

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](https://paypal.me/robbradshaw)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Baptist Quarterly* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bq_01.php

Matthew the Pastor

WHO, would you say, is the pastor *par excellence* in the New Testament? Perhaps you would instinctively think of Paul, so much of whose correspondence has been preserved for us, a correspondence which amply reveals his deep pastoral concern: "There is the responsibility that weighs on me every day, my anxious concern for all our congregations. If anyone is weak, do I not share his weakness? If anyone is made to stumble, does my heart not blaze with indignation?" (2 Cor. 11. 28-29). Or would you think of the unknown author of the letter to the Hebrews, whose theological exposition is amply interspersed with exhortatory sections, disclosing a throbbing concern that his readers have not progressed spiritually and are in danger of drifting away (e.g. Heb. 5. 11 and 6. 12)? Further candidates might come from within the Johannine circle: the Elder, who writes to boost the shaken morale of a community or communities which have experienced schism and whose own faith and knowledge have been called in question by the seceders (1 John 5. 13; 2. 20-21, etc.), or the Seer, who writes to steel the nerve of his parishioners faced with the threat of imminent persecution and martyrdom under the Emperor Domitian?

I want to suggest that the writer of the Gospel according to Matthew (hereafter designated Matthew) was a pastor, whatever else he might be (teacher of catechumenes, apologist for Christianity *vis-à-vis* Judaism, Christian scribe well versed in the Old Testament and in rabbinic methods of exegesis). Dr. G. B. Caird of Mansfield College, Oxford, once said to me that of all the New Testament writers he found it most difficult to "put a face on Matthew". Perhaps we may make some contribution to removing Matthew from the shadows by examining him as a pastor.

I

After source criticism had isolated Mark, Q, M and L as the four strata of the synoptic tradition and form-criticism had endeavoured to press behind these sources and had examined the individual pericopes and sayings, seeking what the historical Jesus may have done and said, the latest phase of gospel study¹ has swung over to concentrate on the final editor and his theological outlook and message. To discover this, it is of considerable help if we can see an evangelist working on his sources, adapting, rearranging, moulding and altering them to preach to his own situation.

Let us take the *Parable of the Lost/Wandering Sheep* (Matt. 18. 12-14; Luke 15. 1-7) as an illustration which will shed light on our theme. Scholars are divided as to whether this parable is from Q or whether each evangelist drew it from his own special material (M and L).² We need not debate this here: suffice to say that it is the position in which the evangelists place the parable which affords the clue to their intention. Luke 15 opens with the words: "Another time, the

tax gatherers and other bad characters were all crowding in to listen to him; and the Pharisees and the doctors of the law began grumbling among themselves: 'This fellow', they said, 'welcomes sinners and eats with them.'" Whether Luke composed these verses or took them over from the tradition, most scholars accept that they correctly set the scene: the parables that follow are polemical, they defend Jesus' conduct against criticism, they uphold his friendship with the religious outcasts.³

Matthew, however, has placed the parable in a chapter whose theme has often been described as "Church Order" (without wishing to press that term too strictly). In Matthew's version the sheep is not actually said to be lost, but straying (he uses *plano*, not *apollumi*): the wandering sheep is meant to represent the backsliding church member.⁴ The word "lost" figures in the application (18. 14): "In the same way it is not your heavenly Father's will that one of these little ones should be lost". As W. G. Thompson has said, "The disciple who goes astray can be saved from being lost through the pastoral concern of others".⁵

Granted that Luke has correctly preserved the original "setting" of the parable, it is clear that Matthew has reapplied the parable to his contemporary church situation, specifically to the problem of church members who are drifting away from the "fold". The church cannot be indifferent to them; the church as a whole⁶ has a responsibility to reclaim the erring and win them back. This pastoral concern accords with the will of God, as v.14 reveals. The will of God (so important in Matthew's Gospel) is made the ground and basis for the attitude and activity of church members.

This illustration of redaction criticism's interest in the theology and message of the evangelist has served to reveal Matthew's pastoral concern for the life of the church.

