

NEW TESTAMENT COMMUNITIES IN TRANSITION: A STUDY OF MATTHEW AND LUKE

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THE RECOGNITION of biblical theology as a separate and autonomous discipline has challenged the Church to rethink how it uses Scripture in its practice of prayer, in its preaching, in its liturgical life, and in its theology. The process toward this recognition began in the Roman Catholic Church when biblical criticism was reintroduced by Pius XII. Biblical studies have since then gradually, if sometimes reluctantly, been accepted into the mainstream of Catholic thought. Such acceptance has, however, brought us to what Raymond E. Brown has described as "the current painful assimilation of the implications of biblical criticism for Catholic doctrine, theology, and practice."¹ This article is intended to contribute to that assimilation by presenting data from the writings of Matthew and Luke judged relevant to the question "Why the Church?"

Biblical theology is a historical discipline. Its first and most crucial task is to provide an empathetic description and understanding of the biblical writings, each on its own terms. It uses categories appropriate to the culture in which these writings emerged. It interprets what they meant in their historical setting without borrowing categories from later times. It provides, in Krister Stendahl's terms, "a frontal nonpragmatic, nonapologetic attempt to describe OT or NT faith and practice from within its own presuppositions, and with due attention to its own organizing principles, regardless of its possible ramifications for those who live by the Bible as the Word of God."² The primary task in this article, then, is to describe how Matthew and Luke thought about the role and function of the Church, each in his own historical context.

The descriptive task alone, however, does not show how these writings can inspire Christian theology today, or how they are to be accepted by contemporary theologians as a *norma normans non normata*. Such questions are important for theologians who believe that Matthew and Luke not only had a meaning in the past but also have a meaning in the

* EDITOR'S NOTE—W. G. Thompson has written the introduction, the section on Matthew, and the conclusion; E. A. LaVerdiere has written the section on Luke.

¹ *The Virginal Conception and Bodily Resurrection of Jesus* (New York, 1973) p. 3. For a statement of the biblical suppositions for this article, see pp. 15–20; also R. E. Brown, K. P. Donfried, J. Reumann, eds., *Peter in the New Testament* (New York, 1973) pp. 7–22.

² "Biblical Theology, Contemporary," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* 1 (New York, 1962) 425.

present. They are answered within the consciousness of the Church, a consciousness that accepts New Testament writings as sacred and canonical, expecting them somehow to inform and influence the Church's ongoing life and theology. Consequently, once we have described how Matthew and Luke thought about the Church, we will offer tentative suggestions as to how their writings might inspire theologians and function as normative in their thinking about the Church today.

To discover how Matthew and Luke can inform and influence contemporary understandings of the Church, we must first recognize that the context of their questions was not the same as ours, that their world view was significantly different from ours. They explained the *raison d'être* of local communities. Communication among them had just begun to be established. Matthew's largely Jewish-Christian community had little or no contact with or influence on the predominantly Gentile-Christian communities addressed by Luke. The Evangelists also thought these local communities would continue to exist only until the second coming of Jesus Christ. Whatever ties they established with Judaism, with Hellenistic culture, and with the Roman Empire would be temporary, passing away at the Parousia. Furthermore, since Matthew and Luke imagined the world to be limited to the Roman Empire, they may well have expected that the gospel could be preached to the whole world in a short time. The Church's mission was clearly universal not only in intention but also with the hope of actual fulfilment. Finally, Matthew and Luke expressed their understanding of the Church's function in stories about Jesus and the early Church. Matthew narrated the life of Jesus from his conception to his resurrection, guided by a historical perspective that would enable his readers to find their own experience reflected in the narrative. Luke introduced "history" as a literary form, so that his second-generation Gentile communities could see precisely how they remained in continuity with Jesus of Nazareth and his immediate followers.

Our situation is very different. We ask about the role and function of the universal Church, a Church that spans the entire world and speaks to that world through an efficient network of communication. The result is that our thinking about the Church must take into account the vast cultural pluralism that exists today. We are also aware that, as a long-established institution, the universal Church has a complex social, economic, and political history. It has established and maintained multiple relations to secular institutions at the local, national, and international levels. It cannot put them aside or exist without them. We recognize, furthermore, that the world population is so vast that we cannot expect to announce the gospel to even a significant number of the men and women alive to-

day. Our thinking about the Church's mission must be very different from that of Matthew and Luke. Finally, theologians today do more than retell stories about Jesus and the early Church. We speak several languages at once: the descriptive language of the Gospel narratives, the propositional language of creedal formulae and doctrinal statements, and the technical language of systematic theology. The distance, then, that separates Matthew and Luke from later creeds and dogmas, from the institutional Church, and from our modern situation makes us realize that they thought about the Church in a context very different from our own. A creative tension must be maintained between these two situations.³

Despite the distance, however, theologians in every age claim that the biblical writings, such as Matthew and Luke, constitute the norm, the *norma normans non normata*, for Christian theology. For some the Bible functions as a negative norm. They seek to understand the Church from the data of contemporary experience, formulate their understanding in nonbiblical language, and then ask whether it is consistent with the Bible. For other theologians, however, the Bible also has a more positive function. They develop an understanding of the Church both from contemporary experience and from the Bible. The biblical writings inform, influence, and positively inspire them in their search for understanding.⁴ Neither group of theologians affirms that because the Bible is the Word of God, it must speak the same literal message to every age. Nor do they consider the biblical writings so culturally conditioned that they cannot speak to our present situation. Both groups agree that the Bible is the norm for Christian theology, but they disagree on the way it functions as norm.⁵

