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The Theme of Mission in Matthew's Gospel From the Perspective of the Great Commission

Abstract:

Presented as the keynote paper at the Advanced Research Program's Interdisciplinary Colloquium, held October 12, 2018. The Theme was the "Theology of Mission as an Interdisciplinary Enterprise." This paper explores the theology of mission found in the Gospel of Matthew through the lens of the Great Commission, using the tools of Inductive Biblical Studies. The Gospel of Matthew has mission as a central focus, even though Matthean scholars often overlook this focus. The paper argues three essential conclusions. First, the theme of universal mission is of critical importance in Matthew's Gospel. Second, Matthew insists that all the major themes in his Gospel, even Christology, must be understood finally within the framework of mission. Third, the Great Commission is intimately connected with Matthew's Gospel in the large and must be interpreted specifically in light of its function within the entire Gospel. These conclusions are explored throughout the remainder of the paper.

Keywords: Great Commission, Matthew, Christian mission, Christology, discipleship

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It is a privilege for me to participate as a keynote speaker in this Interdisciplinary Colloquium given over to the topic "Theology of Mission as an Interdisciplinary Enterprise." I am honored to address the topic from the perspective of biblical studies, with special attention to the theme of mission in the Gospel of Matthew.¹

It is appropriate that we should focus upon mission in Matthew's Gospel. It is true, as Christopher J. H. Wright reminds us, that mission stands at the center of the Bible from beginning to end.² But precisely because that is the case, we could not, within the time allotted, even begin to scratch the surface of this theme within the entire canon. The clock dictates that we limit our focus. And if we must limit our focus, The Gospel of Matthew offers to us a prime target. For, along with Luke-Acts, it is among the most explicitly missional books in the New Testament. Thus, Ferdinand Hahn declares, "Matthew's Gospel is of the greatest importance for the question of the mission in early Christianity."³ And David Bosch insists, "our first gospel is essentially a missionary text."⁴ We need consider only that Matthew gives over one of the five great discourses to the theme of mission (9:35-11:1),⁵ and that Matthew's Gospel culminates with the missionary commissioning of 28:16-20.

And yet the theme of mission has received scant attention in Matthean studies. Only a handful of monographs and articles deal with the topic, reflecting (in my judgment) a theological aversion, and we might say embarrassment, toward the whole notion of mission on the part of many critical New Testament scholars. And when scholars do examine the issue they often focus on the tension between Jewish particularism (as reflected in 10:5-6, "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel"⁶) and Gentile universalism⁷ (as expressed in the Great Commission, "Go, make disciples of all nations"),⁸ in such a way as to reduce the matter to stages in salvation-history⁹ or to Jew-Gentile dynamics as they bear upon the ecclesiology or makeup of the Matthean community,¹⁰ rather than addressing the theme of mission as such.¹¹ Yet, while acknowledging the important role of Israel and the inclusion of the Gentiles within the schema of Matthean thought, we recognize that the center of Matthean theology is neither salvation history nor ecclesiology, but rather Christology. As recent scholarship has often noted, the Gospel of Matthew is not essentially a cipher for the ethnic complexion of the Matthean community, nor a manual for the ordering of life within the Church, nor reflections on the

periodization of salvation history, but a story about *Jesus*.¹² Consequently, the Gospel itself requires that we consider every theological issue, including Matthew's presentation of mission, from a Christological focus.

It is, among other things, this Christological focus that rivets our attention, as we consider the theme of mission in Matthew's Gospel, upon the Great Commission. For Matthew so structures his story of Jesus as to bring it to a climax in the missionary commissioning by the Resurrected One in 28:16-20. The entire plot of the Gospel moves towards the resurrection: the resurrection of Jesus is adumbrated already in chap. 2 with God's deliverance of Jesus from death at the hands of Herod. It is foreshadowed in Jesus' declaration that "as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (12:40; cf. 12:41; 16:4). On several occasions, Jesus explicitly predicts his resurrection (16:21; 17:9, 23; 20:19; 26:32). And Matthew (alone among the evangelists) makes reference to Jesus' resurrection right in the midst of the crucifixion (27:52-53),¹³ thus suggesting that the crucifixion event stands along the path towards the resurrection.

But if Matthew's story of Jesus reaches its climax in the resurrection, the missionary commissioning itself forms the climax to the resurrection narrative. The Great Commission is, in a sense, the climax to the climax. The scene at the empty tomb points ahead to the missionary commissioning; both the angel and the resurrected Jesus himself command the women to tell his disciples that Jesus will meet them in Galilee where "they [or you] will see him" (28:5-7, 9-10), thus fulfilling the promise Jesus made to the disciples earlier on the Mount of Olives: "after I am raised up I will go before you to Galilee" (26:32). The Great Commission is in fact a resurrection appearance; and it is, in Matthew's Gospel, the only resurrection appearance to Jesus' disciples, one might say, to the Church. It is the sole narrative depiction of Jesus and the disciples in the post-Easter period in which we live, the time between the resurrection and the Parousia.

Additional considerations also point to the supreme significance of the Great Commission. For one thing, several major themes in the Gospel come here to ultimate expression, including the authority of Jesus, Jesus' relationship to the Father, discipleship, and the role of the nations.¹⁴ Moreover, the Great Commission marks a dramatic reorientation in Matthew's story. Throughout the ministry of both Jesus and the disciples is restricted to Israel (10:5-6; 15:24), but here that

restriction is opened and we encounter for the first time the declaration of universal mission. And the inclusio around the theme of “with-ness” (*Mitsein*) reinforces the climactic character of the Great Commission; Jesus’ promise to the disciples to be “with you” (μεθ’ ὑμῶν) in 28:20 echoes the announcement of 1:23 that Jesus is “Emmanuel, God with us” (μεθ’ ἡμῶν), thus bracketing the entire Gospel and pointing to the ultimate significance of Jesus’ statement in the final verse of the Gospel. Accordingly, Wolfgang Trilling declares that these verses contain “den wichtigsten Worten des ganzen Euangeliums,”¹⁵ and Otto Michel insists that “*Matt. 28:18-20 is the key to the understanding of the whole book.*”¹⁶

These considerations lead to three conclusions. First, the theme of universal mission, set forth in this most prominent passage, is of critical importance in Matthew’s Gospel. These are the last words the audience of Matthew’s Gospel hears as they transition from the narrative world of the text back into their own world. Their sense of the entire Gospel is finally configured along the lines of mission. Second, Matthew insists that all the major themes in his Gospel, even Christology, must be understood finally within the framework of mission; for the Great Commission reprises these major themes and, as it were, ties them in a bundle bound with a ribbon that has “mission” written all over it. Third, the Great Commission is intimately connected with Matthew’s Gospel in the large and must be interpreted specifically in light of its function within the entire Gospel.¹⁷ David Bosch has properly lamented that readers and preachers have often isolated the Great Commission from its Matthean context with the result that many of its rich insights have remained hidden and have been replaced by notions that are foreign to the passage and to the message of Matthew’s Gospel.¹⁸ Accordingly, the goal of this paper is to employ the Great Commission as a lens through which to explore some of the major emphases of Matthew’s theology of mission.

Although most think of the Great Commission as comprising Matt 28:18-20, the passage actually begins at 28:16. We might dub Matt 28:16-17 “Preparation for the Commissioning,” for these verses provide background to the remainder of the passage; but they also contain elements which, when read in light of the earlier chapters of the Gospel, themselves provide significant insight into mission. Matt 28:16 describes “The Arrival of the Disciples,” whereas 28:17 depicts “The Situation of the Disciples.”

The heart of the matter is certainly 28:18-20. After a brief introductory statement, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying...”

(28:18a), Matthew records the final words of Jesus in this Gospel according to a threefold movement. Jesus begins with the declaration of his own authority in 28:18b, then draws out the implications of this authority for his disciples in the commissioning proper (28:19-20a), and concludes with the promise of his presence (28:20b).

Three structural features are prominent. First, Matthew employs cause and effect between 28:18 and 28:19-20a. The “therefore” (οὖν) indicates explicitly that Jesus’ authority is the cause, or basis, for the discipling activity of the disciples. It assures them that they are fully equipped with transcendent efficacy¹⁹ and implies that discipling involves bringing persons under Christ’s sovereign authority. Second, we observe the repetition of inclusive scope, expressed especially by the word “all” (πᾶς): “all authority; “all nations;” “all I have commanded you;” “I am with you all the days.” The causal movement from v. 18b to vv. 19-20a indicates that Jesus’ all-inclusive authority is the basis for, and is expressed in, these later references to “all.” Third, we find also a causal connection between the commission proper and Jesus’ promise of presence in v. 20b. Most likely, this involves the movement from effect to cause: “The reason why you can and must make disciples of all nations is because I am with you all the days...” Yet, the causal nexus may move in the opposite direction as well: “Because (or insofar as) you make disciples of all nations, therefore I will be with you all the days...”²⁰ All three of these structural features point to the Christological focus of the passage, since the command to make disciples is framed by references to Jesus; it has its basis in Jesus’ all-inclusive authority, described spatially (“in heaven and on earth,” v.18b), and in his all-inclusive presence, described temporally (“all the days until the completion of the age,” v. 20b). In this connection, we note that Jesus stands at the center also of the command proper: They are to make disciples by “baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,” and by “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”²¹

Thus, the Christological focus of the entire Gospel finds expression in this final passage. This passage, and by extension the mission of the Church that it describes, is ultimately not about the Church, but about Jesus Christ: who he is, and what he has done and is doing. The mission of the Church is an extension of his person and of his activity.²²

Looking at the passage more specifically, we begin with the background in vv. 16-17. Matthew describes the arrival of the disciples in terms of identity, number, and destination. With regard to identity, the

reference to “disciples” in v. 16 may seem inconsequential, but it actually establishes the orientation of the whole passage: this passage deals with *post-Easter discipleship*. As I mentioned earlier, this is the only passage in the Gospel that narrates an event in the present period of the Church; it thus offers the most direct portrait of what discipleship for those of us in the Church is about. Clearly, the Gospel indicates that there is more to our discipleship than what Matthew explicitly describes in this passage; nevertheless, the Great Commission sets forth the essential task of disciples in the Church during the post-Easter period.

I equate “the disciples” here with the whole of the post-Easter Church. Such a construal is warranted when we consider that although the disciples have a once-for-all role in the historical account of Jesus’ life, nevertheless throughout the narrative Matthew often, indeed typically, presents the disciples in such a way as to foreshadow the post-Easter experience of the Church, even to the point where they may be said to represent the post-Easter Church.²³

In this connection, I should mention that a certain dialectic pervades the Great Commission. On the one hand, Matthew wishes us to consider this passage as relating an event that has actually occurred at a specific point in time. After all, this pericope seamlessly connects with the immediately preceding historical reportage; and, as a resurrection appearance, it contributes to Matthew’s concern throughout 27:55-28:20 to provide historical evidence for Jesus’ resurrection;²⁴ and it employs aorist indicative verbs.²⁵

But, on the other hand, it has a kind of timeless quality. For example, the passage lacks closure, with no reference to Jesus’ departing or ascending, but rather concludes with Jesus in the midst of his disciples, continuing to speak to them, promising to be with them (present tense) “until the end of the age.” The intended readers recognize that the end of the age could not occur during the lifetime of the original eleven disciples, some of whom had already died by the writing of this book; for Jesus had insisted that the gospel “must be preached to all nations before the end comes” (24:14). Therefore, the group he is addressing here as “the disciples,” with whom he is present and promises to remain to the end, must be the Church throughout the entire post-Easter period. Thus, at one level the passage is paradigmatic of the experience of the whole Church in the present time, from Jesus’ resurrection to the end of the age. We are

there on the mountain, experiencing and reacting to the presence of the Resurrected One; and he is speaking to us all.

