

bread for the trip?

6. Define the "leaven of the Pharisees." Why was this dangerous to the Apostles?
7. Define the "leaven of the Sadducees." Why was this dangerous to the Apostles?
8. Define the "leaven of Herod." Why was this dangerous to the Apostles?
9. Explain why Jesus gave this warning at this particular time. What events led up to and called for this warning? What actions and attitudes in the Apostles' lives shortly *after* this proved the timeliness of this warning?
10. List three other retreats before this one, where Jesus deliberately left a public ministry to take His Apostles away for awhile.
11. From what and to what was Jesus withdrawing each time?
12. In what sense does Jesus intend the expression: "Are your hearts hardened?" Is this the same sort of hard heart found in a determined sinner? If so, explain how the Apostles themselves could be in danger of this condition. If not, explain how Jesus' words are to be otherwise interpreted.
13. Why did Jesus make reference to the two miraculous multiplications of food for the multitudes? What connection is there with Jesus' warning about leaven?

Section 41

NEAR CAESAREA PHILIPPI JESUS TESTS HIS DISCIPLES

(Parallels: Mark 8:27—9:1; Luke 9:18-27)

TEXT: 16:13-28

13 Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is? 14 And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. 15 He saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? 16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. 17 And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter and upon

this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. 20 Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.

21 From that time began Jesus to show unto his disciples, that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up. 22 And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall never be unto thee. 23 But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men. 24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. 25 For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. 26 For what shall a man be profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life? 27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds. 28 Verily I say unto you, There are some of them that stand here, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

THOUGHT QUESTIONS

- a. Why do you suppose Jesus examined the convictions of His disciples at this time? In this way? In this particular place?
- b. Can you suggest what might have been the reason Jesus was praying before He tested His men? What would have been the subject of His prayer, the concern that drove Him to His knees before the event that follows? (Lk. 9:18)
- c. What was there about the ministry of Jesus, or His personality or message, that caused people to remember John the Baptist? Elijah? Jeremiah, or one of the other ancient prophets? Why were there so many opinions held about Jesus? Could they not admit that He was the Messiah and be done with it?
- d. Why do you think it should have been Peter to answer Jesus' question? Did not the other apostles believe this too?
- e. Why should Jesus be so thrilled with Peter's conclusion that He was

God's Son and Messiah? Had not these same Apostles made similar statements before this?

- f. What does it mean to confess Jesus as the Christ and Son of God in the twentieth century?
- g. Is not God being partial to Peter, since He revealed this majestic truth to him? Had God revealed it to anyone else before this? If so, to whom? How?
- h. Almost all commentaries notice the play on words in Greek where Jesus said, "You are Peter (*Pétros*) and on this rock (*pétra*) I will build my church . . ." (Mt. 16:18) Centuries of church history have witnessed the bitter debates that have raged around those two words and their meaning. The Catholic interpreters have argued that this linguistic play on words proves that Jesus intended to constitute Peter as first pope and hierarchical head of the Church. Protestants, generally, see the differences in grammatical gender a real difference in meaning between *Pétros* (masculine) and *pétra* (feminine). Do you not agree that Jesus should have been more careful in His use of words at such a critical moment in His teaching about the true foundation of the Church? Could He not have foreseen the difficulties such a play on words would cause? Now, if you think that He was careful and that there is no difficulty here, would you explain Jesus' play on words? To do this, you will need (1) to clarify why Jesus says "You are Peter." Did not Peter already know his symbolic name? (Cf. Jn. 1:42) Then, why bring his name up now, if Jesus did not intend to make some allusion to it? Then, (2) you will need to show how the word "rock" (*pétra*) is or is not related to Simon's name "Peter" (*Pétros*).
- i. Since Jesus used the word "church" to describe what it is that He intends to construct, what do we learn about His plans? What did He mean by that word? How does it differ from His other expression: "the kingdom of God"?
- j. What was so vital about Jesus' assurances that even death itself ("Hades") could not hinder His Church? Why mention it to these disciples at precisely this time?
- k. How can Jesus practically hand over the keys to God's kingdom to human beings like Peter and expect that what they permit or require of others will be precisely what God wants?
- l. Why should so marvelous a truth as that confessed by Peter be hushed up by Jesus right on the heels of its pronouncement? Why would it have been politically most inexpedient to publish Jesus' Messiahship during this portion of His earthly ministry?

- m. What does the precision with which Jesus predicts His demise and resurrection tell you about Him?
- n. What was so wrong with Peter's rebuking Jesus? What do you think prompted him to do it?
- o. How do you think Jesus must have felt to have His solicitous friend express his concern in this way? What was so viciously diabolical about the fact that Peter *lovingly* rebuked the Lord?
- p. Why was it so important that the Master expose Peter's anxious consideration to such scathing criticism? Where had he gone wrong?
- q. Why do you think it was so important that Jesus demand the death to self of all who would follow Him? First, why was it important to demand it of those followers during that particular historical moment? Second, what connection is there between self-renunciation and repentance and salvation, if any?
- r. Is not Jesus using double-talk when He promises that those who "lose" their life for His sake will actually find it, while those who would "save" their life will "lose" it? Or is there some deeper paradox involved here? Explain.
- s. Is not Jesus being a bit impractical to suppose that the average man on the street is even vaguely concerned with "gaining the whole world"? Who among the common people is even bothered with this problem? Or is this really what Jesus was thinking? What is this "whole world" He had in mind?
- t. How can a person "forfeit his life" in gaining the whole world?
- u. List some of the things that people are already giving in exchange for their life.
- v. What part of man is referred to by the expression "life," or "soul"? In other words, what is really at stake in losing or gaining it? Use other language to describe just what it is in each of us that is threatened by bad choices or saved by the right decision in the area mentioned by Jesus.
- w. Why would anyone want to be ashamed of Jesus or His message?
- x. Is not Jesus just being vindictive to threaten anyone who is ashamed of Him with repayment for what he has done?
- y. Matthew reports that Jesus' disciples would live to see "the Son of man coming in His kingdom," while Mark says they will see "the kingdom of God come with power," but Luke only mentions "the kingdom of God." Which of these three is right—that is, what did Jesus actually say? Could He have said and meant all this? If so, what did He mean? How do the three different phrases

relate to each other?

- z. What do you think Jesus intended to accomplish by promising that some of His disciples would live to see the Messianic Kingdom arrive in power? How would this statement tend to take some of the sting out of previous demands for "blood, sweat and tears"?

PARAPHRASE AND HARMONY

Leaving Bethsaida Julius in the company of His disciples, Jesus continued His journey on north toward the villages in the district of Caesarea Philippi. On the way there, while Jesus was away from the crowds, praying by Himself with only His disciples around Him, He quizzed them: "Who are people saying that I, the Son of man, am?"

"Some say you are John the Baptist," they began. "Others think you are Elijah. We have also heard some say that you are Jeremiah or one of the ancient prophets come back to life."

"But what about *you*?" He persisted, "Who do *you* think I am?"

Simon Peter replied, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God."

Then Jesus continued, "What a fortunate man you are, Simon, John's son! You did not get that information from any purely human source. Rather, it was my heavenly Father who revealed this truth to you. Now, I too have something to say about you: you are what your name "Peter" implies—a rock. Further, your name symbolically suggests the kind of rock upon which I will found my congregation of the new Israel, the Church, and death itself will be powerless against the Church. Further, Peter, I will give you the right to open God's Kingdom to men: what you forbid men to do will be what God wants forbidden. Whatever you permit people to do will be what He wants permitted."

But then Jesus gave the disciples strict orders not to reveal to anyone that He was the Messiah. Further, it was from this very period that Jesus began to impress upon His followers the divine inevitability of His going to Jerusalem where He would go through a great deal of suffering and be repudiated by the Jewish supreme court, the hierarchy and the theologians, and finally be murdered. "However," He continued, "three days later I will arise from the dead!" He made this statement quite bluntly without any reserve.

At this, Peter took Jesus to one side and began to take Him to task, "May God in His mercy spare you this fate, Lord! Nothing like this

must ever happen to you!"

But when Jesus turned, He saw His disciples. So He reprimanded Peter in their presence: "Get moving, Satan-like adversary! Behind me! Presuming to direct me, you have become but the trigger of a trap! Once a precious rock, you are now a stone to cause me to stumble! Once instructed by God, you now follow human thinking. You may have expressed a popular viewpoint, but you have totally missed God's!"

Meanwhile a crowd was gathering, so Jesus summoned these people to join His disciples to hear Him say: "Anyone who plans to be MY student must give up all right to himself, disown himself, leave his own ambitions behind, yes; say of himself, 'I never knew him,!' Day after day he must shoulder his cross, yes, say of himself, 'Crucify him! Crucify him!' He must come with ME, wherever I wish to lead him. The prudent are damned: whoever cares more for his own safety than for my service is lost! But anyone who will let himself run the risk of losing everything he ever thought dear, giving up his right to it for MY sake and for the Gospel, that man is the only one who is really safe and can really protect his life and save his soul!

"In fact, in the balances of eternity, what advantage is there for someone to conquer everything he aims for, only to find that it cost him his SOUL?! Or what could a man give that would buy his soul back, once it is irretrievably lost?

If anyone feels ashamed of me or my message during these days of faithlessness and sin, I, the Son of man, will be ashamed of him when I return! In fact, I will come in my GLORY, in the GLORY of my Father with the GLORIOUS, holy angels. Then I will give each man what is coming to him on the basis of what he decided and did.

"However, I can assure you that some of you very people standing here today will live to see it. You will see me coming in my Kingdom, yes, God's Kingdom! And when it comes, it will come with POWER!"

SUMMARY

Jesus tested the Apostles concerning their personal grasp of His mission and message. Peter, responding for the Twelve, showed deep understanding by confessing Him to be God's Son and Messiah. Overjoyed, Jesus made truth incarnate in human personality the basis of His new community and Peter a principle spokesman in it. When Jesus then made the bold declaration of His coming suffering and

resurrection, Peter, horrified, rebuked Him. After reprimanding His friend, the Lord pointed out that all true followers must expect to undergo whatever is the lot of their Master. Although there is suffering and shame ahead, there is also victory in the end and hope for the near future: Jesus' reign will soon have its powerful, glorious beginning.

NOTES

A. THE GOOD CONFESSION (16:13-20)

1. The disciples questioned about public opinion. (16:13)

16:13 **Now when Jesus came into the parts of Caesarea Philippi . . .** Should we attach any special significance to His choice of sites for this critical conversation? Concerning *Caesarea* (= Paneas) Plummer (*Matthew*, 224) observes the following coincidences:

The name Paneas came from the grotto of Pan, which represented the elemental worship of the old inhabitants, close to which Herod the Great had built a temple in honour of the Emperor (Josephus, *Antiquities*, XV, 10, 3; *Wars*, I, 21, 3); and this represented the most modern of heathen cults. Thus, just where Judaism touched both the worship of nature and the worship of man, Jesus called upon His disciples to answer for mankind and for themselves as to what His claims upon the conscience were as against the claims of these conflicting worships.

These coincidences are interesting, but not essential, since Mark (8:27) locates the following conversation as taking place "on the way to the villages of Caesarea Philippi (*eis tà kòmas K.t.Ph. kai en tē hodō*), and Matthew loosely places the event somewhere *in the district of Caesarea Philippi (elthòn . . . eis tà mére K.t.Ph.)*. This observation weakens the surmise that they were necessarily standing in sight of the city of Caesarea, supposed figurative basis for Jesus' remarks at 16:18, 19.

The timing of this event is more significant than the place. The Twelve had now completed nearly two and a half years of daily, close personal association with Jesus, learning from Him. By this time they must have formed a mature opinion of His true identity. This

test came approximately six months before the cross.

This calculation is based on the following data: this conversation occurred at least one week before the transfiguration (Mt. 17:1; Lk. 9:28). A trip to Capernaum took place thereafter. (Mt. 17:24) There were discussions and a sermon at Capernaum. (Mt. 18) Then Jesus' brothers say, "Why not go to feast of Tabernacles?" (Jn. 7:2, 3) Later, Jesus attended that feast (Jn. 7:14) in the fall, six months before the last Passover on which He died.

This exam was prepared in the prayers of Jesus. Luke (9:18) reminds us that "He was praying," and out of these supplications came these critical questions. How His heart must have ached as He considered the consequences of this test, earnestly pleading that they be given the grace to decide rightly. At that moment the Lord prayed alone, only His Twelve being around Him. Although a crowd began forming later (Mk. 8:34), some arrangement for privacy may have been made, similar to that in Gethsemane. (cf. Mt. 26:36-39, 42, 44) Not only would He pray for their good confession despite His rejection by the majority in Israel, but also that they would accept His revelations concerning His humiliation at Jerusalem.

What motivated Jesus to question His disciples in this way? The possible motives are many:

1. He must deal with the undeniable pressure brought upon His disciples by the opposition. The antagonism is growing among leaders who everywhere attempted to undermine His teaching and authority. Part of the low opinions voiced about Jesus, and reported by the Twelve (vv. 13, 14), may well be the tangible results of hostile undercurrents that viciously undercut His claims. Such unbelief must be met solidly, lest its intimidation begin to tell upon His precious nucleus of followers (cf. 16:12) The site chosen for this examination is remarkable only for its distance from the center of orthodox Judaism: Judea and Jerusalem. This factor is more understandable when we notice its position in Jesus' travels abroad, or else on the periphery of the Holy Land. (See notes on 15:21.) He has been deliberately avoiding frontal conflicts with the hierarchy since His collision with the Pharisees over traditions. (Mt. 15:1ff) The refusal to cater to the sign-seeking critics abruptly concluded that interview too. (16:1-4) So, whereas the choice of THIS particular district for the examination may not be particularly significant (i.e. Caesarea Philippi, as opposed to Damascus or

Pella or some other semi-Gentile center), its distance from the pressure-points of His opposition is. Further, He had been giving His disciples every opportunity to grow in information and experience, so that they would be able to withstand the tension of opposition, because they could not long remain unaffected by the majority rejection of their Master.

2. These men who will become the divine missionaries to carry Jesus' Kingdom to the ends of the world must now face their semi-final exams. If the unexamined life is not worth living, the untested faith is doubly so, because it is in graver danger of presuming to be above trial. Precisely because the disciples cannot envision the approaching cross, the Lord must reveal His approaching death, and He understands how difficult this will be for them to accept. Therefore, He must first sound their commitment to Him by testing how far they are willing to identify Him as God's Ambassador and Revealer, God's Messiah and Son.

How did He proceed? **He asked his disciples saying, Who do men say that the Son of man is?** For maximum contrast between their own personal commitment to Him and the popular evaluations, He first focuses their thinking on what others were saying, before laying the vital question on the table. Tolbert (*Good News From Matthew*, 141f) rightly analyzes the first question:

The question about the opinion of others is, however, a basic question of tremendous importance to one's own faith. The disciples did not live in a vacuum. They lived in a society where people held many conflicting opinions about Jesus. They needed to be aware of the options. They needed to recognize that they had to live out their own faith among people who did not agree with them.

Although He deliberately helps them to bring their own thinking into sharp focus by first eliminating all lesser theories about His identity, this does not mean, however, that many disciples, previous to this, had not already begun to form some very solid conclusions about Him. (Cf. Jn. 1:49; 3:2; 4:42; Lk. 5:8; Jn. 6:14, 68, 69)

The Son of man (see on 8:20) Although He had used this title in connection with divine prerogatives (see on 9:6), its relative indefiniteness as a Messianic title makes it appear here that He intends to keep His humanity before the disciples. In fact, had **Son of man** been completely unambiguous, He would have been loading His

questions in favor of His Messiahship, and thus predetermining the disciples' answer. There would be no point in asking, "Who do men say that the Christ (= "Son of man") is?," if He expected Peter's actual answer. Salvoni (*Da Pietro al papato*, 43) notices this:

. . . The expression "Son of man," often a synonym for Messiah, is often reduced in value to a simple pronoun. [i.e. "I," HEF.] That this is the case in the present text is evident from the fact that Jesus could not have asked what the crowds thought of the Messiah, because, in that case, the answer would have been different. He asked, rather, what they thought of Him. (Cf. also Mk. 8:31 and Lk. 9:21 with Mt. 16:21.)

2. Public Opinion (16:14)

16:14 **And they said, Some say John the Baptist; some, Elijah; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets.** And these are just the GOOD opinions! There had been other choice expressions: "Beelzebul" (Mt. 10:25); "Blasphemer!" (Mt. 9:3) "Glutton and drunkard, a friend of sinners!" (11:19) Jesus' townspeople at Nazareth had marked Him down as nothing more than "the carpenter's son," but were left without a satisfactory explanation of His wisdom and mighty works. (Mt. 13:54ff) The speculations now reviewed by the Twelve quite vividly represented the confusion rampant in Galilee in that period. (Cf. Mt. 14:1f = Mk. 6:14ff = Lk. 9:7ff) As usual, public opinion is divided:

1. **John the Baptist:** the fear of Herod. (Mt. 14:1-11, see notes.) Anyone who really knew the life-style of the two men would never have confused the ascetic John and the perfectly normal Jesus. (Mt. 11:18f, see notes.) However, it is right to remember the similarity in the fundamental doctrines taught by both, at least at the beginning of Jesus' ministry. (Cf. Mt. 3:2; 4:17)
2. **Elijah** (Cf. Mal. 4:5; Jn. 1:21) This view, although based upon prophecy, was an ignorant conclusion, because John the Baptist had personally fulfilled all that Malachi had intended. (Cf. Mt. 11:14) Later, even the inner Three needed repeated instruction to clarify the issue. (Mt. 17:10-13)
3. **Jeremiah** (Cf. 2 Macc. 2:1-8; 15:13, 14; 2 Esdr. 2:17f) Whereas these books are not Scripture, yet they report traditions known to the Jews of Jesus' day, who, in turn, would be encouraged by

such statements to think of Jesus as "the Jeremiah." Salvoni (*Da Pietro al papato*, 44) expands this:

Although the Jewish legend sees him as having hid the sacred fire, the altar and the Tent of meeting in a cave before the sack of Jerusalem, Jeremiah never assumed an important position in Jewish apocalyptic. (2 Macc. 2:1-8) It was logical, however, for the common people to think that Jeremiah—who had already appeared in a vision to Onias to give him a gold sword (2 Macc. 15:3-16)—should reappear before the Messiah, to reveal the cave and return to the Hebrews the objects necessary for worship.

- McGarvey (*Matthew-Mark*, 143) sees Jesus' characteristic denunciation of the sins of the age, combined with the genuine sorrow He felt for His people, as suggestive to some that He were Jeremiah.
4. **One of the old prophets** "has arisen." (Lk. 9:19; cf. the exact words of Herod's courtiers, Lk. 9:15) This indefinite suggestion shows a perplexity about Jesus that may reflect the hopes of 1 Macc. 14:41: ". . . until a faithful (genuine?) prophet should arise (from death?) *héos tou anastênai proféten pistôn.*" Or, is it only Luke's intention to clarify for his Gentile readers, to whom resurrection would be a new concept, how it could be thought that an ancient prophet long dead could return to earth? Its very indefiniteness makes this last alternative sound like the usual 14% of the population that is always undecided!

The confusion evident in current speculation about Jesus' true identity has a dual basis:

1. The time and opportunities to know Jesus better differed from person to person according to the amount and kind of exposure to Him they had enjoyed. Jesus' travels throughout Palestine evidently permitted only some teaching and some miracles in any given place. Although what He gave them should have sufficed, nevertheless, people, whose tenaciously held preconceived notions do not permit them to admit the evidential force of His words and works, require more time and situations to permit Jesus' loving self-giving to infiltrate their barriers of prejudice and convince them. This, of course, does not excuse their lack of hunger and thirst for righteousness and truth that would have spurred them to get to the bottom of the problem.
2. Jesus' multifaceted ministry presented varying aspects of His

true identity. Thus, in Jesus the true prophet, men could discern uncommon greatness that convincingly reminded them of the GIANTS of Old Testament history. But, even so, to refuse these evidences of His supernatural identity and His messianic claims as incredible, however well established they might be, is to say: "We do not believe."

While there was something in Jesus that reminded them of something mighty in each of the prophets mentioned, yet there was something in the people themselves that blocked their comprehension from going any further! The opinions listed are high, noble and respectful. Yet, however complimentary any of these theories may have been intended to be, to say anything less about Jesus than confess His rightful position as God's Son, the Messiah of Israel and Lord of the universe, is to "damn Him with faint praise!" Everyone must decide about Him whereinsofar the evidence permits, but to continue demanding proof in the face of conclusive evidence, or to refuse to admit that His credentials substantiate His claims, is to defame Him, and deny His claims to deity. (See "The Deity of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount," Vol. I, 185; Jn. 5:17f; Mt. 9:3-6)

So, when Jesus lay this first question before them, He was pushing them to face the following hard realities:

1. That an abyss separates them from the contrary and conflicting views of their own countrymen. To continue this way will mean the loss of their friendship, support and popularity.
2. That the judgment others pronounce upon Jesus must have no effect upon their decision. Their choice may be painfully and rigidly personal. Public opinion, itself divided, cannot be trusted to give a united, unequivocal answer on this vital issue. Therefore, the well-known differences of interpretation among the scholars do not dispense anyone from making his own personal research to find for himself the truth about Jesus. After all, everyone must finally answer the question: "But who do you say that I am?" The divergent interpretations exonerate no one from committing himself personally.
3. That the most favorable estimations, whereby many ascribed to Jesus prophetic authority, actually rejected Him. It is absolutely unpardonable that anyone should honor Jesus as a prophet, while rejecting the declarations He made regarding Himself. In fact, they did not embrace His claims as the words of a true prophet. Otherwise, they would have admitted the Messianic claims He

made. These statements were treated with the same indifference one would show to those of a common imposter or of someone unbalanced. Thus, the "esteem" for Jesus, that does not lead to submission to His word as the prophetic voice of God, must be considered a rejection.

