

## ***THE RESURRECTION NARRATIVES IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL \****

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### THE HISTORICAL PROBLEMS OF MATTHEW 28

Of the four versions of the Easter story preserved in the canonical gospels Matthew's is probably regarded by scholars as the least reliable historically. His account is thought suspect in at least three ways:

(1) He alone of the evangelists describes the opening of the tomb by the angel and the accompanying earthquake. Mark by comparison has an unadorned description of the opened tomb, and it is supposed that Matthew has introduced legendary elements into the story in accordance with his known partiality for the sensational and miraculous.<sup>1</sup> In describing the angelic action and the earthquake Matthew comes nearer than any of the other canonical evangelists to describing the resurrection event itself (as distinct from the discovery of the empty tomb and the appearances of the Risen Lord), and this together with Matthew's supposed heightening of the miraculous encourages some scholars to associate Matthew here with the apocryphal gospels. The gospel of Peter, for example, which has a number of notable agreements with Matthew, describes the emergence of three men from the tomb, two of them helping the third and the cross following them. The heads of the two men reach the heavens and that of the third surpasses the heavens.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. G. D. Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel according to St Matthew*, O.U.P., Oxford (1946), 48. The obvious parallel is in Matthew's account of the crucifixion, where the death of Jesus is marked by an earthquake and by the opening of the tombs of the saints (27:51).

<sup>2</sup> G. Grass in his book *Ostergeschehen and Osterberichte*<sup>2</sup>, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen (1962) 26, 27, suggests that Matthew may have known and omitted a description of the resurrection such as is found in the gospel of Peter; he points to

(2) Matthew is the only one of the evangelists to describe the setting of a guard over the tomb of Jesus and the subsequent bribing of the soldiers by the Jews. This story is suspected not only because of its evident apologetic purpose, but also because of supposed improbabilities in the narrative.<sup>3</sup> It is argued, for example, that, if they had feared interference with the body of Jesus from the disciples, the Jews would scarcely have waited until the morning after Jesus' burial before requesting a guard for the tomb. In any case it is unlikely that the Jewish leaders would have defiled themselves by approaching the Gentile governor, Pilate, and then by sealing the tomb on the sabbath day.<sup>4</sup> Another supposed improbability in Matthew's story is his implied assumption that the Jews were familiar with and took seriously Jesus' prediction of His resurrection after three days. But if Jesus did predict His resurrection, which many would doubt,<sup>5</sup> it is doubtful whether the Jewish leaders would have known of it; if they did in fact know of it, it is still not obvious that they would have taken it seriously in the way Matthew suggests.<sup>6</sup> The Matthean description of the guards

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the slightly awkward hiatus between Mt. 28:4 and 28:5. But this may be as well explained from the compressed nature of Matthew's style here or as the result of his addition of the story of the guard to the earlier tradition.

<sup>3</sup> H. Von Campenhausen in *Tradition and Life in the Church*, E.T. Collins, London (1968) 63, says: 'As is generally the case when such a specific intention is dominant, the narrator has chiefly in view his special apologetic aim, and so fails to see the absurdities that follow right and left from his account. Our account abounds with contradictions and impossibilities.'

<sup>4</sup> Cf. K. Lake *The Historical Evidence for the Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, Williams & Norgate, London (1907) 178; A. H. M'Neile, *The Gospel according to St Matthew*, Macmillan, London (1915) 428; G. Grass, *op. cit.*, 23. It is suggested that Matthew, saw this problem and that he deliberately avoided calling the sabbath the sabbath ' in 27:62, where he speaks instead of 'the morrow, which is after the day of preparation' (cf. Von Campenhausen, *op. cit.*, 63). But, if Matthew had wished avoid giving the impression that the Jews took action on the sabbath, he would have done better just to refer to 'the morrow' and to have avoided altogether the conspicuous and curious phrase 'the morrow, which is after the day of preparation'. B. Weiss refers to a number of alternative possible explanations of this phrase, e.g, to the view that ἡ παρασκευή was the early Christians' way of referring to Good Friday; he opts himself for the view that Matthew is here picking up the Marcan, expression he omitted in his verse 57. (*Das Matthäus-Evangelium*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen (1898) 498; cf. also M. J. Lagrange, *L'Évangile selon Saint Matthieu*, Gabalda, Paris (5923) 535). The effect of the Matthean expression is to identify Good Friday as the day of preparation and not just to refer to the events that happened on the sabbath; this may have been the evangelist's purpose whether or not he used Mark.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. K. Lake, *op. cit.*, 579.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Von Campenhausen, *op. cit.*, 63. R. H. Fuller in his *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives*, SPCK, London (1972) 72, says that Mt. 27:63,64 in referring to an earlier 'deception' by Jesus is referring back to Jesus' claim to Messiahship; in Fuller's view Jesus did not make this claim, nor did He predict His resurrection.

reporting back after the resurrection to the Jewish leaders is another aspect of the story regarded as historically unconvincing: it is thought unlikely that Pilate's men would have reported back to the Jews rather than to Pilate; it is even less likely that they would have agreed to put out the story that the body was stolen while they were asleep. Not only was that an improbable story—as Marxsen says: 'How can anyone say what happened while he was asleep?'<sup>7</sup>—it was also a potentially dangerous story to put into circulation, since if it reached the ears of the governor the penalty for the soldiers who had slept on duty could have been death.<sup>8</sup> There is also a psychological problem with the story: for it is thought unlikely that the guards would have agreed to the deception ascribed to them in Matthew if they had really witnessed the angelic intervention.<sup>9</sup> A final difficulty with the Matthean story is the question of its source: if the guards were bribed to keep silent about the actual events and were paid to put out the story of the disciples stealing the body, how did the real story leak out? What was Matthew's source of information? The conclusion of many scholars for the sort of reason listed above<sup>10</sup> is that the Matthean story does not go back to reliable historical sources; it is seen as a precursor of later non-canonical resurrection stories, in which there is a tendency to introduce non-Christian and supposedly impartial witnesses to the event.<sup>11</sup>

(3) The story of the guard is regarded as implausible, and so is the final scene in Matthew 28. The command to make disciples of all nations and the command to baptize in the name

<sup>7</sup> W. Marxsen, *The Resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth*, E.T. SCM, London (1970) 46-

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Lake, *op. cit.*, 178. F. Filson, *A Commentary on The Gospel according to St. Matthew*, A. & C. Black, London (1960) 303.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. E. Haenchen, *Der Weg Jesu*<sup>2</sup>, de Gruyter, Berlin (1968) 549f.

<sup>10</sup> Fuller, *op. cit.*, 73, adds another reason for doubting Matthew's account: he believes that the whole story of Jesus being buried by his friends, which is presupposed by Matthew, is secondary, and that the earliest traditions recognized that Jesus received a common criminal's burial from his enemies. In support of this view appeal is made to Acts 13:29. But Fuller's interpretation of the verse, which occurs in a very compressed summary description of the passion, is unnecessary and, in the light of the unanimity of the gospel tradition, improbable. It may reasonably be supposed that the author of Luke-Acts intended the verse to be understood in the light of his earlier description of the burial of Jesus, and there is no reason for supposing that this was a misunderstanding.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Von Campenhausen, *op. cit.*, 65; W. C. Allen, *Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to St Matthew*, T. & T. Clarke, Edinburgh (1907) 299. Against this view P. Bonnard, *L'Evangile selon Saint Matthieu*, Delachaux et Niestlé, Neuchatel (1963) 409, argues that Matthew's purpose is not to introduce non-Christian witnesses; it is rather to affirm that the body was not stolen.

of the Trinity are both probably read back from the later church situation; for, if Jesus Himself had spoken about the Christian mission in the way Matthew suggests, it is hard to see why the early church should have found the Gentile question such a problem.<sup>12</sup> And if Jesus Himself had commanded the use of the Trinitarian formula in baptism, it is hard to explain the evidence of Acts and of Paul, which both indicate that baptism was simply in the name of Jesus during the earliest days. In the light of this sort of evidence the final scene in Matthew may be regarded as a sort of symbolic summary scene: Jesus the exalted Lord appears on the sacred Galilean mountain and gives the church its charter of existence.<sup>13</sup>

If Matthew's accounts of the angelic opening of the tomb of the bribing of the guards and of the commissioning of the disciples are all regarded as suspect, there is not all that much left in his Easter story. There is the appearance of Jesus to the women after they have left the tomb (28:9, 10), which has no parallel in Mark and Luke; but even this does not escape suspicion.<sup>14</sup> It is pointed out that the message which Jesus gives to the women adds nothing to the message of the angels in verse 7, and some have concluded that the story of Jesus appearance is in whole or part a doublet of the earlier story of the appearance of the angels.<sup>15</sup> The later story is viewed as an artificial composition which was intended to link the accounts of the resurrection appearances with the account of the empty tomb. At one time, it is supposed, the empty tomb tradition was quite separate from the tradition of the risen Christ's appearances, and these may indeed all have been located in Galilee; but the tendency was to bring the two traditions together, so that, as we have noticed, in the gospel

<sup>12</sup> Cf. M'Neile, *op. cit.*, 435; D. Hill, *Matthew*, Oliphants, London (1972) 362.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Grass, *op. cit.*, 28. Grass claims that the theological weightiness of the section marks it out as secondary (*ibid.* 30).

<sup>14</sup> Von Campenhausen, *op. cit.*, 62, claims that the meeting with the women is expressly denied by Luke. But Lk. 24 vs. 23, 24 do not necessarily exclude the appearance reported in Matthew. Luke says that the disciples did not see Jesus, and the implication could conceivably be that they expected to do so, having heard of the women's experience. Another possibility is that events have been telescoped together in Matthew's compressed chapter 28 and that the appearance of Jesus did not follow immediately from the women's first visit to the tomb.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. K. Lake, *op. cit.*, 85; M'Neile, *op. cit.*, 433. U. Wilckens in *Auferstehung*, Kreuz, Stuttgart (3970) p. 68 says: 'Es ist deutlich zu erkennen, dass diese Erscheinungserzählung an die Ostergeschichte vom leeren Grabe erst nachträglich angefügt worden ist und lediglich zur Bekräftigung der Auferstehungsverkündigung des Engels durch den Auferstandenen selbst dienen soll.'

of Peter the risen Christ is actually seen emerging from the tomb accompanied by the two angels.

