling to change their ways, but eventually some will remember and reform.” Familiarity with spiritual healing supports the idea that Jesus understood his quotation in this latter way. He continued as follows:

“But blessed are your eyes, because they see, and your ears, because they hear. For truly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous [men] desired to see what you see and didn’t see [it], and to hear what you hear and didn’t hear [it].<sup>177</sup>

“So hear, you [students], the parable of the sower. Everyone who hears the word of the kingdom and doesn’t understand it, evil [or, the evil one] comes and seizes what has been sowed in his heart.<sup>178</sup> This is what was sowed by the road. And what was sowed on the stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy. But he doesn’t have a root in himself, but is transitory, and when suffering or persecution comes because of the word, he’s immediately shocked [thrown off base]. And what was sowed into the thorn bushes, this is he who hears the word, and the worries of the time and the love of wealth choke the word and it [or, he] becomes unfruitful. But what was sowed on the good ground, this is he who hears the word and understands it, who also bears fruit and produces, one a hundred[fold], one sixty, one thirty.”

**Mark (and Luke) continue:** “And he was saying to them [the people], ‘A lamp doesn’t come [into the house only] to be put under the eight-quart measure or under the bed, does it? [It comes] to be put on the lamp stand, doesn’t it? For it isn’t concealed except so that it will be shown [later], nor did it happen to be stored away except so that it will come to view. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear [that is, again, you will understand my parables if you attune your thought to their spiritual meaning].’

“And he was saying to them, ‘Regard what you hear. [Luke omits the next sentence.] In the measure you measure by, it will be measured to you and put to your account. For whoever has, it will be given to him, and whoever doesn’t have, even what he has will be taken from him.’” **The last sentence is found earlier in Matthew.**

**Mark alone has the following.** “And he was saying, ‘Thus is the kingdom of God: as a man will throw a seed on the ground, and sleeps and rouses up night and day and the seed sprouts and extends itself he knows not how. The automatic earth bears fruit, first the grass, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. And when the fruit will allow, immediately “he thrusts in the sickle because the harvest has come” [a quotation from Joel 4:13, referring there to a day when God will rescue Israel from their oppressors].

**Matthew alone has the following.** “He put another parable before them, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven was likened to a man who sowed good seed in his field, but while people sleep, his enemy came and sowed weeds in the middle of the wheat and went off. [The exact weed is not known; darnel, an annual grass that grows in grain fields, has been suggested; a similar grass is called cheat, because of its likeness to wheat plants. “Tare,” the translation in the King James Version, is strictly a kind of vetch instead of a grass.]<sup>179</sup>

“But when the grass [that is, the wheat plants] sprouted and produced fruit, then the weeds appeared too. And the slaves of the master of the house came to [him] and said to him, “Sir, you sowed good seed in your field, didn’t you? So where does it have weeds from?”

“And he said to them, “An enemy did this.”

“And the slaves say to him, “So do you intend that we’ll go off and gather them?”

“And he said, “No, lest in gathering the weeds you’ll uproot the wheat along with them. Let both grow up together until the harvest, and in harvest time I’ll say to the reapers, ‘First gather the weeds and tie them into bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my storehouse.’”

**Continuing with Matthew (and Mark and Luke).** “He put another parable before them, saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and sowed in his field. Although it’s indeed the smallest of all the seeds, still when it will grow it’s the largest of the plants and becomes a tree, so that “the birds come and take shelter in its branches.”’” **[Jesus was rather loosely quoting Psalm 104:12.]**<sup>180</sup>

**Mark omits the next paragraph.** “He spoke another parable to them. ‘The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three seahs of meal **[about one and a quarter bushels, or roughly 55 pounds]** until the whole was leavened.’”

**Luke omits the next paragraph.** “Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables and he was speaking nothing to them without a parable, so that the statement [that came] through the prophet **[Asaph, in Psalm 78:2]** would be fulfilled, saying,

I will open my mouth in parables,  
I will proclaim that which has been hidden  
from the foundation of the world

**[or rather, says the Christian idealist, from materialism’s eclipse of idealism in general thinking].’**

**Matthew alone has the rest.** “Then he let the crowd go **[or, left the crowd]** and went into the house. And his students came to him saying, ‘Make clear to us the parable of the weeds in the field.’”