3. Jesus pushes the Apostles to confess their personal position.

(16:15)

16:15 And he saith unto them, But who say ye that I am? Having given them opportunity to consider the alternatives and form a mature judgment, He now directs the critical question to His men. Even without one direct suggestion on this occasion, He is giving His students all the help to do well that He can. Whereas they had undoubtedly compared notes among themselves before this moment, still they had not been pressed to commit themselves so deeply as now. Whereas all earlier confessions were prompted by the spontaneous reaction of some disciple to some evidence of Jesus' greatness, the solemn moment has now arrived for them to answer a question Jesus had never asked before, but toward which all His activities had been directed.

These are men who had enjoyed superior opportunities to know about Jesus, having been His close associates for more than two years now. They had eaten and slept and ministered with Him. Because of their personal attachment to Him as itinerate Teacher, they had sacrificed family, comforts of home and business to be His understudies. What they conclude from these associations with Him is of more than academic importance and interest to the reader. In fact, the earlier half-hidden hints and proofs of Jesus' Messiahship and supernatural character have all been leading up to this chapter. What have these closest observers of the Jesus-phenomenon to say about Him?

Note that Jesus cannot make the best use of people who have no clear idea about His identity. Only those who have defined for themselves their personal experience of Him in a clear, intelligent conviction can proclaim it with boldness and enthusiasm.

4. The Apostles' Answer Given By Peter (16:16)

16:16 And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Critics spend pages arguing which form of the "good confession" is the original wording, and which has been worked over according to the editorial theology of the "author": Matthew's, which is the fullest expression; or Mark's, which is the briefest; or Luke's? The most obvious explanation is that Matthew's account is the most complete, while that of Mark and Luke represent the abbreviated versions. Carver (*Self-interpretation of Jesus*, 107) wryly comments:

Sometimes the obvious explanation is the most intelligent. There is no more vicious principle in Biblical criticism than that, among various accounts of an incident or reports of a speech, the briefest is most likely to be accurate (i.e. perfectly verbatim, HEF). The briefest is always condensed, as indeed the fullest must be.

Others had confessed Jesus before this moment:

1. John the Baptist (Jn. 1:34) and Nathaniel (Jn. 1:49) called Him "Son of God."
2. Andrew, Peter's brother (Jn. 1:40f) exclaimed: "We have found the Messiah!"
3. Samaritans recognized Him as "Christ" and "Savior of the world." (Jn. 4:25, 28f, 41f)
4. All who had called Him "Son of David" thereby admitted His Messiahship. (Mt. 9:27; 12:23; 15:22)
5. Even the Apostles themselves had confessed Jesus before this hour. After Jesus walked on the water and calmed the storm (Mt. 14:33): "Truly, you are God's Son!"
6. After multitudes deserted Jesus to follow Him no more, Peter affirmed, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed and come to know that you are the Holy One of God." (Jn. 6:68f)

But this confession is far more critical than those preceding it, since it indicates to what extent the Twelve, at this point in their experience, have committed themselves to the foundation-belief of the Kingdom, that message they must proclaim throughout their ministry as His emissaries. Always and everywhere it must be "Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, God's Son and foundation of our faith." McGarvey (*Fourfold Gospel*, 411) notes another distinction between

this confession and other, earlier statements which . . .

. . . had been under the pressure of miraculous display and strong emotion. Hence they were rather exclamatory guesses at the truth, and differed from this now made by Peter which was the calm expression of a settled conviction produced by the character and miracles of Jesus.

The Christ, the Son of the living God. Peter affirms two distinct truths about Jesus, a fact indicated by the repeated use of the article. **Son of God** does not stand in apposition to **Christ**, as if explaining something about **Christ**. *Christ* refers to His office as the one whom God anointed (Greek = *christòs* = "anointed"), whereas **Son of God** refers to His divine nature. (Cf. Jn. 1:1, 14, 18; 5:17f; 10:36; Lk. 22:67-71) **Christ** declares the belief that He was anointed with the Holy Spirit to the messianic office (Cf. Ac. 10:37, 38), and underlines His humanness, since the Christ must be the human son of David. (See on 1:1-17; Lk. 1:31f) **Son of God** affirms Jesus' spatio-temporal generation by the Father in the womb of the Virgin. (Lk. 1:32, 35; Gal. 4:4) Even if Peter imperfectly comprehended the full significance of his own words, it is unfair to him for some to affirm that he could have understood absolutely nothing of the high concepts he was later inspired to reveal in his apostolic ministry. Nothing positive may be affirmed about how much Jesus had revealed about Himself to this inner group of disciples beyond the well-substantiated self-revelations made before this encounter. (See on 16:17.) That is, did He reveal to them the circumstances surrounding the Virgin Birth that we have learned from Mt. 1 and Lk. 1? Even if these revelations had not been given, Peter could have based his affirmation of Jesus' divine Sonship on the following evidences: Jn. 5:17f, 25; 10:36; Mt. 3:17 and par. Jn. 1:29-34; Mt. 8:29 and par. Account must also be taken of the disciples' own Jewish culture which would have predisposed them to entertain the notion that the Messiah might also be the Son of God.

1. There are the Messianic texts of Scripture that picture the great Servant of Javeh as the "eternal Father, mighty God," "whose origin is from of old, from ancient days," etc. (Isa. 9:6; Mic. 5:2) Would devout hearers of the law and prophets, read to them every Sabbath, fail to attempt the harmonization of God's great promises to come personally to bless and heal His remnant, with those promises to send His Servant, the Son of man? (cf. Mal. 3:1f;

Zech. 9:9-16; Dan. 7:13f, etc.)

2. Despite the live possibility that some portions of the book of Enoch were actually post-Christian interpolations, if even some of the texts that speak of a supernatural Messiah be of pre-Christian authorship, hence undoubtedly Jewish thinking, then those few do demonstrate the conclusion that the divine Sonship of the Messiah formed a real part of the contemporary Messianic belief among the Jews.

The problem with citations from Enoch is the problematic dating of its "Son of God" sections. Is 2 Esdras 2:47 of Christian origin? In 2 Esdras 7:28f the voice of God speaks of "my Son the Messiah" (cfr. also 13:32, 37, 52; 14:9), R. H. Charles considers Enoch 105:2 to be of Chasidic or Pharisean authorship: "The Lord bade them to . . . testify: . . . I and My Son will be united with them . . ."

The hypothesis that contemporary Jewish messianism could think of the Christ as divine is perhaps also supported by the virulent reactions of the clergy when Jesus claimed to be "the Son (of God) in a unique sense (Jn. 5:17f; 10:24-39; 19:7), or even "Son of man" (Jn. 12:23-34).

Although Peter did not derive his understanding of Jesus' Messiahship from his own cultural milieu (16:17), still, the intellectual climate in Israel favored consideration of the Messiah as divine. The deliberateness with which this question of His identity is approached on this occasion argues for the conclusion that the high view of Jesus' identity expressed by Peter is his genuine conviction, because it stands out in contrast to the lower estimates made by public opinion. The only strategem remaining to discount Peter's understanding is to deny any historical validity to this entire account, a tactic actually used by some.

You are the Christ, said Peter, not "an anointed of God." The definiteness of his expression rightly encourages Gresham (*Christian Standard*, 1965, 108) to affirm:

For a Jew to say, "You are the Christ," means more than the average man can realize. The term "Christ" or "Messiah" means the anointed one, and in its Messianic use, it catches up into its ultimate significance all the typical offices God set in Israel, guaranteed by special anointing. Thus, Aaron and his sons were anointed and designated high priests (Leviticus 8). Prophets were anointed (1 Kings 19:16), signifying the approval of the Lord

concerning their message. Kings were anointed (1 Kings 19:15f; 1 Samuel 16:13) by the prophet of God, indicating whom God would have rule over His covenant people. In light of this background, the Jew believed that the Messiah would fulfill all these relations and offices perfectly, adequately and universally.

The great confession was, and is, a confession of content. If we would stand with Peter and express the conviction of our hearts as he, we must believe that Jesus of Nazareth fulfills the prophetic office of God, bringing that final Word from God in His own person and through His work (See Hebrews 1:1-3; John 1:18; 14:7-10; cf. Dt. 18:15-18; Lk. 24:19; Ac. 3:22; 7:37) If we would give adequate answer to our Lord's query, "Who do you say that I am?" we must affirm that Jesus of Nazareth is our only high priest, who in His own body made adequate sacrifice for iniquity and uncleanness, and who now continues His priestly work at the Father's right hand (See Hebrews 7-10; cf. Psalms 110:4; Romans 8:34) If we would confess that Jesus is the Christ in the meaningfulness of its first context, we must submit to His kingly power and enthrone Him as Lord of our lives (Matthew 28:18; Philippians 2:6-11; cf. Psalms 2:6; Zechariah 9:9; Mt. 21:5; Lk. 1:32f; Eph. 1:20-23; Rev. 11:15; 12:10; 17:14; 19:11-16)

The content of this confession must include these items: Jesus of Nazareth is God's truth-revealing prophet, sinful man's adequate high priest and sacrifice, and the world's ultimate monarch:

While it is true that Peter did not always do honor to his great confession made here (see on 16:22), his inconsistency does not change anything either of the sincerity with which he voiced or of the truth to which he gave assent. Any discussion of Peter's understanding must always weigh into the balance Jesus' satisfaction with Peter's affirmation and His identification of its source. (16:17)

To entitle Jesus as "the Christ of God" (Mk. 8:29; Lk. 9:20) is to admit that His representation of God's intentions for Israel's Messiah is the correct one, regardless of how drastically His humble life of service contradicted human preconceptions. By implication, we recognize that His attitudes and activities must guide and judge ours, since our commitment to Him as God's Anointed means that we bow before both His conceptual revelations as well as those acted out in His life-style as Servant of the Lord. (See on 16:24.)

Peter honors the Father of Jesus as **the living God**; because He stands in direct contrast to dead idols (cf. Jer. 10:6-10; Hos. 1:10;

Isa. 40) The God revealed by Jesus His Son is real, alive and active! (Cf. Jn. 6:57; Ro. 9:26)

5. Jesus' Joy and Promises to Peter (16:17-19)

16:17 **And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven.** The beatitude-formula means to represent the one described as particularly happy or well-off. (Cf. on Mt. 5:3-12) **Blessed art thou:** "You are happy indeed!" or "How favored you are!" **Blessed are you, Simon,** even though your understanding of the content of your grand affirmation is severely limited! **Blessed are you,** even though you can hardly imagine all that it means for me to be the Christ or Son of God, as God intends these terms. By comparison to all that you will later understand about these high concepts, what you have just said is but baby-talk expressing a child's understanding. **But blessed are you,** because your confession is true and sincere, and backed by all the authority of God.

Blessed art thou is but the echo of "Blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear . . . Many prophets and righteous men longed to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it." (Mt. 13:16f) This is why Jesus' commendation of Peter is not totally-unique, since the same blessedness is available to anyone open to receive the information God provides him through the life-character and prophetic credentials of Jesus the Nazarene. The Lord singles out Peter as a remarkably happy man because he has believed the testimony of all the evidences that God had worked through the miracles and prophecies of Jesus, hence was really a solid believer. If faith, then, is the trust of testimony to the reality of the facts about Jesus, then anyone today who believes the same facts on the testimony of the eyewitnesses who accurately report them to us, can share in this blessing by making the same declaration of faith.

Simon Bar-Jonah: why refer to him in this way? Is Jesus striking a contrast between what would have been Peter's personal views as a man and what had to be the result of his observing God's revelations given him?

1. Salvoni (*Da Pietro al papato*, 60), discussing this address, argues: Simon is called *Barjona*, an epithet which is probably equivalent

to "revolutionary," in the sense of one who is desirous of eliminating the Roman oppressors, a sympathizer with the Zealots and, hence, a Galilean longing for national liberty. Given this his nationalistic tendency, Peter could not have spontaneously imagined that Jesus, to whom such ideals were foreign, could have really been the expected Christ. That had to be the fruit of a particular divine revelation.

In support of his interpretation, he cites the Hebrew root *jnh* in the sense of "violent, oppressor" (Jer. 46:16; 50:16; Zeph. 3:1; Psa. 123:4; Ex. 22:21, etc.), seeing a correspondence between the modern Hebrew "birion" and "Barjona." Accordingly, he would see Peter as a "son of the violent" or a Zealot sympathizer if not actually one of them. Not only would this agree with his impetuous character, but it would throw into greater relief the complete dissimilarity between his human views and the high, spiritual Messianic concept he had just confessed.

2. On the other hand, Blass-Debrunner (*Grammar*, §53 (2)) explains *Ionâ* as a hybrid Hellenized name which has been abbreviated from *Ioân(n)es* for the even longer Hebrew form *Iochanan*, and therefore equal to *Ioännou* of Jn. 1:42; 21:15-17. Arndt-Gingrich agree (386). From this standpoint, Hendriksen (*Matthew*, 644) sees "Simon, son of John" as a

. . . reminder of what he was by nature, simply a human son of a human father. He was a man who of himself could not have contributed anything worthwhile, just one human being among many. This reminder is going to be followed shortly (v. 18) by an affirmation of that which by grace this same Simon Bar-Jonah had become, namely a worthy bearer of the name "Cephas" (Aramaic) or "Peter" (Greek).

Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee. Flesh and blood = human in contrast to divine. (See Gal. 1:16; 1 Co. 15:50; Eph. 6:12; cfr. Sirach 14:18; 17:31f) But, is the humanity involved here that of Jesus or of others?

1. Barnes (*Matthew-Mark*, 169) applies the expression to Jesus' own humanity. They had not comprehended His proper dignity by the lordly appearance of His human nature or worldly rank and stature, surrounded with external pomp and power as a man. These were not His insignias of Messiahship, so it was obvious that they had not recognized Him on the basis of His human

splendor. Rather, despite His lowly appearance and lack of resemblance to all that they had expected, they still had glimpsed His glory in His miracles, His matchless life, His teaching in harmony with the Old Testament and the prophecies that were coming true in Him.

2. The grand conclusion reached by Peter and the others who shared it had not been decided by taking samples of public opinion, although, as our text proves, it had not been made in isolation from it. The Twelve expressed what contemporary messianism thought of Jesus the true Messiah (16:13, 14), and, ironically, in the wake of the contemporary messianic understanding, themselves rebuke Jesus for talking in such a way as would overthrow their theories about His Messiahship (16:22f).

How was the glorious truth revealed exclusively by **my Father who is in heaven**? The expression, **flesh and blood has not revealed it**, in antithesis to **my Father**, must not be construed as excluding Jesus' ministry, as if His own humanness (flesh and blood) should be thought to eliminate His ministry from consideration as the source of the revelation. Rather, Jesus argued that all His words and works were derived directly from the Father (Jn. 5:17-36; 8:28; 10:25; 14:10f), and that what He revealed was adequate to lead them to believe. To suppose that His own incarnation in and of itself is inadequate to produce faith without unusual supernatural insight is to misunderstand the purpose of His coming. Had not Jesus toiled for over two years to produce this very conviction in His disciples? Why should His patient struggle with their ignorance and misunderstanding all be forcibly down-graded, forgotten or ignored in the flash of a special miraculous revelation to the mind of Peter? No, the only explaining the great confession is to admit that they were seeing what God in His Old Testament Word and in His Son, the living Word (Jn. 1:1, 14, 18), had been saying to EVERYONE. Carver's reconstruction (*Self-interpretation of Jesus*, 108) bears further consideration:

He has been very patient with these men while they were discovering Him. He did not begin by telling them He was "the Christ, the Son of the living God" and asking them to follow Him in that exalted capacity. . . . He waited for His personality (and His supernatural signs, HEF) to compel in them an exalted interpretation. They began following Him as teacher to find that He was "The Teacher." At first He was for them a prophet, to become "The Prophet," and in the end, the Maker of Prophets.

They began following "a friend of sinners" to find themselves heralds of the Redeemer from all sin. Jesus asks only that men will get acquainted with Him and then accept what they find Him to be.

A useful research project at this point would be to study the life of Peter or John as they are brought into contact with Jesus for the first time, with a view to study their individual growth in faith. Notice should be taken of Jesus' claims and deeds recorded up to this time. This method will reveal in precisely what ways God revealed the Messianic dignity of Jesus to Peter through His word and work. We should come to the same conclusions he did and by the same method. This means, further, that Peter's affirmation on Pentecost proves that ANY HEBREW witness of Jesus' ministry could have arrived at his own personal conviction of Jesus' Lordship by recognizing God's power operative in Jesus of Nazareth. (Ac. 2:22) This does not, however, base the final conclusion upon the sole reliability of human reason as distinguished from divine revelation, but rather upon the right use of human intelligence to conclude that a faithful God is actually revealing Himself through Jesus. Peter's own conclusion, then, is neither irrational nor absurd, being correctly arrived at by the proper use of his own intelligence. But it is not based upon human intellect alone. It admits the Lord God's revelations in the Old Testament concerning the nature of the Christ, and then goes on to identify the fulfilled reality in Jesus of Nazareth.

This revelation of the Father to Peter is not an instantaneous, personal inspiration unavailable to everyone else. See notes on 13:16, since the historical context of the great Sermon in Parables (Mt. 13) explains how this glorious truth could be revealed to disciples like Peter, while, at the same time, it lay hidden from so many of Jesus' contemporaries who said so far less about Him than was really true, however high their esteem for Him. So, if this revelation of Jesus' be unavailable to anyone, it is his own fault! (Cf. Mt. 11:25, 26 in context!) Further, as illustrated in 13:17, all the intimate disciples were seeing Jesus for what He really was, and received the same approval as Peter here. Although it is Peter who formulates the great confession, he is quite probably the spokesman of the belief held by the entire group. (Cf. Jn: 6:68f: "WE have believed . . .")

Further, when Peter later acted in direct opposition to a correct application of his confession, his misunderstanding was not corrected by an immediate flash of supernatural inspiration, but by Jesus' stern

rebuke and patient teaching. (16:23-28)

My Father: notice that, far from correcting anything supposedly erroneous in Peter's answer, the Lord affirms His own deity by making His own that expression of unshared Sonship. (Cf. Jn. 5:17ff)

16:18 **But I also say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.** Before continuing our interpretation of this section, we must ask . . .

IS THIS PASSAGE A HOMOGENEOUS PICTURE?

In their effort to interpret problematic language in this text, some commentators see Jesus' language as painting one, unified picture which consists in one homogeneous, extended rhetorical device in which each of the various elements mentioned combine to complete a scene to be explained more or less literally. They see the following elements:

1. Jesus is the builder.
2. He is about to build His Church (assumed by some to be a city-kingdom).
3. The foundation of His Church is a great rock to be identified.
4. Simon Peter is to be the gate-keeper to this Church (city-kingdom?) by using the keys.
5. The keys Peter uses are those which permit entrance into the Kingdom.
6. The gates (symbol of a city's power) of the city-kingdom of death will be unable to withstand the assaults of Christ's Church.

A bit of circumstantial evidence seeming to confirm the above rhetorical construction comes from the topography. Because this conversation occurred near Caesarea Philippi, a city enjoying a strategic location on the solid rock foundation of the foothills of the Lebanon mountain chain, its very configuration would have furnished Jesus with a powerful, visual illustration of His words. Thus, the Apostles would have comprehended instantly that the Church-image He intended was that of a city-kingdom founded upon a solid mountain base.

If this be the proper reconstruction of Jesus' language, then certain internal conclusions follow:

1. If Jesus is the Builder, He Himself cannot be regarded as the foundation rock of the Church.
2. If Peter is bearer of the keys, he would not be thought of as the foundation either.
3. Therefore, the foundation of the Church must be something other than these two persons whose position in the picture is clearly established.
4. All that is left in the picture to serve as the Church's foundation is Peter's confession, or perhaps something else.

Whatever may be claimed for the above-mentioned extended metaphor, all must admit that it is not without weaknesses, significant among which are the following:

1. Jesus nowhere affirms His intention to present a homogeneous picture similar to that constructed by the logic of its interpreters.
2. The Hebrew mentality back of this conversation (recorded in Greek) has importance for our decision about how to interpret the passage, because, if the presumed imagery of the unified picture is nothing but a series of independent Hebraisms, then the supposedly "unified picture" disintegrates. Each single Semitism, in that case, must be interpreted according to its own literary type, but not necessarily linked with the others, as the "unified picture" concept would require. That a genuinely Hebrew mentality lies back of this conversation is evident from the following expressions: "Bar-Jonah" (if thought of as an Aramaic variant of the Greek "son of John"), "flesh and blood," "kingdom of heaven" (instead of "kingdom of God"), "binding and loosing," and the typically Hebrew word-play based on a name (even in Greek!)

The presumption that a conversation in Aramaic stands back of the text of our Greek Matthew cannot be established merely by the presence of Hebraeo-Aramaisms translated into Greek, since no one at this late date can determine objectively who did the translating: Jesus Himself as He spoke, or Matthew as he wrote.

Consider also the Hebraisms involved in the following objections:

3. The rhetorical fiction of the two city-kingdoms takes little or no account of the play on Peter's name in connection with the rock foundation upon which the Church should be built.
4. Also, the Church, in the presumed imagery of this section, is never

- called a city-kingdom in this context. This must be assumed to complete the picture. The expression "gates of Hades" need not suggest "the gates of the kingdom of heaven." Nor need the "keys of the Kingdom" promised to Peter, imply that they are for use in opening the Kingdom's gates, but even if so, that would not depend upon this figure, but upon their own literary connection.
5. Again, no explanation is given of the switch from the image of the construction of a city-kingdom upon a mighty rock foundation to the image of a man binding and loosing certain objects. (16:19) A change of figure in the very verse that speaks of the consignment of the keys of the kingdom of Peter weakens the reconstructed rhetorical device supposedly intended by Jesus.
 6. Are the functions of "bearer of the keys" and "foundation-stone" mutually exclusive? Only if we superimpose an invented rhetorical device upon the text.