Such in brief are the sort of arguments that lead many scholars to doubt the historical value of the Matthean resurrection narratives. Although some may be tempted to dismiss the individual arguments as insubstantial, their cumulative effect is such that they should be taken seriously. This article will not provide definitive answers to the questions raised; but I hope that it may indicate some of the avenues that could be further explored by someone looking for answers. I plan first to go through Matthew 28, examining the relationship of Matthew to the other canonical gospels. It will be seen that Matthew has things in common with John and probably Luke, as well as with Mark, and that his version cannot be regarded simply as a free and fanciful expansion of Mark 16:1-8. Then I shall consider in turn each of the major arguments that supposedly justify treating Matthew 28 with suspicion.

#### MATTHEW 28 EXAMINED AND COMPARED WITH THE OTHER GOSPELS

##### *The visit of the women to the tomb*

Like the other three evangelists Matthew begins his account of the resurrection by describing the coming of the women to the tomb, and the reader of his gospel is immediately faced with a problem of translation. The opening phrase of his account is ὄψε δὲ σαββάτων, τῇ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ εἰς μίαν σαββάτων (28:1), which could be translated 'Late on the sabbath as it was dawning on the first day of the week', were it not for the fact that 'late on the sabbath' and 'dawn on the first day' cannot refer to the same time. There are at least three ways of explaining the apparent contradictoriness of Matthew here: (a) it has been claimed that Matthew has conflated and confused the two time references in Mark.<sup>16</sup> Thus Mark refers to the women bringing spices after the sabbath, presumably in the evening, and then to them coming to the tomb in the morning; Matthew leaves out the buying of the spices, and so, it is suggested, he conflates the two Marcan time notes. If this were the only

<sup>16</sup> Cf. K. Lake, *op. cit.*, 57; . W. Harden, *The Evangelists and the Resurrection*, Skeffington, London (1914) 100.

adequate explanation of the Matthean phraseology, it would be a striking piece of evidence for the dependence of Matthew on Mark; but it is not the only possible explanation, and the chief weakness with the view is that it makes Matthew an extraordinarily clumsy editor.<sup>17</sup> (b) A second view is that Matthew's phrase τῆ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ should be taken to mean 'as the day was drawing on'. Matthew on this view does not refer to the dawn of the first day; he has the women coming to the tomb on the Saturday evening while it is still dark. If this view is correct, Matthew is independent at this point from Mark, since the latter is quite unambiguous in his reference to the dawn; it is suggested, however, that Matthew and John may be drawing on common tradition, since the Fourth Evangelist speaks of Mary coming to the tomb 'while it was still dark'.<sup>18</sup> This view may at first sight seem attractive; but the phrase in John 20:1 'early while it was still dark' suggests the latter half of the night towards dawn, not the beginning of the night around sunset. So far as Matthew goes, the suggestion would allow ὀψὲ σαββάτων and τῆ ἐπιφωσκούσῃ to be taken of the same time; but the women would have to be thought of as setting out on their mission of mourning before the end of the sabbath, and presumably the events of Matthew 28:2-7 would also have to be put in the night. There is no hint of this in Matthew, and it seems more satisfactory to take ἐπιφώσκειν in its primary Greek sense<sup>19</sup> and to interpret Matthew in the light of the other gospel traditions. (c) The third and probably the simplest way of dealing with Matthew's difficult double expression is to take ὀψὲ σαββάτων as meaning 'after the sabbath'. If this is admitted to be a possible translation,<sup>20</sup> then the difficulty is largely eliminated. Matthew agrees with Mark in sense, and, although his wording is not sufficiently similar to prove dependence, there is no need to postulate a special Matthean source at this point.<sup>21</sup>

If Matthew and Mark are compared further in the story of

<sup>17</sup> J. Orr says on the supposed conflation: 'It is not St Mark's language that is used, and St Matthew may be credited with sufficient knowledge of Greek to keep him from perpetrating so obvious an error.' (*The Resurrection of Jesus*, Hodder & Stoughton, London (z 909) 124f.)

<sup>18</sup> Cf. M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*, OUP (1967) 136f.

<sup>19</sup> On the meaning of the verb see F. Neirynck, *NTS* 15 (1968/9) 190.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. *SB* I 1051f.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. T. Zahn *Das Evangelium des Matthäus*, A. Deichert, Leipzig (1903) 707; R. E. Brown *The Gospel according to John XII-XXI*, Doubleday, New York (1970) 988.

the women's visit to the tomb, two differences are immediately striking: (1) Matthew has two women, where Mark has three; (2) he has no reference to their having brought spices to anoint the body of Jesus. Neither of these differences necessarily indicates the independence of the two versions. There is no particular reason why Matthew should have named the three women, even if all three were named in his source,<sup>22</sup> and his failure to mention the bringing of spices is explicable in various ways. One suggestion is that he, like other readers of Mark since, found it impossible to imagine the embalming of the corpse two days after the crucifixion; in the hot Palestinian climate such a delay would have been unthinkable.<sup>23</sup> This explanation, however, is not fully convincing: even if one discounts the Johannine account of anointing by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus, it is not really very difficult to imagine the women bringing spices first thing after the sabbath, Jesus having died on the Friday. It was, after all, less than 48 hours after the death of Jesus; it was not the hottest time of the year,<sup>24</sup> and Jesus' body was inside a tomb; furthermore, even if some decomposition would have set in by that time, it is not clear that this would have deterred the women from their intended act of devotion.<sup>25</sup> If this explanation of Matthew's commission of the embalming plans is unconvincing, an alternative possibility is that Matthew felt it improbable that the women would have come to the tomb on Easter Sunday morning hoping to find it open when, if Mark is correct in his description, they had seen it shut up with a giant stone on Good Friday night.<sup>26</sup> Matthew himself makes matters that much worse by describing the sealing up of the grave and the setting of a guard to watch the tomb; the women could scarcely have hoped to gain access to a sealed guarded tomb. Matthew, therefore, describes the women not as bringing spices but as

<sup>22</sup> Mark jumps from three named women watching the crucifixion (15:40) to two watching the burial (15:47) and back to three at the resurrection (16:1). Matthew sticks to two for the resurrection.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Grass, *op. cit.*, 20; Marxsen, *op. cit.*, 45.

<sup>24</sup> According to Jn 18:18 it was cold on the night of Jesus' trial.

<sup>25</sup> Brown says: 'Little credence should be given to the objection that in a hot country no one would come to anoint a body that would have begun to rot. Actually, it can be quite cool in mountainous Jerusalem in early spring; moreover, those who recounted the story presumably knew local weather and customs and would scarcely have invented a patently silly explanation' (*op. cit.*, 982).

<sup>26</sup> Cf. P. Benoit, *The Passion and Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, Darton Longman & Todd, London (1969) 225.

coming to see the tomb.<sup>27</sup> This explanation of Matthew's divergence from Mark makes reasonable sense, though whether it is correct may be doubted. Did Matthew really find it so hard to imagine the women in their grief setting out to anoint the body and hoping to gain access to the tomb somehow or other?<sup>28</sup> Matthew does not say or imply that the women knew of the setting of the guard by the Jews; but even if they did, it is not impossible that they might have gone to the tomb hoping to be allowed in, however irrational it may seem in retrospect. It is not obvious, then, that this must be the explanation of Matthew's departure from Mark, and an alternative possibility is that Matthew was independent of Mark at this point. The suggestion has been made in fact by E. Lohmeyer and others that Matthew and John have a tradition in common, in which the purpose of the women's visit was to mourn their master not to embalm His body.<sup>29</sup> The picture in John is, of course, somewhat complicated, as the Fourth Evangelist has Nicodemus and Joseph anointing Jesus' body at the time of burial; but, although there is that complication, it remains the case that neither Matthew nor John suggests that the women's purpose was to anoint the body of Jesus; and it is possible to maintain that Mark has amplified the simpler tradition, explaining the particular motivation that lay behind the early morning visit to the tomb.

The same could be said of the women's conversation recorded in Mark: 'Who will roll away for us the stone from the door of the tomb?' There is no equivalent of this in Matthew, Luke or John; and it is tempting to speculate with U. Wilckens<sup>30</sup> as to whether Mark may not here have added to the earlier less elaborate tradition. By referring to the size of the stone (v. 4 ἡμ ἄρ μέγας σφόδρα) and by having the women ask each other 'Who will roll the stone away?' Mark could be drawing

<sup>27</sup> Cf. R. H. Fuller, *op. cit.*, 76. In this Fuller follows K. Lake (*op. cit.*, 61), as also in suggesting that Matthew may have wished to avoid giving the impression that Joseph of Arimathea failed in doing his duty.

<sup>28</sup> The implication of Mark 16:3 is that the women did realize the difficulty of moving the stone when they were on the way to the tomb. The fact that they were not deterred by this realization is easily credible given their emotional state at the time.

<sup>29</sup> E. Lohmeyer *Das Evangelium des Manilas*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen (1962) 408f. He draws attention to the reference in Jn 20:10 to Mary weeping; the assumption in Matthew could be that the women came to weep. They were not on a sight-seeing trip when they came to 'see the tomb' (28:1).

<sup>30</sup> *Op. cit.*, 46.

particular attention to the miraculous nature of the event.<sup>31</sup> However, although it is interesting to speculate on these lines, it has to be admitted that any argument about Matthew here is precarious since it may well be maintained that his omission from Mark is explained by his addition of the story of the angel rolling away the stone. This makes clear the miraculous nature of the even and the women's conversation pales into insignificance.