“And he said in reply, ‘The one who sows the good seed is the Son of man. And the field is the world. And the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom. But the weeds are the sons of evil [or, the evil one]. The enemy who sowed them is the devil. And the harvest is the perfecting [or, end] of [the] age, and the harvesters are angels. So just as the weeds are gathered up and burned up with fire, so it will be at the perfecting [or, end] of the age. The Son of man will send his angels and they’ll gather out of his kingdom all those things that shock and those who do iniquity, and they’ll throw them into the fiery furnace. Weeping and gnashing of teeth will be there. Then the righteous will shine out like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear **[that is, once more, you will understand my parables if you attune your thought to their spiritual meaning].**”

“The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure that has been hidden in a field, which a man finds and hides [again], and goes, out of his joy, and sells all he has and buys that field.

“Again the kingdom of heaven is like a man, a merchant, seeking fine pearls. And when he found one pearl of great value he went off and sold all he had and bought it.

“Again the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was thrown into the sea and that brought up together [sea creatures] of every kind, which when it was filled they pulled to the shore and sat down and gathered the good [ones] into a basket, but the rotten they threw out. **[Jesus’ listeners may have thought of the “rotten” creatures as those forbidden by the dietary laws, such as catfish or (if they had fished in the Mediterranean or rivers running into it) eels, but he himself rejected those laws, and in any case they probably sold catfish and eels to Gentiles instead of throwing them away.]** So it will be at the perfecting [or, end] of the age. The angels will go out and separate the evil from the midst of the righteous and will throw them into the fiery furnace. Weeping and gnashing of teeth will be there.

“Did you understand all these [parables]?”

“They say to him, ‘Yes.’”

“And he said to them, ‘For this reason every scribe instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like a man who is master of a house and who throws out of his treasure [things] new and old.’”

“And it happened [that] when Jesus finished all these parables he went away from there.”

The Gospels differ a good deal in the degree to which they support one another in recording these parables. At one extreme is the parable of the leaven, where Matthew and Luke agree exactly, except that they use different words for “hid” (Mark does not have this parable). At the other extreme is the explanation of the parable of the sower, where the wording in each Gospel is almost entirely different, though the general meaning is the same in all three.

We can suggest a reason for the differences in the explanation of the sower when the parable itself almost always finds at least two of the Gospels agreeing word-for-word. Mark concludes his account of the parable set by saying that “when they were alone he was explaining everything to his students individually.” This I interpret to mean that there was one version of the parable of the sower, which everyone heard and which the Gospels record, but many separate explanations of it, which the students heard individually and some of which the Gospels record. Those who are interested in all Jesus’ words may then like to read the explanations given in Mark 4:14-20 and Luke 8:11-15.

In one respect the explanations differ because the records of the parable differ. Matthew says, as we have seen, that the good seed brought forth “some a hundred[fold], some sixty and some thirty.” Mark has the numbers in reverse order, and Luke has only “a hundredfold.” Some readers suppose that these differences reflect different attitudes on the part of the Gospel authors, but I do not.

The kind of word-for-word agreement we find in the parable of the sower continues into the account of why Jesus used parables. Here Mark and Luke agree that he said he used parables “so that” (where Matthew has “because”) those seeing would not see and hearing would not hear. Matthew’s word “because” better fits my understanding of why Jesus used parables, but the agreement between Mark and Luke indicates that they represent Jesus’ words correctly.

Because the parables build on common human experience, other writers had expressed themselves in similar ways. Jesus the son of Sirach had said that “the children of the ungodly shall not bring forth many branches, but are as unclean roots upon a hard rock” (Ecclesiasticus 40:15) and Job had replied to his three friends, who said he had sinned, that if he had done any wrong then “let thistles grow instead of wheat” (Job 31:40). These passages may have drawn Jesus’ attention to the possibility of developing his parable of the sower.

Ezekiel had said in a parable that Israel would be a cedar in the shadow of whose branches all birds would dwell (17:23). In the book of Genesis we read that when God and two angels in the form of three men came to have lunch with Abraham he told his wife Sarah to take three seahs of fine meal and make bread for his guests (18:6). Daniel tells how Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were thrown into a fiery furnace (3:21). David’s last words were a warning that a king must be just, in which case he would be “as the light of the morning, when the sun rises” (II Samuel 23:4). Proverbs urges that we seek for wisdom as for hid treasures (2:4). Habakkuk had compared righteous men in the grasp of the wicked to fish taken in a net (1:15).

Since the three men in Daniel emerged from the furnace unharmed, Jesus would not seem to be alluding to or quoting that book but using the same words by accident. The other passages and one or two like them may have given him hints for others of the parables here.