Another way to describe how the Bible can function as a positive norm in theology is to say that it provides contemporary theologians with "paradigms" that inform, influence, and inspire them as they think about the Church. James M. Gustafson has provided a useful description of biblical paradigms:

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 425-30. For further discussion see W. Wink, *The Bible in Human Transformation: Toward a New Paradigm for Biblical Study* (Philadelphia, 1973) pp. 19-31; R. E. Brown, "The Current Crisis in Theology as It Affects the Teaching of Catholic Doctrine," in his *Biblical Reflections on Crises Facing the Church* (New York, 1975) pp. 3-19.

⁴ Both Roger Haight and Robert Sears, later in this issue, use Scripture as a positive norm, but they differ in the extent to which they allow the Bible to influence their understanding of the Church. Haight bases his understanding on the biblical symbol "mission"; Sears builds his understanding of the Church as community on data from both the Old and the New Testaments.

⁵ For the spectrum of different uses of Scripture, see J. Peter Schineller's article in this issue.

Paradigms are basic models of a vision of life, and of the practice of life, from which flow certain consistent attitudes, outlooks (or "onlooks"), rules or norms of behavior, and specific actions. . . . Rather the paradigm *in-forms* and *in-fluences* the life of the community and its members as they become what they are under their own circumstances. By *in-form* I wish to suggest more than giving data or information; I wish to suggest a formation of life. By *in-fluence* I wish to suggest a flowing into the life of the community and its members. A paradigm allows for the community and its members to make it their own, to bring it into the texture and fabric of life that exists, conditioned as that is by its historical circumstances, by the sorts of limitations and extensions of particular capacities and powers that exist in persons and communities.⁶

As paradigms, the Matthean and Lukan writings can inform and influence the Church in its prayer life, in its preaching, in its liturgical life, or in its theology. In this article we limit our reflections to how they can influence contemporary theology.

One can begin to determine a biblical paradigm either from the texture and fabric of life in the Church today or from the biblical writings themselves. In this series of articles we are beginning from the contemporary experience of radical change, the type of change that leads to a new self-understanding and calls for new patterns of behavior. Events that have shaped our understanding of "the modern world"—wars, technology, industrialism, communications media, Darwin, Freud, Marx, Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, etc.—have also caused the Church to question her behavior and identity. Such a change is perhaps best illustrated in Roman Catholicism. Langdon Gilkey has described the scene from a Protestant perspective:

To those both within and without her massive walls, present-day Roman Catholicism presents a scene of vast, almost unrelieved confusion. . . . Many of her fundamental practices have slipped away; her most cherished dogmas and sacrosanct authorities are scorned by many and ignored or questioned by most; her formerly changeless patterns of life are altered by an accelerating flux of fads; and her treasured unity is broken by intense inner conflicts.⁷

Matthew and Luke have been selected from the New Testament precisely because these Evangelists wrote for communities in transition.⁸ Matthew's largely Jewish-Christian community had come to see themselves no longer as a sectarian group within Judaism but as an

⁶ "The Relation of the Gospels to the Moral Life," in D. G. Miller and D. Y. Hadidian, eds., *Jesus and Man's Hope 2* (Pittsburgh, 1971) 111.

⁷ *Catholicism Confronts Modernity: A Protestant View* (New York, 1975) p. 2.

⁸ The choice of Matthew and Luke, rather than Paul and John, may surprise theologians unfamiliar with redaction-critical and composition-critical studies of the New Testament, which stress the role of the Synoptic Evangelists as theologians. See N. Perrin, *What Is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia, 1969).

independent religious movement founded by Jesus, the Jewish Messiah. The Lukan communities, predominantly Gentile-Christians, faced the challenge of integrating their Hellenistic culture and their existence in the Roman political world with their conversion to Christianity, a religion founded by a Jew from Nazareth. Both Evangelists presented their communities with a new understanding of what it meant to be Christians and how they should live in their contemporary world.

In this article, then, we are principally concerned to describe how Matthew and Luke thought about the Church in a time of transition. We will conclude, however, with suggestions about how their understandings might function as normative for Christian theologians as they attempt to understand the Church today. Our suggestions will remain tentative, since biblical theologians can decide what is normative only in dialogue with the entire theological community within the Church.

MATTHEW

The concrete situation, addressed by Matthew in his Gospel, can be described as follows. First, Matthew wrote for a group of predominantly but not exclusively Jewish-Christians. Secondly, his work can be dated about fifteen years after the Jewish war which ended with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, that is, around A.D. 85. Thirdly, he and his community were situated in a place, most likely Palestine or Syria, where recent developments within Judaism, especially the growth of Jamnia Pharisaism, largely determined the religious environment. Finally, the Evangelist faced confusion, tension, conflict, and the destructive influence of false prophets within the community. To substantiate these statements, we must look at the Gospel itself. How does it mirror and hence reveal this situation?⁹

Matthean scholars broadly agree that the Christians in Matthew's community were largely, but not exclusively, converts from Judaism. They argue from the obvious "Jewishness" of the first Gospel. The Matthean Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of David, promised in the Old Testament and eagerly awaited by the Jews.¹⁰ Furthermore, Matthew rooted Jesus' origin and his ministry of teaching, preaching, and healing in the Jewish past through several explicit quotations of the Old Testament and even more indirect allusions.¹¹ He is also more concerned than the other Evangelists with the Christian attitude toward the

⁹ For an excellent summary of recent work on Matthew, see D. J. Harrington, "Matthean Studies since Joachim Rohde," *Heythrop Journal* 16 (1975) 375-88.