II

One problem which faced the Matthean church was that of sin among its members (an ever present problem throughout church history!). Certain passages in the Gospel show that this exercised Matthew considerably.⁷

(i) *The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares* (13. 24-30, 36-43).

In its original setting in Jesus' ministry, this parable⁸ was probably told in answer to the kind of criticism which ran "How can this fellow be the messiah when he mixes with such characters as tax collectors and sinners? The messiah, when he comes, will destroy sinners and uproot evil and exterminate it forever. This fellow actually consorts with and eats with them"—a view of the messiah's role which John the Baptist also held (*Matt.* 3. 7-10; *Luke* 3. 7-9). Jesus' reply is this: "The discrimination and separation of which you speak do not come till the End. At the moment God is summoning men to repent and acknowledge Him as King. He is offering men the chance of salvation. At the End there will be judgment and God will do the sorting out. His verdict must not be anticipated now".

The interpretation now given in our Gospel of Matthew (vv.36-43) is, on linguistic grounds, almost certainly the work of the evangelist.⁹ What is its drift? The devil is at work in the church! There is an admixture of good and evil even in the church. The separation, however, takes place at the End, the "consummation of the age" (v.39). The point of the parable—that the farmer restrains his servants from trying to uproot the tares now—remains valid. We may legitimately suggest that Matthew the pastor is concerned at the state of the church, but that at the same time he is endeavouring to hold back rigorist elements in the church who want to establish the perfectly pure community here on earth. The discrimination is God's task at the End: we cannot prejudge that. In the interpretation, then, Matthew examines the issue as to whether we should "anticipate the harvest by a separation as soon as the mixed state of the crop becomes apparent".¹⁰ May it not be that the pastoral concern for the backsliding members was precisely the reason for restraining the purists in their zeal to root out the weaker brethren?¹¹

Much the same can be said of the parable of the dragnet (13. 47-50). Probably the same kind of criticism had been levelled at Jesus, the same kind of answer given, the same kind of reapplication to the life of the church. The separation of the good and the bad will take place at the End.

(ii) *The Parable of the Wedding Feast* (22. 1-14).

It is generally held that Matthew has fused a parable about a garment on to that of the (wedding) feast. The wedding feast parable deals with the rejection by the Jews of God's invitation. At v.10 Matthew has added "good and bad"—which is completely unrelated to the preceding verse, since nothing was said about the moral quality of the last people to be invited, only that *anyone* was to be invited. The function of the phrase "good and bad" is to prepare the way for vv.11-13, suggesting the mixed state of the church. The wedding garment stands for works of righteousness (*cf.* 5. 20; 6. 1; 16. 27, etc.).

The first guests (Israel) showed themselves unworthy: the question is whether the new guests (the church) will prove themselves any better. The Matthean conclusion is seen at v.14, appended to the parable: "Many are called, but few chosen". "Many" refers to both Israel and those summoned to the church; the "few" are those who have believed in Jesus as messiah and show "fruits worthy of repentance" in obedience to the love commandment (22. 40). Here is the pastor issuing a warning: the second group of guests are not willy-nilly assured of salvation: they must do the will of the heavenly Father. Matthew is concerned for the spiritual state of the church, concerned for the complacency and lack of moral seriousness that are being displayed. The discrimination takes place at the end when the guests have been gathered in and the hall is filled.

(iii) *The Parable of the Ten Virgins* (25. 1-13).

We note that while all ten are invited, only five virgins go into the wedding feast. All ten sleep, so sleeping is not the cause of exclusion.

Admittance was granted to those who had enough oil when the bridegroom came, i.e. those who were prepared. Clearly Matthew has taken the parable allegorically: the wedding feast stands for the eschatological kingdom of God, the bridegroom is Christ at his parousia. Verses 11-12 remind us forcibly of 7. 22-23 (whatever their relationship, if any, may be): "Not every one who calls me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my heavenly Father. When that day comes, many will say to me 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, cast out devils in your name, and in your name perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them to their face, 'I never knew you; out of my sight, you and your wicked ways' ". Verbal expressions of loyalty, even impressive religious deeds, like prophecy, miracles and exorcisms, are no substitute for obedience to the heavenly Father's will.