Further weaknesses appear in the way the data have been organized into what appeared to be an air-tight metaphorical picture. The error can be exposed by simply furnishing another image that utilizes the same language-data:

1. Christ is the Builder, or Founder, of His Congregation, or Assembly (*ekklesia*).
2. Peter the believer is a basis (= foundation stone) in that living congregation.
3. The gates of death (= the city of the dead) is powerless to imprison that congregation within its walls:
 - a. Both in the sense that Christ would burst those gates, rising from the dead to establish His congregation of believers.
 - b. And in the sense that the Church too would crash death's gates from within and come forth, victorious over death.

In this alternative picture, the Church is seen as having real existence only in Christ who must Himself enter the gates of the city of the dead, the grave. According to this construction, then, we must not think of the Church as a great city-kingdom on the outside of Hades and warring against the latter kingdom. In fact, Jesus said nothing about that in this text. Rather, we must understand the Church as "in Christ" (a thoroughly Pauline concept), having real existence only in relation to Him. This means that the Church was in Hades with Christ during the time of His death, just as really as Christ was within the "gates of Hades." If He intends also a future prophecy

regarding the Church in a time after His resurrection, then, He means that the Church would enjoy all the benefits of victory over death by resurrection.

Because of the above-mentioned weaknesses in the former rhetorical reconstruction, the method followed in this study will be the consideration of the idiomatic expressions used by Jesus, taken individually and not as part of a rhetorical whole, except as each expression by its nature demands.

In the history of the exegesis of this text, positions have been taken that, in some cases, have produced grievous consequences in the Body of Christ. In the case of most questions afflicted with extreme stances, the truth usually lies somewhere near the middle, roughly halfway between the extremes. The exegetical history of our text has seen its interpreters divided into about three major groups: those who see Peter the man as the Rock-foundation of the Church, those who see Peter's confession as the Rock, and those who affirm Christ to be the Rock. Is it not possible that, for good and sufficient reasons, the truth may well lie somewhere near the middle between these extremes? This is no plea for that indifferentism, that middle-of-the-road-ism, that refuses to choose between hard alternatives. In fact, the choice of a mediating position is often one requiring no little courage, because it is then exposed to the fiery objections from the contenders for the extreme positions. This, however, is not mediation for mediation's sake, but because—at least in our present case—the truth appears to lie between the above-mentioned positions. For sake of clarity, these positions will be dealt with in the following order:

1. Peter is not intended:
 - a. God the great Rock of Israel is meant.
 - b. Christ Himself is meant.
 - c. The faith that formed the content of Peter's confession is meant.
2. Peter is intended:
 - a. Peter the man is made earthly Head of the Church.
 - b. Peter the believer, symbol of all who confess this truth, is meant.

I. PETER IS NOT INTENDED

"You are Peter, a man of rock, worthy of your name, because you have given expression to the revealed truth of my Messiahship and divine Sonship. Your name suggests a symbolic name for what shall

be the Rock upon which I establish my Church.”

Those who reject Peter as the intended reference notice the distinction in gender between the words Jesus used. Jesus referred to Peter by his masculine name, *Pétros*, but identified the Church's foundation by using a feminine noun, *pétra*, thereby distinguishing the two. Further, *Pétros*, it is pointed out, refers to “a stone,” in general contrast to *pétra*, “bedrock, a great rock cliff, etc.” Thus, whatever is represented by the term *pétra* is certainly not *Pétros*! Peter, accordingly, is but a small stone incapable of supporting the Church. The sure foundation must be sought elsewhere.

Because this view is based entirely upon the Greek record of Matthew, its opponents notice that it would be seriously weakened if it be admitted that Jesus were speaking Aramaic at the moment, and that our author rendered in Greek the sense of the Aramaic. The supposition is that the nice distinctions of the Greek are not respected in Aramaic which adopts the same word for Peter (*Cephas*) as for rock (*Cefa*). Proponents of the view then answer that the Holy Spirit guided Matthew's selection among the Greek synonyms, deciding upon that word in Greek which correctly represented the mind of the Lord. Thus, no appeal can be made to a supposed Aramaic original of the text in question, since the final Greek original of Matthew bears the divine stamp of that Apostle's inspiration and consequent authority.

It is further argued by those who reject the man Peter as intended by Jesus' word-play, that had Jesus intended to establish the Church on Peter, He would not have been so ambiguous. Instead, He would have affirmed: “and on you I will build my Church.”

A. GOD, THE GREAT ROCK OF ISRAEL, IS INTENDED.

1. In favor of this view three points are noted:
 - a. The confession of Peter mentions the name of God. (“the living God”)
 - b. Jesus also mentioned the “Father who is in heaven” as the source of Peter's confession.
 - c. In the Hebrew Biblical literature God is pictured as the great mass of rock that protects and blesses Israel. (Dt. 32; 2 Sam. 22:32 = Psa. 18:31)
2. Against this view, it must be noticed that, while God the Father is part of the larger literary and historical context, there are other

possibilities much closer to our text. The expression "upon THIS rock," unless compelling reasons demand otherwise, would be badly applied to words or phrases too far away.

B. CHRIST HIMSELF IS THE INTENDED ROCK

1. In favor of this view the following evidences are cited:
 - a. Christ is pictured as the Rock or as a Foundation in other texts. (1 Co. 3:11; 10:4; Lk. 20:17, 18; Ac. 4:11; 1 Pt. 2:4-8)
 - b. Mention is also made of the difference in gender and meaning between *Pétros* and *pétra*, a factor which facilitates a reference to someone other than Peter.
2. Against this view the following objections should be registered:
 - a. This view introduces confusion into the imagery presumed to be essential to Jesus' rhetoric. That is, if Jesus is the Architect of the Church, how can He properly be considered to be the stone foundation also in the same metaphor?
 - b. If, according to many, it be assumed that the Church be pictured in our text as a great city-kingdom founded upon a rock foundation, then none of the above-cited texts are of any use, because they all involve quite different rhetorical images. When Paul laid Jesus Christ as the Church's foundation at Corinth (1 Co. 3:11), another image is involved: that of an artificial foundation for a temple. (1 Co. 3:9-16) Paul "put" (*étheke*) the foundation that now "lay" (*keimenon*) there. Nothing is said about digging down to the rock, because the figure is another. Nor can 1 Co. 10:4 help the theory, since the "Rock that followed (*akolouthouses pétras*) them was the Christ," was a rock at various places in the desert from which Moses drew water, hence no symbol of a fixed, unmovable foundation for the Church. In the other texts He is no longer the foundation stone, as required by this view, but the "corner-stone."
 - c. *Pétra*, used in reference to Christ does not necessarily refer to a massive rock foundation, since Peter calls Jesus "the stone (*lithos*) of stumbling and the rock (*pétra*) of offence." (1 Pt. 2:8) In our rhetoric, do men normally stumble over massive mountains of rock, or, rather, against rocks of more modest proportions?
 - d. If the distinction in meaning between *Pétros* and *pétra* be thought important, why not be consistent and notice also the

distinctions between Greek words in the above-cited texts where Jesus is called a "stone" (*lithos*), "foundation" (*themélion*), "rock" (*pétra*). "cornerstone" (*akrogoniáion*)? Do not these different words intend also to indicate distinct meanings? If so, then why unite them with *pétra* against *Pétros*? If not, then why pit *Pétros* against *pétra*?

- e. Even if it is true that the divine basis of the Church cannot be a man as such, but only the Christ (cfr. 1 Co. 3:11), we must ask the question: is Jesus presented in our text as the foundation of the Church *directly*, or only *indirectly* through the confession of Peter, just as is true for all the Apostles in Eph. 2:20?

C. PETER'S CONFESSION IS THE ROCK

1. In favor of this view, the following points have been noted:
 - a. The difference in the Greek words is noted: *Pétros* = "a stone"; *pétra* = "a solid rock foundation." It is as if Jesus had said, "You are Peter, truly a man of stone, and upon what makes you that, i.e. the truth you have just confessed, I will found my Church. Though a man of rock yourself, you are but a small stone compared to the solid, massive, bed-rock foundation—i.e. my messianic dignity and my divine Sonship—upon which I establish my Church.
 - b. The validity of this view is further based contextually upon the imagery supposed to be in Jesus' mind. Thus, if Jesus is the Builder of the Church-Kingdom and for which Peter is but the keyholder, then the Rock must be something other than these two. Having identified all other parts of this (supposed) picture, one is driven to conclude that the confession of Peter is itself the Rock.
 - c. The appropriateness of the imagery used to represent the ideas communicated would be ruined, were it supposed that such a momentous institution as the Church should be pictured as established upon so human a foundation as the man Peter. Regardless of the preciousness and lofty conception of Peter's conviction, Peter the man is still human. Contrarily, the glorious proposition to which he gave voice stands above all that is human ("flesh and blood did not reveal this"). Rather, this mighty truth is of divine origin ("my Father in heaven").
 - d. Further, the resurrection faith preached by the Apostles centered

around their conviction of the Messiahship and Lordship of Christ, not around the shallow glory and secondary importance of the man Peter. Thus, only the truth confessed is an appropriate, stable basis for the Church.

2. Against this view the following objections should be noticed:
 - a. Jesus adopted the pronoun "THIS" (*taùte*), not "that" (*ekeïne*), "upon THIS rock," a demonstrative that points, not to something further back in the context, such as the confession of Peter made a few minutes before, but to something more immediate. In that case it would have been more logical to say, "upon THAT rock." (*epì ekeïne tê pétra*)
 - b. The validity of making such wide distinctions in the Greek words *Pétros* and *pétra* will be discussed under II. "Peter Is Intended,"
 - c. The question of "appropriateness of imagery" may turn out to be subjective taste, if it can be demonstrated that another different view arrives at the same goal of rendering the true meaning of this text by providing equally appropriate alternatives.
 - d. The faith preached by the Apostles after Jesus' resurrection was not merely intellectual assent to the right view of Jesus' Lordship and Messiahship. Rather, they labored to produce that fine balance so well expressed by Paul: "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27) This is truth alive in human personality, a larger expression of the confession Peter voiced. So, the cold, naked confession, considered alone, is actually a weaker basis for human transformation than previously imagined, hence, less appropriate as the Church's basis, at least in this sense.

II. PETER IS INTENDED

Before entering into a consideration of the applications to be made of the data pointing to Peter, let us first examine the data.

1. The contextual data; the near context is tightly focused upon Peter:
 - a. The blessing upon Peter by name for his confession. (v. 17)
 - b. The word-play made upon the name of Peter. (v. 18)
 - c. The particular mission of Peter. (v. 19)
 Taken together, these factors recommend that we apply to Peter the intervening material whereinsofar this is possible.

2. The mechanical guideposts as signs of meaning:

- a. Jesus begins v. 18 by saying: "And I say to you (*kagò dé soi légo*)" as if happy to confess Peter for what he is, even as Peter had confessed Him according to His true identity. Peter had said, "You are the Christ, the Son of God." Now Jesus says, "You are Peter." Much earlier the Lord had said, "You are Simon son of John. *You shall be called Peter.*" (Jn. 1:42) Here, on the other hand, He affirms, "You are Peter," even now what the name implies. So, the double confessions, i.e. that of Peter and this of Christ, leads the reader to notice Peter in some special way.
- b. Another mechanical detail drawing attention to Peter is the word "THIS ROCK" (*taùte tē pétra*). Should Jesus have meant to refer to some object outside the immediate sentence, He would have said "THAT ROCK" (*ekeïne tē pétra*). Unless some reference to Peter is intended, further clarification is needed in the sentence to turn the gaze of the reader away from Peter and toward some other unnamed object.
- c. The Greek nouns *Pétros* and *pétra* are not so mutually exclusive as usually defended by apologists. Everyone will agree that *pétros*, taken as a common noun (not a name), may mean "a small stone" in contrast to *pétra*, "a great rock cliff."
- (1) Nevertheless, in its own linguistic history, *pétros* has been used as a synonym of imperturbability or hardness (Sophocles, *Oedipus Tyrannus*, 334). Reference is even made in Euripides (*Medea*, 28) to "the rock-cliff of Thorikia" (*ho Thorikios pétros*) according to Rocci, 1494. Therefore, at a significant point in their spheres of meaning, *pétros* and *pétra* can have overlapping connotations, i.e. they can both mean "rock-cliff, ledge of rock."
- (The same phenomenon occurs in Italian where "sasso" means "a pebble," but "Gran Sasso d'Italia" means "the Great Massif of Italy," a tract of the Appennine range that most looks like high mountains!)
- (2) Further, even *pétra* can sometimes indicate a rock of modest proportions. Both Paul (Ro. 9:33) and Peter (1 Pt. 2:8) cite the parallel use of *lithos* and *pétra*, appearing in Isa. 8:14. (See note at I, B; 2, c above)
- See Salvoni's citations (*Da Pietro al papato*, 63, note 9) of Homer, *Odyssey*, 9,243; Hesiod, *Theogonia*, 675; *Widom of Solomon*, 17:19 LXX = 17:17. The exchange

of these nouns is affirmed in the second century after Christ by the anatomist Claudius Galeno (XII, 194)

In English the same phenomenon occurs in the word "rock": just how big is a "rock"? It can refer to anything from "a rock to throw at rabbits," to the "Rock of Gibraltar." Only the context can determine the size of the rock in question.

So, if the Greeks used *pétros* and *pétra* with some of the same liberty, and sometimes interchangeably, then our interpretation of these words in our text must be determined from the context, and not so much from a mechanical use of wooden definitions.

- d. Regardless of the external measurements of the object to which each word *pétros* and *pétra* is supposed to refer, they are, after all, composed of the same material, a fact that cannot help but cause the mind to connect the two in some intimate way.
- e. Jesus had surnamed Simon "Cephas-Peter" at their first encounter. (Jn. 1:42) What motivated the Lord to do that? If He meant for this characterizing label to indicate some essential quality of the man, to what side of Peter's make-up and especially to what phase of his future work in the Church would He be referring by calling him a "little rock, pebble or stone"? And did He not, rather, by prophetic insight, name him *Cephas-Pétros* in view of his latent capacity for faith and the rock-like spiritual power he would personally contribute to the stability of the Church?

In fact, we are so accustomed to the Apostle's new name that we forget that, originally, it needed to be translated for the common readers of John's Gospel (Jn. 1:42). To sense the original flavor of that scene, we should render it in English: "You shall be called Cephas (which means Rock)." However, prior to Jesus' naming Simon *Cephas-Pétros*, how common was this expression as a normal masculine name? In fact, if *Cephas-Pétros* were NOT a common name in our literature and among the Jewish-Greek speakers of Palestine, then attention would be immediately called to the root significance of that common noun made into a proper name. In this case, only with time would it become commonly known as a proper name because of the fame of the Apostle and used in all the normal situations and combinations common to proper names, e.g. "Simon Peter."

However, Edersheim (*Life*, II, 82) cites, as proof that the name *Pétros* is Jewish, the father of a certain rabbi (José bar Petros), without, however, identifying the date of his source, Pesiqta, ed. Buber, p. 158a, line 8 from bottom. Unless this source is undoubtedly pre-Christian, then the name could have entered Jewish culture from Christian sources rather than vice versa.

Pétros, as a name, can scarcely be pre-Christian. (Arndt-Gingrich, 660) But the prior question, of course, is whether *CEPHAS* were known as a proper masculine name before the first century, since *Pétros*, as it first appears in the NT at Jn. 1:42, only furnishes the Greek translation for Jesus' Aramaic choice. *Cephas*, etymologically linked with the masculine noun *ceph* (= "rock") which is used only twice (Job 30:6 and Jer. 4:29), does not appear in the OT as a name, but is clearly based upon it. (Gesenius, 410 and Scerbo, 139, both link it with NT *Cephas*.) Further, whereas it was formerly thought that *Cepha* were a feminine noun, Salvoni (*Da Pietro al papato*, 62, note 4) indicates that now, however, the critics, on the basis of the Palestinian Targums and Samaritan Targum, recognize it as a masculine noun and therefore applicable to a man. Now, whether or not our Greek text reflects an Aramaic conversation, it nevertheless mirrors the Aramaic word-play that Jesus Himself deliberately set up by naming Peter *Cephas*. Whether or not the conversation took place in Greek or Aramaic makes absolutely no difference, because the final result is the same:

- (1) If Jesus said only two Aramaic words in His Greek sentence (i.e. "You are *Cephas* and upon this *cepha* I will build my Church."), the very change from second person ("You are") to third person ("upon this") points to two concepts, not just one. The pun shows the intimate link, while the change of person shows the distinction.
- (2) If Jesus spoke the whole sentence in Greek exactly as recorded by Matthew, then, He renders Simon's name in Greek *Pétros*, while using the feminine *pétra* to underline the characteristic in Peter upon which He would establish His congregation. Thus, in Greek we have not only the change of persons (from second to third), but also the change of gender to indicate the distinction. Nevertheless, the etymological affinity of the two words, brought out in the word-play,

establishes the intimate link between their concepts. Foster (*Middle Period*, 235) distinguishes *Pétros* from *pétra* as also *Cephas* from *cepha*. On the latter pair he argues that coining a man's name from a feminine word *cepha* automatically makes it a different word with a different signification. But this emphasis fails to recognize that the very act of coining a proper name from a common noun instantly calls attention to the common noun, regardless of which language is used.

This is, of course, increasingly less true the farther the new name travels from its original source. Many common names have meanings that originally characterized the person so named. For example, *Harold* is an old Norse word meaning "Powerful Warrior, army leader." *Edward* is Anglosaxon for a trusted steward, a guardian of property. *Fowler* is English for a hunter of wild fowl. So far are we from the origins! The actual names of the current labor union leaders in Italy, rendered in English, are Mr. Crooked, Mr. Badly-made and Mr. Little (Sigg. Storti, Malfatti e Piccoli)!

So, "Rock" or "Rocky" calls attention to "rock," not vice versa. The net result of these considerations is that, when Jesus made His famous pun, His hearers' mind easily would run from *Pétros* to *pétra* and back in a close, natural identification in terms. But, if something about Peter is the object of Jesus' thought, what conclusions may be drawn therefrom?

A. PETER THE MAN IS MADE EARTHLY HEAD OF THE CHURCH, VICAR OF CHRIST.

1. In favor of this view, the following points are argued:
 - a. Granted that all NT doctrine exalts the primacy of Christ in heaven and on earth, this primacy properly requires human expression on earth during the physical absence of Christ. This principle of representation of God by human officials is illustrated in OT religion, the typical preparation for the new, in its high priest, its prophets and its kings. Because Jesus is their typical fulfilment, but physically absent, and because the Holy Spirit is present only invisibly, human need for divine representation is met by Christ's human delegate, or vicar, who acts on His behalf. But any human delegate must have

proper credentials to identify him as such. Mt. 16:18f constitutes the necessary proof of the transmission of this authority and establishes Peter as Christ's Vicar. In this position, Peter and his successors upon whom episcopal hands have been laid, become the lineal self-projection of Christ Himself in the world. Because of certain historical circumstances, the bishop of Rome is the lineal successor to the Chair of Peter.

- b. The leading position of Peter in the apostolic group and in the life of the early Church is striking confirmation of the authority with which he is invested in this text.
2. Beyond what has already been written on "The Supremacy of Peter" (Vol. II, 274ff), the following objections to this expression of the Roman Catholic position are raised:
 - a. Jesus did not say, "You are Peter and upon YOU I will build my Church," but rather "upon this rock," a fact that, while admittedly linking Peter and the *pétra*, points away from Peter the man to some characteristic that he and the Church's foundation share in common.
 - b. John 20:21 furnishes the following precious elements of proof to the contrary:
 - (1) Jesus' self-projection in the world is not to be accomplished by a single vicar, but by a plurality of disciples: "As the Father has sent me, even so send I you (plural: *humâs*)."
Many NT texts explain that the mission of the total Church is but the extension of Jesus' activity in the world. (Cf. Jn. 12:26; 14:12-20; Mt. 28:20; Ro. 12:4-8; 1 Co. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:23; 4:4, 12-16; 5:30; Col. 1:27, 28; 1 Jn. 4:17)
 - (2) Jesus' commission was given on this occasion to both apostolic and non-apostolic disciples present. Peter was not alone, as other Apostles were present. (Jn. 20:19-21) If this is the same appearance recorded in Lk. 24:13 (cf. Jn. 20:19), two of the non-apostolic disciples are mentioned: Cleopas and his friend. (Lk. 24:18) It was while these latter were retelling Jesus' Emmaus-Road appearance to them that He Himself appeared to the Eleven. (Lk. 24:36)
 - (3) The gift of the Holy Spirit is breathed indiscriminately upon them, not just upon Peter. (Jn. 20:22)
 - (4) The solemn promise is made that men's sins would be forgiven or retained through THESE disciples. (Jn. 20:23)
 - c. Jesus established no hierarchy on earth and deliberately blocked any possibility of its later development by men claiming divine

- approval, (Mt. 20:25-28; cf. Lk. 22:24-30; Mt. 23:8-12) The very character of Christian liberty—i.e. the freedom to act responsibly without surrendering one's right to decide by turning it over to the despotism of hierarchical legalism or to a "Teaching Authority" (Magisterium)—eliminates the need for a continuous judicial or legislative hierarchy. (See Special Study after Mt. 15:20: "How to Avoid Being a Pharisee"; cf. also Mt. 23:8-12 where Jesus outlawed glorification of any teaching authority.)
- d. None of the other Apostles interpreted any part of this verse as establishing Peter over them in any hierarchical sense. Their debates about their own relative importance prove that this point had not been settled by Jesus in this text and situation. (Cf. Mt. 18:1ff) The request of James and John for places of honor,—a request which, intentionally or involuntarily, would cut Peter out,—may also indicate that they did not interpret His words as placing Peter on such a throne as that of the "Holy See." (Mt. 20:20-28) The New Jerusalem has only twelve apostolic foundations, none of which is described as more important than the others. (Rev. 21:14, 19ff) There were fully 12 judgment thrones, not just one for Peter. (Mt. 19:28)
- e. Peter himself, to whom any personal dictatorship was foreign, saw his position as that of a "fellow elder" charged with "not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock." (1 Pt. 5:1-5) The Apostle, especially charged with the responsibility to "Feed my lambs," pictures His Lord as "the Shepherd and Guardian (Bishop) of your souls" (1 Pt. 2:25) and "the chief Shepherd." (1 Pt. 5:4)
- f. Whatever may be affirmed for Peter in this text (16:18), in no sense is he either the real Founder ("I will build") nor the Owner ("my Church"). These fundamental roles are filled only by Christ Himself. (Eph. 1:22; 4:11-15; 5:23ff)
- g. Salvoni (*Da Pietro al papato*, 80) points out that . . .