¹⁰ Mt 1:1-17; 9:27; 12:22-24; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9; 21:14-17; 22:41-46.

¹¹ The so-called "formula quotations" (Mt 1:22-23; 2:5-6; 2:15; 2:17-18; 2:23b; 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:18-21; 13:35; 21:4-5; 27:9-10) have long been recognized as a distinctive Matthean characteristic. For recent discussion see Harrington, *art. cit.*, pp. 386-87.

religious institutions of Judaism, especially the law and the cult.¹² Consequently, the Christians for whom Matthew wrote his Gospel must have had the religious and cultural background necessary to understand his portrayal of Jesus and the disciples. They must have, for example, been familiar with the Old Testament and the practices of Jewish piety. In a word, they must have been to a large extent converts from Judaism.

W. D. Davies has called attention to the fact that even though the Jewish war (A.D. 66-70) and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple (A.D. 70) did not profoundly influence the over-all development of Christianity, these events did in fact have a profound impact on Matthew and his community. Davies has summarized the direct evidence as follows:

In two passages, he [Matthew] introduces what can hardly be other than direct references to these [events]. In the parable of the wedding feast, in xxii. 1 ff., the anger of the king with the recalcitrant elect, that is, the Jews, is expressed in what is almost certainly a reference to the siege and fall of the city. "The King was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city" (xxii. 7). That is, the rejection of Israel is discussed particularly in connexion with A.D. 70. Equally significant, and consonant with this, is that Matthew places the poignant cry of Jesus over Jerusalem at the close of his anti-Pharisaic discourse. The culmination of that indictment and its vindication he states in xxiii. 37f.: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem. . . Behold, your house [temple] is forsaken and desolate" (RSV). . . It is followed immediately in chapter xxiv by the discussion of the Parousia, which in Matthew has been interpreted by Feuillet as the divine judgment on Judaism in the fall of Jerusalem and which, in any case, includes that event (xxiv. 1-3).¹³

Other minor indications also reveal Matthew's concern with the city of Jerusalem: the reference to Jerusalem in the first Passion-prediction (16:21), the disturbance of the whole city at Jesus' entrance (21:10-11). At his death those raised from the dead "went into the holy city" (27:53), and after his resurrection the custodians at the tomb "went into the city" to report what had happened (28:11). This data suggests that we date the final composition of the Gospel at a time when the events of the Jewish war, especially the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, had already caused Matthew's largely Jewish-Christian community to reflect on their identity, that is, around A.D. 85.

It has also been widely recognized since Davies' work that central to the Matthean community's struggle to understand themselves as Christians in a changing world was the question of how they should relate to recent developments within Judaism, especially the emergence of

¹² See Harrington, *art. cit.*, pp. 380-81, 387.

¹³ *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge, Eng., 1964) pp. 298-99.

Jamnia Pharisaism. The Pharisees at Jamnia, with Johanan ben Zakkai their leader, were assuming exclusive power. They saw to it that their only remaining rivals, the Sadducees, were discredited, and they found ways to contain the traditionally powerful priesthood. Johanan gained control of the calendar, indicating by this act that the Beth Din at Jamnia had taken over an important function of the Great Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. Control of the calendar was crucial for a religion based on the observance of the law. Johanan also assumed the right to regulate the conduct of priests in worship. He transferred to the synagogues a part of the Temple ritual, and he legislated about the gifts and offerings normally due to the Temple. Within Pharisaism the conflicts between the Hillelites and the Shammaites were gradually resolved in favor of the former, and codification was introduced into the previously chaotic interpretation of the law. Also in the interests of unification, the sages at Jamnia attempted to regulate the synagogue worship. To awaken popular sentiment, they linked its service to that of the now defunct Temple. But at the same time they standardized the traditional service, concentrated on the problem of the canon of Scripture, and instituted the rabbinate as the authoritative interpreter of the law. Finally, Jamnian Judaism consciously confronted Christianity. The Birkath ha Minim, the use of the ban, and other tendencies, both liturgical and nonliturgical, were introduced to deal with the rising significance of this new religious sect.¹⁴

Such dramatic changes in Judaism profoundly disturbed the Matthean community. Their self-understanding had been rooted in Jewish tradition. But as Jamnia Pharisaism rose to prominence, they were forced to question their relation to Judaism and even their own identity. Could they continue as a sect within Judaism? Should they accept or reject the self-understanding promoted by the sages? Were they to continue their mission to the Jews? What attitude should they take toward the law? Matthew wrote his Gospel in large part to awaken a new self-understanding in the light of these circumstances. He wrote in dialogue with the recent developments at Jamnia, to show his community what it meant to be Christians in the changing milieu of postwar Judaism.