The application of this parable to the church by Matthew reveals again his deep concern for the spiritual well-being of the community and his warning to the spiritually lax and lethargic.

(iv) *The Parable of the Talents* (25. 14-30).

In this parable vv.19 and 30 point to the parousia. Of the three servants, the stress falls on the last one¹²: the servant who did not use his talent is deprived of it and is cast into the outer darkness. The parable has been reapplied from the crisis created by Jesus' own ministry for the chosen people to the life of the church by Matthew, who once again reveals his concern that there are church members who are not engaging themselves fully in the service of their Lord and are therefore being unfaithful to their call and their "stewardship".

(v) *The Parable of the Sheep and the Goats* (25. 31-46).

I mention this parable only tentatively because "all nations are gathered" before the king. Nevertheless it finds its place in this *bloc* of church teaching, and I think that we may legitimately surmise that for Matthew the fate of the heathen is not the main purpose of its inclusion here. Matthew's interest is in its application to church members¹³—the need for practical care of the brethren. We note again that the division (here of sheep and goats) takes place at the End.

There is thus enough evidence to establish that Matthew is concerned about the mixture of good and bad church members. A twofold standpoint emerges: (i) A warning and an exhortation are given; Matthew holds out before the church, and especially the spiritually lax members, the fact of judgment from which no man can escape; (ii) There is a stress on separation at the End,¹⁴ which could suggest that Matthew was trying to curb the idealists who wanted to root out "the tares" now.

III

I turn now to examine chapter 18 for further material for our theme. In this chapter Matthew utilises material from Marcan sources (vv.1-5, cf. *Mark* 9. 33-37; 10. 15; vv.6-9, cf. *Mark* 9. 42-48), from Q (vv.12-14, cf. *Luke* 15. 3-7; vv.15, 21-22, cf. *Luke* 17. 3-4) and from M

(vv. 15-17, 18-20, 23-35), reshaping, omitting, altering where necessary, to achieve the finished product.

After the first section on true greatness (vv.1-4), the word *mikroi* (little ones) dominates up to v.14, whereas thereafter *adelphos* (brother) is the keyword.¹⁵ This might suggest a triple division of chapter 18: vv.1-4 on true greatness, vv.5-14 on how to behave towards the *mikroi*, vv.15-35 on how to behave towards one's brother in the community. W. G. Thompson has more recently challenged this¹⁶ and suggested that the divisions are vv.1-4 (on true greatness), vv.5-20 (vv.5-9 the evil of scandal; vv.10-14 the care of 'sheep' going astray; vv.15-20 reconciling a brother) and vv.21-35 (forgiveness in the kingdom of heaven). Against this, however, it can be argued that "If your brother commits a sin" (v.15) is picked up by v.21, "Lord, how often am I to forgive my brother if he goes on wronging me" (the same verb *harmartanein* is used in both verses, a fact obscured by the NEB rendering). It is true that v.21 begins in narrative fashion, as if starting a fresh section, but it could be argued that the evangelist by this means is drawing attention to a development of his theme and makes Peter the questioner who elicits an important "ruling" from Jesus. If we adhere to a division which takes cognisance of *mikroi* and *adelphos*, there is a structure of teaching on conduct (vv.5-10; 15-22), followed by a parable which illustrates the demands already made (vv.12-14; 23-35),¹⁷ while the key words figure at the beginning and end of each section (vv.6, 14; vv.15, 35), besides occurring in the middle too (vv.10, 21).

