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The Structural Principle of Matthew's Gospel

Kevin Smyth

This is not a search for the arrangement of the doors and windows, so to speak, in the structure, corresponding to fourteen generations (ch.1), seven beatitudes (5), ten miracles (8,9), seven parables (13), the many groups of threes e.g., alms, prayer and fasting (6), the five discourses ending with "When Jesus had finished these words....." and so on. Structure here means the "information" in the sense re-adopted by modern biology, the ruling idea which gives the "through-line" or the "tram-lines" on which everything more or less rides. These latter terms are from Stanislavsky, the Russian actor, director and theorist of the modern theatre (1865-1938). The search for the ruling idea had wide success in modern drama. It helped directors to prevent stars stealing scenes. It could keep parts and speeches in their proper proportion, and make sure that lines were not "thrown away". The only novelty for such a search in biblical would be the terms. Commentators have often sought for the "Middle" of the OT or the NT, for the "message of Matthew" and the like. For Matthew the ruling idea has often been seen as "The Messiah...." with various addenda. Here it is suggested that the ruling idea should be formulated in some such terms as (a) "In spite of sufficient signs - (b) the Jewish people refused to believe in Jesus Christ - (c) but he was manifested as Son of God - (d) and gathered his people." More briefly, since the "signs of the times" (Mt 16.3) are insisted on in all the gospels, as is the unbelief of the Jews, it could be said that the Messiah does not appear without his kingdom. But there are reasons, which will appear below, for avoiding such terminology. The best brief formula for Mt would be: Jesus Christ is shown to be Son of God, gathering his people. There are four contexts in which this structural arch is most clearly visible, with its four constituent elements.

(a) Sufficient signs

The main signs for the people, represented by their king and their religious leaders (2.1,4), are the rising of the star and the fulfilment of the prophecy of Micah given in 2.1-6. Only "all Jerusalem," (2,3) is said to have heard the good news of the star, but since the "chief priests and scribes" are said to be "of the people", Matthew says that ALL Israel knew, eventually at least. That the whole people is involved also follows from the lament (2.18). "Rachel bemoaning her children." It is strange, in view of Matthew's constant dredging for OT quotations to enhance his story, that there is no reference in Matthew to "the star will arise out of Jacob" (Numbers 24.17). The text seems to have been widely used. It was exploited to the full in the Damascus document (7.18-20), "The star is the Searcher of the Law...as it is written, 'A star shall come out of Jacob and a sceptre arise out of Israel'. The sceptre is the Ruler of all the congregation", etc. Then, in the early part of the second century AD, the star was referred to Bar Koseba, known as Bar Kocheba, Son of the star, called the "Star of Jacob, the King Messiah" by Rabbi Akiba. Possibly Matthew was not as familiar with the world of Jewish thought as is sometimes said.

(b) Unbelief

Consternation is all that is evoked among the people by the announcement of the birth of the "King of the Jews". Naturally, "Herod the king" was disturbed, but why "all Jerusalem with him" (2.3)? It has been suggested that the people feared Herod's security police. This is possible. The people of Bethlehem soon had reason enough. But the dismay in the city rather points on to the reaction of the Gadarenes (8.28-34) When they got their signs, "all the city came out to meet Jesus, and when they saw him, they begged him to leave their neighbourhood". The people's reaction to the magis' news is a pre-run of their behaviour when Jesus finally arrived in Jerusalem himself. "The chief priests and the elders persuaded the crowds to ask for Barabbas and to destroy Jesus" (27.20). There will be more of such foreshadowings in Matthew's chapter 2. It is already preparing for the "no such faith in Israel" of 8.10ff.

Herod, chief priests and people form a unified front in Matthew, representing "the Jews." They were in fact constantly "in dispute". Less understandable, perhaps, even than the general consternation, is the immobility of the "chief priests and the scribes of the people" when they had identified Bethlehem, and learned of the sign in the sky. As will occur regularly in Matthew, such massive unbelief is followed by a parting of the ways. Rachel now mourns her children "because they are not" (2.18). The children of Rachel are the whole Jewish people. Topographical reflections on the site of Rachel's tomb, near Bethlehem or not, are out of place in reading Matthew. He speaks in the tones of Amos 8.2, "The end is come upon my people Israel".

(c) Jesus Christ, Son of God.