. . . the context refers to a particular point in the history of the Church, i.e. its establishment: "I will build my Church." It is therefore in that precise moment that Peter's activity must take place . . . a fact which excludes both the function of Head and the continuance of such a function for the entire history of the Church.

- h. Again, Salvoni (*ibid.*, 123-125, 146-150, 153) shows that the early Church did not recognize in this passage a hierarchical

superiority of office for Peter, because the church at Jerusalem was more prone, after Peter's departure from Jerusalem (cfr. Ac. 12:17; Gal. 2:11; 1 Pt. 5:13), to follow the leadership of James the Lord's brother. How could the Judaizing element of the Jerusalem Church justify their glorification of James, if everyone knew that Peter had been appointed Vicar by Christ? Also, those in the post-apostolic Church who tended to glorify John among the Apostles do not see Peter as Head of the universal Church or of the Apostolic college. If Peter's episcopal primacy was clear from the beginning, how is this phenomenon to be explained?

- i. The major misunderstanding represented by the papal view is its uncanny lack of fundamental sensitivity to the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom. What are "authorized representatives and vicars" worth, if they ignore the nature of Jesus' kingdom and the type of influence He desires to be expressed in the world, i.e., spiritual transformation by moral methods, as opposed to materialistic manifestations, mechanical rule or hierarchical authority? Of what use are living authorities, when men will obey or reject the authoritative voice of the Apostles and Prophets now dead, and when men may be judged on the basis of their response to these, just as well as by their response to living authorities?
- j. The attitude of Paul toward Peter is especially revealing:
 - (1) He stoutly denied that his apostleship depended upon any man, especially upon those who preceded him chronologically in the apostleship at Jerusalem. (Gal. 1:11-17)
 - (2) He rejected the popular estimate of the so-called "pillars," since God shows no such partiality, and affirmed that he received nothing essential from them. (Gal. 2:6-10) Note that Paul mentions the Three of Jerusalem as "*reputed* to be pillars," but does not affirm that they *are* pillars. Next he sets them in this order: James before Peter, then John. How could Paul have talked like this, had Peter really been proclaimed head by Christ and His Vicar?
 - (3) He shared a world mission at least as great as that of Peter (if not actually greater numerically!), the only real difference being that Peter's mission was to one nation (the Jews), whereas Paul was entrusted with that to all nations (the Gentiles). (Gal. 2:7-10)
 - (4) Paul had no fear to oppose Peter resolutely when he saw

- him move away from the Gospel truth. (Gal. 2:11)
- (5) When there arose at Corinth a division honoring Peter, Paul did not for once admit that it was essential to belong to Peter in order to belong to Christ, as if Peter should have been recognized as Christ's vicar. Rather, he thundered that one must belong only to Christ. (1 Co. 1:12ff) Later, Paul affirmed that the Apostles, Peter included, are but simple servants of the Christians. (1 Co. 3:4, 5, 21-23)
- k. The entire New Testament doctrine that sees Christ as now enjoying the primacy in heaven *and on earth* militates against any concept of Peter or anyone as the substitute of Christ. (Cfr. Ephesians, Colossians, and the "once-for-all quality" of Christ's sacrifice and the permanence of His high-priesthood in Hebrews.) The Roman Catholic position fails to understand that God has exalted Christ as Head of the Church, that "in EVERYTHING He might be pre-eminent." (Col. 1:18)

B. PETER IS PICTURED AS TYPICAL OF ALL WHO CONFESS THIS TRUTH.

It is as if Jesus had said, "In you, Peter, I have just hit solid rock, just the kind of rock—*this divine truth alive in human personality*,—upon which I will found my congregation of the new Israel." Thus, He makes Peter typical of all in whom this divine truth is found, and out of whom He could construct His Kingdom.

1. Beyond the arguments listed above under II. PETER IS INTENDED, consider the following arguments in favor of this interpretation of the symbolism inherent in the words *Pétros* and *pétra*:
- a. Only this view explains adequately the word-play made upon the name of Peter.
- (1) Only this view explains why Jesus did not say, "You are Peter, and upon you I will build my Church." The Church is not to be constructed upon Peter the man as its only foundation. Rather, Jesus affirmed: "You are Rock and upon this rock I will build . . ." i.e. upon that quality in you, as the first confessor, which makes a good base for the Church: truth alive in the human personality of Peter who recognized Jesus for what God knew Him to be.
- (2) The rock upon which the Church is built, then, is not just

bare truth nor mere humans, but upon that fine combination of the two which we call Christians. Peter, by his bold confession of the conviction of his heart, proved himself to be the first disciple, the first Christian, deliberately tested and found solidly in harmony with all that God was revealing to men through Jesus.

- (3) Only this view adequately explains the use of the masculine and feminine nouns, *Pétros* and *pétra*. If it be true that *pétra* refers to the larger mass of rock and *pétros* to the smaller, the union of these two ideas in the same sentence draws attention to the fact that the one rock (*Pétros* = Peter) standing before Jesus, is a splendid specimen of the sort of rock (*pétra*) upon which He could finally begin building His Church. The *Pétros* comes from the *pétra*! They are of the same material, a fact that draws attention to what they have in common. Jesus did not say, "You are Peter, BUT upon this rock," but "You are Peter AND upon this rock," a fact that unites and coordinates the ideas. Peter is but a symbol of that upon which the Church is built: *divine truth alive and incarnated in human personality*.

- b. The rhetorical error of those who do not see Peter as the symbol of the rock, is their unproven assumption that Jesus intended to indicate a rock mountain, when it is conceivable that He really intended a rock for construction. After all, how big is a rock (*pétra*)? (See Greek citations on *pétra*, *pétros* under II) Only the superimposition of the subjective picture (illustrated earlier) sees the Church as a City-Kingdom situated on a mountain, whereas Jesus' mental picture might be that of a temple built upon a series of stones constituting a foundation which itself is laid upon solid rock. But since Jesus expressed no mental image other than that of a congregation (*ekklesia*) constructed upon a definite basis (*epi taùte tê pétra*), perhaps we would do well to dispense entirely with mental images projected back into Jesus' mind!
- c. In order properly to interpret the rock upon which the Church is to be built, we must ask a question usually assumed already to have been answered: what does it mean to "build upon"? (*oikodomeso epi* . . .) If it means "to establish something upon something else as its foundation or basis," then we must realize that there are as many bases for a concept as grand as the Church as there are standpoints from which it may be viewed.

- (1) The Church has a *theological* basis: justification by faith in the all-sufficient sacrifice of the divine-human Christ.
- (2) The Church has also a *functional* basis: the conversion of individuals by submission to Christ, and their empowering by gifts of the Holy Spirit (both ordinary and special) whereby the whole body effectively builds itself up toward maturity and does Christ's work in the world.
- (3) The Church has a *historical* basis: the mighty acts of God realized in time and space in the person of Jesus and the Apostles, as well as in the preparation made by the prophets and the Law.
- (4) The Church has a *spiritual* foundation also: its goals and methods, as well as its incentives, take their form from their Designer, God, Who is spirit, not carnal nor material.
- (5) The Church has an *economic* basis upon which it operates: its possessions are freely shared because viewed as God's property to be responsibly administered by individual stewards.
- (6) The Church has a *personal* basis: rather than function as a power block to achieve its goals, it begins with the creation of new men and women who, because of the truth incarnate in them and because of what this makes them become and do, are capable of being the body of Christ in the world.
- (7) The Church has a *social* basis: not limited to a vertical, individual relationship to God, the Church not only draws her members from the world, but converts them and returns them to function in the world to leaven society.

NOW, UPON WHICH OF THESE (OR OTHER) BASES DID JESUS BUILD HIS CHURCH? The total New Testament answer is, of course, ALL OF THEM. But to which did He refer *in our text*? Too long we have presumed that He meant to indicate only the theological or Christological foundation, when He may well have meant the PERSONAL basis or foundation. It is the conviction of this writer that the latter is the case.

d. Should it shock anyone that God or Christ should found His Church upon men like Peter, let the following observations be made:

- (1) Other passages clearly reveal that it is NOT UPON MEN ALONE that Christ founds His Church.
 - (a) Everything depends upon the fulfilment of the plan of God.

- (b) Without *Christ*, nothing would be possible, because He carried out God's part on earth.
 - (c) Further, it is precisely by means of the proclamation of *the truth* of the messianic dignity and divine Sonship of Jesus, that the Church was created, is edified and brought to maturity.
 - (d) However, without the spontaneous participation of MEN, there could be no Church, because the Church (*ekklesia*) is, by definition, an assembly constituted of MEN, i.e. of believers in whom the confession of Peter is a living conviction.
- (2) It does not please God to see truth reduced to a fleshless abstraction, nor men living without truth. God's ideal is to incarnate truth in the heart of a man, so that by means of this perfect incarnation, God's intentions for creating man might be realized.
- (a) When God set His plan in motion to redeem the human race, He incarnated His truth in a Man, Jesus Christ.
 - (b) Similarly, when Jesus Christ set in motion His plan to establish His Church, He sought some men in whom His truth had become a living reality. And He found it first in the person of Simon Peter. (And many others too: John 17)
- e. From this standpoint, the man Peter is no longer of any help to those who would establish an ecclesiastical hierarchy upon him. In fact, that which renders *Pétros* like *pétra* is the same thing that makes all other believers into "living stones." (1 Pt. 2:4, 5) For *pétra* Edersheim (*Life*, II, 83) coins the useful English paraphrase: "that which was the Petrine in Peter." As a result, the only primacy ("firstness") left for Peter, therefore, is the chronological primacy expressed in the honor to make the first proclamation of the faith that he, as the first, had confessed. As a result, what was Petrine in Peter earned him the joy to be the first stone in the chronological order to be laid in place. Salvoni (*Da Pietro al papato*, 65) has it:

To the chronologically first confessor Jesus entrusts an important part in the building of the Church, in the sense that He leaves to him the announcement of the fundamental decisions regarding entrance into the Church, thus rendering the Apostle a sort of permanent base, in as much as all

believers who want to enter the family of God will have to own the profession of faith made by Peter and obey the norms that he will sanction once for all time: baptism without circumcision. . . . Peter's function is an activity or condition connected with the establishing of the Church, a fact which would happen only once in the history of the world. Once the Church had been founded, it would rest upon Peter only in the sense that Simon Barjona, by means of the inspired passage in Matthew's Gospel, continues to proclaim that his confession of faith is indispensable to enter into the Church. The fleshly human Simon will die; but the confessing Simon is eternally alive in the sense that the Holy Spirit wanted his confession of faith to be part of the eternal gospel message. To hear the name of Peter is equivalent to hearing once more the voice of Simon who confesses Jesus' messiahship and divine Sonship, an act that must be imitated by anyone who intends to enter into the great family of God, which is the Church.

For this reason, none of the arguments against Peter's assumption of earthly headship of the Church can be thought valid against his being considered symbolic of all genuine Christians. In fact, this latter view sees Peter as equal to those of whom he is but the symbol here. The man Peter is unimportant, because the assembly of Christ cannot be founded on the basis of a single individual alone. But *it is based upon him and all like him* insofar as this divine truth confessed make them what they are: the living stone out of which the new spiritual house is to be built. (1 Pt. 2:4) Should it surprise some that the Church should be founded upon men in whom the implications of this great confession are fully and freely displayed, then Jesus' words could be paraphrased in another way: "The basis of the Church I found, Peter, will be your type of people, i.e. believers who confess what you just said."

f. This interpretation has the advantage of uniting all the best elements of the other interpretations:

- (1) Since God is the Rock of Israel, then Peter, by his acceptance of God's revelations, becomes intellectually one with God by sharing with Him, despite his own humanity, that truth which he now confessed.
- (2) If Christ is the Rock-foundation of the Temple of God, then

Peter by his admission of Jesus' true identity and mission, becomes, by that act, the same kind of material out of which that Temple is to be built—from the laying of its foundation to the glorious completion of every part. (1 Co. 3:11; Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Pt. 2:4-8)

- (3) If the truth of Peter's confession is the Rock-foundation, then Peter, by virtue of his conviction, identifies himself with that truth, which, in the final analysis, Christ Jesus had taught him. Peter's union with the truth, or the truth in Peter, had made him the Rock he was. Because he had built upon the rock (cf. Mt. 7:24f), his construction partook of the same solid, durable character as the rock of Christ's word and work he had now confessed. *He had become the truth he believed.*
- g. Whether this is the only proper interpretation of the phrase in question or not, it is none the less true that Jesus Christ has no Church at all, except that group of believers in all centuries in whom this confession Peter made is real. This view sees no one as truly part of Christ's Church who is not thoroughly what Peter was that day, when, despite adverse public opinion about the Christ, he staunchly stood firm for his bold, good confession.
- h. While it is certain that the Church began on Pentecost, the Church nevertheless became a live possibility only when a human being recognized Jesus' real identity and committed himself to it personally and publicly. This is why Peter is the first foundation stone. Jesus could begin to build His Church or assembly (*ekklesia*) once one human being—in this case, Peter—had correctly analyzed and accepted His true identity. However immature and failing Peter's faith may have been, it was a definite beginning point from which Jesus could begin. You cannot build a pack of wolves until you have at least a pair of wolves, nor can you build a church ("assembly") until you have some believers to assemble either. But one is a beginning, the foundation of what follows. Carver (*Self-interpretation of Jesus*, 109f) says it well:

There is buoyant rapture in His reply that we can appreciate only if we think of this as marking the realization in Peter of what He has all these years been seeking to develop in men. What He missed so sadly in the soliloquy

(Mt. 11:20-30, i.e. "No one knows the Son except the Father" HEF) He finds now in this man. Here, at last, is one man in whose experience He has become the Christ, the Son of God. . . . What He has achieved in Simon, He can accomplish in any other man, in all men. . . . Jesus has come to remake humanity, in the individual. Now He has an example. He has succeeded. . . . God's revelation which has become Simon's conviction is His opportunity for starting afresh in His program. He has some material now that He can use . . .

- i. Collateral support for this interpretation comes from Jesus' own personal teaching style. He habitually began from a concrete situation to illustrate an abstract truth. (Cf. Lk. 13:1-5; Mt. 18:1-4) To exalt the truth of His teaching, He presented Himself as "the Way, the Truth and the Life." (Jn. 14:6) When He needed to reveal difficult truth, His imagination produced suggestive parables based upon concrete objects or events. (Mt. 13:1-53) The urgent need to repent in the light of limited opportunity and immanent doom is pictured by a sterile fig tree granted one more year of care. (Lk. 13:6-9) Similarly, it would be natural for Jesus, desiring to teach the necessity of confessing the faith by anyone who would enter God's Kingdom, to speak of its first confessor, Simon "Rock," as symbolic of the rock foundation of the Church.
- j. Within the larger cultural context of Jesus' contemporaries, His symbolism used here was not a novelty incomprehensible to His hearers. Isaiah (51:1f) had exalted Abraham and Sarah as "the rock from which you were hewn, the quarry from which you were digged." The prophet's argument is this: in the same sense in which a "rock" apparently sterile, can be rendered fertile by God's blessing, so Abraham and Sarah, ancestors of the people of Israel, are symbols of what God can do. So, it was not unheard of in Hebrew literature to refer even to men as "the rock," in harmony with the immediate intention of the Biblical writer himself. (We must not create false parallelisms here, however, between Abraham "the rock" and Simon "the Rock," which would miss the point of both Isaiah's and Jesus' words. All that is affirmed here is the existence, in Hebrew literature, of similar—although not identical—references to men as rock and symbolic of some truth to be taught.)

2. Weaknesses of the view taken here:

- a. If Peter is really symbol of every Christian, then the Church (in the sense of "the congregation of the Christians") is both the foundation and what is founded thereupon. We have, thus, a confusion in figures.

Answer: If the word "Church" be taken, not in its connotative sense ("The Christians taken together as a body"), but in its denotative sense ("assembly, convocation, congregation"), the problem disappears. Thus, according to this view, Jesus is saying, "Upon such Christians as you, Peter, I will base my assembly."

- b. Does not this view, which sees Peter as merely the first stone (*Pétros*) of the same material as the rock construction (*pétra*) for which there would be many "living stones" (*lithoi zôntes*), commit the same error rejected in the view that sees Christ as the *pétra*? In fact, use is made here of texts (e.g. 1 Pt. 2:5) which mix distinct Greek words: *pétra*, *lithoi*. If such use were wrong in the one hypothesis, is it not also in the other? *Answer:* No, in rejecting the Christ = *pétra* view, we rejected only variant Greek words as they were by that view applied to Christ to prove Him to be the foundation stone, because its proponents laid great stress on the *pétros-pétra* distinction, without, at the same time, recognizing similar distinctions in words thought to sustain their hypothesis.

What is to be gained if this latter hypothesis be accepted?

1. If Peter, in his capacity as a confessing believer, really represents the "rock," then we are better able to grasp the ideal Jesus sets before us: *divine truth must be incarnated in human personality.*
- a. In that glorious moment Peter had shown himself to be all that Christ had come to earth to create: a believer, a man who knew to whom he must go for leadership back to God and who sincerely trusted that Guide. Although he was but one Rock (*Pétros*), he was of the right material (*pétra*) to serve as a proper basis for the great congregation (*ekklesia*) to be established.
- b. Even though Peter did not always live consistently with his confession, however, because the truth was truly in him and he in the truth, he was able to become that useful servant of the Lord that we witness in the New Testament.
- c. The heart-searching question for the reader, then, is: "Are we

too 'Rock,' that is, persons in whom the truth God revealed in Jesus is truly incarnate? Or does it remain a dead letter on our lips?"

2. If Peter here (Mt. 16:18) and the other Apostles and Prophets elsewhere (Eph. 2:20f) can serve as foundation for the Church of living God, it should cease to shock anyone that God depends upon men for the carrying out of His plan for the foundation, growth and progress of His Church, His Kingdom in the world. (Cf. Psa. 8:2! Mt. 21:14-17; 11:25f; 1 Co. 1:18-31; 2 Co. 12:7-10)
 - a. What a glorious truth: the great God of heaven, absolutely independent of everything and everyone, sought a basis in human beings to accomplish His purpose to conquer evil and bless humanity!
 - b. And, although the Church is composed of men who are new creatures, redeemed, full of the Spirit, they are still MEN IN WHOM THE TRUTH ABOUT JESUS CHRIST IS A LIVING REALITY!

I will build my church. What is meant by *church* in this very first mention in the Gospels, will be amplified in the Epistles. Nevertheless, several characteristics of this new creation lie on the surface:

1. Its futurity: **I will build.** The new community of believers in Jesus Christ was yet to be inaugurated. Although Jesus had already set in motion a grass-roots movement in His popular ministry, He was not beguiled by His own popularity. He knew that the crisis of the cross and the demands of discipleship would thin out the well-wishers and the hangers-on. The Church must be born at the cross: without that sacrifice there could be no forgiveness, no Gospel and no Church, so, until Jesus had conquered sin and death, He could not build His Church. Whereas the same terms of salvation apply to men of any continent or time-period, i.e. faith in and obedience to whatever God requires of each, nevertheless, the fruition of God's plans revealed in the new Israel through the proclamation of redemption in Christ Jesus was yet future.

Consequently, rather than search the Old Testament for the source of the Church's life, as this is to be expressed in what she confesses and by her formal structure, we must look to the (then yet future) birth of Jesus' Church on Pentecost (Ac. 2) and the expressions of its life and practice that follow that date.

2. Its ownership: **My Church.** This fact is notoriously forgotten in congregational squabbles and in many theological circles, where both the doctrine and practice that the Lord desires goes unexpressed and is bypassed in favor of decisions based upon "church

traditions, convenience, local acceptability, unacknowledged power structures, fears and perhaps also unhistorical exegesis of Scripture." (Scott Bartchy)

While His personal ownership of the Church-Kingdom would not necessarily exclude national Israel, the fact that Jesus sees that a distinctive congregation is essential, i.e. separate from, and even opposed to, the nominal descendants of Abraham, suggests that these latter will have rejected the God-given Messiah and His Kingdom. Its futurity and its distinctive ownership combine to affirm that the concept Jesus has in mind did not then exist in the form of national Israel, and that He is dissatisfied with that nation as such. For the thinking disciple who follows this idea to its logical conclusion, Jesus must mean that, if any in national Israel are to be part of His movement, they must do so upon His terms which, incidentally, had already begun to stir up the determined opposition of almost every religio-political power block in Judaism! Rather than rejuvenate the elements already available in standard Judaism, He intends to form a new people of God destined to take the place of those who rejected Him.

