

be needed or wanted. Woe to him who no longer feels his need for Jesus!

Matthew's report of this contrast (9:33, 34) throws into crisis OUR conscience. As we serve Him our wills remain free, since even His message carried no conviction to the prejudiced mind. With Morgan (*Matthew*, 98) let us zealously inquire with what attitude we listen and study Jesus' word, for it is very possible for prejudice and pride to blind us to the meaning of our King.

FACT QUESTIONS

1. In what general area did these two blind men live? Connect this section with what immediately precedes, showing where they probably lived.
2. What did the blind men call Jesus? Why use this term?
3. Describe Jesus' method in dealing with these two blind men.
4. What had made the man, who appears in the second part of the text, dumb?
5. State what the Bible actually reveals about demon-possession.
6. What was the reaction of the crowds when Jesus evicted the demon? What were their actual words?
7. What explanation did the religious leaders give for Jesus' power to cast demons out?
8. Although Jesus later gave full, detailed rebuttal of this charge made by the Pharisees, how did Jesus respond to the slander at the time?
9. What kind of opposition had the Pharisees brought Jesus during His ministry up to this time?
10. What is proved about Jesus by the fact that He can heal the sick and cast out demons?
11. State at least two good reasons why Jesus required the blind men to be silent about their healing.

Section 22

JESUS EVANGELIZES GALILEE AND SHARES HIS VISION WITH HIS DISCIPLES

(Parallel; Mark 6:6b)

TEXT: 9:35-38

35. And Jesus went about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of disease and all manner of sickness.
36. And when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd.
37. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few.
38. Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Have you ever been frustrated in your Christian work by the fact that there is too much to be done but too few workers? What did you do about it?
- b. Is there any advice that can be drawn from this text, by way of application, that would clarify the mission of the Church today? If so, what advice do you see there?
- c. In what way are the people in Galilee—yes, even the people of our world—like so many "sheep without a Shepherd"?
- d. How long do you think we ought to continue to pray for more workers?
- e. Do you believe that Jesus' command to pray for more workers, originally required of the Apostles, should be obeyed by His followers today? If so, on what basis? If not, why not?
- f. What do you see as the strategy behind Jesus' actions revealed in this text? Or, how does Jesus reveal Himself in this Scripture as the Master Strategist? What is that strategy?
- g. If you conclude that we should pray this prayer that Jesus required of his followers during His earthly ministry, then how far should we go in helping God to answer our prayers by preparing workers ourselves?
- h. If we pray for workers to be sent out to work for God, what is apt to happen? Can you conscientiously pray a prayer in the realization of which you are unwilling to participate?

PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

Jesus traveled about Galilee, stopping in all the cities and villages. There He taught in their synagogues and announced the good news about God's Kingdom. He also healed people who had all kinds of

illnesses. The sight of the crowds who came to Him filled Him with compassion for them. They reminded Him of sheep without a shepherd.

Then He challenged His disciples, "This harvest is plentiful enough; the problem is that the laborers are scarce. So, you must pray to the Lord, whose harvest it is, asking Him to send out more workers into His fields to work!

SUMMARY

Jesus toured Galilee making stops to teach in all the cities and villages. He healed all kinds of sick folk. He was motivated by His compassion to help them, because they were lost sheep—everyone of them. Then He engaged His Apostles in a prayer offensive to tackle the problem of too much work to be done by too few workers.

NOTES

I. A REVIEW OF THE REMARKABLE, RAPID REACHING OF THAT REGION (9:35)

9:35 And Jesus went about all the cities and the villages. Is this a third missionary tour of Galilee, as many harmonists suppose, or is this Matthew's rhetorical device for recalling to the mind of the reader the principle point he has been making since 4:23? In the intervening chapters he has given magnificent illustrations of what he meant exactly by preaching, i.e. the Sermon on the mount (chaps. 5-7) and representative miracles (chaps. 8 and 9). He has now finished these examples, so summarizes this Galilean ministry again in the same terms.

The only verbal differences in Greek between Mt. 4:23 and 9:35 are two:

1. *tàs póleis pásas kai tàs kómas for en hólē tē Galiláia*
2. The addition of *en tō laō* in 4:23, which even some late MSS have also in 9:35. Otherwise these two passages are verbally identical in every respect, even to the significant use of the imperfect tense in the principle verb *periēgen*, "he was in the process of going around," and the present participles for all other verbs dependent upon the principal verb. The usual chronological representations of Jesus' various evangelistic tours divide them thus: the first, Mt. 4:23-25; Mk. 1:35-39; Lk. 4:42-44; the second, Lk. 8:1-3; the third, this one here, Mt. 9:35; Mk. 6:6b. However, in every case but one (Mk. 1:39 about which there is even some doubt in the MSS) the authors

all use the imperfect tense, a phenomenon which suggests that they merely intend to picture Jesus as constantly on the move and that His one, continuous tour of Galilee was either illustrated or else interspersed by the particular incidents narrated throughout this general period. This continuity, then, is to be interpreted as "the Great Galilean Campaign" divided up into successive journeys by returns to Capernaum or by trips to Jerusalem for the feast. This sense of continuity is probably what induces Matthew to use almost verbally identical expressions to describe what should probably be thought of as two separate journeys. Thus, this is both a third tour of Galilee as well as his rhetorical device for signalling a change, from the material that he has just concluded, to a new development in Jesus' ministry: the preparation and commission of the Twelve to labor in evangelism.

All the cities and the villages, i.e. of Galilee. Not only is this a picture of Jesus' personal evangelistic labors, but also as Morgan (*Matthew*, 100) paints it, "this picture of God is that of a Man Who went . . . and looked at the people; and what He saw made His whole inner physical life . . . move and burn." He did not merely demand that people come to Him during certain office hours; He went to them. **Teaching in their synagogues**, because there would be a ready-made audience available to Him. (Cf. Illustrations in Lk. 4:16-37 and notes on 4:23.) **Preaching the gospel of the Kingdom** speaks of the content of His proclamation: "God is still on the throne, but His Kingdom to come is different than you suspect!" It is not reasonable to suppose that Jesus even once announced Himself as Heaven's King or heralded the beginning of God's Messianic Reign, due to the complete misunderstanding people had of these grand truths. What is more likely is the supposition that Jesus hammered away at the true character—spiritual, not national,—of God's Kingdom. To those who awaited the redemption of Israel on spiritual terms (cf. Lk. 2:25, 38; 23:51), Jesus' announcement of the Kingdom's soon arrival would be "gospel" in its best sense, good news. To those who hoped only for the restoration of materialistic national glory, Jesus' message, however exciting at first, could not but prove disappointing as people began to understand that He had no plans that harmonized with their selfish dreams. **Healing all kinds of disease and sickness** summarizes the evidences He offered of His divine identity and consequent authority. His miracles were evidence that God's kingdom had arrived in this respect also, since the presence of sickness and disease is

contrary to normality. Jesus' control over these abnormalities, then, proclaimed God's control in the natural world at any moment He cared to exercise that dominion.

This intensive activity is Jesus' counterattack mounted against all the opposition to His claims drawn in sharp relief by Matthew in chapter nine. Rather than be cowed by the opposition, Jesus plunged into more vigorous evangelistic activity. He had been accused of blasphemy (9:2-8), of hob-nobbing with the scum of society (9:13), of not being holy enough (9:14-17), of folly (9:24), of being less than a real Master (9:31) and of being in league with Satan (9:34). He had answered all of the accusations brilliantly and with power. But He knows that the slight opposition He had then faced must necessarily grow. He knew also that He must gain as much time as possible, bringing as many people as possible to firm confidence in Him, before that inevitable showdown with the religious leaders which must conclude with the cross. This intensive one-man ministry resulted in great crowds deeply aroused: the attention of all northern Israel, at least, is focused upon Jesus of Nazareth. He has succeeded in getting a hearing.

II. THE RATIONALE OF A RESTLESS REDEEMER WHO REALISTICALLY RECOGNIZES THE REASON FOR THIS RECEPTION (9:36)

9:36 **But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion for them, because they were distressed and scattered, as sheep not having a shepherd.** The people crowding around Jesus are the natural result of His evangelistic work which promoted wide-spread popular interest in His ministry. What Matthew repeats here, he has already noticed earlier, i.e. the growing evidence of success Jesus is enjoying in His effort to call national attention to Himself and His message. (Cf. 4:25; 8:18) But getting a hearing only is never sufficient, as important as that may be. One must get His message across convincingly to those ready to hear. And Jesus knows that these multitudes probably have not the slightest idea what He is trying so desperately to say to them. He knows that their prejudices, their ignorance, their background and training, their mistaken longings and selfish desires will shut out much of His message. Thus the Lord faces the greater necessity now of multiplying the efficiency of His means of communication, in order by all means to communicate His message more often and in more different ways. This would result in the dissemination of His information about the kingdom in

ways that would succeed in getting past some of the closed doors of prejudice and ignorance of people too far away to be helped personally. This necessity to render His ministry more efficient is required not only because of the multiplying numbers of people with whom He must talk, but more especially due to their condition.

But when we talk of Jesus' increasing the efficiency of His ministry, we imply that there was something lacking, inadequate or inefficient about it. But this very presence of the crowds raises a problem of tactics for the Lord, since He had already chosen, by virtue of the incarnation, to be just one Man in one place at a time. Though He was the great God, yet when He humbled Himself to be born as a little Jewish baby in Bethlehem, He whom the heaven of heavens could not contain, was deliberately limiting Himself to be just one Man in one place. But the obvious application of a principle of natural physics, He could not be in two places at the same time, much less in seven cities simultaneously evangelizing each one. But, by simply multiplying Himself, through the sharing of His vision, His authority and His message with His Apostles, He could accomplish seven times the work He was then accomplishing. (See on 10:1; 11:1 and compare Mk. 6:7).

But who were these **multitudes**? They consisted not only of the lonely, distressed, sick, poor common people for whom any generous soul could have a place in his heart. Also in that crowd were suspicious Herodians, hypocritical Pharisees, wealthy Sadducees, monkish Essenes, greedy, grasping publicans, perhaps spies of Herod and informers for Pilate, prostitutes and other sinners—sinners for whom the average person would probably have a trace of contempt, for whom **NONE** would willingly give his life on a cross! (Cf. Ro. 5:6-11) Here we feel the striking difference between Jesus of Nazareth and any other man or angel: He feels deeply, even though He sees clearly, the weakness and failure and consequent need of every man. He understands that all that is unlovely, despicable or revolting in any person, is but a good reason for His helping that man. It is comparatively easy for any normal humanitarian to feel compassion for certain classes of sufferers, like mothers or children, the poor or the homeless. But to be moved to action with compassion for heterogeneous humanity with its vast mixture of loves and hates, its diversified backgrounds, its wealth and poverty, its conflicting sentiments, its tensions, its joys, its opposite ideas about God and truth, is to be a Jesus. But is it not to become a Jesus that He came to call us? (Cf. Ro. 8:29; Phil. 2:1-5) **He saw the multitudes** for what they really were and **YET** He

felt a strong desire to relieve them from all that they suffered. A superficial observer, looking at the crowds, would never have seen what Jesus saw. One might have seen those people as irresponsible sheep who have gotten themselves lost and deserve whatever fate awaited them or perhaps just a frustrating lot of tiring field work, but not so Jesus. The difference? He had a Shepherd's heart: the harvest was His.