But, in addition to identity, Matthew is also concerned about their number. The reference to “eleven” disciples is jarring to the reader, because always up to this point Matthew has spoken of “the twelve.”²⁶ Clearly, “eleven” draws attention to the absence of the disciple Judas, and thereby serves as a warning to disciples regarding the danger of falling away, not to return. Such danger will attend the disciples specifically as they engage in a mission to the nations where they will meet with persecution, for Jesus has already warned that, in their mission, “they will be hated by all nations” with the result that “many will fall away, and betray one another” (24:9-10);²⁷ the reference to “betray” echoes, of course, the language used otherwise of Judas.²⁸

Yet the reference to “eleven” points not only to the absence of Judas, but also to the presence of Peter, who has failed, under pressure and in the shadow of the cross, to confess Jesus, and has actually repudiated his discipleship in the face of the challenge of public announcement; yet he repents and is thereby finally reinstated.²⁹ This implicit reference to Peter serves as a word of hope to those who thus fail, and an encouragement to the Church fully to embrace the reinstating of such persons for their role in the task of worldwide proclamation.³⁰

Matthew rounds out his account of the arrival of the disciples by describing the destination as Galilee, which itself has a three-fold significance. For one thing, it points to the comparison, or analogy, between the mission of the post-Easter Church and the ministry of the earthly Jesus as recounted throughout Matthew’s Gospel. Even as the disciples position themselves for their mission by going “into Galilee,” so in 4:11 Jesus positioned himself for his ministry by withdrawing “into Galilee,” the same phrase (εἰς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν) is employed in each case.

Here, then, we encounter an oblique reference to a major aspect of Matthew’s theology of mission that is found throughout the Gospel: Jesus is himself the exemplar, or model, for the mission of the Church. Indeed, both Jesus and the disciples are “sent” on their respective missions; Jesus has been sent by God (10:40; 15:24; 21:37), while the disciples have been sent by Jesus.³¹ In fact, a key aspect of Jesus’ mission from God is to send the disciples (Church) on their mission. The mission of the Church is thus derived from and is a central component of the mission of Jesus.

The comparison between the mission of Jesus and that of the Church involves the *scope* of ministry; during the time of the earthly Jesus, both Jesus and the disciples have been sent only “to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (10:5-6; 15:24). The *acts* of ministry are the same: Both Jesus and the disciples (the disciples eventually) teach;³² both Jesus and the disciples have authority to cast out demons;³³ both Jesus and the disciples preach, and they preach the same message, “the gospel of the kingdom,”³⁴ and the substance of preaching is the same for both Jesus and the disciples, “The kingdom of heaven is at hand” (4:17; 10:7). The *consequences* of mission are the same; the consequences of rejecting the disciples’ message are expressed in the same language as those that come from rejecting Jesus’ message: “It will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you” (10:15; 11:22-24). The *results* of mission are the same. Both Jesus and the disciples experience persecution in the wake of their mission.³⁵ Thus, throughout Matthew’s Gospel Jesus demonstrates by example what the Church *should do in its mission, the struggles and challenges the Church will face in its mission, and how it should perform these missional activities.*³⁶

Beyond drawing our attention to this repeated comparison between the mission of Jesus and that of disciples, the reference to “into Galilee” also points to the eschatological character of the mission of the Church. Matthew draws out the significance of Jesus’ ministry in Galilee by insisting that it fulfills scripture, specifically Is 9:1-2 (4:12-16), and is thus eschatological in the sense that it brings to realization God’s long-awaited end-time rule of breaking the power of cosmic evil and inaugurating God’s own reign over the earth. Manifestly, the reference to Galilee in 28:16 has the same significance for the mission that the Church is about to embark upon; it likewise is an eschatological breaking-the-power-of-cosmic-evil sort of mission. The Church’s mission is of a different, supremely transcendent order, over against all else that is otherwise generally done in the world, and is not reducible to it.

Then, too, the reference to Galilee here emphasizes mission to the Gentiles, that is, to all the nations of earth, which Jesus will make explicit in v. 19. For the fulfillment quotation of Is 9:1-2 at 4:14-16 speaks of “Galilee of the Gentiles,” and declares that “the people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.” The positioning of this quotation, just before the inauguration of Jesus’ ministry at 4:17, is surprising, since Jesus carefully restricts his

ministry, and that of his disciples, to Jews on the basis that he was “sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (15:24).³⁷ It is only at 28:19 that Jesus will commission his disciples to expand their ministry to include Gentiles. The point is clear: God’s intention to bring end-time salvation to the nations is something that Jesus could not accomplish in his earthly ministry, but could be realized only through the post-Easter mission of the Church. Indeed, Jesus could not completely fulfill even the mission to Israel without the assistance of the disciples and those who will be made disciples by them (9:36-38; 10:5-23). In a sense, this points to a kind of insufficiency of Jesus in himself. There are certain things that Jesus himself, during his earthly ministry, could not do, things that require the participation of the Church in the post-Easter period, according to the sovereign decision of God. It involves a kind of divine self-limitation. But it is only a partial self-limitation; for, as we shall see, in the final analysis it is the exalted Christ who actually performs these things through the Church.

When the resurrected Jesus reveals himself³⁸ to his disciples they respond with the dialectic of worship and doubt. The act of worship clearly implies the deity of Christ. In the third, and climactic, temptation in the wilderness Jesus declared, quoting Deut 6:13, “You shall worship the Lord your God, and him only shall you serve.” Accordingly, to offer worship to anyone or anything other than God would be idolatry, and for anyone other than God to accept worship would be blasphemous. The Jesus to whom all authority in heaven and on earth has been given, who is about to commission his disciples to make disciples, and to whom disciples are to be made, is fully divine. The disciples, awaiting their commissioning, recognize that they are in the presence of ultimate reality, of absolute transcendence, so that everything else in the world is radically relativized to him and has value only in relation to him. In worshipping him they acknowledge that Jesus Christ is completely adequate to meet every existential challenge in the mission he is about to give to them, but that he will do so, of course, in his own sovereign way. The fact that he had been worshipped previously in the Gospel³⁹ emphasizes continuity between the earthly Jesus who walked the shores of Galilee and the Resurrected One. This warns against driving a wedge between the “Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.”

And yet it is precisely this sense of ultimate transcendence in the man Jesus Christ that creates the occasion for doubt. The word translated “doubt” here (διστάζω) occurs just once more in the New Testament, in Matt 14:33, the story of Jesus walking on the water, where the term is again

linked, as in 28:17, with the worship of Jesus by the disciples. Clearly Matthew intends that we should construe 28:17 in light of this earlier passage, usually called “the second boat scene,” because of its obvious connection with the “first boat scene” of 8:23-28 when Jesus calms the storm.⁴⁰

Long ago Günther Bornkamm correctly saw that Matthew has so told the story of the first boat scene as to highlight its symbolism.⁴¹ The boat in which the disciples were huddled, with Jesus asleep, is “the little boat of the Church;” the winds and the waves represent threatening horrors, “the distresses involved in discipleship of Jesus;” and Jesus demonstrates dominion over these distressful horrors by stilling the storm.⁴²

It seems to me that the same symbolism is operative in the second boat scene, with some important modifications.⁴³ Once again, we have “the little boat of the Church,” but here Jesus is not physically in the boat, but is outside the boat in the midst of the wind and waves, i.e., in the world where evil forces are threatening the Church. Jesus, presented here by Matthew with a suggestion of his later resurrection glory,⁴⁴ bids Peter, who throughout the Gospel represents the disciples,⁴⁵ to come to him from the boat with its apparent safety out into the world with all of its distressing threats. As long as Peter focuses his attention upon Jesus he remains confident of the reality of the one who appears before him and he is able to join Jesus in doing the impossible,⁴⁶ but when he diverts his attention from the Lord to the afflictions and distresses that surround him he begins to sink; yet Jesus will not allow him to be destroyed. Jesus takes him by the hand and brings him to the safety of the community that in wonder worships Jesus as Son of God. It is important to observe that Jesus dubs Peter’s failure *διστάζω*, which he further characterizes as *ὀλιγόπιστος*, i.e., weak faith.⁴⁷ Thus, doubt (*διστάζω*) is a weakness of faith in the reality of the presence of the transcendent Jesus as he beckons and commands that prevents one from making use of all the resources in Christ for life and mission in the face of obstacles and opposition.

This reference to doubt, then, makes perfect sense in the context of the Great Commission. The resurrected Jesus is about to dispatch his disciples on a mission that will be conducted in the setting of ongoing, effective opposition by the same powerful and cunning forces that did Jesus in (28:11-15), and Jesus had already warned the disciples that in the time between the resurrection and Parousia they will “be hated by all nations” (24:9). It is precisely people who both adoringly worship and often only

haltingly believe that Jesus commissions.⁴⁸ He does not wait for, nor does he require, a perfection of faith before he sends them out.⁴⁹ The Church is sent precisely in its weakness. Yet the existential problem of doubt, which has the power to diminish and even nullify mission, is potentially solved by Jesus' presence and word (vv. 18-20).

I say "potentially" because, on the basis of the narrative, it is not clear whether the disciples' doubt will be overcome and thus how effectively they will fulfill the mission Jesus is about to give to them.⁵⁰ Their performance thus far has been disappointing.⁵¹ Up to this point, Jesus has repeatedly dubbed them *ὀλιγόπιστοι*,⁵² and they have deserved that characterization. For even when Jesus was physically with them they neither had the will nor did they exercise the power to fulfill the charge Jesus had already given to them in chap. 10,⁵³ and they ran away scared at even the prospect of persecution.⁵⁴ On the other hand, the disciples have never disobeyed an overt command.⁵⁵ The Great Commission—and the Gospel—concludes in an open-ended fashion, with the question of the performance of the eleven left open, and with Jesus speaking as much to the readers as to the eleven. Therefore, the issue is not so much what the original eleven disciples will do, but whether we the readers will embrace Jesus' presence and word, as set forth in vv. 18-20, so as to overcome doubt and affirm the reality of the Resurrected One by meeting him where he is in the world through taking up the task that he gives to us.

In line with the Christocentric character of mission, Jesus begins his word with a declaration regarding himself, a declaration that centers on the essential issue of Christology as it bears upon mission: Jesus' authority. In Matthew, authority includes both the power to act (e.g., 10:1) and the right to act (e.g., 21:23-27), in other words, both legitimacy and capability. Thus, Jesus' authority is the rightful power to effect transcendent change.