Within the community confusion and doubt prevailed; for what the Matthean Jesus predicts as future events describes the present experience of Matthew's community: "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death; and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away, and betray one another, and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many

¹⁴ For a full treatment of these developments at Jamnia, see Davies, *ibid.*, pp. 256-86.

astray. And because wickedness is multiplied, most men's love will grow cold. But he who endures to the end will be saved" (24:9-13).¹⁵ Matthew and his community, then, had to confront important issues: persecution from non-Jewish sources, scandal caused by mutual betrayal, hatred between members, the divisive influence of false prophets, and widespread wickedness causing love itself to grow cold.

In dialogue with Jamnia Pharisaism and in response to these tensions within his community, Matthew retold the story of Jesus from his conception to after his resurrection. The author of Luke-Acts, as we shall see, chose to tell both the story of Jesus (Lk) and the story of the early Christian community (Acts). But Matthew so selected, arranged, and composed his material that his readers might find themselves in the narrative. He created a distinctive portrait of Jesus, his followers, and his opponents. Members of his community could identify with the disciples and see the opponents as surrogates for the sages at Jamnia. Matthew could address them through the words and actions of Jesus.¹⁶

Matthew stressed four themes. First, and above all, he presented his community with a new understanding of their mission. They had been sent to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel." But now they should devote themselves to the wider Gentile mission. Secondly, to carry out that mission, he urged them no longer to understand themselves as a sectarian group within Judaism. Recent developments indicated that they should accept their separation from Jamnia Pharisaism and claim an independent identity with roots in Jesus Christ and the Jewish Messiahs and through him in their Jewish past. Thirdly, Matthew urged reconciliation, forgiveness, and mutual love within the community; for the Gentile mission would never succeed unless the community learned how to manage the confusion, tension, and conflict that divided them one from another. Finally, as motivation for the Gentile mission, Matthew assured his community that when the Son of Man comes, he will judge not only themselves but also the Gentiles to whom they are sent. We shall describe each theme in greater detail.

Gentile Mission

Exegetes have long recognized that the final commission "to make disciples of all Gentiles" (28:16-20) dominates Matthew's historical and

¹⁵ For a full exposition of this passage, cf. W. G. Thompson, "An Historical Perspective in the Gospel of Matthew," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 93 (1974) 243-62.

¹⁶ An approach to the Gospels as "dramatic history" has been suggested by R. M. Frye, "A Literary Perspective for the Criticism of the Gospels," in *Jesus and Man's Hope* (n. 6 above) 2, 193-221. I understand the Matthean narrative as comparable to a drama on-stage. The action is the narrative itself, the Evangelist is the playwright-director off-stage, and the community is the audience. Matthew speaks to his community, like the playwright-director, through the action in the narrative. His message and their situation can be discovered principally by looking at the action on-stage.

theological perspective.¹⁷ It is the one event that must be completed before the end can come: "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached throughout the whole world, as a testimony to all Gentiles; and then the end will come" (24:14). And the commission is given in an appearance of the risen Lord for which the Matthean Jesus has carefully prepared his followers; for at the Last Supper Jesus announces that, once risen from the dead, he will go before his disciples into Galilee (26:31-32). And both the angel and the risen Jesus tell the women at the empty tomb to carry this message to his disciples: "he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him" (28:7, 10).

The commission itself is simple and unadorned. Jesus appears to his disciples, and they see him. Some worship him, but others doubt. Jesus presents himself as all-powerful, commissions them to make disciples of all Gentiles, and promises his abiding presence to the end (28:18-20).

Studies of this passage have shown that it is best understood as a revelation. Jesus reveals that, as their risen and exalted Lord, he has come into the full possession of all power. That is, the power he formerly exercised in his mission to Israel now extends to all the earth. Such a turning point in Jesus' career also marks a change for the disciples. Their mission had been formerly limited, like Jesus' mission, to "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (10:5b-6). But now it extends to all the Gentiles. Continuity with the past is assured, since the same disciples are now sent to baptize all Gentiles and to teach everything that Jesus has taught them.

Even though in his earthly life the Matthean Jesus is sent "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (15:24), Matthew focuses on Gentiles throughout his Gospel narrative. The Magi, pagan astrologers, come from the East to pay homage to Jesus, precisely as the Messiah of Israel, while in Jerusalem Herod seeks to destroy him (2:1-23). Prior to the cure of his servant, the pagan centurion is commended for his faith, as Jesus tells the crowds: "Truly, I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such faith" (8:10). Similarly, the Canaanite woman models confidence in Jesus' power and willingness to heal her daughter, and is granted her request with these words: "O woman, great is your faith! Be it done for you as you desire" (15:28). In the parable of the wicked husbandman Jesus warns the Jewish religious leaders: "Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it" (21:43). Finally, at the death of Jesus it is the Roman centurion and those with him who profess "Truly this was the Son of God!" (27:54). These episodes reveal the message of Matthew to his community. Throughout the lifetime of Jesus himself non-Jews believed in him.