3. Its sense of community: **Church**. It is to be an *ekklesia*: an assembly, réunion or gathering, summoned together, away from the public at large, for the purposes of Christ.

Since Church (*ekklesia*) means "assembly or congregation" we may ask: does Jesus have in mind "the congregation of the Lord," as this expression connotes the "whole nation of Israel, especially when gathered together for religious purposes"? (Cf. the LXX version of Dt. 31:30; Jdg. 20:2; 1 Sam. 17:47; 1 Kg. 8:14; Dt. 4:10; 9:10; 18:16; Acts 7:38) If so, He means *ekklesia* in the sense of "the New Israel of God." (cf. Gal. 6:16)

Such a convocation, by virtue of its purpose and character, intentionally condemns all divisive attitudes, however they are expressed: as full-grown schisms or by individual sulking.

For further notes on the relationship of the Church to the Kingdom of God, see the Special Study after Mt. 13:53: "The Kingdom of God." There it is argued that the Kingdom is the effective reign of God in all of its expressions. The Church, therefore, is to be distinguished only as that congregation of Christian believers who have willingly submitted to the King's good government. The Church, as a concrete movement, expresses the intention of God's

Kingdom, and is in the Kingdom, and the Kingdom is active in and through the Church. Nevertheless, the Church is not the only expression of God's Kingdom by which the universe is governed, even if, for Jesus' purpose in our text, it is the most significant, tangible manifestation of God's rule among men. This explains why Jesus can promise Peter "the keys of the kingdom" immediately following this announced determination to build His "Church," since Jesus knows that His Church, rightly understood, submits to God's Kingdom. The obedience to the terms of salvation preached by Peter instantly submits the believer to the rule of God (Kingdom) and makes him an integral part of the congregation (*ekklesia*), or Church of Christ.

I will build my church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. (. . . *kai pūlai hādou ou katischūsousin autês*) To what does "it" refer? **It** (*autês*) is feminine, so refers directly to "church" (*ekklesia*), also feminine.

Hades is the realm of the dead, or death itself. In the Old Testament, as also in intertestamental Jewish literature, the expression **gates of Hades** is a common figure for the dwelling of the dead. (Cf. Isa. 38:10; Psalms 9:13 = LXX 9:14; 107:18 = LXX 106:18; Job 38:17; cf. Wisdom 16:13; 3 Macc. 5:51. See also Psalm 49:14f = LXX 48:15f; Hosea 13:14; Psalm 16:10 = LXX 15:10) The origin of the figure and its connotative flavor is explained variously.

The gates of oriental cities were the place where the judges held their deliberations, in which justice was done, and from which, naturally, the city's warriors poured to carry out the counsels of the city's elders. Sometimes plots were organized and conspiracies planned there. It was at the gate of Samaria that Ahab king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah decided their ill-fated raid upon Ramoth Gilead. (1 Kings 22:10-12) The city gate also served as city court to resolve local questions, because the city's elders sat there. (Ruth 4:1-11; Psalm 127:5; Jeremiah 1:15; 14:2)

While these explanations are interesting, it is far more probable that Jesus intends *gates of Hades* in its idiomatic completeness, without reference to all the usual functions of city gates in the oriental world. The picture involved in *gates of Hades*,—if indeed Jesus intended any mental image, is that of a city called *Hades*, the place of disembodied spirits, within whose *gates* one is imprisoned by death. Salvoni (*Da Pietro al papato*, 70) suggests that "the plural 'gates' may perhaps be explained by the fact that originally it was thought

that many gates, one after the other (as in modern prisons), closed the entrance to Hades," through all of which one must pass to enter and from which there could be no return. If this plural, *gates*, intends only to reinforce the figure (cfr. Arndt-Gingrich, 16, on *Hades*), then it indicates the monstrous power of death within whose walls the Church of Christ would be locked, but could not be held, because those gates would be thrown ajar by the power of the Risen Christ. It is in this sense that **the gates of Hades shall not prevail against the Church**, a fact that has worked out historically in various ways:

1. The personal death of Jesus Christ in no way hindered His plan to establish His Church or come in His Kingdom as planned. (Cf. 16:18, 28) Rather, unless He submitted to death to bring them into being, there would have been no Church, no Kingdom of God on earth. His resurrection, predicted figuratively under the sign of Jonah (16:4) and literally (16:21), guaranteed that all that Death could do would not be strong enough (*ou katischusousin*) to thwart the Church's being established. This truth is plainly echoed in Ac. 2:24, 31. (Cf. 2 Ti. 1:10)

This affirmation is definite preparation for the confrontation with the disciples on the question of the necessity of Jesus' going to Jerusalem. (16:21ff) Although they would imagine that His death would seal the doom of all hope of victory, He has already assured them here that death would have no power to hinder the glorious fulfillment of everything He planned for the Church's realization. He would come forth victorious from the tomb, thus guaranteeing the triumph of the cause of righteousness. Their fears were unfounded.

2. Despite the death of His followers, the loss of each single member to death would not mean the death of the Church. Even if Jesus be not speaking directly of our suffering death, but rather of His own death, yet the fact that He would crash the gates of death in a victorious break-through guarantees the perpetual victory of His people. This is the minor interpretation, because it depends for its accomplishment upon the personal victory of the Lord over death, therefore His struggle with death is the more directly appropriate interpretation.

In a very real sense, the Church was as much in Hades as was Christ Himself. In fact, had He not conquered death, there would have been no Church. Metaphorically, then, we may say that the Church was "born out of death," a fact surprisingly recalled in His later discourse: "the way to life is through death." (Mt. 16:24-28)

3. While this passage, as we have seen, does not explicitly reveal a war between two kingdoms, i.e. that of Jesus Christ against Satan's reign of death (Heb. 2:14), in which the Church would sweep in conquest, nevertheless the result is still the same! The kingdom of death cannot at any time hold out against the power of the Church to break its bonds and come forth.

Some see this mention of Hades (death, grave) as a metonymy for Satan's reign of death (cf. Heb. 2:14; Lk. 22:53; Jn. 8:44); hence, stands for all the conspiracies of the powers of evil combined: demons, Satan, and death. Accordingly, all these monstrous powers of wickedness and death would be brought to bear against the Church, without, however, succeeding in strangling or destroying it. (Ac. 4:24-31; Jn. 12:31; 16:33; Ro. 16:20; Rev. 2:10f; 1 Co. 15:54-57)

How COULD *the gates of Hades* withstand Jesus and the Church, when the resurrected Lord Himself has the keys to the gates?! (Rev. 1:17f) No, Jesus assures the disciples that His Church was not merely designed to last for awhile, like some school of thought or an ethical influence or a religious manifestation, but would continue beyond the grave and on into eternity!

16:19 **I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.** Before entering into a detailed discussion of the terms involved, it is well to remember our decision as to whether Jesus is carrying forward a supposed rhetorical figure or not. If so, then this verse must be interpreted in the light of that figure, but if not, then the terms used here will be interpreted in light of their usual sense and in context with the general subject under discussion. Because we failed to see the necessity to superimpose upon this text a rhetorical picture not explicitly stated in Jesus' words (see reasons at 16:18), we shall follow the latter course.

WHAT IS THE NATURE OF THE AUTHORITY CONFERRED?

The expressions, **keys of the kingdom** and **binding and loosing**, taken together in so close a context, are probably to be understood in the rabbinical sense of "the right to teach authoritatively the truths of the Kingdom of God." It may have been by two steps that the rabbis appropriated for their ministry the glorious concept of

the keys of the kingdom:

1. It may refer to the office of royal steward. A key literally serves to open and lock doors. So the power of the keys consisted in providing (or excluding) access to and care of the royal chambers, and in the decision who was or was not to be received into the king's service. Keys, then, are a symbol of superintendence. Thus, authority and privilege are involved in the consignment of the keys, although not an authority or privilege independent of direct responsibility to the king himself. In fact, he who receives the power of the keys is not the king, but the trusted steward, or servant, of the king, since the keys continue to belong to the king to whom the steward is finally responsible. (Cf. Isa. 22:22; God is the real king of Israel; Rev. 3:7; 9:1; 20:1ff)
2. By a splendid metaphor the rabbis (scribes) could refer to the responsibility of opening the royal chambers of God's truth as possession of **the keys of the kingdom**. In this sense, as stewards of God's truth, they were to be responsible for permitting popular access into God's Kingdom, as proven by Jesus' attitude toward the theologians (scribes, rabbis) who misused their exalted position. (Lk. 11:52; Mt. 23:13 = *kleiete*, from *kleis*, a key)

That Jesus' disciples could become scribes is implicit in Mt. 13:52 and explicit in 23:34. That they would be stewards of the mysteries of God, is noted in Lk. 12:41ff. (Cf. 1 Cor. 4:1, 2) So, the power of **the keys** and **binding and loosing** may be but two forms of the same promise in the sense that *keys* would then be general teaching authority, while **binding and loosing** would be the specific sphere of its application. With Salvoni (*Da Pietro al papato*, 73ff) we should notice that the verbs . . .

. . . *binding and loosing* are two terms of rabbinic usage that assume opposite meanings according as they are applied to a "prohibition" or to an "obligation." In the case of the prohibition, one "binds" when he prohibits someone to do something . . . , while he "looses" by lifting the prohibition, permitting what had heretofore been prohibited . . . In the case of the obligation, one "binds" by establishing something as an obligation, but one "looses" when he eliminates this obligation . . . The verb "to loose" can also acquire the sense of "to pardon," i.e. to "loose" the guilt from the individual.

Consequently, consigning the keys to Peter is paramount to assigning

him the responsibility for admission to, or exclusion from, the Kingdom-Church. **Bind and loosing**, accordingly, refer to the task of expressing authoritatively those terms of salvation and damnation which would permit men to enter the Kingdom, or else be forever excluded therefrom.

THE AGENT UPON WHOM THE RESPONSIBILITY IS CONFERRED

I will give unto thee means to Peter. No reading of the text can ignore the singular: "I will give to you (singular: *dôso soi*) . . . whatever you bind (*hò eàn déses*)." The promise of *the keys* is not made to the Apostles, either by name or taken as a group *per se*.

I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Since it is assumed that there is a degree of officialness in this granting power to Peter, it must also be remembered that the nature of the "office" must be judged by its historical exemplification in the life of the man to whom it was intrusted. But the nature of Peter's "office," as this is recorded in Acts, mirrors that of a major prophet whereby God made His will known through this authorized, qualified spokesman. Then, having revealed God's message, he had to submit to it personally and urge others to communicate it. Since God raised up none to occupy his specific function to reveal new truth or determine Christian orthodoxy and conduct, then the only "office" left is that which now faithfully communicates "the faith once for all delivered to the saints," i.e. those who share the message in evangelizing and teaching.

Before rejecting the authority conferred upon Peter as referring to judicial, administrative and legislative powers, since it appears to make Peter rule the Church and establish the laws of pardon (cf. Foster, *Middle Period*, 237), it must be remembered that Christ never consigns responsibility to men without also providing the power necessary for its proper completion. So, if we admit that Christ knew that Peter would faithfully deliver the decrees of heaven as these were revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, then the Holy Spirit is the real administrator and legislator operating through Peter. Why fear such power when it is the Lord who not only decides to give it, who also decides to whom to promise it, but who also will govern its expression when He does confer it? Merely because we fear abuse of power, thanks to the myriads of illustrations available in Church history

alone, does this justify our hesitation to let Jesus confer it upon Peter, especially if the Lord Himself is going to be the One pulling the strings? Key-bearing authority is no different from normal prophetic authority, as fearful as that responsibility is! Has it suddenly become impossible to trust the Spirit of Jesus to be able to control the exercise of key-bearing authority wielded by the fisherman-Apostle? Even in the later history of Peter, when he once got out of line in his personal practice, the Holy Spirit at work in Paul was present to correct his temporary aberration. (Gal. 2) Modern fear to concede *the keys of the kingdom* to Peter is an over-reaction to Roman Catholic argument which misuses Peter. But since the Lord established no such hierarchy or series of successors as the Roman clergy demands, why prohibit the Lord Himself from recognizing the rock-like quality of His Apostle and conferring upon him this honor? And then judge Peter's ministry in retrospect: did he abuse what Christ here conferred upon him? Did he act the part of a pope? History has forever absolved him of that accusation! Had the Roman Church never abused this passage to exalt Peter to supreme authority over all other Christians, applying this text to what it was never intended to touch, no other meaning would have been sought for it. The fact that Jesus established Peter as a specially honored instrument for the first proclamation of the Gospel to the world, did not hinder Him from commissioning Paul. Perhaps we would worry less about the uniqueness of Peter's commission, if we remembered Paul's. (Study Ac. 9:15f; 14:27; 22:13ff; 26:15-18)

Whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Regardless of whether the tenses involved here be considered a future perfect passive ("What you bind on earth SHALL HAVE (already) BEEN BOUND in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth SHALL HAVE (already) BEEN LOOSED in heaven"), or as a simple periphrastic future passive (as rendered in the common text), it is implied that Peter is to have such a very close relationship with God that he would know what God required or permitted. The resultant pronouncements of Peter will be precisely what God intends that he say. This is no esoteric, mysterious promise completely unconnected with everything that lies right on the surface of Jesus' ministry and of the history of the early Church. In fact, during Jesus' ministry, Peter had already been receiving precise and clear revelations of God's will openly expressed in all that Jesus said. (Jn. 17:14) In fact, it was on the basis of these revelations that Peter made his confession (16:17). Later, Jesus would

promise His Spirit to empower the disciples to remember His entire message and to make revelations of future events (Jn. 14:26; 16:13), so that they could preach and set down in print for all future ages precisely that Gospel and doctrine that God *bound or loosed in heaven*.

So, if the power of *the keys*, understood as the right to teach authoritatively the truths of the Kingdom of God, be no less than the inspiration of the Spirit who would cause Peter to reveal precisely what God willed, then we would expect other passages to confirm this. Instead of confirming only Peter, other disciples are included in the same general work and empowered by the same supernatural provision. Peter's unique opportunity or privilege is left intact, but others are added.

1. The authority to *bind and loose* is further modified by its being conferred also upon the Church. Although Mt. 18:18 is correctly analyzed as spoken directly to the Apostles personally present, conceptually, however, the emphasis is upon Christian cooperation within the congregation to settle difficult problems between believers and to correct sinners. Moreover, the major subject of the chapter is personal, not official, relation among the Apostles. Still, it is the assembly (*ekklesia*) which *binds and looses*.

Salvoni (*Da Pietro al papato*, 77) argues the illegitimacy of reference to Mt. 18:18 if used to weaken the fact that the keys were conferred upon Peter, since, contextually, the two texts (i.e. 16:18 and 18:18) refer to different situations. The former, rightly noticed by Salvoni, refers to Peter's unique mission to open the Kingdom of Heaven to men by indicating to them what was necessary to enter it. The latter refers, rather, to church discipline by teaching how to act in the case of a sinner within the group (*ekklesia*). He also argues correctly that the *binding and loosing* have different functions in the two texts: in 16:18 Peter is to indicate what is obligatory or not for the believers, whereas in 18:18 the text deals with sins of the individual sinner to *bind upon*, or *loose from* him. While these distinctions are essentially correct, Salvoni fails to see that both texts represent one total function, that of teacher and the decision about what is to be thought and done about a given problem, be it entrance into the Kingdom or that of an unrepentant sinner. To the Church is confirmed this authoritative function.

2. See comment on Jn. 20:21. (Objections to the papal position, at 16:18, II, A, 2) Other disciples were present to hear the precious promise: "Receive the Holy Spirit: if you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained." (Cf. Lu. 24:33-49) From this it appears that, whereas Peter, because of his forthright confession, was privileged to be God's first spokesman to reveal God's great truth about salvation in Jesus Christ, others too were to participate in this general work.
3. Paul's treatment of prophetic gifts assumes that others than Peter or the Apostles were so gifted as to assume an authoritative teaching role in the Church. (1 Co. 14:3f, 24f; Eph. 2:20; 4:7, 11)
4. Neither Peter nor the other Apostles were called to be innovative theologians, creatively inventing new theologies to which God must set His stamp of approval. Rather, they are called to be witnesses of what God had revealed through Jesus the Christ. (Cf. Jn. 15:26f; 16:13-15 where not even the Holy Spirit was to be innovative.)

Thus, the inspiration needed to *bind and loose* was promised, not to Peter alone, but also to other disciples as well.

But, to this view it may be objected that Peter is left with no uniqueness worthy of Jesus' declarations that here clearly single him out for special responsibilities, if not also honors. In answer let it be affirmed that this promise, like any other prophecy of future realities, must be interpreted in the light of its undoubted fulfilment. Of this prediction we have the fullest historical illustration in the book of Acts and in the Epistles. This prophecy was fulfilled exclusively and completely when Peter, inspired by the Holy Spirit, carried out his unique function by being the first to express those terms whereby both Jews (Acts 2) and Gentiles (Acts 10) would be forever admitted or eternally excluded from God's Kingdom. In so doing, he announced God's Word on earth. Because of its normative character and finality, there is no further need for new Peters to arise to use these or other keys. The Kingdom, once opened to mankind by Peter's proclamation or forever left inaccessible to those that reject his message, needs no further opening or closing. This is why we must dissent from Plummer (*Matthew*, 231) who decides that we may not assume "that what Peter decides for the visible Church is binding on the Church invisible; or that what he decides for the visible Church of his day holds good for ever, however much the conditions may change . . ." No, it is because of Peter's inspiration that we MUST

assume the definitive authority of his words, especially when he is absolutely the first Christian Apostle to enunciate the perfect universality of Christianity, the first Apostle to announce Christ's Lordship, the first Apostle to tell both Jews and Gentiles how to be saved on God's terms. Why NOT listen to Peter? What possible change of conditions could justify ignoring Peter today? It is Peter who, after describing Christian maturity, assures us: "Be the more zealous to confirm your call and election, for if you do this you will never fall. So there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." (2 Pt. 1:5-12)

Since *binding and loosing* appear in a context concerning the use of the *keys to the Kingdom of heaven*, then, as Salvoni (*Da Pietro al papato*, 73ff) has it, these expressions . . .

. . . must refer to something that is necessary or is not necessary for someone who desires to enter it. In the book of Acts which serves as a commentary on Christ's prophecy, it turns out that it is Peter himself who once and for all rendered baptism obligatory for entrance into the Church ("bound"), while he dispensed with the obligation of circumcision ("loosed").

Peter's great mission during the early days of the Church, even before Paul's great contribution, was to establish the Church on a solid, international basis by liberating Christianity from the Jewish religion. (Ac. 15:7ff) By establishing the Christian plan of salvation ("binding") and never once requiring any Jewish rite ("loosing"), he carried out his mission prophesied here. Although Peter definitely occupied a leading position in the life of the early Church during the period of its almost exclusively Jewish character, he was instrumental in giving divine sanction to the evangelization of the Gentiles. Thus, he actually laid the groundwork for acceptance of Paul's brilliant ministry to the Gentiles. Although Paul's apostleship was truly independent of Peter's authority, his specific mission was prepared for by Peter. Salvoni (*ibid.*) notes:

In place of the "doctors of the law" (scribes) who with their doctrine hindered others from accepting Jesus as Son of God and from thus entering into the Kingdom of heaven, Jesus places the confessing Peter, so that, with his faith just demonstrated, he might open the Kingdom of heaven to anyone desiring to enter it. Not the Scribes, but the Apostles (here represented by Peter) will be the new heralds of the Word of God, the new prophets of Christianity.

The key-holding responsibility of Peter does not at all militate against his being considered symbolic of the foundation of the Church, as suggested in v. 18. Rather, to whom ELSE should Jesus more appropriately consign such an important responsibility as that of bearer of the keys, than to the first tested believer in whom the experience of Jesus as the Anointed Son of God is a real conviction? No amount of fear of falling into the Roman Catholic error can justify denying to Peter what Jesus really gives to him and recognizes in him! In fact, it is notorious how far the Roman Catholic Church, while formally glorifying Peter, so effectually ignores Peter's teaching, in favor of her own dogmas! This is why the modern Christian must not balk at owning Peter as the retainer of the keys. Rather, we must be more truly Petrine than any Catholic ever thought about! We must accept the terms he revealed for entrance into (or exclusion from) God's Kingdom, or miss it entirely! (Acts 2:36-40; 3:26; 4:12; 5:29-32; 10:42-48; 11:17f, etc.)

Should it be argued that any view that sees Peter as intended to be symbolic of the rock foundation of the Church, even as symbolic of every believer, proves too much, because, if that interpretation were carried forward into this verse (19), then, to every truly Petrine believer is consigned *the keys* and the authority of *binding and loosing*. To this it may be answered:

1. Sure, why not? After all, every believer in whom the conviction is real that made Peter the rock he was, really does use only the Petrine keys to open or close the Kingdom to anyone he contacts with the Gospel. And, since the "Petrine keys" are really those of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 10:20; Jn. 20:21-23; Lk. 24:46-49; Ac. 2:1-4, 14; 4:8; 5:3, 4, 9; 10:19), all of the Spirit-filled Christians of the first century joyfully proclaimed the Gospel which the Spirit inspired Peter, first of all, to proclaim to the Jews on Pentecost and to the Gentiles later. Only those Christians who faithfully adhere to and faithfully proclaim THIS Gospel may consider themselves to be such. In any case, we are "key-holders" only in a secondary sense. (Cf. Ac. 4:31)
2. On the other hand, NO Christian, other than Peter, received that unique, first privilege of proclaiming the terms of pardon to representatives of the entire world. He had been first to confess Jesus on the basis of a matured conviction and when specifically tested. Why should he not also be the first to proclaim Jesus? In this view, the only proper primacy left to Peter is not ecclesiastical primacy, but merely chronological.

HOW IS THIS AUTHORITY EXPRESSED?