So far the possible contacts that we have noted between Matthew on the one hand and Luke and John on the other have been no more than possible; none has been very obvious. We come now to some slightly more promising evidence of a connexion between Matthew and Luke. First there is the description of the angel. For the young man wearing a white robe in Mark, we get in Matthew an angel whose appearance was like lightning (ὡς ἀστραπή) and whose robe was as white as snow, and in Luke two angels whose dress was like lightning (ἀστραπτούση). Matthew and Luke have both departed noticeably from Mark's sober description of the young man. Whether this is significant or not is debatable; in some ways it is not surprising that Matthew and Luke have brightened up Mark's portrait, but their agreement in the use of the ἀστραπ- root against Mark could go back ultimately to some non-Marcian tradition.<sup>32</sup>

More important evidence of such a non-Marcian tradition is to be found in the message of the angel to the women. Whereas in Mark the angel says 'He is risen; he is not here', Luke has 'He is not here; but he is risen. Do you not remember how he spoke to you . . . ?' and Matthew has similarly 'He is not here; for he is risen, as he said.' The agreement of Matthew and Luke

<sup>31</sup> This is not to suggest that these Marcian elements are Marcian fabrications without any basis in primitive tradition.

<sup>32</sup> Compare also Matthew's verse 5 μὴ φοβεῖσθε ὑμεῖς and Luke's verse 5 ἐμφοβῶν δὲ γενομένων; Mark uses the word ἐκθαμβεῖν of the women's reaction. H. W. Bartsch notes the links between Matthew and Luke; he also sees a possible link between Matthew's description of the guards in verse 4 and Luke's description of the women in his verse 4. He argues that the tradition lying behind Matthew and Luke referred to an appearance of the Risen Jesus (not of angels) and that the resurrection was originally considered to be the Parousia, the coming of the exalted Son of man. (*Entmythologisierende Auslegung*, Evangelischer Verlag, Hamburg-Bergstedt (1962) 88; but first published in *Basileia*, the W. Freytag Festschrift.) But, although lightning and other phenomena may characteristically be associated with the Parousia, there is no reason to insist that they always have this significance or to deny that they could accompany the sort of angelic appearance described in the gospels. Cf. Neiryneck, *art. cit.*, 173, who observes that in apocalyptic the sort of language used here is used of God, of the Son of Man and of angels.

is twofold: they reverse the order of the phrases 'He is risen; he is not here', and they immediately go on to refer back to Jesus' earlier teaching about the resurrection. Matthew simply has the phrase 'as he said'; Luke has 'Remember how he spoke to you while he was still in Galilee . . .'. Mark has no reference back to Jesus' predictions of His resurrection at this point, though shortly afterwards he has a reference back to Jesus' particular promise that He would go before His disciples into Galilee. This is something slightly different. The fact that Matthew and Luke agree both in the change of order and in the reference back to Jesus' earlier teaching means that neither agreement can be easily dismissed as coincidental; or at least it would mean this if the text was sure.

However, the matter is complicated by the fact that the words 'He is not here; but he is risen' are absent from the Western textual tradition of Luke; this is an example of a Western non-interpolation, and it is possible to view the crucial words as a harmonizing addition to the context. Against the view that they are such an addition it may be observed (1) that the Lukan text differs quite considerably from Matthew and Mark before and after the words in question, so that it is not to be taken for granted that a harmonizing gloss of the sort postulated would have been felt desirable; and (2) that the form of the wording is slightly different in Luke from that found in Matthew or Mark; Luke only has the adversative ἀλλά. If the words were a harmonizing gloss added into Luke, they might have been expected to correspond more closely to either Matthew or Mark.<sup>33</sup> These observations do not decide the textual question, and there is much more that could be said; but I intend to leave the matter there concluding that the longer text may well be original, while admitting that the point is far from proved. So far as the previous argument goes about the agreement of Matthew and Luke, this does not necessarily collapse if the Western reading is adopted. It is still possible to maintain that the agreement of Matthew and Luke in referring back to Jesus' prediction of the resurrection rather than to His promise to go before them into Galilee is significant, though the case is much weaker.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Thus J. Jeremias, *Eucharistic Words of Jesus*, E.T. Blackwells, Oxford (1955) 149.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. Neiryneck, *art. cit.*, 175, who suggests that Matthew and Luke have interpreted Mark's phrase καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν in the same sort of way independently.

If there is at least one agreement between Matthew and Luke here that goes back to a non-Marcan tradition, this is interesting for at least two reasons. (1) First it is of interest for the question of the relationship of Matthew and Mark, since the phrase καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν, which is found in Matthew, has a parallel in Mark's verse 7, 'There you will see him καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν (as he said to you)'. At the point where Mark has this phrase Matthew has the angel saying ἰδοὺ εἶπον ὑμῖν ('Behold I have told you'). In other words, in Mark the angel refers back to Jesus' words; in Matthew he speaks on his own authority. The relationship between the Matthean and Marcan versions at this point is difficult to determine; but if the earlier suggestion about the agreement of Matthew and Luke is correct, then Matthew's use of the phrase καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν is not primarily dependent on Mark's. It could be argued that Matthew's choice of wording was affected by Mark's and that, having used the phrase καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν once, Matthew did not wish to repeat himself, hence his choice of the alternative ἰδοὺ εἶπον ὑμῖν.<sup>35</sup> But what may be simpler is to regard Matthew's tradition as the earlier one here. Mark having reversed the order of the phrases 'He is not here; he is risen' naturally omits the καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν the first time round; but he uses it shortly afterwards in place of the perhaps rather more difficult ἰδοὺ εἶπον ὑμῖν, which Matthew preserves. (2) The argument about the agreement of Matthew and Luke is also of interest for the understanding of the Lukan text. It is frequently asserted that Luke wished to avoid any idea of the risen Jesus appearing in Galilee and that he therefore transformed the command to 'go to Galilee' into a reference back to Jesus' earlier Galilean ministry, 'Remember how he spoke to you *while you were still in Galilee*'.<sup>36</sup> But the procedure envisaged

<sup>35</sup> Neiryneck, *art. cit.*, 175, claims that by reversing Mark's order and moving καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν Matthew has thrown the ἡγέρθη into relief. But if anything Mark's ἡγέρθη seems to stand out more obviously than Matthew's, which is incorporated into an explanatory γάρ clause. The effect of Matthew's order is rather to concentrate attention on the resurrection as a resurrection from the grave. (So U. Wilckens, *Festschrift für Friedrich Smend zum 70. Geburtstag*, Verlag Merseburger, Berlin (1963) 32.) Fuller suggests that Matthew has replaced Mark's καθὼς εἶπεν ὑμῖν with ἰδοὺ εἶπον ὑμῖν 'in order to prepare the way for the repetition of the charge by the Risen One in verse 10, reinforcing the angel's injunction. The result is to rivet firmly together the angelophany, the Christophany to the women, and the final appearance to the disciples' (*op. cit.*, 77). This seems rather subtle reasoning, and it would seem simpler to argue that Matthew wished to avoid repetition (*cf.* Wilckens, *Smend Festschrift*, 32).

<sup>36</sup> *E.g.* by Fuller, *op. cit.*, 97f.

is rather odd. It is hard to see why, if Luke wished to eliminate a reference to resurrection appearances in Galilee, he should have felt obliged or inclined to bring Galilee into his account in some completely different way.<sup>37</sup> However, if the argument for a tradition lying behind Matthew and Luke is correct, it is unnecessary to assume that this is what has happened. Luke's expression 'Remember how he spoke to you while he was still in Galilee' is not his replacement for Mark's 'He goes before you into Galilee', but is a quite distinct tradition parallel to Matthew's 'as he said'.<sup>38</sup>

The next part of the story that merits our attention is Matthew's verse 8, which reads: 'And leaving the tomb in haste they ran with fear and great joy to tell the message to his disciples.' Mark is in some respects similar, but he does not refer to their great joy and he diverges strikingly from Matthew in his ending 'They told nothing to anyone'. Luke, however, sides with Matthew against Mark, since he has 'and returning from the tomb they announced all these things to the eleven and to all the rest'. There are differences between Matthew and Luke, and it is possible to hold that the editors of Matthew and Luke supplemented Mark in a similar way,<sup>39</sup> but independently of each other. However, if their earlier agreements are thought to suggest acquaintance with a non-Markan tradition, then this agreement (which extends to the common use of the verb ἀπαγγέλλειν) may not unreasonably be explained in the same way.

### *Jesus' appearance to the women*

The story that follows in Matthew of the women's meeting with Jesus has no parallel in Mark or Luke; and some regard it as a story that developed or that was created in whole or part in order to associate the risen Jesus with the empty tomb traditions, pointing out that the message of the Risen Master is little more than a repetition of the message of the angels to the

<sup>37</sup> J. Orr, *op. cit.*, 158, says on Mark and Luke: 'The difficulty of deriving either of these forms from the other is obvious (the word "Galilee" occurring in both should not mislead).'

<sup>38</sup> The reference to Galilee could be a Lukan addition to the tradition, but there is no need to suppose that Luke has been influenced in this by Mark.