¹⁷ For discussion and bibliography, see Thompson, *art. cit.* (n. 15 above) pp. 259-60. Also D. R. A. Hare and D. J. Harrington, "Make Disciples of All the Gentiles (Matthew 28:19)," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 37 (1975) 359-69.

Certainly now, long after his death, his followers should not be afraid to preach the gospel to the Gentiles and welcome them into their community.

It is not surprising, then, that Matthew concluded his narrative with the explicit commission to "make disciples of all Gentiles" (28:19). Matthew emphasized the Gentile mission, so that his largely Jewish-Christian community might understand that in the changing world of postwar Judaism they were sent to preach the gospel to the Gentile world.

Judaism

To support the Gentile mission, Matthew needed to show his community that they were no longer a sectarian group within Judaism but had become an independent movement separate from Jamnia Pharisaism and rooted in Jesus Christ. Matthew communicated this self-understanding by portraying Jesus as the Jewish Messiah, as an authoritative teacher, and as in tension with the scribes and Pharisees.

The Matthean Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah promised in the Old Testament and eagerly awaited by the Jews. Matthew demonstrated this truth in the prologue (1:11-2:23) by providing apologetic and scriptural answers to questions concerning the origin of Jesus and the place of his birth.¹⁸ How can Jesus be the Messiah? In the genealogy Matthew traces his lineage through Joseph to David and Abraham, placing him in the direct line of Jewish history and messianic expectations (1:1-17). He then explains how Jesus' origin and his name were revealed to Joseph (1:18-25). Why, then, does he not come from Bethlehem rather than Nazareth? Matthew resolves this dilemma with a journey from Bethlehem to Egypt and back to Nazareth (2:1-23). Each event in the narrative—the visit of the Magi, the flight into Egypt, the massacre of the innocents, and the return to Nazareth—is presented as the fulfilment of an Old Testament text.¹⁹

Matthew also uses quotations from the Old Testament to interpret the public ministry of Jesus: his move to Capharnaum, his healings, his use of parables, and his entry into Jerusalem.²⁰ And the title "Son of David" occurs throughout the Gospel.²¹ In this way Matthew does not let the reader forget that Jesus is the Messiah promised in the Old Testament and eagerly awaited by the Jews.

The Matthean Jesus is also an authoritative ethical teacher, certainly

¹⁸ See K. Stendahl. "Quis et Unde?: An Analysis of Mt 1-2," in *Judentum-Urchristentum-Kirche* (Berlin, 1964) pp. 94-105.

¹⁹ Mt 2:5-6, 15, 17-18, 23b.

²⁰ Mt 4:14-16; 8:17; 12:18-21; 13:35; 24:4-5.

²¹ Mt 9:27; 12:22-24; 15:22; 21:9; 21:14-17.

a rabbi, perhaps the new Moses.²² He urges his followers to do the will of his Father in heaven.²³ To reveal that will, Jesus does not abolish the law and the prophets, but rather fulfils them by interpreting six statements of the law according to the more essential command, the love of God and neighbor.²⁴ He promises a future reward to those who do what he says, and he threatens punishment for those who do not.²⁵ And after his resurrection he commissions his eleven disciples to teach the Gentiles "to observe all that I have commanded you" (28:20). Matthew presents Jesus as the sole authoritative teacher, so that his community will follow his teaching rather than that of the sages at Jamnia.

Matthew's Jesus also argues with the scribes and Pharisees and teaches about them in parables. In Galilee the Pharisees react with hostility when Jesus cures the sick, and Jesus challenges their reaction.²⁶ He also argues with them about plucking grain on the Sabbath and about healing on the Sabbath (12:1-8, 9-14). But in the Temple in Jerusalem the debates grow into open conflict. Jesus talks about the Jewish religious establishment in parables concerning two sons and the tenants in the vineyard. The chief priests and Pharisees are aware that he is talking about them and seek to arrest him (21:28-46). But Jesus only teaches more explicitly about them in the parable of the wedding feast (22:1-14). The Pharisees continue to plot against him, send their disciples to question him about paying taxes to Caesar, watch the Sadducees ask about the resurrection, and then challenge him themselves about the great commandment (22:15-40). Jesus then takes the initiative in asking the assembled Pharisees about the Messiah (22:41-45). Matthew then adds the comment "And no one was able to answer him a word, nor from that day did anyone dare to ask him any more questions" (22:46). His readers could easily recognize in the debates between Jesus and the Pharisees their own debates with Jamnia Pharisaism.

The Matthean Jesus also warns his disciples and the crowds about the scribes and Pharisees. In the Sermon on the Mount he tells them that their righteousness must surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, and later applies that principle to almsgiving, prayer, and fasting.²⁷ After arguing with the Pharisees about ritual cleanliness, he warns his

²² For discussion of the Moses typology in Matthew, see Davies, *op. cit.* (n. 13 above) pp. 25-108.

²³ Mt 6:10; 7:21; 12:46-50; 26:39, 42.

²⁴ Mt 5:17-48; 7:12; 22:34-40.

²⁵ Mt 5:3-12, 17-20, 27-30; 6:1-18; 7:1-5, 13-14, 15-20, 21-23; 13:24-30, 36-43, 47-50; 18:5-6, 7-9.

²⁶ Mt 9:32-34; 12:22-24, 25-37, 38-45.