Carver (*JSBE*, article "Power of the Keys," 1794f) well outlines the hierarchical mentality and structural concern apparently innate in human beings, that is apparent in Church history's various answers to this important question:

1. The power of the keys was conferred to Peter alone.
2. The power committed to Peter was also conferred upon the other apostles, including Paul, discharged by them, and descended to no others.
3. The power was conferred on Peter officially and on his official successors.
4. The power was conferred on Peter officially and the other apostles officially, and to such as hold their place in the church.
5. The power belongs to Peter as representative of the church, and so to the church also is committed the same power, to be exercised in the following manner:
 - a. By the officials of the church alone.
 - b. By the officials of the church and those to whom they commit it.
 - c. By all priests and persons allowed to represent the church *de facto*.
 - d. By the church in its councils, or other formal and official decisions.
 - e. By the church in a less formal way than through formal, conciliar decisions.
 - f. By all members of the church as representing it without specific commission.
6. The power belongs to the Christian as such, and so the power is imposed upon, or offered to, all Christians.

This penchant for structuring a "chain of command" is neither sinful nor merely human, because God has also organized the heavenly order (Col. 1:16; Rev. 4, 5; 1 Pt. 3:22; cf. Psa. 89:5-7) and structured human authority for man's benefit. (Ro. 13:1-7; Psa. 8) However, like most human mistakes, it is possible for man to take a good thing to an extreme, and want to establish precise limits where God established very few. We feel that we must be certain beyond the limits of reasonable certainty. For man, it is not sufficient that Christ should be Head over His Church, ruling it by His Word (1) authentically revealed once for all by a few authorized spokesmen, i.e. Apostles and

Prophets, and (2) faithfully taught by a multitude of evangelists and pastoring teachers, and (3) obediently observed by everyone until Christ comes. Nor is a simple, congregational government judged by some to be adequate with its local rulers, the superintendents (bishops = elders = pastors). Man must have an iron-clad chain of command, with authorized officials and specific commissions to speak only after conference in formal councils, that decide either on matters that God said nothing about, or is thought to be unclear in what He did teach. Nothing is to be left up to chance, if man must be mathematically certain that he is right. For these reasons, the above-listed plethora of possible applications of this our text is quite seriously offered by serious, sincere students of church polity! Unfortunately, most of these expressions sadly miss the primary emphasis of Jesus which is light-years' distance from establishing an official hierarchy so foreign to His fundamental approach to government. His emphasis is not upon uniqueness of power and privilege, but upon usefulness of duty and responsibility; not upon office, but upon function. It just does not seem to occur to us that power and privilege and office are of absolutely no use to the Lord, where the usefulness of duty, responsibility and function are absent. And for those theorists who hold that one can have both in equal measure and in equilibrium, let it be answered that nowhere in sacred Scripture is it recorded that Jesus conferred the papacy or its equivalent upon anyone. If there are no predecessors, there can be no successors! Besides, Jesus knows that He can expect usefulness, responsibility and function without instituting power structures and privileged offices to get them.

How is this authority expressed? Once Peter's function had been completed, the Kingdom was open to all men. Other Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers lead men into the Kingdom by the gate opened by Peter. All of them together, Peter included, then busy themselves in the maturing the Christians and the committing the Word, now revealed, to faithful men who shall be capable of teaching others also. (2 Ti. 2:2; Ro. 15:14)

If Peter is really symbolic of every Christian, then the exercise of this power belongs to the Christians as such. The Christian must be all that Peter was in the moment of his confession, the kind of rock of which all "living stones" built into the temple of God must be before God inserts them into His construction. Thus, the words addressed exclusively to Peter are to be thought of as addressed to him in his symbolic character as the first typical Christian. So, Peter has no special prerogative to hold the keys other than the chronological

priority to use them. Carver (*ISBE*, 1794f) concludes that

The words were spoken to him only as the first who gave expression to that conception and experience on the basis of which Jesus commits the keys of the kingdom to any believer in him as the Christ of God. . . . The holder of the keys is any man with that experience that called forth from Jesus the assurance that Peter should have the keys. Such a man will be in fellowship and cooperation with like men, in a church, and the Spirit of Jesus will be present in them, so that their decisions and their testimony will be His as well as theirs. There is a corporate, or church, agency, therefore, and the man who would ignore that lacks the experience or the Spirit needful for the use of the keys. Yet the church is never to overshadow or exclude the individual responsibility and authority.

In the early Church are revealing examples of the non-official, but true, communication of the divine truth on the part of common Christians who, despite their unofficial position and perhaps also lack of miraculous credentials or special mandates, went everywhere preaching the word" (Ac. 8:4), starting churches wherever they went, opening the kingdom of God even to other races. (Ac. 11:19-26) They accepted the priesthood of all believers (1 Pt. 2:4, 5, 9; Heb. 13:15f; Rev. 1:5b, 6), utilizing their individual gifts for the common good. (Eph. 4:7; 1 Pt. 4:10, 11; 1 Co. 12:6, 7; Ro. 12:3-8)

WHAT IS THE SCOPE OR RANGE OF THIS POWER?

1. This power confers no political authority over the kingdoms of the world. It is no mistaken antithesis that notices that Jesus said, not "keys of the kingdom of the world," but "keys of the kingdom of heaven." The reign of God is not "of this world," (Jn. 18:36), although very much in the world.
2. The power of the *keys* and *binding and loosing* is spiritual power to be used for making men godly. It is therefore a redemptive, sanctifying influence. No corruption of this influence, either by its abuse or omission, can lay claim to Christ's support. Because it is also a liberating influence, all unauthorized binding of human opinions, conclusions and traditions upon the disciples is unjustified. Therefore, when any disciple, without divine authorization confirmed by prophetic credentials, attempts to invoke the

power of the keys by binding their conclusions upon others, he has usurped the Lord's authority and must be rebuked.

3. It follows that the power of the *keys* and *binding and loosing*, understood in the sense of teaching what God has revealed, is essential to liberate the Kingdom from evil men who try to take possession of it for their own purposes. Spiritual men must be equipped to exclude these usurpers.
4. The power of the *keys* and *binding and loosing* necessarily involves the teaching of the condition of entrance into the Kingdom and proper conduct in it. But this cannot mean the "authoritative" invention of "necessary" applications of divine principles where God has not revealed these. It must mean merely the appropriate and thorough proclamation of the revelations given once and for all by the Apostles and Prophets. The divine commission of the Church is always to "teach them to observe (1) all that (2) I have (3) commanded (4) you." (Mt. 28:20)

6. Secrecy Required (16:20)

16:20 **Then charged he the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.** The reason for this extraordinary strict order (cf. Lk. 9:21) is woven into the fabric of the context in which it was given:

1. It was given at a time when the word "Christ" or "Messiah" would provide the spark to ignite the powder-keg, exploding in a bloody national uprising that would attempt to throw off Roman supremacy, end Roman occupation of Palestine, restore Jewish independence, attempt world dominion under a Jewish Messianic King, and bring in an era of unprecedented prosperity for Israel. This was the religio-political platform of the Galilean party of Zealots ready to revolt instantly, were they to discover a convincingly viable Messiah. All the genuine, spiritual aims of Jesus' Kingdom would be totally ignored in the ensuing confusion. Six months earlier, tumultuous disciples had reacted to Jesus' miraculous feeding of the multitude by exclaiming, "This is indeed the Prophet to come into the world!" and He barely staved off their ambition to take Him by force to make Him their kind of king. (Jn. 6:14, 15) Another perhaps more impelling reason for this prohibition is that those very disciples themselves as yet so badly understood what they themselves had confessed in calling Him the Christ of God. Just

how badly they misunderstood is vividly portrayed in the successive conversation. (16:21ff) Very likely they still considered their confession to be perfectly compatible with bloody revolution, national glory, hierarchical attainment and material prosperity. Without direct inspiration to override their own prejudices,—which, because of this prohibition, we may assume He would not provide,—what could they say publicly to explain what it meant to believe Him to be the Christ? Total silence on this subject is the only solution.

Further, what could be sufficient to correct the mistaken impressions that would be left in people's minds by (presumably) off-key preaching by the as yet uninspired Apostles? Once a sack of feathers has been emptied into the wind, regathering them would be impossible. Jesus, therefore, is saving Himself and the Twelve the work of having to undo what wrong-headed zeal and bad timing would have caused.

3. Plummer (*Matthew*, 24) rightly sees that the popular, however misdirected, enthusiasm of the masses ready to crown Jesus and sweep Him into power, is a real temptation to Him. Satan's wilderness suggestion to avoid the cross and still enjoy world power without suffering, is by no means dead. In whatever form, by whomever proposed, the opportunity to be the kind of Christ men wanted is the same sordid seduction.
4. Another significant motive for silence combines the previous ones. If the as yet imperfectly understood confession of His Messiahship were caught up as a revolutionary motto, it is conceivable that, were Jesus to be cast in the role of a political revolutionary, even the cross could become a sociological impossibility. Why should a national hero be executed by the Jews? But, since He never intended to be this kind of Christ, if events should precipitate to such a level, He would then have to change His course radically. And, since His sacrificial death to complete the expiation of our sins lay at the center of His mission, He must ruthlessly eliminate anything that would threaten to block this determination. (Cf. on 16:22f; 17:9; Mk. 9:30f)

The Triumphal Entry enthusiasm is no objection here, because at that point there was no time left for the development of revolutionary fervor before His crucifixion. In fact, the hot-bloods from Galilee, present at Jerusalem during the national feast, were only a portion of the total assemblage. Also, Jesus' Apostles

held their silence, not proclaiming Him openly as the Christ. Jesus Himself, too, did everything possible to make Himself available to His enemies to permit them to carry out their determination to destroy Him.

5. Only the resurrection and glorification of Christ could place the true nature of His Christhood in its proper perspective.

What a commentary of men and events: God has taken 1500 years to teach Israel what He meant by this word "Christ" and yet the Jews had practically totally misunderstood the word! But before we proudly condemn, we must ask what He is trying to instruct us concerning the words "Church," "Kingdom," "cross-bearing," and "self-denial" and many other concepts!

B. THE WAY OF THE CROSS (16:21-28)

1. The Revelation of Jesus' Approaching Death and Victory (16:21)

16:21 This is no less a test of the Apostles' commitment to Jesus than was the question asked earlier, for this declaration is but the trial by fire through which their commitment to Him must pass. It is one thing to confess sincerely that Jesus is the Christ, Savior and Lord. It is quite another thing to accept everything He says though it collides with our own understanding. The Apostles had brilliantly passed the first test. Would they do as well when their confession (as they understood it) was clearly contradicted by Him who was the object of their trust?

The crucifixion part of Christianity is unique, because, in His self-revelation, Jesus had the unique choice to reveal Himself first as the glorious Messiah of God, or first as the suffering, crucified Messiah. If He revealed the former first, His disciples would not be prepared for His death, but if He revealed Himself as born to die, they would not believe in His glory because of their inherited prejudices. His reserve regarding His sufferings had been maintained out of regard for their weakness. He waited, therefore, until Peter's confession confirmed their relative readiness for this news. A critical reason for Jesus' beginning now with a frank elaboration of His destiny to suffer is the three-way tension between the escalation of the opposition's plotting against His life, the disciples' natural nervousness about it, and Jesus' determination not to defend Himself. Foster (*Middle*

Period, 240) sees that

To keep the apostles in ignorance of the fact that He did not intend to defend Himself would place the apostles at a great disadvantage. It would be harder to control them and to keep them from meeting violence with violence.

From that time began Jesus to show his disciples, that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things. . . . There had been ominous, distant thunder warnings before, that hinted of the approaching storm that would finally burst on Calvary. (Cf. Lk. 2:34f; Jn. 1:29 "the Lamb of God" to be slain? 2:19-22; 3:14; Mt. 9:15; 12:40; Jn. 6:51-57) Now, however, all allusion has been dropped, and the horrifying facts are bared in all their shocking realism: **He began to show** (*deiknúein* = "to show, indicate, make known, reveal, explain") "He said this plainly." (Mk. 8:32) Until this crucial moment Jesus had been steadily building the disciples' faith in Him, gradually divulging His heavenly mission so that they could sustain the shock which the cross must inevitably produce on their emotions. Now, however, they must learn the unexpected, unwelcome, even incomprehensible lesson that the concept of His death did not contradict the reality of His divinity and Lordship. *Jesus began* and He kept up the lessons (Mt. 17:22f and parallels; 20:17-19 and par.; Lk. 17:25), because they must learn to live with the Divine Will, however temporarily uncomfortable it might be. Bruce (*Training*, 169) underlines the somber significance of going to *Jerusalem*:

Yes! there the tragedy must be enacted: that was the fitting scene for the stupendous events that were about to take place. It was dramatically proper that the Son of Man die in that "holy," unholy city, which had earned a most unevitable notoriety as the murderess of the prophets, the stoner of them whom God sent unto her. "It cannot be"—it were incongruous—"that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." (Lk. 13:33) It was due also to the dignity of Jesus, and to the design of His death, that He should suffer there. Not in an obscure corner or in an obscure way must He die, but in the most public place, and in a formal, judicial manner. He must be lifted up in view of the whole Jewish nation, so that all might see Him whom they had pierced, and by whose stripes also they might yet be healed. The "Lamb of God" must be slain in the place where all the legal sacrifices were offered.

He must go and suffer (*deí apelhtheín kai pollà pathheín*) This

prediction is not simply the astute recognition of an unavoidable disaster, but the announcement of a personal purpose in harmony with the decree of God (*dei pathein*). This is best felt by comparing 16:21 with Jn. 3:14f; Lk. 2:49; 4:43; 9:22; 13:33; 17:25; 19:5?; 22:37; 24:7, 26, 44; Mt. 26:54; Ac. 3:21; 17:3; 1 Co. 15:25. His predicted suffering and death is entirely voluntary, for who, in his right mind and intending to live out his normal life, would deliberately walk into a trap set for him, out of which he knew there could be no exit except through the tomb? Foster (*Middle Period*, 240f) justly concludes that

Jesus was seeking to cause His disciples to recognize the divine compulsion and plan behind His perplexing refusal to defend Himself and behind His approaching death. The enemies of Christ could not destroy Him. They would not be able to bring about His death unless it was God's will that He go into their midst and suffer torture and death at their hands.

Although Jesus does not even name the cross directly here, it was clearly in His mind. In fact, His discourse which immediately follows shows how vividly the cross stood out in His thinking. Even if He must mention the reality of His death without indicating the method by which it would be accomplished, He has already given the disciples more in this first announcement than they can tolerate.

Jesus began to show his disciples that His enemies were already plotting the very course He now details for His men. (Cf. Jn. 5:18; Mt. 12:14 and par.) Whereas their plotting was yet somewhat nebulous in contrast with their final success in Jerusalem, Jesus' precision marks Him as a Prophet of the first order. In fact, whereas any astute political observer could predict that, given the collision course on which Jesus was heading, the Jewish clergy would very probably do Him in, no one but God could foresee Jesus' victory over them by His triumph over death.

Elders, chief priests and scribes: whether or not this expression is the normal technical designation for the Jewish supreme court, the Sanhedrin, it practically includes its every member: the men of reputation, representative constituents from various cities of Israel, the priestly caste and the theologians. There is no cushioning of the shock in the discovery that the most famous, most influential, most highly respected men in Israel would unite to inflict this suffering on their Master! Now it becomes even clearer why He had ordered His men to "let them alone" (Mt. 15:14). He had no intention to

save face before that religious establishment, because it stood at cross purposes with God's plans. *Elders*: the Hebrew *Flusser* (*Jesus*, 159) is plainly mistaken to plead that the Jewish Sanhedrin was not responsible for Jesus' condemnation, since, according to his own apologetic purpose to exculpate the best men of Judaism, these *elders* must be only "the elders of the Temple," hence, merely Sadducees. Matthew, however, (26:3, 47) terms them "elders of the people," not merely "of the Temple." The whole Sanhedrin would be involved. (Mt. 26:59; Mk. 14:55; 15:1 *hólon tò sunédrión*; Lk. 22:66 "the assembly of the elders of the people" *tò presbutérion toû laou*) While it is unnecessary to perpetuate and unChristian to perpetrate further hatred of Jewish people, it is also unjust to exonerate those actually responsible for this judicial murder. To accomplish this latter, Flusser must discount the historical references to the fulfilment of Jesus' prediction. To what state had so glorious a nation fallen when her wisest, holiest, most learned men should become the prime movers and responsible agents in the contemptuous execution of the One Hebrew whom God had chosen, qualified and sent to bless her in turning everyone away from his sins! (Ac. 3:26)

He must be raised up the third day. What sort of King is He who so confidently promises His own resurrection shortly after His yet future death? Although Jesus' students missed this victory note. Matthew's readers have the unexcelled advantage of being able to ponder this question, and they must decide about it. *The third day* (= "after three days," Mk. 8:31) This expression, coming shortly after the repeated sign of Jonah (16:4) and reminiscent of the more elaborate expression of that sign (12:39), is but its literal interpretation given by the Lord Himself. If Jesus intends to arise literally *on the third day*, then the figurative language of the earlier prediction which had seemed so precise, must be interpreted in light of His explanation. (See notes on 12:40.) If Jesus must remain in the tomb literally "three days and three nights" (= 72 hours), then His resurrection would occur on the fourth day, a hypothesis nowhere affirmed in Scripture. He said: *on the third day*, not "on the fourth day."

This prophecy is a perfect illustration of divine foreknowledge. In fact, every single person who was to play a role in this drama did so with full liberty and responsibility, yet their moves were foreseen in surprisingly accurate detail.

2. Peter rebukes Jesus (16:22)

16:22 **And Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall never be unto thee.** Peter's words are stated here in about as good an English paraphrase as is possible for *hileós soi, kúrie*, literally: "(God) be merciful to you, Lord." This scene is so true to life, so human, so much like all of us! We are repelled by death, especially that of our closest friend. So Peter, too, could not understand how our glorious Lord must also crumble in the dust of death. The Twelve could admit that the common lot of mortals might include martyrdom, even on crosses. But "the difficulty of the twelve was probably not that the servant should be no better than the Master, but that the Master should be no better than the servant"! (Bruce, *Training*, 176) **Peter took him** aside (*proslabómenos*, Mk. 8:32), evidently intending to make the rebuke relatively private. But his shock reflected that of the others. (Mk. 8:33, "But turning and seeing His disciples, He rebuked Peter," as if they too stood stunned by His incredible prophecy, agreed with Peter and so needed to hear the correction administered to Peter.) They must have reasoned: "Our Master no better than a common criminal? Unthinkable! But what of the Kingdom, if Jesus should die? What will happen to us, His closest followers? Of what sort of kingdom is He, then, a king, if He must die to establish it?" These burning questions form the backdrop of Jesus' answers and teaching that follows. (vv. 23-28)

The stunned Apostle probably hoped to head off that kind of talk as soon as possible, because Jesus' message came through with a clarity far too painful. (Mk. 8:32) It must have seemed to Peter that such negative talk would defeat the Messianic cause he had just confessed, and render impossible the realization of the Church to be established. But his psychological reaction is astonishingly similar to that of Nicodemus (Jn. 3:1ff). That Pharisee, after having honestly admitted that Jesus was "a teacher come from God, since no one can do these signs that you do, unless God is with him," turned immediately to arguing with the Lord whether the new birth from above could be a real possibility or not!

The abruptness of Peter's reaction indicates that this is the first time that any of the Twelve had really understood anything about Jesus' destined suffering. Allusions had preceded this, which the disciples had apparently cast into the limbo of incomprehension or had interpreted in some figurative sense, e.g. Jesus' influence would

suffer some sort of temporary eclipse only to shine forth in far more glorious strength thereafter. Now, however, His words are impossible to take in any way but literally.

Because they focused only upon the concept of the suffering Messiah, the men missed the promised hope of His resurrection. And despite the stern correction Jesus handed them on this occasion, a correction they could understand intellectually, they could still not bring themselves emotionally to accept its truth—even after the resurrection had occurred and its reality witnessed to them. (Mt. 28:17; Lk. 24:8-11, 41; Mk. 16:11, 13f; Jn. 20:9) Obviously, they had stopped listening as He told of the compelling necessity of His death. Emotionally, they may have never even heard the rest. Death was such a shock that resurrection lost all its glory for them. Yet, His prediction of a resurrection was not futile, even though it probably did not fully register in their mind, since, like the sign of Jonah given to the Pharisees (Mt. 12:39; 16:4), when the resurrection actually occurred, it became the means of strengthening their faith as they recognized, however tardy, that Jesus had actually described it many times before it took place. (Cf. Jn. 2:22)

Another psychologically true note is sounded by Peter's officiousness: could anyone really suppose that the true Son of God, God's Anointed, could do or say something that deserved rebuke? Could anyone who is really thinking admit that such a Leader needs leading? But Peter's impulsive, well-meant reproof arises in a mind that is perfectly normal in its not being able to see the real, moral contrariety between the rebuke and the confession. His own prejudice blocked out his ability to sense this contradiction. Because these disciples had no conception of the necessity of the Messiah's suffering, the more firmly they trusted Him to be the Messiah, the more confused they became when told He must be executed. Rather than trust His promise of resurrection, they could only hope that His extremely negative view of the situation would prove baseless. And so they sin by supposing themselves to have a clearer conception of Jesus' duty than He Himself does! They have no intention to tempt Him to prefer safety to righteousness, duty and truth; they merely suppose that He wrongly understands what they have decided must be true. Herein is written the danger of supposing that our love for the cause of Christ may permit our well-meaning concern to overstep the limits that our discipleship imposes upon us, and to tell our Lord what He can say or do. In this frame of mind, Peter is the forerunner of all Christians who assume that they know anything better than Jesus

and may safely presume to tell Him so. All of Peter's sincere love for Jesus and his devotion to His cause, all his joy flowing out of his past confession, all his happiness born of Jesus' commendation, are insufficient to justify this bold protest against the program of God revealed by His Son! Every believer must be open to correct his own understanding and be able to grow past the limitedness of his beginning conceptions, however rightly stated may have been the terminology in which it was originally expressed.

