

REDACTION CRITICISM AND THE GREAT COMMISSION: A CASE STUDY TOWARD A BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF INERRANCY

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A great deal of misunderstanding about redaction criticism exists among evangelicals. Too often we have accepted the negative criteria of the radical critics as the only mode within which redactional work may be done. But redaction criticism, properly used, is a positive tool for Biblical research, and evangelicals should be in the forefront of research into its constructive possibilities. The purpose of the present study is to apply redactional techniques to the Great Commission (Matt. 28:16-20) in order to understand that pericope better. We shall then examine the implications for a Biblical understanding of inerrancy by stressing the attitude of the Biblical writers themselves to the question rather than the twentieth-century philosophical approach we employ all too often.

I. A REDACTIONAL STUDY OF THE GREAT COMMISSION

Matthew 28:16-20 not only concludes the resurrection narrative and the Book of Matthew as a whole but, many believe,¹ also summarizes the message of the first gospel itself. Otto Michel *et al.*² argue that the heading, "Great Commission," is inappropriate, since the passage is mainly an epiphany or exaltation story directed to the new status of the Risen One. However, an exegesis of the passage bears out the traditional title. The early Church must have thought that the message of verses 18-20 centered on its universal mission, since the comments before and after verse 19 center on that verse and provide the means (v. 18) and the encouragement (v. 20) for accomplishing the task.

The *Traditionsgeschichte* of the passage shows some evidence of a traditional origin, but also a great deal of Matthean themes and language throughout. In the introductory section there is some evidence of tradition in the phrase "to which Jesus had appointed them" (v. 16), for *tassō* is not Matthean³ and the phrase is probably taken from tradition, alluding to an event not recorded in the gospels. Also, *hoi de*

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¹O. Michel, "Der Abschluss des Matthäusevangeliums," in *Evangelische Theologie* 10 (1950-51), pp. 16-21 (especially p. 21); G. Bornkamm, "The Risen Lord and the Earthly Jesus—Matthew 28, 16-20," in *The Future of Our Religious Past*, ed. J. M. Robinson (London, 1971). W. Trilling, *Das Wahre Israel* (München, 1964), pp. 21 f., bases his entire study of Matthew's theology on the insight given in this pericope.

²Michel, *art. cit.*, pp. 22 f., calls it an "enthronement scene"; Bornkamm in Robinson, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 212, a "hidden mystery scene"; R. Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, tr. U. Marsh (Oxford, 1963), p. 286, a "cult legend."

³It occurs elsewhere in the gospels only in Matthew 8:9 = Luke 7:8.

edistasan (v. 17) favors a traditional source, because Matthew normally avoids critical comments regarding the disciples.

Although the message itself contains a large proportion of Matthean phrases, there are indications of tradition. Many of the terms, such as "give," "authority," and "heaven and earth," are just as frequent among the other evangelists and may not be Matthean. The command to "disciple" is expressed in Matthean style but may reflect tradition, since there are parallels in the other resurrection narratives (Lk. 24:47; Jn. 20:21). As Wenham notes,⁴ the combination of mission and authority also occurs in Luke and John and is hardly a Matthean peculiarity. The command to baptize probably goes back to Jesus himself because no other explanation can suffice for the institution of the practice among early Christians.⁵ "Teach" is more frequent in Mark and Luke, and "keep" is more common to John and Acts. While many scholars⁶ believe that verse 20b is a Matthean composition, the theology is echoed in many places, especially in John and Paul. In short, there is good evidence for asserting that this pericope has its foundation in tradition, though it is expressed predominantly in Matthean language.

Another difficulty is deciding whether the passage is a single whole delivered on one occasion or a combination of separate traditions. Many scholars⁷ assert that the latter is more probable, due to the close connection with Matthew's themes. This would also fit both the fact that the missionary command is found in different contexts in the other gospels and Matthew's common practice of combining speeches of the Lord given on separate occasions (e.g., the Sermon on the Mount).

However, there are good grounds for considering it a single tradition that was redacted by Matthew. There is some basis for saying it

⁴D. Wenham, "The Resurrection Narratives in St. Matthew's Gospel," in *Tyndale Bulletin* 24 (1973), pp. 20-54 (especially pp. 40 f., 51 f.). He notes that in Luke the mission is connected with the sovereign power of God and the authority of Scripture and that in John the disciples are sent out with authority. This is not a free composition but a Matthean version of the tradition.

⁵O. Cullmann, *Baptism in the New Testament* (London, 1950), pp. 19 f., argues that Qumran, proselyte baptism, John the Baptist's practice, etc., are all insufficient reasons for the reappearance of baptism in the early Church.