<sup>39</sup> I speak of Matthew and Luke supplementing Mark rather than of them correcting Mark, since it does not seem to me likely that Mark intended to imply that the women remained silent for any length of time, disobeying the angelic command.

women.<sup>40</sup> However, there is good reason for hesitating before accepting this explanation. The relevant evidence in this case is not in Luke, but in John, who also describes an appearance of Jesus outside the tomb to Mary Magdalene. It may not seem immediately obvious that this appearance is the same as that described in Matthew: Matthew has several women not just one. However, although there is a problem of harmonization here, it is worth noting (a) that of the two women named in Matthew Mary Magdalene is the first mentioned, and (b) that, although the Johannine empty tomb is consistently told from Mary Magdalene's point of view, the author of the gospel does give a hint that may suggest that he knew of the presence of other women with Mary, since Mary at one point speaks in the plural 'We do not know where they have laid him'.<sup>41</sup> So the differences may not be as significant as they at first appear. A closer examination of the two traditions reveals two particular contacts between them. In the first place the idea of physical contact between the risen Christ and His followers is present in both. In Matthew it is a positive statement to the effect that the women held His feet and worshipped Him. In John it is a negative command to the adoring Mary 'Do not

<sup>40</sup> W. Michaelis, *Die Erscheinungen des Auferstandenen*, Majer, Basel (1944) 16f., argues against this that the stress is not on the location of the incident by the grave, but on the message communicated. There may be something in this; Matthew does not make a point of locating the incident at the grave—in 28:8 the women run from the grave. Michaelis also argues that the use of the greeting *χαίρετε* and of *κρατεῖν* + the accusative are untypical of Matthew, and that this and the differences between Matthew's verses 7 and 10 show verses 9f. to be an independent tradition. It is doubtful if this and the other evidence cited proves Michaelis' point, though we agree that the tradition is pre-Matthean. (Although verses 9 and 10 may be detached from their context and treated as an independent tradition, there is no need for that reason to agree with those who regard them as a comparatively late insertion in the context.)

Fuller, *op. cit.* 78f., also argues that the story is pre-Matthean; but because of the repetitious words and because the story is absent from Mark and 1 Corinthians he concludes: 'One can only conclude that the earlier tradition of the angelophany to the women had been later converted into a Christophany.' To us it seems quite unnecessary to include anything of the sort on the basis of the very brief accounts in 1 Corinthians and Mark. So far as the repetitiousness goes, Neiryneck, *art. cit.*, 182, denies the Jesus' appearance adds nothing new to what has preceded. The fact that it is Jesus who speaks is a not unimportant new element, and in any case Jesus goes further than the angels in specifically commanding that the disciples go to Galilee. The final appearance in Galilee is thus prepared for.

<sup>41</sup> Jn 20:2. Contrast v. 13 'I do not know . . .'. It is possible to take the plural as what Fuller calls an 'inauthentic plural' (*op. cit.*, 134), but then it is necessary to explain why the idiom is not used also in verse 13. For discussion of the point see especially R. E. Brown, *op. cit.*, 984. Fuller explains the differences between verses 2 and 13 by suggesting that the original Mary Magdalene tradition skipped from verse 1 verse 11, verses 3-10 being originally a separate story. The evidence scarcely seems sufficient to justify the theory.

touch me' or 'Do not go on touching me'. Although it is not the same thing that is being said in the two gospels, it is not hard to see that there may be something presupposed in common in the two traditions. B. Lindars comments on the command in John: 'The command is only intelligible if Mary has made, some move to do so. It thus seems likely that John's source had something corresponding with "took hold of his feet" in Mt. 28.9.<sup>42</sup> If there is something presupposed in common in Matthew and John, then it is significant that we have two traditions that are evidently not dependent on each other, but that both bear witness to a common stratum of material. The same can be said about the next agreement of Matthew and John, which is much more striking; for Matthew has Jesus instruct the women to 'go and announce to my brothers that they should go to Galilee, and there they will see me', and John has Him instruct Mary to 'go to my brothers and tell them: I ascend to my father and your father, to my God and your, God'. The message to be delivered is different in each case (though not incompatible),<sup>43</sup> but the very striking agreement is in the introductory phrase, where the message is designated as for 'my brothers'. This way of speaking of the disciples is almost, if not quite, without parallel in the gospels,<sup>44</sup> so that the agreement of Matthew and John can hardly be regarded as coincidental.<sup>45</sup>

Although the agreement is unlikely to be coincidence, that does not by itself prove that we are dealing in Matthew and

<sup>42</sup> B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John*, Oliphants, London (1972) 607; cf. also E. Levesque, *Rev. Bib.* XIII (1916) 34; Benoit, *op. cit.*, 259; Fuller, *op. cit.*, 137.

<sup>43</sup> Matthew's words are clearly a lead into the final scene of his gospel on the mountain in Galilee; if John knew them, it is not surprising that he omitted them, as he was going on to describe Jesus' appearance in Jerusalem to the disciples on Easter Sunday evening. He has instead a more typically Johannine announcement of Jesus' imminent exaltation (cf. Fuller, *op. cit.*, 138). Matthew has no parallel to this, though when Jesus appears in Galilee he is the exalted Lord who has been given God's authority to rule.

<sup>44</sup> For some sort of parallel cf. Mt. 12:49, 25:40. C. H. Dodd has suggested that 'brothers' should be taken literally rather than of the disciples (*Studies in the Gospels*, ed. D. E. Nineham, Blackwell, Oxford (1955) 19); but it is unlikely that either Matthew or John took it this way, despite the possible parallelism in Jn 7:8 (cf. Brown, *op. cit.*, 993f.). According to M'Neile the use of the expression 'brothers' emphasizes the continuing humanity of Jesus (*op. cit.*, 433). J. Schniewind (*Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen (1964) 274) and others compare Heb. 2:12 and Ps. 22:22: 'I will proclaim thy name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.'

<sup>45</sup> N. A. Dahl, *NTS* II (1955-6) 22, thinks in terms of a link between the pre-Matthean and pre-Johannine traditions, and he points to contacts between Matthew and John in the narratives of the arrest and burial of Jesus. Cf. Neiryneck, *art. cit.*, 189f.

John with two versions of the same story. This is probably the simplest explanation, but it is possible to hold that Matthew and John are describing two separate but similar appearances of the Risen Christ to the women: the women could have reacted in the same way and Jesus could have used the same expression to describe the disciples on both occasions.<sup>46</sup> But on either view the significant point is that John's tradition lends support to Matthew's and shows that Matthew was working with a received tradition of some sort when relating this story.<sup>47</sup> How much of Matthew's story goes back to his source and how much is his own amplification of the tradition will be a matter for debate. Kilpatrick argues that 'The substance of ver. 9 is largely conventional and ver. 10 is made up from the angel's speech, specially ver. 5 and ver. 7. It is clear that the tradition of an appearance to the women came to the evangelist in a vague form, meagre in detail.'<sup>48</sup> But, although there is typically Matthean language here (e.g. προσελθοῦσαι, προσεκύνησαν), this view should not be too quickly accepted. Both John and Matthew put the story in a similar sort of context—after the women's visit to the tomb and their vision of the angels—so that we may surmise that, unless the one gospel is ultimately dependent on the other, the story was in such a context in the pre-Matthean tradition. And then so far as the content of the verses goes, it is reasonable to assume that there was some equivalent in Matthew's source to the first part of his verse 9 describing Jesus' meeting with the women, as well as to the second half of the verse with its reference to the women holding Jesus' feet, which has a parallel in John, so that this verse should not be ascribed to Matthew. As for verse 10, the words of Jesus are not exactly those of the angel in verses 7f., and the fact that the form of address 'my brothers' is found also in John suggests again that Matthew is not improvising freely and that his source contained a message from Jesus for the disciples.

<sup>46</sup> Some will feel this view simpler because of the not inconsiderable differences between Matthew and John in the story.

<sup>47</sup> It could be argued against this that the tradition originated with Matthew and that John was directly or indirectly dependent on Matthew (*cf.* Neiryneck, *art. cit.*, 18 f.). But the substantial differences between the two gospels make this view difficult. Various suggestions have been made about the relationship of the traditions. Lohmeyer agrees with Neiryneck in regarding John's as the later version (*op. cit.*, 408f.). Levesque, *art. cit.*, 14, regards Matthew's as the less precise version.

<sup>48</sup> G. D. Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel according to St Matthew*, Oxford (1946) 49; *cf.* Fuller, *op. cit.*, 78.

*The appearance in Galilee*

We come to the last pericope of Matthew 28, the commissioning of the disciples on the Galilean mountain. This has no parallel in Mark, but what there is in Mark is a prediction of an appearance in Galilee and it is possible to hold that Matthew's story was invented by Matthew to fulfil that prediction. But this is an unnecessary, if not perverse, hypothesis. If it is arguable—and it is—that Mark knew of one or more appearance of the risen Christ in Galilee, then the possibility that Matthew also knew of these traditions must be taken seriously; He should not be accused of invention without good reason,<sup>49</sup> particularly as we have already seen evidence in Matthew 28 which indicates that Matthew had primitive traditions other than Mark to draw on.<sup>50</sup> When Matthew 28:16-20 is examined, it turns out that there is evidence which suggests that Matthew, is not freely inventing a sequel to Mark.<sup>51</sup> What is significant is the fact that the themes and motifs of Matthew's last pericope are also found in the resurrection stories of John, Luke and Acts. They are not found in precisely the same contexts, it is true; but that they are found at all suggests that Matthew is not inventing resurrection stories without basis in the tradition. The following parallels may be noted: in verse 17 of Matthew the disciples react with a mixture of recognition and of doubt, when Jesus appears; and a rather similar mixed reaction is described in Luke 24:36 and in John 21.<sup>52</sup> This is evidently

<sup>49</sup> R. H. Fuller's argument that the mission charge in Matthew cannot be primitive because there is no parallel charge in Mark or 1 Corinthians involves quite unwarranted negative assumptions about the non-Marcian and non-Pauline resurrection traditions (*op. cit.*, 84). His view that the Matthean mission charge presupposes the Hellenistic and Pauline mission is quite speculative.

<sup>50</sup> For what it is worth, John 21 is further evidence for the tradition of Jesus appearing in Galilee.

<sup>51</sup> It might be possible to argue this on the basis of Matthew's description of the disciples going to 'the mountain to which Jesus had directed them'. There is no hint in Mark of any appointed mountain, and it may be supposed that Matthew is alluding back to some other tradition in which a mountain was referred to as the disciples' destination (*cf.* Lagrange, *op. cit.*, 543). However, it is possible to regard the appointed mountain as the product of Matthew's theological imagination, mountains being characteristically places of revelation (*cf.* Mt. 5:1, 7:1) (*cf.* G. Barth, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* by Bornkamm, Barth & Held, E.T. SCM, London (1963) 132; G. Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen (1962) 98; Fuller, *op. cit.*, 81. Benoit, *op. cit.*, 332, comments: 'the mountain is somewhat theological—not that it did not exist'. An alternative is to translate the phrase 'to the mountain where Jesus gave them instruction', *i.e.* at some time in the past; but this does not seem very satisfactory.