He was moved with compassion, as Barclay (*Matthew*, I, 363f) puts it, by our pain and sickness (Mt. 14:14), our blindness (Mt. 20:34), by our sorrow (Lk. 7:13), by our hunger (Mt. 15:32), by our loneliness (Mk. 1:41), by our bewilderment (here, also Mk. 6:34). **Compassion** means mercy, since, in strict justice, "there is no reason in man that God should save; the need is born of His own compassion. No man has any claim upon God. Why, then, should men be cared for? Why should they not become the prey of the ravening wolf, having wandered from the fold?" (Morgan, *Matthew*, 99)

Because they were distressed (*eskylmēnoi*; Arndt-Gingrich, 765: "wearied, harassed, troubled, bothered, annoyed;" cf. Lk. 7:6; 8:49; Mk. 5:35) **and scattered** (*erimmēnoi* from *rhiptō*. Arndt-Gingrich, 744: "1. *throw* in a manner suited to each special situation . . . 2. With no connotation of violence: *put* or *lay down*, lying down, lying on the ground or floor . . . of the crowds of people, Mt. 9:36, of animals lying on the ground.") **Scattered** sums up graphically the picture of shepherdless sheep lying here and there, having been thrown about by many diverse forces. This is their condition that moved the compassion of Jesus: their very weakness, their unworthiness, their unreadiness to meet God. What Matthew fairly shouts to any Jewish heart (and to any Gentile who has looked into the Jewish Bible!) is this: "Jesus has the heart of the great, long-awaited David, the great Shepherd!" (Cf. Isa. 40:10, 11; Jer. 23:3-8; 31:10; Ezek. 34:11-31; 37:24) **Harassed and helpless** is the picture of people perplexed, oppressed and troubled by the impossible obligations of current Judaism, confused by the contradictory claims of the various theological debating societies that left them groaning under the weight of restraints and duties of "religion." These are people who hold confused ideas about the Kingdom of God, the King and their duty. They have vague longings, aroused by the prophets, John the Baptist and now by Jesus Himself, yet they are ignorant about how or where they can satisfy this yearning. Even this self-inflicted anguish, for which Israel was personally responsible, excited Jesus' pity. Were the paradoxical words

of Isaiah (53:6) in Jesus' mind as He looked at these lost human beings?

All we like sheep have gone astray;
we have turned every one to his own way.

Each one thinks his case is peculiar; all however are getting lost in droves!

As sheep not having a shepherd. But had they no shepherds? Rather, had they not HUNDREDS of them? Historically, yes, and good ones too! Moses, the prophets and many righteous men had ministered to Israel, given their witness and challenged them to leave their sins. (Nu. 27:17; Ps. 77:20; Isa. 63:11) But just as recently as the later prophets, Israel had been willingly misguided, deceived and betrayed by men who served their own interest. (Jer. 23:1-40; 50:6ff.; Ezek. 34:1-10; Zech. 10:2, 3) Then when the true prophetic voice was finally silenced by the rejection and murder of the last of God's servants, Israel was left to her fate under the shepherding of thieves, robbers and hirelings. (Cf. Jn. 10:1, 8-13) Barclay (*Matthew*, I, 364ff.) summarizes this tragedy,

They were shepherds that had nothing to offer the common people longing for truth. The Scribes and Pharisees, the Sadducees and priests, who should have been giving men strength to live, were bewildering men with subtle arguments about the Law, which had no help and comfort in them. These orthodox teachers had neither guidance, comfort nor strength to give. When they should have been helping men to stand upright, they were bowing them down under the intolerable burden of the Scribal Law.

This deeply felt compassion of Jesus is born of His great vision: tired lost sheep; the waiting harvest. But He is not lost in visions and dreaming. These tensions must be resolved: there must be shepherds! He must call reapers! But these two colossal visions are not exactly parallel but two halves of the same truth. If there is any certain emphasis to each, it is this: the vision of the sheep without a Shepherd is the image of man's need met by God, while the vision of the waiting harvest require that God's need for reapers be met by men.

Another interesting thought suggested by Lewis and Booth (*PHC*, XXII, 239), that is impossible to check out, is that in these two figures, Jesus intended to describe the two-fold work

of the Church. In the sheep to be shepherded are seen those disciples just won who need so much help to grow. The waiting harvest, according to this view, signifies those souls whose interest in Jesus was greatly aroused and who could be won, were there but evangelists to reach them in time. The waiting harvest required reapers rather than shepherds, "the men of the sickle, rather than those of the crook." So saying, the two-fold outreach of the Church is pictured rising in the heart of Jesus. This view, while interesting, is impossible to establish, since it cannot be proved that Jesus had such a neat distinction in view between those described as sheep and those meant by the harvest, for He may well have considered them but parallel images of the same idea seen from two angles.

III. THE REQUIREMENT TO REQUEST AND RECRUIT REAPERS (9:37, 38)

9:37 **Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few.** Even though these men have been with Jesus as personal companions for considerable time now, still Jesus does not presume to command them to take up this task upon which the success of His whole mission to earth depends. In His wisdom He involves first their conscience in a moral decision that something must be done about this great need. They must be as motivated as Him. They too must see what He sees, feel what He feels, if they are to share His ministry. To evangelize mechanically, without the spirit and motivation of Jesus, is worse than hypocrisy: it is impossible! In light of the commission He will give the Twelve in the next chapter, note how He first engages their deep concern over these souls, their concern about the paucity of workers in distressing contrast to the magnitude of the task. He then involves them in beseeching God for more workers. Before long, almost before they will have been able to analyze the excellent psychology of His approach, they will actually find themselves spontaneously sharing His vision and His anxiety, and enthusiastically arming themselves to reach out in mercy to help meet the needs of these multitudes.

The harvest, thinks Lenski (*Matthew*, 384) cannot be the multitudes Jesus saw coming to Him, since "some of these people would not be gathered into the heavenly garner." But he sees only half of the harvest work! (Mt. 3:12) The announcement of those

principles upon which the final judgment and separation will be made, is also evangelism. No, **the harvest**, for Jesus, means that the prime moment to begin the work of proclaiming God's kingdom has arrived (cf. Jn. 4:35), and that this work involves telling people in no uncertain terms what God's judgment means. By reaping those who accept the message, the reapers leave to God the disposal of those who judge themselves chaff. But we must not push this figure too far, since human beings are different from chaff, because they must be regarded as a harvest to be reaped, until God calls a halt to this age. (cf. Mt. 13:39-43)

The harvest . . . laborers. Jesus is about to select, challenge and send forth His own personal emissaries. But they must understand their work and share His spirit, as well as express His power and authority. He begins at once to describe the kind of helpers He must have: **laborers**, not princes arrayed in soft robes living in kings' houses, not men with soft hands unaccustomed to the toil of harvest-hands laboring out in the harvest fields.

9:38 Pray ye therefore. Not only must these men share Jesus' vision; they must share also His prayers. Instead of merely lamenting the deplorable condition of Israel as scattered, harassed sheep or as a harvest too great for the number of available workers, Jesus' first response is to engage God-fearing men in **PRAYER**. How often have we encouraged some fainting heart, in anguish under some crushing problem, to pray for God's solution, when, at the same time, we continued wringing our hands about the frustrating enormity of the task of reaching the world without seeing our Lord's wisdom in this text! Jesus was not satisfied simply to load His disciples' minds with the burden of lost souls. He opens up to them also the secret of relief and reinforcements: "Pray for more helpers to face this gigantic task!" How long and how often had the Master Himself been uttering this same cry in His own lonely night vigils? (cf. Lk. 6:12) How fervently had He hoped that these very Twelve would respond positively to His teaching, His shared views, His companionship? These very men were the laborers for the harvest that the Father had given Him and for them He gave thanks and expended every effort to encourage them to be all that an excellent reaper must be. (Jn. 17:6-26; cf. 17:6 with 6:70 and 15:16) He also prayed that the laborers God raised up might not be lost to His service. (cf. Lk. 22:31, 32)

Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest. We may well ask our-

selves, if this harvest belongs to the Lord, how would our puny prayers help Him?

1. Lewis and Booth (*PHC*, XXII, 240) answer well:

Why go to prayer first? Because it takes us at once to the right quarters. Who so certain to know about the harvest and all its needs as the Lord of the harvest? Who so likely to be interested in them? Who so able to help? Who so able, especially in this case where the need of help is extreme; where labourers have to be even "thrust forth" (ver. 38) to this work? Who so able to do this as He who sent Saul of Tarsus into His harvest?

2. "It is not only worse than idle to begin anywhere else, but self-sufficient and presumptuous and distrustful also in an equal degree." (*ibid.*)
3. Our praying this way unites our concern and will with God's, making us useful as laborers whenever it please Him to use us. Since the harvest is all around us, in all of our social contacts, we need merely to be transformed into laborers. Can any man honestly pray this prayer without involving himself emotionally in the very activity which has become the burden of his concern? Can anyone pray that God send laborers and not send those whom God makes willing to go?
4. Such praying would keep us and our hindering prejudices out of God's way! While praying like this, can any man at the same time stand around arguing whether the need is great, or whether the souls are lost or not, or whether the people of God should involve themselves in such work, etc?

The Master knew what He was doing when He commanded His men to pray like this! The glorious wonder of this prayer is that Jesus definitely ordered His Apostles to beseech God to provide workers. God obviously cares enough about their prayers to answer them in accomplishing that work which He had already spent thousands of years of patient, careful preparation to do! The great, supreme challenge facing Christianity is that the entire world is to be reached. But the greater surprise of Jesus' message is that God actually needs men to reach that world. He has chosen "truth in the flesh," the living gospel vividly expressed in human personality, to save men. God has deliberately decided that the harvest will not be reaped unless there are human laborers to harvest it. Whether we understand His choice

or not, there is no doubting either the fact that He has so decided or the need to pray for the needed laborers.

IV. RAMIFICATIONS AND REFLECTIONS

Barclay is right to teach (*Matthew*, I, 366) that

It is the dream of Christ that every man should be a missionary and a reaper. There are those who cannot do other than pray, for life has laid them helpless, and their prayers are indeed the strength of the laborers. But that is not the way for most of us, for those of us who have strength of body and health of mind. Not even the giving of our money is enough. If the harvest of men is ever to be reaped, then every one of us must be a reaper, for there is someone whom each of us could—and must—bring to God.

