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The Sermon on the Mount as a Part of Jesus' Call to Repentance

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A Thesis presented to the Faculty
of the University of St. Louis,
Department of Evangelical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Divinity

Short Title:

SERMON ON THE MOUNT

by
James J. Johnson

June 1950

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THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT AS A PART OF
JESUS' CALL TO REPENTANCE

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A cursory glance at various expositions of the Sermon on the Mount will show that there are as many interpretations of the Sermon as there are interpreters. Some men feel that the Sermon on the Mount is a list of practical rules for daily living which can easily be carried out by all right-thinking men. Still others have held that the Sermon is not meant for all Christians, but only for a few--those who want to maintain a more perfect station in life. Some have maintained that the Sermon is all Law; others see in it many elements of Gospel. And so it goes on. With such a variety of interpretations there is much confusion as to the real meaning of the Sermon. It is on this basis that the writer chose this particular topic for study. The purpose of this thesis, then, is an attempt to arrive at the basic meaning of the Sermon on the Mount as a part of Jesus' call to repentance.

In order to arrive at our proposal that the Sermon is a part of Jesus' call to repentance, we shall have to view it in its widest context: the historical background out of which Jesus issues his call to repentance. This includes a study of the Sermon against the backdrop of the Old Testament. Here two basic concepts must be examined: the

Kingship of Yahweh and the Old Testament meaning of repentance, particularly that found in the prophets. We narrow the context as we proceed to the New Testament where we must examine the proclamation of John the Baptist, his preaching of the Kingdom at hand and his call to repentance. In this light we shall view the advent of the Messiah as he takes up John's call. Following this we shall briefly discuss the structure of the Gospel according to St. Matthew as it pertains to the Sermon and the immediate context in which it is recorded. Then we enter into a study of the Sermon itself, dividing it into two major sections: first, The Caller, and secondly, The Meaning of the Call. A summary of the characteristics of Jesus' call to repentance elucidated by parallels in the Gospel according to St. Matthew will complete the investigation.

In a study such as this the writer must begin with certain basic assumptions, for not all controversial questions are within the scope of this paper. The first of these is the Matthean authorship and authenticity of the First Gospel. While many scholars disagree as to the originality of the First Gospel, we assume that Matthew wrote the Gospel as it stands.¹ The second assumption that we

¹For a discussion of the basic arguments, pro and con, concerning the Matthean authorship and the authenticity of the First Gospel, cf. A. Schlatter, Der Evangelist Matthaeus: Seine Sprache, sein Ziel, seine Selbständigkeit (Vierte auflage; Stuttgart: Calver Verlag, 1957), passim.

make concerns the position of the Sermon on the Mount in the Gospel according to St. Matthew. Here we agree with Stonehouse, who views the Sermon as purposefully set in a Messianic structure by St. Matthew.²

Other things must be said in connection with the limitations of the scope of this paper. For the most part it is the intention of the writer to deal primarily with the Sermon as it is recorded in Matthew's Gospel. However, parallels from the Lucan account will be drawn into the paper when deemed advisable. Likewise, not all parts of the Sermon will receive the same emphasis. Grammatical construction, usage of particular Greek words, and cross-references will be included only when deemed pertinent to the discussion at hand.

One final thing must be stated. The term "repentance" as used in this paper is used in its widest sense as also our studies of the various calls to repentance will bear out. That the term "repentance" is not used in one and the same sense in Scripture can be verified by a quote from the Lutheran Confessions:

The term "repentance" is not employed in the Holy Scriptures in one and the same sense. For in some passages of Holy Scriptures it is employed and taken for the entire conversion of man, as Luke 13:5: "Except ye repent, ye shall likewise perish." And in

²Ned B. Stonehouse, The Witness of Matthew and Mark to Christ (Second edition; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), pp. 129-133.

chap. 15:7: "Likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth." But in this passage, Mark 1:15, as also elsewhere, where repentance and faith in Christ, Acts 20:21, or repentance and remission of sins, Luke 24:46,47, are mentioned as distinct, to repent means nothing else than truly to acknowledge sins, to be heartily sorry for them, and to desist from them.³

Another quote from the Lutheran Confessions indicates the wide meaning that the term "repentance" is sometimes given:

we have ascribed to repentance [or conversion] these two parts, namely, contrition and faith. If anyone desires to add a third, namely, fruits worthy of repentance, i.e., a change of the entire life and character for the better [good works which shall and must follow conversion], we will not make any opposition.⁴

It is in this sense, then, that we employ the term "repentance" in this study.

The value of this study ought to be that it will give the writer a greater appreciation for and deeper insights into the Gospel of St. Matthew as a whole and the Sermon on the Mount in particular. It also ought to give one a greater understanding of the Biblical conceptions of the Kingdom of God and the call to repentance.

³"Formula of Concord, Thorough Declaration," Article V in Concordia Triglotta, edited by F. Bente (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 953.

⁴"Apology of the Augsburg Confession," Article XII in Concordia Triglotta, edited by F. Bente (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 259.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OUT OF WHICH JESUS ISSUES HIS CALL TO REPENTANCE

The Old Testament Background

Before we go into a more detailed study of the Sermon on the Mount as a part of Jesus' call to repentance it will be necessary for us to get a complete picture of his contemporary situation, the ideas and attitudes that permeated Jewish thinking, and the concepts of Jewish theology to which he addressed himself. When, for example, he began his public ministry with the dictum: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17; Mk. 1:14f.), the question arises: What was this Kingdom of heaven, this Kingdom of God about which Jesus so often spoke? What did it mean for the people to whom he spoke? What were the implications of the word "repent" which Jesus addressed to his contemporaries; what does such repentance mean and include? These are the questions that we shall attempt to answer in speaking about the historical background out of which Jesus issues his call.

The Kingship of Yahweh

The concept of the Kingdom of God, though the phrase

itself is not mentioned in the Old Testament,¹ is no late development in Israel as Bright points out.² For as far back as the Biblical records go, we see the Kingship of Yahweh, the God who is powerful over nature and history. Feather gives us a brief summary of the beginnings and continuum of this overlordship of Yahweh:

The ideal began with the beginning of their race, in the call of Abraham to go out and find the place that God should tell him of. And Jehovah promised to make him a great nation. It continued, with ebbings and flowings, it is true, according to the vicissitudes of their history,--but it continued; never wholly lost, even in the darkest periods, but never fully realized, even in the brightest. Even after the father of the faithful, God was regarded as the director of the nation's concerns and the giver of its laws. The people were under his control and guidance when but a family. In each development of their tribal and afterwards their national life, the reference was to him. Moses gave them laws written with his finger; they were an elect race, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession; chosen and ordained to conserve his truth, and to maintain, in the midst of a world that wandered from him, the truths of the unity and spirituality of his nature, and the right he had to reign.³

Yahweh is the $\aleph \quad \aleph \quad \aleph$ (king), but the Old Testament also speaks of the $\aleph \quad \aleph \quad \aleph$ (kingdom or kingship), as belonging to him (Num. 24:7; 1 Chron. 29:11).⁴ The Kingship of

¹John Bright, The Kingdom of God (New York: Abingdon Press, 1953), p. 18.

²Ibid., p. 26.

³J. Feather, The Last of the Prophets (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1894), pp. 56-57.

⁴Rudolph Otto, The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man, translated from the revised German edition by Floyd V. Filson and Bertram Lee-Wolf (London: Lutterworth Press, 1943), p. 34.

Yahweh denotes royal rule and is used in the sense of royal sovereignty.⁵ This Kingship idea depicts God in action, taking up his royal rule. It is especially this thought that is captured by the prophet Isaiah when he speaks of the Kingship of Yahweh:

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of the good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! (52:7).

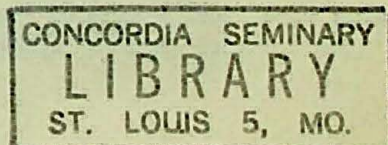
The Israelites could see this active reign of God manifested in his creation. He is Creator of heaven and earth (Gen. 1:1), and the earth and all that is in it belong to him (Ps. 24:1). As Bright goes on to say:

It is he who, having created all things, disposes of the destinies of all the families of men and calls Abraham to serve his purpose. It is he who humbles the pride of pharaoh to the dust and engulfs his army in the sea. He delivers his people from all their foes, provides sustenance for them in the wilderness, dries up the flood of Jordan, brings Jericho's walls tumbling to the ground, and paralyzes the Canaanites with terror. The dark powers of the plagues do his bidding, as do the sea waters and the wind (Exod. 15: 1-17), the sun and the moon and the stars (Josh. 10: 12-13; Judg. 5:4, 21). It is he, too, who when his people have sinned, turns the battle against them and delivers them to their foes (Josh. 7; 1 Sam. 4).⁶

This is the Lord who sits enthroned over the flood, who

⁵K. L. Schmidt, H. Kleinknecht, K. G. Kuhn, and Gerhard von Rad, Basileia (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1957), p. 12. A translation of Bible Key Words from Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, I, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1933).

⁶Bright, op. cit., p. 26.



sits enthroned as King forever (Ps. 29:10). He is Lord of the universe and of all that takes place there, for his throne is in the heavens, and his Kingdom rules over all (Ps. 103:19).

This is the God that Israel knew as King, but she did not merely believe that such a God existed, "she was convinced that this God had, in a historical act, chosen her, entered into covenant with her, and made her his people."⁷ This King of creation was Israel's King, for in his temple the Israelites spoke of his glory (Ps. 29:9), and he gave strength to them and blessed them (Ps. 29:11). They gave thanks to him and praised him with psalms because they knew that he was a great God and a great King above all gods (95:1-3).

That Yahweh was to rule Israel can be seen from the fact that Gideon refused the throne offered him on the ground that Yahweh was to rule Israel (Judg. 8:23). Again, when the people demanded a king from Samuel and he took the matter to Yahweh he received the answer that it was not himself that the people had rejected, but Yahweh (1 Sam. 8:7; cf. also 12:12). Even when God did finally establish an earthly monarchy during the great emergency caused by the attacks of the Philistines,⁸ these kings were still kings

⁷Ibid., pp. 27, 28.

⁸Schmidt, op. cit., p. 4.

which the Lord had placed over Israel (1 Sam. 12:13).

That God the King is Israel's own King, the covenant King, can be seen in a variety of texts in the Old Testament. Particularly with regard to the events of the Exodus Israel saw herself as God's chosen nation,⁹ and the prophets speak of this wonderful manifestation of God's grace repeatedly. Thus the Lord spoke to the people of Amos' day:

Also I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and led you forty years through the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite. . . . Is it not even thus, O ye children of Israel? saith the Lord (2:10,11).

Micah (6:25) and Ezekiel (20:5-7) record the same fact.

Hosea pictures Israel and God as wife and husband brought together in the covenant ceremony (Hos. 2). He portrays the Father's love for his little boy which began when Israel was a lad and God called him out of Egypt (11:1).

God himself speaks of himself as the King of Israel: "I am the Lord, your Holy One, the Creator of Israel, your King" (Is. 43:15) and the prophets echo his claim (Jer. 10:7,10; Zeph. 3:14,15).

However, the fact that God is Israel's King does not detract from the fact that he is King over the whole universe; rather, "his universal Kingship is the background and presupposition of his national Kingship."¹⁰ For all

⁹Bright, op. cit., p. 27.

¹⁰Martin Franzmann, Basileia Tou Theou (Revised edition; printed by the Concordia Seminary Print Shop, St. Louis, Mo., 1956), p. 13.

the earth is his (Ex. 19:5), and everything that dwells in it (Ps. 24:1); thus he alone will "shave" with the soldiers of Assyria whom he "hires" (Is. 7:20), for he is the first and the last, and beside him there is no other God (Is. 44:6).

In spite of the fact that Israel looked upon God as her King within the limits of the history of the Old Testament and that her government was ideally a theocracy,¹¹ as also the above passages indicate, she also looked forward to a future Kingship of Yahweh. As Franzmann points out:

The prophets continually point forward to a complete and ultimate realization of that which the Davidic kingship had fractionally incorporated: the reign of God on earth. Two lines of prophecy run side by side, sometimes connected, sometimes separate: (1) The prediction of the universal kingship of God, universally manifested and universally recognized (cf. Mic. 4:1-7; Is. 52:7,9,10; Zech. 14:9), and (2) The prediction of the complete realization of the Davidic kingship.¹²

This consummation of the Davidic kingship was to be realized in the person of the Messiah who was to be sent. It is this hope that the prophets kept continually alive. Isaiah spoke of a better kingdom under a Son of David, the Child with the five names who would sit upon the throne of David, and over

¹¹Andrew C. Zenos, "Kingdom of God," A New Standard Dictionary of the Bible, edited by Melancthon W. Jacobus, Elbert C. Lane, and Andrew C. Zenos (3rd revised edition; New York: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1936), p. 494. Feather speaks of the theocracy as the first fact in the minds of the Israelites when they thought of "The Kingdom of God," op. cit., p. 56.