⁶See Bornkamm in Robinson, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 223 f., and G. Barth in G. Bornkamm, G. Barth, and H. J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*, tr. P. Scott (London, 1963), pp. 136 f. The best presentation of this position is found in J. D. Kingsbury, "The Composition and Christology of Matt. 28:16-20," in *JBL* 93 (1974), pp. 573-584. His extensive linguistic study certainly shows that Matthew redacted the message, but it falls short of proving Matthean composition for two reasons: (1) He draws too much from words that are found elsewhere in Matthew, and (2) he fails to consider words and phrases common to all the evangelists.

⁷See E. Lohmeyer, *Das Evangelium des Matthäus* (Göttingen, 1963), pp. 423 f.; Michel, *art. cit.*, p. 17; Barth in Bornkamm *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 131. Lohmeyer believes the traditions were combined in the pre-Matthean period, while the others believe Matthew did the combining himself.

may reflect the lost Markan ending,⁸ and the three points of the message are paralleled in the other gospels and may not be truly Matthean. For instance, authority and mission are linked in Luke and John (cf. Jn. 4), and the presence of the Lord is connected with mission in John 20:19 ff. Strecker⁹ argues that the three form a homogeneous whole and would hardly have circulated independent of context. Furthermore, Matthew's practice of combining traditions does not normally extend to phrases. It would seem that the tradition came to Matthew, possibly via Mark, as a single whole, but that he stated it in his own style and words.

The literary context of the message itself is also debated. The major hypotheses are as follows:

- (1) Many¹⁰ believe that the background is found in Old Testament prophecies (especially Daniel) that the Son of Man would have power and dominion. The passage would then consummate the Matthean Son-of-Man emphasis.
- (2) Others¹¹ argue that the Son of Man is not indicated in verse 18, since the eschatological Judge is not present. The passage instead reflects Psalm 2:8 and the royal-enthronement motif of Judaism. Jesus is the anointed King and appointed Messiah who here assumes his throne.
- (3) Bornkamm¹² denies the first two, arguing that neither lordship nor parousia are in mind. He believes Matthew stresses the *mysterion* of the mission to the Gentiles.
- (4) B. J. Malina¹³ sees a similarity to the decree of Cyrus which concluded 2 Chronicles (36:23) and therefore the Hebrew Bible. Matthew 28:18 would thus be an official decree of the King.

⁸For the possibility of a lost ending, see C. F. D. Moule, "St. Mark XVI 8 Once More," in *NTS* 2 (1955-56), pp. 58 f.; G. W. Trompf, "The First Resurrection Appearance and the Ending of Mark's Gospel," in *NTS* 18 (1972), pp. 308-330 (especially pp. 316-319). There are similarities with Mark in both the theme and structure of Matthew 28:16-20. The Galilean setting and commission would fit the promise of Mark 16:7. Furthermore, the themes of the message also fit Markan motifs.

⁹G. Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit* (Göttingen, 1962), pp. 210 f. See also E. F. F. Bishop, "The Risen Christ and the 500 Brethren (1 Cor. 15, 6)," in *CBQ* 18 (1956), pp. 341-344.

¹⁰See Barth in Bornkamm *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 133; Lohmeyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 413, 416 f.; Michel, *art. cit.*, p. 22; and R. H. Fuller, *The Formation of The Resurrection Narratives* (London, 1972), p. 83.

¹¹See K. H. Rengstorf, "A Formula of the Judean Royal Ritual," in *Novum Testamentum* 5 (1961), pp. 229-244. J. Jeremias, *Jesus' Promise to the Nations*, tr. S. H. Hooke (London, 1959), pp. 38 f., sees an echo of the enthronement pattern here: authority, proclamation, acclamation.

¹²Bornkamm in Robinson, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 207 f., *contra* R. H. Lightfoot, *Locality and Doctrine in the Gospels* (London, 1938), p. 72, who argues that it does look to consummation in the parousia.

¹³B. J. Malina, "The Literary Structure and Form of Matthew XXVIII 16-20," in *NTS* 17 (1970-71), pp. 87-103. He also sees overtones of Old Testament proof passages, used to authenticate the message.

- (5) Evans¹⁴ claims the passage does not fit any theory and was an original Christian composition intended to stress discipleship—that is, what it means to be a Christian in the present.

The problem with the above theories is that they are set in opposition to one another. The Son-of-Man background, as we shall see below, is definitely predominant in verse 18. The enthronement pattern fits in with the possibility that Matthew sees a royal emphasis in the speech and uses it to conclude his previous stress on the “lowly King” motif.¹⁵ Bornkamm’s thesis fits the implicit universalism of the passage. Evans’ “discipleship” theme is also prominent in verse 19. Only Malina’s hypothesis is speculative, since he stretches the similarities to 2 Chronicles. In short, the theories catch varying nuances of a kaleidoscopic theme, and the title “Great Commission” best expresses the central emphasis. As Jesus’ followers studied the speech, they must have noted its richness.