But what hinders our efforts and strangles our effectiveness? Is it that we do not share Jesus' vision of the task? When we look at the mobs of people crowding their way through life, with little or no passing thought for their comrades on the journey, what do we think? When we are frustrated by the thoughtlessness of selfish individuals, whose unwillingness to help, irks us to the limit, what do we see? Do we see these people as hindrances which we must destroy, since they obstruct our hurried pace? Or do we see them through the eyes of the Lord: lost souls, whose very sins bar our path and frustrate our progress and mar our happiness, yet cry for our help?

Let me look at the scattered crowds

Till my eyes with tears grow dim—

Let me look at the crowds as my Savior did

And love them for love of Him!

—Author unknown

How long should we pray this prayer for reapers? Only so long as there remain sheep without the Shepherd—only so long as there is more harvest than laborers to gather it. Even as those candidates for Apostleship joined their voices in prayer, let us add our voices: "Lord of harvest, send forth reapers! Hear us, Lord, to Thee we cry; Send them now the sheaves to gather, Ere the harvest time pass by."

—J. O. Thompson

FACT QUESTIONS

1. Show the connections between this section and the one which immediately follows in chapter ten.

2. Describe the general situation in Galilee that renders this picture presented by Matthew not only plausible but to be expected.
3. What is the larger role in Matthew's apparent outline that this section plays? Remember that Matthew seems to be following a topical, rather than a strictly chronological, outline.
4. Explain the figure of "sheep without a shepherd." Tell it in literal language.
5. Explain the figure of "the harvest." Tell it in literal language.
6. Describe the motivation that moved Jesus to share His vision with His disciples.
7. How should this vision of Jesus and challenge to His followers be interpreted in the life of the Church today?
8. Whom does Jesus hold responsible for sending workers into the world to labor for God? Whom does Jesus hold responsible for requesting more help? What did Jesus do to answer the prayers of His disciples, i.e. what did Jesus do to make more workers possible? (See Mt. 10)

DO YOU HAVE THE WORD IN YOUR HEART?

Matthew 8, 9

Where are these passages found? Who said it? On what occasion? To whom was it said? Why? What does it mean? Are there parallel passages? variant manuscript readings? important other translations of the verse? Are there problems of interpreting it? How shall we apply it to our lives?

1. "See thou tell no man; but go, show thyself to the priests . . ."
2. "I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel."
3. "Himself took our infirmities, and bare our diseases."
4. "But the sons of the kingdom shall be cast forth into the outer darkness: . . ."
5. ". . . leave the dead to bury their own dead."
6. ". . . thy faith hath made thee whole . . ."
7. ". . . for I came not to call the righteous, but sinners."
8. "No man putteth a piece of undressed cloth upon an old garment; for that which should fill it up taketh from the garment, and a worse rent is made."
9. "Go ye and learn what this meaneth, I desire mercy, and not sacrifice."
10. "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath authority on earth to forgive sins . . ."

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

11. "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick."
12. "Have mercy on us, thou son of David."
13. "And Jesus went about . . . preaching the gospel of the kingdom . . ."

SPECIAL STUDY: MIRACLES

The fundamental conflict in which Christianity is engaged today, in the intellectual sphere, is between *Naturalism* and *Supernaturalism*. Beneath all the attacks of scientists and philosophers, scholars and theologians upon Christianity lies an undercurrent of naturalism, more or less concealed, according as the opponent of supernaturalism is within the ranks of professing Christians or not.¹

Miracles, as phenomena in historic Christianity, have posed no small problem to every age of the church's existence. Any search into the early years of the Christian religion will reveal the intense, tenacious conviction that the supernatural intervention into human history which we call "miracle" really occurred. The word itself might be defined:

A miracle is an event occurring in the natural world, observed by the senses, produced by divine power, without and adequate human or natural cause, the purpose of which is to reveal the will of God and do good to man.²

The question of miracle revolves around one central historic figure: Jesus Christ. Did Jesus really work miracles? This is a far greater question than just a decision as to whether Jesus worked miracles or not. It is more than simply deciding whether He fed the 5000, healed the blind, cast out demons, and raised people from the dead. It is deciding whether there be a Christ at all. There is no Christ but the Christ of miracle! It is deciding whether there is a God or not. He is morally perverse or intellectually blind who concludes that a religion can be ethically true and historically false. An ethic predicated upon a lie, by the very nature of its case, warns the world against its own truth.

Further, there is no Christ but a supernatural Christ, if any credence be allowed the claims of those writers who furnish the only

MIRACLES

reliable history of His life. There is no supernatural Christ if there is no resurrected Christ. Truly,

"if the resurrection of Jesus was not a reality, all the other miracles would be valueless even if real, and all effort to establish their reality would be abandoned."⁸

Miracles have a way of smashing our neatly-arranged systems of thought. The miraculous commands our attention and threatens to undo our uniformities not only in nature but in religion. If there is no miracle, no trumpet-call from beyond the natural or the earthly, we can settle down into our comfortable self-pleasure and drink long draughts from the cool glass of self-satisfaction, rousing only to change the record on our philosophic stereo to the soothing, mellow voice suggesting, "Enjoy yourself while you're still in the pink." Suddenly, into our picture of peaceful self-complacency storms a miracle, a fact—stubborn and real—that can not be dismissed. The out-of-the-ordinary has just startled our ordinary and we must react. It is this very feature of the miraculous that leads us to see

THE NATURE OF MIRACLES

Just what occurred back there in that age of "unenlightenment"? Indubitable is the fact that Jesus of Nazareth was reputed to have super-human abilities which He manifested through His short but meteoric rise to the limited public prominence of His country. To appreciate rightly the nature of His supernatural activities we must not view miracles as isolated facts, but in their actual relations to the life of the Man who accomplished them. Any exception is so rare that it is a safe observation that Jesus did not perform the miraculous needlessly. The need for the supernatural acts grew out of the situation and must not be considered independent of that situation. His miracles might be classified thus:

A. POWER OVER NATURE:

At a wedding feast Jesus turned water into wine.

Seeing His disciples distressed in rowing against a stormy lake, Jesus walked across the lake to them, defying gravity. On another occasion Jesus spoke the word and the sea immediately became calm.

One morning at breakfast time He cursed a fig tree and it withered.

By supernatural knowledge He informed Peter that in the mouth of the first fish Peter hauled in would be tribute money.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

B. POWER OVER DISEASE AND DEMONS:

Paralytics, impotent men, women with hemorrhages, sight to blind men, hearing to deaf and speech to dumb, lepers, withered limbs restored to normalcy, wounded ears replaced—all these and many more Jesus did! No weeks or day of anxious waiting, no returns, no incurable cases when Jesus healed a body!

C. POWER OVER DEATH:

Death in others was no problem to this Jesus of Nazareth. He stopped a funeral procession to raise the widow's son; He broke up the funeral to raise Jairus' daughter. He walked nearly 40 miles to raise Lazarus from the grave.

Death in Himself was nothing to fear for He calmly predicted His own death and resurrection with frightening regularity:

Therefore doth the Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. (John 10:17, 18)

Many passages could be cited in which Jesus foretold in detail the various features of His passion. Here again we could marvel at the supreme fact—His own resurrection itself.⁴

At this point, our attention has been arrested by the extraordinary nature of Jesus' deeds but for what? Like Moses, the flame of the unusual has attracted our attention and we have turned aside to see why.

THE PURPOSE OF MIRACLES

Bible miracles are supernatural phenomena in the realm of human experience WITH A MESSAGE. Why bring up miracles if the one doing them does not have something to say for himself? Such questions are most appropriate. The Jews of Jesus' day could have asked these questions: "Immediately we become interested when we learn that a man can supply a sumptuous meal to 5000 men on ridiculously insignificant rations. We want to know if He will provide battle rations for our national army we are raising. One who is reputed to be able to heal all manner of disease could be very useful to our purposes as we strike out against Rome. Do you suppose He would consent to being our king? What is He saying for Himself? Where is He going? What is He trying to accomplish by these miracles?" So the message is all-important.

MIRACLES

Probably the most significant utterance of Jesus ever recorded was His claim to unique knowledge of God:

All things have been delivered unto me of my Father; and no one knoweth who the Son is, save the Father; and who the Father is, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal him. (Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22)

Or another claim:

For I am come down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me. And this is the will of him that sent me, that of all that which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. For this is the will of my Father, that every one that be- holdeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. (John 6:38-40)

My teaching is not mine, but his that sent me. If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself. (John 7:16, 17)

I speak the things which I have seen with my Father . . . (John 8:38)

But now ye seek to kill me, a man that hath told you the truth, which I heard from God . . . If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of myself, but he sent me . . . But because I say the truth, ye believe me not. Which of you convicteth me of sin? If I say truth, why do ye not believe me? He that is of God heareth the words of God. (John 8:40-47)

Obviously, throughout His teaching Jesus is claiming to be a very revelation of God. He comes not as a supreme teacher of an exalted ethical system or a propounder of new moral philosophy but as one who comes from God to reveal God's mind to man. In other messages Jesus asserted that He entered the world to "seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10) and "to give his life a ransom for many." (Matt. 20:28) It is clear that Jesus intended to reveal God and ransom man but how do we know He is God's emissary? His "mighty works" hold our attention and most of His doctrine we cannot verify. What is the connection between miracle and message?

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

It is perfectly plain that such a revelation would need to be tested and accredited, for unless it were, men would never believe that the revelation was from God Himself . . . man would have a right to demand of anyone claiming to have a revelation from God, that he show his credentials . . . showing that there is no question but that he is the authorized representative of God. Man has a right to demand these credentials, and by the very nature of the case, they must be of a kind that could not possibly be duplicated by man, for if they could be, they would lose all value as accrediting the message from God.⁵

Thus, not only the possibility of miracle is justified but also the probability. How else would God remind people down through the ages saying, "Lo, I am here"? It is the miracle, the departure from the observed uniformity of nature, that arrests the attention of man and makes him realize that a higher person and a higher power is at work. The miracle is the majestic seal that God has affixed to the revelation which He gives us. The Bible is God's Word. An integral part of the Bible record is *miracle*, for the specific purpose of showing it to be God's Word. Except for miracles, how could we know it to be a revelation of God? With no miracle, there is no evidence of deity. Miracles, then, authenticate the Christian message: (1) Jesus Christ appeals to His miracles as His divine authentication.