This all-inclusive authority certainly includes the various aspects of authority that Jesus exercised during his earthly life, e.g., authority to forgive sins (9:6-8), to resuscitate the dead (9:23-26; 11:5), to alter the processes of the created world (8:23-27; 14:13-33; 15:32-38), to name just a few.⁵⁶ But the observation that this declaration in 28:18 leads to a commission to his disciples that transcends what Jesus had previously demanded of them suggests that the authority described here may go beyond what Jesus had possessed earlier.⁵⁷ Moreover, this verse echoes Dan 7:13-14 LXX,⁵⁸ which, when applied to Jesus, quite clearly points to his exaltation; and for

Matthew exaltation centers on the resurrection.⁵⁹ Thus, this authority was granted to Jesus by God⁶⁰ at the point of the resurrection.⁶¹

In line with the imagery of Dan 7, Matthew is describing Christ's enthronement over the cosmos. It is at this point that "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand....'" (22:44, quoting Ps 110:1). Consequently, his authority is comprehensive, both in terms of quantity ("all") and in terms of sphere ("heaven and earth").⁶² There is no authority (rightful power) anywhere or of any kind that does not properly belong to the exalted Christ.

Yet this authority is not static, but dynamic. It cannot wait until the consummation to explode into the world. It lunges into the present age, demanding to be made known, insisting on exercising its capacity to achieve God's ultimately redemptive purposes. And the method by which it accomplishes all of this, or at least the primary method that is most relevant to the Church, is expressed by the mandate set forth in 28:19-20a.

The *substance* of that mandate is **make disciples**. This term, a single word in Greek (μαθητεύσατε), stands at the center of the passage, since it is the finite (main) verb in the sentence preceded by an aorist participle and followed by two present participles. Etymologically, μαθητεύω and its noun form, μαθητής, stem from μανθάνω, meaning "to teach," and in fact μαθητής originally meant "learner." But during the Hellenistic period it was broadened to refer to someone who placed himself⁶³ under the pronounced influence of another⁶⁴ for the sake of training or formation. This rather general meaning led to its being employed in a number of specific ways that were determined by the precise character of the disciple-relationship in view.⁶⁵

It is clear, then, that we must establish the meaning of "make disciples" here on the basis of Matthew's description of μαθητής/μαθητεύω. The comparison that Matthew establishes between the mission/ministry of Jesus and that of the disciples, which I referenced earlier, and the connection between the eleven μαθηταί (28:16) and μαθητεύω in 28:19, may lead us to conclude that the disciples are to make disciples of others in the same way that Jesus made disciples of them throughout the Gospel. And to some extent this is true. Even as Jesus made disciples of the twelve by teaching, preaching, healing, correcting, warning, encouraging, and sharing ministry tasks with them, so these practices may form, at least in part and in some measure, the content of discipling in 28:19. Jesus models what our work of discipling is to look like. The earlier chapters of the Gospel make it clear also that those who are made disciples will form local congregations

characterized by nurture, discipline, and forgiveness,⁶⁶ in analogy to the circle of the twelve that Jesus established during his earthly ministry.

And yet Matthew does not present Jesus simply as a model for our work of discipling; but rather Jesus is the one final discipler. Jesus is not a facilitator of a discipleship that involves accepting a body of teaching or a set of ideas that is separate from himself, and thus could be offered with equal effectiveness by a host of others. But rather Jesus is the ultimate source of all discipleship; for Matthew has made it clear that discipleship must always be initiated by Jesus and that discipleship is a response to *his* call (4:18-22; 9:9; 11:28-30),⁶⁷ which is the offer of personal, intimate, trusting, and submissive relationship with himself.⁶⁸ In the final analysis, then, all disciple-making is accomplished by Jesus; in even the discipling performed by the Church Jesus is the ultimate actor (28:20b). Christian disciples are now the (essential and necessary) vehicles of Jesus' own continuing discipling work.

The scope of this discipling work is **all nations** (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη).⁶⁹ As I mentioned previously, this marks an expansion of the ministry of Jesus and of the disciples, which earlier had been restricted to Israel.⁷⁰ At least I take it as an expansion, and not a replacement. Indeed, several years ago a small but vocal group of scholars insisted that because ἔθνη in Matthew often means "Gentiles," therefore this statement should be rendered: "make disciples of all Gentiles," and that Matthew considered the mission to Israel (Jews) to be at an end.⁷¹ But this can hardly be so, since Matthew frequently uses ἔθνος in the sense of "nation," and in several passages Jesus describes mission to Israel in the post-Easter period (e.g., 10:23; 23:34-36).⁷² This is an important point, because it addresses the practical issue of the appropriateness, and necessity, of Jewish evangelization in our own day. Moreover, if ἔθνος does signify "nation" here, it indicates a concern for "ethnographic" entities (*Volkstum*, i.e., discrete culturally cohesive groups),⁷³ and thereby suggests the necessity of taking seriously the ethnic character of those who will be evangelized, in other words, cross-cultural communication of the gospel.

But even if τὰ ἔθνη should be understood as "all nations," it certainly emphasizes Gentiles. And we thus encounter here the critical issue of universal mission. Throughout the Gospel Matthew has placed side-by-side Jewish particularism, that I have already mentioned, and suggestions of Gentile inclusion. Thus, Jesus is "son of Abraham," through whom, "all the nations of the earth will be blessed" (Gen 12:3; 18:18;

22:18), a claim supported by the mention of Gentile women included in the pre-history of the Messiah (1:1-17);⁷⁴ and the Gentile magi are proleptic disciples, and in fact the first “disciple-figures” in Matthew’s narrative (2:1-12);⁷⁵ and we are told that “many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven” (8:11); and even when Jesus sends his disciples to minister to Israel he insists that, in the process, they will bear witness to Gentiles (10:18); and Jesus is Isaiah’s “Servant” who will “proclaim justice to the Gentiles,” and in whose name “the Gentiles will hope” (12:18-21); and a Canaanite girl experiences the salvation of healing because of the super-abounding faith of her mother (15:21-28); and in 21:43 Jesus declares that the kingdom of heaven will be taken away from Israel as it has been constituted and given to a “nation” (ἔθνος) that will deliver to God the fruit of righteousness; and the parable of the wedding describes God inviting Gentiles to the messianic banquet in the wake of Israel’s general refusal (22:1-10); and Jesus insists that the end will not come until the gospel has been preached “throughout the whole world” (24:14; cf. 26:13); and at the Last Supper Jesus declares that his blood is poured out “for many” (26:28; cf. 20:28); and at the cross it is the Gentile centurion and those with him who actually crucified Jesus who confesses, as he faces the cross, “Truly this was the Son of God” (27:54), so that thereby the first and last Christological confession in Matthew’s Gospel come from Gentiles (cf. 2:2).

Matthew has included the tension between Jewish particularism and Gentile inclusion to indicate that from the beginning God has intended that all peoples would have the opportunity of God’s salvation, but that such opportunity would come specifically through Israel.⁷⁶ And, as far as Matthew is concerned, this is exactly what has happened, and that in two ways. On the one hand, Jesus *is* Israel in the sense that he embodies all that was involved in God’s dealings with Israel as God’s people; all of Israel’s history, institutions, and promises come to fulfillment in him.⁷⁷ And on the other hand, God through Jesus has established a reconstituted eschatological Israel, not identical with the nation itself but composed of the twelve disciples (corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel, cf. 19:28) and those Jews (and later Gentiles) who respond to the proclamation of the end-time kingdom with a repentance that bears fruit.⁷⁸ The centrality of this reconstituted Israel in the salvation of the world explains the temporal priority given to the exclusive evangelization of Israel (10:5-6); for this redemption of the remnant of Israel is the basis of the mission of reconstituted Israel to

the nations. In Matt 28:18-20 Israel finally fulfills the global mission that God always purposed for it in that this reconstituted Israel is dispatched to make disciples of all nations (who themselves may thereby be incorporated into this reconstituted eschatological Israel, and thus also become part of the ongoing discipling process), with the assurance that, as they do so, Jesus, who embodies Israel's existence before God, is with them.⁷⁹

But this mission involves the *circumstance* of **going**. This aorist participle (πορευθέντες) that precedes the verb "make disciples" is certainly, as most translations render it, the "participle of attendant circumstance."⁸⁰ As such, it is properly understood as coordinate with the main verb and is therefore also a command. While the emphasis is upon "make disciples" Jesus is clear that disciples can accomplish this task only by moving away from where they are to the space inhabited by others. The repeated reference to the gospel being preached throughout "the whole world" (24:14; 26:13) certainly points to the crossing of geographical boundaries; but the broad context of the Gospel indicates that it involves every bit as much the crossing of all cultural, religious, and ethnic boundaries that typically separate human beings from one another, even in cases where no geographical distance must be spanned.⁸¹ The prophetic hope was that, at the end, all the nations of the world would flock to the mountain of the Lord (Zion) and learn of the Lord there (e.g., Is 2:1-4; Mic 4:1-4; Zech 8:20-23), i.e., come to Israel; but because Jesus has now been made cosmocrator it is necessary for his servants to pursue an aggressive conquest of the peoples of the earth through a discipling that involves going to them.

The *process* of bringing such persons to discipleship involves **baptizing** and **teaching**. These are instrumental participles that, in this case, spell out the substance of "make disciples." The evidence for this relationship is simple, but compelling. In 13:52 Matthew has employed the verb μαθητεύω in the sense of "teaching" or "training." And, of course, one of the major ways in which Jesus makes disciples of the twelve is by teaching them.⁸² The fact that "baptizing" and "teaching" are grammatically coordinate indicates that both of these tasks form the material content of discipling.⁸³

One might object that the Gospel of Matthew in its entirety indicates that discipling involves more than "baptizing" and "teaching." And this claim contains some truth. Yet, as we shall see momentarily, "baptizing" and "teaching" have such broad ramifications that most of the

aspects of discipling that Matthew presents otherwise in his Gospel are herein included.

The present passage is the only reference in Matthew's Gospel to Christian baptism,⁸⁴ and Matthew does not here develop the meaning of baptism, which suggests that Matthew assumed his readers would bring their understanding of baptism to bear upon this statement. Matthew does describe the baptizing work of John (3:1-17), but John's baptism is manifestly not the Christian baptism that Jesus mentions here, although insofar as it anticipates Christian baptism it may contribute to our understanding of baptism here,⁸⁵ if we take seriously both points of continuity and discontinuity. Consequently, we must derive the specific significance of baptism here in 28:19 from the rest of the New Testament (which witnesses to the conceptual background of the readers) and (with qualification and carefulness) from John's baptism. In short, we find that baptism involves response to the preaching of the gospel;⁸⁶ confession of sin (3:6); repentance;⁸⁷ faith in Christ;⁸⁸ the experience of the forgiveness of sins;⁸⁹ the reception of the Holy Spirit;⁹⁰ and incorporation into community of faith.⁹¹ It is really "an act of transfer,"⁹² wherein one moves from being ἐν Ἀδάμ to being ἐν Χριστῷ, to use Paul's terminology.⁹³ To be baptized "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit" means to be brought existentially into the sphere of, and in submission to, the active powerful presence of the Father, Son, and Spirit, so that one belongs to the Father, Son, and Spirit (e.g., 1 Cor 1:10-17).⁹⁴

It is clear that baptism marks the initiation into discipleship, whereas "teaching" refers to the ongoing process of discipling.⁹⁵ "Make disciples," therefore, must in no way be restricted to conversion, but rather be construed as a lifelong process of re-formation. The order is significant here, for, in contrast to the typical early Christian practice of instruction before baptism,⁹⁶ reflected already in the *Didache*, this teaching is to take place after baptism.⁹⁷