There are two major sections in the pericope: the setting (vv. 16 f.), and the message (vv. 18-20). The latter may be subdivided into three parts: the statement of authority (v. 18), the command to evangelize (v. 19), and the promise of Jesus’ presence (v. 20).

The Setting (vv. 16 f.). There are several important points in this section. “Eleven” is found only here in the gospels apart from four times in Luke-Acts and may have come from tradition, although it might also have been used because it fits Matthew’s stress on Judas in the passion narrative. An important concept is seen in *eis to oros*, for “mountain” has an important place in the first gospel (found sixteen times). It is connected with the temptation, Sermon on the Mount, and transfiguration, as well as with times of special communication between the Father and the Son. W. D. Davies and others¹⁶ state that Matthew has in mind here a “new-Sinai” motif, in which Jesus is viewed as a “new Moses” providing a “new Torah” for the “new Israel.” However, this thesis suffers when one notes first of all that there is little Moses typology in Matthew. It is better to say with Bornkamm¹⁷ that Matthew viewed the

¹⁴C. F. Evans, *Resurrection and the New Testament* (London, 1970), pp. 89-91.

¹⁵Matthew has a definite stress on Jesus’ kingship but includes it during his earthly ministry. In his triumphal entry account (21:1-11), he uses Old Testament messianic testimonia from Isaiah 62:11 and Zechariah 9:9 but excludes the important phrase “righteous and triumphant is he” from the latter. In so doing Matthew makes Jesus the “lowly King,” pointing the way to the death of the Messiah. Only afterward can Jesus become “triumphant King.”

¹⁶W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge, 1964), pp. 85, 99. See also Fuller, *op. cit.*, p. 81, and Lohmeyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 75 f.

¹⁷Bornkamm in Robinson, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 204. Many scholars would say this is a Matthean addition to the pericope. However, the connection with the following phrase, which is distinctly non-Matthean (see above), may well indicate that it is taken from tradition. There is no reference to such a command in Matthew, and it is doubtful that he would have included it if it were not in his source.

mountain as the place of divine revelation.

The worship theme in verse 17 parallels verse 9 and is part of the contrast between the hatred in verses 11-15 and the homage in verses 8 f. and 16 f. Matthew's resurrection discourse is shaped by a series of contrasts between the enmity of the officials and the triumph of Christ. In verses 16-20 that triumph is finalized. The phrase "but some doubted," however, seems at first glance to jar with the worship theme. While doubt is a central motif of the appearance narratives,¹⁸ it is found only here in Matthew.

Various attempts have been made to explain its presence—that it is a scribal error,¹⁹ that it refers to "other" disciples who were present,²⁰ that it means lack of recognition rather than true doubt.²¹ The context, however, shows that the disciples were the doubters. As I. P. Ellis has noted,²² the verb is found only in Matthew in the New Testament (14:31 and here) and refers not to unbelief but to hesitation or uncertainty. The disciples worship, but waver. There is a twofold connection here: a contrast with the worship theme, which adds even greater stress to the victorious promise of verse 18; and a transition to the reassurance of verses 18 ff.²³ This is Matthew's message to the believer: In the midst of uncertainty he may trust the authority of the Lord. In the other gospels, doubt²⁴ is assuaged by the physical presence of the Risen One; here it is dispelled by the authority of his Word.

¹⁸C. H. Dodd, "The Appearances of the Risen Christ: An Essay in Form Criticism," in *More New Testament Studies* (London, 1968), p. 12, says that "the appearance of the Lord does not bring full or immediate conviction to the beholders who require some form of assurance: the sight of His wounds, contact with His body, or His word of authority."

¹⁹See W. D. Morris, "Matt. xxviii 17," in *Expository Times* 47 (1953-367), p. 142, who conjectures that *edistasan* was originally *diestesan*, meaning "they stood apart" in reverential awe. However, there is no manuscript evidence for this.

²⁰See A. N. McNeile, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (London, 1961), p. 434. He argues that Matthew always tones down Mark's derogatory comments regarding the disciples. But this is not always true, and Matthew here has a special reason for the doubt motif.

²¹See F. V. Filson, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew* (New York, 1960), p. 305. However, lack of recognition would more likely precede than follow worship.

²²I. P. Ellis, "But Some Doubted," in *NTS* 14 (1968), pp. 574-580. Michel, *art. cit.*, pp. 16 f., and Barth in Bornkamm *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 132, note this same theological emphasis.

²³C. H. Giblin, "A Note on Doubt and Reassurance in Matt. 28:16-20," in *CBQ* 37 (1975), pp. 68-75, argues against the contrast and for the reassurance theme here. But there is no reason why both cannot be correct, for the contrast strengthens the reassurance (especially in light of Matthew's outline in ch. 28, as already noted).