<sup>52</sup> Benoit (*op. cit.*, 334) maintains that the doubting is out of place, strictly

a recurrent motif, and, although its significance may be debated,<sup>53</sup> Matthew's uses of it shows that he was in touch with the same sort of resurrection traditions as Luke and John. Matthew and John have in common the fact that the disciples react to the appearance of the risen Lord with worship; but this agreement cannot be claimed as very significant, as worship would be one of the most obvious reaction to ascribe to people at a resurrection appearance.

Matthew continues his account with Jesus claiming authority in words strongly reminiscent of the Son of man passage in Daniel 7:10f.<sup>54</sup> On the basis of that authority He sends out the disciples in mission to all nations, the implication being that they go with His authority. Their mission is to baptize and to teach men to keep Jesus' words; and Jesus promises them His own presence. Luke also has Jesus claiming authority, at least indirectly since He claims that His passion and resurrection and the disciples' mission are in accordance with Scripture and therefore with God's plan. Jesus sends the disciples out in mission as witnesses to proclaim repentance in His name. As with Matthew their mission is Christocentric; and also as in Matthew the mission is to all nations. There is no promise of Jesus' presence as such, but there is the promise of the Spirit. In Matthew Jesus promises that they will not be left on their own, while at the same time implying that he will be with them in a different way from that which they have experienced up until now; Luke has Jesus promise the power of the Holy Spirit. John has closely parallel ideas: the disciples are sent out with authority: 'As my Father has sent me, even so I send you'. 'If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain

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speaking, in the Matthean account; it properly belongs to the earlier appearances of Jesus, but Matthew has telescoped his material and so has included it here. But are there good grounds for assuming that people's doubts were limited to the first appearances (? to those in Jerusalem)?

<sup>53</sup> Fuller, *op. cit.*, 81 f., notes that no apologetic use is made in Matthew of the reference to doubting, and he believes that this may be an early element in the tradition. But even if it is true that Matthew leaves the doubt apparently unresolved, this does not mean that he had no apologetic purpose in including a reference to it. Bornkamm claims that the doubt here is overcome by the word of the Risen One and sees considerable relevance for Matthew's church in the passage. (*Überlieferung und Auslegung im Matthäusevangelium*<sup>5</sup> by Bornkamm, Barth & Held, Neukirchener Verlag Neukirchen-Vluyn (1968) 290.) Also Barth, *op. cit.*, 132.

<sup>54</sup> On whether the echo of Daniel is significant or not see Barth, *op. cit.*, 133; A. Vögtle, in *Studia Evangelica* II, ed. F. L. Cross, Akademie Verlag, Berlin (1964) 267f.; W. Trilling, *Das Wahre Israel, Kösel*, München (1964) 22f.

the sins of any, they are retained'; and John like Luke speaks of the Spirit, who will empower them for their mission. Sufficient has been said to show that the themes of Matthew's last pericope are not unique to Matthew's resurrection account; there is considerable overlap in Luke and John.

But what about the much discussed command to baptize, that is found in Matthew 28:19? Although this has no exact parallel in Luke or John, Luke does have the risen Christ describing the disciples' mission as one of 'proclaiming repentance in his name for the forgiveness of sins'. Although it is not provable that Luke intended by this phrase to imply a reference to baptism, it is a phrase that has distinct baptismal connotations in Luke.<sup>55</sup> Thus John the Baptist's mission in Luke 3:4 is described as 'proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins' and in Peter's first post-Pentecost sermon in Acts 2:38 he tells the people to 'repent' and to 'be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins'. In the light of this evidence it is not unreasonable to claim that Luke implies in 24:47 that the Risen Christ commissioned the disciples to baptize.<sup>56</sup> If there is a possible, even probable, baptismal allusion in Luke,<sup>57</sup> there is nothing comparable in John's resurrection narratives, unless his 'If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven . . .' etc. is interpreted baptismally.<sup>58</sup>

A much more important question concerns the Trinitarian formula in Matthew, which has no parallel in Luke. Baptism in Luke/Acts and apparently in the Pauline epistles is in the name of Jesus. In the light of this apparent unanimity in the rest of the New Testament and in view of the other parallel, between Matthew and Luke at this point it is tempting to ask for the reading that Eusebius may have known in Matthew 28:19 to be reconsidered. In this tradition there appears to have been no direct baptismal reference at all; instead the

<sup>55</sup> Cf. F. H. Chase, *JTS* 6 (1905) 509; Fuller, *op. cit.*, 86.

<sup>56</sup> One might argue to the contrary that Luke deliberately omitted a reference to baptism here; but it is hard to see why he should have wished to avoid a dominical baptismal command.

<sup>57</sup> M'Neile, *op. cit.*, 437, thinks that the Eusebian text of Matthew may reflect the influence of Luke. M'Neile argues that it is more likely that a baptismal reference would have been added by Matthew than that it would have been eliminated by Luke. He comments that the Matthean word is probably not genuine; yet he says: 'But that he commanded it before His death is in any case extremely probable.'

<sup>58</sup> On this see Fuller, *op. cit.*, 86, and especially R. E. Brown, *op. cit.*, 1041f.

reading was 'Go make disciples of all nations in my name'. The Trinitarian formula has gone. The following points may be worth noting on this reading: (1) It would be a reading thoroughly in keeping with Matthean usage elsewhere, whereas the explicit reference to the Trinity would be unique to this passage. (2) I would make for greater unity within the last section of Matthew. As it stands at the moment verse 18 is Christocentric 'All authority is given to me'; verse 20a is Christocentric 'teaching them to keep all I commanded you'; verse 20b is Christocentric 'and behold I am with you'. Verse 19 by contrast is out of line, if the usual reading is retained with its reference to the three persons of the Trinity. (3) E. Lohmeyer points out that the shorter Eusebian text is of a strikingly regular structure with our lines, each with two or three stresses and each containing the word 'all'.<sup>59</sup> (4) It is not difficult to see that the Trinitarian formula could have come to be substituted for an original 'in my name' at an early date. Although factors such as these should provoke us to give more thought than we usually do to the minority reading here, it would be unwise for anyone to rest his case on a reading that is very poorly attested (if indeed it is attested at all).<sup>60</sup> So the last observation I wish to make now is this: although Matthew is more overtly Trinitarian than the other gospels if the usual text is accepted, Trinitarian ideas in the general sense are present and even prominent in the Lukan and Johannine accounts of the resurrection as well. In Luke Jesus refers to the promise of the Father which He will send on them, and in Acts this is specifi-

<sup>59</sup> Lohmeyer, *op. cit.*, 412f. He argues for the originality of the Eusebian reading, but claims that the other reading goes back very early indeed. The reason that the Trinitarian formula is not known elsewhere in the New Testament is because it was part of the Galilee tradition, and it was not in the Jerusalem tradition. Fuller, *op. cit.*, 91, accuses Lohmeyer of ignoring the strongly Matthean style of the pericope. In Lohmeyer's defence it should be pointed out that the presence of an author's style in a passage does not prove the author to have been working at that point without sources. An author's style will often be imposed on a tradition taken over from a source, especially if the author has been responsible for translating the tradition from another language.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. F. C. Conybeare, *ZNW* 2 (1901) 275-288 and *Hibbert Journal* 1 (1902) 102f. for the argument in favour of the postulated shorter text. The consistency and regularity with which Eusebius uses the short text in his early writings is impressive. For a defence of the normal text see especially E. Riggenbach, *Der Trinitarische Taufbefehl Matt. 28.19*, C. Bertelsmann, Gütersloh (1909); also F. H. Chase, *JTS* 6 (1905) 481-512. Riggenbach's discussion is particularly valuable; he notes Eusebius' forceful claim always to have held to Trinitarian baptism, and he explains Eusebius' regular omission of the Trinitarian formula in quotations of Matthew 28 as a reflexion of the *disciplina arcani*.

cally referred to as the Holy Spirit; in John too there is reference to the Father and the command 'Receive the Holy Spirit'. In Luke and John, as in Matthew, the Trinitarian language comes in a context where Jesus is commissioning His disciples for service.

Two different conclusions about Matthew 28:16-20 might be reached on the basis of the evidence just considered. It might be argued that common traditions lie behind the gospel narratives and that these have been developed and used in different ways and contexts in the different gospels. Thus, for example, a single original account of the Risen Christ commissioning His followers as His witnesses may be thought to lie behind the commissioning in Matthew 28:16f. and behind that found in John in his story of Jesus' appearance on Easter Sunday evening and behind the Lukan traditions that have been mentioned.<sup>61</sup> But then some explanation has to be offered for the fact that the tradition is treated so differently in the different gospels. Alternatively, it may be argued that Jesus' post-resurrection teaching was characterized by certain distinctive themes and that this is the explanation for the recurrence of a number of dominant motifs in the resurrection narratives in the different gospels. It is not possible to show which of these alternative explanations is correct; but the similarities between the gospels are certainly not sufficiently detailed to demand that we think in terms of common sources, and in view of the differences between the gospels the second alternative may be regarded as the simpler of the two. But whichever view is taken on this question, the general point being made remains unaffected, namely that Matthew is working with received traditions; the ending of the gospel is not the evangelist's own unaided work.<sup>62</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Lindars, *op. cit.*, 597, sees Mt. 28:16-20, Mk. 26:24-20 and Lk. 24:36-49 as variants of a common tradition.