²⁷ Mt 5:20; 6:1-18.

disciples that the Pharisees are blind guides not to be followed (15:12-14). And when he has answered the Pharisees' demand for a sign, he tells his disciples to beware of their teaching (16:5-12). Such warnings are addressed to Matthew's community, teaching them what attitude to have toward Jamnia.

Matthew's anti-Pharisaism reaches its climax when Jesus teaches his disciples and the crowds how their behavior should differ from that of the scribes and Pharisees, then denounces his enemies as hypocrites and blind guides, and finally laments over Jerusalem (23:1-39). The issues named in the warnings are clear: "they preach, but do not practice. They bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with their finger. They do all their deeds to be seen by men . . ." (23:3-5).²⁸ True followers of Jesus, however, are not to be called rabbi, nor call any man their father, nor be called master. Rather they are to humble themselves and take on the role of a servant (23:8-12). Such a stark contrast would enable the Matthean community to understand how their behavior is to be patterned after that of Jesus rather than that of the Jamnia scribes and Pharisees.

Matthean Community

The Gentile mission could never be successful if the Matthean community did not learn to manage their internal confusion, tension, conflict, and the divisive influence of false prophets. So the Matthean Jesus invites his disciples, and at the same time the Evangelist invites his community, to deepen their faith. Jesus calls them "men of little faith" and attributes their inability to cure the possessed boy to their lack of faith.²⁹ He also rebukes them for failing to understand his warnings to and about the Pharisees.³⁰

But the episodes in which the need for greater faith is most strikingly taught are the calming of the storm at sea (8:18-27) and the walking on the water (14:22-35). Prior to the first storm, the Matthean Jesus commands the crowd around him to go over to the other side of the lake, but only the disciples will follow him into the boat. Who are these disciples, and how are they different from the rest of the crowd? Matthew

²⁸ Matthew does not totally discredit the scribes and Pharisees: "The scribes and Pharisees sit on Moses' seat; so practice and observe whatever they tell you, but not what they do" (Mt 23:2-3). This statement seems to contradict what Matthew has said about Jesus as the authoritative teacher and interpreter of the Jewish law. I have no answer to this contradiction, but only the suggestion that Matthew himself may not have arrived at a consistent, well-thought-out understanding of how Jewish Christians were to relate to Jamnia Pharisaism. Davies has commented: "Matthew reveals not a single, clearly defined attitude towards Judaism but one that is highly complex and varied" (*op. cit.*, p. 286).

²⁹ Mt 6:30; 8:26; 14:31; 16:8; 17:20.

³⁰ Mt 15:16-17; 16:8-11.

identifies them as those who are ready to share all that is implied in the fact that their master has no place to lay his head, and to put familial piety in second place when it conflicts with their commitment to follow Jesus (8:18-22). With the meaning of their action understood, the disciples follow Jesus into the boat. A storm rises, but Jesus is asleep. The disciples awaken him with an appeal for help: "Save, Lord; we are perishing." And Jesus responds with the question "Why are you afraid, O men of little faith?" (8:25-26). The disciples' inadequate faith refers to their lack of confidence in Jesus' power over the storm. But Matthew's readers, swamped by waves of opposition and conflict and with some beginning to lose heart, would easily identify with the disciples. Matthew calls for a deeper faith in Jesus' power over the evil symbolized by the storm at sea.³¹

Similarly, when Jesus walks through the storm to the disciples in the boat, he invites Peter to come to him on the water. Peter gets out of the boat, begins to walk toward Jesus, but then becomes afraid of the wind and begins to sink. Jesus catches him with the words "O man of little faith, why did you doubt?" (14:31). Once they are safe in the boat and the storm has ceased, the disciples worship Jesus with the profession "Truly you are the Son of God" (14:33). Once again Matthew intends his community to see their situation mirrored in the storm at sea, and their fears and doubts expressed in Peter's hesitation. He invites them to join the disciples in their renewed faith in Jesus as the Son of God.

Also through Jesus' instructions to his disciples Matthew addressed the confusion and conflict that was dividing his community. The Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:28) and the so-called communitarian discourse (17:22-18:35) are the clearest examples. In the Sermon the disciples and the crowd are called "blessed" when they experience persecution and all kinds of evil (5:11-12). In the first antithesis they are warned against divisive anger and urged to reconciliation (5:21-26). In the fifth they are taught not to resist an evildoer (5:38-42). In the final antithesis Jesus instructs them to love even their enemies (5:43-48). The need for mutual forgiveness is expressed as a petition in the Our Father (6:12) and elaborated at the end of the prayer (6:14-15). Finally, in the epilogue Jesus warns against false prophets (7:15-20) and against those who would claim a place in the kingdom of heaven on the basis of mighty works in his name (7:21-23). Matthew's community could easily apply these instructions to their own confusion and conflicts and to the divisive influence of false prophets in their midst.³²

³¹ For further discussion see W. G. Thompson, "Reflections on the Composition of Mt 8:1-9:34," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 33 (1971) 371-74.

³² For recent discussion of the problems confronting Matthew's community, see Harrington, "Matthean Studies since Joachim Rohde," pp. 379-80.