3. Jesus rebukes Peter (16:23)

16:23 **But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art a stumbling-block unto me: for thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men.** What a crushing blow this must have been to the fisherman-Apostle who probably expected to be commended for his love and concerned loyalty, even as he had earlier been recognized for his faith and grasp of his Master's revelation! And yet, too much was riding with the outcome of this confrontation to permit Jesus to treat Peter in any other way. Jesus may not have expected the disciples instantly to fathom the absolutely essential nature of His death, but He did not intend for them to object either!

Get thee behind me, Satan; thou art a stumbling-block unto me. Peter is a Satanic trap to Him in a dual sense:

1. Peter's selfish concern for the supremacy of his views as to what the Kingdom of God must be and how it must be brought about is the same subjective self-interest that makes Satan the devil that he is. He had no concern to promote God's interests; only his own.
2. Because this is true, Peter's misdirected affection is nothing but Satan's subtle attempt to sway Jesus from His divinely appointed purpose. Bruce (*Training*, 174) is right on the mark to link with Satan's character this advice to sacrifice duty to self-interest:

That advice was substantially this: "Save thyself at any rate; sacrifice . . . the cause of God to personal convenience." An advice truly Satanic in principle and tendency! For the whole aim of Satanic policy is to get self-interest recognized as the chief end of man. Satan's temptations aim at nothing worse than this. Satan is called the Prince of this world, because self-interest rules the world; he is called the accuser of the brethren, because he

does not believe that even the sons of God have any higher motive. He is a skeptic, and his skepticism consists in the determined, scornful unbelief in the reality of any chief end other than that of personal advantage.

Any counsel to prudence, any hope of by-passing the cross which stood at the focal center of God's foreordained plan, is nothing short of being the subtlest whisper of Satan who is making excellent use of perfectly natural, well-meant concern for Jesus' safety and earthly success. "None are more formidable instruments of temptation than well-meaning friends who care more for our comfort than for our character." (Bruce)

Jesus shows His true humanity at a critical point: He is temptable! Peter really has become *a stumbling-block* in Jesus' path. He needed no persuasion to avoid the cross that any true human being would instinctively dread. Rather, He needed to be encouraged to endure it! This is why He responds so drastically to the temptation: He refuses to temporize with sin. In so doing, He sternly exemplifies His own doctrine. (Mt. 5:29, 30)

Thou mindest not the things of God, but the things of men. Disciples of all epochs must learn once and for all that no man may confess Jesus to be Messiah and Son of God and still permit himself the luxury of disagreeing with whatever in His message does not suit his taste, views or hopes. This very disagreement with the Lord of all earth and heaven is nothing less than *mind[ing] the things of men* at the expense of the will, purposes, plans and methods of God.

Whereas it was God who had revealed to Peter the great confession, it is this-worldly self-preservation that prompted his present protest. God planned the death of Christ for man's sins, but the popular concepts dreamed of a political, earthly Messiah ruling in kingly splendor. God intended a reign voluntarily embraced in humble, submissive faith, but men clamored for a triumphalistic, fascistic domination that forced compliance to the architects' brand of king and ruthlessly crushed all opposition. God desired to offer men mercy through the voluntary self-sacrifice of His Son; men's scheme had no place in it for mercy; only self-glorying, self-justifying, self-satisfied self-righteousness. And even if the Apostles who had already given up much for Jesus did not now intend to be selfish, they nevertheless suffered from the short-sightedness of their small view. They were grossly hampered because they preferred their human point of observation as final, rather than God's. Jesus, on the other hand,

could see the victory of God's counsels, as well as the self-defeating, self-destructive end of theirs.

4. The Sermon on the Cost of Our Salvation (16:24-28)

16:24 **Then Jesus said unto his disciples**, but before launching this ultimatum, He "called to him the multitude with his disciples" to hear it. (Cf. Mk. 8:34; Lk. 9:23) The presence of the crowd argues that His desire for privacy was only partially realized during the trip north. The Evangelists' silence about the motive for the presence of the crowd does not permit us to determine whether Jesus was actively engaged in any public ministry, although this is doubtful, because of the nearness of the final crisis and the deep need of the disciples for further training. The crowds, however, had probably heard of His fame (cf. Mt. 4:23-25) and here too "He could not be hid." (cf. Mk. 7:24) However little or much they knew of Him, they too must hear this hard-hitting, down-to-earth challenge. In short, He was promising "blood, sweat and tears" for every one of His servants. No cost would be too great, no sacrifice too dear for His sake. Only realistic individuals who have taken a long, hard look at discipleship need apply for membership in God's Kingdom! The loyalty and devotion that He had required of His Apostles during their first evangelistic tour (Mt. 10:38f) is also required of everyone without exception. (Mk. 8:34; Lk. 14:27; 17:33) The extreme demands Jesus makes here are not for the heroic few who would live exceptional lives somehow untrammelled with the harrying problems of normal existence, or for spiritual giants capable of reaching this hallowed ground. They are for housewives, businessmen, coal miners, truck drivers, lawyers, sailors, students and pensioners, living and working in the commonest daily experiences. This is not the rare spiritual discipline for so-called "religious orders of super-Christians," but the only means of saving ANYONE!

If any man would come after me (*El tis thélei . . .*) The service of Christ is to be freely accepted as an autonomous choice of the will and because we want to. (*thélei*) There is no external constraint, just the impelling power of a new affection. It is easy to submit to the subtle pressure of family, friends, the congregation or the preacher. But one cannot become a Christian unless he *wants* to more than anything else. Not even God compromises our liberty to refuse. (See notes on 13:9.) But this does not mean that willingness to deny self and bear a cross are matters of indifference, because the terms of

discipleship He lays down next, by their very nature, are absolutely indispensable, not only to a right understanding of salvation, but to our participation in it. We cannot be disciples of Jesus on any other terms!

Let him deny himself. (See Special Study: "The Cost of Our Salvation" after 16:28.) Here all that is Satanic in each disciple meets its Waterloo. Self-interest, self-promotion, self-preservation and self-complacency must forever die. (See notes on 5:5, Vol. I, p. 213.) This death to self is only possible where men have a clear understanding of absolute righteousness and recognize their failure to meet that exacting standard. (See notes on 5:48.) How can anyone seriously present himself before a gloriously holy and righteous God, garbed in filthy rags, all the while pretending that such "finery" could satisfy the most scrupulous examination? (Cf. Isa. 64:6; Ro. 3:9-20; 6:4-11; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 4:22-24; Phil. 1:21; 2:1-8; 3:7-12; Col. 3:5-17; 2 Co. 5:14-19)

Take up his cross. Jesus' Galilean listeners well know what cross-bearing meant. In fact, Josephus (*Antiquities*, XVII, 10, 10; *Wars*, II, 5, 2) reports the crucifixion of 2000 insurgents by Varus shortly after the birth of Christ. They knew that His words could only mean the voluntary bearing up under any avoidable suffering, even martyrdom, that would come in the line of duty for anyone committed to Jesus. As he signs his own recruiting papers, each disciple must recognize that he is, at the same time, subscribing to his own death warrant. It is *his cross* he must bear for sake of Jesus. There is no merit or meaning in suffering for any other cause, nor for one's own wrong-doing. Rather, the fiery ordeal that tries each disciple's mettle must come only because he is a Christian and for doing right, conscious of God's will. (1 Pt. 2:19-25; 3:13-18; 4:12-19)

Even though each man must *take up his cross*, such a cross only has meaning as it admits the rightness of Jesus' having borne His. Why bear ours, if His were not part of God's plan? Therefore, the demand that we bear our cross is an implicit demand that we accept His. To the modern Christian, fully accustomed to glorying in the cross of Christ, this sounds backwards. But to those Hebrew disciples, unconvinced that Jesus' cross was an inevitable and integral element in God's planning, this demand is far from superfluous.

Conversely, however, to claim to follow Jesus without admitting His sacrificial death and proclaiming it as God's only plan to save humanity, is tantamount to refusal to bear one's own cross, the instrument by which we identify ourself with Him and His. But who

would dare minimize His cross? ANYONE is certainly trying it who supposes that social revolution or social service without proclamation of the bloody sacrifice at the cross can still communicate the total message of Jesus or the love of God. No one who understands the social expression of a relevant Christianity could ever deny that the building of hospitals or the feeding of the world's starving populations is a natural fruit of Christ's spirit. But to substitute these for the demand that men not only acknowledge the cross of Christ as the only means of their salvation, but that they also immediately and willingly shoulder their own cross, is to deny the Lord who expects us to do both.

Bearing our cross identifies us with Jesus' understanding of God's program and plan. In effect, this means that, in our own personal experience, we identify with Him by generously giving ourselves in sacrificial service to others, however humiliating or painful this turns out to be for us. (Ro. 8:36; 12:1, 2; 1 Co. 15:31; Heb. 13:13-16; 1 Jn. 3:14-18) Even as He lived out the implications of the cross every day of His life, even before the actual, historical crucifixion, so we too must bear our cross DAILY (Lk. 9:23). What is this challenge but His invitation to every disciple to share in His mission, His method, His experience? Jesus not only assumes upon Himself the responsibility to be the suffering Savior of men, but He also calls into existence a group of self-sacrificing disciples willing to share His work, extending it throughout the world. In this sense, this body of followers will be but the extension of His thoughts, the continuance of His own mission—in short, His body. (Eph. 1:22; 4:12ff) The real test of our belonging to the Church, then, is not merely intellectual orthodoxy, or the ability to give the correct answers, but readiness to serve and follow Jesus whatever it costs. Bales (*Jesus the Ideal Teacher*, 54, italics his) describes the psychological soundness of this challenge:

It will cost to be a Christian. And yet, there is *the heroic in man* which responds to such a challenge. For a cause which he considers worthy, man is willing to sacrifice. . . . To some the Christian life has been presented as a sissified type of thing that demands nothing and brings little. Such is a perversion of Christ's teaching. Men need to understand that although the blessings of the Christian life far outweigh its costs, yet one is called to a life of service. The real tough guy is the guy who has the moral fiber to stand up and do right regardless of what others may think. Such conduct really takes strength of character, but any weakling can drift with the tide and do what the crowd does.

In this sense, then, what seems too rigorous and extreme a requirement, is real wisdom, for Jesus knows that it is the only way to produce His own character in us and actually equip us for the mission on which He sends us.

And follow me. (1 Pt. 2:21ff) Psychologically, this death to self is possible only if men make an intensely personal commitment to Jesus. People are far less ready to give themselves to an impersonal cause. Jesus knows that the psychological power to rise to the high sacrifice of self can come only as each person feels the compelling warmth of His own personal challenge. Notice His emphatically personal invitation to "come after ME . . . follow ME . . . lose life for MY sake . . . ashamed of ME (Mk. 8:38), the Son of man (= "I") shall be ashamed of him also . . . for the Son of man ("I") is to come . . . HE will repay everyone for what he has done." (Study the implications of Jn. 12:26. Beyond the servant's sharing in Jesus' glory after the judgment, how does the servant share with his Lord now? Where is Jesus at work on this earth in our time? This is where we at His side must busy ourselves in thoughtful, useful service among those in our ken who have any need of our [His] service.) This challenge is but the working out of His own principle: "A servant is not above his Master." (Mt. 10:24f) We must understand that Phil. 2:5-10 was not written to inform theologians about the incarnation and atonement, but to teach all of us that we too must die to self and not have our own way! (Phil. 2:1-4)

This extraordinary invitation must not be misunderstood as a doctrine applicable only to a certain, critical era fortunately different from our own, or applicable only to those willing to live dangerously in prominent roles as unwelcome prophetic leaders who publicly denounce the world's sins, or, simply, as a doctrine too demanding for ordinary people. No, the cutting edge of Jesus' requirements must not be dulled, since their imperative character reflects the will of God for each of us. We must identify ourselves with them by obeying, because these very demands identify us with, and justify, His determination to cooperate with the purpose of God: "The Son of man must . . ." (16:21) Thus, our identification with His cross must identify us with God's purpose for our lives, and, as Morgan (*Matthew*, 219) expresses it: "whether it be laughter or crying, sorrowing or sighing, the secret of life is to follow Him on the pathway of loyalty to the Divine Will."

16:25 For whosoever would save his life shall lose it: and whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. Because the terms of service

in Jesus' discipleship are so exacting, Jesus mercifully submits three persuasive reasons to make acceptance easier, each of which argues that the disciple who obeys is actually acting in his own best interest.

1. Because only the loss of self in Christ's service leads to true life. (16:25)
2. Because he who loses himself in self-interested choices, loses everything. (16:26)
3. Because Jesus will reward everyone on the basis of his own free choices. (16:27)

The hub around which Jesus' paradoxical declarations turn is every man's decision about what constitutes *his life* (*tèn psuchèn autoû*). Implicit in His words is an understanding of life that includes both earthly, temporal life and eternal life hereafter. But, for those whose view of reality includes only the here and now, Jesus is talking absolute nonsense. This statement immediately tests everyone's view of reality: whose world is real, Jesus' or his own? The critical importance of this pronouncement lies in its ability to test our own view even of our own life: what is our *life* (*psuché*)? Luke (9:25) furnishes a precious key to understand to what Jesus refers. Instead of Matthew's "gain the whole world but forfeits his life" (16:26a), Luke says: "gain the whole world and lose HIMSELF." Thus, Jesus is talking about man's own being, his soul, his ego, his person, which he possesses in this life and could lose or keep for eternity. (Cf. Jn. 12:25, not parallel) Paraphrased, this becomes: "Whoever decides to protect all that contributes to and constitutes his personal happiness, shall lose everything. Whoever surrenders all this for my sake, shall find that he has really preserved it best!" In context, Jesus will clearly illustrate this attempt to save oneself: "For whosoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of man also be ashamed when he comes . . . then he will repay every man for what he has done." (Mk. 8:38; Mt. 16:27b) Hendriksen (*Matthew*, 656ff) is right to teach that the great contrast in life choices here is between love and selfishness. In fact, the person *who would save his life* seeks to promote his own predominantly selfish interests. He relies upon what he has made himself. He must subordinate every choice, every relationship to the preservation of whatever good he sees in himself, because this latter is of absolute value and importance to him. His first concern is for his own well-being, popularity, position and possessions. Accordingly, the person who is anxious to save his own skin, will abandon truth and righteousness

and Jesus. Cowardly withdrawing from the pressure and avoiding the hatred inevitably directed toward true disciples of the Lord, he retreats to a temporarily safe position. This instinctive selfishness, however, is self-defeating and will be inevitably frustrated. Despite his gaining a few years of ease and tranquility in this way, such a person will die after all, only to face the Christ he had so miserably denied in the name of prudence. All that he had hoped to save by his caution, prudence and evasions, is forever lost. So, "the prudent" are damned!

Whosoever shall lose his life for my sake shall find it. This is the man who loves, whose whole existence is bound up in out-going sharing with others for Christ's sake. He understands how Christ loved him and, because of that love, he responds by loving Him and anyone Jesus wants him to love, whatever that costs. Love is what makes *life* all that it is meant to be, because self-giving love brings real usefulness to the world and personal satisfaction in successful help rendered others. (Cf. 1 Co. 13; 2 Co. 8:1-7; 9:6-15; Gal. 2:20) Real *life* is "to know that one is loved, and then to love in return, and in showing this love to recognize no boundaries among men beyond which love cannot go, that is life." (Hendriksen, *ibid.*) Ironically, the man who risks everything involved in Jesus' discipleship, and spurns the unreal "safe houses," those pseudo-refuges in this life, will actually protect his own best interests best. He places everything into the hands of a trustworthy guarantor, God. And even if he should temporarily lose family, possessions, economic security or even his own physical life, he joyfully suffers the sacking of his goods, because he sees Him who is the invisible Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. (Cf. Heb. 10:32-39; 11:6, 25-27, 35f)

Note the striking parallel: "If any man would . . ." and "*Whosoever* would . . ." (vv. 25, 26) Our discipleship and how we spend it, is left a matter of free choice. No man can shake his angry fist at God, blaming Him for his personal failure to find life. Further, the freedom to spend our life precisely as we wish (*thélei*), is unhampered by God. The crucial difference does not consist in whether anyone can really save his life or not, because the winners and the losers, after all, spend their whole lives, sacrificing all their powers and possibilities to arrive at what they consider their goals and for whatever they consider to be the right reasons. The crucial difference, rather, lies in the reason for which the life is spent. Only those who spend (*lose*) their life *for Jesus' sake* succeed in discovering life in all its fullest, best senses. (Cf. Mt. 19:29) To have sacrificed

everything—talents, power, opportunities, influence—all for the wrong reason, self, is really to lose everything that was real life. So, the conscious quest of happiness by taking the route of self-interest is the surest way of missing the happy life.

If there must be any concern for self, it must be our concern to be useful means to accomplish His purposes for us. Beyond this, however, the disciple, now absolutely unconcerned about personal glory or comfort, and practically careless about personal consequences, sees himself as having only relative value and only comparative importance, i.e. relative to the greater perspective from which he now views everything in which God and His will are biggest values in his whole scale and control everything else. This is why only an adequate concept of grace can prevent people from demanding their rights, even to life itself, if they need to surrender them for Jesus' sake. Here is where the settled conviction of one's own real damnation actually helps him. It saves him from defending the indefensible. Why would anyone attempt to *save his life*? Because he supposes himself to be worthy and justifiable **JUST AS HE IS**. But grace teaches that he cannot be justified **AS HE IS**, and must be forgiven **FOR WHAT HE IS**. (Romans 1-8; Tit. 2:11-14)

Lose his life for my sake "and the sake of the gospel" (Mk. 8:35) means to give up self for all that Jesus is and stands for and is trying to get done through His body, the Church. The Gospel is but the good news about Jesus, and the implications of this message, hence the entire program of Christ, the success of the Kingdom of God. (Cf. Lk. 18:29f) So, for the worldlings, unconvinced or unsure of Jesus' credentials and true identity, Jesus' promise of life to those who bet everything on Him sound like a risky long shot in a game where the stakes are astronomical. So, the whole question boils down to the decision whether we really think He knows what He's talking about, or not. If He does, there is absolutely no risk! If He does not, we are wasting time with Him anyway. How can we be sure? Because God raised Him from the dead and named Him Judge of all and set the date for our trial. (Acts 17:30f)

16:26 **For what shall a man be profited, if he gain the whole world, and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?** Consider Lk. 12:15-21 as commentary on this unanswered and unanswerable question. **Gain the whole world**, taken in the absolute sense, is the goal sought by only a few unrealistic dreamers. If they happen to be idealistic disciples of Jesus, then they probably see the Messianic Kingdom as the triumphal crushing the free choice of all

those who do not willingly submit to the Messiah. But this kind of world conquest leads only to the destruction of all the moral values Jesus came to establish. On the other hand, more modest goals constitute *the whole world* for the more realistic. The only distinction, however, lies in one's own definition of what, for him, constitutes *the world* to be conquered. But these are only relative differences without a real distinction, relative differences which make no real difference to Jesus. In fact, *forfeiture of one's life* is a price too high for the value received. The conquest of all that anyone wishes to consider his personal world to conquer, at the expense of the forfeiture of his own life, is worthless in the final balance. *Gaining the whole world*, therefore, is not merely a commercial transaction bargained for by a wealthy industrialist, or the battlefield conclusion of a victorious potentate. It is the arriving at one's goals by being "ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation"! (Mk. 8:38 = Lk. 9:26) This also expresses itself in being unconcerned about Jesus' words which would bless men by making them righteous, noble-spirited, holy people, giving them peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Spirit. Too often the highest practical goal of millions is to be "happy animals" oblivious to spiritual considerations. So, the proper investment of one's life is of absolute importance.

This rule applies as much to Jesus Himself as to the humblest disciple in His Kingdom. In fact, had Jesus acceded to Satan's offer to concede Him all the kingdoms of the world, in exchange for His homage, what could Jesus Himself yet offer to repurchase His own freedom from Satan's bondage? No, "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit." (Savor the whole context of Jn. 12:23-33!)

The cowardly disciple, the purpose of whose existence is to save his own neck at any price, will be bullied into denial of his discipleship by the powerful insistence of his own degenerate contemporaries. But because of this betrayal of all that is holy and precious to God, consistent with truth and justice, Jesus will be ashamed of him. (Mt. 10:32f; 2 Ti. 2:12)

Or, if the expression *forfeit his life* is synonymous with death, then, Jesus says: "What profit is there, if a man should arrive at his life's highest goals and gain all the greatest of earthly possessions, and then dies? His life has been spent. What could he possibly have of value to give in order to have his life back again?"

What shall a man give in exchange for his life? Does Jesus mean

this verse to contain two questions somewhat parallel, hence, synonymous, or, rather, two consecutive questions expressing a development in thought? If the latter, then in whose hands does Jesus see the man as having forfeited his life and to whom he must now give something in exchange for it to have it again?

1. To Satan? Having pawned his life to Satan for whatever Satan had offered to provide, in order to repurchase his own soul, what could impoverished man give in exchange for something so precious? From this standpoint, the doctrine of grace receives extra support, because the answer to this rhetorical question ("What shall a man give . . .?") must be that, without help from God who mercifully interposes the sacrifice of Christ as redemption of the pawned soul, man is absolutely penniless, hence unable to give anything of his own to buy back his forfeited soul.
2. To God? Having spent God's gift of life for himself, when man is called to face his Maker to commit his soul to God, what, of all the baubles collected and for which that life was misspent, what could he substitute for *his life*? What could have the same value as what God gave him, that he might return *in exchange for his life*?