We note that mission involves teaching them to observe what Jesus commanded. Thus, they are to teach both the *necessity* of obedience to Jesus' commands ("to observe") and the substance of those commands ("what I have commanded"), in other words, *to do them*, and *what to do*. This concern for the necessity of obedience relates to the Matthean emphasis upon righteousness in the Christian life. The purpose of Jesus' coming was to "save his people from their sins" (1:21) the plural suggesting that the focus is upon salvation from sin as a life-practice over against sin as

a principle;⁹⁸ salvation in Matthew, then, is salvation from a life of sinning and its consequences.⁹⁹ Matthew describes such righteousness as “fruit” that is possible only by the transformation of the “tree,” or the inner life of persons,¹⁰⁰ that comes through receiving by faith¹⁰¹ the proclamation of the kingdom that God has offered in Jesus Christ (3:2; 4:17); for this reason the reference to obeying Jesus’ commands must follow the mention of baptism. The mission, therefore, does not trade in moralism, i.e., appeal to adopt a different practice, but rather offers gospel, i.e., a divine opportunity for profound transformation that manifests itself in obedience to the will of God found in the Old Testament Scriptures (5:17-20) as they are interpreted by Jesus according to the centrality of the twofold love command (22:34-40).¹⁰²

The substance of the teaching is “what *I* have commanded.” They are to teach his commands, and not their own. They are thus to be careful to make disciples of Jesus, and not of themselves.¹⁰³ Indeed, this statement may imply that they are not to add any commands of their own. And yet the Jesus who has commanded is present with his Church as one who continues to speak, suggesting that the commands that form the content of missionary teaching are both stable and dynamic. They are stable in that they are found written within the Gospel tradition, specifically the Gospel of Matthew;¹⁰⁴ but they are dynamic in that they must constantly be re-applied to new situations in which the Church finds itself, situations that Jesus, during his earthly ministry, would have had little opportunity to address. This, I think, is the significance of Matt 16:19: “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Drawing upon language used by the rabbis to decide what is required (“bind”) and what is not required (“loose”) for participation in the kingdom that is to come,¹⁰⁵ Jesus promises that the decisions of the Church¹⁰⁶ regarding emerging issues of praxis will be maintained by God as the standard at the Great Assize; and this will be so, because as the Church makes these decisions it is assured that it reflects the divine mind, since the Church enjoys the guiding help of the exalted Christ who continues to “be with you.”

But if mission involves teaching only Jesus’ commands, in this sense, it requires also the teaching of *all* that Jesus has commanded. I have argued elsewhere that the critical core of this missional catechesis are the five great discourses that punctuate Matthew’s Gospel (chaps. 5-7; 10; 13; 18; 24-25), each concluding with the formula, “when Jesus had

finished instructing his disciples” or the like.¹⁰⁷ Although these discourses are ostensibly directed to the twelve disciples as Jesus ministered in Galilee and Judea, in substance they pertain not to the twelve during Jesus’ earthly ministry but to the whole of the Church in the post-Easter period. Moreover, the formula at the end of the final discourse reads: “Now when Jesus had finished *all* these sayings” (26:1), thus forming a link with “teaching them to observe *all* that I have commanded you” here at 28:20.

Yet if we take seriously the inclusive language “all” we will not limit this missional catechesis to the five great discourses, even if we give to them pride of place. It must include the entirety of Jesus’ instructions throughout the Gospel. Indeed, it is not limited even to what Jesus said, but encompasses also what he did.¹⁰⁸ For, in Matthew’s Gospel, Jesus instructs as much through actions as through speech. Thus, in a critical passage we read, “From that time Jesus began to *show* (δείκνυμι) his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem, suffer many things...and be killed...” (16:21). And Chrysostom perceptively explains the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount this way: “And for what reason is the clause added, ‘He opened his mouth’? To inform you that in his very silence he gave instruction, and not only when he spoke. At one time he taught by ‘opening his mouth,’ while at another by the works that he did.”¹⁰⁹ The whole of the Gospel of Matthew, what Matthew calls “this gospel of the kingdom,”¹¹⁰ contains both implicitly and explicitly Jesus’ commands that are the content of ongoing mission.¹¹¹

Incidentally, the embodiment of “obey all that I have commanded you” on the part of the community is itself an important aspect of the Church’s mission. The ordering of the Church’s life together in compliance with the commands of Christ is a witness to the surrounding world both to the reality of the presence of the kingdom and to its character. In the Sermon on the Mount, which sets forth the essential principles of the kingdom, Jesus insists that insofar as the community lives according to the precepts of the Sermon it is the “light of the world” and the “salt of the earth” (5:13-16). In fact, it is a city set¹² on a “hill” (ὄρος, the same word used for the “mountain” upon which Jesus gives the Sermon, 5:1) that cannot be hidden.¹¹³ The Church’s proclamation is received by the world not only as something heard with the ears, but also as something seen with the eyes.

But that mission, proclaimed either by word or example, is possible only because of Jesus’ presence (28:20b). The declaration “I am with you” echoes many Old Testament passages in which God promises to be with his chosen people or chosen leaders among his people in the

sense of saving them from destruction (e.g., Josh 22:31; 1 Sam 17:37; Is 41:10) or empowering them to fulfill the task he has given to them which lies beyond human capacity (e.g., Ex 3:11-12; Josh 1:5; Hag 2:4-5).¹¹⁴ The first reference in Matthew's Gospel to divine presence is the programmatic statement of 1:23, "Emmanuel, God with us," and pertains to salvific divine presence, whereas this final reference to divine presence pertains to empowering divine presence. This framing (*inclusio*) signifies that the Jesus who promises to be "with you" in 28:20 is himself "God with us." Thus, God himself, in the person of his Son (28:19), dwells with his people precisely as they fulfill their global mission.

But 28:20b not only participates in an *inclusio* with 1:23, but also brings to a climax the theme of *Mitsein* developed throughout the Gospel. The *Mitsein* of 1:23 is soteriological, or salvational, with-ness (linked as it is with salvation from sins, 1:21). In 18:20 ("where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them")¹¹⁵ Jesus promises to be with the Church (in the form of its local congregations) as it goes about its most difficult task of disciplining errant members; this is ecclesial with-ness. All of this anticipates Jesus' eschatological with-ness ("I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom," 26:29), which is, however, contingent upon the disciples "watching with" Jesus (26:38, 40), pointing to provisional with-ness.¹¹⁶ The consideration that all of these references to *Mitsein* culminate in the missional with-ness of 28:20 suggests that, in a sense, these various forms of God's presence with his people through his Son Jesus realize their full significance in the mission of the Church.

End Notes

¹The word "mission" is not found in Matthew's Gospel. In fact, it occurs rarely in the New Testament. The term appears only once in the NIV and NASB, at Acts 12:25, where it translates *διακονία*; and in the RSV it appears not only at Acts 12:25, but also at 2 Cor 11:12 where it is simply supplied for the sake of sense and does not translate any specific Greek term, and at Gal 2:8, where it translates *ἀποστολή*. Neither *ἀποστολή* nor *διακονία* appears in Matthew. Yet the theme of mission is manifestly present. As is often pointed out, our English word "mission" derives from the Latin *mittere*, meaning to send ("Mission," s.v., *The Oxford English Dictionary* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971]). And, in this instance, etymology accords with the current use of the term, since sending with a view toward fulfilling a purpose is the denotation of the English word (see, e.g., "Mission," s.v., *Webster's II New College Dictionary* [Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1995]). Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity,

2006), 23, defines it as “a long-term purpose or goal that is to be achieved through proximate objectives and planned actions,” but he does so in order to be able to speak of God assuming a mission for the world (the *missio Dei*). Yet it is better to differentiate between purpose and mission; God has a *purpose* and therefore sends Israel, Christ, and (through Christ) the Church on a mission to fulfill that purpose. According to the Bible, God is active in fulfilling his purpose, but usually not directly so, but through mediate agency. In fact, *missio Dei* originally had to do with the doctrine of the trinity: God (the Father) *sent* the Son, and the Father and the Son *sent* the Spirit. For the history of this concept, see David J. Bosch, *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, 20th Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2011), 398-402.

² Christopher J. H. Wright, *The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2010).

³ Ferdinand Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1965), 120.

⁴ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 58.

⁵ The five great discourses are (1) Sermon on the Mount (chaps. 5-7); (2) Missionary Discourse (chap. 10); (3) Parables Discourse (chap. 13); (4) Community Discourse (chap. 18); and (5) Eschatological Discourse (chaps. 24-25). For discussions of the role of these discourses in Matthew's Gospel, see Benjamin Wisner Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (New York: Henry Holt, 1930), 80-90, 165-261; Christopher R. Smith, “Literary Evidence of a Fivefold Structure in the Gospel of Matthew,” *New Testament Studies* 43 (1997): 544-51.

⁶ Unless otherwise indicated, all biblical quotations represent the translation of the author.

⁷ I am using this term not in the broad soteriological sense that all persons will ultimately be saved, but in the missional sense that God offers the possibility of salvation to all (including Gentiles). As we shall see below, Matthew's Gospel contains several other allusions to the eventual inclusion of the Gentiles.

⁸ For a helpful review of scholarly treatments on the relationship between 10:5-6 and 28:16-20, see Axel von Dobbeler, “Die Restitution Israels und die Bekehrung der Heiden: Das Verhältnis von Mt 10,5b.6 und Mt 28,18-20 unter dem Aspect der Komplementarität. Erwägungen zum Standort des Matthäusevangeliums,” *Zeitschrift für neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 91 (2004): 21-28.

⁹ E.g., John P. Meier, “Salvation History in Matthew: In Search of a Starting Point,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 37 (1975): 203-15; idem, *Law and History in Matthew's Gospel: A Redactional Study of Matthew 5:7-48*, *Analecta Biblica* 71 (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1976), 27; Georg Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit: Untersuchung zur Theologie des Matthäus*, 3e. Aufl. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971).

¹⁰ E.g., Schuyler Brown, "The Matthean Community and the Gentile Mission," *Novum Testamentum* XXII (1980): 193-221; James LaGrand, *The Earliest Christian Mission to "All Nations" in the Light of Matthew's Gospel*, University of South Florida Studies in Formative Christianity and Judaism (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); Paul Foster, *Community, Law and Mission in Matthew's Gospel*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2 Reihe, 177 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 218-42; Eung Chun Park, *The Mission Discourse in Matthew's Interpretation*, Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament, 2. Reihe, 81 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1995), 6-8.

¹¹ Among exceptions to this general lack of concentration upon a theology of mission in Matthew are Donald Juel, "The Mission Theology of Matthew," in *The Biblical Foundations for Mission*, ed. Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1983), 233-54; Mark Allan Powell, *God With Us: A Pastoral Theology of Matthew's Gospel* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 1-27; and Bitrus A. Sarma, *Hermeneutics of Mission in Matthew: Israel and the Nations in the Interpretive Framework of Matthew's Gospel* (Carlisle, UK: Langham, 2015).

¹² E.g., the recent insistence that Matthew's Gospel, along with the other Gospels, are of the genre of ancient biography, emphasizes that the focus is upon the subject of the biography. See Richard Burrige, *What Are the Gospels? A Comparison with Graeco-Roman Biography*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 247-50, 289-94.