Matthew begins with the question, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" At this point Mark writes about a dispute between the disciples over rank (*Mark* 9. 33-34). Thus, in effect, Matthew has removed the "historical setting" and made the question a general one, valid for all Christians.¹⁸ The phrase "kingdom of heaven" can have a present or future reference: here it seems to have a present connotation and to be referring to life in the community of Jesus' followers.¹⁹ Jesus' answer consists of two parts: a sign (a kind of prophetic symbolism) and word. He sets a child in the midst of them, and then speaks. In both v.3 and v.4 behaviour like a child is demanded. How does the "action" illustrate the "word"? The child set in the midst of adults is a symbol of smallness and insignificance, needing help and protection: so also is man insignificant before God. Man, therefore, needs to repent to enter God's kingdom (v.3, cf. *Mark* 10. 15), he needs to lose his self assertiveness, to become humble and aware of his smallness.²⁰ The lesson is drawn in v.4 which provides the answer to the question of v.1: true greatness lies in the need to humble oneself—this is the law which is to be operative in the kingdom of heaven and therefore in the church.

Two points in this first section enable Matthew to lead forward into his next section (vv.5-14). Firstly, the figure of the child enables him to introduce the key word *mikroi*. Matthew fastens on the phrase in his Marcan source "one of these little ones who believe" (*Mark* 9. 42) and

uses it with the addition of "in me" (*Matt.* 18. 6). The question is—has Matthew in mind a specific group within the church, or is he thinking of Christians as a whole? It would seem to me that the former is more likely, though several scholars have demurred,²¹ including most recently W. G. Thompson, who writes "The general expression 'one of these little ones' refers to a member of the community whom the disciples may be apt to disregard or even contemn".²² This seems to me to concede the point! The *mikroi* are certainly no rigidly defined group, but any who are spiritually weak and who could be deflected from the Christian way.²³ Secondly, the idea of humbling oneself is carried forward in the idea of service and help towards the *mikroi*.

IV

So Matthew opens the second section (vv.5-14) with an antithetical saying: "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me. But if a man is a cause of stumbling to one of these little ones who have faith in me, it would be better for him to have a millstone hung around his neck and be drowned in the depths of the sea". "Receives" finds its contrast in "causing to stumble"; "child" is balanced by "one of these little ones who have faith in me".²⁴ It is not a reference to real children. To receive one of these Christians who are spiritually weak is to receive the Lord himself, for even the insignificant can represent the Lord (*cf.* 25. 40-45). Part of becoming like a child before God embraces being a servant of, a helper of, the *mikroi*. We may legitimately deduce that in Matthew's opinion, there were those who in their own and others' eyes were "like this child"—insignificant and often despised, and those who believed themselves to be "great" because of their religious performance and/or social position. The latter are given a pastoral warning—they are not to neglect or despise the *mikroi*. They need to humble themselves and to be ready for service to them. On no account is anyone to cause them to lose their faith and leave the church and so forfeit salvation. The awesome character of the "punishment" backs up this implied demand for care towards these "little ones", as does the "Woe" saying in v.7.

Starting then with the question and incident of the child, Matthew has built up to this lesson in vv.5-7. The thought of offences (*skandala*) and of causing to stumble (*skandalizein*), prominent in vv.6-7, is continued in vv.8-9 (sayings already previously used in 5. 29-30). Has Matthew switched from thinking of causing others to stumble, to causing oneself to stumble away from faith? So sharp is this switch that some scholars have thought that Matthew is thinking of the church as the body of Christ and that he is referring to church members who cause offences and who should therefore be excommunicated ("cut off").²⁵ But the introduction of the idea of the church as the body of Christ would seem to be even more abrupt! W. G. Thompson has tried to find a way out of the difficulty by suggesting that we should translate the verb in the protasis of both vv.8 and 9 (*skandalizei*) as "causes you to become a stumbling block", i.e. to others: "The disciple