This must have been an incredible concept, unimaginable by contemporary standards in Jesus' day, since it implies that all the materialistic goals and worldly gains, as these were envisioned for the Messianic Kingdom in standard Jewish thought, are grossly unsatisfactory and inadequate. Is it credible that the triumphalistic, materialistic golden age as they fancied it, should finally be so self-seeking in its aims as to cause everyone who had banked everything on its realization, *to forfeit his life?!*

Bruce (*Training*, 180), on the other hand, sees Jesus' meaning differently:

The two questions set forth the incomparable value of the soul on both sides of a commercial transaction. The soul, or life, in the true sense of the word, is too dear a price to pay even for the whole world, not to say for that small portion of it which falls to the lot of any one individual . . . The whole world is too small, yea, an utterly inadequate price, to pay for the ransom of the soul once lost . . . Mic. 6:6f.

The whole point is that, apart from God's grace, the lost soul has no market price, although the damned would wish it so.

How poignantly was this very reality played out in Peter's later denial of his Master in order to save his own skin! What if Peter had truly escaped conviction for being a disciple of the Nazarene, only to live on for 50-60 more years, relatively undisturbed under the leaky umbrella of the powers that be on earth? What would he have gained? What would he have lost! And Peter had just now been ashamed of Jesus' revelation of His approaching suffering!

16:27 **For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then shall he render unto every man according to his deeds.** See the discussion of this coming of Jesus in the Special Study: "The Coming of the Son of Man," (Vol. II, pp. 430ff) That this coming of the Son of man is His personal second coming, is proven by the following factors:

1. His coming would be surrounded *with the glory of the Father*. Whether He means that His appearance would be enwrapped in that glory that is usually associated with the Father, or accompanied by a glorious manifestation of the Father Himself in person with Jesus, there is no denying the public character and magnitude of such an appearance. But for Him to be in a position to share *in the glory of His Father* must mean that He will have been fully vindicated and glorified, His death notwithstanding. Although He affirms His deity by speaking to "His Father" in the unshared sense of unique Son of God, He too would be punished for such presumption, unless this claim be vindicated too.
2. His appearance will be attended by his *holy angels*. (Cf. 2 Th. 1:7; Mt. 25:31)
3. His stated purpose is *to render unto every man according to his deeds*. He affirms His right to judge all nations. (Cf. Jn. 5:29; 2 Cor. 11:15; Rev. 2:23; 1 Cor. 3:13f; Psa. 62:12; Prov. 24:12)

These considerations may not be weakened by appeal to the Greek original, as if Jesus mistakenly believed that the date of His return were soon. While it is true that *méllei gàr ho huiòs toû anthrópou érchesthai* can be rendered: "The Son of man is about to come," nevertheless, the verb *méllei* may also be rendered in the following manners: a. "to be about to, to have in mind to, to plan to, to want to." b. "to be established that, to be in the circumstance to," thus, ordinarily: "I may or I must," as by the force of the will of others or by the events. This is even weakened sometimes to a mere possibility: "I can perhaps, I must perhaps." c. "To hesitate, to put off, to delay,

to defer to." 4. Sometimes *méllei* serves as a simple paraphrase for the future tense, substituting for future tense forms that were disappearing from common use. (Cf. Blass-Debrunner, § 338, 3; 350; 356; Arndt-Gingrich, 502; Rocci, 1203) This latter usage is the more likely and preferable, especially in light of the definiteness and certainty with which Jesus' second coming is taught elsewhere.

The reasons for His mentioning His coming in judgment upon the world are multiple:

1. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." (Prov. 1:7; 9:10; 16:6; 19:23; 22:4, etc.) When men tremble in terror of men's threats, they must be shaken by the realization that they do not stand before human tribunals, but before the Judge of all the earth! (Mt. 10:28, 33) Only a proper fear of displeasing our Lord will be sufficient to hold us faithful against the provocations to protect ourselves at all costs. G. C. Morgan (*Matthew*, 220) said it well:

The Judge will be the Lord whose cross you will not share today. To whom will you appeal from His verdict? The last throne is His throne, and at the final assize He presides. If you save your life today, how will you buy it back, for the Man for Whom you will not suffer is the Man coming to reign in His glory.

In effect, Jesus warns: "You will see my glory and face my judgment. I will judge you on the basis of your loyalty to me!" Unless He can cause His disciples to be sensitive to His displeasure more than to their own self-protective instincts, He will have failed to convert them at their most fundamental psychological level.

2. Beyond fear to displease the Lord Jesus, Hendriksen (*Matthew*, 658) notes another excellent connection: "Do not seek to possess the whole world. That will mean loss. Leave the matter of receiving a reward to the Son of man. He at his coming will reward every man according to his deeds." (See Special Study "The Reasonableness of the Redeemer's Rewards for Righteousness," Vol. I, 198ff) Jesus' words here are two-edged: they promise and threaten at the same time, the difference in application being merely what each person intends to do about his own discipleship. Does our discipleship become less ethical, merely because we desire the crown of righteousness and fear eternal contempt? Some would

grade Jesus down for establishing such categorical alternatives that influence our present choices on the basis of the prospects of future destiny, as well as for encouraging right choices by hope of reward, rather than teaching virtue for its own sake. Bruce (*Training*, 181) answers such cavils correctly:

. . . an alternative is involved in any earnest doctrine of moral distinctions or of human freedom and responsibility. . . . Christians need not be afraid of degenerating into moral vulgarity in Christ's company. There is no vulgarity or impurity in the virtue that is sustained by the hope of eternal life.

Those who would object to Jesus' offering repayment or reward to His disciples make just one more example of people who enjoy informing God about His privileges and duty!

3. The fitting climax to Jesus' discourse on the necessity of entering into the glorious Messianic life through suffering and death to self, is the truth implied in Jesus' promise: "Although I must suffer, I will arrive at the glory that is rightly mine, because I will return in my Father's splendor, with His obvious approval and exalted glory." The confused disciples had seen nothing until now, but humiliation, affliction and execution. Now they must admit the truth of His promise of victory ("and rise again the third day" 16:21). He forces them to face the heavenly glory. Luke expresses this threefold glory far more emphatically: "he comes in his glory and the glory of the Father and (the glory) of the holy angels" (Lk. 9:26). To disciples, heart-broken at the news of His humiliation, He says that the same *Son of man* who must suffer soon and who now calls men to shoulder their crosses, *shall come in glory!* It is only through the cross that men arrive at the crown, through the grave they arrive in glory, through death they arrive at dominion. (Cf. 2 Ti. 4:8; 1 Co. 15:42f; Rev. 2:10, 26f; 3:21; consider Mt. 16:27 as the affirmation of Daniel 7:9-18, 22, 27) Jesus, too, will be rewarded only after enduring the cross and despising the shame. (Heb. 12:2f) The disciple is not above the Master. Must the servant have his reward before, or even without, the shame and contempt?

What is the resplendent *glory* with which Jesus will be surrounded? Is it only the blazing brilliance of light? Yes, at least this, but such visible splendor is but one aspect of a spiritual God. The glory of Jesus is also His praiseworthiness for what He will then have accomplished on the spiritual plane too:

1. He will have brilliantly succeeded in removing the final scaffolding from a glorious Church, having fitted into place the final stone. Now He can reveal her in all her corporate beauty, notwithstanding the wide diversity of individual lives, gifts, personalities and ministries, He will have then succeeded in gathering into one glorious harmony all these varied personalities submitted to His direction. (Cf. Eph. 3:10, 21)
2. He will have accomplished to the full all the things of God upon which He had fixed His heart and mind all the time He was a Man! This is implicit in His encouragement aimed to bolster the sagging faith of disciples whose confidence in His ability to succeed has been shaken.

Only a cosmic, long-range view of His total mission and victory would suffice to provide the motivation for our willingness to bear reproach for Him. But because of His resurrection, we can be certain that He is able to carry out the remainder of His promises. The only question is whether we believe it or not.

16:28 **Verily I say unto you, There are some of them that stand here who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.** (Cf. the Special Study "The Coming of the Son of Man," Vol. II, pp. 430ff, esp. 437ff.) The coming of the Son of man, intended in this verse, is clearly distinct from that intended in the preceding verse, unless, with some modern scholars, we are ready to attribute a gross error to Jesus. They would hold that He Himself expected to return during the lifetime of His Twelve. While He confessed not to know the time of "that day and that hour" (Mt. 24:36), He affirmed nothing about not knowing perfectly every other detail thereabout. In 16:27, rather, He shows that He does know these details. As with other prophecies, so also this one must be interpreted in the light of its undoubted fulfilment. Jesus did not return personally in the lifetime of His Apostles. Therefore, He did not intend to promise that here. Rather, Jesus did establish His Kingdom during the lifetime of these disciples, therefore that is the coming He had in mind. (Study Acts 1 and 2 as the beginning of the fulfilment of this prophecy.)

Had Jesus meant to refer to His own second coming in this verse, then it would be assumed by the reader that, after some would have seen the coming of the Son of man in His kingdom, then they would experience death. But the very final defeat of death at the final judgment precludes this possibility. (Cf. 1 Co. 15:25, 26) Therefore,

when the Lord affirmed that **some would not die until** they should **see Him coming in His Kingdom**, He really leaves open the possibility that, after that event, they could really die. In light of the Church's beginning on Pentecost, an event witnessed by every Apostle (except the suicide, Judas, Mt. 27:3-5), we must affirm that this verse refers at least to that event, and maybe to much more in the life of the early Church. Today, however, the Apostles are all dead, and Jesus has not yet personally returned in His glory and royal dignity. What has occurred in verses 27, 28 has been correctly analyzed by Hendriksen (*Matthew*, 659). Jesus shows the Apostles His entire glorification as one unitary concept embracing all the events from His exaltation and vindication at Pentecost and the period following clear up to His second coming. Verse 27 outlines His final victory; verse 28 describes its beginning.

A careful harmonization of all that Jesus said reveals His full intention:

MATTHEW:

There are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom.

MARK:

There are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.

LUKE:

There are some standing here who will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.

The differences in reporting Jesus' words may be resolved in the following manner: "You will live to see the beginning of my Kingdom surrounded with power. The arrival of the Kingdom of God is equal to and contemporaneous with the beginning of my reign as King." The fulfilment of this promise was only understood by faith, since Jesus did not personally appear in Jerusalem at Pentecost, nor even visibly above Jerusalem, exalted at the right hand of God. Not even then did Jesus perform stupendous personal signs, other than those actually recorded as performed by the Holy Spirit, to convince men of His reign. But what was done was evidence enough that He had indeed begun to rule the Kingdom of God with power. (Cf. Ac. 2:32, 33, 36) That the post-crucifixion, post-Pentecost events are evidence of Jesus' coming in His Kingdom is clear from the following observations:

1. The disciples saw Jesus ascend to the Father's right hand. (Ac. 1:6-11; Lk. 24:50-52)

2. They beheld the Spirit's coming to bring charismatic power, help and illumination. (Ac. 2:1ff)
3. They witnessed the birth of the Church among the Hebrew people despite the helpless rage of His enemies. (Ac. 4:24-33; 8:4; 21:20!) They thought of this as "the Kingdom." (Ac. 1:3; 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31; Ro. 14:17; 1 Co. 4:20; Col. 1:13; 1 Th. 2:12; Heb. 1:8; 12:28; Rev. 1:9)
4. They participated personally in the vigorous, rapid, world-wide expansion of the Church among the Gentiles. Ac. 10; 11:19-26; 13-28
5. They labored for and witnessed the maturing of the Church's love, boldness and oneness.
6. Some of the Apostles, notably John, witnessed the fall of national Judaism with its temple, priesthood and sacrifices, and the triumph of the Gospel proclaimed in every part of the Roman empire.

These all provide evidence of Christ's royal reign in and through the ministry of His people, the Christians. These momentous events, from the world's point of view, could be described as "filling all Jerusalem with your teaching" (Ac. 5:28) and as "turning the world upside down" (Ac. 17:6) But from the Christian point of view, however, it was evidence of Christ's glory and reign. (Col. 1:13)

And so ends Matthew's chapter 16, as orderly as a tax-collector's record, but as incisive as an Apostle's sermon. In effect, Matthew says to his reader: "The signs are conclusive that Jesus is the Christ, God's Son. Although many did not acknowledge Him, many did, and became part of His new, invincible, immortal assembly. Death would not stop Him, nor any who follow Him. However, He demands total loyalty and complete self-submission of His servants. A high price, but the world's best bargain, since everything else is even more expensive and not worth the price paid for it. Jesus will return to judge everyone on the basis of what they will have decided and done? Dear reader, what is your choice?"

FACT QUESTIONS

1. What incidents took place immediately preceding this journey Jesus took to Caesarea Philippi, and where did they occur?
2. Locate Caesarea Philippi on the map, describing its location in relation to Capernaum. Tell something of its history and importance.

3. Since the King James Version speaks of "the coasts of Caesarea," explain what is meant by "coasts." Where exactly were Jesus and the Twelve during the conversation recorded in this section?
4. Which Gospel writer notices that Jesus was praying at this time? What relation would there be between this prayer and what follows?
5. Why did Jesus ask two questions of His disciples, when possibly only the second one was what He really wanted to know?
6. At what stage in His ministry was Jesus when He quizzed His followers in this way?
7. How many times and on what occasions had the Apostles made similar confessions of the unique identity of Jesus? What is the specific importance, then, of this particular confession in the growth of faith and understanding of the Twelve? How does it differ from those other, however similar, confessions?
8. In what way is Jesus' question as to His identity important (a) to the disciples; (b) to the multitudes; (c) to us?
9. Cite all the passages in Matthew, Mark and Luke which, up to this point, show the deity of Jesus or indicate His unique relationship to the Father, and which, because of this, become reasons Peter and others could confess Jesus as Christ and Son of God.
10. Where did the multitudes get such misconceptions about Jesus as to think of Him as John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the ancient prophets?
11. What is the full significance of Peter's answer? What meaning would his words have to these Apostles conversant with the Old Testament? What is meant by "the Christ"? What is it to confess Him as "Son of God"?
12. What literal truth is meant by each of the following figures of speech?

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| a. "flesh and blood" | b. "gates of Hades" |
| c. "keys of the kingdom of heaven" | d. "binding" and "loosing" |
| e. "take up one's cross" | f. "upon this rock" |
| | g. "taste of death" |
13. What does "Bar-Jonah" mean? Does this prove that Jesus was speaking Aramaic in this incident? If so, what would this prove about the contention of some that in Aramaic He would have said, "You are *Cephas* and upon this *cepha* I will build my church?" If not, what is this Aramaic expression doing in the middle of a Greek sentence?
14. Explain how God revealed to Peter the truth he had confessed.

Did Peter know this truth before he spoke, or did he speak by immediate inspiration? Is Jesus' own ministry the thing referred to by the expression, "flesh and blood"? Did not Jesus have a flesh-and-blood body in which He lived and worked? Did Jesus have anything to do with revealing His real identity to Peter? But, if so, how can He say that "my Father who is in heaven (has revealed this to you)"?

15. Explain Jesus' remark about building His Church. What is an *ekklesia*, and what is its significance in helping us to understand what a "church" is? In what sense, then, is it to be His Church?
16. Identify the "rock" on which Jesus built His Church and prove that your identification is the only one correct, showing the weaknesses of the other explanations offered for "this rock."
17. In what sense(s) is it true that "the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it"? What is it that they shall not prevail against? Why does the King James Version say "gates of Hell"?
18. When Jesus gave the Apostles and Peter (Mt. 16:19; 18:18) the power of binding and loosing, He said, "Whatever you bind (or loose) on earth, shall be bound (or loosed) in heaven." Now, did He mean that anything that the Apostles required or permitted during their earthly ministry would later be supported, or ratified, by God? If so, in what sense? Or did He intend to say that in the future they would require or permit nothing that God had not already required or permitted from eternity? How could you know this? In other words, which comes first in the historical sequence: (a) what the Apostles require or permit? or (b) what God requires or permits? What historical facts help us to answer this question?
19. Why did Peter begin to rebuke Jesus? Why did Jesus rebuke Peter? How was Peter a "Satan" and a "stumbling block" to Jesus?
20. Quote and explain what Jesus said and meant about the high cost of discipleship, i.e. the exacting requirements for following Him.
21. What effective threat did Jesus place before those who would be tempted to be cowards in the face of grave difficulties so frightening as to be ashamed of Him?
22. Affirm or deny: according to our text Jesus taught and sincerely believed that His second coming should have taken place during the lifetime of some of His disciples present on the day that this discussion took place. Explain your reasons for the position you take.

APPLICATIONS

"DAMNING CHRIST WITH FAINT PRAISE"

16:14-16

Today, as in first-century Palestine, men continue to underevaluate Jesus of Nazareth, and so "damn Him with faint praise," because their esteem or praise so badly mirrors the reality. They hold Him to be far less than what He really is:

1. Some admit Him to be *the best of men* that ever lived, but *not the Sovereign Lord* who wisely and perfectly administers His Kingdom.
 - a. As long as they can approve of Jesus' doctrine, judging it by the criteria of a generous humanism, so long will Jesus enjoy their esteem.
 - b. However, should Jesus, at some point, contradict their idea of God or their vision of man and what man needs to better his lot, then at this very point, they do not hesitate to dissent.
 - c. For such people, Jesus' methods are too slow. The emphasis He places upon the conversion of the individual is, for them, an unrealistic scheme, incapable of changing the course of humanity.
 - d. Ironically, Jesus cannot be even the best of men, or even considered good, if His "unprovable, unacceptable" claims to be divine are to be taken seriously and rejected as untrue. But, if He really is divine, then no amount of human dissent can detract one iota of the wisdom of His sovereign rule!

Others would consider Him to be *the perfect man*, but *not the God-man*.

- a. Great, popular theologians attempt to diminish the impact of the New Testament assertions of the divinity of Jesus. But these Biblical affirmations involve the validity of His most marvelous claims. They also demonstrate that all that He requires of all men is absolutely essential, because His words are the words of God.
- b. These scholars attempt to reduce the force of Jesus' claims, because, if what He says should prove true, then some principle of theirs is seen to be false, though they have always defended it and reasoned on the basis of it. Woe to anyone who would

disturb their well-established, sacrosanct presuppositions, because, according to them, they have been established on the basis of "the assured results of modern criticism with its scientific conclusions!" And yet these same scholars would hail Jesus as the Ideal Man.

- c. Ironically, Jesus cannot qualify to be the Perfect Man, if His moral and intellectual credentials are not in order, because He claims to be both divine and human, when, according to many unbelieving theories, He is not.
3. Or else men honor Him as a *Divine Savior*, but *not* a Savior qualified to be such *on the basis of His atoning sacrifice*.
 - a. Why should this concept offend men? Because, whereas men do feel the need of something or someone to deliver them from all their ills, yet it must *not* be done *at the expense of their pride*.
 - b. They want to arrive as far as possible in their own power, by their own intelligence, as autonomous men.
 - c. But the concept of a Jesus that offers Himself as a unique sacrifice eliminates all merit in human effort to justify oneself before God, and this is for them a grave offense. Jesus, by His all-sufficient sacrifice, says, "Without me, you can do nothing!" which means: "You cannot do it by yourself!" Thus, He condemns their self-sufficiency.
 - d. The doctrine of salvation by human submission and self-denial that denounces all self-justification before God, has always been offensive to many.
 - e. Ironically, however, it is impossible to have a Savior who saves from earth's pain, who does not also save from the sins that are its cause. Nor can such a Savior save from sins, unless He attack that malignant cancer that stands at the root of all other evil: human *pride!*
4. To the extent that men consider Jesus to be only a prophet, and not "the Christ, the Son of the living God," they can serenely search elsewhere for the realization of their messianic hopes:
 - a. If Jesus is no more than a John the Baptist, an Elijah, or Jeremiah, or just another undefinable prophet, then we may safely search elsewhere for our supreme Hero!
 - b. And people actually go looking for Him in science, philosophy, law, letters, music, social service, or elsewhere.
 - c. However, men of today who do not decide to follow Jesus as committed disciples of the supreme Prophet of God, automatically

align themselves with those who formally praise Him, but, in substance, they reject Him!

- d. This rejection, in the light of the sufficiency of the signs that validate all that He says of Himself, eliminates the claim to be an "honest doubter." There may remain many doubts, but they can no longer be called "honest."

CONCLUSION: Let us not praise Jesus superficially, pretending to say something important about Him, when we have no intention to go all the way with Him in sacrificial service. Let us praise Him, confessing Him for what He really is: the Christ, the Son of the living God, King of kings and Lord of lords!

But let us praise Him with a solid understanding of what we believe about Him! Our faith, if it is to be mature, must not be a sheltered house-plant, unaware of the options, untested by the winds of opposition from hostile opinions. We must be aware of these low views of Christ's essential identity and glory, we must test them and be prepared to be loyal to our convictions, despite the fact that we may remain a small minority in the world.

SPECIAL STUDY:

THE COST OF OUR SALVATION

During His ministry of approximately three years Jesus of Nazareth, with fiery words of eternal wisdom, set the skies ablaze over Judea and Galilee, announcing the most important news man was ever to hear! He raised no army, laid and collected no taxes, put on no robes of royalty. Yet, His sudden rise to the public eye was very little short of being as spectacular as that of any historic revolutionary. The common people heard Him gladly. At first, the leaders of Judaism listened with an interest which turned sour, first into disgust, then bitter hatred. Jesus stormed the capital of the Jews and wrought havoc right in the sacred precinct by raising embarrassing questions, exposing Pharisaic hypocrisy, and by claiming for Himself the nomenclature which was exclusively Messianic. Characteristically, He demonstrated His most magnificent claims by producing the most inescapable proof—"mighty works, wonders, and signs, which God did by Him in the midst" of those who most wanted to disclaim and destroy such proof. And yet, whether in the midst of the haranguing