The teaching, “whoever has, it will be given to him, and he’ll have more than he needs, but whoever has not, even what he has will be taken from him [he can’t insure himself against misfortune],” we shall find repeated among Jesus’ last instructions to his students and illustrated by two very similar parables, of the talents in Matthew and the minas in Luke. The parable of the houses built on rock and sand, which closes the sermons on the mount and the plain, makes the same point. It would appear that Jesus felt it wise to repeat this very important warning often.<sup>181</sup>

Jesus’ next words to his students, beginning “Blessed are your eyes, because they see,” emphasize that they were living in exciting times and receiving supremely valuable teaching. Mark omits these two

sentences and Luke has them in another place, the second sentence, beginning “For truly I say to you,” being nearly word-for-word the same as Matthew’s, and therefore possibly drawn from the same written source. My heart warms to the words every time I read them, so I like to think Jesus repeated them.<sup>182</sup>

Other repetitions are to be found in the parable of the lamp and the measure-for-measure warning that follows it. Only Mark and Luke give the parable here, and only Mark gives the warning but Matthew had given both in the Sermon on the Mount and Luke had given the warning in the Sermon on the Plain and gives the parable again among Jesus’ teachings on his last journey to Jerusalem with his students. The parable is really a semi-parable, since it does not tell a full story as the other parables do. It would appear to have been one of Jesus’ favorite metaphors, but we may notice that he used it for a slightly different purpose each time. Here he makes the point that his parables can be understood if thought about, in the Sermon on the Mount he adds, “Likewise shine your light before people, so that they’ll see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven,” and the last time he uses it in a warning against trying to cloak bad motives.<sup>183</sup>

Three of the parables, the sower, the lamp, and the wheat and the weeds, end with some such words as “he that has ears to hear, let him hear [that is, again, you will understand my parables if you attune your thought to their spiritual meaning].” In a humble desire to “have ears,” then, we may conclude that Jesus’ explanation of the sower does not exhaust its meaning, which is fundamentally that we should strive to be the good ground for the seed, his teaching, we should refrain from imparting that teaching to those who are not good ground, and we should pray for a nurturing atmosphere for it. Likewise the parable of the wheat and the weeds tells us not just to wait until the end of time for the destruction of all that is earthly and evil but to root out whatever is ungodlike and unspiritual from our thoughts and actions as soon as we can, in the meantime patiently insisting to ourselves that good and evil never really mingle in us or in others.

I had always thought of the enemy as coming at night to sow the weeds until I saw “The Devil Sowing Tares,” by Jan Wilders, in the picture gallery in Kensington Palace in London. Wilders portrays the farmer and his hands asleep under a tree while in the background the devil, with a neat little horse’s tail, is sowing the weeds in the field. Pictures of biblical scenes all include interpretation, and I thought this one was particularly interesting. It alerts us to the general problem of being asleep at the switch.

Many who read the parable of the seed growing secretly will recognize they have had good experiences that came about not by accident but in demonstration of some biblical truth already accepted and hidden away in consciousness. The parable of the leaven has a similar meaning, but adds that a person’s and all humanity’s thinking will be completely transformed.

The parable of the leaven is especially interesting not only in the fact that almost every important word, “took,” “hid,” “meal,” “whole,” can be seen to have a second meaning, but also in the fact that the leaven itself may represent both good and evil. Jesus used leaven in a bad sense, for example, when he warned his students against the “leaven of the Pharisees.” The two possibilities are not mutually exclusive, both may be present in the same set of words, though we may have to read the words twice to separate the meanings in our minds.

Taking leaven in a bad sense, the parable says that the kingdom of heaven comes when evil has worked all its wiles and been completely exposed and destroyed. Taking the leaven in a good sense, the parable says that our vision of ourselves as mere dust which will return to dust, a false vision of life, substance and intelligence, will be completely changed. By that interpretation, the three measures of meal may be three modes of human thinking, perhaps in science or ethics, theology and medicine, all of which came within Jesus’ purview (for his mighty works, such as walking on the water, challenge the findings of science), and all of which, when recognized as modes of divine law, have their place in the realm of spiritual reality.