The background of sufficient (not, of course, efficacious) signs meeting unbelief is common, in one way or another, to the four gospels. It is the collocation of the next two items that is specific. Jesus Christ has been presented as "son of David, son of Abraham" (1.1). This is merely genealogical. Jesus Christ is a proper name, as it always is in Paul, and in the early title given to believers, "Christians" (Acts 11.26; cf. Herodians, Caesareans). And "son of David" cannot mean the great king from the house of David who is finally to put things right (Psalms of Solomon, c. 60 BC), since Joseph is also called "son of David" (1.20). It is even very doubtful that "Jesus called Christ" at the end of the genealogy (1.16), could be translated "Jesus called Messiah", as in the New English Bible (OUP, CUP 1970). In every instance in which the phrase "N called NN" appears, what follows "called" is a proper name: "Simon called Peter" (4.18); "a man in the customs called Matthew" (9.9; so also 2.23; 26.3, 14, 36; 27.16, 23). And there are other considerations which will come up later. The fact is that Matthew's interest in the "Messiah" was slight. And when he used the (Greek) title, he meant something different from the king expected by the Jews; by most of them at any rate. Evidence for their expectations in the first century

is confined to Acts 1.6, according to J.S. van der Woude, TWNT Vol 9 (1973) p513.

For the status of Jesus, the fourteen generations of 1.17 should be significant, but it is now lost on us. All that 1.1-17 does for readers now is to present Jesus as a descendant of Abraham (a Jew therefore; 3.9) and as of royal descent. Matthew only really takes flight when he records that Jesus' mother, who turns out to be a virgin, has "conceived of the Holy Spirit". The unique traits of Jesus begin here (In John 1.13 "born of God" and in 3.16, "born of the Spirit", is said in quite a different sense). He is to be called Jesus because "he will save his people from their sins" (1.21). This is the first of many instances in Matthew where Jesus acts as only Yahweh does in the OT. He "saves from sin", which is Yahweh's work: "He will redeem Israel from all its iniquities" (Ps 130.8). In the great majority of cases of "saving" in the OT, salvation is rescue from enemies. Actual parallels to Matthew 1.21 are rare, the closest perhaps being "I will save you from all your impurities" (Ezek 36.39). Saving from sin not seen as a "messianic" work. In the Psalms of Solomon the coming King will exterminate the wicked and provide the pious with a situation where the law can be observed and enforced (esp. Ps. 17). Further, it is "his" people whom Jesus will save. Throughout the OT, it would have been "my, Yahweh's people". If the title, then, "Immanuel" (1.23) is read in the light of the predicates given Jesus in 1.21, it will be seen to mean something substantially different from what it did in Isaiah 7.14. The meaning will be put beyond doubt by 18.20, "There I am in the midst of them", and finally by the last line of the gospel, "I will be with you always" (28.20).

The magi ask for the "king of the Jews", a modest enough title, which seems also allotted to Herod (2.3). But the magi have come to "adore" the king signalled by the star. "Adore" always has its full religious sense in Matthew where it occurs 13 times to four in all in Mark and Luke. Only believers adore Jesus, just as only believers address him as "Lord". An instructive passage is to be found at 8.18-22 where the would-be disciple who failed to make the grade does not get beyond "Master", while the actual disciples say "Lord" (8.22,25;14.28 etc). Sufficiently

decisive for the meaning of "adore" in Matthew is the Temptation. The devil has shown Jesus the kingdoms of the world, and asks him to fall down and adore him in order to have them. Jesus answers, "The Lord God you shall adore, and him only shall you serve" (4.9,10). The sense of adoration in the full meaning of the word is confirmed in 2.11,12: "Falling down the magi adored him, and opening their treasures, offered him gifts, gold, incense, and myrrh". This is the true worship, because in Matthew to "offer gifts" occurs elsewhere when it is a matter of offerings to God in the temple (5.23(2);8.4; 15.5;23.18,19). In 18.38 "adore" is used of homage to a king. But it is in a parable, and the king is transparently God. Finally, "Out of Egypt have I called my son" gives what will be the central title of Jesus in Matthew. In the present context, "Son" is not stressed, but his status has been made clear: he is the centre of the world's faith and religion, to whom "every knee should bow" (Is 45.23; Phil 2.10).