<sup>62</sup> The various suggestions that have been made about the composition of verses 18b-20 cannot in my view be proved or disproved. For example, some assert that three independent sayings have been brought together by the evangelist (e.g. O. Michel, *Ev. Theol.* 10 (1950-51) 20f.; Bornkamm *op. cit.*, 292); but this is highly speculative, and the existence of parallel sayings elsewhere in Matthew or in the other gospels (compare for example 28:20 and 18:20) is no proof of the view that Matthew has here brought a selection of independent logia together. It is arguable, on the other side, that the sayings cohere well together and that it is hard to imagine them having been transmitted independently of any context (*cf.* Strecker, *op. cit.*, 220f.) The fact that the section contains characteristic Matthean vocabulary and phraseology proves little about the composition of the passage.

*The results of our examination so far*

My study so far has not been at all exhaustive; it has left many questions about the traditions contained in Matthew 28 unanswered or inadequately discussed.<sup>63</sup> But what has emerged clearly is that Matthew 28 cannot be dismissed as an imaginative expansion of Mark 16:1-8. Matthew, as has been seen, had access to non-Markan traditions that are independently attested in Luke and John. This being so, Matthew's traditions should be treated with respect; it cannot simply be concluded that, where he differs from the other gospels, he is improvising without any basis in tradition. On the basis of this not very startling and not very new conclusion I am now going to return briefly to some of the historical objections to Matthew's Easter stories enumerated at the start of this paper. I shall not prove, or attempt to prove, that, for example, the guards were bribed in the way Matthew describes; but I will make a few comments that may be relevant to anyone who recognizes that Matthew had access to early tradition and who for that, and perhaps for other reasons, is inclined to take Matthew's account seriously to see if it makes sense as it stands.

## THE HISTORICAL PROBLEMS REVIEWED

*The opening of the tomb*

First Matthew's description of the angel opening the tomb. Is this to be regarded as legendary? It would probably be true to say that most of those who regard it as suspicious do so (a) because it has no parallel in the other three gospels and especially in Mark, which they take to be Matthew's source, and (b) because of its open and, some would say, exaggerated portrayal of an angelic intervention.<sup>64</sup> On the first point it has already been noted that if Matthew did use Mark (something on which not all scholars would agree) he also had access to independent non-Markan sources; and there is no very good reason for denying that the Matthean material here or the Matthean description of the opening of the tombs in chapter 27 could go back to such an early tradition. So far as his open

<sup>63</sup> We have not, for example, looked at the spurious endings of Mark, nor at the apocryphal gospels.

<sup>64</sup> Cf. Benoit, *op. cit.*, 246.

supposedly exaggerated portrayal of the miraculous goes, it is doubtful whether this is any indication of the reliability of his tradition. W. R. Farmer in his book *The Synoptic Problem* points out that Mark's supposed sobriety where miracle is concerned has appealed to some commentators, who have tacitly if not explicitly assumed that the less miracle the more reliable; but the criterion is a dubious one, and it is in any case often not obvious that Mark's gospel is really the less miraculous.<sup>65</sup> In this case Matthew says little more than is implied in the other gospels: they all bear witness to the appearance of one or more angel, and they all note that the stone was rolled away. Matthew is the only one to connect the angel and the removal of the stone; but this is little more than spelling out what may be presupposed in the other versions. Something similar can be said about Matthew's earthquake; for, although none of the other evangelists describe the opening of the tomb, it is probable that they all believed it to have happened supernaturally. How they imagined it is a matter for speculation; but there is nothing in their accounts to exclude the sort of seismic activity portrayed by Matthew.

*Matthew 27:51-54*

Matthew's earthquake here in chapter 28 has a parallel in chapter 27:51f.; there Jesus' death is marked by the rending of the veil, the shaking of the earth and the splitting open of rocks and tombs; from the tombs the saints rise, and they appear in Jerusalem after Jesus' resurrection. To many scholars the existence of this remarkable parallel passage, which is a further example of Matthew going it alone in his description of the miraculous, will only seem to confirm their suspicions about Matthew's description of the resurrection, since in this case the phenomena described are particularly difficult to come to terms with. Because of the links between this passage and Matthew's resurrection account, we must briefly comment on the problems raised.

The first obvious problem is the absence of any hint elsewhere in the New Testament of the appearances of the resurrected saints. Although arguments from silence are to be treated with the greatest caution, in this case the phenomenon

<sup>65</sup> *The Synoptic Problem*, Macmillan, New York (1964) 178f.

described is so remarkable that some mention of it might be expected in the other gospels or Acts. The second major difficulty is in understanding the events as described by Matthew: what is supposed to have happened to the saints at and after the resurrection described by Matthew, and how is what Matthew describes to be fitted in with other New Testament teaching about death and resurrection?<sup>66</sup>

In view of these difficulties it is tempting to follow the lead of scholars such as Benoit who see Matthew's language as figurative and theological. The eschatological event is described through the figurative language of apocalyptic not literally. Benoit compares the language sometimes used of the death of the rabbis, *e.g.* 'When R. Acha died, the stars became visible at midday.'<sup>67</sup> The attractions of this view are undeniable, but whether the suggested demythologization is legitimate and fair to the evangelist's intention is less clear. The majority of Matthew 27 has all the appearance of being in intention a straightforward description of historical events, and there is no hint given of any changed intention in verse 51 or elsewhere in the chapter. On the contrary the earthquake is said to have been witnessed by the surely historical centurion, and the resurrected saints are said to have appeared to many. However attractive the appeal to supposed metaphorical or symbolic language may be, some reliable criteria are needed for identifying such language, if the appeal is to be convincing. Unless the evangelists were all mistaken in supposing that the events of the passion and resurrection were of more than human significance, it would be most unwise to ascribe symbolic significance to any and every unusual and supernatural occurrence in the narratives (*e.g.* to the rending of the veil).<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup> The first problem might be less acute if the expression 'holy city' (27:52) could be interpreted of heaven rather than of Jerusalem; but on the only other occasion where the expression is used in Matthew (4:5), the reference is to Jerusalem, and in any case the idea of the saints 'appearing to many' in heaven is itself rather a peculiar one to find here. (*Cf.* J. Schmid, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus*<sup>4</sup>, Friedrich Pustet, Regensburg (1959) 376.)

<sup>67</sup> TJ, Aboda Zara 3, 42c, 1, as cited in Benoit, *op. cit.*, 200. See also W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann *Matthew*, Doubleday, New York (1971) 351. They refer to the views of W. G. Essame and W. K. Lowther Clarke; the latter 'saw the verses as a triumphant assertion in Old Testament language that the resurrection of Jesus was a divine act'. E. Haenchen, *Der Weg Jesu*<sup>2</sup>, de Gruyter, Berlin (1968) 533, referring to the earlier description in Matthew and Mark of the darkness over the land compares Virgil's description of Caesar's death.

<sup>68</sup> In the early chapters of Acts we read of houses being shaken, tongues of flame, etc.

If we decide provisionally against a symbolic interpretation of the passage, what can be said about the Matthean tradition? It is probably a mistake to be overconcerned with the theological question of what happened to the resurrected dead; it may be an interesting question about which to speculate, but, if it is once admitted that the dead bodies could have been raised and could have appeared, as Matthew suggests, the problem of their subsequent state cannot be regarded as especially difficult.<sup>69</sup> If then we ignore this theological problem, we are left with the historical question: could what Matthew describes have happened? If the tradition is historical, we must presumably postulate two things: (a) a report that a number of tombs in Jerusalem were found open and perhaps empty; (b) many reports of visions experienced in Jerusalem after Jesus' resurrection.

When the tradition is analysed in this way, it becomes, I believe, slightly less difficult to accept. The major problem is still that there are no traces of the postulated reports outside Matthew; but if it is recognized that the resurrection narratives in the gospels are extremely compressed and that the evangelists have been selective in their description, then it will not be regarded as surprising if they are found to have concentrated on the central event to the exclusion of other things. In this particular case it is easy to see how the tradition of the appearances of the saints, which may have been isolated appearances and comparatively poorly attested, could have come to be completely eclipsed by the tradition of Jesus' resurrection. Just as Paul, according to some, avoids mentioning the appearances of Jesus to the women in I Corinthians 15 because their testimony would carry little weight in certain circles, so others may have felt that the story of the saints appearing would have commanded little respect and in any case that it was of relatively little importance for their Christian proclamation. Although we are here completely in the realm of speculation, one thing we may be sure of is that the Easter story was considerably more complex than we have often supposed; we

<sup>69</sup> Lagrange supposes that their resurrection was only temporary 'une vie éphémère' (*op. cit.*, 533). As an alternative view, may it not be supposed that the raised saints shared in Jesus' ascended glory as well as in His resurrection? It is clear enough that their position was an exceptional one, and so arguments about the state of the Christian dead are not particularly relevant, *cf.* B. Weiss, *op. cit.*, 494.

should therefore be slow to dismiss the sort of tradition we are discussing.

There are a number of further observations of differing importance to be made about the disputed Matthean tradition: (1) Although Matthew has unique material not found in the other gospel, his account has connexions with those of Mark and Luke, and it is possible that Mark and Luke presuppose some of the elements found in his special traditions. Thus all three evangelists agree in describing the rending of the temple veil—this is in itself of interest, since it means that Matthew is not alone in referring to miraculous phenomena at the time of the crucifixion—but Mark and Luke do not explain how the rending happened. Although it is possible that they envisage some sort of direct action by an unseen hand, an alternative view is that they know what Matthew may be thought to imply, *i.e.* that the rending of the veil was caused physically by some sort of seismic disturbance.<sup>70</sup>

Another place where Matthew may be thought to make sense of Mark and Luke is in the centurion's words: 'Surely this was a Son of God.' Although it may appeal to our romantic instincts to suppose that this remark was simply provoked by the nobility of Jesus' death, it is possible to argue that the remark is more intelligible if the death of the Lord was accompanied by the sort of physical phenomena described by Matthew.<sup>71</sup> This argument is, however, rather double-edged, since it can be argued that the phenomena were supplied in order to explain the centurion's remark.<sup>72</sup>

(2) In the view of a number of scholars the association of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection with the sort of phenomena described in Matthew 27:51f. reflects a primitive theological outlook. Thus J. Jeremias can say: 'Matt. 27:52f. is a keystone of the tradition. Here something of the mood of the first days has been preserved: the earth quakes . . . , the dead rise, the shift in the ages has arrived. . . .'<sup>73</sup> It is probably wise to be cautious about this sort of argument, since so often evidence

<sup>70</sup> Lagrange, *op. cit.*, 532, denies that Matthew explains the rending via the earthquake. But the fact that the earthquake is described after the rending does not necessarily mean that the events did not happen simultaneously.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. M'Neile, *op. cit.*, 424.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Kilpatrick, *op. cit.*, 47.