Two of the parables, the wheat and weeds and the net, end with the words “weeping and gnashing of teeth will be there,” that is, in the fiery furnace to which the evil are to be sent. The net is the final parable in

the series, so its message is the climactic one. Only Matthew has these two parables, and their closing phrase is found mostly in his Gospel. We have seen it closing his version of the healing of the centurion's slave, and shall see it closing the parables of the royal wedding, the good and bad slaves, and the talents. Luke has the phrase in the parable of the narrow gate. Christians differ as to what Jesus meant.<sup>184</sup>

Those who have carefully considered the implications of a life after death, and the question of whether or how God can be both just and loving, have arrived at conclusions that we may divide into three classes, each having subdivisions that I need not go into here. Jacques Le Goff has traced the development of two of these conclusions as follows. Division of the hereafter into heaven and hell long preceded Christianity among the Persians, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans and Jews, that is, in almost all the cultures from which the first Christians came. Some of the Jews, however, had come to believe that those who were not irretrievably bad could be rescued from hell by the prayers of the righteous.<sup>185</sup>

For the general reader today, the most accessible statement of this new belief is in II Maccabees 12:32-45, where we read of a battle in which the Jews who died were found to have been wearing talismans instead of trusting in God for their safety. Those who buried them nevertheless prayed for their souls. We are not sure when II Maccabees was written, but a guess of about 100 B.C. would satisfy most scholars. The battle in question took place about 160 B.C.

We do not know how or when Christians began to adopt this belief in postmortem rescue of people who had been neither wholly good nor wholly bad, nor how or when it took the form of a belief in a third place, purgatory, where these people would go for a time instead of to hell. The belief of purgatory was well established in the thought of St. Augustine, who converted to Christianity in 387 and who is the first theologian known to us to have cited II Maccabees, but it was not until 1254 that Pope Innocent IV made it official doctrine for western Christians and 1274 that the Council of Lyon confirmed it. It never developed in eastern Christianity, in the west various forerunners of Protestantism refused to accept it, and Protestants agree that Luther was right to reject it.

Those Christians who believe only in heaven and hell see Jesus as teaching that doctrine in the parables we have mentioned and another we shall be reading, Lazarus and the rich man. Those who believe also in purgatory do not see him as denying its existence.<sup>186</sup>

A third conclusion about the parables has been reached by those who deny any fundamental reality to evil on the grounds, first, that it is inconsistent with an all-good, all-present, and all-powerful God or Spirit, as taught by Jesus, and second, that spiritual healing flourishes when undertaken with this understanding of the nature of things. In a universe created and maintained by such a deity, say these thinkers, there is no place for either hell or purgatory as they are usually conceived; rather, individuals work their way out of hellish or purgatorial states of mind both here and hereafter in a struggle with their more or less stubborn or lingering beliefs in the reality of evil and suffering. For such thinkers, every day is judgment day, Jesus' teaching and example being always before us; the kingdom of heaven is within, as Jesus taught; and the fiery furnace of the parables is the same as the fiery baptism John said Jesus would bring; it is evil that is destroyed in this fire, for which the evil people in the parables are metaphors.

As Paul put it, "Each person's work will become evident; for the day will disclose it, because the day reveals itself in fire, and each person's work, what its quality is, the fire will assay. If a person's work that he has built remains, he will receive payment. If a person's work is burned down over his head, it will be lost, but he himself will be saved, and the way [he is saved is] through fire. Don't you know that you're God's temple and the Spirit of God houses in you?"<sup>187</sup>

Two minor matters. Matthew's reason for saying that "I will open my mouth in parables" is a quotation from a prophet is because in II Chronicles 29:30 Asaph is called a seer (as is the prophet Samuel in I Samuel 9:18). We can see that the owner of the field where the treasure had been hidden had not hidden it himself,

for he did not remove it before the sale. J. D. M. Derrett was, I believe, the first to point out that therefore, by Jewish law, the treasure did not belong to the owner of the field but to the one who moved it. Presumably the man who found the treasure was an employee of the seller, so that if he had moved the treasure before he bought the field he would have taken possession of it for his employer.<sup>188</sup>

