

“Ἀμήν I Say to You”:

**Faith, Understanding and Speaking the
Truth in Matthew's Gospel**

Carmen E. Anderson

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Theology
at the University of Otago
Dunedin, New Zealand

December 2013

Acknowledgements

This is for my King, who loves me and never leaves my side.

My sincere thanks to Professor Paul Trebilco for your understanding, patience and expertise. Thanks to Dad for your prayer, steadfastness and encouragement during the hard goings-on that might have overwhelmed me in the last few years. Thanks to all who dared to ask me how my thesis was going when it barely featured on my priority list, in particular Steve Graham, whose belief in my ability – from recommending I upgrade from a one-year diploma to a degree, then that Bachelor's to a Master's, and until now – has been quietly heartening to me.

Thank you Simon for wanting to marry me! Let's do that.

Abstract

The concept of telling the truth has, to date, received surprisingly scarce treatment within the area of biblical studies. This thesis makes a move towards filling that scholarly gap by addressing just one aspect of the broader issue. With the chosen context of the Gospel of Matthew, limited to the world of the text, and using a combination of literary and historical critical methods, this study draws back to primarily investigate the inner condition(s) required for successful truth-speaking in Matthew. It asks, “How are people able to tell the truth, as opposed to lie, according to Matthew's text?”

To begin this process, “Righteousness: Outflow of Actions in the Context of the Kingdom” offers an introductory treatment of δικαιοσύνη and righteousness concepts in Matthew. A behavioural focus and Kingdom context are noted, and the Matthean approach of presenting actions (including speech) via the imagery of fruit and natural overflow of the heart is offered as vital to comprehending Matthean righteousness. Matthew 5:33-37 is discussed as a depiction of outflowing righteousness in the particular area of truth-speaking. On this groundwork, “Believing εἰς ἐμέ: Faith as the Right Response to Authority” then leads towards the 'how' by considering the oft-neglected notion of faith in Matthew. Jesus' God-sourced and inherent authority is discussed, as the one teaching and representing the Kingdom; the Greek ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν formula is analysed, too, as an illustration of Jesus' portrayal as one whose *words* are trustworthy and correct. Faith is confirmed as the right correlative not only to the authority of God the Father, which is assumed, but also to the authority of Jesus, the one who comes from God to fully live and *speak* in accordance with the righteousness of the Kingdom.

A further, vital element of the truth-telling process appears in “Faith *and* Understanding: The Imagery of Vision and Hearing.” Via his favoured imagery of vision and hearing, Matthew ties together the two hugely important concepts of (1) faith, the role of which has been affirmed, and (2) understanding. Matthean examples of sensory imagery that relate to this pairing are highlighted for analysis, including that in the parables discourse of chapter 13. It is clearly demonstrated here that this Gospel text sees understanding as coming through faith commitment. Subsequently, faith and understanding are seen in practice in the text through “Following the Disciples: Tracking Our Theme in the Disciples' Journey.” The disciples are presented as the most beneficial focal point for the progressing argument; their story is explored and analysed as it pertains to the faith-understanding link, especially in their portrayal as ὀλιγόπιστοι, and concrete demonstration is given of their development and mixed success in this area – even in their final appearance in Matt 28.

Having prepared the way by becoming familiar with and evaluating the disciples in general, the actions of Peter specifically are analysed in “Narrowing Down to Our Most Apt Example: Peter's Ability to Speak the Truth in 26:69-75.” Peter is argued to be a well-grounded Matthean representative of the disciples. Next, a positive example of truth-telling is provided in Jesus' approach to his trial (26:57-68), followed by a distinctly less favourable discussion of Peter's failure in the same (26:69-75). Analysis of Peter's “trial” draws together the argument to this point, and uncovers the entire faith-understanding-truth-telling activity at play: Peter's lack of faith and hence lack of understanding lead to a lack of ability to speak the truth. This study finally revisits the uncertain portrayal of the disciples in Matt 28, and briefly addresses what hope there is for them (and for Peter) as potential truth-speakers at the close of the text.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
1 Introduction.....	1
1.i Focus on Matthew and truth-speaking.....	2
1.ii Selected aspects that will not receive attention.....	3
1.iii Preliminary methodological considerations.....	5
1.iv What else has been written touching on this subject.....	7
1.v Outline of discussion to come.....	10
2 Righteousness: Outflow of Actions in the Context of the Kingdom.....	14
2.i Δικαιοσύνη and Jesus and John the Baptist.....	15
2.ii 5:17 and the fulfilment of the law.....	17
2.iii Righteousness and the Kingdom of heaven.....	21
2.iv Revealing true humanity.....	23
2.v Righteousness as fruit overflowing the heart.....	25
2.vi Excursus on hypocrisy.....	30
2.vii Matthew's Jesus on speaking from the overflow: 5:33-37.....	35
2.vii.i Opening up the fourth “antithesis”.....	37
2.vii.ii Straightforward speaking: “Yes, yes” and “No, no”.....	40
2.viii Locating this within the thesis' argument.....	42
3 Believing εἰς ἐμέ: Faith as the Right Response to Authority.....	44
3.i Jesus and authority.....	45
3.i.i Ἀμήν, λέγω ὑμῖν (σοι).....	49
3.i.ii The right way in Matthew: a faith response to Jesus.....	58
3.ii Locating this within the thesis' argument.....	60
4 Faith <i>and</i> Understanding: The Imagery of Vision and Hearing.....	61
4.i Vision and hearing as recurring motifs.....	61
4.i.i Narrowing to vision in particular.....	62
4.i.ii Vision and hearing in chapter 13.....	67
4.ii Locating this within the thesis' argument.....	74
5 Following the Disciples: Tracking our Theme in the Disciples' Journey.....	76
5.i Matthew's favourable portrayal?.....	76
5.ii “Follow me”: Jesus as model.....	78
5.iii The disciples as most helpful and relevant model for the current purpose.....	81
5.iv The disciples' journey of faith and understanding throughout Matthew.....	83
5.iv.i The Matthean disciples as ὀλιγόπιστοι.....	83
5.iv.ii A high point: the confession of chapter 16.....	88
5.iv.iii Back down to earth: transfiguration and beyond.....	90
5.iv.iv That final scene: worship and doubt.....	92
5.v Locating this within the thesis' argument.....	95
6 Narrowing Down to Our Most Apt Example: Peter's Ability to Speak the Truth in 26:69-75.....	97
6.i Peter as archetypal or representative disciple.....	97
6.i.i Peter as the “first” and most prominent disciple.....	98

6.i.ii	Matthew's parallel characterisation of the disciples and Peter.....	99
6.i.iii	Matthew's use of Peter as spokesperson on Kingdom questions.....	101
6.i.iv	Thus, Peter as our model disciple.....	105
6.ii	Jesus' approach to speaking the truth at his trial (26:57-68).....	106
6.iii	Matthew 26:69-75: Peter's trial?.....	110
6.iv	Jesus vs. Peter: head to head.....	117
6.v	28:18-20 and hope for the disciples.....	118
6.v.i	The approach.....	119
6.v.ii	Matthew's Jesus as "with" the disciples.....	121
6.vi	Judas, Peter and redemption for the community.....	127
6.vii	26:69-75: An uplifting passage?.....	128
6.viii	Locating this within the thesis' argument.....	129
7	Conclusion.....	131
7.i	Where we have been.....	131
7.ii	Where to from here?.....	134
	Bibliography of Works Cited.....	136

1 Introduction

To tell the truth, if speaking the truth as opposed to lying is a widely-assumed aspect of Christian morality, it also appears to be widely-neglected. Indeed, when Glen Stassen and David Gushee first wrote their joint effort based upon the Sermon on the Mount, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*, they noted that

contemporary introductory treatments of both Christian ethics and philosophical ethics rarely take on the issue [of truth-telling]. Of the fifty-plus ethics survey texts we surveyed, only six of them ... contain a section devoted to truth-telling or much sustained attention to the issue. The omission is a general problem in Protestant ethics, with both mainline and evangelical texts neglecting the theme.¹

They are quite right to lament the difficulty of sourcing very many worthwhile treatments of the subject.

In line with this, the average Christian in New Zealand today – and, judging by the scarcity of literature, at least throughout the west – may well have heard that Jesus said, “Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’” (Matt 5:37a NRSV²) and know little else on the subject besides that one command or a Sunday school equivalent. This study is birthed first, then, out of an interest in the intriguing combination of (1) an assumption of the rightness of truth-speaking and (2) a vacuum of knowledge or adequate discussion of the very idea of it. This is my original starting point. Naturally, to fill the gaps in scholarly discussion would take much more than a mere master's thesis! For this, therefore, I will concentrate on a small and specific aspect of the overall picture.

In embarking on an examination of truth-speaking, I am taking many steps back from this broad notion of truth-telling as a moral issue. For the current purposes, I am committed

1 Glen H. Stassen and David P. Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003), 369. In this book, they devote the entirety of ch. 18 (369-388) to the topic of truth-telling. The six examples they provide of ethical treatments that *do* cover truth-telling to some degree (excised from the quote above where they originally sit in parentheses) are as follows: “Murray, *Principles of Conduct*; Hoose, *Christian Ethics*; Hooke, *Virtuous Persons, Vicious Deeds*; Smedes, *Mere Morality*; Stone, *Ultimate Imperative*; Curran, *Catholic Moral Tradition Today*.”

2 Abbreviations in this thesis follow the SBL abbreviation list.

to remaining in the world of the biblical text. I am also choosing to limit the context here to just one of the Gospels, in order to discover the resources within it that may address our theme, without the added complication of needing to heavily compare and contrast with the other Gospels, or even to synthesise their content. The text I have chosen for this task is the Gospel of Matthew – and the First Gospel, it turns out, is a genuinely fruitful text for such discussion.

1.i Focus on Matthew and truth-speaking

The most obvious teaching section to intersect my topic is Matt 5:33-37 on oaths and vows, unique to Matthew within his Sermon on the Mount. Yet the oath-taking passage is just one feature that the Matthean text can offer so effectively on this matter. It also provides a substantial emphasis on *doing* the righteousness of the Kingdom and on the natural outflow of righteous or evil action from a person; rich sensory imagery, word choices and sharp discourse in relation to faith and understanding, which will become vital to my case; and rounded, mixed and distinctive characterisation of the disciples and their spokesperson, Peter. These, among other features that will arise in due course, contribute to making Matthew's Gospel an inspiringly fertile ground for discussion of the theme.

What, therefore, is this theme? The arena in which my study ultimately stands is that of speech, broadly covering the act of vocalising assertion, promise, question or other utterance in any given context. The general issue within this, then, is that of speaking the truth, which I am defining here as follows:³ truth-speaking or truth-telling, as opposed to lying, is speech under the conditions that (1) an utterance is in alignment with “the facts,” or reality, and (2) the speaker has internal cognition or mental awareness of said reality. For

3 Surprisingly (surprising at the beginning of this research, at least, and merely disappointing at the close of the process), Bible dictionaries do not tend to offer any coverage or definition on truthfulness, honesty, truth-telling or similar topics. *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* perhaps comes the closest by denoting a lie as “an intentional deception or falsehood. A false or erroneous statement should be classified as a lie only if it includes an intention to deceive. ... [L]ying is actively, intentionally conveying a falsehood”; see David W. Gill, “Lie, lying,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell, Baker Reference Library, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2001), 690f., quote 690. Here, of course, we are focusing on this in a spoken context. Though I will not give a treatment of ἀλήθεια-language in Matthew, D.M. Crump briefly notes that, in the Synoptics, the language is used “in a straightforward manner to refer to honesty as opposed to falsehood” (e.g. as in 22:16); see “Truth,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall (Downers Grove: IVP, 1992), 859-862, quote 860.

instance, if Person A is acquainted with Person B and is mentally aware that he/she is acquainted with Person B, then Person A is speaking the truth to utter that he/she is acquainted with Person B. An example of lying in this situation, on the other hand, would be Person A uttering that he/she is not acquainted with Person B.⁴

So, narrowing again within this area, my specific and limited query is regarding the *process* or *facility* by which telling the truth is realised within the Matthean context. The actual question at the forefront of my mind is this: How does Matthew's text portray people as being able to speak the truth? In the final text of the Gospel of Matthew, I am looking at what we can discern about how people within that text are able, or otherwise, to produce truthful (as per the basic definition above) utterances.

1.ii Selected aspects that will not receive attention

It may be helpful at this stage, also, to preliminarily suggest a number of areas that will *not* receive focus in this particular examination. First of all, broader discussion and definition of religious or spiritual “truth,” and prophecy/prophetic speech can all be linked to the notion of telling the truth (or, more generally, to speaking in line with the Kingdom of heaven). Such issues are necessarily being treated for current purposes as an area distinct from mine, which is more simply that of truth-telling as opposed to lying.⁵ When I talk about “Kingdom truth” or “the truth about the Kingdom,” therefore, this refers to the actual facts or reality as portrayed in Matthew's text, in this case about the Kingdom.⁶

Other related themes, too, will be limited to what they can immediately offer: while faith and understanding will become crucial aspects of the argument to come, for instance, their import for Matthew in general and for spheres of ethical concern in the text *other* than my own will not be directly or thoroughly addressed.⁷ The same self-imposed limitation

4 The definition of truth-speaking will be kept at approximately this simple a level in this thesis. Areas beyond my scope, such as objectivity and truth theory, philosophy of language, speech-act theory and various connecting aspects of social theory are valid related enterprises but will not be ventured into in particular.

5 Worthwhile study could be made, though, of prophecy/prophetic speech in Matthew and its connection to faith and understanding.

6 The notion of understanding in my thesis, then, relates to a sufficient depth of comprehension of these realities that allows one to act in accordance.

7 Nor, indeed, will opposite aspects such as doubt and fear receive any particular treatment.

applies to the broad notion of integrity or consistency of thoughts, words and action. This is very important both to my chosen theme and to the Matthean Gospel, although it will be dealt with primarily in the particular area of truth-speaking. Again, in terms of ethics and discipleship, Matthean images, methods and models of discipleship and broader discipleship issues are a potentially fruitful area to investigate to develop upon the subject, but due to space restraints will not receive extended treatment here.⁸

It will soon become apparent that the character of Matthew's Jesus has relevance in multiple areas of the current study. For this reason, brief discussion of various aspects of his character will arise from time to time, in order to highlight different points – and this will involve a certain amount of repetition, but is necessary for the logical flow of the thesis. Jesus, while fairly vital to the whole proceedings, is not going to be the central character being analysed here, so there are roles, titles and aspects of characterisation that will either be only touched upon, or be excluded due to space constraints. One such example is Jesus as “Teacher” in Matthew, which will merely be briefly addressed in terms of his authority and reliability,⁹ and not otherwise afforded particular attention.

On the opposite end of the spectrum of positive/negative characterisation, the portrayal of the Matthean Pharisees and the other religious leaders will make appearances throughout this thesis (especially in a brief excursus on the relevance of hypocrisy with regard to overflowing righteousness and speech, and in reference to their spiritual blindness). They make excellent negative examples of each of the three components of faith, understanding and truth-telling! Yet, as with the character of Jesus, they will not play the major role in this study, and this is due in large part to the character of the disciples being most thoroughly helpful for my topic (thus becoming the priority and occupying the most space).

Finally for now, I acknowledge the area of inaugurated eschatology as highly relevant to discussion of ethical issues within the Gospels. However, many of these eschatological

8 With small exceptions, such as briefly acknowledging the community context of “God with us” in the final chapter to come.

9 Coming under the issue of faith as a right response to authority in Matthew.

matters are beyond the textual “timeline” on which I am focusing, and will not receive any concentrated treatment. Along these lines, and very important to note, is that I will not be *specifically* covering the imminent coming of the Holy Spirit in the Matthean text, and the implications of that monumental eschatological event upon the ability of a Matthean character to speak the truth. The focus, as will be affirmed below, is primarily upon the world of the text and the story until Matt 28, with a brief look at Jesus' promise of remaining “with” the disciples in 28:20.

1.iii Preliminary methodological considerations

So, then, some initial points ought to be made as to the approach of this thesis. The first and perhaps most fundamental of these is that when Matthew is mentioned here and throughout as the author, this is taken to mean the implied author of the Gospel text,¹⁰ without any particular focus on the historical figure behind it. This decision is not to imply anything about the “historical author” in contrast to the “implied author,” but solely to delineate or limit the area of focus.¹¹ Accordingly, since I am concentrating mainly upon the world of the text, all discussion of characters in the Matthean text is just that. I am examining, for example, Matthew's portrayal of Jesus here rather than seeking out the historical Jesus; Matthew's Pharisees rather than the historical Pharisees; Matthean characterisation of the disciples rather than an investigation of the historical group.¹² Hence, there is a natural component of narrative/literary criticism involved in this task.¹³

One of the vital assets that this kind of critical methodology holds for me is that it sees the text as a deliberate whole. Without having to adopt the methodological particulars of such criticism indiscriminately, even the simple affirmation of engaging with the whole text is

10 Or the text of the whole Gospel itself, depending on context.

11 Also note Jack Dean Kingsbury's wise take on the “implied author” and “narrator,” which I follow here: “In the case of Matthew, ... the reader has to do only with a 'reliable narrator,' one who is in full accord with the implied author. For this reason, the need to distinguish rigorously between the narrator and the implied author is not so pressing. In this study, at any rate, both the narrator and the implied author will be designated as 'Matthew'”; *Matthew as Story*, 2nd ed. (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988), 31.

12 Again, although focusing on what the text itself shows, I am not dealing with or making any comment upon issues of historicity. As Richard B. Hays offers, “[B]oth history and fiction create narrative worlds”; *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation; A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 94.

13 A recent treatment of defining narrative in the first place can be found in Marie-Laure Ryan, “Toward a Definition of Narrative,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman, Cambridge Companions to Literature (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 22-35.

a very strong element to bring to my task. In this way, it offers a corrective to the limited (though valid) scope of other approaches such as the redaction-critical enterprise, which can tend towards viewing a text just in terms of fragmented (perceived) alterations. It also supports, quite obviously, the necessary focus on thematic and characterisation interests – and the groundwork done by others in the latter area will prove genuinely helpful.¹⁴ For good reason, though, narrative-/literary-critical approaches are not the only methodology to be contributing here.

This has to do with the potential limitations or even “blind spots” of such approaches: regardless of the fact that these methodologies make deliberate choices in order to restrict the critical enterprise, they do need to be balanced for my present purposes.¹⁵ For instance, a closed focus on narrative alone can end up by neglecting various available and important historical and social/cultural/political research, thus cutting itself off from the benefits of known historical data. Though this is not always the case, narrative/literary criticism can often be and has traditionally been used in an a-historical way.¹⁶ Instead, my expressed intention is to be sensitive to the literary and narrative dimensions of the text while *also* substantiating this with and taking very seriously the historical dimensions.

Furthermore, literary criticism regularly adopts a reader-focused approach rather than a focus on authorial intent.¹⁷ This reader-focused exercise could, in fact, be a profitable one to be embarked upon – later – with regard to my very topic. But it is a departure from the task at hand. I am deliberate here in not yet even moving on to any study of Matthew's intention for impact upon the implied reader, let alone to the horizons of the actual readers

14 The studies of David D. Kupp (a combination of narrative and historical criticism) and Richard A. Edwards and Jeannine K. Brown (both narrative criticism) are particularly useful to interact with in relation to the disciples at certain points: see Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God's People in the First Gospel*, SNTSMS 90 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Edwards, “Uncertain Faith: Matthew's Portrait of the Disciples,” in *Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985); Brown, *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective: The Portrayal and Function of the Matthean Disciples*, *Academia Biblica* 9, ed. Mark Allan Powell (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002).

15 Though I must acknowledge now that they are much more varied than I can respond to here.

16 Mark Allan Powell addresses the common issue of an isolated literary approach in complete contrast to historical approaches: “Literary Approaches and the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Methods for Matthew*, ed. Mark Allan Powell, *Methods in Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 44.

17 Powell, though, cites E.D. Hirsch as an author-focused example (e.g. his *The Aims of Interpretation*); “Literary Approaches,” 45.

or application in our context(s) today.¹⁸ Rather, the current accent is upon developing Matthew's treatment of the theme and answer to my question at the theoretical level. In this sense I, like traditional literary critics, am not seeking the broad "authorial intent" of the text either. Nevertheless, the exercise in its "text focus" is more author- than reader-focused. While I do not make any claims that Matthew has set out to deal with truth-speaking in any definitive way (perhaps his "treatment of the theme" is even mostly an uncalculated one), this is meant as an exegetical rather than an eisegetical exercise, in which I am looking at what Matthew's text is saying and how that informs my topic.

To help me discern this from within the text, then, I will gratefully employ the findings of multiple critical approaches. Attention will be given both to narrative/literary criticism and to various historical methodologies. For example, although redactional issues are not at the forefront of my interests, and although not essential to the argument, Marcan priority is assumed. A comparison of Matthew with the other Synoptics, especially Mark, will aid at times in distinguishing Matthew's particular concerns. Likewise, while dissecting the historical social/cultural or other situation is not my stated aim, such methodological approaches may and certainly do at times offer significant assistance; they help in bringing together understanding of words, events and thematic emphases and enable a more fruitful and balanced analysis of the theme.

1.iv What else has been written touching on this subject

Just as Stassen and Gushee lament, it has been very difficult to find scholarship on truth-speaking or connected concepts in the Gospel of Matthew. General ethical texts on Matthew, although only of limited use for the current investigation, do nonetheless provide a relevant backdrop. Leander E. Keck's article, "Ethics in the Gospel According to Matthew,"¹⁹ offers useful discussion on approaching the Gospel with ethical questions. He makes key foundational points such as the identification of Matthean ethics as "neither the ethics of

18 This counts out, therefore, hugely interesting but peripheral issues regarding the ethics of truth-telling itself, its application or exemption/suspension in such cases as espionage, medical ethics (prognoses etc.), wartime (e.g. harbouring Jews in World War II/Nazi Germany) and other potential "greater good" scenarios, and also any principles to be drawn from such discussion.

19 *Ilijff Review* 41, no. 1 (1984): 39-56. While the article goes on to analyse Matthew from an ethical viewpoint, its most helpful content for my purposes is in its preliminary remarks, 39-41.

Matthew nor the ethics of Matthew's church, but the ethics of a particular text."²⁰ Indeed, in reading Matthew's Gospel we are being presented with only a miniscule part of what "Matthew" the author will have believed about ethics. His Gospel is, of course, a gospel rather than an ethical primer, so it will include only that ethical content which Matthew incidentally held as important for his gospel presentation, even if such a presentation is done in light of the community for whom he wrote.

Keck also contributes some preliminary reflection on the very use of the term "ethics":

It is far from clear whether Matthew himself would have understood what we are talking about, because strictly speaking, [as hinted above,] this Gospel does not have any ethics at all. There is of course more than one way to talk about ethics. But even if we take a very general understanding of ethics as disciplined, critical reflection on the norms of human behavior (the right, the good, the useful), it is clear that there is none of this in Matthew's Gospel. Matthew might have hoped that his book would prompt his readers to reflect on their behavior, but it is far more likely that what he really hoped for was eliciting a certain range of behavior, not critical thinking about it. So if we use the phrase 'The Ethics of Matthew's Gospel' we do so in two senses: one is the general sense of ethics as that which has to do with moral life, and the other has to do with *our* critical reflection on what Matthew's Gospel says about it. We will not be able to keep these two uses of the term ethics apart very neatly.²¹

This idea that examining ethics in Matthew touches on both "ethics" in the general sense of moral life and our own critical reflection on this is an important detail to bring to the present study also.

Finally, and similarly, Keck addresses the nature of Matthew's text as *story*: it is "neither a book of ethics nor a manual of behavior,"²² and therefore potentially difficult to mine for ethical information. He describes Matthew as a story interrupted by five speeches that are "concerned with ethics in the ordinary, everyday sense,"²³ and contends that both these ethical discourses and the surrounding narrative material are to be analysed for ethical content. He is right that the narrative nature of Matthew is a vital factor to bear in mind;

20 Ibid., 39. Though Russell Pregeant leads a challenging discussion on interpretation theory and postmodernism in *Knowing Truth, Doing Good: Engaging New Testament Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2008), 8-11. He goes on in ch. 5 to give a discussion on Matthew quite similar to Keck's; see 123-144.

21 "Ethics in the Gospel According to Matthew," 40; italics original; brackets mine.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid.

within this, elements of story can divulge a storyteller's ethical understanding equally as effectively as can didactic discourse – as we shall see. Keck's general stated approach of exploring “certain motifs, themes, and dimensions of Matthew's moral counsel,”²⁴ then, is wise and applicable here also. This thesis will build on similar groundwork, heading eventually towards the specific area of speaking the truth.

A second example of an ethical text with a contribution to make is Frank J. Matera's *New Testament Ethics: The Legacies of Jesus and Paul*. While a good part of his own particular focus is on synthesising the ethical legacies of Jesus and Paul – as the subtitle suggests – his main contribution for my enterprise is in his giving a literary/rhetorical analysis of each NT text; chapter 2 is entitled “Doing the Greater Righteousness: The Gospel according to Matthew.”²⁵ I will engage with aspects of Matera's material more specifically in chapters to come, but a short summary of relevant features will suffice for now. As anticipated, he does not speak to the idea of truth-telling in particular. He is clear, though, helpfully, in affirming the Kingdom as the context for righteousness or ethical action in the Matthean text,²⁶ and also delineates Jesus as the one living out the required Kingdom righteousness of Israel.²⁷ He even, albeit briefly, identifies the overflow of the heart as the source or process of ethical action.²⁸ These aspects are among those that will become important for me to handle in setting the scene of righteousness in Matthew – and this shall be done in due course, before I begin narrowing the gaze to my specific issue.

His primary lack in terms of foundational issues for me, then, and unsurprising among scholarly treatments of Matthew, is in neglecting faith (and therefore also its link to understanding) as a vital element in the process of living the Kingdom-shaped life. Matera is open about his disregard for this topic: faith is “not absent from Matthew's Gospel, even though I have not discussed it.”²⁹ Despite and perhaps partly in response to this lack, the current thesis will place great emphasis on the necessity of faith (and its companion,

24 Ibid.

25 Frank J. Matera, *New Testament Ethics: The Legacies of Jesus and Paul* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 36ff.

26 Ibid., 37.

27 Ibid., 51.

28 Ibid., 54.

29 Ibid., 62.

understanding) in the process of Matthean ethical action. Even so, texts such as these on Matthean/NT ethics are important early resources and eventual comparison points for the study.

While these two are examples of texts that speak most directly to the rare topic at hand, there are a good many others that address peripheral topics but have become very helpful along the way, particularly in relation to the characterisation of the disciples (that of H.J. Bernard Combrink, for instance: “The Challenge of Overflowing Righteousness: To Learn to Live the Story of the Gospel of Matthew,”³⁰ as well as the narrative-critical examples provided in fn. 14). These will arise as they become relevant throughout the thesis.

1.v Outline of discussion to come

It is now appropriate to lay out the plan. To begin with, “Righteousness: Outflow of Actions in the Context of the Kingdom” will cover some brief, preliminary matters that are nonetheless indispensable for tracking the thesis' logic. As will become readily apparent, much of the space of earlier chapters will not deal in specific with truth-speaking, but will be sourcing relevant content in Matthew's text with which to gradually build a construct or argument and so target truth-speaking specifically later. First, we will grasp what δικαιοσύνη may refer to in the Matthean text, noting its behavioural focus, and then elaborate on this by placing it in its right context: Matthew's “ethical horizon,”³¹ the Kingdom of heaven. While this Gospel shows a clear high christology (cf. Immanuel, “God with us” in 1:23 etc.), Jesus will be briefly identified both as the Kingdom's King and as Matthew's example of fully living out the complete and righteous humanity that he promotes as part of the inbreaking Kingdom.

Sitting firmly in its Kingdom context, we will then be free to discuss the Matthean approach of presenting righteousness in terms of fruit and the overflow of the heart. This natural outflow of action based on the nature of the heart, and its relation (or lack thereof) to the King, is vital to a Matthean understanding of righteousness. To cap off our discussion

30 In *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006), 23-48.

31 *Ibid.*, 37.

of preliminary matters, we will give just an early glimpse of the particular issue of truth-speaking and provide a short treatment of Jesus' teaching on oaths and vows, the fourth antithesis in 5:33-37, as it pertains to the topic at hand. This, an interesting example of Jesus' ethical teaching on issues that converge with our topic and a picture of what Matthew sees “outflowing” righteousness as looking like in action, will also serve to reinforce the concept of right action (here, right speech) as a requirement of the new humanity of the Kingdom. Thus, in this chapter some important contextual issues are covered and we are enabled to move on to arguing the “how” of truth-speaking in Matthew.

Upon this foundation, then, in “Believing εἰς ἐμέ: Faith as the Right Response to Authority,” I will start establishing my case by looking at faith in Matthew. To do so, the authority of Matthew's Jesus, as the one teaching and representing the new Kingdom way, will be set forth. It is an authority that is rooted in his relationship with his Father, and inherent in who Jesus is. Of course, it will then be worthwhile to look in particular at Jesus' associated portrayal as one whose *words* are trustworthy and true. The Greek formula ἀμήν λέγω ὑμῖν, appearing only on Jesus' lips and a favourite formula of Matthew's, will make a major contribution to this end. Distinct from common ἀμήν-usage and the “Thus says YHWH” formula in the OT, it confirms Jesus' spoken authority and reliability as both God-sourced and inherent to himself. In this formula, Jesus' own person and word is the only confirmation or assurance Matthew provides regarding the veracity of the Kingdom announcements about to be delivered.

It is in the unexpectedness of the frank, Kingdom-aligned words of Matthew's Jesus to a world full of broken hearers – and broken speakers! – that the idea of faith comes into focus for us. For those exposed to the Kingdom and its King, faith is clearly the right, natural correlative not only to the authority of God the Father (important in itself, of course) but also to the authority of Jesus, the one who is fully living out and speaking in accordance with the righteousness of the Kingdom. His followers, then, can even be described by Jesus as “these little ones who *believe in me*”³² (τῶν μικρῶν τούτων τῶν πιστευόντων εἰς ἐμέ, 18:6).

The following chapter, “Faith *and* Understanding: The Imagery of Vision and Hearing,”

32 All translations will be my own, unless stated otherwise.

expands the thesis' scope to include a further, vital element that supports the truth-speaking process, by homing in on a favourite area of imagery for Matthew. Through the imagery/motifs of vision and hearing, our evangelist ties together for us two hugely important concepts: (1) faith, the role of which has already been affirmed, and (2) the attendant new idea of understanding. I will begin by outlining some of the key uses of Matthew's sensory imagery that have to do with faith and understanding, including a particular glance at vision and blindness in the Matthean text. The prominent vision and hearing imagery in the parables discourse of chapter 13 will then come into view, confirming again the faith-understanding process. Here, a combination of the imagery and understanding-language in Jesus' words strongly demonstrates the fact that Matthew sees understanding as coming through faith commitment. This, then, in conjunction with Matthew's appropriation of Isaianic prophecy in 13:14b-15, will lead us into a brief treatment of the *responsibility* to understand, via faith.

Moving forward a step to see these important elements of faith and understanding in practice in Matthew, the next chapter is entitled "Following the Disciples: Tracking Our Theme in the Disciples' Journey." In line with Matthew's own emphasis on the character of the disciples, they become the focus of examining the process and progress of faith and understanding in the narrative. First dealing in brief with, and balancing, the assertion that Matthew portrays the disciples more favourably than Mark does, the disciples will then be shown as the most beneficial focal point for our theme. With many descriptions and/or evaluations of their actions, including at times through Jesus' lips, Matthew ends up providing in the group of the disciples the most colourful and conclusive display of both success and failure in this area.

From here, the heart of the chapter explores and analyses the disciples' story as it pertains to the faith-understanding link (particularly in their helpful portrayal as ὀλιγόπιστοι). We will also find ourselves coming across pertinent, dramatic moments of their mixed ability in the broader process of faith, understanding and the outflowing action of right speech in general – although an extended illustration of speaking the *truth* (or lying) will be saved for the final chapter. Most importantly, this chapter will concretely demonstrate both (1) faith and understanding in the story of the disciples and (2) their success or

otherwise in this area. It is, as it turns out, a very mixed bag in Matthew, even if there is discernible progress! Their last appearance in chapter 28 shows a concerning mixture of faith and doubt. This broad picture of faith and understanding shown here in the general disciple-group will serve to support and prepare for the *particular* picture of one conspicuous scene in our final chapter.

Then, “Narrowing Down to Our Most Apt Example: Peter’s Ability to Speak the Truth in 26:69-75” finally highlights the actions of Peter as an example of capacity (here, rather, *incapacity*) to speak out the truth. Initially, Peter will be argued to be a well-grounded Matthean representative of the disciples as a group. With this accomplished, a short treatment of Jesus’ speech and actions in his trial (26:57-68) as a positive example will lead into a rather less favourable analysis of Peter’s complete failure and denial of Jesus in 26:69-75. Such analysis of Peter’s own “trial” in comparison to that of Jesus will, in effect, bring together all that has come before, and be a clear scenario with which to communicate the entire faith-understanding-truth-telling activity at play. Peter’s lack of faith and hence lack of understanding lead to a lack of ability to speak the truth. Once this important task of demonstrating the whole theme in action has been carried out, we will lastly revisit Matthew’s less-than-flattering final portrayal of the disciples, for a brief discussion of what hope may be held out for them and for Peter at the close of the First Gospel.

As we set out, then, let us first introduce the broader issue and relevant context of righteousness in Matthew.

2 Righteousness: Outflow of Actions in the Context of the Kingdom

It does not take any kind of seasoned religious expert to link the term “righteousness” to the Bible. For Christians today, it may take nothing more than a “memory verse,” greeting card or coffee mug of Matt 6:33 – probably from the NIV, “But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” – to link it to Matthew in particular. What we are aiming in this chapter of preliminary discussion, though, is (1) to examine some of what this “righteousness”-language is actually about in the Gospel; (2) to see how it relates to the Kingdom of heaven that Matthew emphasises and (3) in this context, to unlock the helpful Matthean image of righteous acts, including the specific of righteous speech, as fruit that overflows from the heart. To finish, we will (4) handle the oath-taking antithesis in 5:33-37 as a relevant teaching on this overflowing righteousness from Matthew's Jesus.

Righteousness in general is spoken of as a thing one might have and/or strive for in Christ's community. To be sure, it has received plenty of attention in sermons throughout the history of Christian faith. But what does the Greek δικαιοσύνη, along with its linked δικ– terms, actually tell us in *Matthew's* context?³³ Let us note from the outset that whatever it does mean has primary significance for the concerns of this thesis. If righteousness is grounded in present action (rather than, perhaps, a solely future hope, or any kind of legal declaration or imputation through Christ that might be divorced from disciples' conduct), then our action-oriented question of truth-telling will undoubtedly find itself under the broader δικαιοσύνη banner.³⁴

It is well-known that this righteousness is an emphasis peculiar to Matthew among the

33 Here, of course, I must make it clear that (1) we are first of all looking at the meaning of the Greek term itself (rather than debating English terminology); (2) we are ultimately asking the question within the confines of our purpose and not, say, as a complete study of Matthean δικαιοσύνη or as it relates to or may contrast with Pauline usage; (3) we will also not *remain* limited to the δικ– terminology alone, but rather use it as a helpful starting point and move on soon to the broader theme.

34 We hold off from bringing a BDAG definition at this stage, and will include this in our analysis soon.

Synoptics.³⁵ As a rough indication, the noun itself turns up seven times (*five* times in the Sermon on the Mount alone), compared to once in Luke (1:75), and never at all in Mark.³⁶ Scot McKnight reflects a confident majority in concluding that there is “little doubt” Matthew reworked previous traditions and added the term himself.³⁷ While the final text and not its redaction is our general focus, a comparison of the parallels continue to paint such a picture: Matt 5:6 (blessing “the ones hungering and thirsting [for] righteousness”) compared with Luke 6:21 (“the ones hungering now”), for example; or Matt 6:33 (“seek [God’s] kingdom and his righteousness”) with Luke 12:31 (simply, “seek his kingdom”). The question, then, is what the Matthean author is even conveying by way of this thoughtful and calculated inclusion. This is what we are setting out briefly to uncover now.

2.i Δικαιοσύνη and Jesus and John the Baptist

Our first encounter with δικαιοσύνη, and the δικ– language in general, is in the introductory narrative of the Gospel and relates to the ministry of John the Baptist. It also, significantly, arises in the first words of Matthew’s Jesus. In 3:15 Jesus says, “[I]t is fitting for us in this way [that is, through John’s baptism of Jesus] to fulfil all righteousness.” The only other appearance of δικαιοσύνη outside of the Sermon on the Mount, later on, is again linked to the Baptist. Here, it is said that John “came to you in [the] way of righteousness” (21:32). We can see at first glance, then, that the relationship between Jesus and the Baptist may be of interest in coming to understand Matthean righteousness.

In *Discourses in Matthew*, David P. Scaer suggests that, because of the manner of these two δικαιοσύνη uses above, “[T]he word provides a comprehensive definition for Matthew’s Gospel.”³⁸ Even so, what sort of δικαιοσύνη is being lived out or fulfilled? It should first be noted, alongside John the Baptist’s role as Jesus’ forerunner (his Elijah; 11:14) and the one

35 W.D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, Jr. provide a helpful list of this and other particularly Matthean ethical terms: ἀνομία, δίκαιος, δικαιοσύνη, καρπός, ποιέω + θέλημα + πατρός, πονηρός, πραύς, τέλειος, ὑποκριτής; *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 1, I-VII, ICC, ed. J.A. Emerton, C.E.B. Cranfield and G.N. Stanton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 80. We will happen to come across a few of these in our own investigations later.

36 It appears twice, in one passage, in John’s Gospel (John 16:8, 10).

37 Scot McKnight, “Justice, Righteousness,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 413.

38 David P. Scaer, *Discourses in Matthew: Jesus Teaches the Church* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2004), 246. His premise that Matthew (with its five key discourses) was constructed for the purpose of catechesis, along with other assumptions, leads him in a different direction to ours at times, but his treatment is nonetheless useful.

passing the baton from old covenant to new, that any “righteousness” displayed here must necessarily be in harmonious accord with the Old/First Testament (or law). In fact, examples of δίκαιος people besides John and Jesus appear recurrently in Matthew – in terms of alignment with OT law.

Joseph, husband of Mary, stands out in this respect: he, literally “being righteous” (δίκαιος ὢν; compare this to the NIV interpretation of “because [he] was faithful to the law”), acts accordingly in response to Mary’s seeming unfaithfulness (1:19). Jesus includes as righteous those under the law who were awaiting the Messiah (ἀμὴν ... λέγω ὑμῖν ὅτι πολλοὶ προφῆται καὶ δίκαιοι ἐπεθύμησαν ἰδεῖν ἃ βλέπετε καὶ οὐκ εἶδαν, καὶ ἀκούσαι ἃ ἀκούετε καὶ οὐκ ἤκουσαν, 13:17), as well as martyrs for YHWH and others of the old covenant era (cf. 23:29: [you hypocrites] οἰκοδομεῖτε τοὺς τάφους τῶν προφητῶν καὶ κοσμεῖτε τὰ μνημεῖα τῶν δικαίων; and Abel and Zechariah in verse 35: ἔλθη ἐφ’ ὑμᾶς πᾶν αἷμα δίκαιον ἐκχυννόμενον ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ αἵματος Ἀβελ τοῦ δικαίου ἕως τοῦ αἵματος Ζαχαρίου υἱοῦ Βαραχίου).³⁹

We can see even thus far that in being consistent with following the OT, this righteousness also has a tangible behavioural focus. Joseph in 1:19 is a strong example again; and we might safely assume that those martyred (23:29, 35) are killed despite or because of their righteous action also, and not due to some abstract quality they held (cf. 5:10-12)! “Throughout the OT,” offers McKnight, “as well as Jewish literature from the time of Jesus, righteousness refers to *behavior conforming to the will of God*.”⁴⁰ In the very same way, Jesus and John’s *behaviour* is what fulfils the plan of God for them. For both, this involves their spoken words and declarations (such as calling for repentance before announcing the Kingdom: μετανοέω, 3:2; 4:17) and other actions (baptism, for instance: 3:13-17). Indeed, Jesus’ Father declares himself well-pleased (εὐδοκέω) with/in his Son after the baptism is completed. This active focus and attention to the detail of YHWH’s revealed will is involved in their “fulfil[l]ing all righteousness” (3:15).⁴¹ (It so happens, we might add, that these two

39 McKnight, by his passing mention of 27:4, also references Judas’ confession of his betrayal of innocent blood as an example of Matthean righteousness reflecting the OT law; “Justice, Righteousness,” 413.

40 Ibid., 412; italics added. This accords strongly with the BDAG description of δικαιοσύνη in terms of uprightness in fulfilling either general divine expectation or explicit standards; “δικαιοσύνη,” BDAG, 247-249. Cf. also “δίκαιος,” 246f.

41 In his analysis of δικαιοσύνη and related terms in Matthew, Przybylski likewise concludes that Matthean righteousness has to do with God’s demand that people live according to the norm of the law; see Benno

fulfilling God's demands through their righteous action leads to the climax of salvation-history in the Matthean narrative.)

So there seems to be continuity with the active righteousness of the OT. The fact that there is also continuity between the way of righteousness for John the Baptist, Jesus and Jesus' potential followers is expressed beyond doubt in 21:32, a verse we have already seen: John “came to you in [the] way of righteousness,” though only sinners have responded appropriately. John's role does have its natural limits, though. While the Baptist can demand μετάνοια, repentance or changing of mind, and the fruit of righteous action that necessarily accompanies it (3:8),⁴² Jesus goes much further. He can do this both by his radical, transformational Kingdom teachings (as in his initial Sermon, chapters 5-7), and by the whole of his extraordinary life and ministry as Messiah and Son of the living God. In sum, argues John P. Meier, there is a “strange interweaving of parallelism yet subordination” for the Baptist in Matthew's narrative.⁴³ Hence it is left solely to Jesus to make the confident declaration of 5:17, that “[he] did not come to abolish [the law or the prophets] but to fulfil [them].”