<sup>73</sup> *New Testament Theology*, Volume 1, E.T. SCM, London (1971) 309f. Cf. also A. Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Matthäus*, Calwer, Stuttgart (1959) 784f. He notes that there is no Hellenistic soul-body dualism in the story.

can be read in more than one way, and the earthquake, for example, might be regarded as part of primitive tradition or as later elaboration. However, even if the argument is not at all decisive, it is important to note that the sort of description found in Matthew must not necessarily be considered a sign of lateness.<sup>74</sup>

(3) There is some interesting, though not necessarily significant, extra-biblical evidence that could be relevant to a discussion of the historicity of the passage being considered. Thus Albright and Mann commenting on 27:51 note that Josephus (*Jewish War* VI. 299) has an account of an earthquake before the fall of Jerusalem, while a letter of Jerome (120.8) recalls that the now lost Gospel according to the Hebrews speaks of a cleavage in the masonry of the temple porch, which might have left the Holy Place open to view. The Talmud (B. Yoma 39b) has an interesting story concerned with Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai, which reports that the doors of the temple opened of their own accord forty years [*sic*] before the fall of Jerusalem, so portending the end of the temple.<sup>75</sup> Whether this evidence is relevant to the New Testament traditions is uncertain; but it is worth mentioning if only as evidence that needs further consideration.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>74</sup> Jeremias and other scholars see in the words μετὰ τὴν ἔγερσιν αὐτοῦ a sign that the Matthean tradition is an early one; 'for this note of time, which oddly presupposes that the saints remained in their tombs until Easter morning before going into the holy city . . . is an attempt to obviate a particular difficulty: in being raised on Good Friday, the saints seemed to have an advantage over Jesus . . .' (*New Testament Theology*, 309; cf. H. W. Bartsch, *op. cit.*, 85). This argument is not entirely convincing. It is true that the idea of the saints being raised but then remaining in their tombs for some days is a very peculiar one; but it is not certain that Matthew does mean that. It is possible to interpret the text slightly less rigidly in ways that make easier sense: either verse 52b may be taken with verse 53, in which case the raising of the saints as well as their appearances may be thought of as happening after Jesus' resurrection; or the words μετὰ τὴν ἔγερσιν αὐτοῦ in verse 53 may be taken as applying primarily to the main verb that follows it rather than as defining the time of the saints' exit from the tomb; in this case the saints may be supposed to have been raised and to have left their tombs on Good Friday, though they did not appear until after Easter. But whether or not Jeremias' interpretation of the text is right, his suggestion that μετὰ τὴν ἔγερσιν αὐτοῦ may have been added in order to preserve the primacy of Jesus is dubious, since on Jeremias' interpretation of the text Matthew still gives the saints priority in resurrection. The only thing in which Jesus has precedence is in appearing to witnesses.

<sup>75</sup> W. F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *op. cit.*, 352. Cf. M. Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, E.T. Ivor Nicholson & Watson, London (1934) 595; also Haenchen, *op. cit.*, 534, who sees no link between the gospel story of the rending of the veil and the Jewish traditions referred to.

<sup>76</sup> Matthew has earthquakes on the Friday and the Sunday. Other observations of possible relevance to a consideration of the Matthean traditions: (1) The

*The story of the guard*

What, if anything, can be said about the story of the bribing of the guard? Is there any alternative to regarding this as a piece of apologetic invented by the church to answer the Jewish accusation that the disciples stole the body? The complete absence of any reference to the guard in the other gospels is probably the most surprising thing, if things took place as Matthew suggests; and yet the importance of this should not be exaggerated. The story of the guard is in some ways of very little importance for the Easter story proper, and so far as the Christians were concerned, the story could have been something of an embarrassment; for, if Matthew's account is to be trusted, the guards who were posted at the tomb later put out the story that the disciples came and stole the body of Jesus. This was a direct challenge to the Christian explanation of the empty tomb from people who were at the tomb when the body disappeared. If the story was current when the gospels of Mark, Luke and John were written, it is not altogether surprising if the evangelists refrained from reporting it. In their view the Jewish explanation of events was not true, and it would not have helped their case to refer to it.<sup>77</sup>

Matthew, on the other hand, moved in circles where the Jewish view was well known, and he felt obliged to answer those who said that the disciples had stolen the body.<sup>78</sup> One interesting question raised by Matthew's answer is: what form did the Jewish explanation of things take? Was it a bold assertion that the Christians had stolen the body? Or was the assertion backed up by evidence? In particular could it be that the Jews appealed to the evidence of the guards, who according to Matthew were posted at the tomb? Two things

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Jerusalem area is one where earth tremors are not infrequent, so that there would presumably be nothing very out of the ordinary in the occurrence of tremors on a Friday and on the following Sunday. (2) Scholars disagree over whether the Nazareth inscription, which has been ascribed to the reign of Claudius and which condemns body snatching from graves, has anything to do with Christian origins or not. The fact that Matthew suggests that Jesus' grave was not the only one disturbed at the time of the resurrection could just conceivably be relevant to this question.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. R. W. Harden, *op. cit.*, 95. He suggests that the story had been discredited by Matthew before the other gospels came to be written.

<sup>78</sup> Bonnard, *op. cit.*, 409, suggests that Mt. 27:62-66 could be an echo of early Jewish—Christian controversy in Jerusalem. Like 27:3-10, the story concerns something of interest to people in the Jerusalem area.

may be said on this: (1) It seems not unlikely on general *a priori* grounds that in the course of controversy the Jews would have tried to back up their accusation with some sort of evidence. (2) If the Jews did simply accuse the disciples of stealing the body without backing this up, Matthew's answer (if a fabrication devised to meet the Jewish charge)—his story of the setting of the guard—is surprisingly elaborate, if not actually inept. Matthew, we are told, invents a guard for the tomb; he makes out that this guard was set at the request of the Jewish leaders and that the soldiers reported back to the Jews. Such a story might have satisfied naïve Christians, but it would scarcely have carried weight in a situation where there was serious controversy between Christians and Jews if it was without any basis in tradition.<sup>79</sup> Modern commentators have been happy to regard the Matthean stories as crude and unconvincing apologetic,<sup>80</sup> and yet at the same time they have recognized that the author of the gospel is a man of considerable literary and theological ability. It is reasonable to ask whether the two views go together.

Before we run over the supposed incoherences in the Matthean story of the guard that might appear to justify the view that Matthew's stories are patently unhistorical, it is worth repeating what we said before about the absence of such stories from the other gospels. The evidence is that Matthew had access to early non-Marcian traditions, and so where he has material that is without parallel in the other gospels, this should not necessarily be discounted. Matthew in chapter 27 has a number of features unique to his passion narrative—

<sup>79</sup> A comment of Benoit's on another part of the resurrection narratives may appropriately be cited: 'This apologetic interest does not diminish the historicity of the facts; on the contrary, it presupposes it, otherwise the facts could prove nothing' (*op. cit.*, 285). Lagrange, *op. cit.*, 535, thinks the story an unlikely invention. Someone wishing to confute the Jews would hardly have left the tomb unguarded for the first night after the crucifixion, he suggests, as this would have been just the time for the disciples to come and to try to revive the body of Jesus if He was not quite dead; also in an invented story we might expect the guard to consist of the proper Sanhedrin police. It is doubtful how much weight should be put on these points.

<sup>80</sup> K. Lake, *op. cit.*, 180, says: '. . . the most probable view is that this incident is nothing more than a fragment of controversy, in which each imputed unworthy motives to the other, and stated suggestions as established facts. Any controversy in any age will supply parallels.' It may be admitted that the difficulty is somewhat alleviated if Matthew was not himself responsible for the invention of the story; but if Matthew received the story from some earlier source, it is still necessary to explain how the story first came to be invented and then also how Matthew came to accept the supposedly implausible tale.

the description of the miraculous phenomena following on the crucifixion we have considered already; the other most striking features all concern Pilate: there is the message from his wife (27:19), the washing of his hands (27:34-5) and finally the negotiations with the Jewish leaders over the guarding of the tomb (27:62f.). Whether this is at all significant and whether we can say that this is a particular stream of tradition known to Matthew and not to the other evangelists I do not know;<sup>81</sup> but just as it is a mistake not to take the special material in Luke's passion narrative seriously, so it is with Matthew.

But what of the particular difficulties of the guard story? The failure of the Jewish leaders as described by Matthew to set a guard over the tomb on the night of the crucifixion is not very problematic: there was little time on the Friday night to take any such action and the Jews may not have thought of the danger of the disciples stealing the body before Jesus' death. Their fears could have been aroused by the news that Joseph of Arimathea had been given the body and perhaps also by the reports of the tombs of the saints being opened.<sup>82</sup> But would the Jewish leaders have gone to Pilate on a sabbath thus defiling themselves by contact with a Gentile? Again this is not something very hard to imagine if it is admitted that the Christian movement was taken as a serious threat by the Jewish leaders and especially if they knew of Jesus, predictions of His resurrection. It may at first seem unlikely that the Christian movement would have been considered a serious threat after Jesus' crucifixion; and yet further reflection suggests that, even though the Jews will have hoped that the crucifixion had put an effective end to the Christian movement, they would have been unwise and unlikely to relax all vigilance immediately. John's gospel describes the disciples meeting on Easter Sunday behind closed doors for fear of the Jews (20:19), which, if it is a reliable reminiscence, suggests that they at least suspected that further measures might be taken against their movement. As for the Jews knowing of Jesus' prediction of His resurrection, this raises the whole question of the authenticity of the words of

<sup>81</sup> Harden, *op. cit.*, 60, conjectures that Matthew the tax-collector would have had contact with government officials.