### Footnotes

171. The oldest parable in the Old Testament is Jotham's fable in Judges 9:8-20.
172. John Dominic Crossan, *In Parables: The Challenge of the Historical Jesus*, New York [etc.]: Harper & Row [1973], esp. pp. 7-22. An earlier and influential book of the same kind is Joachim Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, 2d ed. rev., New York: Scribner [1972]; a more recent one is Bernard Brandon Scott, *Hear Then the Parable*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press [1989].
- Samuel Johnson's discussion of fable is to be found toward the end of his "Life of John Gay" in the *Lives of the English Poets* (1779-1781, and often reprinted). What I say of fables and parables here repeats some of what I said in my edition of Gay's *Poetry and Prose*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974, II, 620-621, 632.
173. The Pharisee and the publican: Luke 18:9-14. The houses on the rock and the sand: Matthew 7:24-27 = Luke 6:47-49.
174. John 3:3-12, 11:11-14.
175. Trench: first paragraph of his Chapter II.
- Audience research: J. Arthur Baird, *Audience Criticism and the Historical Jesus*, Philadelphia: Westminster Press [1969]. Among exceptions to the rule are Jesus' words about the sign of Jonah, which we have just read, where he explained his metaphor to his opponents.
176. "The Cock and the Fox," II. 816-818.
177. Instead of this paragraph Mark 4:13 has the following: "and he said, 'Don't you know this parable, and how will you know all the parables?'" This question has been interpreted as an outburst of exasperation, but need not be. Jesus has just said (Mark 4:11), "The mystery of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to those outside everything is in parables, and as a result," and he quotes Isaiah 6:9-10. Paraphrased, "Your inborn spiritual sense is unclouded, but others must relearn spiritual things from analogies they remember." A better understanding of Jesus' question then is, "If you don't understand this parable you won't be able to understand the others I tell you (so you must learn to interpret them; to start you off, I'll explain this one)," which he does. There may have been an element of exasperation in Jesus' question, but if there was it is better to think of it in terms of the parable's explanation, that is, as exasperation at Satan's attempt to extend his reign by making the students' good ground unfruitful.
178. The translation "the evil [one]" rather than "evil" is supported by Mark, which has "Satan" here, and Luke, which has "the devil." Luke adds, "so that [the person] won't believe and be saved."
179. *Fauna and Flora of the Bible*, pp. 194-195, agrees that darnel (*lolium tremulentum*) is the weed in question and says its seed grains are poisonous. If the identification is correct, the latter fact adds an element to the meaning of the parable.
180. It is now known that orchids have smaller seeds than mustard does.
181. Parable of the talents: Matthew 25:14-30. Parable of the minas: Luke 19:12-27. Parable of the houses: Matthew 7:24-27 = Luke 6:47-49.
182. Luke 10:23-24.
183. Sermon on the Mount: Matthew 5:15, 7:2. Sermon on the Plain: Luke 6:37. Last journey: Luke 11:33.
184. Gnashing of teeth: Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 24:51, 25:30; Luke 13:28.
185. Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer, Chicago: University of Chicago Press [1984]; another ed., London: Scolar Press, 1984.

186. Lazarus and the rich man: Luke 16:19-31.

187. I Corinthians 3:13-16.

“Built”: in the preceding verses Paul has spoken of himself as a wise contractor who has laid a foundation, Jesus Christ, upon which others build houses. “Down over his head”: I give the fullest possible force to the prefix *kata*, “down.”

“And the way [he is saved is]”: *houtôs de hôs*, literally, “and [this is] how [he is saved], as if,” and therefore possibly meaning “as if he were escaping from a fire.”

188. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament*, pp. 1-16.

### **SECTION III – B10 (John 3:21)**

#### 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.’<sup>34</sup>

“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.**<sup>35</sup>

“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”]**?’<sup>36</sup>

““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]**.”<sup>37</sup>

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."<sup>38</sup>

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.<sup>39</sup>

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]."<sup>40</sup>

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.<sup>41</sup> 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.”<sup>42</sup>

### 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 IV – B14 (Matt 9:2-8)**

A HEALING OF PARALYSIS

Mark 2:1-12 Matthew 9:1-8 Luke 5:17-26

Continuing as before with Mark as our base. “And when he entered into Capernaum again after [some] days it was heard that he is in the house. And many were gathered together, so that there was no longer room even in front of the door, and he was speaking the word to them. And they come bringing a paralytic to him carried by four [stretcher-bearers]. And not being able to bring [the man] to him because of the crowd, they [carried him up the stairs on the outside of the house,] lifted off [the upper surface of] the roof where he was and after setting aside [the under-boarding] let down the stretcher on which the paralytic was lying.<sup>116</sup>

“And Jesus, seeing their trust, says to the paralytic, ‘Child, your sins are taken away.’

“But [the man remained inert, for] there were some of the scribes sitting there and arguing [against Jesus] in their hearts, ‘Why does this [man] speak this way? He’s defaming [God]. Who can take away sins except God alone?’”

Luke says more specifically that the men were Pharisees who taught law and that they came from all the villages of Galilee and Judea and Jerusalem. Most manuscripts of Luke add the words, “and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.” Scholars today prefer the manuscripts which add instead, “and the Lord’s power was [there] for him to heal.”