(d) His people

The fourth element of Matthew's structural arch is that Jesus Christ is depicted along with "his people" (to be saved from their sins, 1.21). And he is the ruler who is to govern God's people, Israel (2.6 - a quotation from Micah). But the Israel who were Rachel's children is "no more" (2.17). Instead, the God-with-us is adored by magi from the East, the advance guard of those who were to come "from the east and from the west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the sons of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness" (8.11,12). The faith of the nations which appear as the people of Tyre and Sidon is signalled again in the story of the Canaanite woman (15.21-28) and in the cry of the centurion at the foot of the cross (27.54). Matthew does not use any such term as "the true Israel", the "new Israel" or the "Israel of God" (Gal 6.16)

II Chapter 11

The second main statement of Matthew's ruling idea is 11.25-30.

(a) Sufficient signs

These are all the miracles recorded in bulk or in detail from 4.23 to 12.23, which have aroused the people to admiration, e.g., 9.33. But among the signs must also be included Jesus' preaching which was acclaimed by the crowds in the same terms as miracles: "The crowds were astonished at his teaching" (7.28). Then there is the decisive text of 12.38-42. The demand for a sign is answered by Jesus affirming that with his own preaching there was something greater than the prophet's words which moved Nineveh to repentance, greater than the wisdom of Solomon which had drawn the queen from the farthest south.

(b) Unbelief

The crowds rise to applaud, but do not bow down to adore. That the refusal is total is made plain in the comparison of Jesus' hearers to sulky children whom nothing can please, whether dance or dirge (11.16-19). The theme is developed in the denunciation of the cities, Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, where Jesus had done "most of his mighty works". The refusal to repent before someone greater than Jonah's preaching or Solomon's wisdom has already been alluded to (b - above). The final dire straits of the unrepentant people are depicted in grim terms in the parable of the devil who returns to his former home along with seven others worse than himself (12.43-45)

(c) Jesus Christ, the Son of God

The most explicit statement of Jesus' unique status is 11.27: "No one knows the Son but the Father, and no one knows the Father but the Son." The Son is on equal footing with the Father in a knowledge which is exclusive and reciprocal. And since the Son's knowledge is exactly parallel to that of the Father, it is total. This saying was once treated as "a meteor from the sky of Johannine theology". Now, however, most commentators recognize that "the divine sonship in the metaphysical sense is the presupposition taken for granted throughout the whole NT" (E. Käsemann, An die Römer, 3rd ed., 1973, p3). Earlier, R. Bultmann had put it this way: the Christ-myth is the basic unifying principle of the synoptic gospels (Geschichte der Synoptischen Tradition, 3rd ed., 1957,

p397), the myth being that "he who had lived on earth as Son of God, had suffered, died and risen, and been exalted to heavenly glory" (ibid.p396). In spite of the obscurity that now surrounds the words "myth" and "metaphysics", this is what the older theology called the "Filius Dei naturalis non adoptivus". In recent commentaries the only discordant note comes from E. Schweizer (Das Evangelium nach Matthäus 1973, p176) where knowledge is said to mean "election": the Son has been "chosen" by the Father. This is excluded, however, by the reciprocity of the knowledge. The Father cannot be the "Elect" of the Son. In monotheism he has no choice among gods. And to reduce the Son's knowledge to "acceptance" (of a mission like an OT prophet) gives the word "know" two different meanings in one sentence, and a strictly symmetrical one at that. The main reason for understanding "to know" in the sense of "to choose" is said to be the OT text, "You alone have I known from all the nations of the earth" (Amos 3.2). But this question was denied by OT scholars as long ago as L. Köhler (Theologie des AT 1936), and again recently by C. Westermann (Theologie des AT in Grundzügen 1978, p34), where the note explains: "The yada ti should not be translated as 'chosen'. 'I have known' is to be understood in the sense of knowledge in encounter", N.5. Other authors have also noticed how wide the term used was, and that "know" was not the precise (Deuteronomic) term "choose", e.g., H.W. Wolff (Amoskommentar 1969, p214). But whatever about the Hebrew, the Greek word "to know" means sometimes to know intimately as in Matthew 1.25 (which may be an echo of the LXX but was common enough in ordinary Greek (Bauer, Lexikon, sub voce 5)). It is a fault of method to translate a Greek word by its supposed Hebrew equivalent - "abandoning the data for an hypothesis" (E. Lohmeyer, Matthäus, ed. W. Schmauch 1956, p356). Readers of a Greek text did not see it as a code needing a Hebrew concordance and lexicon to And, then, v27 is a very "Greek" phrase. Its closest parallels are such Hermetica as "I know you, Hermes,.....as you know me". Such knowledge was not one mystic's sole and exclusive property in Hermetism, as it was in the reciprocal knowledge of Son and Father. In keeping with such high knowledge the Son makes, like the Father, a sovereign choice of those who are to receive his revelat-



ion (vv26,27b). This goes beyond even Johannine theology. There Jesus' "own" (1.11 etc) are "given him" (17.6) by the Father. "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (6.44). In Matthew 11.27b the decision as to who are to be his own is made by Jesus the Son.