¹²Franzmann, op. cit., pp. 15-17.

his kingdom, to establish it with justice and righteousness forevermore (Is. 9:6,7). The spirit of the Lord would rest upon this "Shoot of Jesse" and his rule of righteousness would consist of pleading the cause of the spiritually poor and the meek, but "with the breath of his lips" he would "slay the wicked" (Is. 11:1-5). He is spoken of as the Refiner who would come not only to burn but also to purify, and the Fuller who would come not only to consume, but above all, to make clean (Mal. 3:2,3). Micah depicts him as the One from Bethlehem Ephratah who would be Prince and Ruler in Israel (5:2), yet this Prince is also the "Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief" (Is. 53:3) who is "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" for the transgressions of men (53:4,5). All of these thoughts expressed by the prophets are recaptured in the name of the Child who was to be born of a virgin: Emmanuel, "God with us" (Is. 7:14; Matt. 1:23). And all of this was to be God's own act (Dan. 2:31ff.).

Further evidence of the various shades of meaning given to the concept of Yahweh's Kingship in the Old Testament is brought out by K. L. Schmidt:

There are passages which stress the timelessness of Yahweh's sovereignty, which comprehends past and future alike (Exod. 15:18; 1 Sam. 12:12; Ps. 145:11ff., 146:10), others accentuate the element of expectation (Is. 24:23, 33:22; Zeph. 3:15; Obad. 21; Zech. 14:16f.). The present is not enough to do justice to these claims, the concept of Yahweh's Kingship gets drawn into the stream of eschatology, towards which it had always shown a propensity: it is hoped that Yahweh will show

himself as King hereafter. But even the most pointedly eschatological passages do not for one moment suggest that Yahweh's Kingship is not already a present reality. It is only the final manifestation of the complete sovereignty that is awaited.¹³

These, then, are the Old Testament ideas of Yahweh's Kingship that came into the mind of every pious Jew when he heard the phrase "Kingdom of God" and these were the thoughts that were called to mind by the preaching of John the Baptist and Jesus.¹⁴

The prophetic call to repentance

Since, however, Israel often refused to come under the Kingship of Yahweh, there was a continual call to repentance by the faithful of Israel. Therefore the next thing with which we have to do as far as the Old Testament background is concerned is to find the meaning of repentance in the Old Testament, particularly in the prophets. As Hastings points out, repentance for sin in the Old Testament is commonly expressed by "turn" or "return."¹⁵ The Hebrew word of which these words are a translation is **שׁוּב**, which connotes the idea of turning away from

¹³Schmidt, op. cit., p. 10.

¹⁴Infra, pp. 20ff.

¹⁵W. Morgan, "Repentance," Dictionary of the Bible, edited by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), p. 789.

something or someone and turning to something or someone.¹⁶

Thus its basic sense is that of a radical reversal.¹⁷

Another verb that is used in the Old Testament, though not as frequently as נָחַם , is נָדַח , and its basic meaning is "to lament" or "to grieve" because of one's actions.¹⁸

The German reuen or the English "rue" brings out this basic sense. This verb, however, is used more of God's repentance than of man's.¹⁹

Now let us look at some of the passages in which these words occur and attempt to show some of the characteristics of this Old Testament repentance. Perhaps the first thought that we ought to deal with in this connection is the repentance that was connected with Old Testament ritual and places of worship. We can see such ritual repentance at the dedication of Solomon's temple when Solomon says to the Lord:

When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again to thee, and confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication to thee in this house: Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people

¹⁶William Gesenius, Hebrew-English Lexicon to the Old Testament, translated from the German by Samuel Tregelles (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954), pp. 807-808.

¹⁷Franzmann, op. cit., p. 32.

¹⁸Gesenius, op. cit., p. 544.

¹⁹For a list of passages in which the word נָדַח is used both in the sense of man's repentance and God's repentance, see Gesenius, op. cit., p. 544.

Israel. . . . (1 Kings 8:33,34).

This ritual repentance had certain procedures and forms attached to it. As Daniel suggests: "And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplication, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes" (9:3; cf. also Jonah 3:7f.; Is. 58:5; Neh. 9:1; and Joel 2:15-17). Certainly sacrifice was also involved as prescribed by Levitical precept (Lev. 1:4f.; cf. also 1 Sam. 15:22; Is. 1:11).

But during the prophetic period all of this had degenerated into a mere formalistic type of worship, an opus operatum, or, as Bright calls it: "A mechanical quid pro quo, a nauseous attempt to purchase material favors of God with material gifts."²⁰ For that reason the prophets "deprecated any merely ritualistic repentance."²¹ Thus the Lord says through the prophet Amos:

I hate, I despise your feast days, and I will not smell in your solemn assemblies. Though ye offer me burnt offerings, I will not accept them: neither will I regard the peace offerings of your fat beasts. Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs; for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream (5:21-24).

Again, the Lord speaks through the prophet Isaiah:

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts: and I

²⁰Bright, op. cit., p. 59.

²¹Martin Franzmann, Follow Me: Discipleship According to St. Matthew (unpublished lectures).

delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats (1:11).

and through Hosea: "For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (6:6).

The kind of repentance that God really wants is summed up in the words of Joel:

Therefore also now, saith the Lord, Turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil (2:12, 13).

That the conception of repentance corresponds to the conception of sin as personal, as revolt against God or apostasy from God can be seen time and time again in the Old Testament.²² When R. B. Y. Scott defines the underlying principle of particular sins as "disobedience, rebellion, estrangement from God, and love of evil," he is not far from the basic sense of the term in the Old Testament.²³ A glance at a few of these passages will suffice. Isaiah

²²Franzmann, Basileia Tou Theou, p. 32.

²³R. B. Y. Scott, The Relevance of the Prophets (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1953), p. 124. He goes on to add that "the resultant spiritual condition is corruption, perversion, instability, callousness, degeneracy." Furthermore, "sin is a concrete way of life" as the Hebrew terms indicate: "ra' and resha' denote a state of habitual wickedness; 'awon--guilt, inherent evil; pesha'--deliberate transgression of a known commandment or moral standard; hattath--defection from good. All are used of this general spiritual condition of guilt and estrangement from God, as expressed in a state of mind and habit of life."

speaks of man's rebellion against God:

sons have I reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me. The ox knows its owner, and the ass its master's crib; but Israel does not know, my people does not understand (Is. 1:2,3, R.S.V.).

In Jer. 1:16 we read: "And I will utter my judgments against them, for all their wickedness in forsaking me;" (R.S.V.). Hosea pictures man's apostasy from God as unfaithfulness, when he pictures the wife (Israel), as unfaithful to the husband (God), and gone whoring after other lovers (Hos. 1-3).

The call to repentance which the prophets issue involves a complete change of mind and heart, a complete "turning," and is therefore personal, a return to the Lord.²⁴ It involves, first of all, grief because of one's actions, as in Jer. 8:6: "No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done. . . ." ²⁵

Secondly, it involves trust in the Lord. "For thus said the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel, in returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and trust shall be your strength. . . ." (Is. 30:15, R.S.V.). Or we may paraphrase the words of the Lord directed to Israel by the prophet Joel: "Turn to me with all your heart . . . and

²⁴Franzmann, Basileia Tou Theou, p. 33.

²⁵The Hebrew word used here for repent is נָחַם. In all of the other passages involved the word שָׁחַ is used when speaking of man's repentance.

offer your hearts to me, and not your garments. . . ." (2:12,13). Hosea pictures repentant Israel as an orphan, trusting in God for mercy (14:1-3).

Still another idea involved in this prophetic call to repentance is the idea that this repentance involves heeding the will of the Lord, turning to the Lord in obedience. 1 Kings 8:33: "thy people Israel . . . shall turn again to thee, and confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication to thee. . . ." This thought is also expressed by Jeremiah: "You recently repented and did what was right in my eyes. . . ." (34:15, R.S.V.); and again: "It may be they will listen, and everyone turn from his evil way. . . ." (26:3, R.S.V.).

Not only does this repentance involve turning to God; it also involves turning away from all evil. This is found throughout the prophet Ezekiel, as for example in 3:19: "Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall surely die"; or in 14:6: "repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations." (Cf. also Ezek. 33:11,14; and Job 36:10.)

Moreover, this turning is not a possibility with man, but rests wholly and completely with God. Thus Jeremiah can say when speaking to God: "turn thou me, and I shall be turned. . . ." (31:18). In this way also the Lord speaks to Israel through the prophet Ezekiel. Because Israel had

defiled the Lord's name, God must act (36:21-23). He must show that He is the Lord by making Israel repentant: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you. . . ." (36:26). In this connection also, the Psalmist cries: "Create in me a clean heart, O God. . . ." (Ps. 51:10; cf. also 1 Kings 18:37 and Lam. 5:21).

From the above cited and quoted Old Testament passages we can deduce that there are five ideas or thoughts included in the prophetic ideal of repentance, and we summarize them here as follows: (1) grief because of one's actions; (2) trust in the Lord; (3) turning to the Lord in obedience; (4) turning away from evil; (5) God's giving, not man's doing.

As we have already indicated above, Israel did not always come under the reign of God and worship him as King; thus God often called Israel to repentance through the faithful in the Old Testament. This indicates that the Kingship idea and the call to repentance are connected at least indirectly throughout the Old Testament. However, there are some passages where we find the two connected more directly. An example of this would be Ezekiel 36. Here God wants to show that He is the universal King to the heathen. Moreover he wants to establish that fact through Israel. Thus he calls Israel to repentance in order to wash her (36:24) and give her a new heart (36:25). In this way the heathen will know that he is the Lord (36:36).

Our discussion of these two concepts in the Old Testament, the Kingship of Yahweh and the prophetic call to repentance, serve to prepare us for what follows. For with an understanding of these concepts we can see the implications and the historical ramifications that the phrases "Kingdom of God" and "call to repentance" had for the Jews when, first of all, John the Baptist entered the scene of history, and secondly and most important of all, when Jesus Christ entered the world as the God-man and reiterated the preaching of John. All of this will prepare us for a better understanding of the background in which Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount.

But before we turn to the preaching of John the Baptist it would be well for us to summarize briefly the Rabbinic ideas of the $\text{מְלֻכּוּת שָׁמַיִם}$ and repentance during the inter-testamental period. K. L. Schmidt describes the Kingdom idea:

Thus malkuth shamayim is one of the few, if not the only, quite strong and pure conceptions in late Judaism: the ἐπιφανειακὸν of the "manifestation of the malkuth shamayim" as that which demands the decision of each individual to "take upon himself" or "reject" "the yoke of the malkuth shamayim."²⁶

When a man took upon himself the yoke of the Kingdom he showed that he acknowledged God as King and placed himself

²⁶Schmidt, op. cit., p. 20. See his entire discussion of the Rabbinic use of the Kingdom of heaven, pp. 15-21. The Kingdom idea underwent a radical change in Rabbinic literature. For further information see Otto, op. cit., pp. 34ff.

under the obedience of the Law. But there developed in this idea the thought that man could do something himself to establish God's Kingdom. This thought was carried over into the idea of Jewish repentance, too, so that we find in Rabbinic literature the phrase לְעֵשׂוּבָה , "to do repentance." This, in turn, resulted in the legalism found among the Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' time. It was into this milieu of thought, then, that John the Baptist and Jesus entered with their preachments of the Kingdom and the call to repentance. And so we are concerned next with the preaching of John the Baptist.

The Kingdom of God and John's Call to Repentance

As we have shown above Israel had some clear-cut ideas about the Kingdom of God and the prophetic call to repentance. And then, after four prophetless though not thoughtless centuries, John the Baptist appeared and "awakened those feelings and hopes which, though they had lain for generations in trance-like slumber, had never finally died and been buried."²⁷ As Franzmann puts it:

John renewed the prophetic proclamation of the Kingdom and the prophetic prediction of the One to come with a new emphasis on the unity of the two predictions: the coming of the Kingdom and the advent of the Coming One are seen now to be one, indivisible act of God. He renewed it also with a new immediacy and urgency: the Voice crying in the wilderness is not only the voice

²⁷Feather, op. cit., p. 61.

of prediction; it is the voice of the herald who ushers in what he proclaims. And so, since he takes the coming of the Kingdom with full religious seriousness, he renews also the prophetic call to repentance, for the coming of the King demands a people made ready to receive him.²⁸

Thus we see that the message of John contains a Divine indicative and a Divine imperative. The indicative: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 3:2), and is personified in "the Mightier One" (Matt. 3:11; Mk. 1:7). The imperative naturally follows: "Repent! Be baptized!" (Matt. 3:2,6; Lk. 3:3; Mk. 1:4).

We deal first with the Divine indicative: "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." As Vincent points out, the "Kingdom of heaven" is an expression peculiar to St. Matthew, while the more usual expression is the "Kingdom of God."²⁹ But there is no marked distinction between the two.³⁰ What the Kingdom of heaven meant for John's

²⁸Franzmann, Follow Me: Discipleship According to St. Matthew.