is urged to cut off his hand or foot and pluck out his eye rather than let them cause him to weaken the faith of another disciple (one of these little ones, vv.6, 10)".²⁶ The difficulty with this suggestion is that the verb *skandalizein*, which does not occur in classical Greek, does not either in the Septuagint or pseudepigraphical literature or the New Testament itself ever bear the meaning "to make oneself or someone else into a stumbling block". Has Matthew forced the verb to carry that meaning in this context? Before Thompson, Jacques Dupont thought so: "In this context, the logion of vv.8-9 really instructs to avoid not the offence which one could give to oneself but what one could give to others. It is not perhaps the natural sense of the assertion taken by itself, but it is clearly the sense which it ought to have in the context to which the evangelist attaches it".²⁷ Despite the force of the argument from context, it may be that the evangelist did make a slight deflection of thought in vv.8-9: if you cause someone else to stumble, then in that action you yourself are straying from the true attitude of a follower of Christ; examine your own life and root out what is causing this unspiritual attitude. Such may be the train of thought, and then in v.10 Matthew resumes the concern for the "little ones".

"Never despise one of these little ones." The problems of the meaning of the further reason given—their "guardian" angels continually beheld God's face—need not detain us here.²⁸ The *mikroi* need special care and attention and must not be despised. As the climax of the section vv.5-14 we have the parable of the wandering sheep (discussed above in Section I): the shepherd's concern for even the one sheep who has wandered off mirrors God's concern. The application, which is Matthean, runs: "In the same way it is not your heavenly Father's will that one of these little ones should be lost". The "little ones" are to be cared for and saved from their wandering lest they perish. The church is urged to a greater pastoral concern for its spiritually weak members.

We may pause to consider the implications of our study of chapter 18 so far. This Matthean arrangement suggests a church in which pride, arrogance and lack of love abound. It suggests that some members are despising others who are not spiritually gifted and that there is a real danger of the former being a cause of the spiritual downfall of the latter. The church has succumbed to certain dangers.²⁹ Its pastor writes with a deep concern to rectify the abuses which have crept in.

V

"Brother" is the word which dominates the remainder of chapter 18. Verses 15-17 probably reflect the kind of church discipline order in operation within a Jewish-Christian community. Exactly the same threefold procedure for settling disputes inside their community is found in the Qumran Manual of Discipline, 5. 25-6. 1 (and a similar approach is also alluded to in the Damascus Document, 9. 2f.). Without implying that the Matthean church took over this procedure directly from the Qumran community, we may agree with W. D. Davies' comment: "The legislation in 18. 15ff. is more sectarian in its

affinities than rabbinic".³⁰ "You must treat him as you would a pagan or a tax-gatherer" (v.18) confirms the origin of the material in a strict Jewish milieu rather than from Jesus, whose friendship with the tax collectors and sinners was so distinctive a feature of his ministry; the use of *ekklesia* to refer to a local assembly, a local church, is similar confirmation.

The aim of the threefold procedure is the salvation of the brother, but when the third stage is reached, the step of excommunication is applied. In their present position, vv.18-20 are clearly intended to afford the basis of the disciplinary procedure. According to v.18 God sanctions and ratifies the *present* judgment of the church (and not just in the future): the context makes it clear that the binding and loosing refer to disciplinary power (not decisions about what teaching is binding). The "two" of v.19 could refer to the second stage, mentioned in v.16. The heavenly Father will "back up" what two believers agree on in prayer. Verse 20 could refer to the church gathering of v.17: the church can depend on the presence of the living Lord in their midst when they assemble to determine disciplinary matters.³¹ Through vv.18-20 Matthew has invested the deliberations of the local body of Christians with tremendous authority.