I told you, and ye believe not: the works that I do in my Father's name, these bear witness of me . . . If I do not the works of my father, believe me not. But if I do them, though ye believe not me, believe the works: that ye may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father. (John 10:25, 37, 38)

Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I say unto you I speak not from myself: but the Father abiding in me doeth his works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. (John 14:10, 11)

(2) Thus, miracles are an integral part of the record which would become meaningless without the miracle. Remove, if possible, the account of miracle from the book of John and observe how much wasted breath is left in the controversies between Jesus and the Pharisees concerning miracles, which, according to the naturalists, He did not do. Most of Jesus' "Sabbath Controversies" had to do with

MIRACLES

miracles done on the Sabbath. Most of Jesus' most magnificent claims were made in agreement with and in company with some of His most astounding wonder-works. A clear case in point is given in Mark 2 (Matt. 9 and Luke 5) where a paralytic is lowered through the roof into the presence of Jesus and a "congressional investigating committee." Jesus said simply, "My son, your sins are forgiven." The scribes and Pharisees who were in the crowded house immediately considered this statement as blasphemy. Jesus answered their thoughts, "Why do you question thus in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven'; or to say 'Rise, take up your pallet and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic—"I say unto you, Rise, take up your pallet and go home." And he did! We can conclude that (3) The miracles and the words of Christ are wonderful and perfect counterparts. Miracles do not make the claims of Jesus or His doctrines true, but they are the attestation of God that His claims are well-founded and His teaching God's. The power of the miracle taken by itself does not assure me of the truthfulness of the claims set forth, or of the doctrines taught, alone, but of Him through whose instrumentality they are performed. May we conclude then that the primary purpose of the miraculous deeds recorded in scripture is to attest the revelation given as from God? This great salvation which is thus taught

having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will. (Hebrews 2:3, 4)

What was true of the Lord in those days was true in regard to His servants the apostles. The miracles also attested their message as from God. It was the miracles that made the disciples believe in Jesus, and they, in turn, made the world believe in Christ.

A secondary purpose of miracles (and it is clearly secondary) was to demonstrate the mercifulness of God in the case of individual men. The miracles illustrate and explain the teaching of Jesus on the love and mercy of God. It is one thing to hear Jesus talk; it is another thing to see Him in action. In the miracles, we see Christ dealing tenderly and yet majestically with our human lives and their sins and burdens and sorrows and fears. The apostles were no less spectacular in calling attention to God's revelation.⁶

A tertiary object of miraculous deeds was to wreak vengeance

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

upon objects unworthy of God's continued grace.⁷ To the mind comes immediately Jesus' cursing the fig tree (Mt. 21:18, 19), the blinding of Elymas (Acts 13:11), the sudden death of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5:5, 10). Bible miracles taught not only God's love and goodness but also His power and authority, and sometimes His righteous and fearful judgments.

A fourth purpose of God in the giving supernatural demonstrations of His presence among men is negative in nature: Miracles are not universal in nature. If they ever were or should ever become so, they would lose their value as deeds of a supernatural character for if universal, they would cease calling attention to God's message and become the norm. Bible miracles were never either (1) universal in extent for they have always been limited to few and special cases. Never have they been used to relieve suffering or prolong this life for all of God's people impartially. Some received no miraculous deliverance here, but a better resurrection for the life hereafter (Heb. 11:35-40). John the Immerser, greatest of the prophets, worked no miracles, nor was he miraculously delivered from prison and death (Matt. 11:7-11; John 10:41). Jesus could have healed all the sick or raised all the dead. But He did not and would not. Many were healed by Paul, but Trophimus and Timothy were not (II Tim. 4:20; I Tim. 5:23). A multitude of sick and afflicted lay by the pool at Jerusalem, but Jesus healed only one man (who did not know Him or ask Him to) and then hid Himself from the others. But later He sought the healed man again to teach him and to meet the debate which the Sabbath miracle had aroused with the Pharisees. Nor were the miracles (2) universal in their result: All who were delivered from sickness or affliction had other times to suffer and to die. All who were raised from the dead had to die again. Once and again Peter was delivered from prison and from persecutors but another time he was left to die, when God was no less compassionate and Peter was no less believing. So it was with Paul.⁸

THE REALITY OF MIRACLES

We are standing on the battleground here where naturalism and supernaturalism meet and the war is not over. The question facing this age (and all ages, for that matter) which demands historical certitude, is the decision of the factuality of miracles. Indeed, the establishing of Christianity as a coherent system without historic foundation in supernatural fact can be the employment of some shadow-boxing theologians who make their living striving after wind but this cannot assuage grief, forgive sin, enable men to live in peace with

MIRACLES

each other, or prepare them for eternity. Let not him that girds on his armor boast himself as he that puts it off. The barrage begins: "Intervention of a supernatural character within the universe is impossible because of

A. "THE UNIFORMITY OF THE ORDERLY GOVERNMENT OF NATURE."

Miracles are antecedently possible. There can be no doubt that such a thing as a miracle is a reasonable possibility, whether we ever saw one, or believed that other men had seen one, or not. We cannot be dogmatic about what may have happened, or what can happen beyond our field of observation.

It is objected that a miracle is a violation of law, or God, as He reveals Himself in nature. God, it is said, would contradict Himself if He did anything in another way. But this implies that we know all about God and His ways. Instead of that being so, how small a portion we have seen! The general uniformity of nature to which deniers of the miracles appeal is a blessing to man. It would be a terrible world in which to live if we could not count on the operation of gravity, of heat and cold, of summer and winter, of seed-time and harvest. But this uniformity is consistent with voluntary control, and therefore, for good and sufficient reasons, as the Bible tells us it has been, could be "interrupted." When we speak of the uniform type of nature all we mean is that an effect is something produced by a cause, and that all the effects we see are produced by natural causes. But we have no right to conclude that therefore a miracle is impossible, for belief in miracles does not imply that an effect took place with no adequate cause, but that an effect was produced by the immediate act or will of God who ordinarily works through second causes, but sometimes, if the Bible be true, through an immediate act. Instead of being a denial of the law of cause and effect, a miracle is its highest illustration.

A God who made a world and then shut Himself out of it so that He could never enter it again, never arrest, regulate, add to its laws of working, would be no God at all. He would be like a man who made a machine with whose law of operation he could never interfere. What we call "interference, arresting or changing of laws" may not really be such at all, but part of the great plan of God. To man it is a miracle, but not to God.

True enough, nature seems to be working under a system of natural laws, which as far as scientific observation can tell, seem to be invariable in their application. But what are natural laws?

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

From scientific point of view, are they anything more than the way the phenomena of nature have been observed to happen within the time range of experience? The natural laws are not the forces themselves which they describe, but only the scientific formulation of the way in which the forces act. Natural laws are not to be confounded with the forces of nature which they describe. They have no control whatever over the forces themselves. Are these forces of nature eternal? They are only the power of God *in action*. If this is the cause, they are governed and controlled by God Himself . . . God is under no compulsory necessity to keep them uniform in their action . . . Now suppose it is part of God's eternal plan that for some great purpose of His own He will intervene in these forces and cause a break in their uniformity and in variability. What is to prevent such an interruption from occurring? Nothing! . . . The only question that may arise is whether God desires the changes to occur. The question that becomes one merely of fact, . . . whether there is any evidence to show that He has intervened. . . . The fact of present uniformity of nature is no barrier whatever to the intervention of God in the past.⁹

David Hume argues that miracles, as such, cannot occur:

A miracle is a violation of the laws of nature, and as a firm and unalterable experience has established these laws, the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the case, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined, and if so, it is an undeniable consequence that it cannot be surmounted by any proof whatever from testimony.¹⁰

Our question to him would be this: How do we get to know what the general experience of men in respect to the course of nature is? Our own personal experience, indeed, comes from personal observation, but, as we have just seen, our individual experience has little bearing on the case and for our knowledge of experience of men in general we have to depend on human testimony. So the whole force of the argument amounts to this: we must investigate the testimony of those who bear witness to the genuineness of the miracles of Jesus as having been performed before their own observation. The proof of miracles is based on testimony and when coming right down to the question at hand, it simply puts testimony against testimony: the

MIRACLES

testimony of those who were present and observed and affirmed what they saw—these miracles; and that of those who were not present and who declare that in all their experience they never saw such wonders wrought by anyone. David Hume's notorious argument attempts to show that no amount of evidence can establish the truth of a miracle:

When the experience of millions of people can be said to contain nothing miraculous, that is, a raising of the dead, or the sudden stilling of a storm on the lake, then the testimony of one or three people to some such miraculous event must be considered definitely of no historical value, because the testimony of millions of other people has a greater power than the testimony of, say, two or three men, for convincing us of the actuality or nonactuality of some miracle.¹¹

The fallacy of this argument is again exposed by the questions, "Whose experience? Whose testimony?" He starts by stating as fact something he cannot prove—"It is a miracle that a dead man should come to life: because that has never been observed in any age or country."¹² In support of this he would have to prove the gospels historically untrustworthy and he does not attempt to do so. He admits that no testimony is sufficient to establish a miracle unless the testimony be of such a kind, that its falsehood would be more miraculous than the fact which it endeavors to establish. If the testimony of the gospel writers concerning Jesus' miracles is false—then their falsehood is indeed a greater miracle than the miracles which they describe. But this is mere logomachy.

He also argues that miracles are seen mostly among ignorant and barbarous nations. The people of Jesus' day can hardly be described in so sweeping and so hasty a generalization. It is based on too few samples of the class under investigation!

He argues that if the event harmonizes with what men normally experience, it can be believed if the evidence is sufficient; but if contrary to man's ordinary experience, it cannot be believed. If this is true, can there be such a thing as reporting advances in scientific research and discovery? I wonder if Hume would be so smug as to deny the unique experience of the American astronaut, his view, his reaction, his gathering of real though previously unknown facts.

"Ah yes," says the ghost of Hume, "but millions of people the world around shared vicariously in the experience of the astronaut being informed of his actions every minute by radio and television."

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

Tugging the coat-tail of the speculating spectre, we urge, "Mr. Hume, this 'vicarious experience,' as you call it, was shared by the millions because of the reliable, competent, sincere, honest testimony, but since nothing contrary to the general experience of millions of people can be admitted as having historical value on the basis of the testimony of a few, then the testimony of such a small segment of humanity cannot be admitted. Turn back over in your grave and we apologize for the intrusion."

Concluding then, it is said that since natural laws have been determined by God, then He can never exercise His power in any way as to contradict these natural laws. But God is so omnipotent and omniscient that He has the right at any time to do anything He pleases, according to His will, whether it be exactly within the limits of WHAT WE CALL "natural law" or not. In our ignorance of many uncertainties involved in our universe we cannot dogmatize that God cannot work a miracle "contrary to natural law without violating His own character."

B. IGNORANT AUTHORITARIANISM.

One reason why many educated men take a negative attitude toward the Bible miracles is because of pure ignorance of the actual content of the Bible itself, and especially of the evidence in support of its historicity. We should not be surprised at the ignorance when we remember the great lack of Bible study in the early training of university graduates. True enough, the study of all the evidence in support of the historicity of the Bible is a science in itself and requires diligent preparation as such.