¹³ Actually the passion and resurrection form a complex climax in Matthew's Gospel, as suggested by the fact that passion and resurrection are mentioned together in the thrice-repeated formalized predictions at 16:21; 17:22-23; and 20:18-19, and by the connections between crucifixion and resurrection that Matthew forges through the reference to the resurrection at 27:53 and the reference to crucifixion at 28:5, and through the role of the women, who form a bridge between the events of Jesus' death and resurrection (27:55-61; 28:1-10). But within this sequence the resurrection holds a position of ultimacy, since every stage of the plot, including the crucifixion, lunges forward towards it. Moreover, the crucifixion is an act of humans (17:23; 20:18-19; 26:57-27:54), whereas the resurrection is the act of God, the supreme reality in the world of Matthew's Gospel, and indeed the final act of God recounted in the narrative.

¹⁴ It is this representation of certain major themes found earlier in the Gospel that led Bornkamm to refer to the Great Commission as "a summary of the entire gospel of Matthew." See Günther Bornkamm, "The Risen Lord and the Earthly Jesus," in *The Future of Our Religious Past*, FS Rudolf Bultmann, ed. James M. Robinson (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 205. Yet it is not a summarization in the narrow, technical sense, since it does not contain a point-by-point retelling of the Gospel; see David R. Bauer and Robert A. Traina, *Inductive Bible Study: A Comprehensive Guide to the Practice of Hermeneutics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2011), 110-113; cf. Esther 9:24-28.

¹⁵ "the most important words of the entire Gospel," my translation. Wolfgang Trilling, *Das Wahre Israel: Studien zur Theologie des Matthäus-*

Evangeliums, Studien zum Alten und Neuen Testament, 10, 3d Aufl. (München: Kösel, 1968), 21.

¹⁶ Otto Michel, "The Conclusion of Matthew's Gospel," in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, Issues in Religion and Theology, 3, ed. Graham Stanton (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress, 1983), 35, italics his.

¹⁷ Some scholars have argued that the Great Commission reflects a form, or *Gattung*, drawn from the Old Testament, and should therefore be construed primarily according to Old Testament passages that bear the form identified, whether royal decrees (Bruce J. Malina, "The Literary Structure and Form of Matt. xxviii. 16-20," *New Testament Studies* 17 [1970]: 87-103), or Old Testament commissions (Benjamin J. Hubbard, *The Matthean Redaction of a Primitive Apostolic Commissioning: An Exegesis of Matthew 28.16-20*, Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series, 19 [Missoula: Scholars, 1974]). But almost certainly the passage is a creation of the evangelist and was not found in any preexisting form. See Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Composition and Christology of Matt 28:16-20," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (1974): 573-84.

¹⁸ Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 58. Bosch himself attempts to correct this deficiency by examining the Great Commission in light of other Matthean passages and themes. My attempt to do the same thing in this paper differs from Bosch's treatment in a number of emphases and matters of interpretation.

¹⁹ Karl Barth, "An Exegetical Study of Matthew 28:16-20," in *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, ed. Gerald H. Anderson (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 60, insists that the "therefore" indicates that "the disciples' carrying out of the charge will not at all be determined by the excellency and strength of their own will and work; nor will it be jeopardized by their deficiencies." Yet we must avoid sliding into a monergism here; the participation of the Church is necessary, and will have a bearing upon outcome.

²⁰ The significance of this possibility is expressed well by Craig S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 720-21: "If many Christians today have lost a sense of Jesus' presence and purpose among them, it may be because they have lost sight of the mission their Lord has given them." The issue here, of course, is whether divine presence is to be understood exclusively in terms of function (salvation and empowerment), or whether it includes also relationship, i.e., interpersonal intimacy. See David D. Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel: Divine presence and God's people in the First Gospel*, Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series 90 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 113-16.

²¹ And, of course, it is Jesus who actually gives this command.

²² Thus Otto Michel, "The Conclusion of Matthew's Gospel," p. 35, asks "Must this composition really be understood in terms of its middle piece, the mission charge—as usually happens—or is it not right from the

start christological?" [italics his] I would counter only that even the mission charge is Christological in that it is Jesus who gives the charge and who mentions himself twice within it.

²³ Note (1) that the five great discourses (chaps. 5-7; 10; 13; 18; 24-25) are directed to "the twelve," and yet these discourses focus not upon matters pertaining to the twelve during Jesus' earthly ministry, but upon the concerns of post-Easter Christians in general, so that what the Matthean Jesus says to the disciples is really being said to the post-Easter Church; (2) that the twelve in Matthew's Gospel are constantly presented as struggling with the kinds of issues and experiences that would be especially relevant to the Christians of the post-Easter Church (e.g., 14:28-32; 16:5-12; 17:14-21, 24-27; 26:30-46); and (3) that both "the twelve" and Christians in general are called "disciples" (cf. 10:1 with 10:2; 13:52; 27:57; 28:19, although Matthew distinguishes between the noun μαθηταί, used for the disciples, and the verb μαθητεύω, which Matthew uses for those who will become disciples in the post-Easter period. But I would draw back from redaction critics who employ the category of "transparency" in the sense that they consider the disciples to be little more than ciphers for specific groups or members within Matthew's community. See, e.g., Ulrich Luz, "The Disciples in the Gospel according to Matthew," in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, pp. 98-128; idem, *The Theology of the Gospel of Matthew*, New Testament Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 9, 62-66. For a more nuanced view, reflecting a narrative-critical reading, see David B. Howell, *Matthew's Inclusive Story: A Study in the Narrative Rhetoric of the First Gospel*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplemental Series 42 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990).

²⁴ Thus, Matthew is careful to include the statement "and when they saw him" in 28:17. Note Matthew's attempts throughout to establish the historicity of the resurrection. He does so, e.g., by emphasizing the sealing of the tomb and the posting of guards (27:65-66; 28:4), by explaining the silence of the guards regarding the resurrection event (28:11-15), by undermining the report that the disciples stole Jesus' body (27:62-64; 28:11-15), and by insisting that the women had seen the actual burial of Jesus in the sepulcher (27:61), thus making it impossible to believe that on Sunday morning they visited the wrong tomb, a different, yet-to-be-occupied grave.

²⁵ Many contemporary scholars reject the notion of temporality in Greek verbs in favor of "aspect" and "space." See, e.g., Stanley E. Porter, *Verbal Aspect in the Greek of the New Testament with Reference to Tense and Mood*, Studies in Biblical Greek 1 (New York: Lang, 1989); and Constantine R. Campbell, *Verbal Aspect, the Indicative Mood, and Narrative: Soundings in the Greek of the New Testament*, Studies in Biblical Greek 13 (New York: Lang, 2007). But several scholars have pushed back, insisting that the indicative mood, at least, grammaticalizes time. See most recently, Timothy Brookins, "A Tense Discussion: Rethinking the Grammaticalization of Time in Greek Indicative Verbs," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 137 (2018): 147-68.

²⁶ 10:1, 2, 5; 11:1; 19:28; 20:17; 26:14, 20, 47.

²⁷ Almost always in Matthew's Gospel persecution is connected to mission. In the first reference to Christian persecution Jesus links it with the persecution experienced by the prophets (5:10-12); and the first reference to "cross" pertains to the cross of disciples in their capacity as proclaimers of the kingdom (10:38-39; cf. 10:7-15). See also 10:16-39; 13:20-21; 23:34-36; 24:9-14. Indeed, the first reference to Judas' betrayal is at 10:4, at the beginning of the Missionary Discourse, suggesting that falling away and betrayal is a potential danger of the rejection of the disciples' ministry and message described in 10:16-39.

²⁸ The word *παραδίδομαι*, which occurs in 24:10, is used repeatedly of Judas (10:4; 26:15, 16, 21, 23, 24, 25, 46; 27:3, 4). Of course, Judas' betrayal did not itself occur because of persecution arising from his pursuit of mission. Yet, Judas' apostasy is due to his repudiation of the way of the cross in favor of the allure of wealth (26:6-16), temptations that will be occasioned by the challenges of mission (10:8-11, 38-39); and Judas apostasizes just after Jesus' declaration regarding the gospel "preached in the whole world" (26:13). Thus, Judas represents the kind of apostasy that would be occasioned, in the case of other (later) disciples, by persecution attending ministry.

²⁹ Insofar as he twice denied being "with Jesus" (26:69-72) Peter repudiated his discipleship, which involves, in Matthew, primarily the notion of being "with" Jesus (1:21-23; 26:29, 39-41; 28:20), and placed himself under eschatological judgment (10:32-33). But in the wake of his denial Peter "weeps" (26:75); and in the Bible "weeping" (*κλαίω*) often carries the significance of submissive turning towards God. See Karl Heinrich Rendtorff, "*κλαίω*," *TDNT*, 3:722-25. The very fact that Peter, in obedience to Jesus' command, goes to Galilee and there worships the resurrected Jesus suggests repentance. Thus W. D. Davies and Dale C. Allison, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, International Critical Commentary, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2005), 3:550, correctly speak of Peter's weeping as "the beginning of repentance." Judas, on the other hand, does not repent, but experiences remorse (*μεταμέλομαι*, 27:3), i.e., a different feeling over against a changing of the mind or alteration of intention (*μετανοέω*, cf. 4:17). This distinction between *μεταμέλομαι* and *μετανοέω*, found consistently in classical Greek, was sometimes blurred in Hellenistic Greek, and consequently to some extent in the LXX. But the New Testament, and particularly Matthew, generally maintains the distinction. See Otto Michel, "*μεταμέλομαι*," *TDNT*, 4:626-29.

³⁰ This passage understandably played a significant role in the debate involving the Novatians and Donatists over full reinstatement (including reinstatement to ministry) for those who had lapsed under pressure of persecution. See Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 21-28: A Commentary, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005), 459-62.

³¹ 10:2, 5, 16; 23:34, 37.

³² Of Jesus at 4:23; 5:1, 19; 7:29; 9:35; 11:1; 13:54; 21:23; 22:1. Of the disciples at 28:20a.

³³ Of Jesus at 8:16, 28-34; 9:32-34; 12:22-29; 15:21-28; 17:14-29. Of the disciples at 10:1, 8; 17:14-20.

³⁴ Of Jesus at 4:23; 9:35. Of the disciples at 21:14; 26:13.

³⁵ Persecution of Jesus at 2:3, 13-23; 9:1-13, 33; 12:1-14, 24-42; 15:1-21; 16:1-12; 20:17-20; 21:12-17, 23-23:38; 26:3-5, 47-27:26, 41-45, 62-66. Persecution of disciples at 5:10-11; 10:16-22, 38; 13:21; 16:24; 20:22-23; 23:29-36; 24:9-14. The comparison between the persecution of Jesus in the wake of his ministry and that of the disciples as they minister is explicitly connected in 10:24-25.

³⁶ Of course, comparison is not identity; consequently, certain aspects of Jesus' ministry belong to him alone and are not reproducible by disciples. Only Jesus can "save his people from their sins" (1:21), or atone for sins by death upon the cross (20:28; 26:28), or fulfill the law and the prophets by identifying the will of God that lies behind the letter of the law and is, at least in part, obscured by that letter (5:17-48). Even though both Jesus and the disciples forgive sins (9:1-8; cf. 6:14; 18:21-35), forgiveness by the disciples is derivative of forgiveness effected by Christ and therefore does not carry the same value. For a rather thorough analysis of this comparison between the mission of Jesus and that of the disciples, see Powell, *God With Us*, 3-15.