²⁹Marvin Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), I, 23. Vincent gives his own definition: "It is a kingdom of heaven because its origin, its end, its king, the character and destiny of its subjects, its laws, institutions, and privileges--all are heavenly." For a contrary view see Gustav Dalman, The Words of Jesus, translated from the German by D. M. Kay (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1902), p. 93.

³⁰Alan Richardson, editor, A Theological Word Book of the Bible (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1955), p. 119. Schmidt holds this, too, and his view of *Baitha* may be worth noting: "We see again, and clearly, that the essential meaning is not realm, but sway. Bound up with this is the realization that such a power of heaven can from its

contemporaries is summed up very well by Franzmann:

John spoke of the drawing-near of the Kingdom of heaven; which meant, since for John's contemporaries and countrymen "Heaven" was one of a number of reverential periphrases for the name of God, that the reign of God was near at hand. He spoke of the near advent of God the King. "Kingdom of heaven" stirred a thousand memories in every pious Jew and roused a mighty hope. John did not explain to his contemporaries what the "Kingdom of heaven" was or tell them that there was a "Kingdom of heaven." No good Jew needed to be told what the Kingdom of heaven was. His Old Testament told him that on every page; it meant: "Thy God reigneth!"³¹

As K. L. Schmidt points out, the point of impact in this indicative of John the Baptist is this that the Kingdom of heaven is nigh, is at hand ἤγγικεν (cf. Matt. 3:2; 4:17; 10:7; Mk. 1:15; Lk. 10:9,11).³² It was as if John the Baptist were saying: "The God who has been over you all your history is over you still."³³

But founded upon this indicative is the imperative: "Repent! Be baptized!" Thus John renews the cry of the prophets in his demand for repentance with a strong

very nature not connote a Kingdom that comes about as a result of a natural development of earthly relationships or human strivings, but through an intervention of God from heaven," op. cit., p. 38. See also our discussion of ἤγγικεν , supra, p. 6.

³¹Franzmann, Follow Me: Discipleship According to St. Matthew.

³²Schmidt, op. cit., p. 42. For a more complete discussion of ἤγγικεν see G. H. Dodd, Parables of the Kingdom (Revised edition; London: Nisbet and Co. Ltd., 1950), pp. 44f.

³³Feather, op. cit., p. 59.

μετανοείτε.³⁴ The basic New Testament sense of the word denotes first "to change one's mind," then "to feel remorse, repent, be converted."³⁵ We may summarize Vincent's definition as follows:

A word compounded of the preposition meta, after, with, and the verb noeo, to perceive and to think, as the result of perceiving and observing. In this compound the preposition combines the two meanings of time and change, which may be noted by after and different; the whole compound means to think differently after. Metanoia (repentance) is therefore primarily an after-thought, different from the former thought; then a change of mind, which issues in regret and in a change of conduct. The latter ideas, however, have been imported into the word by Scriptural usage, and do not lie in it etymologically nor by primary usage. Repentance, then has been rightly defined as "Such a virtuous alteration of the mind and purpose as begets a like virtuous change in life and practice!"³⁶

And this is the sum and substance of John's imperative.

Like the call of the prophets, it demands a complete

³⁴Actually *μετανοέω* does not directly replace *שׁוּב* in the Old Testament except perhaps for Is. 46:8. The LXX has *ἐπιτερέφω* for *שׁוּב*. However, in inter-testamental writings *μετανοέω* replaced *ἐπιτερέφω* and came to have the meaning "turn" or "repent" through usage with the Old Testament background. There is, however, no basic difference between *μετανοέω* and *ἐπιτερέφω*, Franzmann, *Basileia Tou Theou* (unpublished lecture notes).

³⁵William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 513.

³⁶Vincent, *op. cit.*, p. 23. For further discussions of the definition of "repentance" see James Hastings, *op. cit.*, pp. 789-790; also Richardson, *op. cit.*, pp. 191-192; E. W. A. Koehler, "Metanoia," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, XIV (August, 1943), 529ff.; Johannes Behm, s.v. "*μετανοέω*," *μετάνοια*," *Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1942), IV, 995-1001.

"turning to God" (Lk. 1:16) and a trust in the One who was to come after John (Acts 19:4). And like the call of the prophets, John's call includes a complete change of mind and heart, a "turning from the evil way." For unless one bears good fruit, fruits worthy of repentance, he will be hewn down and cast into the fire (Matt. 3:8,10). John's call renews the prophetic call to repentance, but his appeal is even more categorical. As Franzmann says:

John restored to the idea of repentance the Old Testament stringency and vigor which it had all too often lost in Judaism; for it had become, commonly, a legalistic distortion of that complete, personal, committed, resolute, divinely wrought return to God, the 180-degree turn from sin to God of which the prophets had spoken. John's call to repentance was universal; it included prostitutes and tax collectors (Matt. 21:31-32), but also and particularly the pious (3:7,10). . . . John demanded a repentance as radical as it was universal, as deep as it was wide. His appeal is even more categorical than that of the prophets, for it is made under the urgency of the last days, in the shadow of the coming final revelation of God.³⁷

John's appeal is based on the fact that the Kingdom is "at hand." This is the future Kingdom to which the Jews were looking forward projected into the present, "the transcendent kingdom throwing its mysterious shadows ahead."³⁸

Furthermore, the kind of life that John led typified his call to repentance (Matt. 3:1,4; 11:8,18), for his

³⁷Franzmann, Follow Me: Discipleship According to St. Matthew. See also Behm, op. cit., pp. 995-996.

³⁸Rudolph Otto, op. cit., p. 73, quoting his earlier work, R. Otto, West-Oestliche Mystik (2nd edition; 1929).

preaching in the wilderness pointed to that time when Israel was particularly close to Yahweh, as a people in the wilderness looking to Yahweh for help and guidance. The food that John ate (Matt. 3:4) was the food of a wilderness people; his clothing was the dress of a prophet (cf. Zech. 13:4); and his abstinence from "strong drink" was indicative of his mission (Lk. 1:15).³⁹

Another part of John's imperative is "Be baptized!" (Matt. 3:6,11; 21:15; Mk. 1:4; Lk. 3:3; Acts 13:24). John required an expression of man's repentance, but even as the Old Testament call was Yahweh's giving, so also the expression which John required in his reiteration of the prophets' call is a gift from above:

As in the Old Testament, so in the New, God confers what he demands. He is still the turner of the hearts of men, the creator of the clean heart that can receive him. That is what the baptism of John signifies--it was from heaven and not from men--(Matt. 21:25) . . . God's act upon man--not a legally prescribed act of man's piety.⁴⁰

In summarizing John's call to repentance we emphasize the fact that it was a renewal of the prophetic call, for it demanded a whole and complete "turn to God" in obedience to his will; a complete reversal, a "turning from the evil way"; and it emphasized God's gift of grace, his turning of

³⁹The Nazaritic vow is critically examined by Feather, op. cit., pp. 32f.

⁴⁰Franzmann, Follow Me: Discipleship According to St. Matthew.

the will and the heart of sinful man. But John's call was unique in one respect, for it involved a special sense of urgency in that the Kingdom was "at hand" in the person of a "Mightier One" who was to follow John. It is to this advent of the Mightier One, Jesus of Nazareth, that we turn our thoughts next.

The Advent of the Messiah

In this particular section it is not our purpose to discuss Jesus' call to repentance at length; this will be done in detailed fashion in Chapter IV. What we want to do now is to discuss briefly the events which led up to Jesus' preaching of the Sermon on the Mount and how they affect our proposal that the Sermon is a part of Jesus' call to repentance. For an understanding of these events all that has preceded is a necessary foundation, for

It was in an air charged with the proclamation and the demand of John, an air still reverberating with the indicative and imperative of this Voice, that the disciples heard Jesus renew John's cry of the Kingdom at hand and his call to repentance.⁴¹

Whereas John's preparatory office is characterized by the prophetic "Voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord" (Matt. 3:3), the coming of Jesus is ushered in with the prophetic utterance: "The people which sat in darkness saw a great light; and to them which sat in

⁴¹Ibid.

the region and shadow of death light is sprung up" (Matt. 4:16). The events that precede this prophecy point very poignantly to the Bearer of that light, who indeed claims to be that Light himself (Jn. 1:9f.), indicating who he is and the task before him.

Thus the fact that the accounts of the baptism and the temptation of Jesus (Matt. 3:13-17; 4:1-11) precede his call to repentance (4:17) is not without significance, for it "points out the contours of the Caller very clearly."⁴² For Jesus did not come to John to be baptized because He needed to wash his sins away; he is indeed without sin (2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 1:9; 4:15), nor did his incarnation take place at the time of his baptism as some gnostics believed,⁴³ but "he, the Sinless One, the very Son of God, chooses to put himself along side of all the sinful ones for whom this sacrament of John was ordained."⁴⁴ When Jesus told John: "It becometh us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matt. 3:15) he was indicating that he was not thinking of himself alone, as apart from sinful men and concerned only about himself, but as concerned with men, as the Divine Messenger sent to

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Alfred Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Robert Scott, 1911), p. 34.

⁴⁴R. C. H. Lenski, Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1932), p. 123.

assume the great office of seeking and saving them (Lk. 19: 10).⁴⁵ Thus the Divine Voice and the Spirit of God, descending on him like a dove (Matt. 3:16) ratified and publicly announced an already existing Messiahship, the proclamation of which was to take concrete form in his call to repentance.⁴⁶

Likewise, the temptation narrative points out characteristics of him who issues the call to repentance, for it shows the purpose of the Divine Messenger to do the Divine will. As God's Messiah, Jesus has come to crush Satan, destroy his works, and erect the Kingdom of God among men,⁴⁷ and although this victory did not reach its consummation until his resurrection, we can certainly see its beginnings here. For he not only shows his obedience to the Father's will and, by such an example, the Divine claim that is laid upon all those who are called to repentance, but he also shows that his victory is man's victory and that he has secured the fruits of that victory for those whom he calls into communion with him.⁴⁸

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 122.

⁴⁶See Barrett, The Holy Spirit and the Gospel Tradition (London: S. P. C. K., 1954), p. 34.

⁴⁷Lenski, op. cit., p. 134.

⁴⁸Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph and Company, 1886), p. 294. The fact that these temptations are Messianic temptations and not personal only is brought out by T. W. Manson, The Sayings of Jesus (London: S. C. M. Press, 1949), pp. 42-46. See also Barrett, op. cit., pp. 48-52.

It was after these two events that Matthew records that Jesus left Nazareth and went up to Galilee to dwell in Capernaum (4:12,13) in order that Isaiah's prophecy might be fulfilled (4:14-16). It was at this time that Jesus renewed John's call to repentance: "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" (4:17), and thus indicates the continuity between himself and John. Mark (1:14,15) gives us a fuller description of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom at hand and his call to repentance:

Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.

In this initial call Jesus indicates that the Kingdom is at hand in the person of himself, and that it is at hand by reason of his proclamation of it. For that reason the time (*Kairos*), is fulfilled; that time which was expected and longed for and promised by the prophets is now present. Thus it is an appointed, decisive, critical, loaded time for the great opportunity of repentance and believing the Gospel which the Messiah offers.

It was against this background that Jesus called his first disciples (Matt. 4:18-22; Mk. 1:16-20), with the word: "Follow me!" As Franzmann puts it:

When Jesus said, "Follow me," he was confiscating man for himself. For that word applied to man with personal and inescapable urgency his call to repentance

and his annunciation of the Kingdom come; it brought the gift and the claim of the Kingdom to bear on man.⁴⁹

That word, then, for the disciples is the call to repentance, for Jesus' call was the call of the Baptist before him and the call of the prophets before John. When Jesus calls, however, he calls to himself alone; he does not point to another, a "Mightier One," as did John, nor to a coming King of the future as did the prophets; he indeed is that future King, and though he says nothing of that King directly in the narrative, it is with regal authority that he calls his first disciples. "Without explanation, he gives what, even in form, is a command rather than an invitation: and this assumption of authority is not resented, but instantly obeyed."⁵⁰

From these passages (Matt. 4:17-22; Mk. 1:15f.) we can see some of the elements of Jesus' call to repentance. He wants men to "turn to him" and that turning, moreover, is to be a trust; his followers are to "believe the Gospel," and more specifically, trust in him as the Bearer of that Gospel, for the Gospel itself reveals the Person and work of its Bearer.

As we have pointed out in Chapter I, we are using the term "repentance" in its wider sense. We have seen how the

⁴⁹Franzmann, Follow Me: Discipleship According to St. Matthew.