But what is both surprising and reprehensible is to find an educated man who is an authority in some other line, setting himself up as an authority on Biblical criticism without having ever given more than the most cursory study to the subject beyond swallowing whole what some destructive critic, whose own opinions are based on naturalistic premises, says about the Bible . . . The saddest part of it all is that such men, because of the respect and reputation which they have rightly gained in their own line of study, received a welcome hearing on the part of hundreds, to which hearing they are in no ways entitled, and lead many astray because their hearers think that they are speaking with equal authority about the Bible as when they speak on subjects in their own line of study.¹³

It may well be that some brilliant minds have read nothing but the distorted religious views of other ignorant religionists whose very

MIRACLES

teaching, not being founded in truth, become the very cause of all religion's overthrow through the brilliant but mistaken writing of the mentally acute specialists in some other field.

Some would say, "Supernatural intervention is very improbable because of

C. "THE PROBABILITY OF FRAUD."

This philosophy makes the claim that Jesus got caught up in playing the part of Messiah and to keep this popularity maintained He hired people to play blind, lame, dumb, insane, or dead so He could appear to people to heal or raise them. They even claim that the resurrection of Jesus from the dead was a fixed job! Again we have the impossible dilemma of a supreme ethical teacher violating His own ethic (practicing deliberate fraud) in which case He is nothing but a bold, bare-faced liar; or we impugn the witnesses who testify to the veracity of His miracles which they did not, in fact, ever see.

At this point we have to take a choice! We find it impossible to admire as "divine" a Christ about whom there is only falsified, or at best, deluded testimony. We cannot have our Christ and deny some of the history from which we originally learned about Him! Either we accept the witnesses as reliable and believe their testimony or else deny all of Christ and go write our own religion, for God has not spoken in human history clearly enough for all to hear.

Still others would object to miracles on the basis of

D. THE PREVALENCE OF MYTH IN ANCIENT RECORDS.

This theory would suggest that many, many years after the original witnesses were passed off the scene, mythical accounts began to arise, clothing the "historical Jesus" with a garb of miraculous deeds about which He knew nothing. These myths became part of the later oral traditions which were collected and recorded in the late second and third centuries in essentially the form evolved in our current New Testaments. Thus, according to these theologians, it is our responsibility to extract these mythical elements from the ethics of the "historical Jesus" and in this way be able to accept Jesus without these "hindrances" to rational minds. The attempt to reduce the supernatural acts of Jesus to myth cannot command much attention because (1) If during His life Jesus worked no miracles, the insoluble problem arises how He came to be known as the Messiah by those who looked for a miracle-working Messiah. (2) On what grounds can it be successfully denied that Jesus claimed to work

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

miracles? (3) Formation of myths takes time not historically available from Jesus' death to the earliest accounts of His earthly ministry. Recent critical research demands the writing of the original manuscripts of the witnesses well within the first century and not during the late second or early third centuries, as this theory demands.

Other opponents of the supernatural miracles dismiss them as

E. THE DELUSION OF THE WITNESSES.

This is the idea that the apostles thought certain acts of Christ were miracles because they could not account for them by the natural causes which were hidden from them. Proponents of this theory claim that the miracles were made to appear as such by the influence of spiritual power on the nervous system or by medicine or secret remedies. The major fault of this theory lies in the failure to explain the acceptance of Jesus' enemies of the concrete and objective fact of the miracles. True enough, they did not accept the implications of the facts, but there was no denying the facts! Where is the "medicine, magic, or influence of spiritual power" which convinces centurions, high priests, Sadducees and those critical analysts, the Pharisees? These had everything to gain by denying the miracles; the apostles had nothing to gain by affirming them in face of death, privations, maltreatment of all varieties, and social stigmatization. And yet these enemies of Jesus, when they speak, are just as agreed that the miracles of Jesus are fact, as are those witnesses favorable to Him.

Some suggest that miracles of healing were due to some practice of

F. AUTO-SUGGESTION.

The theory would explain healing miracles by the power of Christ's mind acting upon the mind and then the body of the patient through a psycho-therapeutic idea. However,

It is the clear verdict of medical science that suggestion is incapable of removing any medical malady whatever and that its curative effects are restricted to functional disorders. Only what has come into existence through an idea can be removed by an idea.¹⁴

Jesus' healings were instant, not the result of extensive long-process treatment. Can men today instantly make a man walk who has been lame from his mother's womb and open the eyes of one congenitally blind? Can medical science create new arms or legs precisely like the originals instantly for the maimed? This Jesus did. Jesus was unique in this ability.

MIRACLES

G. EXTREME CREDULITY.

has been employed as a charge levelled against the age in which Christ worked, a time when all men looked for and believed in supernatural manifestations. Jesus' age was not any more an age of credulity than the age of our fathers. It was an age of genuine skepticism. True, they were deceived, worshipping gods that were non-existent, but what age has not done that? Study current news events and decide how rational creatures can be so gullible as to swallow the torrent of lies told by world communism. We cannot label any one age as a time of great credulity. The whole of the New Testament itself manifests an age of skepticism. Thomas doubted the resurrection and demanded an empirical basis for his faith. See Matthew 11:21-23 and John 8:46. Is it reasonable to say that the men who wrote the four gospels, that have amazed men down through the ages, were easy dupes whose minds were so childish and under-developed as not to be able to discern between astonishing feats and supernatural miracles? The charge reduced to its simplest form is this: the miracles, having been wrought or supposed to have been wrought in an age fond of believing such events, were received as real without the application of the tests by which their reality could be demonstrated. In other words, it is claimed that they were not worked under scientific conditions.

First, we remark that, whatever may have been the habit of the age in which Jesus and the Apostles lived with respect to miracles in general, and those of these men in particular, there was certainly a large class of persons, including the most acute and intelligent of the Jews, who most persistently refused to credit them; and these men were sufficient in number and in influence to check any disposition on the part of the masses to receive them without question. Second, we have a detailed account of the way in which the miracles were tested by this class of men, and by a comparison of that with which would be applied by scientific men of our own day, we can determine how much credence we should give to the assertion in question.¹⁵

The notable case in point is the healing of the man born blind by Jesus (John 9). The process of investigation, reduced to the simplest statement, was this: they first ascertained that the man could see; they next inquired what Jesus had done to him; and seeing that what He had done was only to put moistened clay on his eyes and require him to wash it off, they next inquired as to the certainty of his

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

having been born blind, and they close this inquiry with the testimony of his parents.

Let us now suppose that, instead of the Pharisees who tested this miracle, it had been done by a "commission composed of physiologists, physicians, chemists and persons experienced in historical criticism" as is demanded by M. Renan. What advantage would they have had over the Pharisees in determining whether the man, when first brought before them, could see? It is clear that no knowledge of physiology, or chemistry, or medicine, or historical criticism, could help them in this. The most stupid . . . could settle the question at once by striking with his hand toward the man's face and seeing whether he winked. When it was settled that the man could see and the question was raised, What had Jesus done to give his sight?, the commission would have an advantage over the Pharisees, in that they would know more certainly, on account of their scientific attainments, that merely putting clay on a blind man's eyes and washing it off could not give him sight. Uneducated and superstitious men might imagine that the clay had some mystic power; but scientific man would know better. On this point of inquiry, then, the advantage would be with the commission, but the advantage would be in favor of the miracle. As to the next question, whether the man said to have thus received sight was born blind, what more conclusive testimony could the commission obtain, or what more could they wish, than, first, that of the neighbors who had known the man as a blind beggar; and, secondly, that of his own father and mother? Who, indeed, could be so good witnesses that a child was born blind as the father and mother for they always exhaust every possible means of testing the question before they yield to the sad conviction that their child is blind?¹⁶

Obviously, in testing such a miracle there could be no use made of scientific knowledge; and the same is true of Jesus' miracles in general. The most unscientific men of common sense can know when a man is dead; when he is alive and active; when he has a high fever; is a cripple; is paralyzed, as well as the greatest scientist. The cry, then, that the miracles of the New Testament were not done under "scientific conditions", is totally irrelevant, and can mislead only those who do not pause to think.

MIRACLES

Some moderns who have too much reverence (or too little, depending on your point of view) for the gospels to allow themselves to deny the miracles claim that those events in Jesus' life are not to be used for

H. TEACHING "SPIRITUAL" TRUTHS.

Rather, it is said, these narratives are to be given a "spiritual" interpretation. If these miracles did not take place, what did? The writers gave the impression that it was a distinct and remarkable miracle and they knew that they were giving this impression.¹⁷

RULES OF WAR

No matter how strong the evidence may be that the supernatural *has* occurred, since these scholars start with the premise that the supernatural can't occur, all evidence for its occurrence is ruled out of court without examination. Now I submit that even from a scientific point of view such a procedure is unwarranted. Questions of fact are not to be decided by any *a priori* principle laid down by any scientists, however erudite they may be! If facts and principles are at odds, so much the worse for the principles! The only thing we must be sure of is our facts. Facts are decided by *evidence*, and by *evidence alone*.¹⁸

The only way we can decide whether or not God has given a revelation of Himself in human history, is by an examination of the evidence tending to show that such revelation has been given. Since the matter is one purely of fact and of fact alone, it can be decided by the evidence. If God *has* given a revelation, no amount of theorizing to the contrary can change the fact.

The force of human testimony depends on three things: first, the honesty of the witnesses; second, their competency; and third, their number.¹⁹

That these qualities obtain in the witnesses of the miracles who record them for posterity is, in my opinion, demonstrated.²⁰ The writers of the gospels that record the miracles of Jesus did not consciously deceive or lie. These men were hard-headed, practical men who, even when Jesus was resurrected, had to be rebuked for their unwillingness to believe that He had, in point of fact, risen from the dead. Neither were the miraculous events that they record the kind that men readily imagine to have taken place. The writers of the gospels that picture Jesus as the miracle-working teacher were with Him

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

day in and day out while Jesus walked the dusty trails of Palestine. There was nothing secret about His working of miracles. These men were competent to pronounce judgment upon the miracles. If they knew they were false, why should they declare them to be true fact, not merely supposed fact? What did they have to gain?

All evidence of Christ's miracles is contained in the New Testament. There can be no doubt as to the meaning of the evidence or the nature of the events witnessed to. The men who wrote about these miracles are either deceivers or deceived or else telling the sober truth. If they were conscienceless fabricators, how was it that such men produced that picture of moral excellence before which all the ages have fallen down in the reverent admiration? How could men who lied about the facts of Christ's life have produced so marvelous a character? Of this we can be sure, the men who relate the miracles of Jesus were not conscious deceivers and liars.