2.ii 5:17 and the fulfilment of the law

The overall objective here is far from delineating the relationship between Matthew, or the Matthean Jesus, and the law (or the OT as a whole, “the law and the prophets”: ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται, e.g. 7:12; 22:40; cf. 5:17).⁴⁴ Yet it cannot be ignored. The Sermon on the Mount seems to be preoccupied with unpacking what life looks like when this law is lived out faithfully. As has just been noted, Jesus states in 5:17 that he came not to abolish (καταλύω)

Przybylski, *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought*, SNTSMS 41 (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 105.

42 Cf. his water baptism for/unto repentance in verse 11.

43 John P. Meier, “John the Baptist in Matthew's Gospel,” *JBL* 99, no. 3 (September 1980): 387. Much of this difference in roles is explained perfectly well in Matthew's narrative itself, especially by Jesus in ch. 11. See also Lisa M. Bowens, “The Role of John the Baptist in Matthew's Gospel,” *WW* 30, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 311-318, who argues for the Baptist as a model disciple-type character in Matthew.

44 Louw and Nida class this as an idiom: Johannes P. Louw and Eugene A. Nida, ed., “ὁ νόμος καὶ οἱ προφῆται,” *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1 (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 33.58, 396. We lack space to look at אִשְׁרָיִם-language and other related Hebrew/Aramaic concepts, though in a broader discussion these too could be worth studying to further grasp a Matthean background. Przybylski gives an in-depth analysis of this terminology (indeed, it forms the heart of his book) as it appears in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Tannaitic literature; see *Righteousness in Matthew*, 13-76.

all this but to fulfil (πληρώω) it; the short passage this is from (5:17-20) is hugely important to Matthew, and is without complete parallel in the Synoptics.⁴⁵ Again, summarising both the Sermon and the OT is 7:12: “Therefore, [in] all things, whatever you will/desire people to do to you, you also do to them likewise – for this is the law and the prophets.” The presence of the OT here is as clear as can be. In an age, even in the narrative, that goes beyond John the Baptist, though (all the prophets and the law “prophesied until John”; 11:13), what is the place of the law for Matthew, with all its detailed righteousness?

J. Daryl Charles' assertion that, “[f]rom Matthew's standpoint, to construe Jesus' 'coming' as antithetical to the law is to misconstrue his coming altogether”⁴⁶ is a fair position from which to start. Indeed, Jesus declares in 5:18 that, until heaven and earth pass away (παρέρχομαι), not the *least* detail of the law (ἰῶτα ἐν ἡ μία κεραία) will pass away until all has taken place (γίνομαι⁴⁷)! So, in what way is Jesus “fulfilling” the law? The BDAG definition of πληρώω as “bring to a designed end, *fulfill*”⁴⁸ in 5:17, “in the broadest sense and in contrast to καταλύειν”⁴⁹ is vague but still somewhat helpful. We might add to this Louw and Nida's account, which also holds Matt 5:17 as a particular example: “[T]o give the true or complete meaning to something – 'to give the true meaning to, to provide the real significance of.’”⁵⁰ These can begin to steer us in the right direction.

Carson emphasises, quite correctly, that “[t]he antithesis is not between 'abolish' and 'keep' but between 'abolish' and 'fulfill.’”⁵¹ From Carson's point of view, the OT – the prophetic nature of which has already been emphasised in the prologue (chapters 1-2),⁵²

45 5:18 has parallels in Mark 13:31 and Luke 16:17.

46 J. Daryl Charles, “Garnishing with the 'Greater Righteousness': The Disciple's Relationship to the Law (Matthew 5:17-20),” *BBR* 12, no. 1 (2002): 10.

47 BDAG, “γίνομαι,” 196-199. See 4a, 197.

48 *Ibid.*, “πληρώω,” 827-829, quote 828; italics original.

49 *Ibid.*, 829.

50 “πληρώω,” *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, vol. 1, 33.144, 405.

51 D.A. Carson, *Matthew*, vol. 1, *Matthew 1-12*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 144; see 143f.

52 *Ibid.*, 144. See the interesting approach of J.R. Daniel Kirk, who proposes a “diachronic, narrational typology,” particularly to make sense of the formula quotations and the law; “Conceptualising Fulfillment in Matthew,” *TynBul* 59, no. 1 (2008): 77-98, quote 77. He adds, “Jesus does not embody what was always the *sensus literalis* of the OT. Instead, the OT gives shape to the ministry of Jesus such that, in retrospect, the OT can be seen as a witness to something greater than itself whose substance has come with the one who fills the shape of its story with new meaning”; 97. Also Kangtaek Peter Lee, whose dissertation abstract advocates a “radically christotelic” approach that “must be understood from the perspective of the renewed story of Israel”; “Matthew's Vision of the Old and New in Jesus: The Social World of the

especially 1:22f. and in key events like YHWH calling Israel out of Egypt in 2:15 – is only completely understood through the one lens of Jesus. Matthew's Jesus has already been shown (e.g. through the formula quotations) as the one person Scripture points to, and the one who “fulfils” it (also πληρόω)⁵³ in other ways. In the totality of his words and actions, he is revealed (for those with eyes to see and ears to hear) as the one to whom Scripture points.⁵⁴ Jesus fulfils the law.

Even in such a brief explanatory section, though, we must cursorily address what this means in practice. Charles is unapologetic in his focus on righteous action: “In Matthew,” he says,

[R]ighteousness is profoundly a matter of *doing*. It is *social* in character, serving as active leaven in society. The verb *poiein*, which occurs 83 times in the entire gospel, is used 22 times in chaps. 5-7 alone. Seen positively, the disciple is called above all else to do what is ethical. The failure of Pharisaical religion in Matthew's eyes was not that it skirted alms-giving, prayer, or fasting (things that religious 'ought to have done'); rather, it was that it neglected the 'weightier matters' of the law, such as justice and mercy (23:23). Orthodox interpretation entails *orthopraxy*.⁵⁵

This may come across as a rather unnerving ongoing focus on the law. Yet it is true that Matthew's handling of the law and its fulfilment maintains the importance of enacting righteousness, particularly through actions of mercy (ἔλεος, 9:13; 12:7; also κρίσις, ἔλεος, πίστις in 23:23) or, in others of Jesus' core statements, love (ἀγαπάω, 22:37-40; cf. 7:12). In summary, “Be perfect” (or morally “fully developed,”⁵⁶ τέλειος) like God the Father is

Matthean Community Vis-à-Vis Matthew's Understanding of Torah,” *WTJ* 73, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 376-377, quotes 376.

53 Though there is disagreement over whether these appearances of the term should be interpreted exactly the same as in 5:17. Carson believes so, claiming that the “chief objection” is that πληρόω is active in 5:17 but in the passive voice elsewhere, but that “it is doubtful whether much can be made of this distinction”; *ibid.* Charles proposes that the immediate context of actively doing righteousness in 5:17 disallows this same interpretation; “Garnishing with the 'Greater Righteousness,’” 8. Our argument does not rely on either.

54 This naturally means a “fulfilment” much wider than mere focus upon Jesus' death and resurrection, though these are no doubt included.

55 “Garnishing with the 'Greater Righteousness,’” 5; italics original. To Charles, “[B]oth the antinomian and the hypocritical Pharisaism sustain a stinging rebuke from Jesus ... (7:23; 23:13,15,16, 23, 25, 27, 29),” 6. This aligns with Robert H. Gundry's suggestion that Matthew's approach to the law is in opposition to antinomianism; *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 78-82; cf. Gerhard Barth, “Matthew's Understanding of the Law,” in Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth and Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, trans. by Percy Scott, NTL (London: SCM, 1963), 62ff.

56 BDAG, “τέλειος,” 995-996. See 4a, 996. God is therefore described in 4b as “a role model for unlimited

perfect (5:48)!⁵⁷

With the demanding sayings of both 5:48 above and 5:20 in mind – “For I say to you that unless your righteousness far surpasses⁵⁸ [that] of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter into the Kingdom of heaven [at all]” – Carson leads us towards an important finding. We know that the OT points to Jesus in Matthew. Further still, though, Jesus' own teaching and person fulfil the law, accomplishing its righteousness and unveiling its ultimate divine intent and direction. So the focus now shifts to him, his words and his non-verbal actions. Perhaps surprisingly, then, the moral expectation, “far from being more lenient, is nothing less than perfection”⁵⁹ (illustrated right here in the very sayings that culminate in the “perfection” statement, vv. 21-48). The law does not become irrelevant in Matthew; however, a transformed and transformational understanding of its purpose does come uniquely through Matthew's Jesus.

A right relationship with the law then, comes via right relation to Jesus and obedience to *his* righteous commands (cf. 7:24-27). Carson's summary of what this fulfilment may mean in practical terms is thought-provoking:

If the antitheses ... are understood in the light of this interpretation of vv.17-20, then Jesus is not primarily engaged there in extending, annulling, or intensifying OT law, but in showing the direction in which it points, on the basis of his own authority (to which, again, the OT points). This may work out in any particular case to have the same practical effect as 'intensifying' the law or 'annulling' some element; but the reasons for that conclusion are quite different.⁶⁰

Jesus is not furnishing people with a new law/*nova lex*.⁶¹ Rather, the whole OT necessarily directs towards him, Son of God and Son of Man, and all that he is, says and does. He is its

display of beneficence”; *ibid.* Compare the straightforwardness of this τέλειος-demand with the almost humorous approach of the *Didache*, as quoted by Paul W. Walaskay: “If you can bear the full yoke of the LORD [Torah? cf. *Aboth* 3.5; teaching? cf. Matt 11:29], you will be perfect [*teleios*; Matt 5:48]. But if you cannot, then do what you can” (*Did.* 6:2; Walaskay's translation); “Matthew 5:17-20,” *Interpretation* 56, no. 4 (October 2002): 419; italics and brackets original.

57 In line with the above, Gerhard Barth sees this perfection as wholly living out love; “Matthew's Understanding of the Law,” 80.

58 Here (πλείων +) περισσεύω, a term relating to abundance: see BDAG, “περισσεύω,” 805.

59 Carson, *Matthew 1-12*, 146.

60 *Ibid.*, 144.

61 Although there are nonetheless senses in which he can be seen as a “greater Moses,” as Gundry suggests: *Matthew: A Commentary*, 78.

one reliable interpreter. It does make sense, then, for Jesus to require of his followers a greater or surpassing righteousness, even with his “fulfilling” of the law – and it is a much deeper, more heart-focused and challenging interpretation of the law than could possibly be expected.⁶²

2.iii Righteousness and the Kingdom of heaven

Admittedly, it has been with genuine difficulty that we have avoided mention of the Kingdom in this chapter until now – *almost* entirely – for the purpose of a logical progression. That it has been difficult is an excellent sign; the Kingdom of heaven is indisputably the broader narrative or thematic context for any and all forms of righteousness we may find in Matthew. To put it in more dynamic terms, the kind of righteous action Matthew stands for and commends is not only in line with the OT and the person of Jesus but it is, without exception, the righteous action of the Kingdom of heaven.

In Matera's *New Testament Ethics* language, the Kingdom is the “ethical horizon”⁶³ for Matthew. The Gospel with which we are involved is a royal narrative from start to finish. Time is spent covering both Jesus' credentials to reign and the nature of his reign and, while discourse along these lines could occupy us indefinitely, we must be content with a couple of swift demonstrations. One vital aspect of the Matthean Jesus' identity is that he is Israel's messianic Son of David (cf. 1:1 and genealogy)⁶⁴ – a title latched onto by the needy and the crowds (in contexts of anticipated messianic miracles, like restoration of sight and speech: 9:27; 12:23; 20:30f.; cf. also 15:22) and heard powerfully at Jesus' entry into Jerusalem as king (21:1-9,⁶⁵ 15) and his silencing of the Pharisees there (22:41-6). Similarly, Matthew opens his narrative with μάγοι searching for a newly-born “king of the Jews” in 2:2, and draws toward its close in 27:37 using the same phrase, as Pilate's crucifixion charge against Jesus. Jesus even leads the way ahead of Israel in the final resurrection (28:1-10). His royalty is made clear throughout the entirety of Matthew.

62 This we shall see as we touch upon one of the antitheses, descriptors of this greater righteousness, soon.

63 *New Testament Ethics*, 37.

64 Note also the angel of the Lord addressing Joseph as “son of David” in his dream; 1:20.

65 Here and elsewhere Jesus' fulfilment of OT messianic prophecy, as well as the Davidic covenant, comes to the fore.

Hence we come to see that, just as our evangelist has a strong interest in righteousness, so also does he have an overriding interest in ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν: most literally “the Kingdom of the heavens.”⁶⁶ The phrase itself (and other “Kingdom”-variations) appears 50 times in Matthew, 32 of which appear nowhere else.⁶⁷ Aptly enough, it first arises in John the Baptist's announcement of the Kingdom of heaven having drawn near (3:2), and is immediately turned into a call to righteous action (μετανοέω)! Jesus' opening statement repeats the Baptist verbatim (4:17) and Matthean summaries of Jesus' ministry, also, are presented in terms of the Kingdom (cf. 4:23; 9:35). It is crucial to see now that in Matthew this βασιλεία of God, his dynamic reign, is both “your [God, the Father's] Kingdom” (6:33; cf. 13:43) and “his [Jesus, the Son of Man's] kingdom” (13:41; 16:28; cf. 20:21). The OT-revealed Kingdom of YHWH, Father and Creator,⁶⁸ and the Kingdom Jesus heralds in his own arrival are one and the same.

This happens to be at the very heart of our findings regarding righteousness: the Kingdom's arrival, presence and eventual future consummation⁶⁹ is purely centred upon a person (no less than the person who makes the declarations of 5:17-20). The Jesus to whom the whole OT points, as mentioned before, is also the *King* even as God is. The righteousness of a person or people, too, is to do with their relation to this King. When one responds to the royal invitation in Matthew, repenting and entering this prayerful Kingdom relationship, the primary output ought to be a life of humbly and thankfully following and serving this King they now know.⁷⁰ In fact, these Kingdom relationships are spoken of in warm familial terms (often pluralised: e.g. God as “our Father,” 6:9; “sons [and daughters] of the Kingdom,” 13:38 etc.). Fittingly, and beautifully, Matthew's Jesus also speaks of “whoever [may] *do the will of*

66 Where Matthew chooses between “Kingdom of heaven” and “Kingdom of God,” only 4 times does he choose the latter (12:28; 19:24; 21:31, 43). Keener assures us, should we doubt, that other Jewish texts use “Kingdom of Heaven” as a periphrasis for “Kingdom of God”: “Matthew, preferring a usage that would communicate better in the Pharisaic-type circles he was engaging, naturally preferred this synonymous expression (Goulder 1974: 63; Jeremias 1971: 97; contrast Guelich 1982: 77)”; see Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009), 68.

67 Compare this, for emphasis, to 14 appearances of the same in Mark.

68 God's kingly rule is implied even in his role as Creator, but for specifically “kingly” OT language see, for instance, 1 Sam 8:7; Ps 103:19 (his βασιλεία, 102:19 LXX). The OT knows both present and future reigns of God, though the widely held Jewish understanding of two distinct ages would naturally have to be developed in light of Jesus.

69 Cf. even Jesus' instructions on how to pray for this, 6:9-13; see also 20:21; parts of chs. 24-25 etc.

70 That the disciples are sent out by Jesus to call Israel into its Kingdom role but appear to fail in this (cf. ch. 10) is not so much, for Matthew, a reflection on them but their audience, with whom Jesus officially 'failed' also.

my Father in heaven” as his brother, sister and mother (12:46-50; quote v. 50). We never stray far from the notion of active righteousness with the Kingdom of God.⁷¹

Such a righteousness, as it happens, is enacted fully in Matthew by Jesus, the messianic King.⁷² This includes his obedient baptism in chapter 3 (and God's being “well-pleased” with him in 3:17); his temptations in the narrative of chapter 4 (which itself is filled with Kingdom imagery); and, of course, all of his life including his crucifixion in chapter 27 (with its own final temptation in verses 39-44). Matera sets up this contrast:

When the people of Israel were hungry in the wilderness of Sin, they complained against Moses and Aaron (Ex. 16:1-36), and when they were thirsty at Rephidim (Ex. 17:1-17), they quarreled with Moses. In both instances Israel proved to be a disobedient son that did not trust in God's salvific power. In contrast to Israel, Jesus shows that he is truly God's Son by his obedience to the Father. Unlike Israel of old, he heeds the words of Deuteronomy (Deut. 8:3 is quoted in response to the first test [in chapter 4], and Deut. 6:3 to the second test).⁷³

While Matthew's Jesus is unquestionably the Son of God (cf. the requests asked of him in the temptations of 4:3, 6; 27:40: “If you are Son of God...”), his inaugurated earthly kingship is one of humility and prayerful reliance on his Father in heaven and of mercy towards others. We see in his Kingdom an embodiment of the Beatitudes (see 5:1-12).

2.iv Revealing true humanity

So Matthew's Jesus is not just a divine figure and a King, but is also a rich reminder of what humanity can and should be. He is a unique but real and thoroughly τέλειος human. It is through this lens that systematic theologian Veli-Matti Kärkkäinen answers the question, “Why is Jesus' earthly life and ministry so important?” Answer: “Because it was a life lived in the way human life is supposed to be lived.”⁷⁴ The calling of humanity far surpasses that which Jesus' audience presently grasps; as we recall, “[U]nless your righteousness far surpasses [that] of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the Kingdom of heaven [at

71 Granted, a lot of this is very basic ground that we might cover in delineating a broad picture of Matthean salvation, but it has been necessary to step back and grasp Matthew's general conception of righteousness in its natural context. Not wishing to cover greater issues of soteriology, we will necessarily avoid as many peripheral aspects as possible for reasons of conciseness.

72 As we might well have guessed with his fulfilling all righteousness and fulfilling the law!

73 *New Testament Ethics*, 51.

74 “The Human Prototype: With Jesus, We See What We Were Created to Be,” *Christianity Today* 56, no. 1 (January 2012): both quotes 30.

all!]” (οὐ μὴ εἰσέλθητε, 5:20). Indeed, Jesus' wider teaching ministry in Matthew could even be helpfully explained as his reorienting people to God's will for humanity. He instructs them on the abounding righteousness and life⁷⁵ among humans that the Kingdom of heaven necessarily entails on a day-to-day basis.

He is also, as has been touched upon (but could be safely assumed), a model human himself. He shows servanthood as the Kingdom way of leading, for instance (“just as [ὡσπερ] the Son of Man [did],” 20:26-28), and openly tells the disciples to “learn from me” (μάθετε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ, 11:29),⁷⁶ the gentle and humble one. In reality, he exhibits elements of a restored or re-established humanity right down to his resurrection from the dead⁷⁷ (28:1ff.) and his universalising of the Kingdom now to all of humankind (28:18-20). According to Bruce A. Ware's understanding, Jesus “lived the prototype of new covenant life, by prayer and the word and the power of the Spirit.”⁷⁸

Much of Matthean righteousness, then, in its Kingdom context, is about revealing and enacting God's real intention for humanity, “just as” we see in Matthew's Jesus. In Keck's description,

Underneath Matthew's various statements lies an unstated assumption which he shares with much of Semitic antiquity; namely, the view that the End will be like the Beginning, that final time will be like primal time. ... We see this in Jesus' reply to the question about divorce (19:3-8): 'Have you not read that he who made them [man and woman] from the beginning made them male and female, and said, "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one"? No human should separate what God

75 Esp. authority, in Dan G. McCartney's view; he is particularly interested in this aspect in his “Ecce Homo” article, arguing that in Jesus' actions and teaching, the coming Kingdom restores the proper created order – that of human authority under God. He provides suggestions of ways Jesus lives this out (including proclamation; exorcism; healing; power over nature, with special focus on Matt 8:27 and the disciples' acknowledgement of Jesus as a special human being (ποταπός ἐστιν οὗτος ...); exercising astounding authority, e.g. 9:6, 8 and ... ἐξουσίαν τοιαύτην τοῖς ἀνθρώποις; shepherd imagery, cf. 15:24ff.; time-limit pronouncements). See “Ecce Homo: The Coming of the Kingdom as the Restoration of Human Vicegerency,” *WTJ* 56, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 9-11. See also his discussion of restored human authority as seen the Beatitudes, 17.

76 Of course, this can imply learning from his teaching as well as his ways.

77 See for instance Kärkkäinen, “The Human Prototype,” 31.

78 And shared those same resources with his followers, he adds; Bruce A. Ware, “The Man Christ Jesus,” *JETS* 53, no. 1 (March 2010): 5-18, quote 17. For a discussion of Jesus as fully human example and even “hero” showing the “kingdom lifestyle,” see Klaus Dieter Issler, “Learning From Jesus to Live in the Manner Jesus Would If He Were I: Biblical Grounding for Willard's Proposal Regarding Jesus' Humanity,” *Journal Of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 3, no. 2 (2010): 155-180.

has united.' When the Pharisees ask, 'Why then did Moses provide regulations for divorce?', Jesus replies again that this was a concession to human hard-heartedness, 'but from the beginning it was not so.' In other words, Jesus the proclaimer and bearer of the Kingdom appeals to the original order of things in creation. ... Matthew's ethics is teleological, not in the sense of human needs and goals but of the telos, the goal and end of God's work—restoration of creation.⁷⁹

The Sermon on the Mount, where much of Matthew's Kingdom and righteousness language and various other related concepts lie together,⁸⁰ offers a masterful illustration of this. Addressed primarily to his new disciples, it is the first of Jesus' five key discourses⁸¹ and programmatic to the Gospel. Jesus offers solid teaching on the practicalities of the Kingdom; he tells his audience how humanity has always been truly meant to live. In this Sermon, we are graced with “Beatitudes”⁸² for the divinely happy (οἱ μακάριοι, 5:1-12); “antitheses” (or, perhaps, “transforming initiatives”⁸³) regarding ethical teachings (5:21-48);⁸⁴ tips on “doing righteousness” in three traditional areas of piety (ποιεῖν + τὴν δικαιοσύνην; see 6:1-18); putting Jesus' words into practice (7:21-27), and plenty of new Kingdom teachings. The Sermon envisions a richly varied life,⁸⁵ where ethics are not for a moment abandoned, but carried out joyfully (5:3-12), diligently (7:13-27), prayerfully (6:5-15;⁸⁶ 7:7-11) and in humble confidence (6:25-34) – with the motivation and source being the glorious King and Father (cf. 5:16). It envisions a group of people learning to be human according to the Kingdom, like Jesus, and to enact the desires of their Father in heaven's heart.

2.v Righteousness as fruit overflowing the heart

Having already looked at the basic nature of Matthean righteousness and its relationship to the Kingdom, we can now readily affirm a claim of Matera's: “The norm for moral living is conduct that corresponds to the kingdom: compassion, mercy, and vigilance...

79 Keck, “Ethics in the Gospel According to Matthew,” 48; brackets original. Note how this aligns with Matthew's understanding of the law.

80 For ἡ βασιλεία τῶν οὐρανῶν: 5:3, 10, 19, 20; 6:10, 33; 7:21; for δικαιοσύνη: 5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33.

81 Though “the crowds” are also in audience; 5:1; cf. 7:28f. and their response of amazement at his *authority*.

82 Note Gerhard Barth's Beatitudes-based comments on righteousness/δικαιοσύνη as both demand and eschatological gift (e.g. 5:6; cf. also 6:33): “Matthew's Understanding of the Law,” 139.

83 This wording is the approach of Stassen and Gushee's project, *Kingdom Ethics*: see for instance their introduction of the concept in ch. 6, “The Transforming Initiatives of the Sermon on the Mount,” 125-145.

84 One of these will come into focus for us soon.

85 Persecutions included, cf. 5:10-12.

86 Note how asking that God's Kingdom come involves doing the will of the Father in 6:10.

there is no moral discourse apart from the kingdom of heaven.”⁸⁷ We know, too, that this entails living out God's full and original intention for humankind. Building upon this foundation, then, we are now prepared to narrow our focus a notch. In this thesis, we are essentially aiming to uncover one particular way in which a life in accordance with the Kingdom is shown to operate, as Matthew represents it. En route to that end goal, it is time to investigate the area of Matthew's ethical understanding that recognises one's spoken words – and other actions, righteous or evil – as *fruits* that overflow directly from the heart.

When it comes to the ethics of the Kingdom, Matthew offers us a number of diverse images of moral or ethical contrast: wheat and weeds (13:24-30, 36-43) or chaff (3:12); sheep and wolves (7:15b; cf. 10:16) or goats (25:31-45); wise or foolish builders (7:24-27) or virgins (25:1-13); good or bad fish (13:37-50) and good or bad trees (see 3:10 for the first such example; cf. 7:16-20; 12:33; 15:13; perhaps even 21:18-21). This list, also, is by no means exhaustive! While all of these work in harmony with our argument, the most beneficial Matthean image for us will be that of fruit representing ethical action(s). As simple as its logic may be, Green's outline in *The Message of Matthew* is a worthwhile summary to keep in mind for now:

If we are to retain Matthew's 'kingdom' language, then the members of the church are children of the kingdom (13:38). In Jesus they share the forgiveness of the kingdom (26:28). They hear and understand the word of the kingdom (13:19, 23) and so know the secrets of the kingdom (13:11). They seek the righteousness of the kingdom (6:33). They have been entrusted with the keys of the kingdom (16:19⁸⁸). They pray earnestly for the coming of the kingdom (6:10), and produce the fruits of the kingdom (13:8). At the consummation of the age they will enter into the kingdom (25:23) and inherit it (5:3).⁸⁹

As we move on, this basic abstract reminds us that, for humankind in a Matthean framework, every earthly ethical action is a move made in light of God's Kingdom. It reminds us that these fruits of righteous action are endorsed by his righteous Kingship. Indeed, as R.T. France describes, the fruit-bearing image “is an important [one] for the practical outworking of a commitment to God's service, and it is the mark of genuineness” in that life of faith.⁹⁰

87 *New Testament Ethics*, 42.

88 This is actually spoken to Peter alone; in 18:18 it is spoken to the apostles/disciples as a group.

89 Michael Green, *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven*, *The Bible Speaks Today*, ed. John R.W. Stott (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000), 47-48.

90 R.T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, NICNT, ed. Joel B. Green (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 522.

What is required in Matthew, therefore, is a lifestyle of embodying the Kingdom – living, and hence speaking, the truth. Just as Jesus fruitfully embodies the Beatitudes, and is perfect/complete and mature like his heavenly Father (τέλειος again, 5:48), so also those who know, hear and follow Jesus as his disciples are to embody such a life of truth in their habitual actions. They are entering the fullness of a renewed humanity. Through the fruits of their spoken words and other deeds, they show themselves to be genuinely joined to Jesus and his heavenly Father and are enabled to begin to produce and “overflow” righteous fruit that is, above all, the fruit of the King and his Kingdom.

One thing is essential to notice, even at this early and general stage. Many scholars seem to misconceive the fact that Matthew's focus is not on deeds *as opposed to* words; rather, words are a vital component of one's overall deeds and, as such, should naturally be in alignment with the rest of one's outward actions. Luz, for example, in his *Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, says this: “At the end of our observations on the Sermon on the Mount we noted that the defining property for the Christian-ness of Christians is not words but deeds. The Judge of the world will pass judgment on their 'fruit', that is to say, on their works.”⁹¹ Although this is a valuable *element* in the light of Matthean issues and themes such as hypocrisy, to state it in this way can thoroughly skew our understanding of Matthew's intent.

Luz gets closer to a balanced assessment later on, when he comments that “Matthew depicts Jesus as a human being whose deeds and words are in perfect concord with each other” – still quickly adding that “[i]n our age, when the Word has suffered an inflation of meanings, this point [should] be stressed: Matthew depicts Jesus as a man of deeds, not of words only.”⁹² There is a vital key for us to hold to at this point, in coming to grasp Matthew's portrayal of righteous ethical fruits and the sincere new humanity that ought to come with the Kingdom. Words, for Matthew, are not some separate or even inferior detail in Kingdom living and full humanity, but are an *essential component* in the integrated (and judgeable!)

91 Ulrich Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, trans. by J. Bradford Robinson, New Testament Theology, ed. James D.G. Dunn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 80. He compares this to his conclusion at the end of the mission discourse (ch. 10) that the church's defining mark is its conformity to Christ, and not faith confessions or institutional fabric.

92 Ibid., both quotes 158.

whole of a person's fruits or outflowing activity. It is time to look at this fruit imagery now.

In tracing the fruit/ethical actions image from its inception in Matthew, we can see it emerge first in the preaching of John the Baptist. “Produce fruit in keeping with [or worthy of⁹³] repentance,” he says to some Pharisees and Sadducees (3:8; see 3:8-10 for the full first occurrence). Within its context, John's command to produce fruit is given in order for his hearers and producers of *poor* fruit to evade the coming wrath of God. Far from being free and able to claim a lineal relationship with Abraham as adequate grounds for divine favour (3:9), John's audience is delivered a strong and very personal warning. Through the lips of the Baptist, the evangelist leads off in 3:10 with a metaphor that will be repeated throughout his Gospel. Every individual tree that does not bear *good* fruit will be chopped down and burned. So this practical outworking of one's interior life is, for Matthew, already non-negotiable: “The kingdom of heaven ... requires a radical change of mind (*metanoia*) that must express itself in concrete deeds comparable to good fruit produced by sound trees, if one hopes to escape the wrath of God (3:7).”⁹⁴

In his opening presentation of Jesus' public ministry (4:17; again see also the summaries of 4:23; 9:35), this focus on transformation and repentance in light of the Kingdom continues (likely revealing the same prophetic tradition). As in the Baptist's preaching, Jesus first declares his own call to repentance as a foundation for the Kingdom announcement. This comes, we see, after he has proved his wholehearted allegiance to his King and Father via his response to the temptations of 4:1-11. Matthew's Jesus “walks the walk and talks the talk” here in echoing John the Baptist's focus on producing fruit.

What is more, we must be aware of the *ongoing* fruit-producing emphasis that Matthew holds. We will do well to inform ourselves of a few main passages in which the Matthean Jesus intentionally speaks to the idea of fruitfulness. In fact, it will be helpful to represent certain parts in full. Towards the close of his first Sermon, Jesus describes the danger of false prophets in terms related to fruitfulness:

From their fruits you will know them. Do [people] gather grapes from

93 That is, ἄξιός + genitive. On both, see BDAG, “ἄξιός,” 93f.

94 Green, *The Message of Matthew*, 38.

thornbushes, or figs from thistles? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit.... Therefore, from their fruits you will know them. Not everyone saying to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the Kingdom of heaven, but the one doing the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name and perform many miracles in your name?' Then I will profess to them, 'I never knew you. Go away from me, evildoers [or “workers of lawlessness”; οἱ ἐργαζόμενοι τὴν ἀνομίαν]!' (7:16f., 20-23).

Likewise, in chapter 12 we face one of the passages that most clearly deals with fruitfulness even as it pertains to *speech* in Matthew. Notice the stark Kingdom context in verses 22 to 37, which contain a quote from Jesus regarding blasphemy against the Son and the Spirit. He says:

Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or make the tree bad and its fruit bad, for from the fruit the tree is known. Offspring of vipers! How are you able to speak [what is] good,⁹⁵ being evil? For out of the overflow [περίσσευμα⁹⁶] of the heart the mouth speaks. The good person, out of the good treasury, brings forth [ἐκβάλλω] good [things], and the evil person, out of the evil treasury, brings forth evil [things]. But I say to you that, [for] every careless word which people will speak, they will give account for this on the day of judgement. For by your words you will be justified/rendered righteous,⁹⁷ and by your words you will be condemned (12:33-37).

So it is obvious from the lips of Matthew's Jesus that the outwardly spoken words are in fact a reflection – or more accurately a *projection* (cf. ἐκβάλλω in 12:35, here causing something to become removed from something else⁹⁸) – of the inner treasury of one's heart.

Soon, in chapter 15, a bold and confrontational statement comes from Jesus in reply to the hypocritically religious Pharisees. Having come north from Jerusalem to Gennesaret, where Jesus has just been healing the sick in accordance with his Father's will, the Pharisees confront him as to why his disciples do not follow the elders' tradition of ceremonially washing their hands before eating (15:1ff.):

95 The Greek word here, ἀγαθός, is different to that of the previous verse (καλός), but both are usually and aptly translated as “good” here.

96 “Excess” or “surplus”: “In the NT the word is used at Mt. 12:34 ... to denote that which, present in abundance in the heart, comes to expression for good or evil in the words of a [person]”; Friedrich Hauck, “περίσσευμα,” *TDNT*, vol. 6, ed. Gerhard Friedrich and Geoffrey W. Bromiley, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), 63.

97 Passive of δικαίω.

98 BDAG, “ἐκβάλλω,” 299.

Listen/hear and understand [συνίημι⁹⁹]. [It is] not the [thing] entering into the mouth [that] defiles the person, but the [thing] coming forth¹⁰⁰ from the mouth – *this* defiles the person. ... [Then, after calling the offended Pharisees blind, and the confused disciples dull,] Do you not understand that every [thing] entering into the mouth goes on into the belly and is cast out¹⁰¹ into a toilet? But the [things] coming forth from the mouth come forth from the heart, and these defile the person. For from the heart come¹⁰² evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, sexual immoralities, thefts, false testimonies, slanders/blasphemies. These are the [things] defiling a person; but eating with unwashed hands does not defile the person (15:10b-11, 17-20).

There can now be no question that Matthew sees speech, righteous or otherwise, as a core part of one's ethical action and not separate from it.

2.vi Excursus on hypocrisy

In fact, since the religious leaders happen to be currently in view, now is an appropriate time to take a quick look at hypocrisy: how does Matthew speak of those who attempt to thwart this natural process whereby the fruits of speech and other action overflow the heart?¹⁰³ We can likely tell already that Matthew's Gospel deals a death-blow to hypocrisy. In pondering the question of “Whatever Happened to the Sermon on the Mount?” for a postmodern audience, John D. Caputo draws the dilemma back to a quote of Augustine's: “So if it seems to you that you have understood the divine Scriptures, or any part of them, in such a way that by this understanding you do not build up this twin love of God and neighbor, then you have not yet understood them.”¹⁰⁴ The issue at hand, simply put, is an apparent separation between the inner and outer, or one's heart and one's actions. Matthew employs words of the ὑποκρι- family significantly more than the other Synoptics (14x;¹⁰⁵ cf. 5x Luke; 2x Mark), and both the statistical evidence and the weight of his literary/theological themes show that the issue of hypocrisy is of certain concern here.¹⁰⁶

99 That is, “have an intelligent grasp of someth. that challenges one's thinking or practice”; BDAG, “συνίημι,” 972.

100 A nominative participle of ἐκπορεύομαι; see BDAG, “ἐκπορεύομαι,” 308f. Also in v. 18.

101 ἐκβάλλω again, cf. 12:35.

102 ἐξέρχομαι, another word denoting movement from one place to another; BDAG, “ἐξέρχομαι,” 347f.

103 Again, we iterate that our interest is in *Matthew's picture* of the religious leaders, not in uncovering “the historical Pharisees” etc.

104 *What Would Jesus Deconstruct? The Good News of Postmodernity for the Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007); this citation of Augustine's *de Doctrina Christiana* (1.36.40) is found in ch. 5: “What Would Jesus Deconstruct? Or, Whatever Happened to the Sermon on the Mount?”; 111.

105 As well as a variant reading of 23:14. Interestingly, the words are entirely absent from John's Gospel.

106 This is confirmed by R.H. Smith in “Hypocrite,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 351-353. See esp. 353

We lack space to discuss each instance of hypocrisy arising in the Gospel, of course, but stories that speak to it (such as the parable of two sons in chapter 21, wherein one says he will not obey and work in his father's vineyard but changes his mind and does it anyway, and another says he will but does not; see vv. 28-32) abound throughout. People's initial appearances are not always accurate for Matthew. Whereas the law was perhaps intended to be a gracious guide for a wholehearted nation whose King is God, Matthew's Gospel shows an entirely different reality. He generally portrays the religious leaders as having tragically degenerated all of this into a narrow and inadequate preoccupation with external acts, regardless of the ambition of the heart.

These religious leaders (more specifically, at first, Matthew's notorious character pairing of Pharisees and Sadducees) have been given the opening command by the Baptist in 3:7-12. Brood of vipers that they are, they have been challenged to produce fruit worthy of a life of repentance. It seems that Matthew's Jesus also bears the same view of their state. As we meet them again in chapter 12 – initially just the Pharisees, and joined later on by the scribes – they spark a controversy over the Sabbath and accuse Jesus of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub. Claiming to worship God, in fact they misunderstand and spread lies. These Pharisees are again labelled as the offspring of vipers, and evil people (πονηροὶ ὄντες: the ones *being evil*, or “bad”) who produce fruit of unusable quality (σαπρός,¹⁰⁷ 12:33; see vv. 33-37). Matera is right in his early diagnosis: “Ultimately, the problem has to do with *the heart, the seat of morality*, 'For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks' (12:34).”¹⁰⁸

Chapter 15:1-20, which we have already touched upon, provides us another opportunity to grow our awareness of this hypocrisy idea. In this section, Jesus encounters the fastidious Pharisees and scribes, who accuse him of having disciples who transgress the elders' traditions. It all dovetails nicely with Jesus' warning against judgementalism and blindness to one's own failings towards the end of his Sermon (7:1-6). Of course, Jesus

for discussion of hypocrisy as a Matthean concern.

107 See BDAG, “σαπρός,” 913. Otto Bauernfeind's *TDNT* article also discusses this well: “σαπρός,” *TDNT*, vol. 7, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, trans. by Geoffrey W. Bromiley (1971; reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 94-97.

108 *New Testament Ethics*, 54; italics added.

declares that it is they who break God's commands (vv. 3-6), bluntly contrasting *what God says*, or the Kingdom view (“Honour the father and the mother...,” v. 4) with *what they say* (note the focus on disparity between words: “Whatever you may have profited from me...,” v. 5). It is not the tradition of elders but the word of God that should be followed, as Matthew's Jesus' and, here at least, his disciples' example demonstrates. Calling them “hypocrites” directly for the first time in Matthew's Gospel (v. 7),¹⁰⁹ here he quotes Isaiah (Isa 29:13 LXX). These leaders ostensibly honour God with their lips. Their hearts or the sources of their full ethical outflow, though, are far from God – and so, we might safely assume, far from producing actions in accordance with his Kingdom.

Again, it is a “heart problem”! If any further proof of their predicament were needed, Matthew's Jesus echoes these earlier themes by delivering such a tirade against the “scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!” in chapter 23 as to leave us beyond all doubt.¹¹⁰ Though appearing righteous and “whitewashed” (v. 27), they are filled with death, hypocrisy and wickedness (or “lawlessness”; ἀνομία, v. 28). Matthew's seven woes against these “blind guides” (v. 16; cf. 17, 26; 15:14) show them to fit perfectly with the description in chapter 15 of uncleanness coming from within, via one's mouth (words) and one's other actions (vv. 10-20). Speaking to the crowds, who have been astounded from the beginning of his ministry by his authoritative teaching in contrast to that of their scribes (7:28f.), Jesus' reluctant concession is that they should do as these blind leaders *say*, as they sit on Moses' seat: “Therefore everything they say (λεγειν) to you, do and observe [it]; but do not do according to their works/deeds (εργα), for they say and do not do” (23:3; see 1-4). In other words, they do not practise what they preach.

How does this work, then? Have these “hypocrites” successfully divided their speech and their action? Successfully, that is, for the short term before the inevitable judgement? The answer to this is of significant interest to our study, and it is a resounding “No.” Matthew and his Jesus have already displayed beyond question the organic connection between the inner heart and the outward flow, both of spoken words and unspoken deeds. No contempt for these hypocrites has been held back, who delusively (and deludedly) live for

109 Though compare ch. 6 in the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus warns against the hypocrites who “do [their] righteousness before people, to be seen by them,” in vv. 1-18 and also beyond.

110 And it is such an interesting section that it could be the focus for another thesis similar to this one.

appearances, human approval and the reign of self; the image of hypocrisy is even placed alongside that of lawlessness/ἀνομία (7:23; 13:41; 23:28; 24:12). Ultimately it translates into sinfulness in every facet of life, as the parable of the unmerciful servant so aptly displays (18:21-35). Naturally, then, as a way of life that opposes itself to Kingdom righteousness, it is “a mirror image of that practised by Jesus.”¹¹¹ Such people may attempt to portray a wholeness and integrity with their skilled choice of words and action but, even in Matthew, shall eventually reveal their hearts through an inconsistency in lifestyle and words. Even their ability to tell the truth will fail.

These Pharisees who call Jesus “teacher” (διδάσκαλος) in chapter 22, saying, “[W]e know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality” (22:16 NRSV¹¹²), are the same ones¹¹³ who plainly lie and accuse him of doing evil. As we know from the confrontation over Jesus' restoring of a demon-possessed man in chapter 12 (vv. 22-37), the Pharisees falsely state that Jesus acts only “by Beelzebub/Beelzeboul, the ruler of the demons” (v. 24)! Of course, there is stark irony to their words. Again, after Jesus' death the chief priests and Pharisees call him a deceiver/impostor (πλάνος, 27:62; see vv. 62-66) and predict that the disciples will aim to continue this deception by the theft of his body (v. 64). Then, upon hearing of Jesus' resurrection (or rather, his body's disappearance; 28:12-15), they promptly bribe soldiers to lie and say that the disciples stole the body while they slept (v. 13). We are shown that the whole catalogue of their actions, verbal *and* non-verbal, is flawed and inconsistent. Matthew shows evildoers, even thoroughly-practised hypocrites, as unable to fully and adequately stem their hearts' overflow to speak the truth.

Intriguingly, the same problem goes for the devil in Matthew's Gospel. According to Gracia Grindal's perception, for many, “[T]he most distressing thing about the story of Christ's temptations is the way the devil quotes scripture with such fluidity and conviction.”¹¹⁴ It is true that in 4:1-11 the character of the devil wields Scripture very

111 Matera; *New Testament Ethics*, 56.

112 This is said as part of a plan to trap Jesus in *his* words regarding taxes to Caesar; 22:15. Even in this scenario, helpfully, Jesus outs these sly offenders as “hypocrites”; v. 18.