It is highly significant that Matthew has linked Peter's question (*cf.* the probable Q original, *Luke* 17. 3-4, where *Jesus* is the speaker) to these verses about church discipline (vv.15-20). For in v.22 Jesus enjoins limitless forgiveness (whether we translate "seventy times seven" or "seventy seven times", the latter alluding, by way of contrast, to *Genesis* 4. 22 and Lamech's revenge). The ensuing parable demands this readiness to forgive in a most vivid manner and its application (v.35) emphasises this with an eschatological sanction. By his juxtaposition of the disciplinary rule (vv.15-17) and the question and parable about forgiveness, Matthew mitigates the apparent severity of the former. He reveals that the real stress in v.18 is for him on binding to the community, not loosing from it. As the shepherd in the parable of the erring sheep, so now in this parable the king reflects the behaviour of God: and God's behaviour is the prototype for the Christian's behaviour (v.35 balances v.14). God's mercy lays an obligation on every believer to be merciful too (v.33: *cf.* the final antithesis 5. 43-48 and 5. 7). Indeed, one could go further and point out how the rule of discipline in vv.15-17 is flanked by the parable of the shepherd searching for the wandering sheep (vv.12-14) and by the parable of the king who was prepared to wipe out his servant's massive debt. We come into the rule via the demand for greater pastoral concern and go out from it into the demand for greater brotherly love, forgiveness and reconciliation.

The problem of "brotherhood", of mutual love and forgiveness, seems to have been a pressing one in Matthew's church. Matthew as a pastor writes in the knowledge of squabbles and disagreements within the fellowship of the church and failures to forgive. He writes out of a deep concern to establish and realise brotherhood in his church (*cf.*

23. 8, "But you must not be called 'rabbi'; for you have one Rabbi and you are all brothers"; and 5. 21-26, especially vv.21-24).³²

That we are right in this estimate is confirmed by a Matthean addition to the so-called eschatological discourse in chapter 24: "Many will fall from their faith; they will betray one another and hate one another. Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many, and as lawlessness spreads, men's love for one another will grow cold" (24. 10-12). There is widespread agreement that the experiences of the Matthean church have coloured the description in these verses. For our purpose, if this assumption is correct, it is significant that causing others to stumble and the cooling of love mentioned here are two of the problems dealt with in chapter 18. As to false prophets, the passage in the Sermon on the Mount alluded to earlier should be recalled (7. 15ff.): though having many impressive religious deeds to their credit, they seem to have been guilty in Matthew's eyes of not doing the will of God. They are branded as evil doers, the word used being *anomia* (literally, lawlessness) which occurs at 24. 12, where it is held to be the reason why love has grown cold.

VI

There are other passages which we could discuss, such as the famous excepting clause in the divorce pericope (19. 3-12): is this the pastor at work modifying the strict rigorism of Jesus' teaching with a view to the pastoral needs of his community (*cf.* 1 *Cor.* 7. 15)? But enough evidence has already been adduced to suggest that pastoral concern was at least *one* of the reasons why Matthew wrote. Pressing problems in the life of his community are reflected in the way he handles his material:

- (i) He is concerned for the spiritually weaker members of the congregation who might easily be led astray from their faith and he wishes to inculcate a deeper pastoral concern for them.
- (ii) He is concerned at the loveless spirit and the lack of a forgiving, reconciling attitude displayed by many, and he wishes to inculcate a more merciful, forgiving approach.³³
- (iii) He is concerned to restrain the desire of some to "purify" the church and cut out those deemed to be less worthy members and he wishes them to realise that God alone can execute the perfect judgment.³⁴

Matthew then stands alongside Paul, the writer to the Hebrews, the Elder, the Seer, and others, as a man with a pastoral heart and a deep concern for those entrusted to him.

NOTES

¹ N. Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (London, 1970) provides a useful introduction, but should be read with some care as it makes exaggerated claims for the achievements of redaction criticism.

² R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition* (Oxford, 1963), p.171, believes that *Matt.* 18. 12f. is more original and thinks that *Luke* 15. 1-2, 7 is secondary. E. Linnemann, *The Parables of Jesus* (London, 1966), p.65, follows Bultmann. On the other hand, J. Jeremias, *The Parables of Jesus*, revised edn. (London, 1963), pp.38-40, 132-6, argues for the priority of the Lukan version.

B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels* (London, 1924), pp.243-5, believed that the two versions came from M and L, as did T. W. Manson, *The Sayings of Jesus* (London, 1949), p.283. Personally I would agree with Jeremias, and attribute the Matthean version to Matthew's rewriting in order to concentrate not on the joy at discovery, but the actual searching.