³⁷ As we shall see, Jesus ministers to Gentiles on only two occasions (8:5-17; 15:21-28); in both cases these Gentiles come to him and manifest super-abounding faith. It is only such extraordinary faith that causes Jesus to transcend his otherwise carefully maintained restriction. Although twice Matthew reports that Jesus traveled to Gentile areas (8:28-34; 15:21-39), the restrictive statements at 10:5-6 and 15:24 require us to understand that Jesus did not go into these areas with the purpose of ministering to Gentiles; in fact, both these areas contained a significant Jewish population. Accordingly, Matthew is careful to record that both the demoniacs and the Canaanite woman "came out" to Jesus (8:28; 15:22). In the account of the Gadarene demoniacs, the demons' statement (found only in Matthew), "Have you come to destroy us *before the time*" probably suggests that, before the resurrection, ministry in Gentile lands was premature and in a sense anticipatory of the world-wide mission that would be inaugurated at 28:16-20; though cf. John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2005), 375-76. See Walter T. Wilson, *Healing in the Gospel of Matthew: Reflections on Method and Ministry* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 2014), 131-38; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 8-20: A Commentary*, *Hermeneia-A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 24-25.

³⁸ The reference to "mountain" in 28:16 highlights the revelatory character of the scene, for (as most scholars recognize) Matthew uses this image to refer to the place of revelation. See, e.g., Bornkamm, "The Risen Lord and the Earthly Jesus," 204. But cf. Terrence Donaldson, *Jesus on the Mountain: A Study in Matthean Theology*, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplemental Series 8* (Sheffield: JSOT-Press, 1985), who sees "mountain" signifying the place where the eschatological messianic

community is constituted in line with Old Testament and Jewish notions of the New Jerusalem.

³⁹ 2:2, 11; 8:2; 9:18; 14:33; 15:25; 20:20.

⁴⁰ In addition to the obvious general similarities (boat, storm, Jesus' deliverance of his disciple[s] from danger) we note a number of specific resonances, e.g., μη φοβεῖσθε; Κύριε, σῶσον; ὀλιγόπιστοι/ὀλιγόπιστος. And the question that the disciples pose at the conclusion of the first boat scene, "Who is this....?" they answer at the conclusion of the second boat scene, "Truly, you are the Son of God."

⁴¹ "Günther Bornkamm, "The Stilling of the Storm in Matthew," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, 56. Scholars generally consider this brief work by Bornkamm to be the beginning of redaction-critical study on Matthew's Gospel. This symbolic, virtually allegorical, function of the story has been subsequently affirmed by many other scholars, e.g., Jean Zumstein, *La condition du croyants dans l'Évangile selon Matthieu* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1977), 245-55; Birger Gerhardsson, *The Mighty Acts of Jesus according to Matthew*, Scriptura minora Regiae Societatis humanorarium litterarum Ludensis (Lund: Gleerup, 1979), 58; and Romeo Popa, *Allgegenwärtiger Konflikt im Matthäusevangelium: Exegetische und sozialpsychologische Analyse der Konfliktgeschichte*, Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus/Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments, 111 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 334-35.

⁴² Bornkamm's figural interpretation of this passage was anticipated by the Fathers, e.g., Tertullian, *On Baptism*, 12; Peter Chrysologus, *Sermons* 50.2.

⁴³ Gerhard Held, a student of Bornkamm, correctly notes connections between these two boat scenes, but does not sufficiently analyze the combination of similarities and differences between the two pericopes. See Gerhard Held, "Matthew as Interpreter of the Miracle Stories," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*," 204-206.

⁴⁴ Note that Matthew is careful to note that Jesus appears at the fourth watch of the night (14:25), i.e., between 3:00 and 6:00 in the morning, just before dawn, corresponding to the time of Jesus' resurrection according to 28:1. Note, incidentally, that Jesus has just expressed his deity by the divine designation ἐγὼ εἰμί (14:27). See Luz, *Matthew 8-20*, 319.

⁴⁵ See below, footnote 106.

⁴⁶ Thus Peter exercises true faith, which is the proper response to the appearance of the glorious Lord, as emphasized by Held, "Matthew as Interpreter of the Miracle Stories," 206. The notion of διατάζω may indicate weakness of faith (ὀλιγόπιστος) but not the absence of faith (ἄπιστος). Thus, διατάζω stands in a dialectical relationship not only with προσκυνήσις but also with πίστις. The presentation of Peter in this pericope anticipates the combination of worship and doubt in 28:17; as Peter is characterized at one and the same time by strong and weak faith in 14:22-33, so the disciples in

28:17 hold simultaneously the strong faith implicit in worship along with doubt.

⁴⁷ Adolf Schlatter, *Der Glaube in Neuen Testament* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1963), 112, describes the person who is ὀλιγόπιστος as “der das früher betätigte Glauben nicht festhält, sondern es in der neuen Lage wegen ihrer besonderen Schwierigkeit unterläßt.” “[T]he one who has not held fast the faith which was earlier exercised, but in the new situation pulls back because of its special difficulty”—my translation.

⁴⁸ The Greek construction indicates that this doubting characterizes all the eleven (versus the rendering of the NRSV, “but some doubted”). See R. W. L. Moberly, “Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel as Son of God,” in *The Bible, Theology, and Faith: A Study of Abraham and Jesus*, ed. R. W. L. Moberly, Cambridge Studies in Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 191-93; contra R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2007), 1111.

⁴⁹ Matt 17:20-21 makes it clear that ὀλιγοπιστία involves not amount of faith (“little faith”) but character of faith, a faith mixed with doubt (“impure” or “alloyed” faith).

⁵⁰ Matt 8:11; 23:34-35; 24:14; and 26:13 indicate confidence that worldwide mission will occur.

⁵¹ Richard A. Edwards, “Uncertain Faith: Matthew’s Portrait of the Disciples,” in *Discipleship in the New Testament*, ed. Fernando F. Segovia (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1985), 47-71; Jeannine K. Brown, *The Disciples in Narrative Perspective: The Portrayal and Function of the Matthean Disciples*, Society of Biblical Literature Academia Biblica 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 59-120.

⁵² 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8. In 17:20 Jesus applies to them the noun ὀλιγοπιστία (“little faith”).

⁵³ 14:13-21; 15:32-39; 17:14-21; 19:13-15. In contrast to Mark (Mark 6:12-30) and Luke (Luke 9:6; 10:17) Matthew mentions nothing of the disciples actually ministering. See Dorothy Jean Weaver, *Matthew’s Missionary Discourse: A Literary Critical Analysis*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series, 38 (Sheffield: JSOT, 1990), 127-53.

⁵⁴ 26:30-35, 56, 69-75; see also 15:12.

⁵⁵ 4:18-22; 9:9; 21:1-7; 26:18-19; 28:16.

⁵⁶ To this list could be added: authority to teach the will of God (7:28-29), even insofar as it involved the abrogating of certain commandments of the law (5:17-48); authority in himself to heal, since he performed these healings without recourse to prayer (4:23-25; 8:1-9:35; 11:5-6; 12:9-23; 15:29-31; 19:2; 20:29-34; 21:14); authority to exorcise demons and thus “plunder” Satan’s kingdom (8:16, 28-34; 9:32; 12:22-32, 43-45; 15:21-28; 17:14-21); authority to demand that persons abandon

possessions and family to follow him (4:18-22; 19:21-22, 29), even if it meant violating the commands of the Decalogue (8:21); authority to send the twelve to minister to Israel (10:1-42); authority uniquely to reveal the Father (11:27); and authority to seize property (21:3).

⁵⁷ Matt 28:19-20a is the first time Jesus gives the command to make disciples, baptize, or teach; and, of course, this passage also marks the broadening of ministry from Israel alone to “all nations,” the reference to “all” here corresponding to “all authority” in the preceding verse.

⁵⁸ Here one “like a son of man” comes with clouds of heaven to “the ancient of days” [God] and is presented before him, at which time he “was given (ἐδόθη) authority (ἐξουσία) and glory and kingdom, and all nations (πάντα τὰ ἔθνη) according to race were serving him.” In Daniel this “son of man” represents the “saints of the Most High” (Dan 7:22, 25, 27a), i.e., Israel, or a righteous remnant of Israel; yet at the end of the passage Daniel describes the “son of man” by the third person masculine singular (Dan 7:27b), which allows its application to a specific individual.

⁵⁹ In New Testament Christology exaltation involves the resurrection and ascension. See, e.g., Charles H. H. Scobie, *The Ways of our God: An Approach to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 446-466. The Gospel of Matthew, of course, contains no account of, or even reference to, the ascension.

⁶⁰ The verb “has been given” (ἐδόθη) is certainly a divine passive, i.e., the passive voice used without an explicit reference to the one who does the action as a substitute for the divine name; as such, we understand it as “given by God.” The divine passive appears throughout the New Testament, but is especially prominent in Matthew’s Gospel. Of course, in the narrative world of Matthew’s Gospel only God could grant “all authority in heaven and earth.” See, e.g., 11:26-27. We should note also that during his earthly life Jesus apparently did not have authority over the angels (26:53), but was to exercise such authority later (13:30, 39-43; 16:27; 24:31).

⁶¹ The notion that Jesus was given greater status or authority at the point of his exaltation is found throughout the New Testament, e.g., Acts 2:29-36; Rom 1:1-4; Phil 2:5-11; Heb 1:1-5. Some have argued on the basis of 11:27 that 28:18 does not describe a new authority, but is a confirmation of the authority he had all along. See, e.g., von Dobbeler, “Die Restitution Israels,” 38; Barth, “An Exegetical Study,” 62, who speaks of an unhiding of the authority that was his previously. Cf. Moberly, “Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel,” 193-96, for a thoughtful analysis of the relationship between 11:27 and 28:18, in which he suggests that the degree of authority that Jesus possesses is always relative to his relationship to the Father at any particular time, and that therefore there is a progressive degree of “Sonship” (although Jesus has been Son all along, and thus there is no hint of adoptionism) that corresponds to a progressive experience of authority. In other words, at 11:27 Jesus had received from the Father “all things” that were appropriate to his relationship with the Father at that point. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 1113, perceptively notes that finally at 28:18 Jesus enjoys the range of authority that is commensurate with that of the Father, who is described in 11:27 as Lord of heaven and earth.” cf. 9:6.

⁶² This reference to authority “in heaven” (ἐν οὐρανῷ) also points to a greater degree of authority than he enjoyed previously, a cosmic co-authority with the Father; for up to this point in the Matthew’s Gospel Jesus exercised authority “on earth” (e.g., 9:6). Thus Jonathan T. Pennington, *Heaven and Earth in the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 203-206, points out that when Matthew combines “heaven and earth” he typically uses “heaven” in the sense of the divine realm. This explanation is preferable to that offered by Barth, “Exegetical Study,” 61, who argued that authority in heaven corresponds to Paul’s notion of Christ having authority over the “principalities and powers,” for which there is no evidence.

⁶³ I use the masculine pronoun since in the ancient world μαθηταί were typically male.

⁶⁴ Indeed, μαθητής sometimes referred to the adherent of a philosophical or religious school.