²⁴See E. M. Howe, "'... But Some Doubted' (Matt. 28:17). A Re-Appraisal of Factors Influencing the Easter Faith of the Early Christian Community," in *JETS* 18/3 (1975), pp. 173-180, for the setting of this in the larger context of the doubt motif in the early Church as a whole. What she neglects is the *Sitz im Leben* of the motif in the post-Easter community. Its prominence is probably due to the fact of doubt in the risen Lord on the part of many later disciples. The evangelists wished to identify themselves with it and show solutions; John is especially strong here.

The Message (vv. 18-20)

(1) *The Statement of Authority* (v. 18). This verse stems from Daniel 7:14, as a comparison with the LXX shows. The Son-of-Man motif receives special attention in Matthew. As Albright demonstrates,²⁵ Matthew consciously adds to Mark the concept of the glory of the Son that he receives from the Father (cf. 10:23; 12:32; 13:41; etc.). The title itself is probably omitted for two reasons: (1) It would be misunderstood and given a parousia interpretation; (2) he wished to teach that the parousia power and glory were his now and were offered to his followers during the interval between the two advents.²⁶

There are several emphases. *Edothē*, which is also first in Daniel 7:14 LXX, is used temporally for the resurrection event as the enthronement of the Messiah,²⁷ with the passive force presupposing an act of the Father (cf. the credal passive in 1 Cor. 15:3 f.). The *exousia* is the authority originally given Christ by the Father "within the limits of His earthly calling and commission" (Matt. 9:8; 11:27) but now his absolutely (*pas*).²⁸ The term is more comprehensive than "power" and refers to position as well as function. The kingdom of heaven (a favorite Matthean phrase) is already present in the form of the Risen One.²⁹

A key word throughout the message is *pas*, found in all three parts. It binds the sections together, stressing the universal reign of Christ. In fact, we may have here a type of rabbinic "pearl-stringing" midrash centering on the "all-ness" of Yahweh transferred to the risen Lord. It looks at Christ positionally (all authority), locally (all the earth), individually (every creature), and temporally (always). The concept

²⁵W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew* (New York, 1971), p. lxxxviii. D. Senior, "The Passion Narrative of St. Matthew," in M. Didier, ed., *L'Évangile selon Matthieu* (Gembloux, 1972), pp. 343-357 (especially pp. 354-356), says Matthew deliberately underscores Mark's Christological elements in his passion narrative, especially in the Son-of-Man theme, "as a preparation for and a preinterpretation of the passion as a revelation of the Messiah."

²⁶As Bornkamm in Robinson, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 207, says, the title does not belong in this context, since the speech stresses Jesus' universal lordship rather than the consummation of the ages, *contra* Barth in Bornkamm *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 142, who states that the eschatological judge is implied here. Kingsbury, *art. cit.*, pp. 580-584, argues that Son of God, not Son of Man, is the predominant Christology of the pericope. In this light Matthew stresses the unique Personhood and authority of the risen Son. This is an excellent qualification of the above, but in light of the exaltation motif predominant here it seems that Matthew uses this pericope to culminate and fuse the two titles. Son of Man is given divine status, Son of God eschatological overtones.

²⁷Lohmeyer, *op. cit.*, pp. 416 f.; Michel, *art. cit.*, p. 22; and Barth in Bornkamm *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 133, interpret this more in the sense of eschatological ruler and judge; they see exaltation, rather than resurrection, as the central thrust. However, they read too much from Son-of-Man eschatology into the context.

²⁸W. Foerster, "exousia," in *TDNT* II, pp. 568 f.

²⁹Barth's reformulation of Lightfoot's parousia thesis, in Bornkamm *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 134 n., that "the Christophany in 28.16 f." is "a kind of proleptic parousia," is certainly preferable, for the kingdom has now been made available to believers in the interim age.

includes the exaltation theology reflected in Ephesians 1:21, Philippians 2:9 ff., and Colossians 1:15 ff. Absolutely "all" things are under his dominion. The first phrase of the four includes the other three and sums up the partial claims to authority made in the first gospel regarding his earthly sojourn.³⁰ This authority is "heavenly" as well as "earthly," a sweeping concept that implies divine status. When we add verse 20, the divine status of Christ reveals its theological purpose here.³¹ Jesus as the Risen One has the authority of Yahweh.

(2) *The Command to Make Disciples (vv. 19-20a)*. This is paralleled in pseudo-Mark 16:15 but is a different tradition from those in Luke 24:47 f. and John 20:21. On the basis of his claim to authority (*oun*), Jesus now gives his command. The use of the participle before the verb is found often in the first gospel³² and is used for two aspects of the same act: "Go and make disciples." *Mathēteuō* is found only in Matthew (13:52, 27:57, and here) and Acts (14:21). It is one of Matthew's major emphases and refers to discipleship, both on the part of the disciples and of those they evangelize. One notes a deeper meaning than the one normally given to evangelization, for there is implicit in the word "a call which leads to discipleship."³³ It is a central theme of Matthew's ecclesiology and, as Barth states,³⁴ denotes both imitation and obedience. The followers of Christ must act, suffer, and walk as he did, trusting the authority of his Person.