³ Jeremias, *op. cit.*, pp.40, 136; A. M. Hunter, *Interpreting the Parables* (London, 1960), p.59.

⁴ Hunter, *op. cit.*, p.59; D. Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (New Century Bible series, London, 1972), p.274; K. Stendahl, *The School of St. Matthew* (Lund, 1967), p.27.

⁵ W. G. Thompson, *Matthew's Advice to a Divided Community* (Analecta Biblica, 44, Rome, 1970), p.157.

⁶ Pace Jeremias, *op. cit.*, p.40; Hill, *op. cit.*, p.274; and others who try to limit chapter 18 to church leaders. Cf. the following works which correctly emphasize that the disciples stand for the church: W. Pesch, "Die sogenannte Gemeindeordnung Mt. 18", *Biblische Zeitschrift*, N.F. 7 (1963), pp.233-4; W. Pesch, *Matthäus der Seelsorger* (Stuttgart, 1966), pp.56, 68-71; W. Trilling, *Das wahre Israel*, 3rd edn. (München, 1964), pp.109, 113, 122f.; W. Trilling, *Hausordnung Gottes: Eine Auslegung von Matt. 18* (Düsseldorf, 1960), p.40; Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp.71-2.

⁷ In the discussion of the ensuing parables Jeremias, *op. cit.*, and Manson, *op. cit.*, have been very useful, as has C. W. F. Smith, "The Mixed State of the Church in Matthew's Gospel", *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 82 (1963), pp.149-68. Smith's speculative views on the adhesion of some Qumran members to the Matthean church after A.D. 70 should not cloud the contribution made by the rest of his article. For the mixed state of Matthew's church, see also G. Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit*, 2nd edn. (Göttingen, 1966), pp. 214-19; and G. Bornkamm and others, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (London, 1963), pp.19, 267.

⁸ See N. A. Dahl, "The Parables of Growth", *Studia Theologica*, 5 (1951), pp.151-2, followed by Jeremias, *op. cit.*, pp.223-5.

⁹ Jeremias, *op. cit.*, pp.81-5; also "Die Deutung des Gleichnisses vom Unkraut unter dem Weizen (Mt. xii, 36-43)", in *Neotestamentica et Patristica* (Oscar Cullmann Festschrift, Leiden, 1962), pp.59-63.

¹⁰ Smith, *op. cit.*, p.151.

¹¹ The interpretation espoused here assumes that for Matthew the kingdom of the Son of Man (v.41) is the church: so C. H. Dodd, *The Parables of the Kingdom* (London, 1935), p.183, and, more cautiously, *New Testament Studies* (Manchester, 1953), p.57; Bornkamm, *op. cit.*, p.44; Hill, *op. cit.*, p.237. Verse 38 should not overthrow this. Smith's comment is worth quoting: "The field is the world" suggests the problem of the church in the world, but it turns out to be that of the world in the church", *op. cit.*, p.153.

¹² Bultmann, *op. cit.*, p.191, speaks of the law of "end stress".

¹³ Cf. Hill, *op. cit.*, p.300; Matthew "was not discussing the conditions for Gentile entry into the church, but was concerned with the behaviour of 'disciples' already in the church, while they await the parousia".

¹⁴ Smith, *op. cit.*, pp.152, 155; Bornkamm, "End Expectation and Church in Matthew", *op. cit.*, pp.15-51.

¹⁵ Pesch, *Gemeindeordnung*, pp.225, 232, 235; *Seelsorger*, pp.17ff., 35ff.; also (to a lesser extent) Trilling, *Hausordnung*, pp.30, 40-41, 44, 66ff.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, chapter 9.

¹⁷ Cf. Pesch, *Gemeindeordnung*, p.220; *Seelsorger*, p.50.

¹⁸ Cf. Pesch, *Seelsorger*, pp.18-9, 54; Trilling, *Israel*, p.107; *Hausordnung*, p.21; Hill, *op. cit.*, p.273.