In the communitarian discourse in chapter 18, Matthew addresses the same issues, but against the background of Jesus' prediction of his own passion, death, and resurrection (17:22-23). His instructions concern attitudes and behavior among the disciples. If they would enter and achieve greatness in the future kingdom of heaven, they must now humble themselves like the child in their midst (18:1-4). Under no circumstances are they to weaken the faith of a fellow disciple through scandalous behavior (18:5-9). Instead, they should care for the one going astray and do everything possible to reconcile a brother who has wandered into sin (18:10-20). Finally, they are to forgive personal offenses without limit (18:21-35). Once again through these instructions Matthew teaches his community how to cope with their internal situation.³³

Final Judgment

As a motivation for the Gentile mission, Matthew assured his readers that when the Son of Man comes, he will judge not only themselves but also the Gentiles to whom they are sent. In his perspective history will end with that final judgment. The righteous will enter the kingdom of heaven, and the unrighteous will be punished. It is not surprising, then, that in the final sections of Matthew's eschatological discourse Jesus describes the judgment of the disciples and the Gentiles.³⁴

The Matthean Jesus exhorts his disciples to vigilance (24:36-25:30). He stresses the fact that, as the Son of Man, he will certainly come (24:37, 39, 43, 46; 25:6-7, 19), but also that his coming will be delayed (24:48; 25:5; also 25:19). Since the exact day and hour cannot be known, the disciples should watch and remain alert, like the faithful servant in his master's household or the virgins waiting for the bridegroom (24:36, 42, 44, 50; 25:13). When the Son of Man comes, however, the disciples will be divided one from another, like the men in the field or the women at the mill, like the faithful from the wicked servants, like the wise from the foolish virgins, or like the servants to whom the talents had been entrusted (24:40-41, 45-49; 25:2-4, 16-18). The reward will be great. The faithful servant will be set over all his master's possessions (24:47), the wise virgins enter the marriage feast (25:10), and the good and faithful servants enter into the joy of their master (25:20-23). But the punishment will be severe. The wicked servant will weep and gnash his teeth (24:51), the foolish virgins be excluded from the feast (25:11-12), and the slothful

³³ For further discussion see W. G. Thompson, *Matthew's Advice to a Divided Community* (Mt 17:22-18:35) (Rome, 1970).

³⁴ See J. Lambrecht, "The Parousia Discourse: Composition and Content in Mt., XXIV-XXV," in *L'Évangile selon Matthieu: Rédaction et théologie*, ed. M. Didier (Gembloux, 1972) pp. 309-42.

servant be cast into outer darkness (25:24–30). Finally, the criterion for judging the servants will be how faithful they were in carrying out their responsibilities (24:46–49). For the maidens it will be whether they are ready and watching at the bridegroom's coming (25:10, 13), and for servants entrusted with the talents it will be how well they made use of those talents (25:21, 23, 27).

Matthew addressed Jesus' words to his community in the aftermath of the Jewish war to correct the false impression that the end had already arrived and to call them to constant vigilance and readiness. He also wanted to motivate them to carry out the mission to all Gentiles. Merely belonging to the community would not guarantee entrance into the kingdom of heaven; for they will be judged on how well they used their different talents in the common task of "making disciples of all the Gentiles" (28:18) and in living with each other according to the law of love (22:34–40).

In the final scene, the judgment of the Gentiles (25:31–46), the Son of Man comes in his glory, the Gentiles are divided into the sheep and the goats, the sheep are rewarded and the goats are punished, and a clear criterion is expressed. Matthean scholars are more and more convinced that the Gentiles are being judged and that "the least of these my brethren" refers to the disciples sent to preach the gospel of the kingdom. The Gentiles will be judged by how well they treated the disciples. If they gave them food or drink, welcomed them or clothed them, or visited them in sickness or in prison, they will inherit the kingdom of heaven. But if they have turned their back on a disciple in need, they will be cast into eternal fire. For whether they know it or not, they were treating well or ill not only the disciples but also Jesus himself, who is one with his own.³⁵

With this scene Matthew has assured his readers that when Jesus comes as the Son of Man, he will judge not only themselves but also the Gentiles to whom they are sent to preach the gospel of the kingdom. In this way he will be revealed as the universal and triumphant Lord over the entire world and all its inhabitants.

We have been describing how Matthew answered the question "Why the Church?" in his own language and in his own historical context, that is, in dialogue with both Jamnia Pharisaism and the needs of his community. He understood the nature and mission of the Church in

³⁵ Matthean scholars agree that this is the way Matthew understood the final-judgment scene (25:31–46), even though in the Christian tradition it has been read and interpreted to mean that all men, Christian and non-Christian alike, will be judged by their concern for the poor and underprivileged with whom Jesus is identified. See, e.g., Davies, *op. cit.*, pp. 97–98; L. Cope, "Matthew XXV:31–46—'The Sheep and the Goats' Reinterpreted," *Novum Testamentum* 11 (1969) 32–44; Lambrecht, "The Parousia Discourse," pp. 329–40; Thompson, "An Historical Perspective in the Gospel of Matthew," pp. 256–59.