113 Of course, they may not be *exactly* the same ones, or in fact all of them, though this does not greatly alter Matthew's characterisation (cf. 12:38; “*some of the scribes and Pharisees...*”: ΤΙΝΕΣ ΤΩΝ).

114 Gracia Grindal, “New Sight, New Life: Lenten Gospels,” *WW* 16, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 93.

eloquently and confidently: “And he said, ‘If you are [the] Son of God, cast yourself down. For it is written: “He will command his angels concerning you, and they will bear you up in [their] hands, lest you strike your foot against a stone”’” (4:6; quoting Ps 91:11f.).

It becomes clear within the pericope, though, that the sum of his words is undoubtedly a vile untruth. He is speaking both misleadingly and unequivocally against the King and the Kingdom of heaven, even despite some technically-correct words having been used. In the case of the devil's calm use of the Hebrew Bible, Jesus refutes these very words with others that have *not* been manipulated into an ill-fitting and self-serving context (note Deut 6:16 in Matt 4:7). We should find reassurance in Grindal's summary at this stage of our pondering: “Jesus is able to use scripture to confound the devil because he makes more faithful use of it than the devil, the great deceiver himself.”¹¹⁵ As another of many examples, when the Pharisees' word-trap regarding taxes to Caesar is defeated by Jesus with genuine integrity and understanding, they are “amazed” (θαυμάζω, 22:22) and leave him for the time being. They are amazed – but they do not share the inner treasury that is needed to speak with unbroken integrity like the Matthean Jesus does. Likewise, the devil's interaction above suffers from the same tragic lack.

In the Matthean Jesus, on the other hand, as we have discussed, we grasp “a return to the radical belief in God as Father and king, a belief which for him pervades all areas of human life – social, intellectual, spiritual and moral.”¹¹⁶ This decisive reality means that the sum total of one's outward deeds can never again be legitimately divorced from the inner person; instead, it is visible proof of what is really inside. This is a potentially religion-changing declaration or realisation. Falsely pious words and deeds, or striving attempts at legal piety that are nonetheless detached from the Kingdom's source (compare the “Lord, Lord, did we not...?” of 7:22) will never suffice. These acts are to be revealed as inconsistent with one's entire person. It follows clearly, then, that “if you are the wrong sort of person you cannot do what you are told. First make the tree good, then the acts will follow”¹¹⁷ (see 7:16-20).

115 Ibid.

116 L.D. Hurst, “The Ethics of Jesus,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 210.

117 Ibid., 215.

Despite appearances, our Gospel is a place where now the *initial* emphasis is on who and what one is rather than what one does. In reading Matthew, it is far too easy to rush into an improperly-grounded focus on the latter. Deeds, in line with the Matthean fruit metaphor, can in time begin to grow spontaneously on the “tree” of one’s character; this is true whether such a character is good, becoming whole/mature in relation to the King and his reign, or is deceitful and evil apart from it. Either way – and there is, to our evangelist, no third option.

2.vii Matthew's Jesus on speaking from the overflow: 5:33-37

Having looked at Matthew's general “righteousness” talk by itself and in relation to the Kingdom, and discussed his idea of righteous actions as fruit overflowing the heart, slowly narrowing to the idea of speech in itself as ethical overflow, we have one thing left to do for the moment. Just before we move on to the “how” of Matthean righteousness for our purposes, as a matter of prefatory interest it is well worth targeting an example of Jesus' Kingdom teaching that touches on our topic.

The place Matthew's Jesus comes closest to dealing with the idea of truth-speaking is in his Sermon on the Mount. Here, where Jesus is teaching his disciples (and the crowds) in a form unique to Matthew and absent from the other Gospels – traditionally known as the six “antitheses”¹¹⁸ (5:21-48) – we find Jesus discussing the taking of oaths in 5:33-37. He has built the foundation of the Beatitudes (vv. 1-12), proclaimed his people as those who live in the world to bring glory to the Father (vv. 13-16) and, crucially, defined his relationship with the law (vv. 17-20). Then, Jesus uses these various life examples in the antitheses to describe the exceeding righteousness required of them in 5:20.¹¹⁹ As anticipated, he is going beyond

118 As Daniel J. Harrington reminds us, though, with examples, the title is not overly helpful: “[T]he word ‘antithesis’ fits the rhetorical pattern but not the content. ... Christians often ... talk about the opposition between law and gospel, or refer to the ‘new Law’ promulgated by Jesus. But the Matthean context in which the antitheses appear cautions against drawing sharp contrasts between Jesus and the Torah. Since the antitheses follow Matt 5:17-20 which affirms that Jesus came not to abolish but to ‘fulfill’ the Law and the Prophets, it would seem that the antitheses are intended to illustrate in what that fulfillment consists”; *The Gospel of Matthew*, SP, ed. Daniel J. Harrington (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 90. See also Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary*, 83.

119 Przybylski suggests that righteousness is not a central theme for Matthew – that Matthew really understands things in terms of “discipleship” and “doing the will of God” (cf. 12:50) – but that it is only a point of connection with Jewish understanding and a base from which Matthew can explain his view; see esp. *Righteousness in Matthew*, 116. While we need not (and would not) argue that righteousness alone dominates Matthew thematically, Kingsbury seems to be right in contending that 13:43 (about the

the letter of the law or any mere interpretation, directly to its heart and spirit; he is revealing to his disciples God's original intent for humankind.¹²⁰

The OT narrative makes frequent reference to oaths and vows – spoken by God and humans – without the kind of critique that Matthew's Jesus is about to bring.¹²¹ Indeed, oath-taking remains a traditional Jewish practice in Jesus' day, according to Matthew, and a greatly abused one at that (cf. 23:16-22; 26:63, 72-74). Of course, with the direction of this thesis in mind, we will not centre our interpretation of this passage upon oath-taking or its intricacies.¹²² Instead, we will simply emphasise that which 5:33-37 adds to our present understanding of the righteous speaking that Matthew supports. By doing this, we build a clearer picture of the truth-telling expected of disciples in the First Gospel. Also, despite attempts at various times to reduce this passage to the question of oath-taking or perjury, we shall see a much bigger issue at stake: the integrity of every word before the Almighty God.

righteous being in "the Kingdom of their Father" at the end of the age: Τότε οἱ δίκαιοι ἐκλάμψουσιν ὡς ὁ ἥλιος ἐν τῇ βασιλείᾳ τοῦ Πατρὸς αὐτῶν. Ὁ ἔχων ὦτα ἀκουέτω), 13:49 (separating the evil from the righteous at the end of the age) and 25:46 (on the same issue, again referring to "the righteous", οἱ ... δίκαιοι) do naturally apply to Jesus' disciples; see Jack Dean Kingsbury, review of *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought*, by Benno Przybylski, *CBQ* 45, no. 2 (April 1983): 320-322, esp. 321f. Przybylski's thesis that Matthew favours the ideas of discipleship and doing God's will over that of righteousness is, therefore, not a *wholly* accurate picture. In Kingsbury's estimation, then, "Matthew's 'concept of righteousness' is not the singularly Jewish and provisional notion P[rzybylski] would make it out to be, and [his] entire thesis regarding the meaning and function of this concept begs for revision"; *ibid.*, 322. For our purposes, though Przybylski may have a point on Matthew's various modes of expressing ethical matters, the term "righteousness" will continue to be used. This is especially relevant for us because Matthew is unpacking here, in the antitheses and the greater Sermon on the Mount, what the required greater righteousness (5:20) looks like in practice. Paul Foster agrees, citing the inclusio formed by use of the term δικαιοσύνη in 5:20 and 6:1 and hence arguing its importance in interpreting the antitheses; see Foster, *Community, Law and Mission in Matthew's Gospel*, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament* 2. Reihe 177, ed. Jörg Frey (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 95.

120 Cf. Garland's commentary, where 5:20-48 comes under the section heading "Restoring God's Intention in the Law"; David E. Garland, *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the First Gospel* (New York: Crossroad, 1993), 62ff. Note also Davies and Allison's comments about merely viewing the antitheses under the category of interpretation of the law as "inadequate" in *I-VII*, 508.

121 For examples of this and a substantial discussion, see Stassen and Gushee, *Kingdom Ethics*, 373f.

122 Such as the differences between oaths and vows and hence the various interpretations of this passage, which scholars like France (*The Gospel of Matthew*, 214) and Robert A. Guelich (*The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding* (Waco: Word, 1982), 212f.), cover well. See Hans Dieter Betz, *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*, ed. Adela Yarbro Collins, Hermeneia, ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995), 262, on Georg Giesen's three major classes of OT oaths, and Guelich again for his focus on assertive oaths in this passage; 218.

2.vii.i Opening up the fourth “antithesis”

Again, you [have] heard that [it] was said to those of ancient [times], “You will not swear [falsely],¹²³ and/but you will carry out the oaths [you have made] to the Lord.” But I say to you not to swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; nor by the earth, for it is [the] footstool [for] his feet; nor by Jerusalem, for it is [the] city of the Great King; nor swear by your head, for you are not able to make one hair white or black. But [make] your word be “Yes, yes,” [or] “No, no” – and that which [is] beyond these is from evil (Matt 5:33-37).

The antitheses are often seen as six issues divided up into two sections of three, 5:21-31 and 5:33-48.¹²⁴ If this is so, the first group begins with “You [have] heard that [it] was said to those of ancient [times]” (on murder; 5:21) and the second, the start of the oath-taking passage above, opens with “*Again*, you [have] heard that [it] was said to those of ancient [times]” (5:33).¹²⁵ Garland is one of many suggesting Lev 19:12 as a background¹²⁶ to what has been said about oaths (“And you shall not swear falsely by my name, profaning the name of your God: I am the Lord” (NRSV)). Our saying in verse 33, though, may reflect a number of texts of the Hebrew Bible: related ideas appear in Num 30:2ff. and Deut 23:21-3 on keeping oaths and vows,¹²⁷ and even in the commandment about use of the Lord's name (Exod 20:7; Deut 5:11).¹²⁸ In any case, as elsewhere in the antitheses, it is that which it is understood that YHWH has said in the law that is what has been “said to those of ancient times.”¹²⁹

123 Again, it is not our intention to spend time on the specifics of oaths and vows, but see Davies and Allison, *I-VII*, 534, on the NT *hapax legomenon* ἐπιορκέω as most likely meaning “swear falsely” here.

124 Cf. Guelich, *The Sermon on the Mount*, 177; Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 62; Davies and Allison, *I-VII*; 504.

125 Guelich argues that, form-critically (though this is not an issue that we will delve into), the first three statements have the form of legal ordinances – “definable and enforceable” and stating both ruling and consequence in the third person (cf. 5:21f.; 5:27f.; 5:31f.). The second three, he says, have the form of apodictic commands/prohibitions, or “an absolute demand without qualifications or consequences,” in the second person (cf. 5:33f., 37; 5:38f. and 5:43f.); *The Sermon on the Mount*, 177.

126 To his reasoning: “(1) The first series [5:21-32] begins with the phrase ‘You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times’ [ital. orig.] (5:21) and deals with laws from Exodus and Deuteronomy.... (2) The second series begins, “*Again* you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times’ (5:33), and deals with laws from Leviticus...”; *Reading Matthew*, 62f. See also Darrell L. Bock, *Jesus According to Scripture: Restoring the Portrait From the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic; Leicester: Apollos, 2002), 136; Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 88; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 214.

127 Jesus’ “But I say to you...” saying in vv. 34ff. may remind one of Deut 23:22: “But if you refrain from vowing, you will not incur guilt” (NRSV). According to John Nolland, this is even the most likely background: *The Gospel of Matthew*, NIGTC, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 248f. See echoes of the current passage also in Zech 8:17 and Ps 50:14.

128 Garland also sees deliberate echoes of this commandment here; *Reading Matthew*, 70f. Harrington (*The Gospel of Matthew*, 88) and France (*The Gospel of Matthew*, 214) offer the possibility, which neither argue as highly likely, of the ninth commandment on false witness as a background (Exod 20:16; Deut 5:20).

129 Betz argues to categorise it more strictly as “Hellenistic-Jewish halakah”: “[I]t is regarded as a Torah prohibition, but it is not part of the written Hebrew text of the Old Testament”; *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary*, 264, with a suggestion of a possible written Jewish source.

5:33

As we begin the second set of antitheses,¹³⁰ then, the focus of what “[the listeners] have heard” is on making one's oaths (and/or vows) true and fulfilling a pledged word. Then Jesus says to them, “But¹³¹ I say to you...” (ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, with an “I” emphasis).¹³² What does Matthew's Jesus want to add or contrast regarding their understanding of the law? His directive is “not to swear *at all*” (ὄλως) – which is quite a shock, since the Hebrew Bible itself assumed the use of oaths by God and by people! Indeed, according to Guelich, “Such an absolute prohibition comes without parallel in Jewish sources.”¹³³

5:34-6

Yet Jesus continues, providing examples of unacceptable oath formulae. “[N]either by heaven, for it is God's throne,” he says, “nor by the earth, for it is [the] footstool [for] his feet;¹³⁴ nor by Jerusalem, for it is [the] city of the Great King”¹³⁵ (vv. 34f.). These make up what Stassen and Gushee refer to as the current “vicious cycle” of untruthful speaking in their triadic reading of the passage.¹³⁶ Nolland explains a little of the background to such oath formulae:

What exactly was understood to be going on when an oath was uttered? The fundamental element in an oath seems to be the (mostly formulaic) joining of words of promise or assertion with something or someone of considerable significance. By means of association the reliability of the words is in some way thought to be buttressed (both in terms of the seriousness of the oath taker's commitment to his or her words and of the believability of the words to others).

130 “From a literary point of view [they may be divided into two equal parts], but it is not easy to see any difference in principle between the first three and the last three, and the close similarity in principle between the third and the fourth ... cautions us against reading too much into this ‘new beginning’”; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 214.

131 Though δὲ can also be translated as “and,” and we ought not to create a false disconnect between Jesus' words and the OT, here it is translated as “but” because of the sufficient difference between that which has been “heard” and that which Jesus now reveals as the greater righteousness. Betz confesses uncertainty regarding how 33b and c relate to 34a; *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary*, 266.

132 This authoritative formula we shall discuss later, in conjunction with Jesus' ἄμην-sayings.

133 He adds, “This command stood in bold contrast to Judaism”; *The Sermon on the Mount*, 214. Nolland makes sure to note, though, that there was concern and discussion regarding oaths/vows already within Judaism and strands of Greek philosophical tradition: for instance, “Philo held (*Spec. leg.* 2.2) that oaths should be avoided if at all possible, since fundamentally our word should be our oath. He was also concerned about the cheapening of oaths through their frequent and thoughtless use (*Spec. leg.* 2:6; *De decal.* 92-93; cf. *Sir.* 23:9-11)...”; *The Gospel of Matthew*, 250.

134 On these first two, cf. *Isa* 66:1.

135 Cf. *Ps* 48:2.

136 The triadic reading involves identifying in each antithesis (1) a traditional teaching; (2) a vicious cycle (i.e. the current status quo); and (3) a transforming Kingdom initiative; *Kingdom Ethics*, 375ff.

... [I]n ancient definitions of oaths the emphasis is on God (or the gods) acting as witness.¹³⁷

We may already know that oaths should be made in YHWH's name, according to Deut 6:13 (and again in 10:20). In the first century, though, with his name perhaps left unspoken for fear of misuse, we see such substitutions as these that appear in 5:34f.¹³⁸ Now, surely, people are safe to just “swear away”? It turns out that the answer is a strong “No.”

In fact, we see a similar logic here to that of 23:16-22, where Jesus pronounces woe upon the scribes and Pharisees for their casuistry in oath-taking. Although not dealing with exactly the same issue as chapter 5, his argument there builds to verse 22: “And the one swearing by heaven swears by God's throne and the One sitting upon it.” So it is for those hearing Jesus' Sermon. If, by swearing, one is claiming some kind of authoritative right to hold that by which one swears responsible as their witness,¹³⁹ then it must be realised that these things are all God's alone – and not the swearer's! Jesus takes away *all* recourse to swearing: by God's name (implicit but obvious), by any substitution and even by one's own head (“[N]or swear by your head, for you are not able to make one hair white or black”; v. 36). Even this easy option “usurps God's jurisdiction over one's life.”¹⁴⁰

5:37

What is his alternative for those learning to walk in a Kingdom humanity, then, to the self-important attempt to claim authority over the things of their Lord? We notice that Jesus follows the same dynamic as the previous antitheses and gets to the core of the issue. Anger is the root of murder and must be dealt to before it matures (5:21-26). So too here: rather than lamenting the abuse of oaths, Jesus makes an outright call on living as truthful children of the Kingdom. Having negatively commanded the disciples “not to swear at all” (v. 34a), and then given examples of seemingly-safe yet still unusable oath formulae (vv. 34a-6), he now returns to positively reinforce his point of verse 34a. Matthew's Jesus removes the broken two-tier system of speech, in which only those words spoken under oath can

137 *The Gospel of Matthew*, 249.

138 See Davies and Allison, *I-VII*, 536.

139 Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 249.

140 Garland, *Reading Matthew*, 72. It is worth noting that Betz argues this passage *not* to be primarily about God's name as such, but about “human limitations and the sufficiency of ordinary language”; *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary*, 267f.

(theoretically) be trusted, thus casting doubt over *every* word. He offers them an astonishingly simple command instead. Perhaps distressingly simple! He says, “But [make¹⁴¹] your word be 'Yes, yes,' [or] 'No, no' – and that which [is] beyond these is from evil”¹⁴² (v. 37).

At this stage, it is well worth considering a portion of Jo-Ann Brant's thoughts on what such evil or “infelicitous” oaths that appear in Matthew's Gospel after the 5:33-37 command ultimately portray to his readers (cf. Herod, 14:1-12; Caiaphas' adjuration, 26:59-68; Peter, vv. 69-75). Her article, wherein she uses speech-act theory to analyse the Matthean use of oaths, concludes that

[t]he infelicity of the speech-acts of the oath-takers confirms the felicity of Jesus' assertion that 'oaths are from the evil one'. What Jesus says is so. The provenance of oaths is evil and their intent is deadly, but while oaths serve to leave Jesus abandoned by Peter and to crucify him, this is the fulfilment of Jesus' assertions that Peter will deny him and that he will die. Given the contrast between Jesus' speech and the speech of those who deny him, there is no basis in the narrative for the reader to doubt that Jesus' prediction of his resurrection is also felicitous. The story of the oaths seats the Son of Man on the right hand of power in the mind of the reader and invites the reader to believe that Jesus is the resurrected Lord.¹⁴³

This is true. With the evil nature of people's oath-taking exposed in light of the Matthean Jesus' command, his own faithful, truthful and wholehearted approach to speech shines all the brighter to his glory.

2.vii.ii Straightforward speaking: “Yes, yes” and “No, no”

Of course, the idea has been raised that this “Yes, yes”/“No, no” can, itself, become a new variation on an oath formula.¹⁴⁴ This is far from the point and, while there may be a

141 Often translated in this verse as “let,” but “make” has been used for now to highlight the imperatival “be” (ἔστω ... ὁ λόγος).

142 That is, ἐκ τοῦ πονηροῦ: with the genitive form the same in masculine and neuter, it is not entirely clear whether this should be translated/interpreted as “from evil” or “from the evil one.” France (*The Gospel of Matthew*, 216) and Nolland (*The Gospel of Matthew*, 252) prefer the impersonal interpretation, and Guelich (*The Sermon on the Mount*, 218) opts for “evil one” due to Matthew's personal image of Satan elsewhere as the Kingdom's adversary (cf. 13:19, 38; again 6:13 could be either). Either way, this strong contrast is a Matthean emphasis. Herman Hendrickx even suggests that Jas 5:12b is closer to Jesus' words than Matt 5:37b, which is Matthew's own strengthening of the antithesis (*The Sermon on the Mount*, rev. ed. (London: Chapman, 1984), 79).

143 Jo-Ann A. Brant, “Infelicitous Oaths in the Gospel of Matthew,” *JSNT* no. 63 (September 1996): 3-20, quote 19.

144 Lamentably, Harrington (for example) writes that “[i]n later rabbinic writings a double ‘yes’ or a double ‘no’

Semitic doubling form here,¹⁴⁵ Matthew's intention is clearly to do with simplifying humans' language rather than giving a new oath type. To follow Guelich's understanding, Jesus is basically saying to "let your word be an emphatic yes or no."¹⁴⁶ Nolland clarifies this further with the advice that "we can and should do nothing other than repeat the initial statement." He continues:

All places of appeal outside the self are rejected. The double assertion is not understood to have a greater seriousness of intent than the single assertion...; it is offered only as a way of saying that nothing can be added to the initial assertion. Anything beyond the bare assertion takes away from the consistent transparent truthfulness to which Jesus calls, and inasmuch as it does this it is the product of an evil impulse. ... [T]he final clause draws attention to the allusion back to 5:20 [leading into the antitheses, with the call for those living by the Kingdom to have more abundant righteousness than the religious elite]: the kind of 'abundance' involved in powerfully formulated oaths is not at all the kind of abundance called for in v. 20.¹⁴⁷

So it becomes unmistakable that Matthew's Jesus is calling his disciples to straightforwardly truthful speech, without any dodging or arrogant reference to things beyond one's knowledge or power. God retains his sovereignty, and humanity learns to ditch duplicity and manipulation¹⁴⁸ in favour of the single-minded purity of heart praised in the Beatitudes (μακάριοι οἱ καθαροὶ τῆ καρδίᾳ, 5:8). This is the way of the Kingdom with regards, specifically now, to speaking the truth. "[A]nything more" therefore comes from the opposite camp, according to Matthean thought; it hails from, and necessarily leads to, evil.¹⁴⁹

In Betz's estimation, our passage and especially 5:37 "seems to make a moral rather

could be construed as an oath ... in its own right"; *The Gospel of Matthew*, 88.

145 Guelich argues well for this – which also has rabbinic parallels; *The Sermon on the Mount*, 216f.

146 *Ibid.*, 216.

147 Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 252. In fn. 216 here he adds that, *formally*, "'yes, yes' stands as the alternative to the rejected 'yes, I swear.'"

148 Discussing this, Garland theorises that "[i]n forbidding oaths, Jesus ignores the practical problems this demand creates for his disciples in a society that required oaths in all manner of disputes. With the advent of the reign of God, all such concerns have been superseded"; *Reading Matthew*, 72.

149 While not our concern here, it is worthwhile to mention the debate over the application of Jesus' oath command in a *legal* context or a context of other required oaths. On private and public ethics as one and the same, see Stanley Hauerwas: *Matthew*, Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible, ed. R.R. Reno (Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006), 73. Nolland suggests that while "[t]he concern is centrally with behaviour which is within one's own control, ... this should not be taken so as to restrict the scope of the antithesis to the private sphere"; *The Gospel of Matthew*, 273 (see 272f.). Davies and Allison also discuss the question of absolute prohibition, as well as the relationship between Jesus' command and OT oaths (*I-VII*, 535f.) and Luz offers a historical survey of Christian views (*Matthew: A Commentary*, vol. 1, *Matthew 1-7*, trans. by James E. Crouch, Hermeneia, ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 318-322).

than a religious argument in favor of a straightforward speaking of the truth.”¹⁵⁰ We will come to know even more clearly soon that these are one and the same in Matthew's eyes, with Kingdom ethics and a flourishing humanity rooted in a growing relationship of faith and understanding with Jesus and the Father. The righteousness of the Kingdom is never mere detached morality. For the disciples hearing this demand to speak the truth nakedly before God and others requires them to be the people spoken of in 5:3-16. They are potentially a new community undergoing dramatic reconstruction in light of the Kingdom, towards a surpassing righteousness – beyond the kind they have seen and known in some of their religious models (5:20). Betz is still right to say a little later, then, that “it is the condition of the heart that decides whether the ‘yes’ is really a ‘yes’ and the ‘no’ really a ‘no.’”¹⁵¹ Or, to reaffirm the language we have used above, it is about the heart's overflow.

What we notice from a brief treatment of the passage at hand is that speech is *meant* to be simple. The intention of Jesus in Matthew's antitheses is not to bind the hearer with new and weighty laws – his yoke, after all, is easy, and his burden light (11:28-30) – but it is, rather, to proclaim freedom from such complications. In this antithetical case, he is getting to the heart of the issue of truth-telling and is requiring faithful hearts that overflow clear, righteous speech without any recourse to oaths or any other shaky buttressing of one's word and character.

2.viii Locating this within the thesis' argument

This has necessarily been a chapter of many preliminary ideas. We have seen that any talk of “righteousness” in Matthew is only really understood in relation to the Kingdom of heaven and in relation to Jesus – that Jesus who fulfils rather than undermines the law, and who we already know will display a mature humanity in line with the Kingdom.¹⁵² In this

150 *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary*, 272.

151 *Ibid.*, 274. Such a point relates well to Jesus' upcoming lesson in 15:1-20: the words proceeding from an unclean heart are what ultimately defiles (v. 18), even if their speaker is one among a people who “honours [God] with their lips” (v. 8, quoting Isa 29:13). Their hearts are far from him (same quote v. 8), as evidenced by the sum of their speech and action. See Betz also for his discussion regarding “[t]he similarity of this doctrine to ancient philosophical discussions about ‘frankness of speech’ (παρρησία) as part of the ethos of the speaker (ἠθος τοῦ λέγοντος)”; *ibid.*

152 While briefly treated, that latter idea has not been afforded a significant amount of space for the fairly basic reason that it can be safely assumed in Matthew, and that this space can therefore be better used elsewhere. It is mentioned here as a reminder of areas we have touched upon, and will arise again in our final chapter of argument, in the context of Jesus versus Peter as (potential) truth-tellers at the end of ch.

framework of active Kingdom righteousness, we have also become acquainted with the helpful image of deeds as fruit that grow out of or overflow the heart, narrowing to evidence of speech as a vital component of the overflowing action. To close in further and round out the chapter, we have looked at 5:33-37 as the most specific instruction Matthew provides on our topic, and grasped the clear picture of simple, straight truth-telling required of Jesus' disciples. This is an important foundation; it has necessarily covered some rather basic Matthean theology. What it allows us to do, then, is to move into the next stage of our discussion: the "how." How are Jesus' disciples in Matthew able to become people who routinely speak the truth, rather than going beyond a 'Yes, yes,' 'No, no' and/or flatly lying? How is this theoretical ability portrayed in the text? The first essential element in our answer is the requirement of *faith*.

3 Believing εἰς ἐμέ: Faith as the Right Response to Authority

We know that Matthew views ethical action as overflowing the heart and that the outer requirement is straight truth-speaking. As we enter into the next phase of our investigation, one of the keys for us to appreciate is the primary issue of faith in realising this Kingdom way of life. Within the Synoptic Gospels, “faith” terminology itself (that is, the πίστις word group) finds little use comparative to the Pauline writings.¹⁵³ The fact that it is most prominently used in relation to (or as the impetus for) miracles may have led France to judge that “their uses ... do not usually carry the same weight of theological connotation [as Paul].”¹⁵⁴ Yet this is an unwise conclusion.

More specifically, Matthew's own treatment of faith has been widely overlooked amongst scholarship. Matera's approach in *New Testament Ethics* is fairly typical: “Faith,” he summarises, “is not absent from Matthew's Gospel, even though I have not discussed it. ... Matthew, however, seems to emphasize doing and producing works of righteousness more than faith.”¹⁵⁵ Gerhard Barth's intriguing conclusion is that “[o]n the basis of the emphasis on yielding fruit one must suppose either that πίστις plays no special part or that it is itself fashioned by the effort to do the will of God.”¹⁵⁶ We know and can affirm, of course, the solid Matthean emphasis on “doing righteousness.” Now, though, the aim is to argue that Matthew's picture of faith, particularly as an appropriate response to Jesus' true authority and integrity, is central to our broader vision of the Kingdom life and the righteous actions stemming from it. This will set us up to grasp, in the next chapters, the Matthean link of faith with understanding (two closely-paired concepts for the evangelist), and thus to comprehend how these contribute to Matthew's truth-speaking process.

153 Though see esp. Christopher D. Marshall, *Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative*, SNTSMS 64 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), in particular his conclusions on the Marcan conception of faith, 228-240. He recognises in Mark a two-fold use of the faith motif as “kerygmatic” (believing and accepting Jesus' Kingdom proclamation, and trusting in Jesus, as seen especially in the disciples) and “petitionary” (an essential, concrete act of those needing and seeking the power of the Kingdom).

154 R.T. France, “Faith,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 223.

155 Matera, *New Testament Ethics*, 62.

156 “Matthew's Understanding of the Law,” 112.

3.i Jesus and authority

While there is no intention of bringing a full presentation of Jesus' authority or authoritative titles in Matthew, we ought simply to discuss this authority as a backdrop and basis for the disciples' faith. Jesus' divine authority or ἐξουσία¹⁵⁷ is sourced in his heavenly Father (cf. 11:27; implied in 28:18), who, it should go without saying, is already an obvious object of faith for any would-be disciples (cf. 6:25-34). With that assumed, though, we are going to look here at how Matthew specifically includes Jesus in this also – as the one who represents his Father in action and as the one *speaking* these authoritative truths¹⁵⁸ to them. Such ἐξουσία on Jesus' part is enacted powerfully throughout our Gospel (usually mentioned in relation to his teaching, forgiveness of sins, healing and exorcism¹⁵⁹). In Stanley P. Saunders' view, power/authority is “one of Matthew's primary concerns. It is demonstrated clearly in Jesus' capacities to heal, to calm storms, to multiply loaves, and finally, to overcome death. ... It is this power, transcending the boundaries of the human and the divine, that finally brings Jesus to his climactic confrontation with the authorities in Jerusalem.”¹⁶⁰

In an early appearance of the concept, after Jesus' surprising new interpretations and Kingdom teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, the crowds are awestruck (or “amazed”: ἐκπλήσσω; see 7:28f.) by the authority of his speech, as opposed to that of their scribes. The centurion in 8:5-13 recognises Jesus' authority to heal (and significantly, as we shall see, is honoured for his great faith: τοσαύτην πίστιν, v. 10). Jesus' authoritative rebuke of the storm in 8:23-27 even causes his “little-faith” disciples to wonder, “What kind of person is this? Even the wind and waves obey him!” (v. 27). The Son of Man asserts his own authority on earth to forgive sins in 9:6, which had been understood as solely a divine attribute. Soon afterwards in 9:34 (cf. 12:24), having seen a mute demoniac freed, the crowd is again

157 Defined in the BDAG in terms of “potential or resource to command, control, or govern, *capability, might, power*” and “the right to control or command, *authority, absolute power, warrant*” as used in Matthew: BDAG, “ἐξουσία,” 352f.; italics original. See, for example, 7:29; 8:9; 9:8; 10:1; 21:23ff.; 28:18.

158 To reaffirm what has been written in the introduction, we are not talking here about religious truths in an abstract sense, but primarily limiting ourselves to reliable truth-telling as opposed to lying. There exists undeniable crossover when Jesus is speaking or teaching “Kingdom truth” and when some of Jesus' statements are true in Matthew's framework but seem contrary to visible facts! This, however, is in no way a deterrent from our goal, as Jesus is clearly portrayed in Matthew as one who tells the truth.

159 A range of examples to come in the discussion below.

160 Stanley P. Saunders, “God With Us in Power: Preaching Matthew Missionally,” *Journal for Preachers* 22, no. 2 (Lent 1999): 29.

amazed – but the Pharisees claim that Jesus' authority comes from “the ruler of the demons” (ὁ ἄρχων τῶν δαιμονίων).¹⁶¹

In chapter 10, Jesus officially passes on to his twelve disciples the authority to exorcise and heal. The episode of his walking on water (and Peter's also, if only briefly before his rescue!) prompts worship from the disciples, who see in his powerful actions that he is “truly ... the Son of God” (14:22-33; quote 14:33). Later, the chief priests and elders openly question Jesus' source of authority in 21:23-27, and we witness him make a bold claim to heavenly power at his own trial (see esp. 26:64).¹⁶² At the closing of the Gospel, in 28:18-20, Matthew's Jesus finally declares that “all authority [πᾶσα ἐξουσία] in heaven and on earth has been given to [him].”¹⁶³ He can thus openly commission his followers to go now in his own presence and authority – and to teach thoroughly, baptise, and make many more righteous, obedient disciples who will be learning to live the Kingdom. Kupp, in his *Matthew's Emmanuel*, asserts that

[f]or Matthew there is something new in Jesus' reception of πᾶσα ἐξουσία of v. 18, beyond the πάντα of 11.27 [“All things have been committed to me by my Father”]. Matthew's earthly Jesus teaches, heals, exorcizes and forgives sins with authority, but the Jesus who speaks here is risen.... He has unprecedented authority to command a world-wide mission (and thus to close the unfinished business of Matt. 10), and because of his authority is able to promise his own constant presence in divine terms. What qualifies ἐξουσία in 28.18 as new is thus both its rhetorical flourish as part of the Gospel's climax and terminology – the 'heaven and earth' description, the universal parameters of the four 'all' phrases, and the redactional employment of Jesus' first-person narrative closure to the story.¹⁶⁴

With this narrative climax in mind, we can nonetheless note that in every earthly moment

161 The suggestion that Jesus' authority is validated by his miracles is raised by William R.G. Loader; “Son of David, Blindness, Possession, and Duality in Matthew,” *CBQ* 44, no. 4 (October 1982): 578. Here he gives the example of the feeding miracles framing Jesus' teaching in Matthew (14:13-21; 15:32-39): “Observe how great is Jesus' power (16:7-11a), then you will know that his teaching is true....”

162 This will arise again later as we study the truth-speaking of Jesus and Peter in ch. 26.

163 Gundry is correct to note that this phrase in Matthew adds heavenly authority to the devil's (far inferior) offer of earthly authority in the temptations of ch. 4; *Matthew: A Commentary*, 595. Mention of the temptations passage, which does not employ the term ἐξουσία, is also a good time to recall that the concept, not limited to the ten Matthean instances of the word, is very much present elsewhere with various terminology.

164 *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 211. Regarding this passage, he also states that “[t]his is the first meeting of Jesus with his disciples since his arrest and crucifixion, and from the events subsequent we can assume that the divine passive of resurrection (ἠγέρθη in 28.6, 7) implies the same divine agent as ἐδόθη in 28.18b, i.e., resurrection in Matthew has meant both Jesus being raised from the dead and the bestowal of his unlimited authority”; 211.

the Matthean Jesus is the Son of David who is truly David's Lord (cf. 21:1-11; 22:41-46); the eschatological Son of Man who identifies with his people and will judge (cf. 26:64); Teacher (cf. 23:10); the Messiah; the Son of Israel's God; Emmanuel, "God with us" (cf. esp. 1:23); Jesus, sent by the Mighty One to save (1:21).¹⁶⁵ To highlight every reference to Jesus' authority in Matthew would mean exhaustively recalling his every powerful, humble and truthful act as he enacts and ushers in his Father's Kingdom as the human yet transcendent King.

Indeed, even a second glance at the challenge to Jesus' authority in 21:23-27 will confirm his worthiness and integrity. He has just been teaching¹⁶⁶ the disciples about the ability of those who have faith to speak confidently and receive practical results (21:21f.). Having moved into the temple courts, and continuing to teach the people, the chief priests and elders ask him, "By what kind of authority do you do these things? And who gave you this authority?" (21:23b). He answers, "I will ask you also one question (λόγος), which if you answer (λέγω) me, I also will say (λέγω) to you by what sort of authority I am doing these things. The baptism of John: From where did it come? From heaven, or from people?" (21:24f.). On the surface, Jesus' reply serves simply to hamper the leaders' efforts to falsely accuse him by facing them with their own inconsistency. Yet, there is more here to be discovered. After Jesus' seeming refusal to offer an answer (due to his questioners' inability to meet their side of the verbal agreement; see 21:27b), Gene R. Smillie posits in his absorbing article that the following speech, right through to 22:14, is a long and subtle response to the current question of authority.¹⁶⁷

The teaching section at hand involves three parables (of two sons, murderous and bad/evil (κακός) vineyard tenants and a wedding banquet, respectively), during the second of which Jesus apparently identifies himself with the character of the landowner's son.¹⁶⁸

165 Keener's discussions of Jesus' roles and key background themes in Matthew are worthwhile further reading here; see *The Gospel of Matthew*, esp. 53-68.

166 Utilising the phrase ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν which, again, we shall soon consider in some depth.

167 Gene R. Smillie, "Jesus' Response to the Question of His Authority in Matthew 21," *BSac* 162, no. 648 (October-December 2005): 459-469.

168 Smillie notices that, "[a]lthough the previous parable had been about two sons, it was not until this point that Jesus actually used the term υἱόν – in fact τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ('his own son') with both the definite article and the possessive adjective – followed two words later by the even more poignant τὸν υἱὸν μου ('my own son')." A weighty point! *Ibid.*, 463.

This, Smillie proposes, is a further implicit rejoinder to the religious leaders' question of Jesus' authority: "By demonstrating Jesus' superiority over His opponents in rabbinical debate Matthew revealed Jesus' authority to teach ... that is, to declare theological truth."¹⁶⁹ In this exchange, adds Saunders, "[T]he wheels of earthly power are set in motion that will finally crush Jesus' life. In Matthew, Jesus goes to the cross precisely because he demonstrates a kind of power that is both superior to and of a different kind than that exercised by the Judean authorities."¹⁷⁰ While he does not directly answer his antagonistic enquirers, Matthew's Jesus continues to make his claim to authority plain to see for all those who will see it. So, by what sort of authority and whose? Well, by the "landowner" of the Kingdom's authority (naturally, God the Father's)! By the authority of the one who sends his son for the (evil, as this parable suggests) tenants to reverence or respect (ἐντρέπω) regarding his presence, his action and his every spoken word.

A central issue for us, then, when it comes to our final goal of speaking the truth, is that Matthew's Jesus is presented as the one whose authority is true – and whose *words*, therefore, are also true. Pregeant's insightful claim that "[t]he divine authorization of Jesus' status is only half the picture...; his obedience to God's requirements is the necessary complement"¹⁷¹ is a powerful point here, and might remind us of discussion of Jesus' righteousness and his exemplary humanity in the previous chapter. In any case, it becomes clear in our Gospel that the authority in Jesus' every spoken word and other action is indeed from God alone.

Obviously, Jesus' status as Teacher is strongly applicable here.¹⁷² Though the verb διδάσκω (usu. "tell"/"instruct" or "teach";¹⁷³ cf. also ἐντέλλω, "instruct"/"command"¹⁷⁴) appears an unimposing fourteen times (compare Mark and Luke's 17x each), Kupp is deliberate in identifying teaching as "the distinctive activity of Matthew's Jesus."¹⁷⁵ Pregeant,

169 Ibid., 467.

170 Saunders, "God With Us in Power," 29.

171 *Knowing Truth, Doing Good*, 124.

172 As mentioned in the introduction, this will not receive its own extended treatment.

173 BDAG, "διδάσκω," 241.

174 See BDAG's "ἐντέλλω," 339. This term appears four times in Matthew (4:6: God as subject; 19:7: Moses as subject; 17:9 and the Gospel's final verse, 28:20: Jesus as subject), in comparison to Mark (2) and Luke (1). Says Kupp, this usage "categorically redefines Jesus' sayings as fundamental religious truth, as ἐντολαί"; *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 216. Jesus' words and teachings surpass even those of Moses.

175 Ibid., 215.

likewise, goes so far as to argue that “Jesus' role is defined largely in terms of teaching.”¹⁷⁶ The five rich discourses that break up Matthew's narrative provide ample illustration here. To further support this idea of Jesus authoritatively telling the *truth*, though, we must sharpen our focus. The most fruitful way for us to do this fairly briefly is by analysing a unique introductory statement of Jesus', used throughout the Gospel when he teaches both his disciples and the crowds. This statement is a phrase that the Authorised/King James Version has made famous as “Verily I say unto you,” the New Revised Standard Version translates as “Truly I tell you” and the popular New International Version interprets, appropriately enough for our discussion, quite simply as follows: “I tell you the truth.”

3.i.i Ἀμήν, λέγω ὑμῖν (σοι)...

Witherington makes the prudent remark that “[s]ometimes one learns more about a person by observing how they speak, than by what they say.”¹⁷⁷ Here we are dissecting both with regard to Jesus. The Greek ἀμήν λέγω ὑμῖν (σοι) – “amen, I say to you” – is a core phrase that appears some thirty-one times in Matthew¹⁷⁸ (cf. Mark 13; Luke 6; John 25, with ἀμήν always doubled), and is always on Jesus' lips. The ἀμήν itself, as has been suggested above, is often translated as something like “verily” (cf. KJV), “solemnly” or “truly.” It may even be indirectly translated. The whole phrase may be rendered in English by process of dynamic equivalence, or paraphrased, to emphasise the truth of a forthcoming statement; “I promise you” is one example (CEV), or note the straightforwardness of the New International Reader's Version: “What I'm about to tell you is true.”

As is well-known, ἀμήν derives from the Hebrew אָמֵן (root אָמֵן) which, confirmed by Jeremias and others, “means 'certainly'. It is a solemn formula with which already the Israelite of OT times took up a doxology, an oath, a blessing, a curse or an execration. Without exception it is used in answers assenting to the words of another”¹⁷⁹ (see, for

176 *Knowing Truth, Doing Good*, 123.

177 Ben Witherington III, *The Christology of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990), 186.

178 Interestingly, in all 9 Lukan parallels to Matthew's uses, ἀμήν does not appear. Instead, Luke uses δέ (Luke 10:12//Matt 10:15); γάρ (10:24//Matt 13:17); ναί (11:51//Matt 23:36); ἀληθῶς, “truly” (12:44//Matt 24:47); or (in the 5 remaining cases, paralleling Matt 5:18, 26; 8:10; 11:11; 18:13) omits ἀμήν without replacing it. See Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology*, vol. 1, *The Proclamation of Jesus*, NTL (London: SCM, 1971), 35.