JESUS CLAIMED TO WORK MIRACLES

Jesus answered the disciples of John the Baptist:

Go and tell John the things which ye have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached to them. (Luke 19:22)

Earlier Jesus had said to the Jews:

But the witness which I have is greater than that of John; for the works which the Father hath given me to accomplish, the very works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father hath sent me. And the Father that sent me, he hath borne witness of me. Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his form. And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he sent, him ye believe not. Ye search the scriptures because ye think that in them ye have eternal life: and these are they which bear witness of me. (John 5:36-38)

Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. (John 14:11)

How can we believe in Jesus if we do not accept His own testimony that He worked miracles? People say that Jesus was the greatest of moral teachers of all time and His ethical standard amounts to absolute perfection. Some will even claim for Him that He lived His own supreme ethic which He taught! Yet how can they think

MIRACLES

this and still say He did not work miracles when He claimed to have done so? It gets down to the foundational question: Is Jesus telling us the truth when He claims to work miracles? Did Jesus lie or falsify His credentials? If we say that Jesus was somehow the world's greatest teacher and yet was deluded into thinking He was working superhuman acts (when in fact He did no such thing) we have little more than a self-deceived imposter. There is no middle ground. Do we reject so easily Jesus' moral integrity, or His intellectual soundness?

PROBABILITY FACTORS

By examination of the gospels, the following reasons may be employed to prove to us that the miracles are the subject of adequate and reliable testimony:

A. THERE WERE MANY MIRACLES PERFORMED BEFORE THE PUBLIC EYE.

Jesus healed in the cities, at the busy corners, when surrounded by a mob, when speaking before multitudes in the open or in a house. They were for the most part not done in secret or seclusion or before a select few. Most of them were public property, as it were. There was every occasion and opportunity to investigate the miracle right there. Such clear, open, above-board activity is good evidence of the actual occurrence.

B. SOME MIRACLES WERE PERFORMED IN THE COMPANY OF UNBELIEVERS. Miracles are always popping up in cults that believe in miracles. But when the critics are present the miracle does not seem to want to occur. But the presence of opposition or of critics had no influence on Jesus' power to perform miracles. More than once, right before the very eyes of His severest critics Jesus performed miracles. Now certainly, to be able to do the miraculous when surrounded by critics is a substantial token of their actual occurrence.

C. JESUS PERFORMED HIS MIRACLES OVER A PERIOD OF TIME AND IN GREAT VARIETY.

The imposter always has a limited repertoire and his miracles are sporadic in occurrence. Not so with Jesus. His miracles were performed all the time of His public ministry from the turning of water into wine in Cana to the raising of Lazarus. Further, He was not limited to any special type of miracle. Sometimes He showed supernatural powers of knowledge, such as knowing that Nathanael was

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

hid in a fig tree; or He showed power over a great host of physical diseases: blindness, leprosy, paralysis, fever, demons, and death itself; or He was able to quell the elements at a command as He did in stilling the waves and the wind; or He could perform acts of sheer creation as when He fed thousands of people from very meager resources.

Imposture on this scale is impossible. The more times He healed, the more impossible it would be if He were an imposter. Further, it is incredible to think that for three and one-half years He maintained one consistent imposture. The number of miracles, their great variety, and their occurrence during all His public ministry are excellent evidence that Jesus actually performed the miracles the gospel writers record.

D. WE HAVE THE TESTIMONY OF THE CURED.

Many times when Jesus healed, it is recorded that the healed person went broadcasting far and wide that he had been healed, even in those cases where Jesus cautioned the person or persons against it. Certainly the report of His miracles found their way all through the hamlets and villages of Palestine. Consider too, that two of the gospels were written by men who were not eye witnesses, so available was the data of the life of Christ. Thus, part of the reason for the sudden and energetic growth of the church in Acts was the memory of the marvelous life and miracles of Jesus Christ. The result of the personal testimony of the many who were healed, as they spoke to their loved ones, their relatives near and distant, and their townspeople, cannot be ignored in accounting for the great success of the preaching of the gospel in the book of Acts.

E. THE EVIDENCE FROM THE GOSPELS CANNOT BE UNDONE BY APPEALING TO THE PAGAN MIRACLES. Miracles are believed in non-Christian religions because the religion is already believed, but in Biblical religion, miracles are part of the means of establishing the true religion. This distinction is of immense importance. Israel was brought into existence by a series of miracles; the law was given surrounded by supernatural wonders; and many of the prophets were so indicated as God's spokesmen by their power to perform miracles; and the Apostles from time to time were able to work wonders. It was the miracle authenticating the religion at every point.

Pagan miracles lack the dignity of Biblical miracles. They are frequently grotesque and done for very selfish reasons. They are seldom ethical or redemptive and stand in marked contrast to the

MIRACLES

chaste, ethical, and redemptive nature of the miracles of Christ. Nor do they have the genuine attestation that Bible miracles have. Therefore, to examine some pagan miracles and show their great improbability, and then to reject all miracles on that ground is not fair to Biblical miracles or to the science of historical research.

THEREFORE?

Jesus from the commencement to the end of His public ministry wrought many miracles. Christianity claims to be a revelation from God confirmed and vindicated by mighty signs and wonders. The miracles are a strand woven into the fabric of the garment of Christ's personality, and you cannot tear them out without destroying the fabric itself. **THE ONLY CHRIST IS THE CHRIST WHO WALKED ON THE SEA, RAISED THE DISEASED TO HEALTH AND CALLED THE DEAD OUT OF THEIR DEATH CHAMBER!**

Miracles form part of the foundation of our faith, being divine demonstrations witnessing to the origin of the message we have believed. But they are not part of the faith or part of its practice in the lives of obedient believers. The miracles wrought by the messengers of God while the faith was "once for all delivered to the saints" are still effective evidences to establish the truth and authority of that faith.²¹

Finally, whether we believe that miracles happen or not depends on our attitude toward historic testimony to their reality.

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name. (John 20:30, 31)

1. Floyd E. Hamilton, *The Basis of Christian Faith*, (3rd rev. ed.; New York: Harper Brothers Publishers, 1946); p. 87.

2. Clarence E. McCartney, *Twelve Great Questions About Christ*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1956), p. 70.

3. J. W. McGarvey, *Evidences of Christianity*, (Cincinnati: Standard Publishing Company, 1891), Part III, p. 116.

4. For a very clear discussion of the direct evidence for the resurrection of Jesus see J. W. McGarvey's, *Evidences of Christianity*, Cincinnati: Standard Publishing, 1891), Part III, Chpt. X. Also see Wilbur Smith's, *Therefore Stand*, (Natick, Mass.: W. A. Wilde Company, 1959), Chap. VIII.

5. Hamilton, p. 95, 96.

6. They had power to bless; healing sick (Acts 3:6-9); raising the dead (Acts 9:37-42; 20:9, 10); power to grant miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17); power to curse (Acts 13:11).

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

7. For Old Testament examples, consider the death of Uzzah (II Sam. 6:6, 7); Nadab and Abihu (Lev. 10:1, 2); the leprosy of Gehazi (II Kings 5:27) and of Miriam (Num. 12:9-14); the blindness of the Syrian band (II Kings 6:18-20); the destruction of army (II Kings 19:35).

8. Seth Wilson, "*The Purpose of Miracles*", Christian Standard, Nov. 2, 1957.

9. Hamilton, pp. 89, 90.

10. Wilbur Smith, *The Supernaturalness of Christ*, (Boston: The W. A. Wilde Co., 1958), pp. 142-150, 158.

11. *Ibid.*, p. 145.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

13. Hamilton, pp. 90, 91.

14. Smith, *Ibid.*, p. 133.

15. McGarvey; *Ibid.*, p. 112.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. 112-114.

17. See John 20:30, 31; 2:11, 23; 3:2; 4:45, 54; 5:1-36.

18. Hamilton, *Ibid.*, p. 92

19. McGarvey, *op cit.*, p. 146.

20. See MacGarvey, *Evidences*, Part III, chapter XII, p. 146ff. Also Wilbur Smith, *Therefore Stand*, chapter VIII, especially p. 422ff.

21. Wilson, *Ibid.*

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER TEN

IS THIS SERMON OF WHOLE CLOTH, OR PATCHWORK?

On first reading this entire chapter it has the appearance of uniform wholeness. It requires only a glance at other Gospels, however, to cause the reader to realize at once that he has encountered some of this same material in quite different places and connections. A bit of first-hand familiarity with Matthew's neat organization of his materials according to topical, rather than strictly chronological, considerations, is almost sufficient to tip the balance in favor of the conclusion that the publican-Apostle is again organizing by collecting materials out of other discourses given on other occasions.

The modern Christian, hurried by immediate, practical concerns, is tempted to ask, almost with impatience: "Why bother to dig into this old question? After all, the chapter has come down to us all in one piece. What is there to gain by puzzling over the problem?" The seriousness of this problem lies in two directions: (1) Matthew's good judgment is placed in doubt, since he seems to ignore propriety by setting down in this place admonitions and predictions that not only were not given so early in the Apostle's training, but would have no connection with their immediate work, necessities or understanding.

CHAPTER TEN

(2) If the material, however, is set forth in its proper place in the self-revelation of Jesus to His disciples, then there is much to gain from this vision of Him as Prophet of the finest order, as General briefing His staff, and as Supreme Lord demanding loyalty due only to God. So, what are the evidences?

A. Arguments offered against the unity of the discourse:

1. Matthew stands alone giving this message in relation to the limited mission of the Apostles in Galilee, whereas the other Synoptic writers include large parts of this discourse in different contexts as messages preached much later on other occasions. (See, for example, Mk. 13:9-13; Lk. 12:4-9, 11, 12, 49-53; 21:12-19) Moreover, in his version of the great sermon on the end of the Jewish nation and of the world, Matthew seems deliberately to omit most of those statements of Jesus he has already included in his report of the Apostolic Commission (Mt. 10), though Mark and Luke both include them in the great eschatological message.
2. In the Lord's farewell address to the apostles during the Last Supper, Jesus specifically remarked, (Jn. 16:1-4)
I have said all this to you to keep you from falling away. They will put you out of the synagogues; indeed, the hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God. And they will do this because they have not known the Father, nor me. But I have said these things to you, that when their hour comes you may remember that I told you of them. I did not say these things to you from the beginning, because I was with you.

So it would seem to some that this obvious declaration eliminates categorically any predictions of persecution, prior to the discourses of the Last Week. Consequently, Matthew has placed the material describing persecutions in quite the wrong place.

3. Considering the immaturity and inexperience of the Apostles, it is thought quite unlikely that Jesus would disturb His yet untried warriors by making allusions to perils not likely to menace their simple, limited labors in Galilee.

B. Considerations strongly recommending the unity of the section:

1. The first and most obvious factor that argues the unity of

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

this discourse is the fact that Matthew intends to give the clear impression that he is signalling both the beginning and the end of one discourse.

10:5

These twelve Jesus sent out,
charging them, . . .