⁵⁰Plummer, op. cit., p. 48.

term is used in the prophetic call to repentance, in John's call to repentance, and now in Jesus' call to repentance. In using this term in its wider usage we intend to show that what follows in the Sermon on the Mount is also a part of Jesus' call to repentance. For like John's call and the prophetic call to repentance, the Sermon on the Mount has in it the same distinctive features of repentance: sorrow for sin, a whole and complete "turn to God in obedience," a "turning from the evil way," and it points to a trust in the Messianic Giver of this repentance, the One who bestows upon those whom He calls, Jesus of Nazareth. We direct our thoughts next to the Sermon itself.

is a presentation of the great facts which reveal Jesus as the Messiah.¹ A look at the structure of Matthew's Gospel will bear this out, for it is composed of five great sermons or discourses all marked by the recurrent formula: "and it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings" (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 23:1).² Before each one of these discourses and directly connected with the words which Jesus spoke are recorded his deeds and miracles which, together with the words, constitute a record of Messianic action.

¹ C. H. Leavelle, *Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel* (Cincinnati, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1932), p. 173.

² Merrill C. Tenney, *The Sermon on the Mount* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans' Publishing Co., 1934), pp. 157f.

CHAPTER III

THE CALL TO REPENTANCE IN THE SERMON

The Structure of Matthew's Gospel and the Immediate Context of the Sermon

In order to see the true intent of what Jesus proclaims in the Sermon on the Mount we need to see that it is set in a Messianic structure; for this we must take a brief look at the structure of Matthew's Gospel. As Lenski points out, Matthew presents the general program of the main body of his Gospel in the narrative of 4:12-25, for it is a "presentation of the great facts which reveal Jesus as the Messiah."¹ A look at the structure of Matthew's Gospel will bear this out, for it is composed of five great sermons or discourses all marked by the recurrent formula: "And it came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings" (7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).² Before each one of these discourses and directly connected with the words which Jesus spoke are recorded his deeds and miracles which, together with the words, constitute a record of Messianic action.

¹R. C. H. Lenski, Interpretation of St. Matthew's Gospel (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1932), p. 172.

²Merrill C. Tenney, The New Testament: A Survey (2nd edition; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954), pp. 153f.

Just as we cannot separate the Sermon from the backdrop of the Old Testament background, neither can we separate it from the events which directly precede it. We sum up the preceding events in Matthew's Gospel that we have covered as preparatory background material for the study of the Sermon in the words of Hans Windisch, who rightly views the Sermon as a Messianic proclamation:

In the preceding birth and infancy narratives the Evangelist has already shown that all the circumstances of Jesus' birth and the early events of his life show him to have been the Christ of God. At the time of his baptism he had been set apart as Christ and proclaimed as Son. The devil had not been able to compel him to abandon the attitude and the dignity of the obedient Son. In Matt. 4:12-16 the Evangelist shows how at the very beginning of his public ministry a concrete prophecy of Isaiah (9:1,2) had been fulfilled in him. It is clear that in the Sermon on the Mount Matthew desired to present a great Messianic proclamation.³

The Sermon is not only a Messianic proclamation, however, merely because it is set in a Messianic structure, but also because it is spoken by the Messiah. For this is the Jesus speaking who had renewed John's call to repentance (Matt. 4:17) and who had called to himself disciples (4:18-22). Then Matthew's narrative pictures Jesus as

³Hans Windisch, The Meaning of the Sermon on the Mount, translated by S. MacLeon Gilmour (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1951), p. 125. We cannot, however, agree with Windisch's interpretation of the Sermon when he argues for its fulfillability. He seems to disregard all hermeneutical principles when he says that the Sermon must be interpreted historically rather than theologically, basing his argument on the fact that it is pre-Pauline, op. cit., pp. 118ff.

moving into his ministry in full force (4:23-25). He taught, but with a different kind of authority than that which the Jews had been accustomed to hearing (7:28,29); he preached and he healed, and in all this and through all this his contemporaries heard his call to repentance. The result was that great multitudes of people followed him from all over Palestine (4:25). We may not conclude from this that all who followed him were disciples, however, for certainly there were those merely curious people who were indifferent to or refused to come under the claim of Jesus' call, or those who followed him for reasons of personal advantage (Jn. 6:22ff.).⁴

This leads us, then, quite naturally into the question of the hearers of the Sermon, for the events of 4:23-25 are certainly connected with the preaching of the Sermon itself. As we have mentioned above, we may not conclude that all who followed him were disciples; the "crowds" and the "multitudes" did not follow him in the same sense as his disciples followed him. This is shown by a glance at any of the gospels. Matthew 5:1 also bears this out, as Jesus seems to direct his attention more to the disciples as contrasted to the crowds. Whether the crowds are to be included in Jesus' audience is a difficult question to

⁴Ned B. Stonehouse, The Witness of Matthew and Mark to Christ (2nd edition; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958), pp. 133-134.

determine. Besides the above mentioned text, the following texts must be taken into consideration here: 4:23-25; 7:28; cf. also Lk. 6:12ff. Matthew's Gospel seems to make it plain that there were crowds present, but we would agree with Hunter that the Sermon is fundamentally disciple teaching.⁵ We cannot overlook Luke's account either, in which he indicates that the twelve were chosen prior to the preaching of the Sermon (Lk. 6:12ff.). Perhaps Lenski is close to being correct when he says:

When this Sermon was preached the Twelve were already appointed as apostles and many others had become his disciples. The Sermon is addressed to them. The multitudes who also heard it are secondary. These crowds were to hear and know what the true disciples of Christ really possessed and what their lives in the Kingdom would henceforth be. In this way, and only in this way, the Sermon opened to the crowds the door of the Kingdom, showed them what was inside, and bade them to enter and to join those already inside.⁶

Since we have determined that the Sermon is a Messianic proclamation preached in a Messianic setting and that it is directed primarily to disciples, to those who have

⁵Archibald M. Hunter, A Pattern for Life (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), p. 109. We might also note in this connection that in Matthew's Gospel never means "disciples."

⁶Lenski, op. cit., p. 173. Windisch agrees with this and also points out that the only ones to be excluded are the scribes, the Pharisees, the hypocrites (Matt. 6:1ff.), the tax-collectors and the heathen (5:46f.; 6:7), and the false prophets (7:15), op. cit., pp. 64f. We agree that the crowds may have been present, in the background, but the text itself indicates that the emphasis must be placed on the disciples as hearers.

been placed under the claim of Jesus' call, we now proceed to show that the content of the Sermon itself indicates that it is a part of his call to repentance. For in his call to repentance Jesus calls man into the Kingdom (Matt. 4:17; 5:3,10), and the disciple, the believer, is in the Kingdom right now (Mk. 1:15), although he does not enjoy the consummation of that Kingdom until the last judgment (Matt. 25:34ff.; 2 Thess. 1:5; Ja. 2:5). The Sermon on the Mount is an account of the blessings of that Kingdom which man enters into when he comes under the claim of Christ's call. The Sermon "presents the entire life in the Kingdom, from the first entrance into the Kingdom here on earth to the final consummation of the Kingdom in the last judgment."⁷ The prerequisite for existence in this Kingdom is repentance; hence the Sermon on the Mount is a call to repentance, the "daily renewal" of which Luther spoke when he said (in the first of his Ninety-Five Theses) that the whole life of Christ's believers "is to be a constant or unending repentance."⁸

Jesus indicates in two ways that the sum and substance of the disciples' existence is to be repentance in the Sermon on the Mount. First of all, he shows himself to be the

⁷Lenski, loc. cit.

⁸Quoted from Karl H. Ehlers, "Repentance," The Abiding Word, edited by Theodore Laetsch (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), II, 258.

Caller, the Author of the call to repentance (Matt. 5:3-12), and secondly, he shows them the meaning of this call, the claim that it lays upon them (5:13-7:29). We turn first of all to the Caller.

The Caller

In the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-12) we see the Caller, the Author of the call to repentance, "the one come to bestow blessedness, and that upon those who build no hope upon themselves."⁹ We see him as the One to whom Matthew's Gospel points, the promised Messiah. While Jesus does not expressly refer to himself as the Messiah, the words that he speaks recall the Messianic promises of the Old Testament. As Hunter states:

To be sure, Jesus' own Messiahship is veiled--he does not in the Beatitudes expressly call himself the Messiah. But when he promises the Kingdom to the "poor" or "comforting" for the "mourners," when he speaks of the "meek" inheriting the earth or calls suffering for his sake blessed, the implication is (as surely as in his sermon in the Nazareth synagogue) that in himself and his ministry the ancient promises are being fulfilled.¹⁰

As the Author of this call to repentance, Jesus is pictured as the gracious Giver who pronounced his blessings

⁹A. Tholuck, Exposition, Doctrinal and Philological, of Christ's Sermon on the Mount, translated from the German by Robert Menzies (2nd edition; Edinburgh: Thomas Clark, 1843), I, 77.

¹⁰Hunter, op. cit., p. 31. For a similar discussion see Tholuck, op. cit., pp. 81ff.

upon his disciples because he can give God's great and whole promise to them.¹¹ The word "blessed," (*μακάριοι*),¹² which Jesus uses nine times in connection with his disciples, is a "judgment pronounced upon the persons indicated, stating that they must be considered fortunate."¹³ The disciple is considered fortunate because he is blessed of God; he has come under the claim of Jesus' call, therefore the gifts and blessings of the Kingdom are his.

Jesus gives to the *οἱ πτωχοὶ τῷ πνεύματι*,¹⁴ the "poor in spirit," "the beggars before God" (5:3).¹⁵ He gives to the poor because they are poor (Is. 66:2), because under the claim of Jesus' call they realize that that which man so vitally needs, God's love and truth, have been

¹¹A. Schlatter, Erläuterungen zum Neuen Testament (erster band; Calm und Stuttgart: Verlag der Vereinsbuchhandlung, 1918), p. 36.

¹²*μακάριοι* occurs five times in Matthew's Gospel outside of the Beatitudes and in each case it describes man in his relation to the Messiah (11:6; 13:16-17; 16:17; 24:26; cf. also Lk. 1:45 where it is used of Mary by Elizabeth in a similar sense; also Lk. 1:48).

¹³Lenski, op. cit., p. 177.

¹⁴This word is allied to the verb *πτύσσειν*, "to crouch or cringe," and conveys the idea of utter destitution. Here it denotes utter spiritual destitution, the consciousness of which precedes entrance into the Kingdom of God and can only be relieved by the free mercy of God. Marvin Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1905), I, 36.

¹⁵Hunter, op. cit., p. 31.

conspicuously absent from their lives.¹⁶ Therefore repentance requires that the disciples remain poor. They must realize that if they are to be rich, it will not be and cannot be with their own richness, but only with the rich blessings which Jesus offers them in his call. For he calls men who have nothing to recommend them but their need of the grace and mercy of God. These blessings are no less than the blessings of the Kingdom itself:

He gives them the reign of God, whose grace is as wide as mankind's need of it; and all that goes before and all that follows after in the Gospel shows that that reign is present in Jesus himself, that Jesus is the gracious reign of God in person.¹⁷

The *οἱ πένθοῦντες* (mourners),¹⁸ also receive the gift which Jesus has to offer (5:4). Evidently referring to Isaiah 61:2 Jesus has in mind "those who mourn for the sin in Israel, which checks and thwarts God's purposes for his people, and delays the coming of the Kingdom."¹⁹ But behind

¹⁶Schlatter, op. cit., pp. 36f.

¹⁷Franzmann, Follow Me: Discipleship According to St. Matthew (unpublished lectures). See Lenski, op. cit., p. 179.

¹⁸The verb *πένθειν* is used in connection with sin in at least two other New Testament passages, 1 Cor. 5:2 and 2 Cor. 12:21. For an understanding of this word against the background of the Old Testament see Eccles. 7:4.

¹⁹Willoughby C. Allen, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew," The International Critical Commentary (3rd edition; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1912), p. 41. Luke's *κλειόντες* (6:21) carries with it echoes of Ps. 137:4, indicating that the saints are as homesick for the *βασίλεια* as the Jews were for Palestine during the Babylonian captivity.

the cry of the mourners is the recognition of the merciless power of sin, and of man's helplessness to break away from its bonds; thus it is personal mourning for one's own sin, and a constant cry to God in distress.²⁰ Jesus comforts those who mourn: In turning to him in repentance the blessings of the Kingdom are theirs, and these blessings are manifest in him (Lk. 2:25f.), for there is no suffering for which comfort has not already been provided.²¹

Jesus gives to the *οἱ πραεῖς* (the meek), (Matt. 5: 5). Perhaps the best commentary on this word of Jesus is Psalm 37, for this Beatitude is practically a quotation from the eleventh verse of that Psalm. Here the meek are described as gentle, patient, trusting in the Lord; they are pictured as people who renounce every right of their own and depend utterly and completely on their Lord.²² These are those who, trusting in the Lord, follow the example of the Lord who is himself meek and lowly in heart (11:29), and "are quite content with the same rights as their Master--that and no more."²³ Such people shall "inherit the earth." Here again, the future projects into the present

²⁰Lenski, op. cit., p. 180.

²¹Schlatter, op. cit., p. 37.