It is important to recognize that Jesus’ words had not immediately healed the paralytic, to understand why, and to observe Jesus’ response. The mental opposition to him among the onlookers had to be faced up to and faced down.<sup>117</sup>

Continuing with Mark. “And Jesus, knowing immediately in his spirit that they are arguing in themselves thus, says to them, ‘Why do you argue these [things] in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, “Your sins are taken away,” or to say, “Rouse up and take your stretcher and walk”? But so that you’ll know that the Son of man has authority to take away sins on the earth,’ he says to the paralytic, ‘I say to you, rouse up, take your stretcher, and go to your house’ [thus raising him from his inertia and, by removing him from the hostile atmosphere, preventing a relapse].

“And he roused up and taking his stretcher at once he went out in front of all, so that they are all amazed and glorify God, saying, ‘We never saw anything like this before.’”

Luke adds that the paralytic glorified God. Matthew’s and Mark’s omission of the paralytic’s gratitude does not necessarily mean Luke is wrong, but we shall see Jesus himself pointing out that only one in a group of ten lepers gave God thanks as soon as they were healed.<sup>118</sup>

Notable in the healing of the paralytic is Jesus’ statement that the paralysis and sin were taken away in the same manner. He did not thereby mean that every disaster was caused by sin, for Luke tells of the following conversation at a later time. “There were some . . . who brought him news about the Galileans whose blood Pilate mixed with their sacrifices. [We do not know anything more about this massacre.] And he said to them in reply, ‘Do you think that these Galileans were sinners beyond all the Galileans because they suffered these [things]? No indeed, I say to you, but unless you repent you’ll all die in a similar way. Or those eighteen on whom the tower fell in Siloam [a part of Jerusalem inside the southeast corner of the city wall] and killed them [another event of which we have no other record], do you think that they were sinners beyond all the people living in Jerusalem? No indeed, I say to you, but if you don’t repent you’ll all die similarly.’” And, as we shall see, when his students thought sin might have caused a certain man to have been born blind, he said that sin was not the cause in that particular case.<sup>119</sup>

Sin neglected or nurtured is not merely a cause of disaster, it prevents spiritual healing. As the man who had been born blind put it, “God doesn’t hear sinners. If this [Jesus] weren’t a man of God he couldn’t do anything.” One who would heal by the Spirit does not have to be so free of sin as Jesus was, but he cannot deliberately break or even intend to break one part of God’s law at the same time that he seeks to bring another part into operation. The same is true of the patient. If sin has caused his trouble, he must give it up by himself or with the aid of the healer before healing can come; to erase the effect the cause must be erased.<sup>120</sup>

In the case of this paralytic, Jesus had healed the man of sin, the cause of his paralysis, but was interrupted before he removed the effect. This was not the last time that Jesus had to come to the defense of his healing method in order to heal, and spiritual healers today sometimes find it necessary also. When one has taken up a case with the same love and trust in God that Jesus had, then delay in the healing is a symptom of the disease and must be taken up along with the others, this particular symptom indicating that the patient’s mind, of itself or under the influence of other minds, is resisting the healing. There is no formula for the healer’s response in such cases, as we can see from the other times when Jesus had to respond. A spiritual healer known to me was praying for a patient whose family telephoned several times to say, “He’s no better.” When the healer responded, “He’s no worse, is he?” the healing came. Spiritual healings are proofs, not tests, of God’s care for His beloved creation, proofs that He never tires of or in healing the sick. Who would not come vigorously to the defense of this great fact, dispelling any illusion that would appear to blot it out?

We shall also see many other examples of Jesus’ removing his patients from atmospheres of thought inimical to him by sending them away or by taking them aside or both. He did not always do so, but he clearly preferred to. In the same way, a spiritual healer today will prefer that his patient be under the care of like-minded persons, but will not refuse to help someone who has been hospitalized or imprisoned. In Jesus’ case, also, as we have said, he was sheltering his patients from attempts to undermine their healings.

#### Footnotes

116. “Stretcher-bearers”: the terms used by the Gospels for what the bearers carried are different in each and have been differently translated by others. Matthew uses *klinê*, Mark uses *krabaton*, Luke uses *klinê* and *klinidion*, i.e., small *klinê*.

Commentators generally agree that Luke, who says the roof was tiles, gives a less accurate account of it than Mark. In their view the roof must have been clay over wood (see *IDB*, II, 657), or wood with perhaps branches or rushes packed with mud above (see *IDB*, I, 210-211), like most of the older roofs in Israel today. For tile roofs in Galilee see Yizhar Hirschfeld, *The Palestinian Dwelling in the Romano-Byzantine Period*, Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing, 1995. *NIB*, IX, 122, says “Luke’s departure from Mark . . . suggests that Luke envisions a different style of house, and apparently a different social setting.” Tiles “would have covered more affluent Hellenistic homes” than “a Palestine peasant’s house.” The Romans roofed their barracks in Jerusalem with tiles.