⁶⁵ Michael J. Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Ancient World and Matthew’s Gospel*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1995), 11-125. Although the concept of master-disciple appears in the Old Testament and intertestamental material, the Greek terms are not found therein, but occur for the first time among the Jews in the writings of Philo and Josephus. The rabbis in the Tannaitic period often used the corresponding Hebrew terms to refer to those who studied the Oral Torah under rabbis with a view toward becoming rabbis themselves; and they sometimes projected this notion back into the first century, say to describe those who were disciples of Shammai and Hillel.

⁶⁶ 5:1-7:28; 12:46-50; and esp. the “Community Discourse” of chap. 18. See Juel, “Mission Theology,” 77-78; Powell, *God With Us*, 22-26.

⁶⁷ David R. Bauer, “The Major Characters in Matthew’s Story: Their Function and Significance in the First Gospel,” *Interpretation* 46 (1992): 357-67. The scribe who attempts to initiate discipleship (8:18-19) is no exception, since this man is rebuffed by Jesus in part precisely because of this self-initiation. See Jack Dean Kingsbury, “On Following Jesus: The ‘Eager’ Scribe and the ‘Reluctant’ Disciple (Matthew 8:18-22),” *New Testament Studies* 34 (1988): 45-59. Jesus’ practice of initiating discipleship is unique among Jewish rabbis; otherwise it was always the would-be disciple who approached the teacher. See Donald Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1993), 76-77.

⁶⁸ Note how Matthew consistently uses spatial language to point to the relational character of discipleship: “follow me” (4:20, 22; 8:19, 22; 9:9; 10:38; 16:24; 19:21, 27; 20:34; 27:55); “come to me” (2:2, 8, 9, 11, 23; 9:10; 15:28, 29; 16:24; 19:14, 21; 21:5); “with you/with me” (1:23; 18:20; 26:29, 38, 40; 28:20). See K. H. Rengstorff, “μαθητής,” *TDNT*, 4:444-52, who emphasizes this personal relationship of disciples to Jesus over against the way discipleship was typically construed in intertestamental and first-century Judaism, i.e., with a focus on the teachings of a school or

(especially toward the end of the first century AD) the interpretation of Oral Torah.

⁶⁹ In spite of the phrase, “make disciples of all nations,” he does not have in mind discipling whole nations or people-groups, but rather persons within these nations, as the masculine accusative plural ἀποστόλων (vs. the neuter accusative plural form of ἔθνη) later in v. 19 demonstrates. Thus Barth, “Exegetical Study,” 64; contra Warren Carter, “Matthew and the Gentiles: Individual Conversion or Systematic Transformation?,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 26 (2004): 259-82. Thus there is no anticipation of “Christendom” here.

⁷⁰ von Dobbeler, “Die Restitution Israels,” argues that the restrictive command of 10:5-6 and the demand of universal mission in 28:16-20 both remain in force in that the mission in chap. 10 pertains to Israel while the Great Commission pertains to Gentiles, and that both are to continue until the end. von Dobbeler insists that Matthew calls for a “restitution” of Israel, which involves Jews’ embracing obedience to their law as Jesus has brought it to fulfillment; this constitutes not conversion but an affirmation of the faith that has always been theirs. But, according to von Dobbeler, Matthew looks to the conversion of the Gentiles through a process of discipleship, since it involves for them a turning away from paganism to the faith of Israel as Jesus has fulfilled it. Thus, according to this view, Matthew envisages two separate missions. But this ingenuous solution fails to persuade, since disciples are to be made of Jews as well as Gentiles, and since both the restricted command of 10:5-6 and the universal commission of 28:18-20 are directed to the same group: the twelve [eleven] disciples. Either they are not to go to the ἔθνη (10:5-6) or they are to go and make disciples of the ἔθνη (28:19); these are mutually exclusive alternatives. A much better solution is that 10:5-6 reflects the limited scope of mission that was appropriate during Jesus’ earthly ministry, but was to be followed by a subsequent universal mission on the part of the now reconstituted Israel. See Anton Vögtle, “Das christologische und ekklesiologische Anliegen von Mt 28,18-20,” *Studia Evangelica* 2 (1964): 266-94; Strecker, *Der Weg*, 33, 117-18; Joachim Gnilka, *Das Matthäus-Evangelium*, 2 Teile, Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament (Freiburg: Herder, 1988), 1:362-63.

⁷¹ They also noted the emphasis upon the guilt of Israel in rejecting Jesus as Messiah (e.g., 27:20-26) and the consequent judgment upon Israel as set forth in 21:43 and 22:1-10. See Joachim Lange, *Das Erscheinen des Auferstandenen im Evangelium nach Matthäus*, Forschung zur Bibel, 11 (Würzburg: Echter, 1973), 177; Rolf Walker, *Die Heilsgeschichte im erstern Evangelium* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1967), 111-13; Joachim Gnilka, “Die Missionsauftrag des Herrn nach Matthäus 28 und Apostelgeschichte 1,” *Bibel und Leben* (1968): 1-9; and esp. Douglas R. A. Hare and Daniel J. Harrington, “(Make Disciples of all the Gentiles’ (Mt 28:19),” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 37 (1975): 359-69. See the rejoinder to Hare and Harrington by John P. Meier, “Nations or Gentiles in Matthew 28:19?,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 39 (1977): 94-102.

⁷² Trilling, *Das Wahre Israel*, 26-28.

⁷³ So also Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 719, who speaks of “peoples” over against our contemporary notion of “nation-states;” also John Piper, *Let the Nations be Glad: The Supremacy of God in Missions* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1993), 177-81. Contra Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology: An Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 107. The reference to a new ἔθνος in 21:43 points to the cultural distinctives of the community of faith, first Israel and now the Church. If so, the mission of the Church involves attention to the culture of evangelized peoples, and at the same time recognizes that certain cultural markers belong to the community of faith, in whatever indigenous culture that community takes shape.

⁷⁴ For this understanding of the role of the women in the genealogy, see David R. Bauer, “The Literary and Theological Function of the Genealogy in Matthew’s Gospel,” in *Treasures New and Old: Contributions to Matthean Studies*, ed. David R. Bauer and Mark Allan Powell, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Studies 1 (Atlanta: Scholars, 1996), 147; also John C. Hutchison, “Women, Gentiles, and the Messianic Mission in Matthew’s Genealogy,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 158 (2001): 152-64. For different views on the role of the women, see Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke*, rev. ed. (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 71-74; Marshall D. Johnson, *The Purpose of the Biblical Genealogies with special reference to the setting of the genealogies of Jesus*, 2d ed., Society of New Testament Studies Monograph Series 8 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); and Jason B. Hood, *The Messiah, his Brothers, and the Nations (Matthew 1:1-17)*, Library of New Testament Studies, 441 (New York: T. & T. Clark, 2011).

⁷⁵ David R. Bauer, “The Kingship of Jesus in the Matthean Infancy Narrative: A Literary Analysis,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 57 (1995): 319-23.

⁷⁶ Juel, “Mission Theology,” 234; Sarma, *Hermeneutics of Mission*, 145-202; Amy-Jill Levine, *The Social and Ethnic Dimensions of Matthean Salvation History*, Studies in the Bible and Early Christianity 14 (Lewiston: Mellen, 1988). Rollin G. Grams, “Narrative Dynamics in Isaiah’s and Matthew’s Mission Theology,” *Transformation* 21 (2004): 238-55, insists that Matthew derived this notion that Israel’s mission to the nations was always at the center of God’s plan especially from Isaiah. Grams fails to demonstrate that Matthew draws upon Isaiah’s vision in detail, but his study does support the possibility that Matthew drew his sense of Israel’s mission in the Old Testament through the lens of Isaiah. Michael Knowles, *Jeremiah in Matthew’s Gospel: The Rejected-Prophet Motif in Matthean Redaction*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplemental Series 68 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993), 320, has suggested that Matthew has obtained his perspective on Israel’s missional role through Jeremiah. That this motif is found throughout the Old Testament, or at least in many portions of the Old Testament, is strongly argued by Christopher J. H. Wright, *Salvation Belongs to Our God: Celebrating the Bible’s Central Story, Christian Doctrine in Global Perspective* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2008), 69-90.

⁷⁷ Note, e.g., the genealogy of Matt 1:1-17 and Matt 2:15. See R. T. France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Teacher* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1989), 206-10.

⁷⁸ As Barth, "Exegetical Study," 64, puts it: "It is the eschatological Israel, the Israel which receives into its life and history the chosen ones from among the Gentiles." This command to the disciples (reconstituted Israel) to make disciples, i.e., those from all nations who will become disciples like themselves, means that these who are made disciples also participate in the reconstituted Israel. In this sense, they become the "true Israel," as Trilling, *Das Wahre Israel*, puts it (though that expression appears for the first time in Justin Martyr, *Dialogues* 123; cf. *Dialogues* 135). Thus, believing Jews and Gentiles form one "nation" (21:43). In Pauline terms, they become one people out of two (Eph 2:11-22). The fact that Matthew has in mind one new nation probably explains his omission of the phrase "for all the nations" from the statement we find in Mark 11:17, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations" (cf. Matt 21:13; also Luke 19:46).

⁷⁹ The centrality of this reconstituted Israel in the salvation of the world explains the initial exclusive mission to Israel (10:5-6); for this redeemed remnant of Israel is, according to the divine economy as set forth in the Old Testament Scriptures, to be the agent of salvation to the nations. To paraphrase the message of Isaiah (esp. chaps. 40-55): "God will save you in order that you may thereby bring God's salvation to the nations." Thus, Hahn, *Mission in the New Testament*, 126-27: "What Matthew wants to assert in his own way is the priority of the mission to Israel and the permanent obligation towards it—for without Israel as the center there would indeed be no salvation. This mission, however, is only carried out rightly if at the same time the universal commission is observed by working among all nations." Cf. also Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, 105-106.

⁸⁰ Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics: An Exegetical Syntax of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 640-45. Wallace is especially insistent that when the participle precedes the imperative it is virtually always a participle of attendant circumstance; he references, in this connection, specifically Matt 28:19.

⁸¹ Verkuyl, *Contemporary Missiology*, 106-107; Sarma, *Hermeneutics of Mission*, 208-209. Wilson, *Healing in the Gospel of Matthew*, 195-225, 316-19, emphasizes the crossing of various kinds of boundaries in the ministry of Jesus.

⁸² Matthew maintains a distinction between "teaching" and "preaching" (cf. 4:23; 9:35).

⁸³ Contra Bruce J. Malina, "The Literary Structure and Form of Matt. XXVIII.16-20," 87-103, who insists that both participles are to be taken as imperatival, and thus the eleven are commanded to make disciples and then to baptize and teach.

⁸⁴ Note that the reference to baptism in Mark 10:38-39 (which may allude, in some measure, to Christian baptism) is absent in Matthew.

⁸⁵ Matthew draws connections between Jesus' baptism at the hands of John (3:13-17) and Christian baptism in 28:19, e.g., both passages involve the Father, Son, and Spirit. Yet we must consider the differences. John himself contrasts his baptizing work from that of the "coming one" who will baptize with "the Holy Spirit and fire" (3:11); and in early Christian tradition Christian baptism is the occasion of the baptism with the Holy Spirit (e.g., Acts 2:38; 9:17-19; 19:6; cf. 10:44-48 with 11:13-18). Consequently, those who have experienced John's baptism are required to undergo Christian baptism (Acts 19:1-7). We note, too, that Matthew excludes the connection of John's baptism with "the forgiveness of sins" that is found in Mark 1:4 and Luke 3:3, inserting that phrase instead into the account of the Last Supper (26:28).