Panta ta ethnē consummates the implicit universalism of the gospel. The entire thought refers to the interim period between the resurrection and the "consummation" (v. 20; cf. Matt. 24:14 = Mark 13:10) and implies that some time will pass before those closing events. This motif of universal mission is part of the exaltation theme. As Bornkamm says,³⁵ "all the nations" is part of the universal lordship theme "elaborated in various ways" by the early Church (cf. Php. 2:9 f.; Rom. 14:9; Col. 1:19 f.; etc.). Here we see a striking contrast with the seeming emphasis of Matthew's previous mission sayings, which show

³⁰Cf. 4:23 f.; 7:29; 8:32; 9:6, 35; 10:1; 12:22; 17:18.

³¹Albright, *op. cit.*, p. clviii, shows that the combination of "Son" and "Lord" in Matthew points to a Person who surpasses a messianic role.

³²Barth in Bornkamm *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 131 n., follows Schlatter in saying that "when two actions are linked in an event Matthew uses for the preparatory action the aorist participle before the aorist of the main verb."

³³K. H. Rengstorf, "mathēteuō," in *TDNT* IV, p. 461. Bornkamm in Robinson, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 218 f., notes that "disciple" is a major ecclesiological term in Matthew and defines his attitude to the Church as following Jesus in "obedience, humility, and readiness to suffer."

³⁴Barth in Bornkamm *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 105 f., 119 f.

³⁵Bornkamm in Robinson, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 210-212. See also Davies, *op. cit.*, pp. 327 f. Bornkamm declares that the addition here is mythical and not historical. This, however, is hardly necessary, especially in view of the strong flavor of universalism throughout the gospels.

that it was confined to Israel (10:5 f., 16; 15:24). Yet there are several hints of an implicit universalism (12:18 ff.; 13:38; 24:14; 26:13), and these set the stage for the command here. The full explication had to await Jesus' sacrificial death and authenticating resurrection.

Two modal participles, "baptizing" and "teaching," describe the process of making disciples. The baptismal motif seems strange here. Many scholars believe it resulted from later Church tradition read back into the resurrection events. But as we have already argued, it probably came from the original tradition as expressed here. Baptism is not stressed in the first gospel; Matthew only uses the verb seven times (versus twelve for Mark and ten for Luke) and the noun twice (versus four each for the other synoptists). The major problem is that elsewhere the baptismal formula includes only one member ("in the name of Jesus") while the trinitarian formula is found here (nowhere else in the New Testament in a baptismal context; but see *Didache* 7:1).

Most scholars today believe it is a Matthean addition, perhaps due to his own *Sitz im Leben* but probably taken from a late tradition and inserted here (cf. 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 2 Cor. 13:14; Gal. 4:6; Eph. 5:5 f.; 1 Pet. 1:2). The concept is prepared for in Matthew's gospel, as in Jesus' baptism (3:11, 16 f.), the Father/Son relationship (11:27 = Mk. 13:32; 24:36), and the Son-of-Man/Spirit connection (12:32). E. F. Harrison³⁶ argues that Acts simply reports the baptism and never seeks to reproduce the credal formula, as seen in the variation between the titles "Jesus Christ" (2:38; 10:48) and "Lord Jesus" (8:16; 19:5). However, recent studies in New Testament credal formulae make this argument difficult to uphold. For one thing, the very presence of "in the name of" indicates that Luke was repeating a credal statement; and for another, the titles of Jesus were somewhat interchangeable within the creeds, depending on the theological emphasis.³⁷ It seems most likely that at some point the tradition or Matthew expanded an original monadic formula. The implications of this will be explored in the second major section. Here we will simply point out two things: (1) Matthew was not freely composing but sought to interpret the true meaning of Jesus' message for his own day; (2) both *ipsisissima verba* and *ipsisissima vox* are inspired words of God. Harrison³⁸ himself agrees "that the words in Matthew need not be identical with the actual words of Jesus ... for where we have parallel accounts in the synoptic Gospels the language frequently differs."

The purpose of the triadic formula here is connected with the exalted *pas*-imagery. In order to show that the baptized disciples would

³⁶E. F. Harrison, "Did Christ Command World Evangelism?", in *Christianity Today* 18 (Nov. 23, 1973), pp. 6-10 (especially p. 9).

³⁷For a more detailed study of the creeds see A. M. Hunter, *Paul and His Predecessors* (London, 1940); O. Cullmann, *The Earliest Christian Confessions*, tr. J. K. S. Reid (London, 1949); W. Kramer, *Christ, Lord, Son of God*, tr. B. Hardy (London, 1966).