Mark’s words for what the men did to the roof are *apostégazô* and *exorussô*. The first means “remove the roof,” but I stress the prefix *apo-*, which means “from, away from.” The second may mean “dig out,” but it may also mean “set aside” (see *BAGD*, s.v., which supposes the surface of the roof was both dug out and set aside so as not to fall on those below). Thus if we were to translate *exorussô* as “break up,” we could say it too refers to the upper clay surface of the roof only, after which the boards below were laid aside. It is difficult to imagine that the householder would have allowed his roof to be destroyed. I therefore suppose that Mark meant the roof was so constructed that its tiles could be lifted off and set aside. For another example of breaking through a roof, an occasion when the owner was in no position to object, see Josephus, *Antiq.*, 14.15.12 [XIV, 459].

117. I was led to my interpretation of this delayed healing by a discussion between two experienced Christian

Science practitioners about spiritual healing.

118. Lepers: Luke 17:11-19.

119. The Galileans and the tower of Siloam: Luke 13:1-5 (and see the discussion of this passage, pp. 367-368). Man born blind: John 9:1-3.

120. "God doesn't hear sinners": John 9:31; see also vs. 16. Eddy, *Science and Health*, pp. 365-366, 404-407.

#### **SECTION IV – B15 (Matt 16:24,25)**

Mark 8:34-9:1 Matthew 16:24-28 Luke 9:23-27

**Continuing as before.** "And he called the crowd to him with his students and said to them, 'If anyone intends to follow after me, let him deny himself and take his cross [suffer condemnation] and follow me [for the following reasons]. First, whoever intends to save his life will lose it, but whoever will lose his life for my sake will save it. Second, what does it benefit a man to gain the whole world and to forfeit his life? Third, what should a man give in exchange for his life? Fourth, whoever is ashamed of me and my words the Son of man will be ashamed of him also when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.' [Matthew adds, 'and then he'll give to each according to his deeds.']<sup>75</sup>

"And he was saying to them, 'Truly, I say to you that there are some of those who stand here who won't taste of death until they'll see the kingdom of God has come in power.'"

Matthew gives some of the foregoing teaching both here and in Jesus' ordination sermon for the apostles, which we read earlier. In the earlier circumstance, it seems likely that Jesus was alluding to the crucifixion of Jewish revolutionaries when he spoke of taking one's cross; here it seems more likely that he was alluding to his own death, though his listeners would have understood the allusion only in retrospect.<sup>76</sup>

Matthew also gives Jesus' last words above as, "until they'll see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." It would seem that the earliest Christians expected Jesus to reappear soon after his ascension to heaven and establish the kingdom of heaven on earth. Therefore some scholars believe Jesus meant to be understood literally when he said some should not taste of death, that is, they believe he was mistaken in his prophecy. It seems to me better to suppose that Jesus was once again speaking metaphorically about the kingdom of God and saying that his students were to have a very full and clear sense of God's presence and enter on careers of healing and regenerating all who came to them. As we shall see, Jesus spoke later about one of his students in a way that some interpreted as meaning the man would not die, an interpretation which John specifically refutes.<sup>77</sup>

#### **Footnotes**

75. The words "First," "Second," "Third," and "Fourth" are all simply "For" in the original, the collective meaning of which I have sought to bring out in my insertion, "for the following reasons." In the first reason Mark 8:35 has "for my sake and the sake of the good news" that the kingdom of God has drawn near; and in the fourth Mark 8:38 has "whoever in this adulterous [i.e., unfaithful] and sinful age." The bracketed words at the end are from Matthew 16:27. The words "give to each according to his deeds" are sometimes thought of as a quotation, but the idea is fundamental to the biblical concept of a just God, so they are more likely an accidental parallel to the parallels between Psalm 62:12, Proverbs 24:12 and Ecclesiasticus 35:19. "Will" in this passage is the English auxiliary verb for the future tense, not a synonym for the verb "intend" (*thelô*).

76. Ordination sermon: Matthew 10:38-39.

77. Jesus expected to return soon: I Thessalonians 4:15, Revelation 22:20. A student expected not to die: John 21:20-23.

I explain on p. 589 why some scholars accept prophecy as genuine if it fails of fulfillment and reject it as spurious

if it does not.