179 Jeremias, *The Proclamation of Jesus*, 35. Cf. also Witherington, *Christology*, 187; David Hill, *New Testament*

instance, 1 Chr 16:36; Deut 27:14-26; Ps 41:13; doubled אָמֵן in Num 5:22; Neh 8:6; very rarely at the opening of a statement, e.g. 1 Kgs 1:36; Jer 28:6). The Hebrew term, significantly, brings to a close the first four books of the Psalter (Ps 41:13; 72:19; 89:52; 106:48) and confirms the covenant blessings and curses (Neh 5:13; Jer 11:5, for example). These OT uses are vital background for our understanding. Similarly, in NT usage outside of the Gospels, the Greek ἀμήν appears to be employed to fervently affirm others' statements, or to provide a validating response to prayers, doxologies, blessings and the like (cf. 1 Cor 14:16; 2 Cor 1:20; Rev 5:14; 7:12; 19:4; 22:20 as a liturgical formula). In both Testaments' uses, the terminology denotes the recognition of those other than the original speaker of the reliability and truthfulness of spoken words.

The uniqueness, or otherwise, of ἀμήν as used in the Gospels

It has long been asserted by Jeremias and his supporters that the Gospels' use of ἀμήν is a revolutionary new formula: suddenly, the term is used (1) *only* at the beginning of solemn statements (in the form of ἀμήν λέγω ὑμῖν), and (2) *only* by Jesus, in order to emphasise the authoritative truth of his very own words that are to follow. While it may be a radical shift, it is a shift that requires further thought (and potential nuancing) in response to the ambitious studies of two German scholars in particular. We will cover them only briefly due to space restraints, but it is important to note their contribution nonetheless.

Firstly, Victor Hasler's redaction-critical approach attests that the term was used similarly to Jesus by charismatics as an authoritative liturgical formula in the Easter cult activities of Hellenistic communities, before being directly attributed as a saying of Jesus. Secondly, Klaus Berger, with his semantic and form-critical methodologies, claims ἀμήν as an oath formula within Hellenistic Jewish and early Christian apocalyptic literature. Both scholars search for a Hellenistic background for Jesus' usage, due to seeing Hebrew אָמֵן-usage as overwhelmingly responsory (as mentioned above),¹⁸⁰ and both assertions challenge

Prophecy, Marshalls Theological Library (London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1979), 64. France adds the note that the Hebrew root, אָמֵן, conveys faithfulness and reliability, which is also relevant to us here; *The Gospel of Matthew*, 184.

180 On both Hasler and Berger see Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 65f.; John Strugnell, "Amen, I Say Unto You' in the Sayings of Jesus and Early Christian Literature," *HTR* 67, no. 2 (April 1974): 177-181. The German works themselves, which I have not used, are: Victor Hasler, *Amen. Redaktions-geschichtliche Untersuchung zur Einführungsformel der Herrenworte 'Wahrlich, ich sage euch'* (Zurich/Stuttgart: Gotthelf

the notion that the ἀμήν-formula is truly unique to Jesus' teaching. According to Hill's evaluation, "[T]heir work ... has diminished the strength of Jeremias's claim that the *amēn legō hymin* formula is completely new on the lips of Jesus and that his use of *amēn* to strengthen an affirmation is entirely unprecedented."¹⁸¹

Strugnell's article, in fact, also raises the oft-overlooked occurrence of a "*prepositive 'mn*" – one used as the beginning of an assertory legal statement – on a seventh century BCE Hebrew ostrakon: "Truly (*'mn*), I am innocent."¹⁸² However, one thing must be made clear. Quite regardless of the possibility of scarce evidence such as this being able to weaken Hasler's and Berger's foundations, and regardless of there being extant examples of intendedly authoritative ἀμήν-usage in, say, apocalyptic Hellenistic Jewish Christianity (as daunting a mouthful as that is!), the ἀμήν λέγω ὑμῖν spoken by Jesus within the Gospels still stands as an outstanding proclamatory formula. We may notice this concession, of course, as a quiet footnote in Strugnell's paper: "[T]hat a prepositive *'amēn* is *not part of normal Hebrew speech patterns*, and could not be 'naturally' part of Jesus' own way of speaking, is challenged by none of the reviews known to me."¹⁸³ Jeremias' viewpoint, then, does stand largely unscathed.

The meaning of ἀμήν λέγω ὑμῖν in Matthew

What, then, is the nature of this new and peculiar saying? "The retention of this alien [terminology] shows how strongly the tradition felt that the way of speaking was new and unusual."¹⁸⁴ In all of the Gospel traditions, we acknowledge, it is strictly Jesus' own utterances that are opened with and accented by such a formula.¹⁸⁵ So rather than providing secondary approval to another's statement (conforming to the familiar sense of "agreed" or "so be it"), the ἀμήν λέγω ὑμῖν that Matthew's Jesus employs is an unequivocal assertion of

Verlag, 1969); Klaus Berger, *Die Amen-Worte Jesu. Eine Untersuchung zum Problem der Legitimation in apokalyptischer Rede* (BZNW 39, Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1970); and by the same author, "Zur Geschichte der Einleitungsformel 'Amen, ich sage euch'", *ZNW* 63, 1972, 45-75.

181 *New Testament Prophecy*, 65f.

182 Strugnell, "Amen, I Say Unto You," 178-81; though clearly unconvinced, he also notes Berger's interpretation that the ostrakon-writer's "brethren will answer [him] 'Amen,'" with the אָמֵן being linked to the previous statement instead of the following; 179.

183 *Ibid.*, 178; English italics added.

184 Jeremias, *The Proclamation of Jesus*, 36; cf. Hill, *New Testament Prophecy*, 64.

185 BDAG confirms this dual usage of ἀμήν as (normally) affirming what has been stated and (only in Jesus' words) as an "asseverative particle" beginning a declaration: "ἀμήν," 53f., quote 53.

the speaker's own authority.

Although lacking in any apparent analogy or equivalent formula, it seems that the closest parallel we have is the prophetic messengers' formula, "Thus says YHWH" (or "Thus says the Lord": in Hebrew, with many variations, כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה). Such a formula, found with frequency in the Hebrew Bible (see, for instance, Exod 4:22; Lev 8:5; Josh 7:13; 1 Sam 2:27; 1 Kgs 12:24; Isa 10:24; Jer 2:5; Ezek 21:3; Amos 1:3; Zech 1:3), is a common introductory statement used by the prophets of YHWH. Its use proclaims to their hearers that the words to follow are not merely of their own design, but come to and through them from God. Indeed, the messengers' speech is a divine utterance *inasmuch as* it is not theirs but God's. The authority, too, rests not in the speaker but only in YHWH. With an understanding of this OT formula, then, where do the truthful declarations of Matthew's Jesus stand in relation?

Hill's commitment to an apocalyptic setting leads him virtually to equate Jesus' ἀμήν-sayings with the "Thus says YHWH" formula (cf. its use, particularly, in introducing Ezekiel's prophetic messages). To him, Jesus is yet another divinely authorised messenger who holds his delegated authority "as a teacher and preacher who stands in the prophetic tradition."¹⁸⁶ Yet, not once within Matthew (or, for context, the other Gospels either) does Jesus ever use a "Thus says the Lord" formula to validate his statement of the truth. His own formula asserts, instead, the truth of what he *himself* says to the hearers: "Ἀμήν – truly, certainly – I say to you." While it would be both an incoherent reading of the Gospel and theologically myopic to deny the reality and importance of Jesus' prophetic role and his relationship to the prophetic tradition in Matthew (linked in, too, with his role as Teacher),¹⁸⁷ we must see this outstanding new formula as significantly surpassing the previous tradition.

For Matthew's Jesus, his kind of authority is unique. He does not speak on the temporary, conditional authority of YHWH, but on his own inherent authority as *the* messenger; *the* teacher; *the* true revealer, interpreter and fulfiller of the Law; *the* reliable

¹⁸⁶ *New Testament Prophecy*, 66.

¹⁸⁷ For Jesus as a prophet like Jeremiah, 16:14; 21:12; 23:29-32; a prophet-healer similar to Elijah and Elisha, esp. chs. 8 and 9 healings (although not the signs-prophet christology developed by Mark); Jesus is introducing, not predicting (cf. John the Baptist) the inbreaking eschatological Kingdom. Analysis of prophecy /discussion of Jesus' prophetic function is not the purpose of this investigation, but see esp. Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 55-58; G.F. Hawthorne, "Amen," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 7f.

truth-teller in accordance with his Father's will. His Father, we recall, *is* YHWH, the God of Israel. These aspects we have touched on already. So, although his authority comes from the same place, for Jesus it is part of his identity and not an external addition. With his radical ἀμήν-proclamations, Jesus

confirms the truthfulness and authority of his own words in advance. This strongly suggests that he considered himself to be a person of authority above and beyond what prophets claimed to be. He could attest to his own truthfulness and speak on his own behalf, and yet his words were to be taken as having the same or greater authority than the divine words of the prophets. Here was someone who thought he possessed not only divine inspiration, like David..., but also divine authority and the power of direct divine utterance. The use of *amēn* followed by 'I say unto you' must be given its full weight in light of its context – early Judaism.¹⁸⁸

It is not that the ἀμήν-sayings of Jesus are explicit claims to deity. Throughout Matthew, it is worth being aware, these three introductory words in themselves are never the cause of plots to execute him for blasphemy. While Daniel Doriani contends that whenever Jesus uses ἀμήν in this formula, he shows awareness of and makes implicit claims to his deity¹⁸⁹ – and Christian believers may be tempted to utter a quiet “amen” to his findings – one is not able to build a solid case for this on the usage of the ἀμήν-phrase alone. Nor, of course, does it imply otherwise. Yet, Jesus' divine self-understanding aside, Hawthorne judges that the expression is “intended by Jesus not so much to direct attention to his divinity as to his authority to speak for God as *the messenger*”;¹⁹⁰ although an indispensable part of Jesus' subtle teaching regarding himself, hearers are, in this instance, invited to come to their own conclusions. Nonetheless (excluding Berger's apocalyptic Christian possibility here), “[n]o other person – apostle or prophet – of the early church felt at liberty to follow [Jesus'] example by making use of this very formula”¹⁹¹ (compare, perhaps, Paul's “I say ... not the Lord” of 1 Cor 7:12). It is the exclusive domain of the Lord

188 Witherington, *Christology*, 188. While he may be talking about the historical Jesus, his comments here also apply to Matthew's Jesus.

189 Daniel Doriani, “Jesus' Use of *Amen*,” *Presbyterion* 17, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 126. Here he adds to this bold picture: “[T]he little word 'amen' means far more than 'This prayer is over.' On Jesus' lips, it reminds us that he is Lord and God and performed his entire ministry in full self-awareness.”

190 “Amen,” 7; italics original. David Aune's study curiously cautions against viewing the formula, authoritative as it is, as “reflect[ing] a *unique* authority claimed by Jesus”; *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 165; italics original.

191 Hawthorne, “Amen,” 7. Cf. Witherington, for whom this formula seems a phenomenon “without real precedent, nor did it spawn attempts at imitation in the early church”; *Christology*, 188.

Jesus, whose Father and God is “God of ἰσχύς” (Isa 65:16: “God of faithfulness,” NRSV; or “God of truth,” NIV).¹⁹²

The ἀμήν-formula as used by Matthew's Jesus

What sort of true statements, then, does the Matthean Jesus deliver when using his ἀμήν λέγω ὑμῖν introduction? They are diverse. It makes logical sense that such sayings are generally ones that would necessarily *require* Jesus' powerful stamp of authority – which is, as we are aware by now, the only validity provided – in order to be accepted. Indeed, his statements that follow seem to bring unexpected truths or outrageous claims: those religious people who flaunt their deeds of *righteousness* (and who are here labelled “hypocrites”) now have nothing to look forward to in the Lord's judgement at the consummation of the Kingdom, having already “received their reward in full” (6:2, 5, 16)!

Still a few more examples will broaden our picture: the shocking truth, again, that a *Gentile* centurion has greater faith than anyone Jesus has found in Israel (8:10); that *Sodom and Gomorrah* will have an easier time at the judgement than any town that ignores the disciples' message about the dawning Kingdom of heaven (10:15); that John the Baptist is the greatest born of a woman, but even the *least* in the Kingdom is greater than he (11:11); that if disciples have faith as small as a *mustard-seed*, they can make a mountain move with a word of command (17:20; 21:21); that unless the disciples change and become like *small children*, they will never even enter the Kingdom (18:3); even that *tax collectors and prostitutes* are entering the Kingdom before the chief priests and elders (21:31)! Impossible! Such illustrations as we have glanced at here (that may already be alarming or horrifying, or both, to their original audience within Matthew) are only a sample few.

Further, perhaps in the same startling way, Jesus' ἀμήν-formula often leads into statements of great weight regarding the realities of Jesus' Kingdom mission, including the way of life in the Kingdom now, his own betrayal, the final judgement and beyond. In the formula's first ever use, Matthew's Jesus, who came to fulfil the law and show a new and greater way of righteousness, affirms that – contrary to appearances – *no jot or tittle* will

192 Cf. “The Amen” title, used of Jesus in Rev 3:14.

disappear from the law until all is accomplished (ἕως ἂν παρέλθῃ ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ, ἰὼτα ἓν ἢ μία κεραία οὐμὴ παρέλθῃ ἀπὸ τοῦ νόμου ἕως ἂν πάντα γένηται; 5:18).

There is the previously unapparent Kingdom truth, too, that because of Jesus in their midst, his disciples will be able to bind and loose *whatever* has been bound and loosed in heaven (18:18); and, after the completion of Jesus' earthly mission, when the Son of Man is enthroned at the renewal of all things, the twelve (or "you, the [ones] following me"; ὑμεῖς οἱ ἀκολουθήσαντές μοι) will sit on twelve thrones and judge the twelve tribes (19:28). Further, Matthew's Jesus also reveals regarding the judgement to come – in which he shall play his active part – that all innocent blood will come upon this generation (23:36). He uncovers the fact that one of his own twelve disciples will betray him (26:21) and that Peter will disown him three times before the cock-crow, despite his pledge never to fall away (26:33f.). As with the first-mentioned examples, introducing various kinds of surprising realities, these are all unexpected statements of how the Kingdom of heaven really is and works.

Dorani explains one of the most obvious uses of the authoritative formula well:

Amen lego humin also punctuates the teaching of truths unknown in the Old Testament.... For example, in Matthew 5 Jesus comments on the Old Testament or Jewish interpretations of the Old Testament six times, saying 'You have heard that it was said..., but I say to you,....' He concludes the first section with the 'amen' in 5:26, and by so doing asserts that his authority exceeds the Jewish interpreters' and that he brings a revelation surpassing even that of the Old Testament law itself.¹⁹³

As we recall from a previous chapter's discussion of the Kingdom (and of 5:17-20 and fulfilment), the Matthean Jesus is intending, by his own authority in relationship to his Father, to realign the hearers' misunderstandings or incomplete understandings with the fuller reality of Kingdom life.

These weighty sayings may seem to some to defy overall classification; Hawthorne ultimately thinks so.¹⁹⁴ Nonetheless, we do well to look to Witherington and confirm the

193 "Jesus' Use of *Amen*," 126. Though he also upholds the law, as we remember from 5:17-20.

194 Though he does attempt it; "Amen," 7.

Kingdom stance we have been taking to date. Witherington is convinced that our formula is “not just a way of affirming the truthfulness of any kind of utterance.”¹⁹⁵ Instead, he too offers the Kingdom as a context, suggesting that the sentences introduced are “usually those involving a statement about the inbreaking dominion of God or Jesus' work.”¹⁹⁶ His conclusion is broad, as we can see, but perhaps necessarily. We may strengthen this by summarising that Jesus, in his unique authority, uses the ἀμήν-formula to tell *unexpected truths in alignment with the Kingdom*. These truths are often in contradiction to what would naturally be accepted or expected as reality;¹⁹⁷ logically enough, this calls for people to have faith in the speaker.

A brief word on λέγω ὑμῖν

Before moving more clearly into the notion of faith as a response to authority, a few words must be said about the shorter and less peculiar formula used by Matthew's Jesus, “I say to you”/“I tell you” (λέγω ὑμῖν; chapter 5 examples, before a concluding ἀμήν, are referred to in Doriani's quote above). While Aune comments that the phrase is found rarely in Greek literature because they found it “a repugnant form of expression,”¹⁹⁸ he nonetheless cites its use in Judeo-Christian literature. The saying often appears in prophetic or oracular contexts (cf. Rev 2:4; 1 Thess 4:15; 1 Cor 15:51; cf. even God speaking in Isa 16:14 LXX: καὶ ὑμῖν λέγω), but by no means always, and is what Aune classifies as a “legitimation formula” – implicitly maintaining the authority of a speaker who is higher in social status than the one(s) he or she is addressing.¹⁹⁹ This brings some excellent insight on its social function in NT and extrabiblical usage:

[T]he expression is used only by one whose social status is superior to the individual or group being addressed. The social situations in which this formula occurs include the following: (1) a father speaking to his son(s), (2) a teacher addressing his pupil(s), (3) a rabbi introducing a contrary halakhic opinion to his colleagues, (4) a magician addressing the supernatural powers under his control, (5) a preacher addressing a sermon of repentance or admonition to his audience, (6) an apostle speaking to a Christian community whom he wishes to influence, (7) two peers engaged in a dispute with each other, (8) an angel addressing a

195 *Christology*, 188.

196 *Ibid.*

197 Cf. the use of the formula often “when [Jesus] corrects errors or is engaged in disputes” (e.g. Matt 6:2, 5, 16; 18:3); Doriani, “Jesus' Use of Amen,” 126.

198 *Prophecy in Early Christianity*, 164.

199 *Ibid.*, 165.

[human], and (9) God addressing an angel.²⁰⁰

Because of the inherent authority involved in such a formula, Aune sees no real difference between λέγω ὑμῖν and ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν. Yet, keeping Aune's contributions in mind and appreciative of his study, it is still the preference here to uphold the uniqueness of Matthew's ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, as it has been maintained above. We can affirm with Aune, though, that Jesus' "I say to you" carries great weight in the context of Matthew's Gospel²⁰¹ (cf., for instance, 5:20; Jesus' emphatic ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω ὑμῖν, "but I say to you," six times within his radical Kingdom interpretation of Torah in 5:21-48; and the reference to the day of judgement being more bearable for Tyre, Sidon and Sodom than for those cities in which Jesus has performed many miracles (almost identical to the ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν of 10:15) in 11:22, 24).

Naturally, Jesus' sayings use a variety of methods and emphatic formulae. Indeed, we can even confess with Hawthorne that "[m]any of his significant sayings have no introductory formula whatsoever!"²⁰² Most of the indispensable discourse material in Matthew's Gospel could effectively be listed here (but see, as concrete examples, 10:32f.; 12:28; 18:35; 22:37-40). The heart of the matter, a finding to be clear about as we shift to studying the response of faith, is that the Matthean Jesus is, always, faithfully truthful and authoritative.

This is true when, in his prophetic and teaching role, Jesus is able to make statements confirming that which his hearers already know; it is true when he challenges the status quo for the sake of a real Kingdom understanding; it is true when he introduces teachings with a uniquely authoritative formula, such as the ἀμὴν-sayings; and it is equally true when he introduces his teachings with a shorter formula or nothing at all – though we learn from their use that he is distinctive indeed,²⁰³ as a Teacher and as a person. Because of this, we are

200 Ibid., 164.

201 Aune describes Jesus' use of the formula as one way of expressing authority in a teacher-student relationship; *ibid.*, 165. Bruce J. Malina discusses both variations on the formula as a "word of honour" used by Jesus "to underscore the truth and sincerity of his judgment," likening it to oath-taking/swearing that engages and implicates only the individual, not God or others. A very interesting thought if we remind ourselves of 5:33-37! See his "Social-Scientific Approaches and the Gospel of Matthew," in *Methods for Matthew*, 189-90, quotes 189.

202 "Amen," 7.

203 The actual *uniqueness* of Jesus, we might note, is most fully seen in light of *all* that Matthew says about Jesus (including, for instance, Jesus as Emmanuel), rather than via this particular formula alone.

about to argue that in the context of a radically inbreaking Kingdom (and one that may be apprehended or missed altogether), Jesus' hearers in Matthew have a requirement to believe in him and his words.

3.i.ii *The right way in Matthew: a faith response to Jesus*

With our focused groundwork laid, we are now prepared to acknowledge the issue of faith as the appropriate response to Jesus' authority. We may be well aware, both from within the Synoptics and elsewhere, that faith is established as the right response to the good news of God's Kingdom.²⁰⁴ It is the right attitude for people to have before God the Father (6:25-34 and most anywhere else). Moreover, it is widely stated that faith in the Synoptics is prominently linked to miracles – which are often, though without a complete or rigid connection, in response to one's faith (in Matthew, on both miracles and correct gospel response, see 8:2-4, 5-13; 9:2-8, 18-26, 27-31; 14:28f., 35f.; 15:22-28, 30; 20:30-34; compare 13:54-58; 17:14-20; 21:19-21).²⁰⁵ It is fitting for us to hear France's valuable comment on the matter: that faith in such contexts focuses on “a practical trust in the power of Jesus to meet physical need (or, in the case of exorcisms, to bring spiritual deliverance).”²⁰⁶

While we might add to his comment first of all the plain fact of the social/religious needs of outcasts, some recognition of the more overtly 'spiritual' side, of consistently electing by faith to accept and live the gospel of the Kingdom, is also worthwhile. Smillie touches on this aspect in his discussion of Jesus' authority in chapter 21 and sets us up well: “[I]t becomes gradually clearer that His true answer, for those with ears to hear, was 'I am the Son, and as *the Son of the Father* I do what I do by the authority that the Father has given Me. The real question is, How do *you* respond to that authority?’”²⁰⁷

204 Rudolf Bultmann's article emphasises the specifically Christian usage of πιστεύω as accepting the kerygma, which obviously includes an element of believing, and in which “[o]bedience, trust, hope and faithfulness are also implied”; “πιστεύω,” *TDNT*, vol. 6, 208.

205 France mentions that the noun πίστις is almost exclusively related to miracles in the Synoptics, while the verb πιστεύω has to do both with miracles and gospel response; “Faith,” 223. On the latter and its contrast to the OT and Judaism, which already saw the vital importance of 'faith' in relating to God, see 205 and 209: “[T]he primitive Christian kerygma brings the message that there is one God, and with this it also brings the message about Jesus Christ His Son, and about what God has done and will do through Him. Acceptance of this kerygma is πιστεύειν,” quote 209.

206 *Ibid.*, 223.

207 Smillie, “Jesus' Response,” 465; italics original.

In accord with the above uses, and the Hellenistic and biblical usage of πιστεύω as “trust,” “rely on” and “believe,”²⁰⁸ we can confirm faith as something that recognises authority. This is exemplified most directly in Matthew's chapter 8 pericope of the Roman centurion, who sees in Jesus a functional authority: “For I [myself] am also a person under authority...” (8:9). In France's terms again, “[I]t is not Jesus himself who exercises faith [in this picture], but those who come to him for help. The correlative to the faith of the suppliant is the authority of Jesus.”²⁰⁹ (Likewise, in 17:19f. the disciples are said to be able to perform wonders by having faith while – as we know already – the miracles of Jesus are presented as a response to someone else's!)

We pay particular attention to France on this topic with good reason, and his comment on the *Marcan* object of faith is worth mentioning here: “[I]t may be significant that Mark describes this miracle-working faith as faith in God rather than faith in Jesus (Mark 11:22). The key to the exercise of such faith is not its quantity,²¹⁰ but the God to whom it is directed.”²¹¹ Particularly in the Matthean Gospel with which we are concerned, though, this powerfully effective faith in the living God is *also* revealed as faith directed toward Jesus Christ, the one telling and acting truth before his audience. Matthew 18:6 sees Jesus describe his precious followers as “these little ones who *believe in me*” (τῶν μικρῶν τούτων τῶν πιστευόντων εἰς ἐμέ); remarkably, this seems to be – with the exception of its parallel in the longer version of Mark 9:42 (i.e., that includes εἰς ἐμε) – the one time in the Synoptics that believing in Jesus is the clearly articulated basis for a relationship with God.²¹²

Such a declaration is outstanding in this sense, yet also totally consistent with what we know of the person of Jesus in Matthean narrative. It is not abnormal, when faith is to do with a confident recognition of authority, for Matthew to take the step of using this kind of faith-language with not only God but also Jesus as its goal. So a response of believing in Jesus – who is in wholehearted alignment with his heavenly Father and speaks the truth accordingly – is required.

208 France, “Faith,” 203.

209 *Ibid.*, 223.

210 Here we may recall Matt 17:20 and the effectiveness of mustard-seed sized faith.

211 “Faith,” 223.

212 Though see also Matt 27:42, where witnesses of the crucifixion mockingly promise, “Let him come down now... and we will believe in him” (πιστεύσομεν ἐπ’ αὐτόν).

3.ii Locating this within the thesis' argument

We have already come to understand that the Kingdom righteousness and humanity in which the disciples are to walk entails right acts naturally growing from a right character. In the area of right speech, we know that the most relevant teaching section Matthew's Jesus provides proposes a humble directness in one's words. Now we can see that faith, too often virtually ignored in studies of Matthew, is becoming a core idea to attend to; it is the necessary response to God and, specifically here, to Jesus' outstanding acted and spoken authority. Such ongoing trust is the right response to the Truth-teller.

This is the basis on which we continue to explore the “how” of truth-speaking, and its importance will become clearer still in the next chapter. Our attention turns, now, to uncovering two core images to do with the faith that has just been identified. We are exploring the ideas of vision and hearing as important Matthean images that link the concepts of (1) believing and (2) understanding into an inseparable reality that teaches us how those in the Gospel are able to become those who speak the truth.

4 Faith *and* Understanding: The Imagery of Vision and Hearing

In Matthew, acts of righteousness in the context of the Kingdom grow organically on the tree of good character. It is Jesus who heralds and embodies this arriving Kingdom in full integrity and authority; the appropriate response to his words, deeds and miracles, then, is one of faith. With this established, it is essential now to look at some of the ways Matthew speaks about humans grasping the apparently life-changing Kingdom gospel Jesus preaches and represents. It is, as has been suggested by the direction of the previous chapter, an issue of faith.

Alongside this faith, also, comes the crucial step of *understanding*. It is not a mere surface acknowledgement (even Matthew's Pharisees could do that!) but rather a depth of comprehension of the way and the life of God's Kingdom, including in this case the ethical requirements of humble transparency as we have seen in 5:33-37. Such properly enriched perception thus allows and leads into genuine character and behaviour transformation. This chapter will now show the certain link between faith and this kind of understanding. To begin with, let us limit ourselves and our discussion to Matthew's own way of describing the overall process at play here: we will get to know what we are working with in this Gospel by outlining and analysing some of his key vision and hearing imagery that has to do with this pairing of faith and understanding. Building upon that, we will then be able to summarily discuss the value of this imagery in terms of the responsibility to see and hear: that is, the responsibility to understand via faith.

4.i Vision and hearing as recurring motifs

For Matthew, the concept of people's faith and understanding (or lack thereof) in response to God, to his Kingdom, and to Jesus and his gospel, is aided by the use of sensory imagery. In particular, he employs the imagery of vision and hearing. Throughout our Gospel, Jesus continually exhorts his audiences to hear, or listen, with their ears and to understand; he mentions the blessedness of those who do see and hear (13:16; cf. 16:17), and constantly

refers to the blindness and deafness of Israel and its current religious leaders, who (as we know well already, in the world of Matthew's text) greatly lack in genuine faith and understanding as shown by their words and actions. Indeed, Matthew even holds up certain people who are literally blind and yet have faith as an ironic contrast to these figuratively blind leaders of Israel. As we will 'see' quite rapidly ourselves, these prominent motifs form a strong bridge between the two vital realities of faith and the understanding of the truth.

In chapter 11, Matthew's Jesus tells the inquiring disciples of John the Baptist to go back and report to John what they hear and see – the kind of miracles and preaching that show Jesus to be the expected Messiah and the one who is bringing in the Kingdom (11:4-6). He then uses an ἄμην-saying and other statements to commend the role of John the Baptist (11:11-14: “[I]f [those present and seeing/hearing] are willing to receive/accept [δέξασθαι] it” in faith for themselves, that is; 11:14) and delivers them a blindingly obvious (no pun intended) imperative: “The one having ears, [let them] hear/listen” (ὁ ἔχων ὦτα ἀκουέτω; 11:15). As Carson notes,

The clause 'if you are willing to accept it' does not cast doubt upon the truth of the identification; but, like v. 15, it acknowledges how difficult it was to grasp it.... For if the people had truly understood, they would necessarily have seen Jesus' place in salvation history as the fulfillment of OT hopes and prophecy. That is why the sonorous formula of v. 15 is added (cf. 13:9, 43; 24:15; Rev 2:7, 11 et al.): the identification of John with [the] prophesied Elijah has messianic implications that 'those with ears' would hear. The formula is both a metaphorical description of and a challenge to spiritual sensitivity to the claims of the gospel.²¹³

For one to “see and hear” and understand the truths of the Kingdom Jesus is unfolding, then, here one must have the faith-based disposition to actively receive them as truths. Let us sense for ourselves, then, an overview of these sensory motifs as they appear in Matthew.

4.i.i Narrowing to vision in particular

Firstly and generally, we can see indications elsewhere in Matthew that vision is involved with ethical matters. A few examples will suffice, beginning with the Sermon on the Mount: it is only the pure or undivided in heart who “see” God (5:8); “And if your right eye causes you to stumble...” (5:29 (cf. 18:9, “And if your eye...”), par. Mark 9:47); “The lamp of

²¹³ Carson, *Matthew 1-12*, 268.

the body is the eye. If then your eye is sound/good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great the darkness [is]!” (6:22f., par. Luke 11:34-36). Again, still in the Sermon: “And why do you look at the speck/splinter that is in the eye of your brother [or sister], but the beam in your [own] eye you do not observe? Or how will you say to your brother [or sister], ‘Let me cast out the speck/splinter from your eye,’ and behold, the beam [is] in your [own] eye? Hypocrite, first cast out the beam from your [own] eye, and then you will see clearly to cast out the speck/splinter from the eye of your brother [or sister]” (7:3-5, par. Luke 6:41f.).

The same emphasis continues later on in the Gospel, including Jesus' parable of a landowner's free generosity with his labourers: “Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with that which is my own? Or is your eye bad because I am good?” (20:15; cf. the explicitly ethical interpretation of the NIV, which reads, “Or are you envious because I am generous?”). Even Jesus' post-resurrection promises regarding the disciples, in the lead-up to their final commissioning to go and do and teach his way of righteousness in the world, continue with the appropriate language of their “seeing” him (in Galilee; ὁράω, 28:7, 10 and its fulfilment in 28:17). With a preliminary scan over the gospel, we can already tell that the idea of vision is both important to Matthew and related to ethical Kingdom action.

The literally blind versus the figuratively blind

In relation to our notion of vision and righteousness, then, an article we have touched on previously by William R.G. Loader discusses the “Son of David, Blindness, Possession, and Duality in Matthew.” He posits that the literally blind in Matthew (two accounts of the restoration of their sight in 9:27-31 and 20:29-34; cf. the references to Jesus healing the blind in 12:22-24; 21:14) are used specifically to show the right response to Jesus.²¹⁴ The proper response there is, again, one of faith, and juxtaposes glaringly with Israel's lack of faith and figurative lack of vision. His argument becomes clear by tracking the faith theme throughout chapters 8 and 9 in the lead-up to the first blindness-healing account:

The simple faith of the leprous outcasts (8:1-5) is followed by that of the

214 “Son of David,” see 575.

centurion, set in sharp contrast by Matthew to the lack of faith found in Israel, because of which the sons of the kingdom shall face judgement (8:10-13). Peter's mother-in-law also illustrates the true response of faith (8:14-15), and the call to discipleship and faith in the face of the storm forms the theme of 8:18-27. The encounter with the demons at Gadara results in rejection of Jesus by the populace (8:28-34). In the healing of the paralytic the authority of the Son of Man is disputed by the scribes (9:1-8), and in the following episode the Pharisees complain at Jesus' fellowship with outcasts (9:9-13), but Jesus goes on to explain the basis of continuity and discontinuity with the old. Verses 18-26 give two further illustrations of true faith. The kind of response and the kind of people who respond to Jesus thus form a major theme and source of controversy in these accounts of Jesus' deeds.²¹⁵

In 9:27-31, then (and also vv. 32-34, he would argue), such a theme continues; Matthew even draws a clear faith emphasis into the tradition he uses in 9:27-31.²¹⁶ “Do you believe that I can do this?” Jesus asks the two blind people (9:28). They do, and “[i]n accordance with [their] faith it will be done to [them]” (9:29, and their sight is restored in 9:30; cf. 8:13; 15:28). Here we discover that the people who truly “see” – who have the faith that leads to spiritual understanding – include the literally blind!²¹⁷ In Matthew, it is these Jewish outcasts who are highlighted as some of the believing examples and who recognise Jesus as the awaited Messiah, the Son of David (9:27; 20:30-31²¹⁸). Meanwhile, the Pharisees instantly falsely accuse him of collusion with the ruler of demons for his restorative acts (9:34). True vision in these and any ethical matters is only made possible by faith.

The second apparent use of the Bartimaeus tradition, if we are to follow Loader for our current purposes – 20:29-34 and the healing of two blind men – is closer to its Marcan source. Interestingly, the reference to faith is omitted here (20:34; cf. Mark 10:52), possibly because Matthew is receiving inspiration from Mark 8:22-26 at this point;²¹⁹ however, any

215 Ibid.

216 Ibid. Prior to this, Loader suggests Matthew's use of the Marcan tradition that describes blind Bartimaeus' healing (Mark 10:46-52) here and at 20:29-34; 572.

217 Also other “disabled” people such as the mute demoniac (9:32-34) and outcasts of all kinds, foreshadowing in part a full Gentile inclusion.

218 According to Loader, “‘Son of David’ [which is in both of these passages as well as, for instance, the blind being healed in 21:14] is employed by Matthew ... primarily within this nexus of motifs concerned with Israel's unbelief. As such, it is the appropriate term of response to the Messiah of Israel rather than a term designed to allude to the healing function of Jesus”; “Son of David,” 585. It is still important, of course, to bear in mind links between the Son of David and healing.

219 In a footnote, Loader prefers this explanation to that of J.M. Gibbs, that Matthew omits the faith reference and uses a different word for “eyes” (ὄμματα) to contrast the response of the two sets of blind people in 9:27-31 and 20:29-34: “(‘Purpose and Pattern,’ 459-60).... For Gibbs, ‘according to your faith’ casts doubt

potential omission that leads to our final text need not concern us greatly. It is still plain to see via the faith-based cries of the two men over the top of the crowd's rebukes (20:30-31), and their straight request for sight, resulting in their restoration, that these accounts are both positive models in contrast to Israel's general response. Their faith allows them to see or understand something of the Messiah, and Matthew has emphasised this by way of this pair of stories. It would seem to be highly significant that the theme's recurrence near the conclusion of Jesus' ministry comes just before his final confrontations with the blind and misunderstanding Jewish leaders.

Even elsewhere, in 12:22-24, the demon-possessed man being healed is described as both blind and mute (12:22; compare Luke 11:14-15), while Matthew's Pharisees speak the same lying accusation of Jesus as they have done previously, of his uniting with demons (12:24). In fact, the passages that follow – affirming that Jesus drives out demons by God's Spirit, not Beelzebul (12:28), that to contradict this is to blaspheme the Spirit (12:31-32) and that people will be judged based on these and all words spoken, which flow from the heart (12:33-37) – compellingly iterate the life contrast between those with real sight and those without. Not only this, but it leads on into the discussion of parables in chapter 13, which we will touch on momentarily. “[T]he continuation into [chapter] 13 extends the theme of Israel's rejection of Jesus, this time describing Israel as 'blind.' ... Matthew is contrasting Israel's continuing blindness with the two blind men who chose through Jesus to see.”²²⁰ The stories of the literally blind people's healings uncover what the faithful and obedient response of Israel could have been, and its fruits: fuller understanding regarding the inbreaking Kingdom that leads them to their healing, life-restoration and their own right action within it.

Instead, Israel is presented as blind and possessed. Israel as something of a corporate entity/character (particularly its leaders in representation of an official response) reveals its

on the quality of faith, in the first episode, and he sees this inferior faith manifest in the subsequent disobedience to a command of Jesus, whereas the choice of *ommata* in the second indicates healing of the inner blindness as well as the outer blindness”; *ibid.*, fn. 16, 573. Stephen Voorwinde takes a similar stance to that of Gibbs, arguing that Jesus scolds one pair of blind men and has compassion on the other; see *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 41. As discussed, both accounts quite clearly show the faith response of the blind people, and we do well to listen to Loader's judgement for our purposes in this case.

220 *Ibid.*, 577.

inner blindness in Matthew through offence at and rejection of Jesus and his kind of Kingdom. As well as the blindness pericopae mentioned above, it is worth reflecting on 21:14-16, where the chief priests and scribes respond to Jesus' healings of the blind and lame, and the subsequent praise, with an indignant disbelief at their words: "Do you hear what they are *saying*?" (21:16). Yet Matthew is clearer even than this. His Jesus actually directly addresses their blindness: for Israel, the blind (in this case, the Pharisees) are leading the blind, therefore both shall fall into the pit (15:14)! Then in his big confrontation with the scribes and Pharisees in chapter 23, Matthew's Jesus accuses them of blindness *five times* (23:16, 17, 19, 24, 26). Carol D.C. Howard affirms this observation. In her article on the blindness and deafness motifs, she readily asserts that "Matthew's most significant figurative use of the term *blind* is in his vilification of the scribes and Pharisees ... for misconstruing [that is, *not understanding*] the Law and true righteousness.... *Blind* is used with *hypocrite* as an indication of the ethical disposition of the Jewish leaders."²²¹

It is a powerful statement, then, for Matthew never once to attribute a consummate blindness to the disciples. In 15:1-20, when Jesus is speaking on the elders' traditions, hypocrisy and defilement, he only goes as far as asking the confused disciples, "Are you also still void of understanding [ἀσύνετος]? Do you not understand [νοέω] that...?" (15:16f.²²²). A passing comparison to the Marcan wording is helpful: "Having eyes, don't you see and having ears, don't you hear?" (Mark 8:18). Such imagery of blindness is reserved in Matthew for the people and leaders of Israel, rather than the followers of Jesus. While the disciples, soon after, are censured for their littleness of faith (16:8) and therefore their insufficient understanding (16:9-11), this definitive blindness that seems to preclude any hope for development in Matthew²²³ is not attributed to them. They obviously believe and thus "see" *something*, even very little, and come to accept further teaching from Jesus. At the conclusion of the passage, they understand his metaphor of the "yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees" (16:12), just as he also clarified his parable to them in chapter 15 above. Unlike the blind and hypocritical Jewish religious figures, these willing followers of Jesus are learning to walk in their elementary level of faith and therefore at least have right

221 "Blindness and Deafness," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 81f., quote 82; italics original, though brackets mine.

222 Though cf. NRSV, which chooses to translate νοέω in 15:17 as "see" rather than understand.

223 As shown most vividly in the woes of ch. 23; see esp. v. 33.

understanding of the Kingdom's ways available to them.²²⁴

4.i.ii *Vision and hearing in chapter 13*

As has been mentioned already, a section worth spending some time on in relation to linking vision/hearing and understanding is that portion of Matthew's Gospel that presents and discusses parables in chapter 13 (13:1-52). Without having space to replicate the text in its entirety here, it will be good to walk through it and then to bring a summary. In this scene, Jesus is presenting Kingdom truths in parables before the crowds. He first tells a parable of a farmer scattering seed in various places, with various and appropriate results (13:3-8; followed by, "The one having ears, [let them] hear/listen," again; 13:9). When the disciples ask why Jesus speaks to the people only in parables, his response is delivered in terms of understanding: Kingdom of heaven knowledge has been given to "you" – those, that is, who are choosing in faith to follow him – but not to "them." The reason for such parabolic teaching, Jesus explains using sensory imagery, is that, "[although] seeing/looking, they²²⁵ do not see/look; [although] hearing/listening, they do not hear/listen or *understand*"²²⁶ (13:10-13; quote v. 13).

Next, we are left without doubt that their lack of understanding is linked to a lack of faith. It is a matter of prophetic fulfilment that these people refuse to turn to Jesus and therefore lack sufficient knowledge or understanding of the truth (13:13-15). The disciples, in contrast, can see and hear (13:16).²²⁷ In verses 18-23, Jesus uncovers the meaning of the parable of the sower – which is purely about "hearing" or understanding the truth about the Kingdom – for his disciples.²²⁸ The person who receives seed into themselves as a patch of "good soil" (presumably by faith) is the one who, unlike the others, hears and understands,

224 The disciples' journey in the broader area of faith and understanding will be covered in the next chapter, including these moments; here, we merely touch on them in relation to the blindness metaphor.

225 That is, ultimately, the crowds etc., rather than the disciples.

226 Both Greek verbs, βλέπω and ἀκούω – see/look and hear/listen, respectively – can have both an active (intently seeking information) and a passive (receiving sensory information) meaning. See BDAG, "ἀκούω," 37f. and "βλέπω," 178f.

227 Jesus mentions here in 13:17 that his disciples, who are now privy to all of his personal presence and teaching, see and hear much more than earlier prophets and righteous people were able to witness and comprehend. This clearly does not take away from the righteousness of those of previous times, but is a reflection of the dawning now of the Kingdom.

228 See parallels in Mark 4 and Luke 8.

and therefore produces the fruit of right actions (καρποφορέω; cf. καρπός, like the fruit imagery elsewhere).