²²Dietrich Bonhoeffer, The Cost of Discipleship, translated from the German by R. H. Fuller (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1949), p. 93.

²³Ibid.

and the disciple is promised the future heritage as his possession even now.

Those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6) are not excluded from the blessings of the Caller either. Hunger and thirst are commonly used of strong spiritual desires and needs and denote here (since both participles, *πεινῶντες* and *διψῶντες*, are durative present tenses) a continual hunger and thirst for righteousness.²⁴ Here *δικαιοσύνην* denotes not the doer of the right, but those made righteous, those who long for righteousness.²⁵ Thus the King who calls the disciples gives them the gift of which he speaks. He is the "Lord our Righteousness" (Jer. 23:5-6) who feeds his believers full with righteousness because he is the "Bread of life" (Jn. 6:35).²⁶

In these four Beatitudes we see the Author of the call to repentance as the Messianic Giver, who bestows the blessings of his Kingdom upon those whom he calls to repentance.

²⁴Lenski, op. cit., p. 183. Tholuck, op. cit., p. 121, also points out that in the East where there is scarcity of water, thirst is the most significant image of desire (Amos 8:11; Ps. 42:1; Is. 65:13; Jn. 6:35; 7:37). Cf. also T. W. Manson, The Sayings of Jesus (London: S. C. M. Press, 1949), pp. 47-48.

²⁵Lenski, loc. cit.

²⁶As Vincent points out, the verb *χορτασθήσονται* is very appropriate here in expressing the complete satisfaction of hunger and thirst, op. cit., p. 38.

As Franzmann points out, these first four Beatitudes are a unit, and the persons are the same throughout:

the poor, the mourners, the meek, the hungerers and thirsters are all the disciples who have heeded the call to repentance and have believed the promise of the Kingdom. And the promises are really one promise throughout; the comfort for the mourners, the inheriting of the world, righteousness as the Messianic gift are all descriptions of what the royal reign of God means for repentant man.²⁷

The Caller who gives the blessings of the Kingdom to those whom He calls also lays a claim on those whom He calls, as is shown in the next four Beatitudes. These also form a unit because the promises of these Beatitudes bring into view "the last judgment and the new world of God created by God's royal action."²⁸ The promises and blessings which the Caller gives begin to receive their fulfillment here in time, as we have tried to show above, for the blessings of the Kingdom, though they reach their consummation in the future, are projected into the present. Thus because men are the recipients of these blessings, they are in a position to be vehicles of these blessings, to bring forth the fruits of repentance, and this is the claim which the Caller lays upon them.²⁹

For that reason those who have received mercy are to be *ἐλεήμονες* (merciful), (Matt. 5:7). This is part of the

²⁷Franzmann, op. cit.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Tholuck, op. cit., pp. 124ff.

μετάνοια . The whole life of the disciple is to be a life of mercy (18:22ff.). This is the claim laid upon the disciple by the Caller; yet the disciple is not aware of it as such because it is the natural result of the gift which the Caller has bestowed upon him. Therefore he is most surprised of all when at the consummation of the Kingdom he who has called the disciple enumerates the mercies which the disciple has done and bids him inherit the Kingdom (Matt. 25:34-40).

So also *οἱ καθαροὶ τῇ καρδίᾳ* are to be and remain pure in heart (Matt. 5:8). The disciple is to emulate the singleness of devotion and obedience to the will of the Father as was exemplified by the Caller in his encounter with Satan (4:1-11). This is the claim laid on him by the Caller, that a man love God with his whole heart and mind and soul (22:37). In such a way the disciple shows his faith in the One who has called him, who will at the last judgment give the disciple no less than the Beatific Vision, for then man shall see God "face to face" (1 Cor. 13:12).³⁰

Those who, through the Caller, have obtained peace with God are to be *οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί* (peacemakers), (Matt. 5:9), who actively pursue peace because of their faith in

³⁰Hunter, *op. cit.*, pp. 35f.

the Prince of Peace (Is. 9:6).³¹ They, too, are promised the highest of all titles, *υἱοὶ Θεοῦ*, which is a reality even now (Gal. 4:5ff.), but which will be a confirmation of their present dignity at the last judgment.³² This, too, is a blessing of the Kingdom, for whether the King gives the blessings of the Kingdom or the Father makes the disciples his sons, the same thing is meant by both phrases.³³

The last claim in these Beatitudes which Jesus lays upon those whom he calls to repentance is the one which is probably most offensive to man's thinking and desiring (Matt. 5:10).³⁴ *Δεδιωγμένοι*, a perfect passive participle, may here be rendered permissive: "those who have endured persecution."³⁵ Here the disciple is to submit to what the world metes out to him *ἕνεκεν δικαιοσύνης* and *ἕνεκεν ἑμοῦ* (5:11). We would agree with Bonhoeffer that the community which is the subject of the Beatitudes is the community of the Crucified, for with him it loses all and gains all.³⁶ Here not mere submission is enjoined, however,

³¹ *οἱ εἰρηνοποιοί* should be held to its literal meaning, for the founders and the promoters of peace are meant--those who not only keep peace, but seek to bring men into harmony with each other, Vincent, op. cit., p. 38.

³² Hunter, op. cit., p. 36.

³³ Franzmann, op. cit.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Lenski, op. cit., p. 188.

³⁶ Bonhoeffer, op. cit., p. 97.

but a rejoicing and exultation (5:12), for the gifts of the Caller, while received in this world, will be enjoyed more fully and completely in the next.

The Beatitudes present us with a clear picture of the Messianic King who calls men to repentance, into his Kingdom; life in this Kingdom means a continual .

In the first four Beatitudes we see the gifts which he bestows upon those whom he calls. He gives the beggars, the mourners, the meek, the hungerers and thirsters the gift of faith to rely completely and wholly on him. Thus he turns their minds and hearts to himself as the Messianic Giver and in so doing he "changes their minds" and moulds their wills so that by his power they are placed under the claim of his call. Under the claim of this call the disciples will bring forth "fruits worthy of repentance." They will be merciful, they will be pure in heart, they will be peacemakers, they will suffer for righteousness' sake, for his sake, for he that lays the claim upon the disciples in the call also confers the power to live under this claim. At the same time Jesus the Caller never minimizes the power of Satan at work even among those whom he has called (Matt. 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8,21ff.; cf. also 26:56). For that very reason Jesus indicates in these Beatitudes that even as he continually offers and gives the blessings of the Kingdom, so also his disciples are to continually receive them; for that heart which does not cling wholly and unreservedly to

the Messianic promise will be rejected by him (7:23; 12:30). Thus the disciple is called to a complete and continual *μετάνοια* which demands a complete and continual dependence on the Caller.

The Meaning of the Call

As we have seen the gifts and claim of the Caller in the Beatitudes (Matt. 5:3-12), so also in the remainder of the Sermon we shall see the meaning of the call (5:13-7:29). Here, too, Jesus lays the claim of repentance upon those whom he calls; but here he expounds the claim and sharply defines it. For a clearer picture of what this claim entails we shall divide the remainder of the Sermon into six major sections each of which spells out very distinctively the areas which the claim of this call includes.

The disciple is called to exert an influence upon the world (Matt. 5:13-16)

Because the disciples have been given the blessings of the Kingdom, they have the great task of letting that blessedness shine forth to all with whom they come into contact. They are to be *ἔλας τῆς γῆς* (Matt. 5:13) and the *φῶς τοῦ κόσμου* (5:14). This is the claim which the Caller lays upon them; this is part of the *μετάνοια*. Here, too, the disciples can carry out this activity of influencing the world about them only because they have received

the blessings of the Caller. The disciples do not decide whether they are salt or whether they are light--they are both salt and light by virtue of the call, and that is to be their existence in the world about them.³⁷ The tertium comparationis of these metaphors is that the nature and function of the disciples are one:

salt salts because it is salt, and light illumines because it is light. Salt which no longer salts has ceased to be salt. The disciple who ceases to minister has forfeited his existence as disciple and has destroyed himself. He has by foregoing activity disrupted his communion with Christ; and there is no second way to saltiness. A man can be light only by his communion with the Christ, and he can remain light only by shining.³⁸

Thus the disciples must remain salt and light. They must continually come under the claim of Jesus' call to repentance so that he can preserve them as salt and light.

As salt and light the disciples are to have a salutary effect upon their surroundings, the world in which they live. As salt the disciples are to have a distinctive effect upon those with whom they come into contact by the witness of their lips and by the witness of their lives. As light they are by means of their *καλὴ ζογᾶ* to point to the only "True Light," Christ himself (Jn. 8:12; 9:5; 12:35; Is. 49:6; 60:1), for the disciples are light in the

³⁷Ibid., p. 100.

³⁸Franzmann, op. cit.

secondary sense, in that their light is derived from him.³⁹

Because the disciples are light, they must shine as light; they cannot exclude themselves from the world (Matt. 5:15) and their shining must not point to themselves, but to God who has made them light, so that he, through the shining of his disciples, might bestow upon others the blessings of his Kingdom in the call to repentance (5:16).

The disciple is called to a new life of righteousness (Matt. 5:17-48)

In explaining the meaning of the call to repentance and the claim which this call has upon his disciples, Jesus points them next to a new life of righteousness. The *μετάνοια* to which Jesus has called the disciples is also to manifest itself in connection with the law, for he himself did not come to abrogate the law and the prophets (the Old Testament),⁴⁰ but to fulfill (*πληρῶσαι*) them (Matt. 5:17).⁴¹ That is why he can say that not one jot or tittle

³⁹Lenski, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁴¹The verb "to fulfill" has the image of a vessel which is filled to the top. The vessel here meant is the written Word, the Law and the Prophets; and this vessel is filled, when what the Word records, occurs. The mission of Jesus is to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, not partially, but *in toto*. Thus his entire mission is embraced in the one word *πληρῶσαι*, which is a key term in Matthew, *ibid.*, p. 199.

shall pass away from the law till all is accomplished (5:18). He who has placed himself under the law (3:13-17), fulfills the law in all of its requirements; but more than that, he also fulfills the law for those whom he calls by dying a sinner's death on the cross (Rom. 8:3,4).⁴² For the disciples this means that they, too, are to keep the law and to teach the law (5:19). This was, in fact, the promise of the Old Testament concerning the age to come (cf. Jer. 31:15; Ezek. 37:13,14,24-28). But they were not to keep the law in the sense of the Scribes and Pharisees who thought of "keeping the law" only as carrying out legally prescribed acts (5:20). The disciples keep the law only through communion with and faith in the One who has called them and continues to call them to repentance. For through his Word and through his Spirit they are enabled to see God's whole and perfect will and called upon to obey it. Not that the righteousness of life to which the disciples are called is, of itself, a ticket for admittance into the Kingdom, but rather it is an indication of faith in the One who has called them. He indeed gives them his Kingdom through his call.

In explaining the new life of righteousness in connection with the false teachings of the Scribes and Pharisees on the Old Testament law, Jesus points to the totality of

⁴²Bonhoeffer, op. cit., pp. 106f.

his claim when he calls men to repentance. This claim embraces man in every area of his existence: thought, word, and deed. Because the disciples have been given the righteousness of the Caller, they are called upon to walk in that righteousness,⁴³ and in the sequel (Matt. 5:21-48) Jesus explains to them the totality of its claim. He spells out the meaning of this claim in a series of six antitheses which we summarize in the words of Hunter as follows:

The old Law said, "No murder." I say, "No anger" (5:21-22).

The old Law said, "No adultery." I say, "No lustful thought" (5:27-28).

The old Law said, "Divorce on condition. . . ." I say, "No divorce" (5:31,32).

The old Law said, "No false swearing." I say, "No swearing at all" (5:33,34).

The old Law said, "Eye for eye." I say, "No retaliation at all" (5:38,39).

The old Law said, "Love your neighbor." I say, "Love your enemy" (5:43,44).⁴⁴

As we have stated above, in each one of these expansions of the Old Testament law Jesus shows the totality of the claim of *μετένοια* in every area of the disciples' being: thought, word, and deed. We deal with each one of these antitheses briefly in order to see how this *μετένοια* is related to every sphere and phase of the disciples'

⁴³Ibid., p. 109.

⁴⁴Hunter, op. cit., pp. 44-45.

relationship with their fellow-man. It is important to note at this point that throughout this entire section we shall see the indication of the New Age: the disciple living under the claim of *μετάνοια* in the Messianic Kingdom. This is the force of Jesus' *ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω* (5:22,28, etc.), and its effect was felt by all who heard his teaching (7:28). This *ἐγὼ δὲ λέγω* signifies the presence of the New Age and indicates the totality of the claim of *μετάνοια*.