(d) His people

The presentation of Jesus in his unique and sovereign status is accompanied, as in chapter 2 above (16.16ff; 28.18ff - see below) by a sight of the people who are to be his own. They are "all who labour and are heavy-burdened" (v28). The call should not be restricted to an Israel finding the Law and its Pharisaic interpretation too burdensome. This is still chapter 11. It is not chapter 23 e.g., 23.4. Everyone is addressed as in Sirach 40.1, "Much labour was created for every man, and a heavy yoke is laid upon the sons of Adam, from the day they come forth from the mother's womb till the day they return to the mother of all". The many echoes of the last chapters of Sirach to be found in Matthew 11.26ff have often been noted. There the teacher of wisdom "finds rest" in the divine wisdom, a personified attribute of God. But the teacher has had to pray and labour for wisdom and the rest it gives. Jesus simply promises rest, as the depository of it, to all who come to him. It is not therefore certain that "my yoke" refers, directly at any rate, to Jesus' precepts such as those given in the Sermon on the Mount. And tempting though it would be to compare "my yoke" with "the yoke of the kingdom" (later Jewish tradition), one cannot be sure that the parallel would have been accessible to either Matthew or his readers. The "all" of 11.28 must therefore be left unqualified as "universal".

III Chapter 16

The next clear "Jesus Christ, Son of God, with his people" occurs at 16.16-19. It stands out as the only place in the four gospels (with 18.18) where the word "Church" appears. "Church" stands for "his people" and the magi (Ch.2); the "all" of 11.28 and the "all nations" of 28.19.

(a) Sufficient Signs

The context here starts with the chapter of the parables(13.1-51). They are examples of the "wisdom" of Jesus(13.54), at which Nazareth first was astonished, then scandalized(13.53,57). His "wisdom and mighty works" are associated as marvels(13.54). Jesus' preaching had already been said to have been more telling and momentous than Jonah and Solomon combined - prophecy and wisdom perhaps standing here for the more usual "law and prophets" to sum up the OT(7.12;22.40). Then, after the multiplication of food(14.16-21;15.32-38), the miracles for which the crowd glorified the God of Israel(15.31), there is the straightforward affirmation that enough has been done. "You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times" (16.3).

(b) Unbelief

The crowds have marvelled and even glorified the God of Israel (15.31) The inadequacy of the general response - Pharisee, Sadducee, scribe and people are at one apparently here, like priests and people in ch.2 - is dwelt on in detail (16.13-14). Even if the people glorified the God of Israel for raising the Baptist from the dead - see 14.2 - or for a miracle-worker and prophet like Elijah, or the Jeremiah who preoccupied late Judaism (2 Mac abees 2.1-8; 15.13-16) or another ancient prophet raised from the dead or returned from heaven, they failed to comprehend the coming of God in Jesus, failed and refused (13.13-15)

(c) Jesus Christ

"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (16.16) is Peter's profession of faith. This could be translated "You are Christ, the Son of the living God" since Jesus Christ and Christ are mostly proper names in Matthew (see above Ic). With or without the article, the name can have the same meaning. The only certain use of "the Christ" as the "Anointed" (Messiah) in Matthew is at 11.20 and 22.42. In 16.16 "Christ" is all the more likely to be a proper name because the profession of faith has been "Christianized"; contrast the parallels, "the Christ" (Mark 8.29), "the Christ of the Lord" (Luke 9.20; one of Luke's many semitisms, based on the LXX); "the holy one of

God"(John 6.69). The high priest at Jesus' trial uses the same Christianized expression, "Are you (the) Christ, Son of God"? (27.63). It is not even certain that most Christian readers, even in clearer cases, translated "Christ" by the "Anointed". H. Lohse (TWNT, Vol 9, p421) maintains that the chrestiani of Suetonius and Tacitus is not a case of itacism, but an interpretation of "Christ" as "the mild" (clemens) which was more obvious to the Greeks than a derivation from chriō, anoint. Anyway, - the important thing is that Jesus is called "the Son of the living God" without any emphasis on the "living" since the word is omitted from the formula when it is echoed at the trial. This is the fourth time that "Son of God" has appeared as Jesus' title in Matthew. It was the title given him by the tempter (4.3,6) and demons (8.29) and then by "those in the boat"(14.33). Evidently it had occurred as simply "the Son" (2.15;3.17;11.27). Why then is Peter singularly praised for using it (16.17)? - Clearly, to give the cue for the words in which his singular status as impregnable rock is affirmed.