As France asserts, “The bearing of a crop indicates that this 'understanding' is not to be interpreted as a purely intellectual grasp of truth; it is rather the lifestyle commitment which the 'message of the kingdom of heaven' demands.”²²⁹ Jesus then tells further Kingdom parables, about weeds and wheat (13:24-30), a mustard seed (13:31-32) and yeast (13:33); he tells everything in parables (13:34), and by revealing otherwise-hidden Kingdom realities in this way he fulfils a prophetic word from Ps 78:2 (see 13:35). Next, having left the crowd and entered the house, Jesus' disciples ask him the meaning of the weeds parable, which he elucidates in terms of righteous and evil people (13:36-43); again, “The one having ears, [let them] hear/listen” (13:43b).

To his followers only, now, he tells the parables of the Kingdom as hidden treasure (13:44) and a very valuable pearl (πολύτιμος μαργαρίτης, 13:45-46) – two prized objects to which one commits oneself wholeheartedly and will eventually see the rewards. Jesus then both tells and interprets a parable similar to that of the weeds and wheat, about a net catching good and bad fish that represent the righteous and the evil, to be separated “at the completion of the age” (ἐν τῇ συντελείᾳ τοῦ αἰῶνος, 13:47-50). Finally reaching the end of his present set of lessons (the central of the five discourses), the good teacher asks his disciples: “Did you understand [συνίημι again] all these [things]?” They claim that they have indeed understood (ναί, “yes”; 13:51), and the Matthean Jesus concludes by praising people who are learned in the rich truths of both the law and the now-discernible matters of the Kingdom of heaven (via a simile; 13:52).

Having scanned the passage, let us deal in more depth with just a few portions that can benefit our discussion. Understanding comes to those whose hearts are open by faith to receive it. Matthew 13:14b-15, in the NRSV, is phrased like this:

You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. For this people's heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of

²²⁹ *The Gospel of Matthew*, 521. France also brings a good reminder that the hundred-, sixty- or thirty-fold yield (v. 23) is a variation in earthly *productivity*, not in heavenly reward; 522.

hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn – and I would heal them.

Matthew's use here of Isa 6:9f. from the LXX²³⁰ bears witness, according to Carson, to the fact that “[t]he Messiah who comes to reveal the Father (11:25-27) succeeds only in dulling what little spiritual sense many of the people have, for they do not want to turn and be healed.”²³¹ So why, in fulfilment of Isaianic prophecy, do these people present in Matt 13 not see and hear the truth that is spoken by Jesus?

Like the other Synoptic evangelists (Mark 4:10-12; Luke 8:10; cf. Acts 28:26f.),²³² Matthew intends the Isa 6:9-10 quote to show the underlying reason for Israel's rejection of Jesus' authoritative and thoroughly-true teaching. In their discussion of form criticism in Matthew, Donald A. Hagner and Stephen E. Young indicate that “[n]ot only are parables used for a purpose other than the communication of intellectual truth, they are a means of avoiding this communication, *unless it is accompanied by what is more important, a change in the hearer.*”²³³ That is, the understanding of the truth will only come when that *literal* hearing is accompanied by faith. Luz suggests that the μήποτε (something like “lest”: NRSV, as above, translates it within the phrase “so that they might not...”) in 13:15 does not suggest the notion of divine predestination, but rather “puts on record Israel's guilt: they *closed* their ears and eyes so as not to hear or see, otherwise God would truly heal them!”²³⁴ So too Gundry, who argues for an emphasis on human responsibility in 13:14f. in no uncertain terms.²³⁵ We can be sure that for Matthew's Jesus, the recipients of the seed or the gospel

230 In the MT version, YHWH is actually directing the prophet to *tell* the faithless Israelites to be dull in their senses as described above, lest they (somehow) see, hear and understand without wholeheartedly living the life of faith in the Lord. In the LXX and this Matthew quote, the emphasis is instead placed on the simple fact of their sensory predicament. Note the faith link in Isa 7:9b NRSV: “If you do not stand firm in faith, you shall not stand at all.”

231 D.A. Carson, *Matthew*, vol. 2, *Matthew 13-28*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary, ed. Frank E. Gaebelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 310.

232 Even if others, such as the ἵνα in Mark 4:12c, take this in a different direction.

233 Hagner and Young, “The Historical-Critical Method and the Gospel of Matthew,” in *Methods for Matthew*, 26; italics added.

234 Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, fn. 5, 86; italics added. For this interpretation, see also Luz's *Matthew: A Commentary*, vol. 2, *Matthew 8-20*, trans. by Wilhelm C. Linss, Hermeneia, ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001); cf. fn. 8, 314.

235 He mentions, for instance, Matthew's use of the LXX instead of MT; the absence of Matthew's usual introductory formulae of fulfilment by putting it all in Jesus' words; the absence of ἵνα, often present to express divine purpose; the use of ἀναπληροῦται, which he translates as “completely fulfilled,” as well as the insertion of αὐτοῖς, which he translates as “by them,” to imply human responsibility; and the alteration of Matthew's usual “what was spoken through the prophet” to “the prophecy of Isaiah” – “to

message – seers and hearers – do carry genuine responsibility to be watching and listening with the receptive eyes and ears of faith.

This is confirmed by Dan Otto Via, Jr. and his treatment of “Matthew on the Understandability of the Parables.”²³⁶ He asserts that “for Matthew, even more than for Mark, the parables are not understood as having the power to make [people] disciples. They do not illuminate the hearer’s situation and compel [them] to make a decision but must themselves be illumined by additional language.”²³⁷ Such additional explanations are generally given to those who are already committed by faith – that is, to the disciples – and not to outsiders, who may well remain outside. These disciples, he adds, obtain understanding of the parables’ truth because, “having become disciples independently of the parables, they have the special privilege of private explanations”²³⁸ (cf. 13:12). They, he is arguing, have chosen by faith to be open to the truth.

Gerhard Barth also affirms the notion of a “complementariness” between faith and understanding. For him, though, it is a slightly different causality: πιστεύειν, to believe, is “impossible without” συνιέναι, to understand.²³⁹ He argues that “[i]f understanding denotes the openness of the understanding for the revelation,²⁴⁰ that drives us to the consideration of the relation between understanding and faith. Understanding is then obviously the presupposition of faith.”²⁴¹ As his evidence, Barth first contrasts the words of Jesus in the wake of the water-walking passage in 14:31-33 with its parallel in Mark 6:52 (while Mark mentions the disciples’ lack of understanding and hardened hearts after Jesus walks on water, Matthew omits this and instead emphasises the “little-faith” of Peter and then the

avoid any thought of divine causation that might be mistaken as a lessening of human responsibility”; *Matthew: A Commentary*, 257. Hear Carson, though, who argues that Matthew “simultaneously wishes to affirm that what is taking place in the ministry of Jesus is, on the one hand, the decreed will of God and the result of biblical prophecy and, on the other hand, a terrible rebellion, gross spiritual dullness, and chronic unbelief. This places the responsibility for the divine rejection of those who fail to become disciples on their own shoulders while guaranteeing that none of what is taking place stands outside God’s control and plan”; *Matthew 13-28*, 308-311, quote 309 (in relation to v. 13). Note also BDAG, “μήποτε,” classing Matt 13:15 as among those “denoting purpose”; 648f.

236 “Matthew on the Understandability of the Parables,” *JBL* 84, no. 4 (December 1965): 430-432.

237 *Ibid.*, 432.

238 *Ibid.*

239 “Matthew’s Understanding of the Law,” both quotes 116.

240 In fact, this “openness” sounds a lot more like faith than understanding from the outset, but there is more to discuss of his argument also.

241 *Ibid.*, 113.

disciples' confession). He then compares Matt 16:5-12 with Mark 8:14-21, on understanding the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees (or Pharisees and Herod, in Mark 8:15). In this case, Matt 16:9 does not carry over a συνίημι in discussing the disciples' misunderstanding, but a νοέω remains (cf. Mark 8:17). In Matthew, they come to better understand after hearing Jesus' words (v. 12).

Barth argues that understanding is thus portrayed as coming *before* faith in Matthew's narrative, suggesting that the disciples have the former and not the latter. Rather than arguing with Barth that this is so, and that Matthew has unwittingly allowed another understanding-word (νοέω) to slip through the cracks here in his use of Mark's Gospel – “Matthew obviously intends here the same alteration as in 14.31ff., which, however (by allowing οὐπω νοεῖτε to stand), he has not quite consistently carried through”²⁴² – we are well-advised to look at Matthew beyond merely the text's use of Mark. One thing is patently clear if we test both Matthean pericopae used by Barth (14:31-33; 16:5-12) and if νοέω here and elsewhere means anything like “grasp or comprehend someth. on the basis of careful thought, *perceive, apprehend, gain an insight into.*”²⁴³ Marcan wording and thematic emphases aside, the disciples do lack understanding.²⁴⁴

Matthew, making his own creative word choices and with his own unique emphases (in the first pericope, for example, little-faith Peter joining Jesus on the water before beginning to fall in 14:28, and the disciples' collective confession after both have re-entered the boat in v. 33), by no means dismisses a lack of understanding in his own narrative.²⁴⁵ Instead, he highlights what is, for him, the issue at the heart of the disciples' walk of understanding and

242 Ibid., 114. Barth asserts here, unconvincingly, that νοέω must refer to the disciples' misunderstanding of an “enigmatic saying” because they *already* understand the ἐξουσία of Jesus. The pericopae themselves, for instance the worship and declaration in the wake of Jesus' water-walking and rescue in 14:33, suggest otherwise.

243 Rather than the secondary, specialist use of the word that Barth suggests, as in the footnote above, as though νοέω were not already a familiar term for understanding in Matthew (which we have come across already in looking at vision and hearing). This quote is how the BDAG categorises its 16:11 use: “νοέω,” 674f.; italics original.

244 In fact Marshall, in his analysis of faith in a Marcan context, also concludes that understanding can only come through *faith* as a response to initial perception of Jesus' significance. Without a faith response, “fuller understanding is impossible”; *Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative*, 236. On Mark 8:14-21 (used by Barth in his second pairing of parallels, alongside Matt 16:5-12), Marshall recognises that “the disciples who 'still' had no faith in 4:40, 'still' do not understand (8:17,21),” 220.

245 He does, of course, imply a *process* of the disciples' gaining understanding at the end of each pericope: 14:33; 16:12. This will be covered in our next chapter on the disciples' own journey.

living out this understanding: their littleness of faith. Barth's argument cannot, therefore, be used successfully to claim understanding as either already-realised or having logical priority before faith in Matthew's Gospel. Faith, here, is the initial (and ongoing) posture of openness that allows understanding to develop, as is made unambiguous in chapter 13. It, not understanding, is the starting point for would-be disciples.

On the other hand, what of the responsibility of God to *be* understood? In the parable of the sower (13:3-9; interpretation vv. 18-23), the "path" represents those who never did nor ever will understand the Kingdom truth (13:19). In J. Philip Wogaman's words, "It makes no connection with their experience."²⁴⁶ For Matthew in the context of chapter 13, though, the sower of seed (ultimately, God) simply is not under scrutiny. The determinative factor is whether the *ground* to be planted enables the seed of understanding the gospel to flourish long-term or whether it causes it to die. Earlier in 11:25, our evangelist combines the responsibility to learn by faith with the role of God to administer an understanding of the truth: Jesus says, "I praise you, Father, Lord of the heaven and the earth, because you concealed these [things] from [the] wise and learned, and you revealed them to infants/little children." The Father does reveal his truth. It is those with a humble faith (cf. the humility at the heart of our 5:33-37 oaths passage), whether seen by others as sufficiently "grown-up" and educated or not, who eventually grasp hold of it, as seen in the parables chapter.

The responsibility of listening and hearing

So in Matthew, if people are open and willing to know the truth – and to know the Truth-teller – they *will* see and they *will* hear. Howard, in her blindness and deafness article, confirms that "[t]he efficacy of the parables depends on the nature of the hearers. Jesus often calls upon his hearers to listen carefully"²⁴⁷ or to take notice of what they perceive.²⁴⁸ He does all this, in Greek, as imperatives! Of course, there are those who will opt instead for self-assured blindness and deafness, showing offence at Jesus and his gospel as a clear

246 Here he raises the question of the sower's obligation, primarily focusing on the *church*, to deliver the gospel in such a way as to connect with the thinking of the present age, and not merely people's emotions: "If the gospel is not received until it is understood, then clearly it has intellectual as well as emotional dimensions"; Wogaman, "Homiletical Resources From the Gospel of Matthew: Faith and Discipleship," *QR* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 93-111, quotes 100.

247 "Blindness and Deafness," *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 82.

248 11:15; 13:9, 18, 43b; 15:10: "hear/listen and understand"; cf. 7:24-27; 11:4-5. Note also his very deliberate "I tell you the truth"/"I say to you" approach to teaching, which we have already covered.

symptom.²⁴⁹ The Matthean characters' own responsibility for this “something internal in the offenders themselves,”²⁵⁰ or their overflowing heart condition, is discussed at length by Paul S. Minear. We must strongly agree with this in the Gospel's context. A person can choose misunderstanding, offence and cursing (13:4-7) or carefully looking, listening and understanding in faith – with attendant divine happiness/blessing (v. 8; cf. 11:6). As Matthew is so good at doing, no third alternative is presented.

We can accept, then, that truths about the Kingdom, or these “things hidden since the creation of the world” (13:35), are only adequately perceived through the eyes (so to speak) of faith. Something hugely at play in Matthew, therefore, is that such truths necessarily run against both the spoken untruths and the false mindsets of all those *without* a functioning faith. Somewhat like the use of Jesus' ἀμύνη-sayings, it is clear that what Jesus does in 15:10 when he calls the crowd at Gennesaret to “listen/hear and understand” is to correct the incorrect statements of the Pharisees and the scribes (about breaking elders' traditions of hand-washing; 15:1-2). He is confronting and rectifying statements and understandings that are in severe misalignment with the Kingdom of heaven. His corrections on this occasion even betray that stark reality that, while “this people” make public efforts to “honor [God] with their lips,/ ... their heart is kept far off from [him]” (15:8; quoting Isa 29:13). Just as in our faith chapter, so it is with vision and hearing and the realm of faith *and* understanding. When Jesus speaks the truth, the *responsibility* is for people to listen and learn, and to realign themselves in new understanding with the King.

In a similar way, the disciples are spoken to by God, their Father, at the transfiguration (chapter 17). While Peter is babbling (well-meaning) nonsense out of his poor understanding (17:4), a voice commands and reorientates them to their responsibility: “Listen” (plural: ἀκούετε) to Jesus, the beloved and pleasing Son (17:5). Kimberly L. Clayton explores this same idea in her brief paper “When Death No Longer Determines Our Living: Matthew 28:1-10.”²⁵¹ In it, she reminds us,

All through his life with them, Jesus had been teaching his disciples to *see... to*

249 See esp. 11:1-6: “Blessed/happy is the one who is not offended by/caused to stumble on account of me” (v. 6).

250 Paul S. Minear, “On Seeing the Good News,” *ThTo* 55, no. 2 (July 1998): 163-174, quote 167.

251 *Journal for Preachers* 31, no. 3 (Easter 2008): 28-30.

see the world differently from the way most people saw it and lived in it. Jesus showed them the world of the Beatitudes [5:1-12], where the poor in spirit, the mourners, the merciful, the hungry and persecuted turn out to be the blessed ones. He showed them a world where people did not exchange an eye for an eye, but offered a cloak to the one who just stole your coat [see 5:38-42]. He showed them the world where loving your neighbor is right, but loving your enemy is necessary [5:43-47/48]. He showed them the world God intends, where diseases are healed and storms do not sink boats [8:24-27; cf. also 14:23-33]. He showed them active faith that knows no fear. Jesus showed them that even swords and high priests and false witnesses and denials [26:47-75] *do not have the last word*.²⁵²

In other words, first by the disciples' faith-inspired *willingness* to follow and see and hear, then further by their continually-willing undergoing of training by Jesus in “seeing” the truth, Kingdom understandings are brought gradually into their apprehension and their lives.

4.ii Locating this within the thesis' argument

To summarise our discussion thus far, in the Matthean Gospel one of the primary modes of speaking about the twin notions of faith and understanding is via the imagery of sight and hearing. This we have simply explored as an integral part of the “how” of righteousness. Having examined Matthew's approach to faith as a Kingdom response to authority, it has been our next logical step to grasp the connection between this faith and its natural attendant, understanding. Through Matthew's sensory imagery, a divide is made apparent. There are those with some kind of operational faith that allows them to see something, even just something preliminary, of who Jesus is and what the ushering in of his Kingdom might mean for their daily lives of righteousness – like the chosen disciples and the literally blind. On the other side of the divide are those who deny any such faith and hence lack depth of understanding due to the distancing and hardness of their hearts, like the religious leaders of Israel.

Through use of this imagery we are also faced with the undeniable responsibility to see, hear and understand the Kingdom way. For Matthew, people must “bring faith to the party” or they will not understand the conversations to follow! These motifs and our conclusions from them are indispensable as we move on from this kind of general imagery to

252 “When Death No Longer Determines Our Living,” 29; italics added.

the earthy story of the disciples (who have necessarily been discussed at times already). It is quite fitting, now, to actually examine the disciples' own storyline in Matthew, as the narrative's first Jesus-believing community and those offering the most fruitful content for the topic of truth-telling. It is now time to trace their rugged and eventful path of believing in Jesus and understanding his unexpected yet perfect Kingdom, and to look into just how this correlates to the natural growth of righteous fruit, or overflow of the heart. Before our final look at Peter and truth-telling in particular, that is, we are going to see the storyline of the disciples' ability to believe, understand, and even speak in a right way themselves.

5 Following the Disciples: Tracking our Theme in the Disciples' Journey

Matthew 4:17 is Jesus' public introduction in the Gospel of Matthew. In it, Jesus' first words of proclamation come as a collective call to the crowds and potential disciples: Repent, because the Kingdom of heaven is at hand. We may already have heard and understood – as Matthew might say – much of the theoretical groundwork regarding ethical action and truth-speaking so far. We know the nature of Kingdom righteousness as active deeds overflowing the heart, the ideal of direct truth-speaking in humble humanity (5:33-37) over against the arrogance and duplicity of two-level speech and the notion of faith as the right response to Jesus' outstanding spoken and acted authority in Matthew. We know, too, the real centrality of this faith and its affiliate, understanding, two necessities and responsibilities that are unified in part by our Gospel's decisive choice of sensory imagery.

We are ready, then, to bring this into a more specific context and see it in action. The context we are beginning to deal with now, which happens also to be highly appropriate to Matthew's own concerns, is the community of disciples. There is much we can learn from their unfolding journey. As a helpful preliminary step, we will investigate the proposal that Matthew shows the disciples more favourably than Mark. Then, we will briefly argue for the disciples as the most beneficial focus of the thesis, before plunging in to analyse the movement of faith and understanding in their story. This will set us up well in two respects: it will allow us to appreciate the progress or otherwise of the disciples as a group, and it will lead in our next chapter into selecting the actions of Peter – one of them – as our chosen and particular example of speaking the truth in Matt 26:69-75. First, though, let us simply encounter the disciples more closely and learn why they are our best focus.

5.i Matthew's favourable portrayal?

It has been well established that early on in its classical Greek usage, μαθητής, our “disciple,” was connected to a verb “to learn” (μανθάνειν). As time went on throughout the Hellenistic period, then, the emphasis of the word turned more generally to being an

adherent of someone/something than connoting the learning process²⁵³ *per se*. While not leaning on the etymology at all for our argument, it may yet be a helpful link or reminder for us. One of the key things we are to discover as we follow the disciples through Matthew is just how they fare in their progressive *learning* – and it is, indeed, a very mixed report.

The idea has long been raised that Matthew is kinder to the disciples than is Mark, showing them in a much more favourable light. Gerhard Barth is one to have suggested that “[t]here is a widespread general view that the later standpoint of the Church ... shows itself in Matthew in that he avoids reporting what is unfavourable to the disciples, by toning it down, passing over it, or simply twisting it round.”²⁵⁴ We will surely recognise this throughout our discussion. It is true, first of all, that their *importance* in Matthew is established immediately.²⁵⁵ In the very next section following his Kingdom proclamation of 4:17 (in the very next verse, in fact! 4:18ff.), Jesus lays his claim on his first followers. Their link to this Kingdom that has drawn near, therefore, is also presented here without delay. In terms of Matthew's particular wording, Richard A. Edwards is right to note that they are not explicitly called “disciples” by the author or his Jesus until the narration at 5:1,²⁵⁶ significantly, in the lead-up to the Sermon on the Mount. But their entrance as key characters, or perhaps collectively as *a* key character,²⁵⁷ begins early nonetheless and holds its prominence throughout. Their central place for Matthew is beyond question, as we shall continue to see.

One concern, though, must be clarified from the outset. For Matthew, the disciples' narrative importance *does not* mean a sugar-coating of their ethical and other action in the narrative, as may idly be suggested. If we are able to appreciate something of H.J. Bernard Combrink's understanding, that aspects of narrative can help to form and communicate ethics²⁵⁸ – not a novel idea in itself, of course – then it is not at all necessary for the disciples to be maintained as flawless examples of humanity. Combrink himself, acknowledging this

253 On these points, see Michael J. Wilkins, “Disciples,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 176. See also Wilkins' *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel as Reflected in the Term Μαθητής*, NovTSup 59 (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988), 158-63 on verbs of discipleship.

254 “Matthew's Understanding of the Law,” 118. Like us, he does not necessarily agree at all points; see 118ff.

255 As it is also in Mark 1:14-20.

256 Edwards, “Uncertain Faith,” 52.

257 Powell discusses the idea of “character groups” being represented as one character in Matthew, with the disciples as a key example; “Literary Approaches,” 49.

258 “The Challenge of Overflowing Righteousness,” 26f.

fact, “tak[es] the disciples' behaviour as a character in the story as a starting point to determine Matthew's ethos and ethics.”²⁵⁹ Clearly, their formal stance is that they are “with” Jesus. We will see this implied or expressed many times through the narrative and will return to its great importance later. However, it is by way of the *whole* picture of their inconsistencies and failures, moral mixture and real, actual progress in the Matthean narrative that we can uncover just as much helpful information for our theme as if they were primarily shown in a favourable light. Even, we may suggest, more.

Our focus at this point will first be to discuss our choice of the disciples' character as a most worthwhile one to study for our current purposes rather than, say, a primary focus on the character of Jesus. Having established this, we will follow the disciples through a selection of key moments to do with faith and understanding in the Matthean narrative, noticing in these practical examples the natural connection between the two. Rooted in their own faith story, we will see both an encouraging growth in this area – building, for instance, to Peter's confession in chapter 16 – and a distinct incompleteness that endures to the end. Still, the narrative seems to allow that somehow, in their incomplete state, these followers of Jesus will nonetheless be enabled to act and speak well enough and in such a way as to disciple the nations, just as Jesus has commanded them (28:18-20).

5.ii “Follow me”: Jesus as model

We have chosen here to primarily follow the disciples, as a fruitful practical example of learning to speak the truth in Matthew. Now we know fairly confidently, of course, that if we look at the character of Jesus in our evangelist's account, we will be able to argue for a strongly positive example of ethical speech in narrative context – whether it is truth-speaking or perhaps any other ethical particular we might observe. This can almost go without saying for the study of Matthew's Gospel. As Powell states, Jesus is “portrayed as the authoritative Son of God whose words and actions are definitively true.”²⁶⁰ It is this same Jesus who perfectly displays humanity and in whom the righteous law is fulfilled (5:17), after all.

259 Ibid., 27.

260 “Literary Approaches,” 67.

For Combrink and others,²⁶¹ Matthew's narrative calls the disciples and readers to imitate the ethical ways – indeed, most *any* ways – of Jesus. To them, Jesus' actions determine how the believing community, called to follow him, ought to behave. In 4:18-22, he reminds us,

Jesus calls two pairs of brothers to follow Him, while simultaneously indicating his own narrative programme to make them fishers of men (4:19). In 4:23, the narrator's statement follows [that is, “And he went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity among the people”] and, in 9:35, he repeats it in almost exactly the same words [“And Jesus went around all the cities/towns and the villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the Kingdom and healing every disease and every infirmity”], summarising Jesus' actions in words (the Sermon on the Mount, chs. 5-7) and in great deeds (the miracles, chs. 8-9).²⁶²

He is quite right about the exemplary action summaries in Matthew. He is correct, as well, that Jesus gathers “the twelve” in 10:1 and sends them out in his very own authority (ἐξουσία).²⁶³ They are expressly sent to act in the full, righteous humanity Jesus enacts in their *own* deeds, spoken and otherwise. They seem to be sent out to live like him, not just in following the various examples given in his teachings but in learning to walk in his way of Kingdom life.

While there are many relevant instances of this idea in Matthew, this point (and perhaps Combrink's whole case) may be strengthened by briefly reminding ourselves of Jesus' words to his disciples in chapter 20: he calls the currently power-hungry disciples, if they are seeking after greatness, to offer their lives in humble service (vv. 25-28). Although Mark's parallel passage suggests that these disciples are to live in such a way “because even” (καὶ γὰρ) the Son of Man has done so (Mark 10:45), the thought process and motivation argued in Matthew is subtly, but vitally, different. This Gospel account replaces καὶ γὰρ with ὡσπερ, “*just as*” the Son of Man has done (20:28) – an “emphatic marker of similarity”²⁶⁴ that Combrink holds on to. Jesus is held as an unambiguous example of Kingdom righteousness and ethical action in both spoken and unspoken forms in Matthew.

261 Cf. R.E.O. White's “The Son of God and the Life of Imitation,” ch. 6 of *Christian Ethics* (Leominster: Gracewing, 1994), which looks helpfully at the imitation of Jesus in all four Gospels, 109-123.

262 Combrink, “The Challenge of Overflowing Righteousness,” 28.

263 Ibid.

264 Citing “Louw & Nida, 64.13”; *ibid.*, 28f.

What sort of model is he, though? That is our question for now, if only in passing. It is worth hearing N.T. Wright's recent contribution on the matter. In his *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*, Wright's argument is that Jesus is a moral example within the Gospels – but only inasmuch as he models “an entirely new aspect of 'morality.’”²⁶⁵ That is, he is the one whose actions and ethical stance provide signals of a whole new way of being human that has entered the world. Not unlike the Matt 20 reference above, Wright cites “humility, a willingness to suffer without recrimination, and a determination to forgive even those who were not asking for it”²⁶⁶ as exemplary pointers.

He is not for Wright, then, the step-by-step religious “how-to” guide for virtuous behaviour:

At one level, [an approach akin to this] certainly wouldn't be helpful and might well not even be possible. ... [W]atching Jesus – with his astonishing blend of wisdom, gentleness, shrewdness, dry humor, patience with blundering followers, courage in confronting evil, self-control in innumerable situations of temptation ... – makes most of us, all but the most proud or ambitious, feel like we do when watching Tiger Woods hit a golf ball. Only more so.²⁶⁷

It is a basic enough point. Notwithstanding the fact that, since his very public “fall,” some may be so misguided as to feel quite happy comparing their lives to Woods', Wright's simply-presented argument suggests the practical unhelpfulness of using someone as ideally and masterfully human as the Matthean Jesus as an instructive example of how to live. To repeat his sentiment, it “might well not even be possible”!

An obvious sidenote to this, of course, is the realisation that humans do not merely need a “good example” to be set effectively on their way; Wright, too, rubbishes the notion that people might “look at him approvingly and decide we'll copy him (up to a point at least...). As if! If all we need is a good example, we can't be in quite such a bad state as some people (including Jesus himself) have suggested.”²⁶⁸ Obviously, the problem of sin and the role and power of grace (cf. 7:7f.) and the role (beyond the narrative timeline of this study, but crucially important) of the coming of the Spirit (cf. 10:20; 12:18) in God's Kingdom lead

265 N.T. Wright, *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), 129.

266 Ibid.

267 Ibid., 126.

268 Ibid.

Matthew's ethics far beyond such a facile scenario. These are elements to keep in mind throughout this thesis. So, while Jesus' recorded action and description in Matthew may well be shining examples of faith, understanding, truth-telling and all sorts of Kingdom morality, it is Wright's position that this is not a deliberate call to a rigid *imitatio Christi*. Rather, it is a call, to put it one way, to see and take note of this new Kingdom humanity that is breaking in.

We might be forgiven for straining our eyes at this point to see a clear difference – that is, the difference between viewing Jesus as an ethical example and viewing Jesus as someone heralding a new “way of being human”²⁶⁹ through his real honesty (cf. 26:57-67 in his trial); humble self-emptying (cf. 4:8-10; 27:12-14 before the crucifixion); and faithful confidence (cf. 4:2-4; 26 throughout all of Gethsemane, arrest and trial etc.), to name only a few marks of this Kingdom humanity.²⁷⁰ That may be somewhat due to Wright's particular aims in *After You Believe*: he ultimately looks at renewed humanity and virtue and ethics largely in terms of practised habits of the heart, as contrasted with a preoccupation with rules, principles or striving at unattainable standards. He is very right; Jesus and his ethical actions in Matthew are *not* categorised stiffly in terms of keeping moral values or rules. We can nuance some of the implications of his discussion, all the same, by remembering to balance it with insights that have long been offered by the forerunners of Combrink's stance, which is the position we largely work from here. We, too, focus on Jesus as the bringer of a new and full way of being human (as raised in the righteousness chapter), and we affirm that all of Jesus' words and deeds in Matthew are most worthy markers of this.

5.iii The disciples as most helpful and relevant model for the current purpose

Aware that Jesus is technically a wonderful and outstanding model of virtue and of new ways of living and speaking in Matthew²⁷¹ – and for this reason we will gratefully revisit his example again, in contrasting Jesus' honourable speech at his trial and Peter's lying denials in chapter 26 – there remains another consideration. That consideration is this: while

269 Ibid., 131.

270 It seems strange to give the occasional example of Jesus' behaviour to correspond with each of these areas, since such examples can be found so consistently throughout his depiction in Matthew. Yet, they serve their illustrative purpose. Wright lists new ways of being human such as these; *ibid.*, 131.

271 John the Baptist could arise as another positive model, of discipleship and righteousness, but does not have a large enough role in Matthew to be overly helpful.

we can appreciate the fact of Jesus as model, including in Matthew's Gospel, our most demonstrably *useful* example, for now, is that of the disciples. For these purposes we mean "example," of course, in a sense distinct from either Combrink or Wright. The disciples are not shown as an ideal or a "how-to" but are simply the most helpful focus in displaying the substance of our Matthean theme. In their portrayal in relation to faith and understanding and their imperfect action and response, the disciples' story most powerfully backs up the idea of living out the Kingdom life we have talked about so far. Indeed this, as promised, will lead into discussing the very specific demonstration by the character of Peter of speaking the truth by faith and understanding (or not).

Naturally enough, Combrink himself adds that, while Jesus is provided as the community's model in his speech and other action, the *challenge* of the Matthean narrative is in the portrayal of the disciples. With their lack of understanding of Jesus' example and of his instruction, they function "as a foil to the ethos (and implied ethics) of Jesus' life and teaching."²⁷² Furthermore, while again pointing beyond the scope of our study, Powell argues for the disciples as "the best examples of 'round characters' in this narrative and [as those who] may serve as the most likely candidates for reader empathy."²⁷³ Following our particular study area, then, these Matthean disciples do provide the most profitable and practical image of growing and faltering humanity. It is an image that best shows our concept of right action through faith and understanding; it is one of fallible progress in the life of a genuine (narrative) faith community and, particularly, in the path of being or becoming people who can speak the truth.

272 "The Challenge of Overflowing Righteousness," 45.

273 As well as being realistic and perhaps reassuring for his intended audience! "Literary Approaches," 67. He also adds that "[t]he most consistent element of [the disciples'] characterization may be that they are always presented as 'favored by Jesus,' as persons whom he has chosen to belong to him and as persons who, according to him, are destined for great things (4:19; 10:5-23; 12:49; 19:28)"; *ibid.* Compare this to Jeannine K. Brown, who suggests that "[o]n the discourse level of the textual world, the disciples function both as a point of identification as well as a point of disassociation with the implied reader. After the initial identification the reader has toward the disciples based on their more positive portrayal, the increasingly negative portrayal causes the reader to distance himself/herself from the disciples' behavior and values, so that their portrayal functions as an incentive toward true and complete discipleship"; *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 145. So Donald J. Versepunt, whom we lack space to interact with more fully, but who sees the disciples as negative models and Matthew's narrative as an overall attempt to address the malady of "little faith" in the reader; "The Faith of the Reader and the Narrative of Matthew 13.53-16.20," *JSNT* no. 46 (June 1992): 3-24.

In our faith and authority chapter, we looked generally in Matthew's Gospel at the importance of faith, of Jesus' truth-speaking and exceptional authority, and of faith as a required response in Matthew to such authority. The chapter on vision and hearing, then, began to outline those core Matthean images that link the twin realities of faith and understanding together, already touching on the disciples' peculiar standing in this area as contrasted with other characters. With the character of the disciples now established, in terms both of their prominence in Matthew and of being most helpful for our current purpose, we are ready to narrow the focus accordingly. Through the disciples' portrayal, we will discover a living, applied example of Matthew's solid link between believing in Jesus, understanding and even their outflow in the form of right speech.²⁷⁴ In a sense, it is all thanks to the inconstant journey of οἱ μαθηταί.

5.iv The disciples' journey of faith and understanding throughout Matthew

We know from the discussion of vision and hearing that Matthew refrains from ever calling the disciples blind (in contrast to the picture of Israel or its leaders: see for instance 15:5-12; compare Mark 8:18). There is distinct hope, at the very least, of the disciples believing in Jesus and in the Father's Kingdom plan for him and gaining understanding. Nevertheless, we can *not* track a smooth transition for the disciples between a “not having faith” and a full and sudden “having faith” and understanding – therefore acting and speaking fully according to the truth. This might appear somewhat of a bother in the search for a text's (or life's) simple formulae. Yet it is simply the reality in the arriving Kingdom we come to witness in Matthew, and the shaping and growth of the citizens of that Kingdom: corrupt and dishonest, crippled and lost though they may initially be! It is worth gathering a few select passages that may help us to gauge what Matthew's Gospel has to say about the progress of the disciples here.

5.iv.i The Matthean disciples as ὀλιγόπιστοι

The disciples, for Matthew, though not called “blind,” do still have a rather unfortunate label. Jesus himself addresses his followers multiple times as the ὀλιγόπιστοι: the “little-

²⁷⁴ In general, though an example of truth-telling itself will be saved for the final chapter.

faith ones” or “you of little faith” (NRSV). Indeed, in the introduction of his commentary, Craig Blomberg rightly recognises this label as “unique and characteristic” to Matthew.²⁷⁵ Gerhard Barth also, with his sights set on comparison to Mark, argues that here Matthew has “considerably strengthened the accusation of defective faith.”²⁷⁶ The disciples first receive the unflattering title from Jesus’ lips in the middle of his very first discourse, the Sermon on the Mount. Having been describing how various ethical aspects of the Kingdom of heaven really work, Jesus declares in 6:25-34 that if God is their master (and he is! Note the logical progression in 6:25 of διὰ τοῦτο: “through this”/“therefore”), the response needs to be one of faith. The disciples should be trusting first in their heavenly Father and choosing not to bow to worry or fear and preoccupation with material things: “And if God clothes the grass of the field like this, being [alive] today and tomorrow being cast into an oven, [will he] not much more [clothe] you, little-faith ones?” (6:30).

Instead of focusing and wasting their energies on the same necessary – yet trivial and self-serving – things of this world that the pagans do, such as clothing and food, they are *first* to confidently seek their Father’s Kingdom and his righteousness (6:33). Thus they may become pure salt and light in their communities and in the sight of broader society, as Jesus has just spoken about. Onlookers can then witness the overflowing of their true deeds and offer glory to God, their own heavenly Father (see 5:13-16). The disciples are not yet living this out, though. Judging by Jesus’ ὀλιγόπιστοι call here, they do not sufficiently believe and hence understand the functioning of the Kingdom, or the King who heralds it in representation of his Father. Nor do they see the full fruits of a wholehearted belief worked out in their own righteous action.

It is fair enough to expect this early on in the story. But this is only the first of *four* times the Matthean Jesus addresses them as ὀλιγόπιστοι! The next time is in chapter 8, during the pericope on Jesus’ stilling of the storm (8:23-27). Of course, a crucial element to iterate in discussing these narrative portrayals is the fact that their status and security as true disciples is not at all the point in question. Rather, these portrayals show the imperfect nature of actual Matthean discipleship. To illustrate, right here the disciples have just been

275 Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 32.

276 “Matthew’s Understanding of the Law,” 119.

confirmed as Jesus' genuine followers: "But Jesus said to him [i.e. to "another disciple"; see v. 21], 'Follow me and leave the dead to bury their own dead!' And, having stepped into the boat, his disciples followed him" (8:22f.). We know, then, that the authenticity of their "following" or discipleship is not at issue for Matthew, and the affirmation of this in the context of one of the ὀλιγόπιστοι-sayings is highly significant. Nonetheless, the nature of their discipleship is being shown openly here as a flawed and faltering one.

During their time in the boat, while Jesus is sleeping (8:24), a storm suddenly arises. The disciples' instinctive and faint-hearted reaction is to wake him up, saying, "Lord, save [us]! We're dying!" (v. 25). According to their current level of faith and understanding, the process of their perishing has begun! As we can see, this prompts the second ὀλιγόπιστοι assertion from Matthew's Jesus: "Why are you fearful, little-faith ones?" (v. 26a). He then rebukes the wind and waves and restores full calm to the situation (v. 26b). The problem is precisely as Kupp has observed in relation to this scene, that "[Matthew's] ὀλιγόπιστοι implies an *inadequate perception* of the storm and his presence by the disciples."²⁷⁷ Their explicitly deficient faith, and thus their deficient understanding, even shows itself through the disciples acting and speaking out of line with the real situation according to the Kingdom: "We're dying/perishing!" (8:25).

Now, it is vital to mention the detail that – in this Matthean version of the pericope – Jesus remonstrates with his followers like this *before* the storm-stilling miracle. As has been briefly touched on above, this may stand in contrast to the more obviously negative stance that Mark's Gospel takes at times on the disciples. Notice the lessened sense of humiliation in such a scene as Matthew directs it: his "little-faiths" claim, while blunt, is plainly more favourable than the disciples being labelled as such *after* seeing the miracle, or even combined with a harsher "no faith" choice of wording (οὐπω ἔχετε πίστιν;) as we see it in Mark 4:40! As the pericope stands in our text, *first* they are admonished; *then* they see the miracle; *then* they are amazed and at least eager to learn and understand, asking what kind of person Jesus must be to have performed such an authoritative act (8:27). The disciples in Matthew lack in faith and fail prodigiously in understanding and hence acting or speaking rightly at numerous points. But clearly it is a priority for Matthew to show them as people

277 *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 72; italics added.

who are nonetheless on a positive human journey of discovery and maturing in discipleship. Here in Matt 8, they are portrayed as stepping towards a richer faith in Jesus and a greater understanding of the ways of his Kingdom. A display of their faults becomes rather a beautiful moment.

While chapter 13 and its parables have already been examined elsewhere, it is worth briefly acknowledging their relevance here, too. Once Jesus has explained the parables to the disciples, he asks them whether they have “understood [συνίημι] all these [things]” (13:51a). Their collective answer at this point is a simple “Yes” (ναί, v. 51b). To Edwards, then, for those reading the text,

[T]his is a significant development. The disciples are not praised for their outstanding preaching and healing but rather – after their situation is juxtaposed with that of the Pharisees – for their claim that they understand the parables. Although one might expect some minimal comprehension on the part of any followers (otherwise they would not follow at all), it is the word 'understanding' that is now explicitly stated, repeated, and underlined. And because they understand, Jesus says: 'Therefore every scribe who has been trained [disciplined]²⁷⁸ for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his [sic] treasure what is new and what is old' (13:52).²⁷⁹

Soon after these comments, and noting Jesus' allegorical interpretations of the parables, Edwards also states that if the disciples genuinely understand, they will “comprehend both the immediate significance and the deeper meaning” with the help of their heavenly Father. To put this in the practical terms it must finally involve, then, “They claim to see; can they also act consistently?”²⁸⁰

The first test of this new apparent understanding is in the passage we now mention in passing; let us remember, of course, that there are still a third and fourth time the disciples are called the ὀλιγόπιστοι. The third of these, found in 14:31, is directed specifically at Peter (vocative singular masculine) as an individual representative of the disciples and, here, their littleness of faith.²⁸¹ The disciples are afraid at the ghostly figure of Jesus walking on the

278 These brackets in original.

279 “Uncertain Faith,” 56.

280 Ibid., both quotes.

281 While Peter's representative role is merely accepted here, we shall cover it in some depth in the next chapter.

water (v. 26); Peter, encouraged by Jesus' words, walks on water too (v. 29); he falters in fear (v. 30); and he is rescued by Jesus and labelled a hesitating or doubting (διστάζω) little-faith one (v. 31). Then the wind calms, and all of the disciples in the boat are shown to have now progressed in their faith and their understanding as seen by their worshipping Jesus as the Son of God (v. 33).

It is made plain that they have moved forward since the previous scene; they are now acknowledging a core reality about Jesus that Matthew has made very clear in his Gospel from near the outset (acknowledged by the tempter in 4:3, 6; cf. 8:29). It is also intriguing to see that, in this pivotal scene, the Matthean disciples are again shown in a more flattering light than in the Marcan parallel. In Mark 6:52, instead and simply, “They did not understand about the loaves, but their heart was calloused” (οὐ γὰρ συνῆκαν ἐπὶ τοῖς ἄρτοις, ἀλλ’ ἦν αὐτῶν ἡ καρδία πεπωρωμένη). Nonetheless, Kupp is quite right to provide a sober assessment of their development to this point: “It is not evident ... that the disciples are ready to take up their commission of Matthew 10. They have yet to comprehend fully the nature of his mission and presence, and their delegated authority from him.”²⁸² The disciples do reveal a lack in their basic belief and comprehension – and they *are* called ὀλιγόπιστοι – but we are shown a strong positive confirmation here of their being with Jesus, and are given true hope in the midst of a mixed characterisation.