<sup>82</sup> *Cf.* Mt. 27:52f. If the bodies of the saints are to be thought of as disappearing from the tombs on Good Friday night (which is uncertain), this would very probably have caused anxiety! *cf.* also J. Schmid, *op. cit.*, 378.

Jesus in the gospels. Without going into this disputed area we may safely say that, if Jesus did speak in advance of His death and resurrection—and we see no adequate reason for doubting that He did—then there is every possibility that the Jews would have known of it; they had, after all, an accomplice in one of Jesus' disciples. If they did know of it, it could well have dawned on them after their apparent triumph on Good Friday that the danger was not quite over. Jesus' followers were still at large and they had the body of Jesus; they might try to exploit the situation, appealing to Jesus' predictions and thus trying to perpetuate their revolutionary movement.<sup>83</sup>

A third problem concerns the soldiers' conduct in reporting back to the Jewish leaders rather than to Pilate. This is not a major difficulty. The Matthean picture is clearly of Pilate leaving the setting of the guard and the sealing of the tomb to the Jews; and under the circumstances they were the interested party to whom it was natural for the soldiers to report back. It is possible, also, that the soldiers may have regarded it as wiser to report the loss of the body they were supposed to be guarding to the Jews than to the governor. Admittedly their story about the disciples coming and stealing the body while they were asleep may not have been a very safe story to put about nor a very sensible story;<sup>84</sup> but it is not too difficult to imagine them agreeing to it given sufficient financial incentive, especially as they may have had no reasonable alternative course of action open to them. Perhaps the most difficult problem is the psychological one: would the guards—would anyone—have agreed to the deception if they had just witnessed the angelic intervention? But although this argument is at first sight plausible, it is dangerous to place too much weight on arguments about what people might or might not have done in a situation, when we have very little detailed information

<sup>83</sup> Orr, *op. cit.*, 100, comments that resurrection stories were not unknown at the time, so that the Jews could have feared a Christian resurrection story.

The fact that the disciples did not apparently take Jesus' resurrection predictions very seriously does not suggest that the Jewish authorities cannot have known them. The gospels are quite clear that the disciples knew about the resurrection in advance, and their failure to expect it is portrayed as the result of their unbelief and lack of understanding. According to Matthew, the Jewish leaders also knew about the predictions and they shared the disciples' unbelief. What they feared was not the fulfilment of the predictions, but that the disciples might fabricate a resurrection.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. B. Weiss, *op. cit.*, 505. The story is not as foolish as some have thought: the soldiers could reasonably have inferred that the disciples had stolen the body while they were asleep, even if they had not actually witnessed it!

about it.<sup>85</sup> A final objection to Matthew's story has to do with its source. How, if the guards were bribed to hide the truth, did the truth get out? It is impossible not to regard this sort of objection as rather naïve, because even the best guarded secrets often leak out; and in this case we have no reason to suppose that every soldier involved and every Jewish leader kept confidence for ever (or even that every soldier was involved in the bribe).

### *The appearance in Galilee*

I came lastly to the closing scene of Matthew's gospel; and the two objections to the Matthean portrayal of the events are these: (1) If Jesus commanded His disciples to make disciples of all nations, why were there such heart-searchings in the church over the question of the Gentile mission? (2) If Jesus instructed the disciples to baptize in the name of the Trinity, why did they, so far as we can tell, baptize only in the name of Jesus? On the first question it should be noted that precisely the same problem arises in Luke; the evangelist who goes on in Acts to describe the conflicts in the church over the Gentile mission has Jesus tell His disciples to proclaim repentance *to all nations*—the same phrase as is used in Matthew. They are to be Jesus' witnesses to the end of the earth'. The fact that Luke appears to make the same mistake as Matthew may not obviously change things; and yet before Luke as well as Matthew is accused of a lack of historical sense it may be worth considering whether the supposed historical inconsistency is really one at all. There are at least two points that can be made: (a) It is possible that Jesus proclaimed a mission to the ends of the earth and that His Jewish followers failed to grasp the point of this or the practical implications for some length of time. But more important (b) the problem with Gentiles in the church was not so much over whether they could enter the

<sup>85</sup> In this case we must reckon with the probability that the soldiers would have been confused and terrified, with the possibility that they could have been ridiculed and threatened, and with the financial incentive offered to them. It may also be pertinent to note that Matthew only says that 'some' of the guard went to report to the authorities.

Orr, *op. cit.*, 160, comments at 'the breach of discipline had already been committed in their flight from the tomb and admission that the tomb was open and the body gone'. He points out that the idea of the theft of the body was only a pretext and suggests that Pilate would have been given a truer account, the soldiers being screened by the Jews.

Christian community as over the terms of entry.<sup>86</sup> The first disciples may have appreciated from the start that theirs was a world-wide mission; but they certainly did not appreciate that some would enter the elect community without being circumcised or submitting to the law. Jesus' commission did not illumine them on this.

The question of baptism in the name of the Trinity is more difficult. There is no problem over baptism as such. Acts suggests that it was constitutional for entry into the Christian community from the start, and Luke, I have suggested, implies what Matthew says, namely that the practice was commanded by the risen Christ. The problem of the Trinitarian formula may be evaded by appeal to the poorly attested Eusebian reading; but if that refuge is felt to be insecure, which it is, there is still something we can say. (1) It is possible to take the Trinitarian formula as the full baptismal formula and to argue that the abbreviated form 'in the name of Jesus' was used by the church in its ministry to Jews and God-fearers, for whom conversion was not a turning to God, but an enlisting in the community of Christ. It is doubtful, however, if this view can be sustained, since there is no hint in Paul of a different usage for Jews and Gentiles.<sup>87</sup>

(2) The fact that the words used here can be taken as an expression of a well-developed Trinitarian theology and that they came to be used in the Early Church as a fixed liturgical formula does not necessarily mean that they derive from a comparatively late period or that they were being used liturgically as a fixed formula when the gospel was written. In these two respects 2 Corinthians 13:13 may be regarded as a partial parallel, since the language found there is well fitted to express later Trinitarian theology and the whole verse has come to be used liturgically in the church; but no one feels obliged to argue that the formulation there is a late liturgical usage. There are, of course, notable differences between the two cases, and the problem with Matthew 28:19 is that it is part of dominical command which the Early Church apparently failed to obey. However, it is possible to maintain that the words, which later came to be used as a fixed formula, were

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Riggerbach, *op. cit.*, 102; also J. Rohde, *Rediscovering the Teaching of the Evangelists*, E.T. SCM, London (1968) 89f.

<sup>87</sup> Cf. Riggerbach, *op. cit.*, 96f.

not intended or at first taken in this way. Thus Riggenbach argues that it is not easy to explain the baptismal command as a formula read back on to Jesus' lips from the church situation; it is preferable, he says, to trace it back to Jesus, but to take it that the early church did not feel bound by the exact wording used by Jesus. He notes how in the Didache baptism in the name of Jesus coexists with baptism in the name of the Trinity; there is no trace of any embarrassment about having the two usages side by side. Riggenbach does not think that a differentiation can be made between Christian baptism of Jews and of Gentiles; but the Early Church, while being familiar with the Trinitarian command, may still in practice have used only the name of Jesus, because this was for them the thing that distinguished Christian baptism from Jewish baptism and the baptism of John the Baptist. This does not mean that Father and Spirit were left out; Acts 19, for example, shows that a baptism without the Spirit was not considered a proper Christian baptism.<sup>88</sup>

(3) Whether or not either of the two previous suggestions commends itself, there is a third point. It was observed earlier that Trinitarian ideas are present in Luke's and John's accounts of the teaching of the risen Jesus; and, although there is nothing in either closely parallel to Matthew's expression here, both gospels lend support to the idea that the message that the risen Christ gave the disciple to proclaim and the faith into which they were to baptize men was in some sense Trinitarian. This conclusion should not come as a great surprise: the Trinitarian tendencies of the early church are most easily explained if they go back to Jesus Himself; but the importance of the point for our study is that it means that Matthew's reference to the Trinity in chapter 28 is not a white elephant thoroughly out of context. Whether a formula or not, whether *ipsissima verba* or evangelist's paraphrase, the Matthean command may be regarded as the crystallization of ideas that are present as well in the resurrection accounts of Luke and John.

<sup>88</sup> Riggenbach 94f. Cf. 1 Cor. 12:13; also F. H. Chase, *art. cit.*, 511. Riggenbach argues that, if one claims that Matthew is reading back current church practice into the *Sitz im Leben Jesu*, one will have difficulty in explaining how that practice became established in Matthe's church. Whether this is as difficult to explain as Riggenbach supposes may be questionable; but it is worth noting that there is no hint elsewhere in the New Testament of any comparable Trinitarian formula.

## CONCLUSION

The limitations of the preceding study will be obvious; I am aware in particular that little specific attention has been given to redactional critical questions. This may in one way be considered a serious weakness, since in the long run judgments about the historical value of a passage such as the one examined will go closely together with judgments about the evangelist's aims and interests and redactional method. And yet in another way it may be possible to justify the omission, since redaction criticism has no sure base on which to build, unless source and form critical questions are answered reliably. I do not claim to have given many sure answers to the many literary critical and historical questions raised by Matthew 28; but I hope that I have successfully reopened a number of important historical questions that have often been ignored in recent years by showing (a) that Matthew had access to non-Marcian traditions of the resurrection and (b) that Matthew's account is not nearly so vulnerable to historical criticism as has often been thought. A study of the sort that I have offered will often not lead to definitive answers; but it will have served a purpose if it clarifies the options open and challenges ill-founded assumptions.