³⁸Harrison, *art. cit.*, p. 9. He uses differences between Mark 14:24 and Matthew 26:28 as an example.

enjoy full participation in the fulness of the divine activity, Matthew stressed each member of the Godhead (as implied in the original *eis to onoma*). While recognizing the growing similarity between *eis* and *en* in New Testament times, we must agree with Allen and Albright³⁹ that *eis* is used deliberately here. They say that "in the name" generally refers to the ceremonial rite invoking the name of Jesus while "into the name" speaks of the results of the act, namely incorporation "into" the fellowship of the Godhead. Therefore the phrase is more than a liturgical formula; it is an experiential reality. Baptism is not only an act of obedience but is also an entrance into fellowship. As part of the discipling activity, it has certain rights and obligations associated with discipleship.

The second aspect, teaching, comes after baptism and may well reflect the practice of post-baptismal instruction.⁴⁰ It is based, however, on the tradition of Jesus' own teaching ministry, a central emphasis of Matthew's gospel. Where Mark stresses action, Matthew emphasizes teaching, constructing his gospel around five major teaching sections (chs. 5-7, 10, 13, 18, 24 f.) that center on the believer's life and his relation to the world. Again, although Davies and others (see fn. 16) believe Matthew has a "new-Torah" theology, we do not believe this fits Matthew's view of the law. R. A. Guelich has shown that Jesus is seen as the fulfilment of the law; it still has validity but is "at the same time transcended and set aside by Jesus' own demand for conduct representative of the present age of salvation."⁴¹ There was no programmatic "new Law" to supersede the old but rather a radical demand for a changed life. *Panta*⁴² would therefore refer to the totality of Jesus' teaching, especially as presented in the first gospel, centering on the coming kingdom of heaven and man's relation to it as well as on the Person of Jesus.

(3) *The Promise of His Presence (v. 20b)*. This is a proper conclusion to the speech and to the gospel as a whole. It is paralleled in 1:23, where we read that "his name shall be called Emmanuel (which means, God with us)," and in 18:20: "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there

³⁹W. C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to Matthew* (ICC; Edinburgh, 1922), pp. 306 f.; Albright, *op. cit.*, pp. 362 f., *contra* J. A. Robinson, "In the Name," in *JTS* 7 (1905-1906), pp. 186-202.

⁴⁰See Fuller, *op. cit.*, pp. 88 f. This does not mean, however, that it was read into the tradition from later Church practice. It more likely was the other way around—i.e., later Church practice stemmed from it.

⁴¹R. A. Guelich, *Not to Annul the Law; Rather, to Fulfill the Law and the Prophets* (Hamburg, 1967), p. 246 (cf. pp. 216-266).

⁴²Note the use of *entellō* with *panta*; the verb stresses the authority of Jesus' teaching. It occurs in 4:6, 15:4, 17:9 and here (vs. three total in Mark and Luke) and refers twice to the Father's commands and twice to Jesus' commands.

am I in the midst of them.”⁴³ These verses are part of the evangelist’s emphasis on the deity of Christ. Michel⁴⁴ finds parallel statements in Exodus 3:12 and Joshua 1:5, 9. The theme of these passages—God’s presence among men—is consciously applied to the Risen One as omnipresent among us.⁴⁵ The divine comfort (Michel calls it “divine succor”), given by God to his people throughout the periods of the Old Testament and intertestamental literature, is offered to the Church. The Risen One here supplies the means of performing the obedience required in verse 20a. As Bornkamm puts it,⁴⁶ “The gospel ends with the ‘Immanuel’ with which it began (1:23).”

“Until the consummation of the ages” is also in keeping with the theology of the first gospel. *Synteleia* is found five times in Matthew (13:39 f., 49; 24:3 and here) and only in Hebrews 9:26 elsewhere in the New Testament. It is an apocalyptic concept, and the risen Christ is saying that the authority of the kingdom age is present with his disciples at every moment⁴⁷ and that its extent is limitless, ceasing only when the kingdom appears and the presence becomes a physical as well as spiritual reality. Therefore the mission itself is an integral part of the parousia expectation and becomes, as already stated, a “proleptic parousia.”⁴⁸

Verse 20b is meant to fill the gap between the ages. In Matthean theology, Jesus’ radical demand is to become the life style for the Church as the people of God during the interval between the ages. This statement, then, provides comfort for his people via the promise of his continued presence during that time. With this in mind Matthew

⁴³Fuller, *op. cit.*, pp. 89 f., states that 18:20 and 28:20 are separate developments of a single logion. This is improbable, however, since only *eimi* is common between them and since they occur in different settings (the binding of sins and the missionary charge).

⁴⁴Michel, *art. cit.*, pp. 18 f. Fuller, *op. cit.*, p. 89, adds P.O. x.1, Gosp. Thomas 77, and Pirke Aboth 3:2 (which describes the shekinah glory of Yahweh).