This leaves the fourth and final Matthean account of that unsavoury “little-faith” label: this time, it is already in a context directly related to their understanding of truth! On their travels, Jesus has just warned the disciples to be guarding themselves against “the yeast (singular) of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (16:6). Their erroneous conclusion, as we know well, is that this is a literal warning due to not having brought bread with them across the lake (v. 7) – an assumption laughable to those with the benefit of a New Testament, two-thousand years of perspective and much Christian teaching on the matter, but highly rational to the Matthean disciples. Even in the context of Matthew's narrative, though, this is a painfully apparent lack of understanding. Fortunately, Jesus was aware of their conversation (16:8a).

²⁸² Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 78.

His response to their ill-advised comments actually ties the twin concepts of faith and understanding together immediately: “Why do you deliberate amongst yourselves, little-faith ones, that you do not have bread? Do you not yet understand [νοέω]?” (16:8b-9a). He censures them over their insufficiencies here, first who they are as little-faiths and then what they do in not understanding. Soon, going on to recap the two feeding narratives with their miracles of the five loaves for the five thousand (see 14:13-21) and seven loaves for the four thousand (see 15:29-39), as well as the abundance of collected leftovers (16:9b-10), Matthew's Jesus draws his latest lesson to a close with a rhetorical question. He asks, “How do you not understand that I did not speak to you about bread? But [again,] beware of [προσέχω²⁸³ + ἀπό] the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees” (v. 11). At the end of this miracle reminder and teaching episode, the disciples promptly accept Jesus' teaching; “[t]hen they understood” (συνίημι, v. 12) that the warning was about the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees, and not literally about leaven. In this fourth and ultimate ὀλιγόπιστοι passage, the disciples seem to move and develop beyond the lacking faith they have been accused of and are explicitly shown as reaching a greater understanding.

5.iv.ii A high point: the confession of chapter 16

So, how better to prove their greater understanding than direct questioning from Jesus? Conveniently, we see this connection shown to its fullest and most dramatic extent through the verses immediately following the above pericope. It is critical, suggests Kupp, that the question of the Son of Man's identity is dealt with in the context of a growing understanding.²⁸⁴ Indeed, the disciples' faith has been deepening here to the point that they may now be able to genuinely understand and therefore even rightly *verbalise* Jesus' character as Son of God and Messiah! Upon arrival in the Caesarea Philippi region, Jesus asks his disciples the provocative question, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” (16:13). Together, they offer various answers: to some, he is John the Baptist; to others, Elijah; and to still others, he is Jeremiah or one of the prophets (v. 14).

This information, though quite correct, is still not the overall target of Jesus'

283 While used in a negative sense of being on one's guard etc. here, the verb also has generally to do with being mindful and attentive; BDAG, “προσέχω,” 879f.

284 *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 80.

questioning here. Emphasising both the *you* (plural) and the disciples' *speaking* of the truth about him, the Matthean Jesus asks again: "But who do *you* say I am?" (Ἰμεῖς δὲ τίνα με λέγετε εἶναί; v. 15). Their answer, spoken for them all through the disciple Simon Peter, does not represent the skewed understanding and expectations of the other people on the subject. Instead, it represents a grasp of the truth about the Kingdom. He replies, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God" (v. 16). Jesus affirms this impressive and life-shaping understanding as having been unveiled by his heavenly Father (16:17).

Placed in this central section of Matthew's Gospel, it marks an outstanding shift in their confident faith, in their understanding and quite obviously, therefore, in their practical ability to speak correctly about the Kingdom. Such growth or progression is readily apparent when seen alongside the ὀλιγόπιστοι examples we have been highlighting. The disciples' "What kind of man is this...?" (8:27) is a question they are then able to partially answer in 14:33 – "Truly you are [the] Son of God" – before they reach this kind of climax-of-understanding in 16:16. They have certainly been criticised and characterised all too frankly as "little-faiths." Yet, Matthew is presenting them as gradually coming to grasp what the Matthean Jesus has been showing them throughout in his miracles, his actions and his direct verbal teaching. For one thing, that he really is the anticipated, anointed Messiah/Christ and the Son of the living God in whom they are to trust.

Edwards is careful to point out, though, that even at this pivotal moment of the narrative, "Jesus' identity is only partially understood, and even this comprehension is aided by revelation. The disciples' problem continues to be in understanding what Jesus says because Peter is rebuked [straight afterwards] when he misinterprets Jesus['] plain saying about death and resurrection (16:23)."²⁸⁵ Now, it is imprudent to downplay the Matthean disciples' perceptiveness simply because of the involvement of some kind of "revelation" from God; indeed, we can affirm such revelation as a positive descriptor within a Matthean framework relating to the ability to see, hear and comprehend. But Edwards *is* correct to suggest that the disciples' journey does not come close to glorious fulfilment or enlightenment right here. It is one vital step in an ongoing, fleshed-out faith story.

285 "Uncertain Faith," 57.

5.iv.iii Back down to earth: transfiguration and beyond

“From that time [on],” or, after Peter's decisive words on the disciples' behalf,²⁸⁶

Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go away to Jerusalem and suffer many [things] from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised up. And, taking him aside, Peter began to admonish him, saying, '[God/Heaven be] merciful to you²⁸⁷ [ἰλεώς σοι], Lord! This will *not* happen to you.' But turning around, he said to Peter, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block²⁸⁸ to me; for you are not being mindful [of] the [things] of God, but the [things] of people' (16:21-23).

This is rather a shocking failing following the high point of 16:13-20. As David L. Turner puts it, “Peter exposes a fundamental misunderstanding of Jesus's mission (cf. Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22-27). ... Jesus's death is incompatible with Peter's notion of God's plan for the Messiah.”²⁸⁹ Directly after seeming to have grasped a core truth about Jesus' mission and identity in the narrative, the disciples are failing again in their faith and their comprehension.

So it is soon after the embarrassing situation above, six days later in fact (17:1), that Matthew provides us with a vital reminder of two things: Jesus' identity and the learning process of the disciples. He does so through the transfiguration. It comes, “significantly, *after* the confession of 16.16 and after Jesus has identified his ἐκκλησία as those who will perceive by divine revelation God's salvation and divine presence in him, and be obedient to his mission [see 16:17f.]”²⁹⁰ By means of the transfiguration narrative (17:1-13), in the presence of Peter, John and James, Peter's 16:16 confession is powerfully substantiated: “And [Jesus] was transformed before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his garments became white like the light” (17:2). When Moses and Elijah arrive and speak with Jesus, Peter manages to thoroughly misread the situation and say quite the wrong thing (17:4f.) before

286 Matthew has used the same Greek phrase, ἀπὸ τότε, in 4:17 also, to demonstrate a new phase in Jesus' ministry with the people – in this earlier case, it is the beginning of Jesus' preaching repentance due to the Kingdom having drawn near. And it has significance for his relationship with his disciples there, too, for in the very next verse, he sees Simon Peter and his brother Andrew (4:18) and recruits them (see 4:19-20); likewise with James and John, the sons of Zebedee (4:21f.), before he embarks on travelling around teaching, preaching and healing (4:23).

287 Or “God forbid,” cf. NRSV.

288 σκάνδαλον – or, we might imagine, a rock on the ground that is a cause of stumbling. Compare to the high praise of 16:18 and Peter as the rock on which Jesus shall build the church!

289 David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 410.

290 Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 83; italics original.

the voice of God the Father interrupts him from a bright cloud that now overshadows them: “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well-pleased,” he says (17:5).

As mentioned above, there are two things at play for us here. First of all, the truth of Jesus' messianic status is confirmed with outright finality in God's own words. Secondly, there is an addition made to this confirmation. It is an addition that is both grammatically imperative and imperative to the direction of this narrative as it pertains to the disciples: the Father also says in 17:5, “Hear/listen to him.” The echoes of our previous chapter on vision and hearing are obvious. Fortunately, it seems that they do indeed listen to him; in 17:13 Matthew explicitly mentions this representative subgroup of disciples as having understood Jesus' current teaching (regarding John the Baptist; vv. 10-12). Do the disciples now finally have their faith and comprehension sorted?

We may be confident of this until, well, the immediately following verses (17:14-20). How disheartening that their incapability of healing an epileptic demoniac is attributed by a clearly-frustrated Jesus to their *littleness of faith* (διὰ τὴν ὀλιγοπιστίαν ὑμῶν; 17:20)! While Jesus may not be using the form of the direct title οἱ ὀλιγόπιστοι, the language here is very familiar; the disciples are clearly still buffeted by the practical, active effects of an insufficient faith. For Edwards, in fact, this depressing moment is the dark conclusion of the entire sequence since Peter's confession!²⁹¹ The continuation of the disciples' great distress at Jesus' next prediction of his betrayal and death (directly in v. 23b; see vv. 22f.) is another confirmation here. The reality is harsh; beyond Peter's climactic confession and even beyond the transfiguration pericope, in which a representative few see Jesus in his divine glory and hear the very voice of God giving instruction, the disciples still fail in faith, understanding and, therefore, outward action.

291 Edwards, “Uncertain Faith,” 58.

5.iv.iv That final scene: worship and doubt

So the disciples continue in their mixed characterisation on this front. It is perhaps a nice reprieve, after the sequence above, that Matthew's focus shifts more obviously to Jesus' opponents than the character of the disciples! Edwards' summary of the narrative so far is welcome; he says of Jesus' followers,

They vacillate from good intentions to immature reactions. They have committed themselves to follow Jesus, they have grown to understand much of what Jesus has been saying and doing,²⁹² but they still have not reached a state of perfection. Despite their faults, however, Matthew has counterbalanced them with the more obstinate opponents who plot to destroy him. The reader will recognize how far they have come, even though they still lack full commitment of faith.²⁹³

After all of Jesus' three passion predictions and the teaching that has followed (16:21ff.; 17:22f.; 20:17ff.), there is still a patent deficiency in the disciples' understanding. Edwards even surmises that “[i]n the passion story, the disciples will be perceived by the reader as again failing to put together their newfound comprehension with Jesus' inevitable movement toward death. ... [T]heir failure seems assured, even though they have good intentions.”²⁹⁴ How pessimistic a conclusion! It is important for us to address its validity, though. While there are various parts of the narrative that we could assess between the transfiguration and the close of Matthew, for reasons of conciseness it is now most critical for us to home in on the end of their story.²⁹⁵ Quite simply, where are the group of disciples at in the progress of their faith and understanding when we encounter them for the last time in Matthew?

As it turns out, Edwards may well have been right. The final description of the disciples in Matthew, which is the very end of the Gospel (28:16-20), highlights their continuing doubt. To be fair, there is much that is positive about their appearance here. The eleven have done as instructed, acting obediently where possible, and gone to a mountain in Galilee as per Jesus' command (v. 16). Their faith and understanding, too, have clearly progressed to the point of openly worshipping the risen Jesus (v. 17a), which is an impressive step. There is even a sense of their being restored and confirmed, after deserting him, as his own people in

292 Albeit imperfectly, we might want to add.

293 “Uncertain Faith,” 58; though, outward commitment has not been their problem as yet.

294 Ibid.

295 We skip over Peter's interesting denial account in ch. 26 for now, in order to look at this fruitful passage in our final chapter soon.

their commissioning (vv. 18-20). Perhaps it seems surprising, then, that amidst all this Matthew notes *doubt* alongside the disciples' worship. Just as in the water-walking episode of 14:22-33, διστάζω, doubt, waver or hesitate,²⁹⁶ and προσκυνέω, worship, show up alongside one another (compare 14:31-3 with 28:17).

Οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν and doubting discipleship

Who is doing the doubting here, though? Is it all of these same people, the eleven disciples, who, while worshipping, also doubted? Is it another group of people altogether? Or is it just some of these disciples? NRSV, for instance, removes the first option from the equation by opting for οἱ δὲ [ἐδίστασαν] as “but some [doubted].”²⁹⁷ Another valid translation of καὶ ἰδόντες αὐτὸν προσεκύνησαν, οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν in 28:17, though, is: “And seeing him, they [the eleven disciples²⁹⁸] worshipped, but they doubted.” The core issue when it comes to translating the intended meaning of this verse lies in the οἱ δὲ of v. 17b.

In fact, there is no change of subject that is either clearly specified, or evidently necessary. It is not implausible, then, to take the verse as implying all of the aforementioned disciples. Charles H. Giblin offers a literary analysis of οἱ δὲ ἐδίστασαν and its context in his 1975 article, “A Note on Doubt and Reassurance in Mt 28:16-20.” Within it, he contests that

[o]ne would expect something clearer in Mt 28:17b if another group, wholly or partly to be distinguished from those just mentioned, were being introduced. For, when Matthew finds occasion to suggest or indicate two (or more) groups or persons, he does so readily and easily. For example: *'oi men... alloi de... 'eteroi de* (16:14); *'eteros de tōn mathētōn* (8:21); *'oi de ochloi 'oi proagontes kai 'oi akolouthountes* (21:9); or by the use of *gar . . . de* after the repeated article (25:3-4,29).²⁹⁹

296 BDAG, “διστάζω,” 252. It describes the word as generally denoting being “uncertain, [having] second thoughts about a matter.”

297 This is the approach taken by Carson, for instance, who argues that “*hoi de*, here as in 26:67, means ‘but some,’ in contrast with those already mentioned, rather than ‘but they’”; *Matthew 13-28*, 593; so Gundry, who argues that a “but they” reading “would create a needless contradiction between worship and doubt”; *Matthew: A Commentary*, 594.

298 It is only the eleven disciples who are explicitly mentioned in the scene, having gone to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go (28:16).

299 Charles H. Giblin, “A Note on Doubt and Reassurance in Mt 28:16-20,” *CBQ* 37, no. 1 (January 1975): 69. The “single, debatable exception” Giblin offers is 26:67b on those who are physically abusing Jesus after his trial (the whole verse says τότε ἐνέπτυσαν εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐκολάφισαν αὐτόν, οἱ δὲ ἐράπισαν). He suggests that this may also refer to one group; even if this is not the case, though: “[T]he verbs in 26:67a and 26:67b are clearly synonymous, whereas, if 28:18b were to be taken with 28:17a, a contrasted action would be stressed. Moreover, the precise group subsequently addressed (*autois* in

Indeed, it is readily apparent that elsewhere in Matthew, in 27:22b-3, we see οἱ δὲ function in the sense of “all.” In this instance, with reference to the crowds before Pilate, NRSV translates the phrase as “but they [shouted]” (v. 23), in line with the “all of them” of verse 22. Giblin's straightforward conclusion is that “[t]here are really no grounds in Matthew's narration for supposing that any followers but the expressly mentioned ‘Eleven disciples’ are present.”³⁰⁰

So, with the οἱ δὲ wording, Matthew may be pointing to an unchanged subject in this passage also. He may well be pointing to a worship/doubt blend on the part of all of the disciples. But why must doubt still be mentioned here in the close of the Gospel? Both grammatically and in terms of the thematic flow of the narrative, we are well-advised to hear Kupp's corresponding judgement that “[the disciples'] response may simply be mixed. The disciples worshipped, with some uncertainty and hesitation about the reality of the resurrection.”³⁰¹ As Powell puts it, in familiar terms for us, “the problem of their ‘little faith’ or doubt continues”³⁰² after the resurrection. Even the resurrection does not undo the conflicting qualities we have seen in the disciples so far!

Nonetheless, they *are* worshipping. This is, after all, the picture we have seen at various points in Matthew, and it remains consistent until now. Chapter 28 itself does not explicate the reason the disciples are currently hesitating or doubting. We can deduce, though, that even the significance of seeing the risen Jesus (ὁράω, v. 17a) has not been enough in itself to complete the transformation of these core disciples, if such a completion is even approaching. Despite being faced with such a raw, post-resurrection revelation from God, the reality in Matthew's text is one of mixture in the faith, understanding and therefore outward ability of Jesus' disciples. Ultimately, even if οἱ δὲ is not a reference to the whole group, there are nevertheless “some” (NRSV) unspecified ones among the followers of Jesus

28:18) would be rendered needlessly unclear”; see 69f., quotes 69.

300 Ibid., 70f. Grant R. Osborne argues that, while “it is impossible to be sure, ... all of the disciples seem connoted here,” since there is no theological reason to exclude this, in that διατάζω need not denote a dangerous unbelief but does culminate the “little faith” motif. He lists Bonnard, Grundmann, Bruner, Hagner and Pregeant as holding this view; see Osborne, *Matthew*, Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 1077. Kupp also holds this option as the most likely one grammatically; *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 207.

301 *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 207.

302 “Literary Approaches,” 79. See 79f. for his suggestion of Matt 28 as the beginning of a new story, albeit one that includes both worship and doubt.

who are still shown as doubting.³⁰³

To continue with Kupp's quote above, in fact, "To require of their worship that it arise from purest belief and unsullied adoration would for Matthew falsely dichotomize faith and doubt and demand of the disciples a response beyond their characterization within the First Gospel."³⁰⁴ Although an intermingling of faith and doubt does present a surprising juxtaposition (particularly in the finale of the story!), it also makes sense of the disciples' blemished humanness in the narrative. Having the two concepts together works to convey more fully the faith story of Matthew's unidealised Jesus-followers. For these people who have been known as the ὀλιγόπιστοι, the little-faith ones, we need not read their continued doubt as a dangerous unbelief. Rather, in their actual (faith) commitment we are to see a "little faith" that is being gradually worked out in these followers and forerunners – these disciples who Matthew hints *are* somehow going to be able to speak, act and complete their Kingdom mission.³⁰⁵

5.v Locating this within the thesis' argument

Fortunately, we shall return again soon to a brief discussion of this hope. Despite all that we have seen of the disciples in our Gospel, it presents a very real hope indeed. In this chapter, of course, we have seen fit to narrow down our vision to concentrate on the disciples. Acknowledging the argument that Matthew presents them more favourably than does Mark, we have nonetheless shown them as our most useful focus for the current subject matter, due in part to their varied negative and positive portrayal as well as their explicit depiction regarding faith and understanding. We have gone on to see their shaky story in connection with these twin concepts. We have witnessed their celebrated victories and their disappointing failings, even seeing fortuitous demonstrations of speaking rightly about the Kingdom as an overflow of that faith and understanding. We know who they are in this area and how they have fared and been displayed as a group.

303 This idea of the disciples' continued doubt here is the basis for E. Margaret Howe's investigation into where their subsequent "Easter faith" might have come from; see "... But Some Doubted.' (Matt. 28:17): A Re-Appraisal of Factors Influencing the Easter Faith Of The Early Christian Community," *JETS* 18, no. 3 (Summer 1975): 173-180.

304 *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 207.

305 Particularly 16:18 and the strongly hopeful implications of 28:18-20.

This suggests that we are now ready, therefore, to analyse a most relevant, specific case study of the disciples' speaking the truth (or otherwise!) in Matthew's Gospel. Peter's denials in 26:69-75 as a representative disciple will expose exactly what we already know – that speaking the truth is an act of renewed Kingdom humanity, naturally overflowing the heart of one who has faith and understanding. His actions in comparison to those of Jesus in vv. 57-68 will highlight this. Only when we have addressed this issue and passage in its particularity, then, will we return for a short look at the hope we so greatly long to see in the disciples' Matthean portrayal.

6 Narrowing Down to Our Most Apt Example: Peter's Ability to Speak the Truth in 26:69-75

We know the disciples and their up-and-down journey of faith and understanding fairly well now. We have even seen certain instances of this being related directly to their speech. This has all helped us to build to our present position; we are about to discuss just one very helpful and very specific example of the ability – or, more accurately, inability – to speak the truth in Matthew. The best place we can see this is in Peter's lying denials of Jesus in 26:69-75. In preparation, it will be essential for us to argue that Peter is a valid representative of the disciples. Then, we will be free to walk through the passage as it pertains to our topic: in it, we will see Matthew supply a vital, concrete example of the faith-understanding-speech link. With this accomplished, we will have the chance to return to Matthew's final portrayal of the disciples' ability, and find out what hope there can be for them and for Peter in the Gospel. We may just find that there is quite a hope indeed. First, it is time to meet Peter as our representative disciple in Matthew.

6.i Peter as archetypal or representative disciple

It may be fair to say that “[n]arrative readings ... do not typically argue for Peter's representational role but instead assume it,” as Brown notes in passing.³⁰⁶ Regardless, it is important for us to lay this matter out, even in brief. In doing so, we are preparing ourselves for the focused illustration of truth-speaking in Matt 26:69-75, which happens to have Peter as our exemplar. First of all, we can see a clear stress on Peter as “first” or representative disciple throughout the narrative. This would tend to suggest a leadership or representative role of some sort. Then, also, there are two more specific ways in which Peter is shown as a representative disciple in Matthew: through being characterised individually in parallel with the characterisation of οἱ μαθηταί as a group, and through acting as spokesperson for all the

306 Somewhat ironically, though, she does go on to argue it; *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, fn. 13, 42. From their own perspectives and approaches, Luz (*Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, 94, where he describes Peter as, “again and again,” the archetypal disciple) and Wilkins (*Concept of Disciple*, 141-3; 188; 208ff. etc.) also affirm this role, among many others.

disciples, their current thoughts and their stage of progress. We will look at both of these before analysing our main truth-speaking passage.

6.i.i *Peter as the “first” and most prominent disciple*

We become accustomed, in Matthew, to seeing οἱ μαθηταί acting together as though a singular character. “The disciples” move fairly solidly as one. Nonetheless, from the outset and right throughout the disciples' portrayal in Matthew, Peter enjoys a prominent role.³⁰⁷ He is the first mentioned as having been called by Jesus (“Simon the one called Peter,” 4:18; see vv. 18-20); he is the first of the twelve apostles listed (“first, Simon the one called Peter,” 10:2³⁰⁸). While other positive instances will be covered in a little more depth soon, we might recall for now that it is Peter's home that is visited, too, for the purpose of healing his mother-in-law (8:14).³⁰⁹ It is Peter who walks on water with Jesus (14:28ff.). Obviously, it is also Peter who is the named one among the general μαθηταί who makes the bold confession of 16:16, leading to Peter being the first named member of the church and the one whose confession prompts Jesus even to say that “on this rock [he] will build [his] church” (vv. 17-19; quote v. 18).³¹⁰

As we have seen earlier, on the topic of faith and understanding, Peter is present as the named disciple in a *negative* sense in that same pericope in which he walks on water (14:30f.). The same goes for the confession narrative. Jesus brings forth two lessons for οἱ μαθηταί that are both in response to Peter's actions. The first lesson is prompted by the confession itself (16:16), and the second by Peter's false statement of Jesus' destiny: “This will not happen to you [at all]!” (οὐ μὴ ἔσται σοι τοῦτο, 16:22; see vv. 13-28).³¹¹ Peter then

307 If “enjoys” is the right term for someone who is used as a negative example as often as anything else!

308 Both here and in 4:18, “and Andrew his brother” is added after the segments quoted here – note, though, how Andrew is mentioned in his relation to Simon Peter.

309 In comparison, the parallel in Mark 1:29ff. mentions all of Andrew, James and John by name as well. Here, the focus is more determinedly on Jesus and Peter (with, of course, his mother-in-law).

310 Leon Morris is right to point out the fact that “Peter has made a significant statement about Jesus: Jesus proceeds to make a significant statement about Peter. When he goes on to say, ‘*You are Peter*,’ his *You* is also emphatic: ‘You, the man who has just made this important statement, you to whom my heavenly Father has revealed this great truth’”; *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leicester: IVP, 1992), 422; italics original. PHEME PERKINS reminds us that even his name, “Peter” (Gk. Πέτρος, rock/stone), “is associated with the solid foundation for the Kingdom of God in the teaching of Jesus”; *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994), 66.

311 Combrink discusses the role of Peter as “stumbling-block” to Jesus; “The Challenge of Overflowing Righteousness,” 44.

vocalises his misapprehension as the prominent disciple of the three present at the transfiguration (Peter, James and John; 17:4³¹²). He later confidently promises never to leave Jesus – “and all the disciples said likewise” (26:35) – followed by failing prodigiously in his duty of staying awake at Gethsemane. Here, again, he is shown as the outstanding one of the chosen three, with the failure of οἱ μαθηταί being directed at Peter as if their leader (26:40,³¹³ see vv. 31-45).

Ultimately, as we shall give particular heed to soon, Simon Peter even stands out by denying his own Lord (26:69-75). Yet, these few examples of his prominence do not come near to an exhaustive list! When the others of the twelve disciples are nameless,³¹⁴ or even within the favoured trio of Peter, James and John,³¹⁵ it is *always* Peter who is highlighted, as the first and archetypal disciple – as one who is imperfectly human, frail, well-meaning and a perfect character for our instructive purposes in Matthew.³¹⁶

6.i.ii *Matthew's parallel characterisation of the disciples and Peter*

With Peter's prominence in our minds, we are now ready to look at Matthew's choice to characterise him alongside the group of disciples. As Wilkins maintains, “Almost everything that is said of Peter is elsewhere said of the disciples.”³¹⁷ The language and broader characterisation is indeed frequently parallel. If, then, there is a sense in which the

312 According to Kupp, “[Matthew's] report of God's voice leaves the implied reader in no doubt that Peter has again spoken presumptuously. [This] parallels his utterance at Jesus' baptism, but this time he adds the sharp rebuke: 'Listen to him!' (17.5), i.e., Peter does not listen”; *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 83. Crucially also, note the use of οἱ μαθηταί even for just these three as a representative subgroup: cf. 17:6; 26:40 etc.

313 The question/rebuke, while directed at Peter, is in the plural form (οὐκ ἰσχύσατε).

314 Cf. “the disciples” asking a question as a group in 13:10, 36 etc.; or 8:21: “And another of the disciples said to him...” (possibly also not one of “the twelve”).

315 On James and John as other “named” disciples, see 20:20ff. with the question from “the *mother* of the sons of Zebedee” (20:20) – their role here, however, is only a passive one, and they are not named individually. This mother is also noted as present with other women observing the crucifixion and following events in 27:55f.

316 In fact, the only likely exception is in the pericope that begins at 26:14 – and who should be named here but “one of the twelve, the [one] called Judas Iscariot” (cf. also v. 25, 47; 27:3). His mention, of course, can be seen as his own character, now distinctly separate from the identity of the twelve and therefore not linked to our current concerns. Peter is the primary named example in Matthew of a failing but *genuine* disciple.

317 *Concept of Disciple*, 215. See Arlo J. Nau's table for a more exhaustive treatment of the subject than the few examples we can provide here: “Matthew's Redactional Parallelization of Peter and the Disciples” in Nau, *Peter in Matthew: Discipleship, Diplomacy and Dispraise – With an Assessment of Power and Privilege in the Petrine Office* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992), fig. 3, 132.

twelve “may be treated as a single character”³¹⁸ – and even, in fact, without having to push this notion – it can easily be argued that one could be representative of all. In Matthew, Peter is principally this “one.”³¹⁹

Of course, we have already seen a definite occurrence of this parallel characterisation in our assessment of the ὀλιγόπιστοι passages. In 14:31 of the water-walking pericope, Peter is called a “little-faith one,” just as the disciples have been labelled multiple times throughout the narrative. This instance of ὀλιγόπιστος (singular) is very often analysed by commentators as though, for Matthean purposes, it has been directed at the group as a whole.³²⁰ To further this point, the same pericope first portrays οἱ μαθηταί as crying out “from fear” (ἀπὸ τοῦ φόβου, v. 26), and then Peter individually as being fearful (φοβέω, v. 30). The doubt Matthew ascribes here to Peter (διστάζω, 14:31), too, he applies elsewhere to the broader group (28:17). This Petrine ὀλιγόπιστοι passage is a very helpful image of Matthew's parallel characterisation.

Naturally enough, Matthew also expressly represents both the disciples and Peter as having or lacking understanding at various stages; in chapter 16 (as one example of many available, but one we are familiar with by now), the disciple group are reproved by Jesus for still not yet having a right understanding (οὐπῶ/οὐ νοέω, vv. 9a, 11). Then, in verse 23, after the climax of confessing Jesus as Messiah and Son of God, Jesus reprimands Peter alone for the same simple problem, albeit worded slightly differently: “[T]urning around, he said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling-block to me; for you are not being mindful [of] the [things] of God, but the [things] of people’” (σκάνδαλον εἶ ἐμοῦ, ὅτι οὐ φρονεῖς τὰ τοῦ θεοῦ ἀλλὰ τὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, v. 23).

Again, in the Kingdom community discourse of chapter 18, both οἱ μαθηταί (v. 1) and Peter alone (v. 21) ask questions that betray their misunderstanding of the nature of discipleship. Indeed, the very structure of the section may be broken down as (a) the

318 Kingsbury, *Matthew as Story*, 13.

319 See Brown, *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 41. Interestingly, Nau suggests that Matthew, in “equating Peter with the disciples as a group ... was demoting Peter [from the excessive attention afforded him in the early church] without destroying him. He was no longer ‘first,’ but he was still one of the Eleven, even after his denials and in the post-resurrection community”; *Peter in Matthew*, 133.

320 See relevant discussion in Brown, *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 246.

disciples' question; (b) Jesus' teaching; (a') Peter's question; (b') Jesus' teaching. Our evangelist repeatedly describes Peter and οἱ μαθηταί with the same particular wording or other parallel depiction.

Wilkins, though, does suggest that a very slight exception to this Matthean approach may be Peter's impulsive attitude.³²¹ In support of this idea, he mentions 14:28-30 of the water-walking passage: “And answering him, Peter said, 'Lord, if [it is] you, command me to come to you on the waters.' And he said, 'Come.' And having gone down from the boat, Peter walked on the waters and came toward Jesus. But seeing the wind, he was afraid, and beginning to sink, he cried out,³²² saying, 'Lord, save me!’” Also cited are 17:4, at the transfiguration (“And answering, Peter said to Jesus, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will make here three tents: one for you, and one for Moses, and one for Elijah’”), and 17:24f.³²³ (Peter's discussion with the temple tax collectors and with Jesus on the necessity or otherwise of payment – we might note this one as a weaker substantiation).

Two points can be made to respond to this impression of Wilkins'. First, for Peter to have an archetypal or representative role in Matthew need not mean for a moment that he cannot have any unique human attributes arise in the various passages that record his words and actions. They are simply tailored in a way to parallel the character of Peter to that of the disciples as a whole group. Second, these instances offered by Wilkins, and other instances, could easily be attributed to Peter naturally speaking and acting out his role as representative or spokesperson (a role we shall discuss presently). What is important to grasp at this stage is that Matthew has made a point of characterising Peter, the individual, in a way analogous to the characterisation of the disciple group. This is one key part of allowing him to be the exemplary disciple in Matthew's Gospel, and the example in our case study.

6.i.iii Matthew's use of Peter as spokesperson on Kingdom questions

So Peter is depicted by Matthew in parallel to the general μαθηταί character/s. The next vital element is his use by Matthew as a spokesperson – a deliberate representative of

321 *Concept of Disciple*, 215.

322 This, too, is the same word (κράζω) used for the disciples' response out of fear, v. 26.

323 *Concept of Disciple*, 215.

the disciples' thoughts, words, actions and progress in the faith. A core part of Peter's presentation here is in being *the* named disciple to ask questions about the Kingdom and its discipleship.³²⁴ These are questions that presumably also reflect both the uncertainty and the interests of the other disciples, and the answers to which are essential for all disciples to hear.

It is Peter, for instance, who asks Jesus to explain a parable to the group (φράσον ἡμῖν, 15:15). Another illustration comes in chapter 18, which we have considered in passing for Matthew's parallel characterisation of οἱ μαθηταί and Peter. Amidst the Kingdom community discourse, Peter asks, "Lord, how often, [when] my brother³²⁵ [or sister] will sin against me, [should] I forgive them? Up to seven times?" (18:21). Again in chapter 19, after further teaching on Kingdom life, Peter speaks directly on behalf of the disciples: "Behold, we left everything and we followed you. What then will there be for us?" (v. 27). His questions are used to represent the interests and voice the understanding of the disciples as a group.

This reality is then evidenced quite clearly in Jesus' responses. As well as providing answers to Peter's questions that are plainly relevant to all of the disciples, such as in 18:22 regarding forgiveness in the community ("Not, I say to you (singular), up to seven times, but up to seventy-seven times"³²⁶), Jesus elsewhere even explicitly directs his answers to the disciples as a group. Peter's own query regarding the parable (15:15) is answered with, "Are you (plural) also still without understanding?" (ἀκμὴν καὶ ὑμεῖς ἀσύνετοί ἐστε;). The same occurs in reply to Peter's query of 19:27, where "Jesus said to *them*" (εἶπεν αὐτοῖς, followed by an ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν statement on what is to come for the twelve and other followers; see vv. 28-30).³²⁷ Such responses highlight the spokesperson-nature of Peter's questioning.

It is not just in the asking of questions that Peter acts as a sort of spokesperson, but also in the answering. When the temple tax collectors in Capernaum want answers from the disciples, it is Peter whom they approach and ask (προσῆλθον ... τῷ Πέτρῳ καὶ εἶπαν,

324 At other times it is unnamed/general disciples, cf. 18:1: οἱ μαθηταί.

325 NRSV already interprets this in its choice of translation, "another member of the church."

326 See also 17:24-27, esp. 26f.

327 Cf. again Jesus' directing a plural rebuke to Peter at Gethsemane; 26:40.

ὁ διδάσκαλος ὑμῶν³²⁸ οὐ τελεῖ δίδραχμα; 17:24) and Peter who answers (v. 25a). Back at home, Jesus also directs his questioning to Simon Peter (τί σοι δοκεῖ, Σίμων; etc., v. 25b), who answers him and receives instruction (vv. 26f.). This is a clear instance of Peter being identified both by outsiders and by Matthew's Jesus as a spokesperson or leader of the group.

Of course, the most well-cited example of Peter answering on behalf of the group of disciples is shortly before this, in the striking declaration of chapter 16. Having received ample airtime in our study already, it is still worth looking at in light of Peter's role. At Caesarea Philippi, Matthew's Jesus asks his disciples who people say the Son of Man is and "they" (οἱ), the disciples generically, answer (16:13f.). Next, he further asks them, "But who do *you* (plural) say I am?" (v. 15). Then in verse 16, Simon Peter responds for them: "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." A declaration of blessing follows from Jesus, along with an affirmation that such understanding is able to be spoken out only by revelation from his Father in heaven (vv. 17-19). Peter seemingly answers the question for the others, representing their state of faith and understanding.

We may well ask, though, are Simon Peter's revelation and declaration actually representative in nature or merely personal?³²⁹ Did he speak this truth out primarily as one of (even if he is a leader of) the group? It is natural for us, building on what we have already seen, to argue that he did. A personal, singular blessing is clear ("Simon son of Jonah," v. 17) and church history shows the widely varied ways in which believing communities have understood Peter's special (or otherwise) place.³³⁰ But the same man who has been used by our evangelist as an archetypal and representative disciple throughout the rest of Matthew is found in a comparable position here. Not only does Peter answer with the confession *on behalf of* the disciples (vv. 15f.), but his answer prompts Jesus to instruct the disciples as a group to keep this clear understanding to themselves (v. 20).

Wilkins summarises it thus: "Perhaps it is best to say that Peter is individually singled

328 Note that they are approaching Peter alone about "your (plural) teacher."

329 Wilkins discusses this briefly also; *Concept of Disciple*, 188.

330 Though this area is of no specific concern to us here.

out for his act of leadership in making the confession, yet his leadership role is from *within* the circle of disciples. He is blessed personally, yet representationally as well.”³³¹ We do know that the group of disciples has made a similar confession in 14:33, minus the “Messiah” element. We also know that Jesus has already declared all the disciples as “blessed” with God-given comprehension of the hidden things³³² of the Kingdom of heaven (divine passive: ὑμῖν δέδοται γινῶναι... 13:11; see chapter 13, esp. vv. 11, 16). In Perkins' view, “Jesus' word to Peter is a special instance of the more general principle that God has made the truth about the Kingdom available to the 'little ones' of the world.”³³³ The disciples as a group have already been shown to have the same kind of special understanding.

So, Kupp feels able to evaluate this passage in chapter 16 directly as a narrative turning point for the disciple group. He says:

The images of 'building my ἐκκλησία', the 'keys', and 'binding and loosing' [directed at Peter] are new. It is no accident that they coincide with new exhibitions of growing cohesion and comprehension on the part of the disciples, and with Peter's confession of Jesus as ὁ χριστός, Son of God. The disciples are no longer called ὀλιγόπιστοι and the ἄσύνετοι, but because of Peter's confession are anticipated as the foundation of Jesus' own saved and confessing ἐκκλησία, with new authority and responsibilities in the forefront of the cosmic battle for the formation of this new community.³³⁴

The confession does serve as a critical moment for the disciples; in 16:21, a transition is presented that leads into Jesus' more intensely building and preparing his ἐκκλησία community – “from that time” (ἀπὸ τότε).

Kupp's deliberate connection between this chapter 16 confession and Matthew's “Emmanuel” motif is worth mentioning, and will become pertinent for us soon. Peter's confession among and for the disciples – of Jesus as ὁ χριστός and ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ – is not only held by Kupp as showing a new level of the followers' comprehension. He also holds it as therefore reinforcing Jesus as the one who “will save his people from their sins” (1:21) and as the person of “God, with us” (v. 23). Peter and, by association, the disciples, are “closer to

331 *Concept of Disciple*, 189; italics original.

332 Or mysteries: τὰ μυστήρια, see 13:11.

333 *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church*, 68.

334 *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 81.

seeing Jesus as the active and saving presence of God.”³³⁵ Indeed, as Wilkins accords, “As Jesus instructs Peter, instruction is provided for the church.³³⁶ ... The focus was to be on the risen Lord Jesus who sent out the disciples and said 'I am with you always, even unto the end of the age'”³³⁷ (28:20).

6.i.iv Thus, Peter as our model disciple

Matthew quite clearly uses Peter as an archetypal disciple, or a leading figure, in the sense of representing the mind, speech and action of the core group of followers. He is shown as the “first” disciple and given great prominence among the twelve throughout the evangelist's narrative. Peter's characterisation is parallel to οἱ μαθηταί as a whole, showing Matthew's intentional linking of their characteristics for the purpose of seeing Peter as a functional representative. It is he who stands as the named disciple asking Kingdom-focused questions, and it is he in a Matthean framework who can be expected to answer such questions and be the recipient of praise, teaching or rebuke. Peter is the one Matthew provides as an example of a disciple.

Furthermore, he is our example of a “real” disciple. We have obviously already seen the imperfection and progression of faith and understanding among the disciples in general (which, itself, cannot be covered adequately without reference to Peter!). At the same time, Simon Peter is offered as a specific, personal example of genuine following and also, therefore, of a mixed comprehension, faith and ability to overflow righteousness in his speech and other action. We are able to consider him as one who “represents the disciples' proximity to Christ and yet, at the same time, their frailty.”³³⁸ He is the 'face' of applied discipleship for Matthew.

Wilkins claims that, as we near the end of the Gospel, Peter “loses the spotlight as the representational disciple” (citing 21:20; 24:3; 28:7, though not supporting his argument

335 Ibid., 81.

336 This very sentence about Peter's character as purposeful instruction for the church is a recurring one for Wilkins. See also his discussion of Peter in “Discipleship,” *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, 183.

337 *Concept of Disciple*, 216.

338 Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, 94. For one interpretation of the positives and negatives of Peter's role through Matthew, see Wilkins' chronological graph in *Concept of Disciple: Appendix I*, 240.

otherwise).³³⁹ This is rather important if we are to see him as a representative disciple in chapter 26! Wilkins is absolutely correct in locating Matthew's final emphasis as on the disciples as a fledgeling Kingdom community, and not on any individual follower (esp. 28:16ff.). He is wrong, however, to sever from the story without actual reason Peter's profoundly significant role in the promising, deserting and denying of chapter 26.³⁴⁰ Rather, in line with the argument of the current section, since Peter is the archetypal disciple embodying the group through the rest of Matthew, *so is he here*.

Peter says he will never desert or deny Jesus, “and all the disciples said likewise” (v. 35; see also v. 33). However, Jesus has prophesied this individual denial (v. 34) and that of the rest of the flock: they will *all* be caused to stumble, or fall away, because of Jesus tonight (v. 31). As Peter goes through with his denial, then, and speaks out his lies, his portrayal in all of this is as an exemplary disciple too. Working from this necessary foundation, we now turn to Matthew 26 and its narrative of Jesus' trial and Peter's denials. By first showing Jesus' outstanding handling of his life-threatening trial and then showing Peter's botching of his own “trial” (or mere opportunity to tell the truth), we are offered a very specific demonstration of the disciples' inability, in the imperfection of their discipleship, to consistently or adequately believe, understand the ways of the Kingdom and overflow that depth of understanding by speaking the truth.

6.ii Jesus' approach to speaking the truth at his trial (26:57-68)

To begin with, what is Jesus' practice when it comes to telling the truth in this weighty segment? As Witherington mentions, Jesus' trial in Matthew is “sandwiched between two halves of the telling of Peter's demise, with one story commenting on the other.”³⁴¹ The setting for the trial is the high priest's house (26:57), and here, already, we can see Peter hanging back and watching with interest. “[He] was following [Jesus] from afar, as far as the courtyard of the high priest; and, having gone inside, he was sitting with the servants/guards to see the end” (v. 58).³⁴² Immediately in verse 59, the true nature of the trial is made clear:

339 *Concept of Disciple*, 211.

340 Wilkins specifically mentions the lack of a spokesperson role held by Peter in this pericope; *ibid.*, 212.

341 Ben Witherington III, *Matthew*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary, ed. Mark K. McElroy (Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2006), 499.

342 Osborne notes that the imperfect “was following” (ἠκολούθει) emphasises an ongoing (hence, committed)

“Now the chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were seeking false testimony against Jesus, that they [may] kill him.” This rather discomfiting scene is our context for Jesus' upcoming response. It will be helpful, in fact, to translate verses 60-64 in their entirety first, before a study of the section for our purposes:

[B]ut they did not find [the false testimony, with] many false witnesses having come forward. Then at last, two, coming forward, said, 'This man said, "I am able to destroy the temple of God and in three days to [re]build it."' And, rising, the high priest said to him, 'Do you answer [with] nothing?'³⁴³ What do these ones testify against you?' But Jesus stayed quiet. And, responding, the high priest said to him, 'I adjure you by the living God, that you tell us if you are the Messiah/Christ, the Son of God.' Jesus said to him, 'You said [it]. But, I say to you, from now on you (plural) will see the Son of Man sitting at [the] right [hand] of Power and coming upon the clouds of heaven' (26:60-64).