⁸⁶ Matt 3:6; Mark 1:4; Acts 2:37-41; 8:12, 36; 10:37, 44-48; 13:24; 16:15.

⁸⁷ Matt 3:3; Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38.

⁸⁸ Matt 21:32; Acts 11:18; 16:31-32; 18:8.

⁸⁹ Mark 1:4; Luke 3:3; Acts 2:38; 22:16; Rom 6:1-12; Col 2:11-13; 1 Peter 3:21-22.

⁹⁰ Acts 2:38; 9:17-18; 10:47; 19:1-7.

⁹¹ Acts 2:37-42; 16:15, 34; 1 Cor 12:13; Gal 3:27-29.

⁹² Michel, "The Conclusion of Matthew's Gospel," 38.

⁹³ Rom 5:1-6:14; Gal 3:23-20; cf. 1 Cor 15:21-22, 42-50.

⁹⁴ Hans Bietenhard, "ὄνομα," *TDNT*, 5:243-83; and most recently, Carmen Joy Imes, *Bearing YHWH's Name at Sinai: A Re-examination of the Name Command of the Decalogue*, *Bulletin for Biblical Research Supplements* 19 (University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns, 2018).

⁹⁵ This follows from the Matthean Jesus' own practice of discipling the twelve through constant, ongoing teaching. Contra Everett Ferguson, *Baptism in the Early Church: History, Theology, and Liturgy in the First Five Centuries* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2009), 137, who argues that the absence of a connective (καί or δέ) between the participles indicates that the teaching takes place at the time of baptizing (a "taught" baptism). But this claim places far too much weight on the absence of the connective and fails adequately to account for the sequence of the participles, since, practically speaking, this would involve a process of teaching prior to baptism. The absence of καί here is best explained by a desire to join together βαπτίζοντες and διδάσκοντες so as to set the statement off over against v. 20b, which begins with καί. The construal I am advocating was shared by at least some in the early Church, as indicated by the witness (involving, apparently, a scribal emendation) of the early manuscripts B and D, which have the aorist participle βαπτισθέντες, suggesting that baptism takes place prior to teaching. G. R. Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1962), 89, insists that the absence of the article

between the participles means that they depend “in different ways upon the main verb;” he concludes that “make disciples,” which involves primarily preaching, comes to completion in baptism, which is then followed by teaching. But his reducing discipling to preaching is without foundation and actually contradicts the role of preaching and teaching throughout Matthew’s Gospel.

⁹⁶ Though cf. Acts 2:41-42.

⁹⁷ *Did 7:7-14*. For the relation between the *Didache* and Matthew’s Gospel, see J. M. Court, “The *Didache* and Matthew’s Gospel,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 34 (1981): 97-107; Huub van de Sandt and Jürgen Zangenberg, *Matthew, James, and the Didache: Three Related Documents in their Jewish and Christian Settings*, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Studies 45 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 2008). For the general practice in the early Church of pre-baptismal instruction, see Lawrence D. Folkemer, “A Study of the Catechumenate,” in *Conversion, Catechumenate, and Baptism in the Early Church*, ed. Everett Ferguson, Studies in Early Christianity, XI (New York, NY: Garland, 1993), 244-307; also A. Turck, “Aux Origines du Catéchuménat,” in *Conversion, Catechumenate, and Baptism*, 22-27. In the earliest stages, the emphasis in the catechumenate teaching was upon Christian practice more than doctrine, as is reflected also here in Matt 28:19. Matthew’s sequencing here does not exclude pre-baptismal catechesis; in fact, the various ramifications of baptism that I described above assume some significant knowledge about the faith on the part of the ones baptized.

⁹⁸ Powell, *God With Us*, 6-7. The notion of salvation from sin as a principle is reflected in the Gospel of John; note, e.g., John 1:29, with its employment of the singular.

⁹⁹ This salvation certainly involves forgiveness of sins (26:28; cf. 6:12-15; 18:21-35), but the emphasis is upon a life of active righteousness (e.g., 5:17-20; 7:13-27; 12:46-50; 13:41-43; 15:10-20; 21:28-32). In terms of systematic theology, it involves both imputed and imparted righteousness. The notion of “salvation” was typically deemed in Jewish messianic expectations to refer to deliverance from political or military enemies (e.g., Davies and Allison, *The Gospel according to Saint Matthew*, 1:210; Robert H. Gundry, *Matthew: A Commentary on His Handbook for a Mixed Church under Persecution*, (2nd ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1994), 23-24, as in *Psalms of Solomon* 17-18. But here the focus is not political, but relational, i.e., personal reconciliation to God through which both forgiveness and righteous obedience are made possible. Note that repeatedly Matthew presents discipleship in terms of the relational category of sonship (5:9, 45; 7:9; 9:15; 13:38; 17:25-26; cf. 12:46-50). Wright, *Salvation Belongs to Our God*, 72-79, insists that blessings associated with salvation were relational from the very beginning of the biblical meganarrative.

Matthew can use salvation language (σώζω) in reference to healing (e.g., 9:21-22). Matt 9:1-9 indicates that one function of Jesus’ healings is to point to his authority to forgive sins. Thus, salvation is broad in that it entails also physical healing; but it has its center in deliverance from sin, i.e., relational wholeness with God. For a detailed discussion

of the connection between forgiveness of sins and physical healings in Jesus' ministry according to Matthew, see Wilson, *Healing in the Gospel of Matthew*, 139-59.

¹⁰⁰ 3:7-10; 7:15-23; 12:33-37; cf. 21:33-43.

¹⁰¹ For the role of faith in the Christian life according to Matthew's Gospel, see Gerhard Barth, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law," in *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, 112-16.

¹⁰² This would include, of course, obedience to the Old Testament law, as Jesus has brought it to fulfillment (5:17-20). Scholars disagree among themselves regarding whether Matthew regards this teaching as including insistence on circumcision. In my judgment, evidence is lacking for any definitive answer to this question. Thus, von Dobbeler, "Die Restitution Israels," 38-39; Ulrich Luz, *Matthew 1-7: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg, 1989), 86. But the centrality of the love command (22:34-40; cf. 7:12), which leads to significant reconstrual of certain commands (5:21-48), and the general lack of attention to matters such as circumcision or dietary regulations suggests that, in the theological structure of the Gospel, such demands may not necessarily be pressed; Thus, France, *Matthew: Evangelist and Theologian*, 234-35; contra David C. Sim, *The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism: The History and Social Setting of the Matthean Community*, Studies of the New Testament and its World (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1998), 251-55.

¹⁰³ Disciples of Jewish teachers (*rabbis*) generally undertook their instruction in order to become teachers, or rabbis, themselves, eventually with their own disciples, at least in the period of the Tannaim. According to the Matthean Jesus, this is not to be the case with his disciples (23:8). See Wilkins, *Discipleship in the Gospel of Matthew*, 116-25; Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew*, 718; Rengstorf, "μαθητής," 437-40, 447-49.

¹⁰⁴ This point is properly emphasized by Pierre Bonnard, *L'Évangile selon Saint Matthieu*. Commentaire du Nouveau Testament, 10e Serie (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1982), 416, 419.

¹⁰⁵ See Friedrich Büchsel, "δέω," *TDNT* 2:60-61; Hermann L. Strack and Paul Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch*, 6 Bände. (München: Beck, 1922-94), 1:732-38; Günther Bornkamm, "The Authority to 'Bind' and 'Loose' in the Church in Matthew's Gospel: The Problem of Sources in Matthew's Gospel," in *The Interpretation of Matthew*, 85-97.

¹⁰⁶ Matt 16:19 is directed to Peter, but as he represents the entire disciple circle, which in turn is representative of the Church (cf. 18:18). For the notion that Peter (often) represents the entire disciple-circle in Matthew, see Jack Dean Kingsbury, "The Figure of Peter in Matthew's Gospel as a Theological Problem," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 98 (1979): 69-83.

¹⁰⁷ David R. Bauer, *The Structure of Matthew's Gospel: A Study in Literary Design*, Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplemental

Series, 31; Bible and Literature Series, 15 (Sheffield: Almond, 1988), 132-34. Cf. Bosch, *Transforming Mission*, 70-71, who sees the substance of the teaching here in 28:20a as referring especially to the Sermon on the Mount. I grant that the Sermon on the Mount sets forth the principles of the Kingdom and is foundational for the subsequent four great discourses; yet all five of these discourses contain vital instruction necessary for all the members of the post-Easter community.

¹⁰⁸ Hubert Frankemölle, "Zur Theologie der Mission im Matthäusevangelium," in *Mission im Neuen Testament*, ed. Karl Kertelge (Freiburg: Herder & Herder, 1987), 127-28.

¹⁰⁹ Chrysostom, "The Gospel of Matthew, Homily 15.1," quoted in *Matthew 1-13*, ed. Manlio Simonetti, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament 1a (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2001), 78-79.

¹¹⁰ 26:13; cf. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14. See Jack Dean Kingsbury, *Matthew*, 3d. ed. (Napanee, IN: Evangel, 1998), 28-29.

¹¹¹ Contra Eckhard J. Schabel, *Early Christian Mission*, 2 vols. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Academic, 2004), 2:1495, who inaccurately reduces teaching here to explicit commands.

¹¹² The passive voice (divine passive) suggests that the righteous life-style set forth in the Sermon, which is to be a witness to the world is effected by God.

¹¹³ The framing of the Sermon on the Mount also points to the missionally witnessing character of the right ordering of life within the community. Matthew frames the Sermon with references to the crowds (who are those on the outside) in part to suggest that the life of discipleship as set forth in the Sermon must be conducted in the context of, and to some extent for the sake of, those who are on the outside. This is a point Matthew makes within the Sermon itself at not only 5:13-16, but also at 5:43-48.

¹¹⁴ See Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 138-56.

¹¹⁵ Hubert Frankemölle, *Jahwebund und Kirche Christi: Studien zur Form- und Traditionsgeschichte des "Evangeliums" nach Matthäus*, Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen, neue Folge 10 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1974), 30-32, has shown that in the LXX ἐν μέσῳ ("in the midst") is equivalent to μετὰ ("with").

¹¹⁶ Matthew emphasizes that Jesus was physically present with his disciples throughout his ministry; but Jesus' promise to be with them here in 28:20b, following as it does his new self-affirmation (28:18) and commissioning (28:19-20a), involves a new kind of presence, one that has both continuity and discontinuity with his physical presence among his disciples. Some negatives attend this new (spiritual presence), insofar as it entails mourning over a kind of separation vis-à-vis Jesus' physical presence during his earthly life (9: 14-17). But overall this is a transcendent presence, anticipated even during Jesus' earthly ministry; for on those (rare) occasions

when Jesus was physically absent from them he expected the disciples to minister according to his transcendent power (e.g., 17:14-20), though they failed to operate according to the authority that was theirs (cf. 10:1, 8). Indeed, throughout the Gospel, whenever Jesus is away from the disciples they fail to perform in anything like an adequate fashion. In addition to 17:14-20, see 8:23-27 (where, as asleep, Jesus is practically absent); 14:22-27; 26:69-75. See Kupp, *Matthew's Emmanuel*, 66-108.



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