11:1

And when Jesus had finished
instructing His twelve dis-
ciples, He went on from
there to teach and preach . . .

2. The mere fact, that Matthew omits from his report of the great sermon on the fall of Jerusalem and the end of the world (Mt. 24) some materials which he already used earlier (Mt. 10), is no indication that he was ignorant of the fact that Jesus made the declarations reported by Mark and Luke in that great eschatological pronouncement. His deliberateness, rather, is evidence that he DID know about those Last Week statements and chose not to use them again. The inclusion of those remarks by Mark and Luke, on the other hand, does not prove that these sayings were exclusively said by Jesus during the great discussion of Jerusalem's fall and could not have been repeated often earlier. The very sayings themselves are of such nature that they conflict deeply with the then-popular notions about the Messianic Kingdom, held even by the Apostles themselves. So it would not be at all surprising if Jesus had to repeat in similar language on several occasions the very same warnings and the same instructions about how to react.
3. A misplaced emphasis in the reading of John 16:4 can give the impression that Jesus had never before prophesied persecutions, a view which would of course leave Matthew's record under suspicion of forgery or, at least, of improper appropriation of materials, if not outright contradiction. The case stands, however, as Hendriksen, (*John*, II, 322) puts it.

To be sure, there had been predictions of coming persecution (Matt. 5:10-12; 10:16-39). But *these things* (15:18—16:3)—the fact that the world hates the disciples because Jesus has chosen them out of the world; that this hatred was in reality directed against Jesus *and against the*

CHAPTER TEN

Father, that it was absolutely inexcusable and was rooted in the sinister condition of the heart which deliberately refused to acknowledge the true God, that the time was actually coming when men would regard the putting to death of Christ's followers to be tantamount to an act of worship altogether pleasing to God—*these* things, with *that* emphasis and in *that* forthright manner, had never been revealed before. One does not find "these things" in Matt. 5:10-12, which speaks only of persecution in general and of slander in particular—, nor in Matt. 10:16-29, which describes the outward forms of persecution (arrest, flogging, death, name-calling), but says very little about the hidden root from which this persecution springs (only Matt. 10:22, 24, 25, 40; cf. Jn. 15:20, 21). The reason why Jesus had not said these things from the beginning was that it had not been necessary then, because he was still with them. As long as he was physically present, the brunt of the attack was directed against *him*, not against his disciples.

4. It is a false assumption that the allusions to persecutions had no potential connection with realities involved in the Apostles' first, limited evangelistic activity in Galilee. Jesus was about to dispatch His missionaries right in the very bailiwick of that treacherous king whose command would shortly bring about the brutal murder of John the Baptist. The Twelve, commissioned especially to proclaim the identical message of that wilderness voice, must certainly come under the surveillance of that suspicious, testy old king.
5. Objections to Matthew's recording of the latter portion of this sermon (Mt. 10:16-42) disregard the obvious desire of the Lord to charge the minds of His Apostles on the occasion of their commission with a long-range, perspective view of the issues, conflicts and consequences of their ministry. His purpose is not, as is assumed by those who see this chapter as patchwork, merely to prepare His servants to experiment with their abilities in a county-wide campaign in tiny Galilee. No, it is as Bruce (*Training*, 106ff) thinks:

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

This Galilean mission, though humble and limited compared with the great undertaking of after years, was really a solemn event. It was the beginning of that vast work for which the twelve had been chosen, which embraced the world in its scope, and aimed at setting up on earth the kingdom of God.

G. C. Morgan (*Matthew*, 102, 103) agrees:

As the King stood in the midst of the twelve, He looked at them and at the immediate present; but He also looked with those clear, far-seeing eyes into the near decades; and still further He looked down all the centuries; and speaking to the first apostles, He delivered a charge which in its comprehensiveness and finality is applicable to the whole movement of His enterprise, until His second advent. He declared the abiding principles, which must obtain through all the ages; and He described the changing conditions which necessitate changing methods.

So it is of real value to His Apostles, that Jesus should lay before them from the first moment of their commission in no uncertain terms the duties, dangers, instructions and encouragements in His description of the complete apostolic mission. From that moment on no disciple could complain, "Why didn't Jesus tell us this was going to happen?" Any repetition of portions of this charge on later occasions is naturally to be expected due to their importance.

6. Objections based upon "allusions to distant dangers" are groundless, since upon closer reflection even these warnings are reassuring and timely, with the result that the disciples, far from being frightened by them, could draw great strength from their memory of Jesus' words. Since they had been warned beforehand, their very suffering when it came would serve to justify and strengthen their faith in Jesus. Further, who can demonstrate it mathematically certain that the Apostles did not in fact encounter much on their first tour that tried their souls? Granted the almost certain probability that whatever they encountered was very light in comparison to later opposition, yet Jesus'

CHAPTER TEN

forwarning them, and their own success in overcoming, was excellent training to endure even greater obstacles later.

C. Conclusions assuming the unity of the passage:

1. Edersheim (*Life*, I, 640f) decides:

It is evident, that the Discourse reported by St. Matthew goes far beyond that Mission of the Twelve, beyond even that of the early Church, indeed sketches the history of the Church's Mission in a hostile world, 'up to the end.'

2. Morgan's thinking (*Matthew*, 102ff) suggests the following comparative outlines of the three fundamental portions of the message, as if Jesus has three clearly distinct periods in view. The division into different periods comes, not out of textual exegesis only, but also from the fulfilment of these words of Jesus in the history of the Church.

THE ENTIRE APOSTOLIC MISSION

a. *First Galilean Tour* (10:5-15)

- (1) From the Apostles' ordination until the beginning of the Church.
- (2) Period of relative popularity, no serious persecution.
- (3) Particular zone of operation only among Jewish people.
- (4) Particular preparation: light equipment, dependence on Jewish hospitality.
- (5) Particular message: coming messianic kingdom.
- (6) Particular credential: miracles as identification with Jesus.

b. *The Apostolic Church* (10:16-23)

- (1) From the beginning of the Church until the end of the Jewish state and Jerusalem.
- (2) Period of Jewish persecution from Pentecost till fall of Jerusalem.
- (3) Wider sphere of influence even among Gentiles.
- (4) More thorough preparation and equipment, not based on hospitality. (Lk. 22:35, 36)
- (5) Open proclamation of accomplished facts; special help of the Spirit.
- (6) General credential: immediate inspiration as identification.

c. *The Whole Church* (10:24-42)

- (1) From the fall of Jerusalem to the end of the world.
- (2) Period of general difficulty, rejection, death.
- (3) General work: Confession of Jesus by ALL slaves and disciples of Jesus.
- (4) Emphasis on moral preparation, less on mechanical.
- (5) Widest possible proclamation of Jesus' message.

- (6) Moral credential: suffering as identification.

But after making such a neat outline of this chapter, which upon first, even on the second, reading of the discourse, is perhaps not so obvious as the neat rows of the outline would suggest, we might well ask ourselves if this outline is so important and necessary to

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

the communication Jesus intended. For example, why did not Jesus come right out and identify the precise time periods to which each portion of instruction belongs? This would eliminate our having to guess at the applications. But this very observation may be the key: He did not wish His Apostles to concern themselves with a misplaced emphasis on apocalyptic times and seasons or to apply general principles only to particular periods and not to the whole of their ministry. As Edersheim (*Life*, I, 640f) has it:

At the same time it is equally evident, that the predictions, warnings and promises applicable to a later period in the Church's history, hold equally true in principle in reference to the first Mission of the Twelve; and conversely, that what specially applied to it, also holds true in principle of the whole subsequent history of the Church in its relation to a hostile world. Thus, what was specially spoken at this time to the Twelve, has ever since, and rightly, been applied to the Church; while that in it, which specially refers to the Church of the future, would in principle apply also to the Twelve.

If the outline suggested above has value, it is because we, who have appeared on the scene in our historic time period, have the distinct advantage of historical perspective, which the Apostles themselves, as men, standing there before Jesus, prior to the fulfilment, did not have. Even with the haunting spectre of reading into Jesus' words ideas that are not there, we believe we can make out in this sermon the prophetic foresight of the Master as He describes with unerring precision the pattern, problems and progress of the entire Apostolic mission. If it be objected that with the death of the Apostles themselves their mission ceased, then let it be said that if the Church exists today, it does so in direct proportion to its recognition and acceptance of the Apostles' mission. No, the Apostles' mission is not, and will not be, completed until Jesus comes again to call a halt to the Apostles' work. No, the Apostles are not through working, for they "though dead, yet speak" through that permanent teaching medium they prepared for areas and eras where they personally could not labor: the Scriptures. Any Church today may judge itself truly apostolic by its fidelity to that message which the Apostles taught and recorded for all ages.

Returning to the question of this study, we conclude that this sermon of Jesus is all of a piece, a fitting charge given to the

CHAPTER TEN

Apostles on the occasion of their entering upon the very work to which they had been earlier called, in the same way that the Sermon on the Mount was a fitting message of ordination for the occasion of their calling to the Apostleship. (Cf. Lk. 6:12-49)

One final word is in order about Matthew's orderly argument which this entire chapter exemplifies. Note how this section beautifully carries forward his presentation of the ministry of Jesus the Messiah:

1. Jesus the Messiah as proclaimer of the Kingdom of God (chap. 5, 6, 7). In that message typical of Jesus' preaching, the Master describes the Kingdom of God. He is elaborating His edicts.
2. Jesus the Messiah supernaturally accredited by miracle-working power (chap. 8, 9). In this section presenting a collection of miracles typical of Jesus' power, the Master proves His right to say the things He is. He is exhibiting His evidence.
3. Jesus the Messiah expanding His effort, multiplying His ministry and enlarging His effectiveness. (chap. 10)

SPECIAL STUDY

THE AUTHORITY OF THE APOSTLES

Many self-appointed theologians still echo the ancient lie of Satan asking, "Yea, hath God said thus and so?" hardly comprehending that to pose such a question is to question and quibble the eternal authority of the Author of their salvation. It is one thing to seek the clear evidences which would point to the revelation of God in human history, and quite another to seek, by feigned wisdom, to evade its message. Jesus clearly declares in this section that God will be revealing Himself through Jesus' twelve appointed and empowered ambassadors. It is sufficient to investigate with a true and honest heart whether God has truly spoken in human history. But, having discerned this, it is sufficient to obey.