The totality of the claim of the call to repentance is brought out first of all in the Old Testament law which forbids murder, the fifth commandment (Matt. 5:21-26). According to Judaic law whoever killed a man was in danger of the judgment (5:21).⁴⁵ But Jesus points out that anger in a man's heart will expose him to the judgment of God (5:22). Such a relationship with regard to the brother forfeits the disciple's relationship to God and nullifies his worship of God (5:23,24).⁴⁶ Here, too, we see the eschatological direction of the claim of the call to repentance for

in all man's dealings with his fellow-man he never has to do with the present or with man alone; he is on the way to the last judgment with his fellow-man and has to do with God the Judge.⁴⁷

⁴⁵In this case the penalty was death (Ex. 21:12; Lev. 24:17). See Lenski's discussion of the Jewish court of law, op. cit., p. 211.

⁴⁶Schlatter, op. cit., p. 52.

⁴⁷Franzmann, op. cit.

For that reason, then, the admonition is to be right with the Accuser, for he who refuses to come under the claim of his call will be forced to come under the measure of his judgment (Matt. 5:25,26).

From the fifth commandment Jesus turns to the sixth (Matt. 5:27-32). The new life of righteousness to which the disciple is called also has its implications in relation to the opposite sex. Again the law has commanded: "You shall not commit adultery!" (5:27). And here, too, Jesus "internalizes" the law. He shows that it is not only the outward act that is forbidden, but also the evil lust and wicked desire behind the act, which in itself constitutes adultery (5:28). Jesus is not here condemning normal and lawful sexual desire within the bonds of the married state (rather, he sanctifies marriage, 19:3ff.), but that which is forbidden by God's will and commandment. In this passage, too, the claim of the call to repentance shows eschatological direction. Under the claim of the call the disciple is to "pluck out the eye that offends" and "cut off the hand that causes him to fall"--that is, he is to quell the evil in the heart which expresses itself by means of the members of the body--lest, refusing to come under the claim of Jesus' call, his whole body be destroyed in hell (5:29,30).

Jesus explains the implications of the call with regard to marriage and divorce (Matt. 5:31,32). Where the law had

said: "Divorce on condition . . ." Jesus says: "No divorce." Although Moses had permitted men to divorce their wives by giving them a divorce certificate (Deut. 24:1), this was because the law could not overcome the hardness of man's heart and it was not the original intent of the Creator (Matt. 19:3ff.).⁴⁸ Jesus does not make the marriage bond less absolute when he says: "except on the ground of fornication" (5:32), but rather

Jesus championed the woman whom Jewish divorce law and practice made the helpless victim of her husband's whim, and he sought to make pure and wholesome the relationship between man and woman. . . .⁴⁹

Thus the whole life of the disciple under the claim of Jesus' call must be characterized by purity in obedience to God's will, an obedience that derives its power and will from the Caller.

When Jesus brings a man under the claim of his call he claims his speech, too, and this is the next antithesis (Matt. 5:33-37). The Old Testament law permitted oaths, but warned against false swearing (Lev. 19:12; Ex. 20:7). But Jesus tells the disciples not to swear at all (5:34). Since the very existence of oaths is a proof that there are such things as lies, Jesus makes it clear that the disciple's speech must be above reproach, so that he need not verify

⁴⁸Lenski, op. cit., pp. 223f.

⁴⁹Franzmann, op. cit.

what he says with an oath.⁵⁰ It goes without saying that there are no exceptions admitted here (5:35,36; cf. Ja. 5:12); this is the claim made upon men of the Kingdom, and though all men are under the state, they are not all under the Kingdom. Therefore the state requires an oath, as Jesus himself recognized (Matt. 26:63). The repentant disciple, however, need merely say Yes and No--that is oath enough--"for his every word is spoken in responsibility to God, is spoken in the presence of God who has drawn near to him in his Son; his every word is an oath."⁵¹

A man under the claim of Jesus' call is also required to renounce his personal rights, which were protected by a divinely established system of retribution (Ex. 21:23-25; Matt. 5:38-42).⁵² Where the law could only set limits to man's personal vengeance by saying: "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" (5:38), Jesus does what the law could not do; he erases vengeance from man's heart (5:39).⁵³ He indicates this with four picturesque illustrations: a personal assault (5:39), a suit at law (5:40), an official demand (5:41), and a request for help (5:42). The disciple would be reminded of Isaiah 50:6, the account of the

⁵⁰Bonhoeffer, op. cit., pp. 117f.

⁵¹Franzmann, op. cit.

⁵²Bonhoeffer, op. cit., p. 121.

⁵³Franzmann, op. cit.

Suffering Servant, who by his own obedience made it possible for his followers to come under the claim of the new life of righteousness.

The totality of this claim is even more explicitly spelled out when Jesus points to the word which sums up this whole life of righteousness-- *ἀγάπη* (Matt. 5:43-48). The law said that man should love his neighbor (Lev. 19:18; Matt. 5:43), but did not expressly state that he was to hate his enemy; Jesus rather refers to the misinterpretation of the law by the Scribes and Pharisees.⁵⁴ When Jesus says: "Love your enemies" (5:44,45), he indicates that the claim of *μετ' ἀποκ* requires that there be no limitation on the disciple's love; this is the true meaning of the Old Testament law. The disciple is to love, not with a love that is determined by the way others treat him (5:46), but rather with a love that is determined by the treatment he has received from Jesus the Caller, who has given him all the

⁵⁴Some scholars say that this is inferred from the Old Testament by such passages as Deut. 23:3; 25:19; Ezra 9:1, 12; Neh. 13:1,2; Ex. 17:14. See Alfred Plummer, An Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Matthew (London: Elliot Stock, 1909), pp. 87ff. Luther also expresses this view, "The Sermon on the Mount and the Magnificat," Luther's Works, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), XXI, 118f. It seems more plausible, however, that the Scribes and Pharisees misrepresented the spirit of the Old Testament in their teaching. Thus when Jesus refers to this Old Testament injunction, he refers to it as the Scribes and Pharisees interpreted it. See Lenski, op. cit., pp. 238f.; and Stonehouse, op. cit., p. 208.

blessings of the Kingdom. The love of the disciple is not to be merely the natural and normal, but includes something *περιεβόον* (beyond, extraordinary), (5:47) which is derived only from the love shown by the Messianic King in his life and in his death.⁵⁵

This is the love to which the Messiah calls his disciples; this is the new life of righteousness; this is the claim of *μετάνοια*. *Ἀγάπη* sums up the totality of the claim in that it must pervade man's thinking and speaking and doing. Therefore Jesus uses this word as a capstone when he says: "You shall be perfect as your Father in heaven is perfect" (5:48). Thus the love of God, spelled out emphatically in the Son who has drawn near, is to be the source, the model, and the goal, of the disciples' love. It is such a love that is given the disciple by the Caller in his call to repentance.

In this brief summary of the fifth chapter of Matthew's Gospel we ought to note that the structure of this chapter indicates that the claims which *μετάνοια* has on the disciple are not claims which can be fulfilled by the law. They are rather claims that can be fulfilled only by the Gospel. For first Jesus points to himself as the Caller and the Giver (Matt. 5:3-12), and it is only as a result of the call and the gifts of *μετάνοια* that the disciple can

⁵⁵Bonhoeffer, op. cit., pp. 131f.

carry out its claims and demands, and, by so doing, glorify his Father which is in heaven.

The disciple is called to a new life of worship (Matt. 6:1-18)

In the previous section Jesus shows the meaning of the call to repentance in terms of the disciple's relation to his fellow-man. As we have seen, the command of God is to love the neighbor with a pure and complete love, but it is a love which must be learned from God's fuller love.⁵⁶ In this section Jesus shows the meaning of the call to repentance in terms of the disciple's relation to God. Because the disciple has been given the gift of the Kingdom by Jesus, his worship, too, must be a spontaneous and free act of love and devotion to the God whom Jesus has revealed to him as his Father. It is this fact that Jesus points out in the triad of almsgiving, prayer, and fasting.

Jesus has already shown that the disciples are called to a new life of righteousness, one that must exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:20), but it must also differ from that of the Scribes and Pharisees in avoiding ostentation (6:1).⁵⁷ Thus in almsgiving the piety of the disciples must glorify the Father in heaven rather than

⁵⁶Schlatter, op. cit., p. 64.

⁵⁷Allen, op. cit., pp. 56f.

give glory to the doer. This is the kind of worship for which Jesus has called them and this the claim of *μετάνοιαν* upon them. Anything less than this is mere trumpet-sounding for the purpose of receiving glory from men (6:2), and such play-actors have already received their reward--the only reward they are ever going to get.⁵⁸ The disciple, however, who has received his piety and his whole life of worship from the Father through his Son, is so secretive about his almsgiving that even his left hand does not know what his right hand does (6:3). Then the Father who sees in secret, who sees the true motive of the disciple to glorify the Father, shall reward him (6:4). Here a word might be said about *αποδύσει*, for this particular phrase: "Your Father who sees in secret shall reward you" occurs three times in this section (6:4; 6:6; 6:18). As Schlatter points out in connection with the reward for the persecuted (5:12), Jesus is not afraid to talk about reward because he has first called the disciples to repentance.⁵⁹ So also here Jesus is not afraid that the disciples will misinterpret his mention of reward as a "reward of merit" rather than a

⁵⁸The verb used here, *ἐπέχω*, is used of a business transaction, and the preposition *ἐπὶ* indicates "receipt in full." Thus the hypocrites aim to buy men's applause, and they get it, but that is the only reward they are ever going to get. Hunter, *op. cit.*, p. 61. See also Vincent on this, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

⁵⁹Schlatter, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

"reward of grace." He has already given them the blessings of the Kingdom in his call and has reminded them that his giving was a giving into nothing (5:3). Thus the disciple can look to his Heavenly Father for reward not because he has deserved it or earned it, but because he has experienced the manifest love of the Father who has called him through his Son.

It is noteworthy that Jesus stresses here, as he does elsewhere in the Sermon on the Mount, the child-Father relationship which has been made possible through the gift of the call. The difference in this picture and the picture of the King calling disciples into the Kingdom is one of emphasis and not of kind. In the former Jesus stresses the personal relationship between the disciple and God, whereas in the latter he stresses the community of those called.

That which applies to almsgiving also applies to prayer (Matt. 6:5-8). The disciple, who has received his life from God, is to pray to God as though he had received that life from him. He cannot, therefore, stand before God seeking to control him or manipulate him with a great volume of words or thoughtless babble (6:7), but must stand before God as the one who receives (6:8), for as Schlatter says: "Stellen wir uns an den rechten Ort unter Gott, so haben wir ihn auch fuer uns mit seiner Gabe und Hilfe."⁶⁰

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 68.

Jesus shows the nature of this gift and help for which repentant man prays in the prayer which he himself taught them to pray (Matt. 6:9-15; Lk. 11:2ff.). Disciples are to approach God as their Father because they have received their life from him and belong to him (Matt. 6:9).⁶¹ When the disciples pray to the Father, they do not merely pray for the needs of the present, but also for God's ultimate future. That the petitions of the Lord's Prayer are all eschatological in nature has been brought out by Windisch.⁶² Thus God will hallow his name in the future consummation of his Kingdom, when it will finally "come" in all of its glory. Then the will of God will also be done perfectly. And so this eschatological strain goes through all of the petitions. The meaning that these petitions have for the present, therefore, is derived from their greater eschatological meaning.

In this relationship with the Father the disciple asks God to hallow his name at the end of days, but also in the life of the disciple, so that he proclaims it and lives in obedience to the God who has revealed the full meaning of his name in his Son (1:23). When the disciple prays: "Thy Kingdom come" (6:10), he is asking that the Kingdom into which he has been brought through the call to repentance

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶²Windisch, op. cit., p. 39.

might be manifested in its glorious and final consummation at the end of days when God will be "all in all" (1 Cor. 15:28). The disciple knows that he cannot come before God with his own will and so he prays: "Thy will be done" (6:10). This prayer draws the disciple away from his own will and points him to that time when the will of God will be done perfectly. For the present time this petition directs him to the will of God through whom he constantly receives forgiveness and renewal of heart to carry out that will of God in God's way and with God's power.⁶³

Because he knows God's will and is subject to it, the disciple asks no more than that which is necessary for his present subsistence (6:11). He has experienced the gifts of the Caller, his mercy and grace, in the call to repentance. He knows that God will give him the material provisions that he needs, and so his asking is with utter dependence upon God.

The disciple has received the riches of God's mercy and grace in the call, the forgiveness of sins and the new life, and so, living in fellowship with the Caller, he ought to be sinless, but he is not. His life is still marred with sin; so he prays for forgiveness (6:12). The *μετάνοια* to which the disciple is called is and always must be a continual call; he daily comes to God for forgiveness because

⁶³Schlatter, op. cit., p. 69.

he daily sins. By faith he takes hold of God's forgiveness for himself; at the same time he takes hold of his own forgiveness for others, for the call to repentance includes both aspects: coming to God for forgiveness, and forgiving others.⁶⁴

The disciple looks forward to a future where there is no sin; but he must still realize that until the Kingdom ultimately "comes" there will be future temptations and dangers. So he prays: "Lead us not into temptation" (6:13). Here the disciple asks the Heavenly Father so to govern and direct his every thought, word, and action so that he will not fall into the hands of the Tempter who walks around like a roaring lion seeking to devour (1 Pet. 5:8). He realizes that he must constantly receive the gift of the Caller and come under the claim of his call. Only then can he pray: "Deliver us from evil." He recognizes that there will be freedom from all evil at the consummation of the Kingdom, but he also knows that even now the Heavenly Father protects him and makes him free from the might of the devil, and continually supplies him with his greatest need--the need of forgiveness.⁶⁵

Because the hardest petition for the disciple to pray is the fifth petition, where he must ask for forgiveness as

⁶⁴Ibid., p. 71.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 72.

he himself forgives others, Jesus adds a short commentary on this petition (6:14,15), and here again he reminds them of the gift received in the call to repentance. They have received from the Father; therefore they must also forgive in obedience to his will.