When then Jesus says, "Flesh and blood has not revealed this to you but my Father", he shows the same intimate knowledge of "all things in heaven" (11.27a) as he affirmed of himself in 11.27b. Speaking as Yahweh, rather than for Yahweh, he gives Simon a theological, programmatic name, Peter, Rock, like Abram being changed to Abraham by Yahweh (Gen 17.5). He goes on, "I will build my church". He "will" build, affirming his presence and power for future ages as in 18.20; 28.20. And it is "my" Church, where the OT had "the Church of the Lord (Yahweh)" or "of God" (Deut. 23.1,2 LXX; 2.3 MT; Judges 20.2 and passim). Compare "his (Jesus') people" (1.21), which is nonetheless God's "people Israel" (2.6). Note also "my yoke" (11.28) which at least means his commandments. Jesus, acting as Lord, has the keys of the kingdom of heaven at his disposal (v19) and can guarantee divine ratification for all that is bound or loosed by Peter on earth. The uniqueness of Jesus' sonship is as plain as in 11.27

(d) His people

Here, returning to ancient Christian usage, seen in the Pauline epistles, Matthew uses the term which was to become the official designation of the people of Jesus

Christ, in the creeds. "The Church" takes the place the kingdom of the Messiah. This is what the magi pre-figured, what the "all" of 11.28 comprises, what will be constituted by disciples from "all nations" (28.19). The relation of the Church to the kingdom of heaven need not be discussed here. Matthew does not describe it as the kingdom of Jesus Christ. The nearest he comes to this is 13.41, "The Son of man will send his angels and they will gather out of his kingdom all scandal and evildoers". But even here it is not certain whether the kingdom is the world ("the field is the world" 13.38) or the Church. The term "people of God" is not found in Matthew, and is rare in the NT where it is practically confined to OT quotations and to Hebrews - "a sabbath rest for the people of God". Like Luke, Hebrews goes in for archaisms, deliberately bringing in OT terms. For the third time, then, when the Son of God is solemnly presented, he is accompanied by the equivalent of a kingdom, or, rather, the fulfilment of the promise of a "kingdom for Israel" (1 QM 12.16;17.7) in an unexpected way.

#### IV Chapter 28

The main text here is 28.18-20. It is prepared for by the same elements as in the three previous statements about Jesus and his people.

##### (a) Sufficient signs

The mockery under the cross shows that the execution of Jesus had cancelled out, in the eyes of the people, his previous signs (27.39-44). So the decisive sign, the resurrection, had to be in the structure of Matthew, sufficiently made known to the people. The first intimations come at Jesus' death. "The curtain of the temple was torn in two...the earth shook...the rocks were split..." (27.51-52). This is the language of OT theophanies which is taken up again in 28.2,3: "When the centurion and the other sentinels saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, 'Truly this was the Son of God'". By this Matthew signifies that as for the other centurion (8.5-10), sufficiently definite signs were being given, enough to be likewise the occasion of "faith". Full information then comes to the people, as in chapter 2, through their heads and

representatives, the chief priests and Pharisees. These were told by the guards at the tomb of "all that had taken place" (28.12), the earthquake, the empty tomb, the heavenly being with the theophanic attributes of lightning and brightness, and the meaning of it all, "He is risen". The guards had become like deadmen (28.4) but were still able to recount "all". This is like the disciples at Gethsemane, sleeping but able to tell of Jesus' prayer. What Matthew means is certain however weakly the story is told: "the Jews" all heard of Jesus' resurrection (28.15)