The whole context for Jesus' trial in Matthew is, as we can promptly tell, one of deceit. It is about those who patently have no genuine faith or depth of Kingdom understanding³⁴⁴ acting and speaking against the ways of the Kingdom life and also, therefore, against the rightful King. It is not witnesses that the chief priests seek, but false or pseudo-witnesses (ψευδόμαρτυς, v. 60: compare the μαρτυρία sought in Mark 14:55) for their own murderous aims. How intriguing to notice, then, that the testimony that is eventually used may even be *technically* true!³⁴⁵ The Matthean Jesus may well claim such a thing as he is accused of in 26:61. Yet, in Matthew's framework, this statement – misinterpreted, misapplied and flowing from bad/unfaithful hearts – is precisely the false testimony that has been sought (ψευδομαρτυρία, v. 59). To Osborne, in fact, “The whole emphasis in Matthew[’s trial account] is on the lies that were propounded.”³⁴⁶

action and suggests that at this stage, in 26:58, “[Peter] clearly intended to be with Jesus all the way”; *Matthew*, 994f., quote 995.

343 Actually οὐδὲν (adjective) ἀποκρίνη;.

344 A whole thesis itself could easily be built around the depiction of the religiously powerful in Matthew, with regard to our topic; it is not, of course, our focal priority here, but even another quick glance at the woes of ch. 23 are a reminder of this matter!

345 Daniel Patte observes this point, though he emphasises the idea of it being true *for Matthew*; *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 372. So Gundry, who understands that in Matthew, the Sanhedrin seeks false testimony and finds true (while in Mark 14:55ff. it seeks true and finds false); *Matthew: A Commentary*, 542f. While a fair observation in part, it is unwise to make too much of this for our purposes, as the passage as a whole very clearly shows the deceit of the Sanhedrin and their (probably) technically-true witnesses.

346 *Matthew*, 995. Though his strong language here may be able to be balanced by views such as Patte's above, he is essentially right about the stress on deceit as opposed to truthfulness.

It is then in verses 62-63a that we see the first account of question/answer at Jesus' trial. Caiaphas, as the high priest, stands and fires a double question at Jesus: "Do you answer [with] nothing? What do these ones testify against you?" (v. 62).³⁴⁷ As Luz conveys, the first question about having no answer – οὐδὲν ἀποκρίνη; – "in a rhetorically effective way anticipates what Jesus in fact does: he is silent."³⁴⁸ Jesus provides no answer at all.³⁴⁹ Matthew's Jesus is successfully able to hold his tongue when necessary as a righteous, humble act of trust in God, his judgement and his Kingdom purposes.³⁵⁰ His silence is not, therefore, an affirmation of the charge! Neither is it mere inner strength on display, but a loud, overflowing statement of truth and of trust in God above all. In other words, Jesus' actions, speech, and even his withholding of speech are an enacting of faith in his Father.

This becomes clearer as we go on. After making no progress in the twisted aims of the religious leaders, Caiaphas seems to violate Jesus' Kingdom oath-teachings (we recall 5:33-37) by commanding him to take one (here ἐξορκίζω, 26:63b).³⁵¹ His adjuration is "by the living God, that [Jesus] tell [them] if [he is] the Messiah/Christ, the Son of God."³⁵² Jesus' response, again, is centred on staying true to his Father and living out this Kingdom way of life: "You said [it]," he says (v. 64). Jesus embodies his own teaching in 5:33-37, says Gundry, "[f]or 'You said [it]' does not issue a qualified yes, much less a no, but stoutly affirms that the questioner himself knows the affirmative answer as obvious."³⁵³ Putting the claim back on their lips – indeed, he is even holding the high priest himself (σὺ εἶπας, singular) responsible for his own ultimately-crooked words – he denies the chief priests and their religious, manipulative oath-taking games any authority over him.³⁵⁴ Elsewhere, the σὺ εἶπας

347 Luz comments that "[v]erse 62 is to be read as two questions (not merely as one), even if the second is only a rhetorical strengthening of the first"; *Matthew: A Commentary*, vol. 3, *Matthew 21-28*, trans. by Wilhelm C. Linss, Hermeneia, ed. Helmut Koester (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), 427.

348 Ibid.

349 This might remind us of that central Matthean fulfilment quotation in 12:17-21, which has the Isa 42 servant in view. Jesus is chosen by God, and is "[his] beloved, in whom [his] soul is well pleased" (v. 18; cf. Isa 42:1); 12:19 notes that this Spirit-endowed servant will not engage in strife (ἐρίζω), "nor cry out, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets" (see Isa 42:2) as he walks humbly to bring about justice. Until, as verse 20 puts it, "he brings justice/judgement forth into victory" (ἕως ἂν ἐκβάλῃ εἰς νίκος τὴν κρίσιν).

350 This may also echo/link to the silent righteous ones of Isa 53:7; Pss 38 and 39.

351 Davies and Allison note already that "[l]ike Peter (v. 72) but unlike Jesus, Caiaphas uses the oath"; *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*, vol. 3, *XIX-XXVIII*, ICC, ed. J.A. Emerton, C.E.B. Cranfield and G.N. Stanton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1997), 527. Osborne confirms ἐξορκίζω's use as a legal term; *Matthew*, 996.

352 Note the distinct connection in wording back to Peter's confession in 16:16.

353 *Matthew: A Commentary*, 545; see 544f.

354 To Davies and Allison, this constitutes a refusal to speak under oath; *I-VII*, 535 (on 5:33-37).

response³⁵⁵ has already been used by Matthew's Jesus as a clearly positive reply³⁵⁶ to Judas' mendacious question: "Surely I am not [the one], Rabbi?" (26:25; see also the οὐ λέγεις reply to Pilate in 27:11³⁵⁷). Matthew is simply continuing the picture of his Jesus as one who will have nothing to do with falsehoods but exposing their unfaithfulness, and who lays the responsibility for a righteous character back on the offenders.³⁵⁸

Continuing on in the same verse Jesus adds, on his own authoritative terms, "But, I say to you..." (πλὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, v. 64b).³⁵⁹ Somewhat like the antithetical statements of 5:21-48, here he is contrasting that which is misunderstood (by those lacking the eyes of faith) with reality: "[F]rom now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at [the] right [hand] of Power and coming upon the clouds of heaven" (v. 64c).³⁶⁰ Jesus makes a public declaration of himself at last. Indeed, what a reversal there is to come! We may be well aware that the outcome of this truthful statement is a false charge of blasphemy (v. 65ff.);³⁶¹ most important for us, all the same, is that Matthew's Jesus is uncompromisingly faithful and true in his speech – even when facing the threat of a shameful death.

As for those religious leaders hearing his words and knowing their scriptures (on a surface level, at least), Matthew confirms that "their unbelief goes against what they know

355 Compare with Luke 22:70 (similarly, ὑμεῖς λέγετε ὅτι ἐγώ εἰμι); Mark 14:62 (ἐγώ εἰμι, καὶ...).

356 See Luz's discussion of these answers as implied affirmatives in Matthew: "In all three texts, however, one can also see a distance between Jesus and the questioners to which Jesus' 'you said it' calls attention. In our case it is seen in Jesus' refusal to respond to the demand for an oath"; *Matthew 21-28*, 429.

357 We know that "Pilate unwittingly speaks the truth: Jesus is the king of the Jews.... Matthean usage encourages one to think the words [οὐ εἶπας and similar a] positive [answer]. The context confirms this. That those who hear Jesus' response call him 'Christ' (v. 68) shows how they have understood him (cf. 27.43)...."; Davies and Allison, *XIX-XXVIII*, 528.

358 Along these lines, Davies and Allison also (following Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary*, 545) touch on this as one of the reasons Matthew may have utilised οὐ εἶπας in 26:64 rather than the Marcan "I am" (14:62); *ibid.*, 528f.

359 Cf. our earlier section on the ἀμήν λέγω ὑμῖν sayings. Osborne also proffers (though without extra explanation) that "with πλὴν it is equivalent to an 'amen' (ἀμήν) formula saying ... and constitutes a solemn truth"; *Matthew*, 997.

360 With Jesus' declaration in 26:64c, we at last know the answer to his own question from 22:45 ("If ... David calls [the Messiah] Lord, how is he his son?")! Jesus as Son of Man is both shown as righteously vindicated and declared a judgement figure here (as in Ps 110:1; Dan 7:13f.; Matt 19:28; 25:31ff.; cf. 24:30 in context). McCartney adds his interesting take on the saying, that "[t]he right hand of power' was the position of the vicegerent, the co-regent. Jesus informs his unbelieving hearers that they would in some way witness his vicegerency and experience his sovereign dominion"; "Ecce homo," 14.

361 France voices his awareness of the fact that one of the key areas of disagreement surrounding the trial has been what Jesus was condemned for – his charge; *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1017. Patte's comment that "[Jesus'] blasphemy is to claim that he will share in God's power" is fairly standard; *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 374.

to be true.”³⁶² Of course, this rich irony in 26:57-68 must be clear to Matthew's readers.³⁶³ We can even see it in the charge made by some in the Sanhedrin for Jesus to “prophecy to [them]” (προφήτευσον ἡμῖν, v. 68), as though Jesus has not done so already! According to Davies and Allison, this current section is “the natural outcome of Jesus’ ministry. He has from the beginning been misunderstood, disbelieved, persecuted, and rejected. He has also consistently demanded passivity in the face of unjust treatment as well as loyalty to the truth. Thus the trial, its verdict, and Jesus’ response are only to be expected.”³⁶⁴ In full knowledge of the deadly consequences, Matthew's Jesus is the picture of commitment to humble trust and unwavering honesty before his Father. Unfortunately for Peter, this image of Kingdom humanity (though there are other elements to his characterisation here, also) is precisely what our model disciple, Peter, is placed in comparison to. Let us dare to look now at Peter's performance.

6.iii Matthew 26:69-75: Peter's trial?

Without an intervening sentence or a moment of reprieve from Matthew to dull the parallels to come, we are met with a description of Peter's own “trial”. It may seem unfair to compare the two; we can assume that the Son of God in Matthean narrative, although human, may rather outshine our lead disciple. Indeed – to spoil the ending completely – he does. Yet our end goal in this chapter, we may be reminded, is not remotely about comparing Jesus to Peter. Rather, it is about analysing the portrayal of Peter as a representative disciple, in a passage that is highly relevant to the topic of truth-speaking: 26:69-75. Still, we have reason to indulge the Jesus-Peter comparison. This we will discuss briefly in hindsight but for now, and obviously, it is because Matthew does so himself. The parallels will show up naturally as we walk through the passage to watch for Peter's own verbal responses under varyingly trying circumstances.

362 Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary*, 545. We are well aware, though, that they lack the depth of understanding to genuinely “know” much about the Kingdom at all.

363 Though they, plainly, are not our focus. See the good discussion of irony as the “chief literary feature” of the passage in Davies and Allison, *XIX-XXVIII*, 537. It is worth also noting Luz's suggestion that in Jesus' trial in 26:57-68, Matthew is showing that the Jewish high priest “does not understand or take seriously his own Scripture, an idea also expressed elsewhere in the Gospel (cf. 22:41-46)”; “The Son of Man in Matthew: Heavenly Judge or Human Christ?” in *Studies in Matthew*, trans. by Rosemary Selle (Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2005): 110 ; see 109f.

364 Davies and Allison, *XIX-XXVIII*, 537.

Here in verse 69, we pick up from where we left Peter in verse 58, sitting already outside in the courtyard “to see the end” of Jesus' situation. “Therefore,” deduces Osborne, “these events take place during the trial conducted in vv. 59-68.”³⁶⁵ Of course, Matthew has intensified Peter's boasts of faithfulness in the lead-up to this scene (compare the additional use of σκανδαλίζω in 26:31-35 with Mark 14:27-31), which might remind us to watch with extra interest. We launch into it immediately: a παιδίσκη (a servant/slave girl) approaches³⁶⁶ him “saying, ‘You also were with Jesus the Galilean.’” At this stage, we are shown two remarkable things. First of all, the powerless status of Peter's accuser is clear. To Blomberg, “Both gender and occupation underline [this],”³⁶⁷ so Peter's upcoming cowardice, in comparison to Jesus' resolve, is shown acutely even now. The external temptation to lie, as a potential πειρασμός for Peter (cf. v. 41; temptation/trial), does not seem to be great.³⁶⁸

Second, notice the nature of the servant girl's accusation. “You ... were *with Jesus*.” If it is not apparent already, we shall see soon that, for Matthew, being “with Jesus”/μετὰ Ἰησοῦ is a core concept. It is obviously linked to knowing Jesus, and will also happen to have implications for our choice areas of faith, understanding and ability to overflow/speak out the truth. So Luz adds, on its appearance in this particular chapter, that being “with Jesus” is central

in all of chap. 26 in which the subject repeatedly is his followers' being-with-Jesus. It portends nothing good [for these verses, 69-75]. Previously [within chapter 26], whenever mention was made of the disciples' being-with-Jesus their failure was portrayed (26:23, 38, 40, 51), while Jesus faithfully remained ‘with’ his disciples (26:18, 20, 36; cf. 29).³⁶⁹

As a major theme or motif in Matthew's Gospel, the servant girl's question and Peter's

365 Osborne, *Matthew*, 1000. Cf. Davies and Allison, who as well as this also mention that the passage starts with a δὲ (Ὁ δὲ Πέτρος) to contrast Peter's and Jesus' trials, though it is unwise for us to hang too much on the use of a word with such broad usage; see *XIX-XXVIII*, 544. Their point is nonetheless borne out in other ways.

366 That is, προσέρχομαι, the same word used when the devil (4:3) and Jewish leaders (15:1; 16:1; 19:3; 21:23; 22:23) approach Jesus to test him. This word will be discussed again soon in a different context.

367 Blomberg, *Matthew*, 404.

368 Davies and Allison discuss this, with reference to various historical commentators; *XIX-XXVIII*, 545. At the same time, we must remember that the scene also takes place before a crowd, which heightens *both* the temptation to speak untruth and the culpability of Peter!

369 Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 454. Cf. also Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 380.

pending response are weighty. Will Peter speak the truth and live out the Kingdom life “with Jesus” here, or will he betray Jesus, denying this “withness” and with it his King?

26:70

Regrettably, Peter's position takes shape all too quickly: “[H]e denied [it³⁷⁰] before all, saying, 'I don't know (εἶδον) what you are saying.'" Already neglecting his claim of fidelity in verse 35, that “even if it is necessary for [him] to die with [Jesus], [he] will *not* deny³⁷¹ [him],” Peter pretends ignorance of the very question. Can this really come from the man who made the bold “confession” or declaration of faith in 16:16? In a strangely ironic way, Peter is correct. He exposes the fact that, to date, he *does not know* with enough depth of understanding what it is to truly follow the Messiah – to be “with Jesus” – and hence cannot consistently act according to this Kingdom understanding.³⁷² Recognition of a sort of irony does not excuse his lie, however;³⁷³ Peter ought to agree outwardly that he was “with Jesus the Galilean.” Instead, his “[implied] 'No' is expressly classified by Matthew ... with the verb 'deny'”³⁷⁴ (ἀρνέομαι).

In our Gospel text, this denial is also in front of the entire crowd. What is essentially private in Mark, facing only the servant girl herself (14:66-68), is actually ἔμπροσθεν πάντων (“before all”) here. Matthew decides to make this a public failure, and thus to intensify Peter's culpability. The very choice of wording, in fact, reminds us of the ὅστις ... ἂν ἀρνήσεταιί με ἔμπροσθεν τῶν ἀνθρώπων of 10:33: “Whoever denies me before people....”³⁷⁵ What is more, although we are furnished with no idea of what might befall Peter were he to choose truthfulness over denial, Jesus' lesson in 16:25 about wishing to save one's life and so losing it now seems to be chillingly apt.³⁷⁶ As also suggested elsewhere

370 Or perhaps even *him*; no direct object is given, just that Peter denied (ὁ δὲ ἠρνήσατο...).

371 Ἀπαρνέομαι, future middle deponent.

372 Whether we see this as intentionally-written irony or not, Davies and Allison quote John Paul Heil in calling this an “ironic understatement for the reader”; *XIX-XXVIII*, 546 (citing Heil, *The Death and Resurrection of Jesus: A Narrative-Critical Reading of Matthew 26–28* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991), 64).

373 If we look at the broader Matthean scenario, we know that Jesus takes away the excuse of any ignorance: recall, for instance, the resolute “You said [it]” (σὺ εἶπας; 26:25, 64) and “You say/are saying [it]” (27:11) reply in other situations of professed ignorance.

374 Birger Gerhardsson, “Confession and Denial Before Men: Observations on Matt 26:57–27:2,” *JSNT* no. 13 (October 1981): 46-66, quote 55. Gerhardsson's article discusses Matthew in light of the Jewish and early Christian theme of “confess-deny.”

375 Cf. 5:6; 6:1 etc. for other ideas of acting “before people” in Matthew.

376 See 16:24ff., directly following Peter's confession and subsequent misstatement and rebuke; cf. also 10:39.

in Matthew (see 10:16ff.; 26:63f.), the seriousness of speaking the truth even in the face of opposition is at issue. Yet Peter betrays his lack of faith and understanding by his inability, especially compared to Jesus' composure in his time of trial. His first denial is accomplished.

26:71

Next, we see Peter try to skirt the issue by heading further outside to the porch; “Verbal evasion is followed by physical evasion: Peter is trying to avoid being noticed.”³⁷⁷ He does not entirely leave Jesus, though, and there is something to be said for this. He is a “little-faith,” perhaps, but his heart intention is still to follow. Another (ἄλλη) servant girl³⁷⁸ sees him and says to those present (τοῖς ἐκεῖ),³⁷⁹ “This [one] was with Jesus the Nazarene.” Again the μετὰ Ἰησοῦ charge is specified. As with Luz's quote within the discussion of verse 69 above, Davies and Allison re-emphasise the link to its use in Gethsemane (vv. 30ff.), “where μετὰ is inserted three times into Mark's material. And as there so here: those physically 'with' Jesus are in another sense not 'with' him at all.”³⁸⁰ This will be Peter's second opportunity to speak rightly and overflow his extensive understanding of the ways of the King.

26:72

So “again,” we are told, “he denied it, with an oath: 'I do not know the man.'” As Jesus' lead disciple in Matthew, Peter not only confirms his seeming failure by now *directly* speaking a lie (about Jesus, no less), but he does so this time in an even *more* public and incriminating setting. Furthermore, he even perspicuously contradicts Jesus' teaching on oaths and truthful speech in 5:33-37! Such a failure is far from the description that Matthew's Jesus gives there of a model disciple or child of the Kingdom. Jesus' personal response to an oath command has been to turn the words back on the questioner and reveal the truth about his Kingdom under his own terms (v. 63f.). Acting out of his lack of faith,

377 France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1033. Compare this to Jesus' proactive approach in v. 46!

378 In Mark 14:69 it is likely the same one (ἡ παρῳδίσκη) – this is possibly just Matthew's fondness for doubling, as Davies and Allison suggest; *XIX-XXVIII*, 546. Osborne sees the Marcan choice as “for dramatic purposes” and Matthew's as clarification of another woman's presence; *Matthew*, fn. 26, 1001 .

379 It is well worth noting that “the introduction of ([presumably] male, cf. τοῖς) bystanders to hear Peter's oath satisfies the Torah's legal demand for two or more qualified witnesses (Num 35.30; Deut 17.6)”;
Davies and Allison, *XIX-XXVIII*, 547.

380 Ibid.

however, Peter reaches for oath-taking and invokes something holy in an attempt to validate his faulty speech, much like Herod (14:7) and the high priest, “probably invoking the name of God to solemnize the alleged truth of his statement... [Instead, his] sin and guilt are increasing qualitatively as well as quantitatively.”³⁸¹

This includes, as we can see, a blunt and oath-supported denial of even “knowing” Jesus: οὐκ οἶδα τὸν ἄνθρωπον. To claim on (voluntary) oath that he does not know this person, as though having no acquaintance or familiarity with the Jesus of whom the servant girl speaks, can no longer be confused with a mere momentary lapse or misunderstanding. Rather, it has alarming parallels with statements of Jesus in the context of eschatological judgement: οὐδέποτε ἔγνων ὑμᾶς (“I never knew you,” 7:23), and the powerful ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν, οὐκ οἶδα ὑμᾶς (“Amen I say to you, I do not know you,” 25:12). Peter's lying words seem to be grouping him in with those who do not know Jesus and who will not see his Kingdom in its fullness. Things are getting worse for Matthew's Peter; both the public nature and the intensity of his faith-deficient speaking are growing by the moment.

26:73

“But after [a] little [while], the ones standing by approached,” making a more hostile environment still for our flailing disciple. The group, possibly of mixed gender but presumably involving men (οἱ), draw near and attack Peter themselves – attack, that is, with a correct statement. “Truly you also are from [among] them,” they say, “for even your accent makes [your identity³⁸²] clear.” It is interesting for us to see even the *crowds* having the opportunity and certainty to use the term ἀληθῶς, “truly,” here. Osborne asserts that the present tense εἶ (“you are”) “is a further challenge, hinting that Peter still is a follower [of Jesus],”³⁸³ which he assuredly is. A blatant revelation of the facts looks to be, for Peter, an unambiguous opportunity to finally come clean and tell the truth himself.

26:74

Instead of any confession, however, Peter decides to take his lie to the extreme. “Then

381 Blomberg, *Matthew*, 404.

382 Gk. “you” (σύ).

383 Osborne, *Matthew*, 1001.

he began to curse and to swear: 'I do not know the man!'" Peter has moved from a feigned ignorance (already explicitly a "denial" for Matthew; v. 70) to a lie under a voluntary oath (v. 72), and finally now to both cursing *and* the fumbling two-level speech that is oath-taking. As well as Peter moving physically further from Jesus and into more public circumstances, Matthew's three denials show a clear linear progression in the severity of Peter's untruthful words and reach their full extent here.³⁸⁴ His response is no mere fleeting indiscretion after three opportunities to tell the truth. The remark that Peter "began" (ἤρξατο) to do these things even makes certain that his cursing and swearing sounds like a properly committed activity. "Intent cannot always be judged when a thing is done once," Davies and Allison agree. "But this is not true of something done thrice: repetition reflects resolution. This is why Peter's multiple denials are so damning."³⁸⁵

Speaking of damning, the cursing itself in this third denial is worthy of mention. Καταθεματίζω, as France affirms, only occurs here but "is generally agreed to be synonymous with the verb [from the same root] used in the Marcan parallel, [ἀναθεματίζω, Mark 14:71], 'to curse, anathematize.'"³⁸⁶ Blomberg plainly states that Peter is effectively "asking God to punish him (or Christ) if he is lying"³⁸⁷ – but which of these two is it? The verb itself, while a transitive one, has no direct object here, so it is not necessarily clear what is implied. It could well be, though, that Peter is not only lying about knowing who Jesus is, but is even pronouncing curses upon him (as persecuted Christians were later asked to do) in order to prove himself not a disciple!³⁸⁸ With the cursing, swearing and lying, Peter's process

384 Compare this with Mark 14:66-72, which omits reference to the voluntary oath as the second stage of the denial (simply, "Again he denied," v. 70); Luke 22:55-62, in which Peter's first two denials are clear denials and the third is one of feigned ignorance. Notice also in Matthew the parallel between Peter's three denials and Jesus' threefold prayer in Gethsemane (26:36-46) – Gethsemane being the place of Jesus' instruction to "[w]atch and pray so that [the disciples] may not enter into temptation (πειρασμός); the spirit [is] indeed ready/willing, but the flesh weak" (26:41); cf. Green, *The Message of Matthew*, 285.

385 Davies and Allison, *XIX-XXVIII*, 549.

386 France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1034. Cf. "curse" in BDAG, "καταθεματίζω," 517.

387 Blomberg, *Matthew*, 405.

388 Contra (e.g.) NIV's "began to call down curses on himself." Davies and Allison argue well for this view: see Davies and Allison, *XIX-XXVIII*, 548f., discussing the idea that, while most have suggested a self-curse by Peter or a curse upon the bystanders, or both, "the best guess is that Jesus is the object.... This view, which posits that 'Jesus' is omitted out of reverence, has gained more and more favour in recent studies." Cf. Gerhardsson, "Confession and Denial Before Men," 54; France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1034. Luz argues, too, that this view is becoming increasingly accepted, and says of the self-curse interpretation: "[It] has always been the most popular and is advocated today by, e.g., Schlatter, 764; Gnllka 2.437; Wiefel, 465. Cf. Acts 23:12, 14, 21 (ἐαυτούς); Rom 9:3. However, such conditional curses on one's self are never made in biblical texts with the transitive verb alone without an object"; *Matthew 21-28*, fn. 26, 456.

of openly speaking falsehood and denying Christ is complete. “And immediately a cock crowed.”³⁸⁹

26:75

Our head disciple, of course, is reminded of Jesus' prophetic word: “Before a cock crows, three times you will deny me” (cf. v. 34). Jesus' word is perceptibly fulfilled and Peter, realising his own wrongdoing and “going outside, ... wept bitterly.” It does not seem that he is even able to see “the end” as he has intended (v. 58). Instead, again he moves physically further away from Jesus and cries alone. This woeful scene is not only the conclusion of Matthew's longest pericope concentrating on the character of Peter, but is also *the* final mention of Peter by name in the Gospel. What a horrific way to sum up the leader of the disciples! Peter has comprehensively failed in the end of Matthew to speak the truth, in line with the ways of the Kingdom and its righteousness.

Compare this to a softer view of Peter – or his visible restoration, perhaps – in the other Gospels. In Luke, we have Jesus' explicit prediction in 22:32 that Peter will have “turned back” after his denials (ἐπιστρέψω; see vv. 31-34). Peter is the one to go and actively investigate the women's story about the resurrection (24:12), and “Simon” is also the recipient of the first³⁹⁰ resurrection experience (24:34). In Mark, the women at the tomb are instructed by an angelic young man (16:5) to tell “the disciples and Peter” (v. 7) that the Lord is going ahead of them and they shall see him in Galilee. Peter may be mentioned separately from the disciples, but he is nonetheless singled out as included in Jesus' plan! As Arlo J. Nau offers, “Beyond everything else..., the deletion of the Peter reference in Mark 16:7 from Matthew 28:7 is the cruelest cut of all.”³⁹¹ Outside of the Synoptics, then, in John, Peter is triply recommissioned and reinstated as a disciple (21:15ff.; cf. also ἀκολουθεῖ μοι/σύ μοι ἀκολουθεῖ, “Follow me,” in vv. 19, 22). Matthew appears to let Peter remain

389 Intriguingly enough, from early in the history of its interpretation, some denied Peter ever lied in this pericope! Jerome spoke against such a view at the end of the fourth century, saying, “I know that some ... have interpreted this passage to the effect that Peter did not deny God but man [sic], and what he meant was ‘I do not know the man [26:72, 74], because I know God.’ ... [T]hose who thus defend the apostle make the Lord guilty of a lie ...[:] ‘Truly, I say to you, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times.’ Notice what he says: ‘You will deny me’ – not ‘the man’;” see Manlio Simonetti, ed., *Matthew*, vol. 2, *Matthew 14-28*, ACCS NT 1b (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002), 269f.

390 Presumably – or the first to one of “the eleven” (cf. the Emmaus road pericope of vv. 13ff., after which Jesus' prior appearance to Peter is mentioned).

391 *Peter in Matthew*, 141.

marked by his failure more heavily than all of the other evangelists. He has failed in his *πειρασμός* and utterly betrayed his supposed King.

6.iv Jesus vs. Peter: head to head

This brings us neatly back to the contrast between the “trials” of Jesus and Peter. It is obvious that Jesus succeeds in speaking the right way while facing death at the hands of those of great worldly power, while Peter buckles even before those of low status. Those focusing on christology as Matthew's main goal³⁹² might naturally highlight the comparison as a christological decision. According to Nau's summary, “The net effect of all [my redaction-critical] research was the general discovery that Matthew was simultaneously engaged in two fundamental editorial enterprises. He was comparing and identifying Peter with the disciples while contrasting him with Jesus, both to the denigration of the first disciple.”³⁹³ The back-to-back portrayals in this portion of chapter 26 obviously help to juxtapose the two characters in such a way. Witherington's very specific assessment is this: “Jesus' faithfulness and truthfulness to the end is contrasted with Peter's unfaithfulness and dishonesty.”³⁹⁴ Thus Harrington, leaning towards black-and-white application, offers, “Jesus is the model to be imitated, and Peter the model to be avoided.”³⁹⁵

This kind of vision, overall, may be a fair reading of Matthew. There is a clear highlighting of the kingly Messiah at poor Peter's expense. To quote Nau's attitude again,

Eschatology finds its fulfillment in [Jesus in Matthew]. He personally constitutes the essence of the Christian ethic. Ecclesiology is but the reflection of Christ's gracious sovereignty. ... Where two or three are gathered together in his name,

392 Cf. Nau, *Peter in Matthew*, 141. He argues that christology subsumes all other foci, as seen through the final “enthronement scene” of 28:16-20, with Jesus given all authority/*ἐξουσία* in heaven and on earth, and promising to be “with you always.” He acknowledges his general debt here to Otto Michel and Wolfgang Trilling, and the idea that the Gospel is intended to be read/comprehended backwards.

393 *Ibid.*, 131. While of no great concern to our argument, Nau's speculation of “encomiastic dispraise” as Matthew's overall strategy here to attempt to minimise the exaltation of Peter in the early church is worthy of consideration (with potential examples of how Matthew fits these Hellenistic/Ancient Greek conventions); 138ff.

394 Witherington, *Matthew*, 499f.

395 *The Gospel of Matthew*, 383. Harrington's main argument here is for a “sandwich” technique (also in Mark; see esp. 14:53-15:5): first, Jesus before the chief priest and Sanhedrin (26:59-68); then Peter before ‘nobodies’ (vv. 69-75); finally, Jesus before the Governor, Pilate (27:2, 11-14). We will soon come to remember, as Harrington does not, that Matthew also records Judas' demise in the middle of this “sandwich” (27:1-10; absent in Mark), contrasting Peter's and Judas' responses to failure and hence offering more than his clear-cut summary suggests.

there he is in their midst (Matt 18:20) and only where he is does the Church exist. Prayer becomes genuine and effective when asked in his name (18:19). The mission to all nations is dependent on his authorization. The reassurance and security of all disciples depends upon the promise of his continuing presence among them ... and us (28:20).³⁹⁶

In the end, regardless of whether interpreters see fit to frame our Gospel in christological, ecclesiological, ethical, soteriological, missiological, eschatological or any other terms, this Peter-Jesus contrast is a reality we face. So, while Peter is our model for fruitful analysis here, Jesus *is* the example of perfection/maturity in all manner of righteousness in Matthew, including the area of truth-speaking. In this Sanhedrin trial, Jesus speaks humbly yet confidently in honesty, able to do so because he really knows and trusts his Father (faith) and hence has come to deeply comprehend beyond a beginner's assent (understanding) the ways of the Kingdom and its righteousness; Peter, on all of the preceding counts, does not. "The disciples may have been ineffectual ... owing to their *oligopistia* ['little faith'], but Jesus was successful because he demonstrated that faith ... a faith which all who intend to fulfill Christ's commission must demonstrate."³⁹⁷ Peter does fall where Jesus triumphs. Within this framework, then, his characterisation in the latter part of chapter 26 helps all the same to provide a prime illustration of one's ability to speak the truth only through faith and real understanding. Matthew uses him there to great effect.

6.v 28:18-20 and hope for the disciples

In speaking a little earlier about the disciples and their rugged journey of faith and understanding, we traced right through to the end of their story in 28:18-20. Indeed, we were forced to acknowledge that, even in the final sentences of Matthew's Gospel, these disciples betray a mix of success and failure: in particular terms, of worship and doubt. Now that Peter's clear failure as a representative disciple in chapter 26 has been examined – his own final mention by name in Matthew – we are ready to return here as promised for some final thoughts. There is more to discover at the close of chapter 28 for the disciples as a whole than we may have noticed at first. Without a doubt (but with faith?), there is even hope for stumbling, uncertain, lying disciples in the First Gospel.

³⁹⁶ *Peter in Matthew*, 149f.

³⁹⁷ Ian Wallis, "The Faith of Jesus Christ in Early Christian Traditions," *SNTS 84* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 36, as cited by Issler, "Learning from Jesus," 172; brackets original.

6.v.i *The approach*

The way Matthew ultimately presents this hope is quite unique. Elsewhere in the Synoptics, Mark's ending (16:1-8) actually stops short of giving us any hint regarding the response of the eleven disciples after the resurrection; the narrative ends after three women discover the empty tomb and are told by a young man in a white robe to go and tell the disciples and Peter about seeing Jesus in Galilee. We know only that the women themselves are afraid (16:8).³⁹⁸ Luke has the risen Jesus eating broiled fish to deal to the disciples' want of faith (24:41-43; compare this to Jesus inviting Thomas to touch his wounds in John 20:24f.), teaching them and opening up their minds to rightly grasp the scriptures (vv. 44ff.). Their response is one of pure worship (and they return to Jerusalem, continually praising God; vv. 52f.). In Matthew, we do not get either Mark's silence on the one hand, or Luke's explicit overcoming of the disciples' doubt – not through sight or touch, nor even via direct teaching – on the other hand. We have noticed quite simply so far that the final picture is a mixed one.

However, in the midst of this human mixture and imperfection, Matthew's Gospel reveals quite a confidence. In this respect, perhaps, it is not so unlike the others after all. Introducing the Gospel's closing words (28:18b-20) by way of narration, Matthew says this: “And having approached [them], Jesus spoke to them, saying...” (v. 18a). On the surface, this “approach” (προσέρχομαι) may seem an immaterial element of the text for our purposes. Yet, we must understand that this predominantly Matthean term – appearing 52 times in Matthew; 5 in Mark; 10 in Luke; 87 in the whole NT – serves a vital function here. It is used only twice by Matthew with Jesus as its subject,³⁹⁹ making this a considerably rare occurrence and well worth our attention.

398 In the (clearly inauthentic, in current scholarly view) longer ending of Mark, Jesus makes a post-resurrection appearance to the disciples, both reproaching them for their lack of faith and commissioning them (16:14). The only response on the part of the disciples is that they went out and “proclaimed [the gospel] everywhere,” and the Lord was with them in confirmation as shown by the accompanying signs (v. 20).

399 Elsewhere in Matthew, προσέρχομαι is predominantly used for people “approaching”/“coming to” Jesus for teaching/instruction, healing or any other request (e.g. his disciples, 5:1; a leper, 8:2). As a general term, it is used in both positive (those approaching Jesus for good reasons) and negative contexts (e.g. the devil approaching Jesus to tempt him, 4:3; cf. the Jewish leaders doing the same, 15:1; 16:1; 19:3; 21:23; 22:23). As we discuss Jesus as the subject of προσέρχομαι, perhaps the most notable or similar use in context is angels approaching Jesus to minister him after the temptations, in 4:11.

The first of these two cases, appropriately enough, is at the scene of the transfiguration. Jesus approaches and touches the three disciples who are on the ground, having been overrun by fear at the sight of him; he comes towards them and directs them to get up and not to fear (17:7). Similarly in this second and final case, the context is again one of comforting instruction in the face of raw uncertainty and faint-heartedness. As such an uncommon word for Matthew to choose for an action of Jesus', it carries extra weight here just as it has in 17:7. The disciples' doubt is not explicitly removed – a fundamental point to note – but it is afforded some reassurance and a solid Kingdom context through Jesus' approach and the declaration to come in verses 18b-20.

“And having approached, Jesus spoke to them, saying, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Going on, then, make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in/into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to keep everything, as much as I commanded you: and behold, I am with you all the days until the completion of the age'" (28:18-20). What an outstanding charge, especially for the Matthean disciples we now know! This can either be an unrealistic instruction, or a beautiful picture of present and future hope and full restoration for the disciples. The latter, of course, is where the focus of our text lies. Despite the bleak summary Edwards has provided about the disciples still not reaching perfection (as recorded in the previous chapter, including that the disciples' “failure seems assured, even though they have good intentions”),⁴⁰⁰ others such as Patte highlight the implied transformation in their character. He contends that “[b]y the end of the story, and in spite of some doubt (28:17), they are deemed worthy of teaching others ... (28:20a). One therefore wonders what kind of a transformation of the disciples took place.”⁴⁰¹ In the confident tone of vv. 18-20, their overall future success seems to be assured. Whatever the nature of these conjectured changes, then, they seem to enable the proclamation of the gospel to all the world.

Actually, the quiet assurance we get at the close of the Gospel – that the disciples will have some form of adequacy in faithfully following and carrying out their task – may say less about their current stage of transformation and more about the authority of Jesus and his

400 Edwards, “Uncertain Faith,” 58.

401 Patte, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, 355.

remaining with them. The command to disciple (μαθητεύω, v. 19) is now hugely significant. Edwards' image of this is a provocative but worthwhile one: “[Jesus] commissions these vacillating followers to go and gather others like themselves.”⁴⁰² So, yes, even at the very end of the narrative, there is hesitation and incomplete ability to act rightly, in faith, on the part of the disciples. At this very end, though, there is also a fresh commissioning to act and teach as Jesus has. These same disciples whose flawed ability we have followed throughout Matthew's text are now even called to teach obedience? Oh, the (literal) humanity! A timely reminder, then, from Giblin: “The focus of Jesus's reassurance in the closing episode is not so much his physical gesture, however, as it is his authoritative word. He does not so much seek to allay fear or eliminate excitement as to set forth the work of his disciples in terms of his abiding presence among them.”⁴⁰³ Indeed, the wording of the charge comes with the calm assurance that this task will be completed *with* the risen Jesus. Somehow, because of this fact, it can be done.

6.v.ii *Matthew's Jesus as “with” the disciples*

As we come to close this study, a strong word must be said about this being-with-Jesus (an idea that may rightly recall to our minds the accusations of the servant girls against Peter (26:69, 71)). Alongside the “approach” of the risen Lord in 28:18a, our Gospel closes with him speaking these words: “And behold, I am with you [ἐγὼ μεθ’ ὑμῶν εἰμι] all the days until the completion of the age” (v. 20b). And that is a picture of who God, in the person of Jesus, *is* in the Matthean narrative. That is what kind of Saviour from sins (cf. 1:21) Jesus is: the one who is “with us.” So Matthew 28:20b, as the end of the Gospel, forms a distinct narrative bracket with 1:23 at the beginning. Right there at the start, the evangelist has also emphasised this theme by quoting Isa 7:14 as fulfilled in Jesus' life; he says, “Behold, the virgin will be pregnant and will bring forth a son, and they will call his name Emmanuel, which, being translated, is 'God with us' [μεθ’ ἡμῶν ὁ θεός].” The entire story of this Gospel and all of its many corollary ethical demands is surrounded by the promise that, in Jesus, God is “with us.”⁴⁰⁴

402 “Uncertain Faith,” 59.

403 “A Note on Doubt and Reassurance,” 73.

404 On this theme, Luz makes the penetrating comment that “[t]he Immanuel motif shows that Matthew's Christology is narrative in character. The presence of God can only be related and testified, not captured in concepts. In Matthew, titular Christological categories are subordinate to narrative ones. The narrative

Yet, summaries of Matthew's ethical message – even good, Kingdom-based ones – do not tend to do this idea quite enough justice. Matera, for one, says,

[T]here is an underlying structure of grace that is fundamental to Matthew's Gospel. God accomplishes the work of salvation in Christ, but human beings must respond to that salvation by lives of righteousness. ... Separated from Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom, the sermon becomes an irrational and impossible ethic. In light of the kingdom, and within the community of the church, it is the blueprint for a life of discipleship.⁴⁰⁵

Matera is right, of course. The community context he mentions, too, is essential in Matthew.⁴⁰⁶ But Matera overlooks the “withness” of Jesus as a vital component, or the ‘flavour,’ we might say, of this Matthean grace he advocates. As an image that both brackets the whole narrative and appears significantly within it (as we shall soon appreciate), Jesus' being and remaining “with” his disciples is one practical descriptor of what grace is for Matthew's Gospel.

In the disciples' ethical action and ability to speak truth rather than falsehood in line with the demands of the Kingdom, then, the heart of this requirement *and* ability is a person – the reigning King Jesus. We have already handled much of this in the prefatory chapter on Kingdom righteousness and the overflowing of sound, wholesome fruits. But it is this vital connection, the “withness” of Jesus, that must now be accented. The only way these stumbling disciples are going to be habitually able to do things of good and eternal significance is through the abiding presence of God with them. Jesus, the transcendent eschatological judge, Son of God, Son of Man, Messiah, is actually immanent and present among the disciples. The Immanuel (1:23) is immanent as “God *with us*” and is a fellow human and even a “brother” to his followers. This fraternally-described relationship, as we know, applies even to the resurrected Jesus, as in 28:10: ὑπάγετε ἀπαγγείλατε τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς μου (“Go, report to my brothers”)!⁴⁰⁷ The clear requirement of absolute reliance on Jesus' presence is not an insult to our beloved disciples. It is merely the personal design of

itself is more important than a conceptual understanding of its outcome”; *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, 32.

405 *New Testament Ethics*, 61; see 59-62.

406 As stated in the introduction, we lack space to cover it in any depth, but will touch a little more on this area soon.

407 Interestingly, Bruce J. Malina, from his social-scientific perspective, interprets the “withness” of Jesus as being due to his being the “focal ancestor of [the] fictive kin group” (or church) later created. See “Social-Scientific Approaches,” 174.

the Kingdom.