¹⁹ Trilling, *Israel*, p.107; *Hausordnung*, p.20; P. Bonnard, *L'Évangile selon S. Matthieu* (Neuchâtel, 1963), p.268.

²⁰ Trilling, *Hausordnung*, p.24; O. Michel, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, ed. G. Kittel (Michigan n.d.), vol. IV, p.654.

²¹ G. Barth, "Matthew's Understanding of the Law", in Bornkamm, *op. cit.*, p.122. Barth quotes Wellhausen also.

²² *Op. cit.*, p.153.

²³ E.g. Bonnard, *op. cit.*, p.268 ("perhaps neglected"), p.270 ("humble members").

²⁴ Cf. Pesch, *Gemeindeordnung*, p.222; *Seelsorger*, p.21; Thompson, *op. cit.*, pp.101, 105; Bonnard, *op. cit.*, p.268; against Trilling, *Hausordnung*, pp.27-9.

²⁵ A. H. M'Neile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London, 1915), p.262; B. W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (London, 1930), pp.410-1; D. O. Via, "The Church as the Body of Christ in the Gospel of Matthew", *Scottish Journal of Theology*, 11 (1958), pp.271-86; Pesch, *Gemeindeordnung*, pp.223-4; *Seelsorger*, pp.27-8; Hill, *op. cit.*, p.274 (hesitantly).

²⁶ *Op. cit.*, p.116.

²⁷ J. Dupont, *Mariage et Divorce dans l'Évangile Matt. 19. 3-12 et par. Bruges*, 1959, p.214.

²⁸ See W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge, 1964), pp.226-8 for some Qumran material which may help to shed light on the problem.

²⁹ Both Pesch, *Seelsorger*, p.32, and Trilling, *Israel*, p.113 believe that G. D. Kilpatrick's suggestion (in *The Origins of the Gospel according to St. Matthew* (Oxford, 1946), pp.125-7), that Matthew's church was a well-to-do congregation set in a large city could fit the kind of picture that has emerged from chapter 18.

³⁰ *Op. cit.*, p.226.

³¹ Hill, *op. cit.*, p.276, rightly says: "Church discipline is not an action of merely human administration: it may count on the assistance and ratification of the risen Christ". Matthew seems to have formulated v.20 as a saying of Jesus on the basis of the Jewish saying: "If two sit together and the words of the Law (are spoken) between them, the divine presence rests between them" (Pirke Aboth 3. 2). Cf. 1 Cor. 5. 4.

³² It looks as if Matthew has filled out the antithesis (vv.21-2) with two further logia, vv.23-4 and vv.25-6. Note also 12. 49 (where Matthew has altered Mark): according to Matthew Jesus stretches out his hand to his disciples (Mark has "He looked at those seated around him") and then says "Here are my mother and my brothers".

³³ *Matt.* 18. 15-20 was important in early Separatist thinking and has remained the locus classicus for Baptist church government. Its pastoral emphasis has, however, not always been heeded (cf. B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition* (Oxford, 1971), chapter 7).

³⁴ The Rev. P. Rigden Green, formerly B.M.S. missionary in Bengal, commented to me that on many occasions B.M.S. missionaries had to restrain the Bengalis from excommunicating fellow church members guilty of some lapse. Their attitude was, apparently, "What is the use of being morally upright if leniency is given to the backslider?"

J. E. MORGAN-WYNNE.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1976

At the meeting on 26th April it was reported that the Society's membership stood at 517. The Rev. Douglas Sparkes was warmly thanked for his devoted and efficient work as secretary in the past five years. His successor is the Rev. Peter Wortley. Tribute was also paid to the Rev. Geoffrey Rusling for the notable service he rendered as Editor. Owing to the indisposition of Dr. Alan Kreider, the lecture following the A.G.M. was given by Professor Henry Ippel, of Calvin College, Grand Rapids, Michigan. His very enjoyable paper on "The British Pulpit and the American Revolution" shed new light on 18th-century sermons as he examined the moral problems which preachers discussed.