(b) Unbelief

The Gospel has been moving towards close with a crescendo of unbelief from the Jews, clamouring for the death of "Jesus who is called Christ" (27.17) and breaking completely with the "King of the Jews" (27.29,37; cf 2.2). This refusal of belief persists after sufficient notification of the resurrection. It persisted "until this day" (28.15). Matthew has dwelt so much in the gospel on Jewish unbelief that he has recently been accused of not writing a "gospel", good news, at all. It should therefore be remarked that Matthew is not more "anti-Jewish" than other NT writers. Even Paul could write of "the Jews who killed both the Lord Jesus and the prophets...to fill up the measure of their sins. But God's wrath has come upon them at last (or, for ever)" (1 Thess 2.15,16; cf Mt 23.32-36) And neither Paul here nor the other NT writers are more "anti-Jewish" than the OT prophets. "The end has come upon my people Israel" (Amos 8.2). "Zion shall be ploughed like a field, Jerusalem shall become a heap of ruins and the mount of the temple a wooded height (or, high place, an idolatrous shrine)" (Micah 3.12). These are the last authentic words of these prophets after denunciations as severe as are found in Matthew.

(c) Jesus Christ

All power and authority come to Jesus Christ as in 11.27, from the Father who, despite Jesus' acting and speaking as Yahweh, does not fade into the background to become a dieu fainéant like the Kronos of the Greeks and "high gods" in religions of ancient times and primitive peoples. The risen Lord is not described. The

terrifying elements of theophany have been transferred to the "angel of the Lord" (28.2-3). But the women he meets "worship him", like the magi(2.11). So too the disciples(28.17). They are to baptize all nations "in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit"(28.19). The "theology of the name" (of Yahweh) has been applied to Jesus throughout. All that is done or suffered in the name of Yahweh in the OT is now performed in the name of Jesus, from baptism to prayer and adoration. Compare "You will be hated for my name's sake"(Matt 10.22) with Isaiah 66.5, "Your brethren hate you for my name's sake." The name of Jesus is the focus of the believer's life (Matt 7.22(three times); 18.5 19.29;24.5;18.20) and "for my sake"(5.10,11) should be included here since the name stands for the person. The "theology of the name" if fully treated by J. Dupont, DBS 1960, col.514-554, especially 532-534.

The name of Jesus is now replaced for baptism by the name "of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit." This formula was prepared for, or had left its echo in, the account of Jesus' baptism(3.16,17) "He (Jesus) saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove....and there was a voice from heaven saying, 'This is my beloved Son'". For the association of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, see as early as 2 Corinthians 13.13. (The debate about whether there was ever a baptismal formula "in the name of Jesus" alone, as in Acts, passim does not concern the exegesis of Matthew). Jesus as the Son is on a level with the Father and Holy Spirit, as with the Father (11.27)

But perhaps the most revealing saying of all is in v20, "Behold, I am with you always, till the end of the age." It is the inclusio of the gospel, taking up and translating in unmistakable terms the Immanuel, God-with-us of 1.23. It is also the conclusion of a theophany, the literary form in which the whole resurrection narrative was couched by Matthew, beginning with the earthquake and darkness (cf. Psalm 18.7-9) of 27.51ff. The last part of chapter 28 is the mission or covenant which often forms the end of a theophany (Exod 20.7-17;19.4-6; Deut 5.6-21; 2 Kings 22.19-23; Isaiah 6.1-10). The elements of the divine utterance are "self-presentation, command, promise". (W.Trilling, Das Wahre Israel 1962, pp30-32). One of

the "purest" forms is given in Exodus 3.6-12, "I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham....Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring forth my people.... I will be with you." The "I will be with you" of Yahweh occurs some one hundred times in the OT (H. Preuss, ZAW 80, 1968, pp139-173 - full treatment). The same three elements of theophany are manifest (Matt 28.18-20. (On Matthew 28 as theophany, see ITQ 42 (1975) pp259-271 by the present writer).

(d) His people

As prefigured by the magi, Jesus Christ has a people of all nations(28.19), universal in a way that "Messianic" hopes (a minor element in the OT) did not envisage.

The main, specifically Matthaean idea, under which he gathers his Marcan source, the logia and his own tradition and theology is clear. Jesus Christ is Son of God and has had his people. Discussion on how other titles especially Son of Man, stand to this would be rewarding but not relevant here. It seems certain that the Hebrew-derived "Messiah", common in modern exegesis, has in this form very little at all to do with the NT designation of Jesus Christ, from Paul to Matthew as Son of God.

Two foot-notes. 1. The above exposition of Matthew leaves out of consideration whether it is historical or not or how much.

2. It is not suggested that Matthew clearly formulated in his mind the "main idea" as expounded above. It arises from a reading of his words which is all we have. The "mind of the author" is not for us to know apart from what he says.

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