This specific image of intimate familial presence, offering a vision of his “withness,” is seen throughout Matthew's narrative. For instance:

While [Jesus] was still speaking to the crowds, behold, his mother and brothers had stood outside, seeking to speak to him. And someone said to him, “Behold, your mother and your brothers have stood outside, seeking to speak to you.” But answering, he said to the one speaking to him, “Who is my mother, and who are my brothers?” And, stretching out his hand toward his disciples, he said, “Behold my mother and my brothers! For whoever may do the will of my Father in heaven, this one is my brother and sister and mother” (12:46-50).

The disciples, inconsistent in their enacting of Kingdom ethics and their speaking of the truth, are nevertheless considered Jesus' own family. They *know* him and they know the Father;⁴⁰⁸ these seemingly ambivalent ones are on the path of righteousness, seeking the Kingdom and its King in a life commitment that goes beyond their currently uncertain or “little” faith. Hence, they are following the heart desire of Jesus' Father in heaven (12:50, as above), who is their Father too (cf. especially the Sermon on the Mount: 5:16, 45, 48; 6:1 etc.).⁴⁰⁹ In that same vein comes the teaching of Matthew's Jesus about facing persecution with integrity: a command not to worry because of the *Spirit of their Father* speaking through them (10:19f.).⁴¹⁰ Again, their King is to be with them.⁴¹¹

408 Cf. that “Johannine thunderbolt” of 11:25-30. See 11:27: “[N]o one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son and [anyone] to whom the Son might will to reveal [him].” Knowing him, therefore, they can embark on the process of learning from Jesus; cf. 11:29. (Notice that in e.g. 16:17 and 17:5, vital insights come from Jesus' Father, whom the disciples and the Son both know and by whom they are known.)

409 On Jesus' Sonship and obedience – and the disciples' relationship to the obedient one – see Luz, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, 36f. To give part of Luz's framework here: “After the notion of 'God is with us' has formed the outer brackets (1:23; 28:20), an inner bracket is added dealing with the obedience of the Son of God (3:13 – 4:11; 27:38–54). The same thought recurs in the middle of the Gospel. Once Peter has acknowledged the Son of God (16:16–17), Jesus points the disciples to the path of obedience, which is that of suffering (16:21ff.)”; 36-7.

410 As outlined, we have deliberately kept the primary focus on truth-telling within the world and time-frame of the narrative. Verses such as 10:19f. open up new areas of study and suggestions of what Matthew's “withness” might look like in/for the disciples *beyond* the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (and any particular differences or advancements that Matthew might expect to see, both in truth-speaking and other areas of life). Osborne's summary of the Petrine denial passage is that Peter “never became the rock until after Pentecost, when the Spirit filled him”; *Matthew*, 1004. For now, we simply acknowledge the impending arrival of the Spirit through this extended “withness” image and anticipate both a great empowerment and continued frailty, with grace in times of failure. It is interesting to see Keck note that Matthew's Gospel does not “insist that the Christian self lives by the Spirit, as does Paul. [It] does not deny this, to be sure; but the empowering presence of the Spirit plays virtually no role in this text”; “Ethics in the Gospel According to Matthew,” 41f.

411 Furthermore, Jesus, with the disciples in the closest of family relationships, is even shown as salvifically

Aware that there really is a profound expectation and command of ethical behaviour for the disciples in Matthew's narrative, it is clear that this is in the context of a Lord who is "with [them]" in the fullness of their ambivalence and weakness. Such a realisation aligns with Luz's thinking here: "Mercy and obedience," he reflects, "promise and demand – all are interlinked in Matthew. The will of God is the will of the Father; his demand is the demand of him who is with us. ... Human beings are not left to their own devices in their striving for superior righteousness and perfection."⁴¹² What a stunning reality! Instead, Matthew's Jesus is among them as truly one of them, identifying (for example) as one marginalised with those marginalised, and as God with them in saving strength and radical mercy on the lengthy journey.

Community context

Now Jesus tells the disciples, "I am *with you*" (μεθ' ὑμῶν), *plural*, and we must not neglect to affirm this community context as absolutely central to the Emmanuel theme. Hays asks the question, "How are [the demands of rigour and mercy] to be held together in the life of the community?"⁴¹³ His answer, too, points in the direction of "withness." In chapter 18, we see Jesus teaching the disciples not to tolerate sin but to discipline – maybe severely – as needed. Even in this context, the idea of Jesus' being with them is central, and is actually the impetus for the community's action and authority: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in [the] midst of them" (ἐκεῖ εἶμι ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν), 18:20). Moreover, as Hays reminds us, this whole church discourse is filled with familial language (cf. ἀδελφός, "brother"/"sister"⁴¹⁴ in 18:15 etc.);⁴¹⁵ discipleship has very much to do with being linked as

present among them throughout his earthly ministry. Without the title of Saviour in Matthew's Gospel, he is nevertheless revealed as effectually and mercifully with them. Through the inadequacy of their faith e.g. during the storm (8:25) and when attempting to walk out on water (Peter in 14:30), the disciples can call out for salvation (here σωζῶ in the imperative) and Jesus is attendant to save. The context for the very introduction of the Emmanuel, even, is that of someone coming to save his people (from their sins, cf. 1:21-23. Note that, in Matthew's soteriology, Jesus' bloodshed for many is for forgiveness of or release from sins (εἰς ἄφεσιν ἁμαρτιῶν; 26:28), which does not appear in the Marcan parallel (Mark 14:24)).

412 *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, 50.

413 Hays, *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 101. He spends some time emphasising Hosea's "hermeneutic of mercy" as espoused by Matthew (and taught by his Jesus) and its dramatic reinterpretation of the law (cf. double use of Hos 6:6 in Matt 9:13 and 12:7; also "the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith"; 23:23 NRSV); see 100.

414 This sense is lost in the NRSV translation of ἀδελφός: "member of the church" in 18:15, or "member" thereafter.

415 *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, 101.

the church, *together*, with Jesus. The disciples as a group are characterised as “with” Jesus,⁴¹⁶ whereas “the one not being with me is against me,” Jesus proclaims, “and the one not gathering with me scatters” (12:30).⁴¹⁷ While the sense of individual responsibility in Matthew is undeniable, an essential call of his Gospel is to gather as the collective community with Jesus.

It is only ever in this context of being with Jesus that the disciples are expected to help him with his mission and continue on with his actions and words in his authority (cf. the mission discourse in chapter 10).⁴¹⁸ As Combrink argues here, “For the disciples and the community of believers, it is basic to be with Jesus. ... They should function as intermediaries between Jesus and the crowds.”⁴¹⁹ Of course, their degree of faith and understanding does not always allow them to speak and act like Jesus in any accomplished way; this is on display in the feeding narratives of 14:13-21 and 15:32-39, and is seen quite clearly in their inability to carry out their healing/deliverance role in 17:14-20 due to lacking faith. They are not always successful in the text, but they *are* to stay with Jesus.

The main point to grasp at the moment is this, as Brown summarises in her narrative study:

Ultimately, it is not the characterization of the disciples as [already] understanding Jesus' teaching that guarantees the fulfillment of his expectations....⁴²⁰ Rather, it is the climactic emphasis on the presence of Jesus with the believing community which gives hope that his teachings will indeed be

416 The Jewish leaders, meanwhile, are generally portrayed as against him and the crowds, initially, as having to decide. Crowds are amazed (cf. 7:28f.; 9:8) and look close to accepting Jesus early on, but by 27:15-25 seem to have made their decision to follow blind leaders. See a summary of this in Wilkins' "Discipleship," 183. Warren Carter embraces the varied presentation of the crowds, stating that “[a]t times crowds exhibit some perception that God is at work in a special way in Jesus, yet they lack both the faith and understanding manifested by the disciples and the hostility displayed by the Jewish leaders. At the end of the story, the crowds in Jerusalem display a lack of faith and understanding as they participate in Jesus' death”; “The Crowds in Matthew's Gospel,” *CBQ* 55, no. 1 (January 1993): 64. For Carter's conclusions based on utilising his “audience-oriented” approach, see 66f. Note that after the resurrection, only Jesus' disciples are still portrayed as with him.

417 This is both more restrictive and more specific compared to its parallel in Mark 9:40, which asserts that whoever “is not against us, is for us” (ὅς γὰρ οὐκ ἔστιν καθ' ἡμῶν, ὑπὲρ ἡμῶν ἔστιν). Without taking the discussion into detail, there are of course other positive disciple-type characters in Matthew beyond the core disciple group, who may well become part of the “with me” of 12:30.

418 See Combrink, “The Challenge of Overflowing Righteousness,” 43.

419 *Ibid.*

420 At this point in her study, she speaks specifically about Jesus' “expectations” of the church/disciples raised in 18:1-20. The statement, of course, applies more broadly also; *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 73.

realized.⁴²¹

It is good and right, of course, that Jesus' amazing teaching for and among the community receives significant coverage in scholarly analysis of Matthew.⁴²² The immediate effectiveness of this teaching, however, should not be the main determinant of the Matthean Jesus' teaching ability! The disciples *do not* always grasp his teaching, as we well know. The important thing is that he is with them throughout,⁴²³ or – to use Brown's language – it is his ultimately “effective presence”⁴²⁴ rather than his effective teaching that Matthew advertises.

In relation to chapter 18 and the enabling of the disciples, Combrink reminds us how important it is that we are provided with “no indication that the disciples have, at last, gained some understanding....”⁴²⁵ For this reason, Jesus' promise of his presence with them (18:20; cf. 1:23), is of the utmost importance.”⁴²⁶ We might also add, in practical terms, that with this presence amidst the believing community will gradually come faith and the right understanding of Jesus' teaching towards the outworking of the Kingdom mission (cf. the assurance of 18:18). Powell describes the disciples' final situation:

Some things are the same: the forces of evil continue to be powerful (28:15) and the disciples of Jesus continue to doubt (28:17). But behind the scenes, something is now fundamentally different: Jesus has saved his people from their sins and he is risen from the dead. Thus, he can initiate a new mission, one that invokes a new name (28:19; cf. 1:21, 23), one that is grounded in his universal authority (28:18) and sustained by his abiding presence (28:20).⁴²⁷

Jesus is with the community, and so the aims, commands and ethics of the arriving Kingdom shall ultimately be fulfilled among and through them. Surely now, that might even include our poor, miserable Peter?

421 Ibid. Brown actually holds the disciples' main role in the narrative to be a foil to/a highlighting of the presence or “witness” of Jesus; 122.

422 Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 214ff. is particularly helpful.

423 Contra Wilkins, *Concept of Disciple*, 166.

424 *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 73.

425 Of course, we would argue that they have *some* understanding – but cf. Jesus' further corrections just prior in 16:24-28; 17:20; or even some of the content of ch. 18 itself.

426 Combrink, “The Challenge of Overflowing Righteousness,” 38. See also Brown, *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective*, 122f.

427 Powell, “Literary Approaches and the Gospel of Matthew,” 81.

6.vi Judas, Peter and redemption for the community

The cringe-worthy failure of chapter 26 may not, it seems, truly be the end for Peter. If we see, as it will be argued is indeed the case, the intentional juxtaposition of Peter's grief with that of Judas – another key character, though definitely not an example disciple⁴²⁸ – we can even see a glimmer of hope for Peter's transformation and his reinstatement in Matthew. Directly following 26:69-75 is the record of Judas' demise (27:1-10, see esp. vv. 1-5). Judas, too, recognises his grave sin of betrayal of Jesus (vv. 3f.), but he deals with it badly and alone, committing suicide by hanging himself (v. 5). Peter, on the other hand, amidst all his flagrant failure, his lies and now his regret, is somehow nonetheless still one of the core disciples. At the end of the Gospel narrative, in 28:16-20, Matthew describes “the eleven disciples” as going to Galilee in obedience to Jesus' direction (v. 16). Mercifully, this surely includes Peter and is followed by worship (and doubt), Jesus' command to them all to make and teach disciples and his promise to be *with* them (μεθ' ὑμῶν, v. 20; see vv. 17-20).

Indeed, on the one hand, in relation to the claim of Matthew's Jesus in 10:32-33, “[i]f Jesus' words had absolute applicability Peter's fate should have been sealed: the Son of Man, at the right hand of Power and at the Parousia, should deny Peter with the words, 'I do not know the man' [10:33].”⁴²⁹ At the same time, however, we may also infer from 12:32 – “whoever may speak a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him/her” – that Peter's mistakes in his lacking faith must not be seen as irredeemable. Add to this the fact that Jesus has predicted *all* of the disciples to desert him on the night of his trial (26:31). As we know, they all do (v. 56)! So Peter, although a negative example in our pericope as he is a mixed one elsewhere, is in good company. Amidst his seeming inability to walk in obedience to the end and live out the righteous humanity of the Kingdom, Peter, it is implied, chooses to stay and learn to live life in the community of faith. In all his portrayal he is a typical disciple, and is fully included here as such. So, as Davies and Allison also deduce, “we must interpret his bitter weeping [in verse 75] as the beginning of repentance”⁴³⁰ and a continuation of his life of learning to believe in Jesus, understand and hence act in line with the Kingdom.

428 See Green, *The Message of Matthew*, 286.

429 Gerhardsson, “Confession and Denial Before Men,” 62.

430 *XIX-XXVIII*, 550. Cf. Nau's blunt estimation of the pathos in v. 75 (via the use of πικρῶς, compared to Mark 14:72) as the “one redeeming feature” of the passage; *Peter in Matthew*, 141.

6.vii 26:69-75: An uplifting passage?

What we are witnessing here in Matthew, as we have again and again for Peter and the disciples, is an illustration of the frailty of will and ethical ability in a blemished humanity. Says Green, “Peter was brought back in deep humility and repentance to Jesus, was recommissioned [simply along with the other disciples, in Matthew: 28:16-20] ... and became that rock-like man whom Jesus had longed for. *But he could not become that rock until he realized how weak he was in his own strength.*”⁴³¹ Green's summary of the situation⁴³² does make a sort of start at analysing what happens in Matthew. The concept worth retaining, though, and the core reason for mentioning Green now, is the italicised sentence above. In 16:24ff., after Peter's powerful confession and then a little-faith utterance that even sees him called “Satan” (vv. 13-23), Jesus instructs the disciples to deny themselves, to take up their cross and to follow him in utter dependence. So far, though, we have seen the disciples try to follow a Messiah without a cross. To follow a Messiah, that is, *without* willingly denying their worldly rights and potential identity and realising that their new Kingdom life is wholly “other” (26:69-75 fits comfortably in here). Their new identity is wholly grounded in the power, sufficiency and grace of the Father in his Son, and their Emmanuel.

Peter and the other disciples will only be able to fulfil their function as salt and light inasmuch as they grasp their complete inability to do and say the right thing in their own might without genuine reliance on Jesus. It seems that this gloomy pericope may teach Peter just that. Indeed, such a sombre passage as this can serve a richly redemptive purpose, if we can allow just a moment of vision beyond the current thesis' scope. Keener is correct to express that “Matthew forces his audience to confront the appropriate ways to address human failure as disciples.”⁴³³ In Luz's view, again hinting to relevance beyond our study, Matthew

contrasted [Peter] with the steadfastness and the hidden victory of Christ, and he incorporated the secondary story about Peter into his main story of Christ. His

431 *The Message of Matthew*, 286; italics added.

432 A summary that is nuanced and edited here as the full version, while apparently Matthean, is more relevant to a harmonised version of the Gospels.

433 He adds, even, that Matthew “calls upon the community to show mercy to those who have already stumbled but wish to return to the way of Christ (cf. 18:10-35)”; Keener, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 656.

readers are to take their bearings from it and to experience that there is a larger and more powerful perspective than the one they represent with their own fear, their falling and their remorse. Read from this perspective, the story of Peter is also a story of hope.⁴³⁴

So it is. Why? That liar, Peter, shows up our theme of truth-speaking perfectly (granted, in the negative) but also clearly shows indications of an ongoing life of transformation unto righteousness with Father, Son and Spirit – by being “with” Jesus. While he holds the responsibility for his actions and responsibility to remain committed to his path of following Emmanuel, we have in some ways discovered just as Giblin suggests: that “the note of encouragement is theologically centered not on moral dispositions expected of the Eleven, but on Jesus alone.”⁴³⁵

6.viii Locating this within the thesis' argument

Our primary task in this final section has been to show in Peter our vivid, active model of one's ability to speak the truth in the Matthean narrative. Peter has been argued as the archetype and leader – the best representative of the disciples, in whose story we saw fit to track our theme in the preceding chapter. On this base, having Peter as a model disciple, we have gone on to analyse his truth-telling in his last named appearance in Matthew. To do this, we have followed Matthew's lead by paralleling Jesus' trial and Peter's denials. Through the events recorded in these passages, apparently concurrent in the narrative, we are finally able to see in practice what we have previously discovered about truth-speaking in Matthew.

That is, it is only through faith that Peter – indeed, ultimately any character in Matthew – is able to gain adequate understanding with which to consistently speak the truth. Peter, lacking in faith as we had already been told explicitly in the text, and lacking the depth of Kingdom understanding required as also described by Matthew, does not talk truthfully in his own time of minor (as it is portrayed) trial. The evangelist even shows his lies as no mere accidents but as conscious and culpable acts, becoming progressively worse in his three responses to questioning. This is compared in the Gospel with Jesus' humility and confident

434 Luz, *Matthew 21-28*, 462. He also mentions that Peter is, for Matthew, “the model of the Christians of ‘little faith’ as they actually are, thus a mixture of trust and fear (14:28-31), faith and protest (16:16-20), apostasy and remorse”; *ibid.*

435 Giblin, “A Note on Doubt and Reassurance,” 75.

honesty in the Sanhedrin trial; *he*, rather, is revealed as one with ample faith in the Father and his Kingdom ways and plans, and more than a preliminary mental assent – a great understanding – of this and of the ethics of the Kingdom and the way of truth-telling. Peter's portrayal in 26:69-75 has helped hugely in drawing this together and giving concreteness to the theme.

Yet, for Peter's part in Matthew, he is a well-meaning failure and “little-faith,” it seems, and cannot do so much as tell the truth on an invariable basis. To close our study, it has been worthwhile to bring a cursory discussion of Peter's potentiality as a valid follower of Jesus and member of the disciples, as evidenced by the ending of the narrative. While not spoken of by name anymore, he is still one of “the eleven” (28:16); this in itself is a gracious mention in the text. But in the closing picture of the disciples in the Gospel, there is one solitary thing that gives any practical hope to Peter's (and therefore the disciples') currently bleak situation. It is the “withness” of Jesus as “God with” his followers (28:20; cf. 1:23), both as individuals and as the church or Kingdom community. This is the one thing that makes sense of Peter's situation as a liar, and a liar about the Messiah, no less. Amidst all the success and failure – it is fair to project that there may well be much of each, even if the growth of their faith and depth of Kingdom understanding intensifies in the future⁴³⁶ – God is with them. There is hope for those Wilkins calls “flagrant liars”⁴³⁷ purely inasmuch as they commit to the journey of building faith and understanding with Matthew's Emmanuel.

436 As we might expect it to with the arrival of the Holy Spirit and hence God's “withness” intensifying among them.

437 Michael J. Wilkins, *Matthew*, The NIV Application Commentary, ed. Terry Muck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004), 868.

7 Conclusion

Let's be honest. The world in which we live could do with a talk or two about transparency and integrity. Or purity of heart, as Matthew calls the latter (5:8). In the initial stages of my research, I was reading all sorts of ethical articles and texts, ancient and contemporary. One that has endured in my mind was an article about the ethics of truth-speaking in the context of the CIA and other spy agencies. Agencies that run on lies, but "for the greater good." It was raw and real to me as an issue, and I wanted to know all the right answers. Yet, I knew I had to calmly go back a number of steps. As a Greek/NT Biblical Studies major, I had to aim my fervour towards the most fertile area for my current study.

7.i Where we have been

I decided it best to limit my context to that of the First Gospel, researching its word usage, characterisation and themes as well as drawing in insights from multiple disciplines or critical approaches and comparisons with the other Synoptics where helpful. This was a fortunate call, as the text of Matthew provides more than enough breadth and depth of content for my query. And here is where I ended up after a fair process of sharpening my investigative focus: back to the beginning, or almost. I say "almost" because my question is not the precursory one of "why" a person would act in such-and-such a way (though that answer may arise briefly and purely incidentally concerning glory to God the Father (5:16)). Rather, just beyond this, I ended up arguing Matthew's "how" of righteousness – first, and quite necessarily, in general terms, and only *then* also in terms of telling the truth in particular.

To give an overview of the chapters that became my final argument, then: I first laid a foundation by exploring some vital preliminary matters in terms of Matthean "righteousness" – the language Matthew uses to encompass all of these ideas of truth-speaking and ethical living. Δικαιοσύνη and its surrounding concepts were placed in their right location, within the discourse of the Kingdom of heaven and part of a restoration of God's intention for humankind. The natural, perhaps even spontaneous, functioning of such

righteousness in Matthew was revealed via his recurrent emphasis on the imagery of fruit-bearing or overflowing. Having broadly covered both ethical speech and other deeds up to this point, the chapter closed with a very particular look at the Matthean Jesus' teaching as it pertains to truth-telling in the oaths antithesis of 5:33-37. This showed the demand on humanity for a humble, radically truthful approach to speaking. It supplied a concrete example to match the prior generalities of the fruitful Kingdom righteousness this Gospel requires. Thus, the early section of argument introduced Matthean righteousness, its outward flow of motion – therefore the importance of the inner life – and, for my own enquiry, its specific requirements of truth-telling.

Faith then entered the picture, becoming central to my argument despite others' claims of its lack of import in Matthew's text. Much of the space here was spent in promoting the hugely important accent on the authority of the Matthean Jesus. While God the Father is, most obviously, also the object of faith in the narrative, Jesus was focused upon here as he is the one who is depicted as invariably speaking only the truth and who is teaching the ways of the Kingdom to the disciples and others in Matthew. His ἀμήν λέγω ὑμῖν (σοι) provided a tangible point of connection with the idea of authoritative and reliably truthful speaking. Faith, or trust, in such a one is the only right response.

The next part of the argument, though, is where those claims regarding faith's lack of significance in Matthew were attacked most intentionally. I suggested that Matthew is consistent throughout his Gospel in utilising the paired motifs of vision and hearing. A survey of their application showed readily that within their uses in Matthew's text, the evangelist is also unifying the twin concepts of faith and understanding. Among many instances of this, spending some time on chapter 13 gave the clearest demonstration of all that, not only are the two linked, but faith is the logical priority. Faith is, in this sensory language, the willing openness to see/hear that allows Matthean characters to begin to really understand any of the ways, life or ethics of the Kingdom.

This led quite naturally to the opportunity to follow such a theme in selected Matthean characters. The choice here was the unified character of the disciples, who were argued as

my most beneficial focal point due to the concentrated import of faith and understanding in their progressing journey and their very mixed characterisation. Their story – especially their casting as ολιγόπιστοι – showed precisely the connection between the twin realities of faith and understanding, and I pointed within it to certain moments where this two-part inner process is shown as leading to the disciples' overflowing speech (at this stage, generally speaking with understanding of the Kingdom as opposed to truth-telling in particular). Nonetheless, I presented their success as only partial, and their final portrayal of worship and doubt confirmed this.

Such analysis in that chapter allowed me to introduce a specific case study in the next, based on all that I had already proved about righteousness and the disciples' characterisation regarding faith and understanding. I spent some time demonstrating Peter as the archetypal or representative disciple for the Matthean narrative, thus supporting him as the most valid “model” disciple for my example. From here, I followed Matthew in comparing and contrasting the trial of Jesus and the denials of Peter in order to highlight the theme of truth-telling in Peter's denial pericope (26:69-75). Exegesis, and contrast of the passages for my purpose, suggested a lack of faith and therefore a lack of understanding of the life and righteousness of the Kingdom as the background and context for Peter's inability to speak truthfully.

So this, I have argued, is the nature of the “outflow” of Matthean righteousness, from the heart into spoken words (and other deeds, of course) with my issue of truth-telling as the immediate focus. While not my primary interest, then, in order to draw together the final chapter and the overall thesis, I returned at last to the disciples' somewhat concerning portrayal in chapter 28. Applying the language of 28:17-20 itself, I approached the idea of hope for the disciples' continued development in truth-telling chiefly in terms of Matthew's concept of “God with us.” I suggested this abiding image as a promise for the disciples that, though they will still be imperfect in faith, understanding and hence even truth-speaking, Jesus is with them. As individuals and as the Kingdom community of the church, Jesus is with them while they fail and succeed and learn. That lying Peter, then, was proved still a disciple, also in part through his clear contrast with Judas and his being included among the eleven. I closed with the tentative offering that my chosen truth-telling as opposed to lying passage

(26:69-75) could even be seen as a strongly positive pericope regarding what it shows about failure in truth-speaking and discipleship: more specifically, in the fact that it *does not* show conclusive failure but an earthy moment of stumbling in the journey with Jesus.

7.ii Where to from here?

First, having now spent a considerable amount of time studying the presence and function of faith in the Matthean text, I am more convinced than ever that a pre-existing scholarly consensus over its lack of importance is wrong. Though I began by looking exclusively at the speaking of the truth, this notion of an active faith surfaced insistently and ended up becoming the cornerstone of my argument. It is natural, then, that the link between faith and understanding has not received much airtime amongst Matthean scholarship. Through my findings, I found myself able to offer a partial reply to the treatment given by Gerhard Barth on this rarely-covered subject. These issues, while incidental to the overall goal of truth-speaking, are perhaps the most obvious proposals I am bringing here for the broader area of Matthean studies.

In the realm of truth-speaking/truth-telling, then, I know that I have contributed just one drop towards the torrent that I firmly believe is needed to bring it to the fore as a relevant ethical issue. I have consciously allowed this research, of course, to be greatly limited. It is focusing only within Matthew, only within the timeline of the narrative revealed up to chapter 28 and only on the presentation of the theme at hand, rather than speculating at authorial intention for recipients or recipient response.⁴³⁸ I will have to be content with this and trust, by opening up my own conversation with the issue in the restrictive limits of the Matthean text, that I have at least done what I am able in my selected context. It would be great eventually to see this issue connected with broader themes of integrity, transparency and other linked and relevant ideas in Matthew. I would also love to see similar tasks undertaken for the other Gospels/NT texts, and the conversation broadened to develop, compare and contrast findings, to approach the question via other critical methodologies and to challenge the implications of such findings for the original recipients

438 As well as the fact that I have chosen, at least in part due to limited space, not to look at highly relevant but peripheral topics, such as investigation into religious truth as a concept, or other forms of true speaking such as prophecy.

of the text and today's world.

For the latter, it might mean asking the same kinds of questions as Peter K. Nelson does in his discussion of “discipleship dissonance” in a combined eschatological-ethical reading of the Lord's Prayer:

In the 'Lord's Prayer' in Matthew 6 Jesus instructs his disciples to plead with the Father for the experience of heaven on earth: 'Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven' (Matt. 6:10). ... Such high and holy aspirations are hardly compatible, it would seem, with ongoing failings of disciples through sin and temptation. Nevertheless, in 6:12 the disciples are urged to pray for the forgiveness of their debts – a petition that anticipates ongoing sin and is in order on a 'daily' basis (6:11). Moreover, in 6:13 the threat of temptation and the danger of evil are serious concerns. So then, while the spiritual panorama of Matthew 6:9-10 is high and grand, the orientation of 6:11-13 is lowly and earthly; the former expresses a vision of glory and the latter an expectation of struggle. One wonders, then, how these two conceptions of the future come together: How can Christians have a spiritual experience characterized by the doing of God's will in a manner comparable to how it is done in heaven, and still go forward in the daily clash with temptation and sin, in need of forgiveness? How can it be necessary to experience forgiveness in a heaven-like world?⁴³⁹

In the mean time, I offer this, not as an ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν but as my own attempt to paint a picture of a person's ability to tell the truth, rather than lie, in the context of the Matthean text. Imperfect though it is, my hope is that it has its place – however minute – amongst other treatments of truth-speaking that exist in worlds of biblical text and beyond. Surely any contribution towards a “Yes, yes” or “No, no” and a courageous transparency amidst broken humanity is worth a little ponder? To this vision of humanity as shown in 5:33-37, at least, we can give a bold “Ἀμὴν”.

439 Nelson, “Discipleship Dissonance: Toward a Theology of Imperfection Amidst the Pursuit of Holiness,” *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 4, no. 1 (2011): 71f; see 71-75.

Bibliography of Works Cited

- Aune, David. *Prophecy in Early Christianity and the Ancient Mediterranean World*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983.
- Barth, Gerhard. "Matthew's Understanding of the Law." In Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth and Heinz Joachim Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*. Translated by Percy Scott. New Testament Library. London: SCM, 1963, 58-164.
- Bauer, Walter, Frederick William Danker, William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. 3rd ed. Chicago; London: University of Chicago Press, 2000.
- Bauernfeind, Otto. "σαπρός." *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Vol. 7, ed. Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 1971. Reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978, 94-97.
- Betz, Hans Dieter. *The Sermon on the Mount: A Commentary on the Sermon on the Mount, Including the Sermon on the Plain (Matthew 5:3-7:27 and Luke 6:20-49)*. Ed. Adela Yarbro Collins. Hermeneia, ed. Helmut Koester. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1995.
- Blomberg, Craig L. *Matthew*. The New American Commentary, ed. E. Ray Clendenen. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992.
- Bock, Darrell L. *Jesus According to Scripture: Restoring the Portrait From the Gospels*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic; Leicester: Apollos, 2002.
- Bowens, Lisa M. "The Role of John the Baptist in Matthew's Gospel." *Word & World* 30, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 311-318.

- Brant, Jo-Ann A. "Infelicitous Oaths in the Gospel of Matthew." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* no. 63 (September 1996): 3-20.
- Brown, Jeannine K. *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective: The Portrayal and Function of the Matthean Disciples*. Academia Biblica 9, ed. Mark Allan Powell. Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002.
- Bultmann, Rudolf. "πιστεύω." *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Vol. 6, ed. Gerhard Friedrich and Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968, 174-228.
- Caputo, John D. *What Would Jesus Deconstruct? The Good News of Postmodernity for the Church*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007.
- Carson, D.A. *Matthew*. The Expositor's Bible Commentary, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin. 2 Vols. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995.
- Carter, Warren. "The Crowds in Matthew's Gospel." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 55, no. 1 (January 1993): 54-67.
- Charles, J. Daryl. "Garnishing With the 'Greater Righteousness': The Disciple's Relationship to the Law (Matthew 5:17-20)." *Bulletin For Biblical Research* 12, no. 1 (2002): 1-15.
- Clayton, Kimberly L. "When Death No Longer Determines Our Living: Matthew 28:1-10." *Journal for Preachers* 31, no. 3 (Easter 2008): 28-30.
- Combrink, H.J. Bernard. "The Challenge of Overflowing Righteousness: To Learn to Live the Story of the Gospel of Matthew." In *Identity, Ethics, and Ethos in the New Testament*, ed. Jan G. van der Watt. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2006, 23-48.
- Crump, D.M. "Truth." *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight

and I. Howard Marshall. Downers Grove: IVP, 1992, 859-862.

Davies, W.D. and Dale C. Allison, Jr. *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Saint Matthew*. International Critical Commentary, ed. J.A. Emerton, C.E.B. Cranfield and G.N. Stanton. 3 Vols. Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988-1997.

Doriani, Daniel. "Jesus' Use of Amen." *Presbyterion* 17, no. 2 (Fall 1991): 125-127.

Edwards, Richard A. "Uncertain Faith: Matthew's Portrait of the Disciples." In *Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985, 47-61.

Foster, Paul. *Community, Law and Mission in Matthew's Gospel*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 177, ed. Jörg Frey. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004.

France, R.T. *The Gospel of Matthew*. New International Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Joel B. Green. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007.

_____. "Faith." *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall. Downers Grove: IVP, 1992, 223-226.

Garland, David E. *Reading Matthew: A Literary and Theological Commentary on the First Gospel*. New York: Crossroad, 1993.

Gerhardsson, Birger. "Confession and Denial Before Men: Observations on Matt 26:57-27:2." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* no. 13 (October 1981): 46-66.

Giblin, Charles H. "A Note on Doubt and Reassurance in Mt 28:16-20." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 37, no. 1 (January 1975): 68-75.

Gill, David W. "Lie, lying." *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell. Baker

Reference Library. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic; Carlisle, UK: Paternoster, 2001, 690-691.

Green, Michael. *The Message of Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven*. The Bible Speaks Today, ed. John R.W. Stott. Downers Grove: IVP, 2000.

Grindal, Gracia. "New Sight, New Life: Lenten Gospels." *Word & World* 16, no. 1 (Winter 1996): 91-97.

Guelich, Robert A. *The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding*. Waco: Word, 1982.

Gundry, Robert H. *Matthew: A Commentary on His Literary and Theological Art*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982.

Hagner, Donald A. and Stephen E. Young. "The Historical-Critical Method and the Gospel of Matthew." In *Methods for Matthew*, ed. Mark Allan Powell. Methods in Biblical Interpretation. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 11-43.

Harrington, Daniel J. *The Gospel of Matthew*. Sacra Pagina, ed. Daniel J. Harrington. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991.

Hauck, Friedrich. "περίσσευμα." *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Vol. 6, ed. Gerhard Friedrich and Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968, 63.

Hauerwas, Stanley. *Matthew*. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible, ed. R.R. Reno. Grand Rapids: Brazos, 2006.

Hawthorne, G.F. "Amen." *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall. Downers Grove: IVP, 1992, 7-8.

- Hays, Richard B. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament: Community, Cross, New Creation; A Contemporary Introduction to New Testament Ethics*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996.
- Hendrickx, Herman. *The Sermon on the Mount*. Rev. ed. London: Chapman, 1984.
- Hill, David. *New Testament Prophecy*. Marshalls Theological Library. London: Marshall Morgan & Scott, 1979.
- Howard, Carol D.C. "Blindness and Deafness." *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall. Downers Grove: IVP, 1992, 81-82.
- Howe, E. Margaret. "'... But Some Doubted.' (Matt. 28:17): A Re-Appraisal of Factors Influencing the Easter Faith Of The Early Christian Community." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 18, no. 3 (Summer 1975): 173-180.
- Hurst, L.D. "The Ethics of Jesus." *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall. Downers Grove: IVP, 1992, 210-222.
- Issler, Klaus Dieter. "Learning From Jesus to Live in the Manner Jesus Would If He Were I: Biblical Grounding for Willard's Proposal Regarding Jesus' Humanity." *Journal Of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 3, no. 2 (2010): 155-180.
- Jeremias, Joachim. *New Testament Theology*. Vol. 1, *The Proclamation of Jesus*. Translated by John Bowden. New Testament Library. London: SCM, 1971.
- Kärkkäinen, Veli-Matti. "The Human Prototype: With Jesus, We See What We Were Created to Be." *Christianity Today* 56, no. 1 (January 2012): 28-31.
- Keck, Leander E. "Ethics in the Gospel According to Matthew." *Iliff Review* 41, no. 1 (1984): 39-56.

Keener, Craig S. *The Gospel of Matthew: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*. Grand Rapids; Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2009.

Kingsbury, Jack Dean. *Matthew as Story*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988.

_____. Review of *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought*, by Benno Przybylski. In *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (April 1983): 320-322.

Kirk, J.R. Daniel. "Conceptualising Fulfillment in Matthew." *Tyndale Bulletin* 59, no. 1 (2008): 77-98.

Kupp, David D. *Matthew's Emmanuel: Divine Presence and God's People in the First Gospel*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 90. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Lee, Kangtaek Peter. "Matthew's Vision of the Old and New in Jesus: The Social World of the Matthean Community Vis-à-Vis Matthew's Understanding of Torah." Dissertation abstract. *Westminster Theological Journal* 73, no. 2 (Fall 2011): 376-377.

Loader, William R.G. "Son of David, Blindness, Possession, and Duality in Matthew." *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (October 1982): 570-585.

Louw, Johannes P. and Eugene A. Nida, ed. *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*. Vol. 1. New York: United Bible Societies, 1989.

Luz, Ulrich. *Matthew: A Commentary*. Vol. 1, *Matthew 1-7*. Translated by James E. Crouch. Hermeneia, ed. Helmut Koester. Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007.

_____. *Matthew: A Commentary*. Vol. 2, *Matthew 8-20*. Translated by Wilhelm C. Linss. Hermeneia, ed. Helmut Koester. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001.

_____. *Matthew: A Commentary*. Vol. 3, *Matthew 21-28*. Translated by Wilhelm C. Linss. Hermeneia, ed. Helmut Koester. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005.⁴⁴⁰

_____. "The Son of Man in Matthew: Heavenly Judge or Human Christ?" In *Studies in Matthew*. Translated by Rosemary Selle. Grand Rapids/Cambridge: Eerdmans, 2005: 97-112.

_____. *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*. Translated by J. Bradford Robinson. New Testament Theology, ed. James D.G. Dunn. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995.

Malina, Bruce J. "Social-Scientific Approaches and the Gospel of Matthew." In *Methods for Matthew*, ed. Mark Allan Powell. *Methods in Biblical Interpretation*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 154-193.

Marshall, Christopher D. *Faith as a Theme in Mark's Narrative*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 64. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Matera, Frank J. *New Testament Ethics: The Legacies of Jesus and Paul*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1996.

McCartney, Dan G. "Ecce Homo: The Coming of the Kingdom as the Restoration of Human Vicegerency." *Westminster Theological Journal* 56, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 1-21.

McKnight, Scot. "Justice, Righteousness." *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall. Downers Grove: IVP, 1992, 411-416.

Meier, John P. "John the Baptist in Matthew's Gospel." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 99, no. 3 (September 1980): 383-405.

440 The three volumes are entered separately here due to inconsistency of translators and publishers.

- Minear, Paul S. "On Seeing the Good News." *Theology Today* 55, no. 2 (July 1998): 163-174.
- Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans; Leicester: IVP, 1992.
- Nau, Arlo J. *Peter in Matthew: Discipleship, Diplomacy and Dispraise – With an Assessment of Power and Privilege in the Petrine Office*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1992.
- Nelson, Peter K. "Discipleship Dissonance: Toward a Theology of Imperfection Amidst the Pursuit of Holiness." *Journal of Spiritual Formation & Soul Care* 4, no. 1 (2011): 63-92.
- Nolland, John. *The Gospel of Matthew*. The New International Greek Testament Commentary, ed. I. Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005.
- Osborne, Grant R. *Matthew*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Clinton E. Arnold. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.
- Patte, Daniel. *The Gospel According to Matthew: A Structural Commentary on Matthew's Faith*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987.
- Perkins, Pheme. *Peter: Apostle for the Whole Church*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1994.
- Powell, Mark Allan. "Literary Approaches and the Gospel of Matthew." In *Methods for Matthew*, ed. Mark Allan Powell. Methods in Biblical Interpretation. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009, 44-82.
- _____, ed. *Methods for Matthew*. Methods in Biblical Interpretation. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009.
- Pregeant, Russell. *Knowing Truth, Doing Good: Engaging New Testament Ethics*. Minneapolis:

Fortress, 2008.

Przybylski, Benno. *Righteousness in Matthew and His World of Thought*. Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 41. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980.

Ryan, Marie-Laure. "Toward a Definition of Narrative." In *The Cambridge Companion to Narrative*, ed. David Herman. Cambridge Companions to Literature. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007, 22-35.

Saunders, Stanley P. "God With Us in Power: Preaching Matthew Missionally." *Journal for Preachers* 22, no. 2 (Lent 1999): 25-30.

Scaer, David P. *Discourses in Matthew: Jesus Teaches the Church*. St. Louis: Concordia, 2004.

Simonetti, Manlio, ed. *Matthew*. Vol. 2, *Matthew 14-28*. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture New Testament 1b. Downers Grove: IVP, 2002.

Smillie, Gene R. "Jesus' Response to the Question of His Authority in Matthew 21." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 162, no. 648 (October-December 2005): 459-469.

Smith, R.H. "Hypocrite." *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall. Downers Grove: IVP, 1992, 351-353.

Stassen, Glen H. and David P. Gushee. *Kingdom Ethics: Following Jesus in Contemporary Context*. Downers Grove: IVP, 2003.

Strugnell, John. "'Amen, I Say Unto You' in the Sayings of Jesus and Early Christian Literature." *Harvard Theological Review* 67, no. 2 (April 1974): 177-181.

Turner, David L. *Matthew*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, ed. Robert

W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008.

Verseput, Donald J. "The Faith of the Reader and the Narrative of Matthew 13.53-16.20." *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* no. 46 (June 1992): 3-24.

Via, Dan Otto Jr. "Matthew on the Understandability of the Parables." *Journal of Biblical Literature* 84, no. 4 (December 1965): 430-432.

Voorwinde, Stephen. *Jesus' Emotions in the Gospels*. London/New York: T&T Clark, 2011.

Walaskay, Paul W. "Matthew 5:17-20." *Interpretation* 56, no. 4 (October 2002): 417-420.

Ware, Bruce A. "The Man Christ Jesus." *Journal Of The Evangelical Theological Society* 53, no. 1 (March 2010): 5-18.

White, R.E.O. *Christian Ethics*. Leominster: Gracewing, 1994.

Wilkins, Michael J. *The Concept of Disciple in Matthew's Gospel as Reflected in the Term Μαθητής*. Supplements to Novum Testamentum 59. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988.

_____. "Disciples." *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall. Downers Grove: IVP, 1992, 176-182.

_____. "Discipleship." *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, ed. Joel B. Green, Scot McKnight and I. Howard Marshall. Downers Grove: IVP, 1992, 182-189.

_____. *Matthew*. The NIV Application Commentary, ed. Terry Muck. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004.

Witherington, Ben III. *The Christology of Jesus*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990.

_____. *Matthew*. Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary, ed. Mark K. McElroy. Macon, GA: Smyth & Helwys, 2006.

Wogaman, J. Philip. "Homiletical Resources From the Gospel of Matthew: Faith and Discipleship." *Quarterly Review* 13, no. 2 (Summer 1993): 93-111.

Wright, N.T. *After You Believe: Why Christian Character Matters*. New York: HarperOne, 2010.