The question of this study is not, then, why or how or should God speak through human messengers, but did He, in fact do so? Since we have the accurate message of Jesus recorded by honest, competent, reliable witnesses, we may assume that God's Son is competent to empower His rather ordinary disciples, thereby enabling them to speak extra-ordinarily the very word of the Almighty. Study these four major points of proof that the Apostles' ministry at this time was but the extension of Jesus' own:

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

- I. God would verify their message as God's own by supernatural demonstrations of His presence and approval (Matthew 10:7, 8; compare Hebrews 2:3, 4; Mark 6:12, 13; Luke 9:6).
- II. Jesus declared that those who would reject His Apostles' message would surely receive heavier condemnation than the wickedest of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew 10:14, 15).
- III. Jesus promised that God's Spirit would speak directly in those human messengers in the hour of trial (Matthew 10:19, 20)
- IV. Jesus concludes His charge by asserting that to receive and hearken to the words of the Apostles is precisely equivalent to receiving Jesus Himself and the God who sent Him. (Matthew 10:40)

It was perfectly legitimate for every devout son of Abraham to require the credentials of those who claimed to speak for God. But, having received them, he must obey.

How often do we refuse God's proffered mercies merely because we reject the instrument through which He would make them available to us? Some would rather be accursed from God than receive God's bounties at the hands of Judas, who later betrayed Jesus! But in this ministry Judas assisted Jesus. Judas worked miracles probably along with the other Apostles. At this time all Twelve Apostles are but the multiplication of Jesus' personal ministry, even though these men were largely ignorant of Jesus' deeper meaning behind His messages, largely unaware of the necessity of the cross and deeply in need of further training. But they were nonetheless messengers of Jesus, hence, sent by the living God! Woe to that individual or city that rejects them! How blessed is that village or people that heard the voice of God in the Galilean accent of these simple men sent out by Jesus!

It should not be at all surprising, therefore, to see develop in the continuing revelation of Jesus, the Apostolic office, endowed with all the authority of the Holy Spirit. But now they are in training. Let us hear Jesus as He prepares them for this first task on their own.

WHY TWELVE APOSTLES?

It is obvious, from the emphasis Matthew gives to it, that this commission given to the Twelve represents an important advance in the progress of Jesus' self-revelation, but what is its exact meaning? Mechanically, the number twelve represents a group of men small enough to be able to teach effectively and large enough to get the

AUTHORITY OF APOSTLES

work done. But in reference to the mission they were to accomplish, what moved Jesus to set apart these twelve as APOSTLES?

I. Jesus desired to multiply the effectiveness of His own ministry.

A. A. B. Bruce (*Training*, 96) thinks that "this mission of the disciples as evangelists or miniature apostles was partly without doubt, an educational experiment for their own benefit; but its direct design was to meet the spiritual necessities of the people, whose neglected condition lay heavy on Christ's heart."

B. Reed (*PHC*, 248) observes astutely: "The man who seeks to do the largest amount of good will recognize that far higher results may be attained by instructing a few persons of influence 'who shall be able to teach others also,' than by working always upon an inert mass, destitute of life and reproductive energy."

C. As this chapter shows, Jesus conferred upon His Apostles:

1. His own mission: "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Cf. 15:24)
2. His own message: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Cf. Mt. 4:17)
3. His own miracles: cf. 10:1, 8 with 9:35.
4. His own miseries: "A disciple is not above his Teacher." (10:24, 25)
5. His own mastery: "He who receives you, receives me." (10:40)

D. The result of this commission was that it turned the Twelve into just that many more Jesus Christs to reach out into those areas of needy humanity where Jesus Himself could not go.

II. Jesus planned that the Apostles become personal eye-witnesses of all that transpired while they were with Him.

A. While their very title signifies that they were to be *men sent forth* on special missions for the Master, yet they were specifically called to "be with Jesus," to be His companions (Mk. 3:14; cf. Lk. 8:1 later)

B. In fact, as McGarvey (*Fourfold*, 221) judges: (contrary to the opinion of Lightfoot, *Galatians*, 92f and Lambert, *ISBE*, 202f):

A necessary condition of their apostleship was this seeing of Jesus and the consequent ability to testify as to his actions, especially as to his resurrection (Ac.

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

1:8, 21, 22; I Cor. 9:1; Ac. 22:14, 15). They could therefore have no successors.

- C. Reed (PHC, 247) asks: "But granted the need for witnesses, were the men upon whom the solemn choice fell, competent for the discharge of so grave a function?" He then answers:
1. "The miracles of Jesus were of a kind which the humblest observer could judge, and perhaps judge even better than his superiors in rank.
 2. . . . even if the Twelve were in any measure disqualified in inferior station from bearing trustworthy evidence, they were thereby just as much incapacitated for the concoction of a clever forgery," and, of course, their writings must be explained in some reasonable manner.
 3. Barnes (*Matthew-Mark*, 107) adds that they were not especially learned men, who could spread Christianity by their erudition;
 4. They were not wealthy men who could bribe others to join their movement by offers of wealth or worldly advancement;
 5. They were not men of positions of authority who could compel others to believe.
 6. They were just good men who make the best witnesses in a court of law: plain men of good sense, fair character, of great honesty with a favorable opportunity to ascertain the facts to which they bear witness. They were the kind of men everybody believes and especially when they are willing to lay down their lives to prove their sincerity.
- D. R. C. Foster's splendid description (*Standard Lesson Commentary* 1957, 44) deserves wider hearing:

The roster of the leaders whom Jesus had assembled to assist Him in His campaign and to receive intensified training from Him is given just before this commission is recorded. The list starts the reader into meditation upon the known and the unknown in their lives. But little is known beyond the name of most of these men. Yet how many significant accounts of their heroic faith and consistent victories might have been written! . . .

We are immediately impressed by the fact that these were what the intelligentsia of that day called "ignorant and unlearned men." Good and honest

AUTHORITY OF APOSTLES

hearts constituted the first prerequisite. The simplicity, humility, teachableness, and burning devotion of these men made them choice material for the Son of God to fashion into noble leaders of the church. Some who read the historical accounts of the New Testament are prone to magnify the mistakes of these apostles and to sneer at their slow comprehension. Such hypercriticism needs to be reminded how much more rapidly the apostles apprehended the truth about Jesus than did the college trained scholars, the scribes and Pharisees from Jerusalem. The apostles heard and saw much more of the revelation Jesus presented than did these scholars, but the latter saw and heard enough to prove their unwillingness or their inability to learn and accept the truth which threatened their wicked way of life and their false leadership over the people.

The apostles lacked the formal training which the scribes possessed, but they were free from all the excess baggage of false ideas and ideals which overloaded the scholars. When Saul of Tarsus met Jesus and gave his life to Christ, he became the great apostle, for he had the natural ability, the intellectual discipline which men could give, plus God's divine revelation to him and a flaming faith and courage which enabled him to turn the world upside down. But Paul had a desperate time recovering from the false conceptions which the scribes had given him. It took a face-to-face meeting with the risen Christ before he was able to rise above the handicap of a false education.

The apostles came from different walks of life with the advantage of varied backgrounds giving peculiar points of contact with different people they met and peculiar power to their testimony as it was reflected against their own personal background. Being experienced in hardships, privation, and burdensome toil, they were qualified to become veterans in such strenuous campaigns as Jesus carried on. They could make long, forced marches; they could listen or proclaim; they could lend the helping hand in public ministry or in necessary arrangements for the physical

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

necessities of their journeys; they could lie down on the hard cold ground at night for rest if no home opened a welcome to the divine One who had no place to lay his head. In less than four years they reached the heights: they could 'walk with crowds and keep their virtue, or talk with kings, nor lost the common touch.' They could stand unafraid in the midst of the high tribunals of state and under threat of death proclaim, with the utter simplicity of the truth, their testimony to the facts of the gospel and the divine revelation which Christ had committed to them. What a moving example they have set before us!

- III. Jesus intended for the Twelve to learn evangelism, share in His own service and then continue His work in the world after His ascension.
- A. On this staff of co-workers depended the immediate effect, as well as the long-range future success, of His mission to earth.
 - B. This is why He *chose* them from among the disciples, the "learners," from among men whose minds were open. (Cf. Lk. 6:13) Barclay (*Matthew*, I, 370) quips: "The shut mind cannot serve Jesus Christ."
 - C. He *called* them, but they could accept or refuse that summons: they were present because they chose to be with Him. (Cf. Mk. 3:14) Their acceptance of His calling to be with Him was extremely important, for, before they had anything worthwhile to say to men, they must learn to live in His presence, imbibe of His Spirit, think His thoughts after Him.
 - D. He *appointed* them (Mk. 3:14). This officially set them apart as "The Twelve," as Apostles. Barclay (*Matthew*, I, 370) thinks that "it was not a case of drifting unconsciously into the service of Jesus Christ; it was a case of definitely being appointed to it."
 - E. He *sent them forth* (Lk. 9:2): their lives were not meant to be spent in contemplation and study, even though, until they had done this, they had little to say. They must begin their service.
 - F. He commanded them to herald His message, not their own views or traditions, as Barclay (*Matthew*, I, 371) writes: "The Christian is not meant to bring to men his own opinions or

CHAPTER TEN

his views; he brings a message of divine certainties from Jesus Christ."

Section 23

JESUS COMMISSIONS TWELVE APOSTLES TO EVANGELIZE GALILEE

(Parallels: Mark 6:7-13; Luke 9:1-6)

PREVIEWING IN OUTLINE FORM

- I. Jesus Calls the Twelve and Empowers Them For Special Service (Mt. 10:1-4; Mk. 6:7; Lk. 9:1)
- II. Jesus Instructs and Charges the Twelve How to Proceed (Mt. 10:5-15; Mk. 6:8-11; Lk. 9:2-5)
 - A. Their Words and Works (Mt. 10:5-8; Lk. 9:2)
 - B. Their Equipment and Conduct (Mt. 10:9-15; Mk. 6:8-11; Lk. 9:3-5)
- III. Jesus Challenges and Warns the Twelve of the Dangers and Difficulties That Lie Ahead (Mt. 10:16-31)
 - A. General Warning (Mt. 10:16)
 - B. Persecution by the State "Church" (Mt. 10:17)
 - C. Persecution by the State Government (Mt. 10:18)
 - D. Promise of Power in the Hour of Peril (Mt. 10:19, 20)
 - E. Persecution by Their Own Families (Mt. 10:21, 22)
 - F. Prudence in Persecution (Mt. 10:23)
 - G. Suffering of the Savior and His Servants (Mt. 10:24, 25)
 - H. Freedom From Fear (Mt. 10:26-31)
 1. The Triumph of Truth (Mt. 10:26, 27)
 2. The Right Reverence (Mt. 10:28)
 3. The Care of the Creator (Mt. 10:29-31)
- IV. Jesus Requires and Rewards Loyalty of His Servants (Mt. 10:32-39)
 - A. The Supreme Honor For Loyalty (Mt. 10:32)
 - B. The Supreme Disgrace For Disloyalty or Cowardice (Mt. 10:33)
 - C. The Inevitable Enmities in Loyalty to Jesus (Mt. 10:34-36)
 - D. The Secret of Success Through Sacrifice and Surrender (Mt. 10:37-39)