## **SECTION IV – B16 (Matt 20:27,28)**

### TRUE GREATNESS

Matthew 20:20-28 Mark 10:35-45

In the following incident Mark says James and John came to Jesus, Matthew says it was their mother (Salome). Scholars who see Jesus' words as a rebuke then sometimes argue that Matthew must be retelling Mark's narrative in such a way as to make the apostles look better. As I explain in Chapter VII, I reject such reasoning, but that leaves me in the present instance unable to decide which Gospel is correct. Jesus' words are very nearly the same in both, increasingly so as the dialogue proceeds, so that they may come from the same written source. I take Mark as my base.

“And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come to him, saying to him, ‘Teacher, we intend you to do for us whatever we’ll ask you.’

“And he said to them, ‘What do you intend me to do for you?’

“And they said to him, ‘Grant to us that we’ll sit one on your right and one on your left in your glory.’

“And Jesus said to them, ‘You don’t know what you’re asking. Can you drink the cup I drink, or be baptized with the baptism I’m baptized with?’

“And they said to him, ‘We can.’”

The use of the word “cup” for life experience is found many times in the Hebrew Bible. It is a neutral word: we read of the cup of God’s wrath and of the overflowing cup of refreshment given by God the Shepherd to His sheep. We may wish then to understand Jesus as meaning that before his followers could share in his triumphs they would have to make the same renunciations and undergo the same trials as he did. It will be recalled that Jesus was baptized by God in the Spirit as well as by John in water. More recently, as we have seen, he had said he had “a baptism to be baptized with,” meaning a life work to complete. I see “baptism” as another neutral word, or rather a word with the same double promise as “cup.”<sup>183</sup>

Continuing as before. “And Jesus said to them, ‘You’ll drink the cup that I drink and you’ll be baptized with the baptism that I’m baptized with, but to sit on my right or left is not mine to give, but [is] for those for whom it’s been prepared [by my Father].’<sup>184</sup>

“And when the ten heard, they began to be angry about James and John.

“And Jesus calling them to [him] says to them, ‘You know that those seeming to rule the nations act as their lords, and their great [men] exercise authority over them. But it’s not so among you, but whoever intends to be great among you will be your helper, and whoever intends to become first among you will be everyone’s slave. For even the Son of man didn’t come to be helped but to help, and to give his life a redemption from slavery for many.’”

I take “give his life” to mean, “devote himself throughout his life to showing others how they might be like him.” Many, of course, believe that the phrase means “give up his life on the cross,” as we have seen Milton saying in *Paradise Lost*. They see Jesus as fulfilling a prophecy in Isaiah 52:13-53:12 about a servant of God whose sufferings would bring healing to the nation.

#### Footnotes

183. Baptism: Luke 12:50.

184. “For those for whom” translates a single word, *hois*. The bracketed phrase following is from Matthew 20:23, and may be Matthew’s explanatory insertion rather than Jesus’ own words. We need to remember, however, that

Jesus may have explained himself. He was, after all, a teacher.

The positions of honor on the right and left hand come from the Old Testament, but must have been found in every society, arising from the need for a ruler to have his best troops and advisors around him (see II Samuel 16:6; I Kings 22:19; I Chronicles 6:33 [Heman], 39 [Asaph on his right], 44 [Ethan on his left]; II Chronicles 18:18; Nehemiah 8:4).

### **SECTION VI – B20 (Matt 5:5)**

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 VI – B23 (Matt 18:2-5)**

#### WHO IS GREAT

Matthew 18:1-5 Mark 9:33-37 Luke 9:46-48

**Matthew, Mark and Luke all have the following incident. Mark's account is longest, and when he gives Jesus' words Luke agrees closely, though rearranging the sequence of ideas somewhat. I therefore follow Mark.**

“And they came into Capernaum, and when they were in the house he was questioning them, ‘What were you arguing about on the road?’

“And they were silent, for on the road they [had] challenged each other as to who [was] greatest.

“And when he was seated he called the twelve and says to them, ‘If anyone intends to be first, he shall be the last of all, and a helper of all.’ And taking a child, he put it in the midst of them and putting his arm around it he said to them, ‘Whoever receives one of these children in my name [that is, because they are the Messiah's] receives me. And whoever will receive me doesn't receive me but Him who sent me.’”

**Matthew says Jesus spoke instead of the need for humility on earth to attain greatness in the kingdom of heaven. Mark and Luke, however, say he spoke thus when he was asked to bless some children. Matthew also has the latter incident, but the agreement between Mark and Luke indicates that they are right as to what Jesus said on both occasions.<sup>92</sup>**

#### **Footnotes**

92. Matthew 19:13-15 = Mark 10:13-16 = Luke 18:15-17.

### **SECTION VI – B24 (John 8:31,32)**

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.