⁴⁵Many, such as Barth in Bornkamm *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 136 f., and Bornkamm in Robinson, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 223 f., say this is a Matthean composition, due to the omnipresence doctrine, which they believe is late in the Christological development of the early Church. However, this is paralleled in several of the early creeds—Col. 1:15 ff.; Rom. 6:2 f.; Heb. 7:25—and was more likely in early tradition.

⁴⁶Bornkamm in Robinson, ed., *op. cit.*, p. 228.

⁴⁷McNeile, *op. cit.*, p. 437, asserts that *pasas tas hēmeras* occurs only here in the New Testament but is common in the LXX. The detailed time-note here stresses the extent of the presence, i.e., “all the days” of the interim period.

⁴⁸Barth in Bornkamm *et al.*, *op. cit.*, pp. 136 f., says that Matthew makes the presence contiguous with the proclamation of Jesus’ teaching. This expands the motif in Pirke Aboth 3:2 f., which says that the shekinah glory is present only through the proclamation of the Torah.

concludes his study with a summary of his ecclesiology: The "church"⁴⁹ is God's chosen messenger during the interim before the "consummation" and as such is promised the presence of the authoritative One in executing that task.

Conclusion. This final pericope in the gospel has a two-fold relation: to the resurrection narrative, and to the gospel as a whole. To the former it climaxes and focuses the entire section. Matthew builds contrast upon contrast to emphasize the glory and authority of the Risen One who is at work in this aeon. To the gospel itself it sums up much of Matthew's most important teaching, including his messianic lordship Christology, his discipleship ecclesiology, and his inaugurated eschatology.

A great deal more could be done with this pericope, if space permitted, especially in the area of *Traditionsgeschichte*. A preliminary conclusion, however, would indicate that Matthew has redacted an actual tradition (perhaps taken from Mark) of a threefold statement of the Risen One on a mountain in Galilee. The statement itself contained a claim of authority, a command to evangelize, and a promise of help.

II. A BIBLICAL UNDERSTANDING OF INERRANCY

In the twentieth century, the Church is experiencing in Bibliology the same growth pangs it encountered in Christology in the third and fourth centuries. Radical criticism takes an Arian approach by divorcing the human words of the Bible from the Word of God, which it defines as existential encounter. Fundamentalism, on the other hand, takes a docetic approach by effectively removing the human element from the Biblical text. Evangelicalism is trying to discover an Athanasian middle ground, combining the human and divine elements in a God-ordained tension that recognizes the interplay between both aspects behind the origin of the sacred text.

The current debate in evangelicalism centers on the question of limited versus full inerrancy. Daniel Fuller⁵⁰ argues that inerrancy should be limited to those areas necessary to salvation, while Robert Coleman⁵¹ believes that it should be limited to what Scripture "intends" to teach—that is, didactic purpose rather than incidental details. Both separate inspiration from inerrancy and argue that the latter is not a necessary part of the former. Several others, notably Geisler, Pinnock,

⁴⁹Matthew's is the only gospel to employ the term "church" (16:18; 18:17), and he programmatically stresses her origins and heritage. He emphasizes the choice and purpose of the twelve (10:2 ff.; 13:11 f.; 16:12 ff.; 18:18 ff.; 19:28) and looks at the Church as the inheritor of Israel's mantle. His stress on Israel's rejection underscores the Church as God's chosen people. However, as D. Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (London, 1972), p. 72, argues, "all nations" in 28:19 includes Israel (cf. Acts 1:8).

⁵⁰D. Fuller, "Warfield's view of Faith and History," in *Bulletts* 11 (1968), pp. 75-83. See also his "The Nature of Biblical Inerrancy," in *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 24 (1972), pp. 47-50.

⁵¹R. J. Coleman, "Reconsidering Limited Inerrancy," in *JETS* 17 (1974), pp. 207-214.

Payne, and Poythress,⁵² have written that inerrancy is unlimited and must be an integral part of any concept of plenary inspiration. Not only the primary purpose but also the secondary details are trustworthy. To deny the latter is the first step to a denial of the former.

The key to a proper concept is the meaning of the word "error." It is here that we must be careful to note the Biblical understanding rather than the twentieth-century definition. In fact, a logical mapwork of the term must carefully note the "language games" that are played with "inerrancy" in our time. Both liberals and evangelicals are guilty of a too-easy acceptance of certain facts as error. For instance, many assume that because the gospels are not biographies in the modern sense of the term, they contain error. Others assume that because Matthew quotes Christ in a different way than Mark does, the *Logia Jesu* contains errors. In this way the gospels are the logical testing ground for the doctrine of inerrancy, for they claim to contain factual historical data and to portray accurately the life of Christ. Synoptic differences, then, are the necessary battleground for any discussion of this topic.