As Jesus has made clear the claim that repentance has on the disciple in his prayer life, so also he manifests the same clarity with regard to fasting (6:16-18). Fasting, as a religious rite of the Jews which expressed sorrow over sin, was in itself unobjectionable.⁶⁶ Here Jesus speaks of those hypocrites who fasted much more often than the public fast days as an outward show of piety, and he indicates that a man with a truly contrite heart will let his fasting be known to God alone.⁶⁷ The disciples' fasting, then, must speak to God and not to men.

This is the claim of *μετάνοια* in the worship life of the disciple. As he has been called to a new life of righteousness in his dealing with his fellow-man (Matt. 5:17-48) so also he is called to a purity of motive in his worship of God, to a piety which does not seek to purchase human applause. The next section also deals with the disciple's relationship to his Lord: he cannot divide his heart between God and material things.

⁶⁶A fuller description of the Jewish fast is given by Lenski, op. cit., pp. 265f. and Hunter, op. cit., p. 75.

⁶⁷Hunter, loc. cit.

The disciple is called to a new life of trust and devotion (Matt. 6:19-34)

Just as the disciple in his life of worship must look to the Father alone and not for the favor of men, so also in his daily existence he is to keep the Father before his eyes. The disciple under the claim of *μετάνοια* is not to set his sights on "getting" the things of this world, for they are perishable and have no lasting value (Matt. 6:19). When he makes "things" his only concern in life, he finally becomes possessed by them, for they claim his heart.⁶⁸ Rather, Jesus tells the disciples to accumulate for themselves treasures in heaven which are lasting and eternal and imperishable (6:20). As Lenski points out: "The places mark and characterize the respective treasures."⁶⁹ Thus Jesus emphasizes that God must be the center of the disciple's life; he is the disciple's *Θεοκεντρὸς ἔν ουρανῶν*.

When God is the center of the disciple's life, his heart's eye will be sound and undistorted so that he can see the will of the Heavenly Father and do it (6:22), but when his heart's vision becomes distorted by trying to focus it on both heavenly treasures and earthly goods, then

⁶⁸Franzmann, op. cit.

⁶⁹Lenski, op. cit., p. 268.

the end result must be spiritual darkness (6:23), and "How great is that darkness!"⁷⁰ To be in light, then, the disciple must look to the Father alone whom he has come to know through the Messianic Caller. There can be no serving two masters (6:24), for under the claim of his call Jesus draws the disciple to his Father in complete obedience, as he himself proved to be the obedient Son. In loving the one Lord, the disciple must hate the other, because "mammon"⁷¹ draws him away from the service of the One who called him to love him.⁷²

The disciple has derived his new life of trust and devotion from God; he has been called to serve him alone; therefore he need not be anxious about his daily necessities: food and drink and clothing (Matt. 6:25). For the claim of *μετάνοιαν* includes an implicit trust in the God who provides for the birds and clothes the flowers (6:26-29), a God who knows the needs of each one of his disciples and gladly and willingly fulfills them (6:30). The disciple is to face life trustingly, accepting each day afresh from God, and leaving the unknown future in his hands (6:31,32).⁷³

As the disciple under the claim of *μετάνοιαν* trusts

⁷⁰Hunter, op. cit., p. 78.

⁷¹"Mammon" is the Aramaic word for "gain," ibid.

⁷²Schlatter, op. cit., p. 76.

⁷³Hunter, op. cit., p. 80.

implicitly in God the Father, so also he trusts implicitly in the Son of the Father who bids him: "Seek first the Kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33). "He sought, always, the Kingdom of God; he lived a life intent upon God's reigning, intent upon the assertion of the righteousness of God."⁷⁴ And this is what the disciple must be anxious for, too: that God reign and his Kingdom come, and his grace and righteousness manifest itself to him.⁷⁵ Nothing is more necessary or salutary for the man who has received the gift of the Kingdom in Jesus' call to repentance, than this that he keep on seeking it, and that he continue to hunger and thirst for it. The power for this has been given him by the Caller also. Such must be the response of the disciple to the call to *μετάνοια*. Thus this verse serves as a summary and capstone for the disciple's new life of trust and devotion.

The disciple who seeks first the Kingdom will also seek all other "things" from God in the right spirit and in the right way. He will seek them without worry and without care; he will not place his trust in them nor estimate their value falsely. Then Christ's promise will be fulfilled: "All these 'things' shall be yours as well."⁷⁶

⁷⁴Franzmann, op. cit.

⁷⁵Schlatter, op. cit., p. 79.

⁷⁶Lenski, op. cit., p. 278.

The disciple is called to a new understanding and application of judgment (Matt. 7:1-23)

In the last chapter of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus shows the claim of *μετάνοια* in connection with judgment. Jesus had called the disciples to a righteousness that was to exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 5:17-48) and to a life of worship purer than that of the Scribes and Pharisees (6:1-18). As Lenski correctly observes:

The very fact of having a righteousness far better than that of the Scribes and Pharisees might lead the disciples into the vicious fault of the Scribes and the Pharisees, who set themselves up as judges over all others, gloried in their own false holiness, and despised all others (Jn. 7:49).⁷⁷

Therefore Jesus tells the disciples: "Judge not that you be not judged" (7:1).⁷⁸ He wants to make it clear beyond all doubt that such a misunderstanding of judgment would seriously imperil their discipleship.⁷⁹ Just because the disciple has received his life from God the Giver (5:3-6), and has been made the vehicle of Divine giving (5:7-12), that does not mean that he is to assume the prerogatives of

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 280.

⁷⁸As Lenski points out, the present imperative *μὴ κείνετε* may mean to resist a course of action or to desist from such a course. Most likely the former is meant here, ibid.

⁷⁹Bonhoeffer, op. cit., p. 157.

God the Judge, for if he does, he himself will be judged by God (7:2).⁸⁰

The disciples' understanding and application of judgment is illustrated in a still more striking way in the account of the mote and the beam (Matt. 7:3-5). The disciple who himself has been exposed to God's judgment, but who in Jesus' call to repentance experiences forgiveness and pardon (6:12), is to look upon his fellow-sinner with the same mercy that he himself has received. He is to call his fellow-sinner to repentance, but the accent is on forgiveness. "The goal of the disciple's activity is the removal of the speck from his brother's eye--after he has removed the log from his own."⁸¹ The disciple, however, will meet up with those who refuse God's forgiveness, and so Jesus tells him not to give holy things to dogs nor throw pearls before swine (7:6).⁸² The disciples are not to impose the Gospel upon people by force or against their will because it is both futile and dangerous. It is futile because swine and dogs have no appreciation for that which is holy, and

⁸⁰Franzmann, op. cit.

⁸¹Ibid.

⁸²Dogs and swine are unclean animals in the sight of the Jews, and signify, therefore, those who retain their filthy nature by not repenting and rejecting the disciples' offer of forgiveness. Lenski, op. cit., p. 283.

dangerous because it profanes the Gospel and may bring harm to the bearer of the Gospel message.⁸³

The disciple does not possess any power or rights to judge others, nor can he force others to come under the claim of *μετάνοια*. What can he do? The only way to reach others is through him from whom the disciple himself has received the gift of the Kingdom. So Jesus tells the disciples: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7).⁸⁴ Thus Jesus shows the disciples that judgment and forgiveness are always in the hands of God--he closes and he opens.⁸⁵ Herein the disciple has assurance that God will hear him in his prayer; for the Heavenly Father's love surpasses all earthly fathers' love, who even in their evil condition, recognize their children's needs (7:8-11).

Therefore,⁸⁶ instead of judging wrongly and falsely, the disciple is to do unto others as he would want men to do unto him (Matt. 7:12). Under the claim of *μετάνοια*

⁸³Bonhoeffer, op. cit., p. 159.

⁸⁴The verbs in this verse: *ἑκτεῖτε*, *ἠνεῖτε*, and *κεῖντε* are present imperatives and denote continual action and intensity, Lenski, op. cit., p. 284. This shows the regularity and persistence with which the disciple under the claim of *μετάνοια* brings his petitions before his Heavenly Father.

⁸⁵Bonhoeffer, op. cit., pp. 160f.

⁸⁶The *οὖν* seems to make this verse rest on what has previously been said, Lenski, op. cit., pp. 286ff.

the disciple cannot look askance at his fellow-sinner in sharp Pharisaical judgment and reproof. Under this claim he must be as strict in condemning evil in himself as he was before with others, and as forgiving with the evil in others as he was before with himself.⁸⁷ The disciple has received God's gift of love, and his whole understanding and application of judgment must be determined by that gift.

Furthermore, the disciples' understanding and application of judgment must be viewed eschatologically, in the light of God's ultimate judgment. If, under the claim of Jesus' call, their whole existence is determined by the grace and mercy shown them, they become men who go in by the narrow gate down the way that leads to eternal life (Matt. 7:13,14). They have no guarantee that they will ever be a majority, so they dare not pin their hopes on large numbers.⁸⁸ Moreover, the way is narrow and the way is hard. It includes accepting the gift of *μετάνοια* in faith and it includes coming under the claim of *μετάνοια*. He who refuses to come under the claim has not accepted the gift, and such a one follows the majority through the wide gate that leads to destruction. Schlatter rightly summarizes this thought: "Denn daraus, wie wir uns zu Gottes Gnade

⁸⁷Bonhoeffer, op. cit., p. 161.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 162.

und Gerechtigkeit stellen, entsteht uns das Leben oder der Untergang."⁸⁹

From the gates Jesus directs the attention of the disciples to the false guides who propose to lead them (Matt. 7:15-20). They are characterized by their imitation of the disciple himself, and of such the true disciple is to "beware." That characteristic is not an enduring one, however, for eventually evil will "out." The false prophet will show his true colors by the kind of fruit that he produces. He will show whether his works are according to faith or presumption, whether they bring about harmony or contention, whether they overcome evil or strengthen it, whether they are edifying for people or whether they degrade them.⁹⁰ Here the disciples are called to a true and loyal discipleship themselves by distinguishing between appearance and reality, between themselves and pseudo-Christians.⁹¹ There is no other alternative: every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and cast into the fire; every false prophet will meet with God's judgment (7:19).

Jesus expands the reference to judgment in 7:21-23. "Not everyone that says 'Lord, Lord' shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven." There are those who confess Christ with

⁸⁹Schlatter, op. cit., p. 85.

⁹⁰Ibid., p. 86.

⁹¹Bonhoeffer, op. cit., pp. 164ff.

the lips and even those who do great things in his name who will be rejected in the last judgment, for in all their doing they have not done the will of the Heavenly Father. To such people Jesus says: "I never knew you." Thus the disciple must understand the call to repentance as an act of God's grace--the will of God--which he must obey. The call to repentance is put over the whole life of the disciple, for "his whole life is centered in God and moves toward judgment; for those who abide under the Messianic word of Jesus there is no escaping that tension while the world stands."⁹²

The test of discipleship: hearing
and doing (Matt. 7:24-29)

We have seen the gift of *μετάνοια* bestowed upon the disciple and the claim laid upon him as a result of that gift. Here, in the concluding verses of the Sermon, Jesus summarizes all that he has said with the parable of the wise and foolish builder. As Bonhoeffer points out:

The end of the Sermon on the Mount echoes the beginning. The word of the last judgment is foreshadowed in the call to follow. But from beginning to end it is always his word and his call, his alone.⁹³

Jesus bids his disciples to "do" his words. However, this is by no means to be mere outward compliance with certain

⁹²Franzmann, op. cit.

⁹³Bonhoeffer, op. cit., p. 167.

requirements; the disciples are to do them in and by the power which they themselves bestow.⁹⁴ Jesus' word is a Messianic word, a deed done for men, divine grace conveyed to men, a divine claim being made upon men.⁹⁵ He who does these words in and with the power given by the Caller is like a sensible man who builds his house upon a rock; he shall survive against God's judgment, because his house is founded upon the word of Jesus who gives him the power both to hear and to do. But the foolish man, who builds his house upon the sand does not "do" the words of Jesus. His house is built upon something other than the words of Jesus, something that will not survive the storm of God's judgment. We cite a very apt and fitting conclusion for this section in the words of Schlatter:

Sein Wort ist zwar Gottes herrliche Gabe, voll erretten-
der Macht und dennoch hilft es nicht allen, bringt viel-
mehr den einen Fall und Gericht, den anderen Segen und
Leben. Die einen werden an ihm zu Toren, die anderen
zu Weisen. Jene sind die, die es blosz hoeren, diese
die, die es tun.⁹⁶

This chapter of our thesis has shown that the Sermon on the Mount is a part of Jesus' call to repentance. The whole life of the disciple is to be a life of repentance, for he has been given the gift of repentance in the call of Jesus,

⁹⁴Lenski, op. cit., p. 301.