Is it true that the *Logia Jesu* must contain *ipsisissima verba* in order to be inerrant? Or is *ipsisissima vox* equally inspired? We must note first that the quotes are, at the very best, translations of the original Aramaic and therefore cannot be the *actual* words of Jesus. Moreover, synoptic differences at nearly every point show that the evangelists did not attempt to give us *ipsisissima verba* but rather sought to interpret Jesus' words for their audiences.⁵³ In other words, they wished to make Jesus' teachings meaningful to their own *Sitz im Leben* rather than to present them unedited. Relevancy triumphed over verbal exactness.⁵⁴

This does not mean that the evangelists had no concern for the teachings themselves and freely composed their own materials. It simply means that they selected and paraphrased Jesus' teachings so that the true meaning of them would be revealed to their readers. Matthew's trinitarian formula and theologically colored phrases are not error, but are inspired interpretations of Jesus' actual message. How can we know that his is the correct interpretation rather than an erroneous compilation of inaccuracies? We know via our belief in inspiration, by our acceptance of the promise in John 14:26:⁵⁵ "The Holy Spirit ... will

⁵²N. L. Geisler, "Theological Method and Inerrancy: A Reply to Professor Holmes," in *BULLETINS* 11 (1968), pp. 139-146; C. Pinnock, "Limited Inerrancy: A Critical Appraisal and Constructive Alternative," in *God's Inerrant Word*, ed. J. W. Montgomery (Minneapolis, 1974), pp. 143-158; J. B. Payne, "Partial Omniscience: Observations on Limited Inerrancy," in *JETS* 18 (1975), pp. 37-40; V. S. Poythress, "Problems for Limited Inerrancy," in *JETS* 18 (1975), pp. 93-104.

⁵³Many evangelicals cloud this fact with an overzealous use of "harmonizing." While this interpretive key answers many difficulties, it can by no means remove every problem.

⁵⁴For an excellent discussion of this see R. T. France, "Inerrancy and New Testament Exegesis," in *Themelios* 1/1 (Autumn, 1975), pp. 12-18.

⁵⁵The question regarding whether or not this was the actual teaching of Jesus does not concern us here (although we believe it was). At the very least, it proves a sense of inspiration on the part of the early Church regarding the gospels.

bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you."⁵⁶

This leads us into the whole question of history and theology in the Biblical texts. Radical scholars tend to say that there is an absolute dichotomy between history and theology. Because the gospels are theological, they cannot be historical. For the same reason many evangelicals have neglected the theological ramifications of the historical narratives in the Bible.⁵⁷ Both sides are wrong.⁵⁸ One cannot blindly assume that redaction always involves the creation of material rather than the rephrasing of an existing tradition. Nor can one presuppose that theology does not exist because one is writing history. History and its interpretation must always exist side by side. The critic should take cognizance of the possibility that a passage is traditional but has been reconstructed to provide a particular theological interpretation of the evangelist (while remaining true to the event itself).

What value, then, does redaction criticism have for the evangelical, and how should he approach it? When one removes the negative presuppositions of the radical critics, one has in redaction criticism a tremendous, positive tool for understanding the early Church and its theology. It is hoped that this study has shown the greater insight into the Great Commission that a redactional approach has provided. A better understanding of the evangelist's theology and a deeper insight into the meaning of the passage has resulted.

But what of the dangers? Is the domino theory correct, and will such research weaken the structure of Biblical authority until it falls? There is no reason why it should. In fact, it is hoped that this study will provide a further insight into the true relation between fact and interpretation in the Biblical text.⁵⁹ Both aspects are true, and both are inspired. In this case it is difficult, if not impossible, to trace the exact words that Jesus spoke on the mountain in Galilee. However, we can know that Matthew has faithfully reproduced the intent and meaning of what Jesus said. In fact, we can rejoice because Matthew has rephrased it in such a way that it illuminates his entire gospel and applies the meaning of Jesus' life and ministry to the present mission and responsibility of the Church. Matthew did not simply repeat that command. He lived it—and so must we. For Matthew, it summed up his entire theology. We must ask whether it summarizes ours.

⁵⁶This does not mean that we take a Barthian "leap of faith." There is good evidence that the evangelists themselves believed they were inspired and that this involved accurate historical portrayal (Lk. 1:1-4; Jn. 19:35; 21:24).

⁵⁷This is readily seen in the paucity of references to evangelical works in this study. There are very few who have delved into the theological ramifications of the data.

⁵⁸See the excellent critique of both sides in relation to the gospels in G. C. Berkouwer, *Studies in Dogmatics: Holy Scripture*, tr. J. B. Rogers (Grand Rapids, 1975), pp. 9-24, 250-253, 265 f. On pp. 181-187, he argues against a mechanical view of inerrancy that removes itself from an honest consideration of Scriptural development and differences.

⁵⁹See also Berkouwer's closing chapter, "Faith and Criticism," in *op. cit.*, pp. 346-366.