⁹⁵Franzmann, op. cit.

⁹⁶Schlatter, op. cit., p. 88.

and he is required to carry out the demands and claims of repentance. This is the sum and substance of the Sermon on the Mount. We conclude with Behm:

Die ganze Verkuendigung Jesu, wo immer sie um der Gottesherrschaft willen kategorische Forderungen stellt (Bergpredigt, Sprueche von der Nachfolge!), ist, auch ohne die Worte umkehren, Umkehr zu gebrauchen, Verkuendigung der *μετανοια*, der bedingungslosen Hinkehr zu Gott, der bedingungslosen Abkehr von allem Gottwidrigen, nicht nur dem, was ein fuer allemal boese ist, sondern auch dem, was im konkreten Fall die totale Hinkehr zu Gott unmoeglich macht.⁹⁷

⁹⁷Johannes Behm, s.v. "*μετανοια, μετανοια*," Theologisches Woerterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1942), IV, 997.

Jesus' call to repentance in the Sermon on the Mount. In order to bring out these characteristics more sharply we have used parallel texts from Matthew's Gospel to support our claims. Much of the material that follows has been drawn from sections of systematic Scripture texts in Martin Franke's *Exegese des Neuen Testaments*.

Jesus' Call to Repentance is Universal in Scope

The first characteristic of Jesus' call to repentance in the Sermon and in the Gospel as a whole is the universality of Jesus' call. At first glance it may seem that

Martin Franke, *Exegese des Neuen Testaments* (Revised edition; printed by Concordia Seminary Press Shop, St. Louis, Mo., 1950).

CHAPTER IV

CHARACTERISTICS OF JESUS' CALL TO REPENTANCE AND PARALLELS IN MATTHEW'S GOSPEL

We have attempted to show in the preceding chapters the background, the proclamation, and the meaning of Jesus' call to repentance as it comes to us in the Sermon on the Mount. To be sure, the elements of the prophetic call to repentance are not only present, but expounded more precisely in Jesus' call to repentance. It remains for us now to draw into sharper focus the characteristics of Jesus' call to repentance in the Sermon on the Mount. In order to bring out these characteristics more sharply we draw upon parallel texts from Matthew's Gospel to support our claims. Much of the material that follows has been drawn from sections of systematized Scripture texts in Martin Franzmann's Basileia Tou Theou.¹

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¹Martin Franzmann, Basileia Tou Theou (Revised edition; printed by Concordia Seminary Print Shop, St. Louis, Mo., 1956).

the Sermon itself does not have any reference to Jesus' universal call since it is fundamentally disciple teaching. Yet there are references to its universal character which we intend to bring out below. This can be shown in two different ways: first, Jesus' call pronounces a judgment on all men; and secondly, Jesus' call proclaims himself as universal Savior.

We do not have to look very far in the Sermon to see Jesus' judgment on man, for in the First Beatitude he speaks of man as a beggar, spiritually desolate, possessing all things only through the gift bestowed upon him by the Caller (5:3). Jesus pictures man as sinful, in constant need of God's forgiveness (6:12) and without any recourse of his own. Perhaps the classic example of Jesus' view of man in the Sermon on the Mount is found in 7:11. Here Jesus pictures man at his best, in his fatherhood, and at the same time speaks of him as being evil. What makes the indictment even more severe is the fact that Jesus speaks of man's evil nature only incidentally, as something that he takes for granted. (The universality of the condemnation is brought out more forcefully when we keep in mind that Jesus is here talking to disciples.)

These severe indictments of man in the Sermon are matched in the rest of Matthew's Gospel. Here, too, we see Jesus in his call to repentance pronouncing his judgment on all men. Jesus speaks of mankind as defiled from within,

for all the sinful acts which men commit have their origin in a sinful heart (15:18ff.). Man is by nature blind and without understanding in spiritual things (13:14ff.) and because of this his life is forfeit; he owes an overwhelming debt (18:23-25).

Just as the call to repentance pronounces a universal judgment, so also it proclaims a universal Savior. Jesus is the Savior not only of the beggar, the mourner, and the meek in the Sermon (5:3-5), but he is there also for the "crowds" (4:23-25; 5:1; 7:28), if they will become beggars, mourners, and meek. Jesus is indeed there for the whole earth and the whole world (5:13-16) and men are to see his Father through the "salt" and "light" of the disciples who show the glory of God by their good works (cf. 7:12). Jesus comes to a group of fishermen, casting and mending their nets (4:18-22), to a tax-collector (9:9), to little children (18:1-4), all of whom he speaks of as sinners (9:12,13). Jesus calls men to repentance through miracles. He proclaims himself as Savior to a leper, to a Roman centurion, to Peter's mother-in-law, to those who were demon-possessed (chapter 8). His miracles are signs which call men to turn to him in faith (11:20-24). He offers the gift of the Kingdom in cities and villages and synagogues (4:23; 9:35). He calls to repentance his "righteous" contemporaries--the Scribes and the Pharisees (15:1ff.; 23:2ff.); and the Saducees (16:1ff.; 22:23ff.). And when Judaism

refuses the call, he offers the Kingdom to the Gentiles (8:10,11; 28:18), thus indicating the ultimately universal character of his call to repentance.

Jesus' Call to Repentance Confers the Gift of Repentance

Not only is Jesus' call to repentance universal in its scope; Jesus also confers the gift of repentance of which he speaks. This, in the writer's estimation, is the whole impact of the Sermon on the Mount. For the disciple can carry out the claims of *μετάνοια* in the Sermon only as he has accepted the gift. It is evident from the above-mentioned passages that not everyone accepts the gift of *μετάνοια*. The Jewish nation as a whole and the Scribes and Pharisees in particular would not be called to repentance (11:20ff.; 12:38-45; 15:1-11; 21:23-46; 22:1-14; chapter 23). But upon those who hearken to the call the gift is conferred.

In the Sermon Jesus confers the gift of *μετάνοια* upon beggars, the mourners, the meek, the hungerers and thirsters (5:3-6). He makes them "salt" and "light," so that they can carry out the claim of *μετάνοια*. He points the disciples to himself when he calls them "blessed," for it is he who has brought about the change in their hearts. He has given them new hearts and wills to trust completely and solely in him; he has given them faith

in him so that they can focus all of their attention on him and his Kingdom.

Likewise in the Gospel Jesus confers the gift of repentance upon those whom he calls. The rebellious son can turn to the Father and do his will because he has been summoned to a new existence, because he has been given a repentant, a believing heart in the call to repentance (21:28-32). The man "sick of the palsy" (9:2) and the two blind men (9:27-31) receive forgiveness and health because they accepted the call to repentance--they "believed." Thus faith, a part of *μετάνοια* might be called the positive side of Jesus' call to repentance. It is there, in the call, for the child (18:1-6), for him whose eyes have been opened in the call (13:16,17), for those who will have "rest" (11:28). Such is the gift conferred upon those whom Jesus calls to repentance.

Jesus' Call to Repentance Lays a Claim on Those Called

Those, however, upon whom the gift of repentance is conferred, also are to carry out the claim of *μετάνοια*. Jesus recognizes that this is impossible with man (19:26), for man must continue to hunger and thirst after righteousness that he may continually be filled (5:3). Man must continually ask God for forgiveness because he continually sins (6:12). And yet the claims and demands of *μετάνοια*

are there, laid upon the disciple. The solution to the problem lies in the fact that he who conferred the gift of *μετάνοια* also confers the power to carry out the claim.

The first claim that Jesus demands of those whom he calls is that their repentance be a radical one, a repentance that goes down to the very "root" of man's being. He requires a turning away from everything that hinders a total conversion to God. Jesus spells out this claim very succinctly in the Sermon on the Mount with three striking contrasts. First of all, man cannot divide his heart between himself and God in his righteousness (5:17ff.); his repentance must be complete, and if his body stands in the way he must deny his body (5:29,30), that is, he must deny himself (16:24). The second contrast is that the disciple cannot divide his heart between God and men. God requires a total and complete piety and worship (6:1-18), not for the sake of the approval of men, but out of devotion to the God who has called him to repentance. For that reason, too, the disciple is called upon to renounce the majority (7:13); God must have the claim of *μετάνοια*, not men. In the same way the disciple cannot divide his heart between God and "things," and this is the third contrast (6:19-34). He can develop no personal attachment for material things, but must lay up treasure "in heaven." He can only serve one master and the Master whom he has been called to serve requires all of his trust and devotion.

Similar contrasts are brought out in the Gospel which show the totality of the claim of *μετάνοια*. The disciple must be ready to renounce family, honor, life (10: 37-39), for no human value can cancel the complete claim of Christ on a man. He must renounce wealth (19:16-22) and seek "the pearl of great price" (13:45,46), the Kingdom and the blessings of the Caller. The fruit that the disciple bears must be good fruit, for the tree is known by its fruit (12:33,34); the claim of *μετάνοια* is a total claim.

What is more, all of these passages show eschatological direction. The claim of *μετάνοια* is always a total claim in view of the last judgment. For those who come under the claim of Jesus' call there is life and salvation, but those who refuse must face God the Judge and the last judgment.

Not only is Jesus' claim upon those whom he has called a total claim, it is also a permanent claim, characterizing the whole life of the disciple. His whole life must be a life of repentance--he must continually accept the gift and come under the claim of the Caller. That is why Jesus can say in the Sermon on the Mount that the righteousness of the disciples must "abound" more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees (5:20); it must be a permanent righteousness. The whole life of the disciple must be "perfect" (5:48), characterized by an absolute singleness of purpose. His

whole life is directed toward "seeking the Kingdom" (6:33), to a constant and unending "hearing" and "doing" (7:21-29). Moreover, the disciple can carry out this claim only as he is empowered to do so by the Messianic Caller who continually offers forgiveness (6:12).

Jesus also speaks of such a permanent repentance in other parts of Matthew's Gospel. This is brought out in the parable of the talents (25:14ff.), for man is held responsible for the grace that has been given him. Jesus demands such a permanent repentance in his condemnation of the Scribes and Pharisees who "say," but do not "do" (23:3). The whole life of the disciple is to be spent in doing the will of the Father--only then can he be called Jesus' brother (12:50). Jesus pictures man's life of repentance as a child-Father relationship (5:45); the child must continually recognize his dependence on the Father. Such humility is the essence of true and permanent repentance. Perhaps the capstone for this claim of Jesus is the summary of the commandments (22:36-40), love to God and love to neighbor. The whole life of the disciple is to be a life of love--a life derived from, a life lived for, the One who first loved him.

These are the characteristics of Jesus' call to repentance in the Sermon on the Mount. They are elucidated and drawn more sharply into focus by parallels in the Gospel of Matthew. These parallels indicate that the Sermon on the Mount is indeed a part of Jesus' call to repentance.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

When viewed against the backdrop of the Old Testament and the purpose of Matthew's Gospel the Sermon on the Mount is a part of Jesus' call to repentance. The Old Testament concept of the *Basileia* and the prophetic call to repentance are fundamental for a right understanding of the Sermon, for they bridge the gap between the Old Testament and the New Testament. They show the Judaic understanding of these concepts when John the Baptist announced the Kingdom at hand in the person of Jesus and renewed the prophetic call to repentance. Jesus, in turn, took up the preaching of John, proclaiming the Kingdom at hand in his own person and work and renewing John's call to repentance. The whole structure of Matthew's Gospel indicates that the Gospel is a record of Messianic action, a fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the expected and longed-for King. In Jesus' proclamation of the *Basileia* he points out to men that he is indeed that King and invites men into his Kingdom through the call to repentance. It is in this context that Matthew records Jesus' Sermon on the Mount.

The Sermon, then, is a part of Jesus' call to repentance, for it points the hearers to the King who has called

them, and it spells out for them the gift and the claim of the call. The characteristics of the repentance called for in the Sermon on the Mount are the same characteristics found in the prophetic call to repentance and in John the Baptist's call. In the Sermon Jesus calls for a turning away from sin in contrition and a turning to God in obedience. He calls for faith, a whole and complete trust in him who has issued the call. His call to repentance is not exclusive, but universal, and it always points to God who confers the gift of repentance. These same characteristics of Jesus' call to repentance are elucidated by parallels in Matthew's Gospel. In short, Jesus wants the whole life of the disciple to be a total, permanent, continual repentance. Such is the impact of his message in the Sermon on the Mount.

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