terms of the mission of Jesus. During Jesus' earthly life that mission was limited to Israel. But in his death and resurrection Jesus gained universal authority over the entire world. Since he could no longer exercise that authority on earth, his mission to the Gentiles could be carried out only through his disciples. Hence the role of the Church, as Matthew saw it, was to preach the gospel of the kingdom to the Gentile world. It is the mission of the risen Jesus and the earthly Church in preparation for his second coming. Without the Church, then, the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus would have been without fulfilment in the world. This also meant that Jesus would be present to the Gentiles in his disciples and that he would judge the Gentiles by how they had treated his disciples.³⁶

To support the Gentile mission, the Matthean community is to understand itself as a Christian movement no longer dependent upon Judaism but still rooted in Jesus Christ, the promised Jewish Messiah and the one authoritative teacher of the Jewish law. Internally, they are to deal decisively with the forces that divided them from one another by deepening their faith in Jesus and doing whatever is possible to avoid sin and introduce reconciliation and forgiveness. Finally, they are to look forward to Jesus' second coming, when, as the glorious and triumphant Son of Man, he will judge both themselves and all the Gentiles. With Matthew's understanding of the Church in mind, we now turn our attention to the Lukan writings to see how Luke responds to the same question about the Church.³⁷

LUKE-ACTS

In several respects the situation addressed by the author of Luke-Acts is quite similar to that confronted by Matthew. First, the time of writing is roughly the same, namely, the mid-eighties of the first century. Secondly, the general region for the work's origin may well have been Syria. Thirdly, the church which he represented confronted a set of conditions calling for a new formulation of Christian identity. The

³⁶ The difference between this understanding of salvation for the Gentiles and recent theories about "anonymous Christianity" lies in the fact that the Gentiles must have contact with the disciples to be saved, whereas the anonymous Christian is saved without such contact.

³⁷ It is well to note connections between Matthew and the other articles in this issue. Matthew clearly connects the mission of Jesus and the mission of the Church. Within that spectrum Matthew would most probably agree with the first position presented by Schineller, namely, that Jesus Christ is the exclusive revealer and mediator of salvation, and the Church is the only way to salvation. Matthew does, however, place primary importance on the Gentile mission: see Haight's article on mission. Finally, Matthew sees the turning point of history as the death and resurrection of Jesus: see Sears's article on Trinitarian love as ground of the Church.

differences between the Matthean and Lukan social contexts, however, appear more fundamental than their similarities. First, Luke wrote for Christians who were predominantly of Gentile origin. Secondly, although the region of Antioch may have provided a basic stimulus, the author appears to have had in view many communities rather than one single community. Thirdly, the new situation which gave rise to his literary effort was not so clearly defined as in the case of Matthew. Whereas the latter faced an identity crisis precipitated by the Jewish reform of Jamnia, Luke confronted the historical distance between the Gentile churches of the eighties and their early Jewish origins. Awareness of temporal separation and *de facto* removal from socioreligious roots in Judaism, coupled with a need to confront ongoing history and assume a place in the Greco-Roman world, called for a clarification and a new affirmation of historical continuity.

As in the case of Matthew, these general statements must be substantiated by data from the Gospel itself. The task is facilitated by the nature of Luke's work, which is at once theological and historical, and by the author's two-volume arrangement. Unlike the other Evangelists, Luke materially distinguished the story of Jesus from that of the post-Easter communities and developed the story of the Church as the historical and temporal continuation of his earlier account (cf. Acts 1:1-2, 15). Consequently, it is far easier for us to discern his view of the Church's *raison d'être* as well as the Church's relationship to the life of Jesus. As we might expect of a well-integrated two-volume work, his account of Jesus' historical life presupposes and anticipates that of the Church, just as Acts reflects the concerns of the Gospel.

The dating of Luke-Acts in the mid-eighties is extremely helpful in clarifying the nature of the Lukan enterprise.³⁸ Unlike Matthew, however, where a similar dating enables the scholar to see the relation between the Gospel and a specific historical event, namely, the work at

³⁸The approximate dating of Luke-Acts in the eighties is founded on a number of observations. First, the work's use of Mark's Gospel presupposes the existence of that Gospel, as well as a post-Markan course of events of sufficient duration to seriously date this earlier work and to require a new synthesis of the Christian reality (Lk 1:1-4). Further, Luke's separation of the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersal of the Jews (Lk 21:5-24) from his account of the end of the world (Lk 17:22-37; 21:25-28) presupposes that a number of years have passed since the Jewish war and that this event is no longer viewed apocalyptically (cf. Lk 17:20-21). On the other hand, the picture of Christian diffusion presented in Acts, while positing the existence of many communities, does not presuppose strong bonds between the churches. Indeed, the term *ekklesia* refers to individual congregations and not to a universal Church. Only in Acts 9:31 does it have a somewhat broader extension when it refers to the church in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. These considerations, when buttressed by other indications to be given below, appear sufficient to situate Luke-Acts some time in the eighties.

Jamnia, it is the temporal distance between the time of writing and the origins of the Gospel in the life of Jesus which is here significant. In part, the problem to which Luke intended to respond had been created by the very passage of time.

A geographical locus for Luke-Acts which is at least roughly related to that of Matthew may be argued from their common use of Mark and Q as sources, from the fact that both provided their Gospels with infancy narratives, appearance stories, Jesus' genealogy, and closely-related developments of the temptations of Jesus. However differently each Evangelist may have approached and developed these materials, the very fact of their incorporation in both Gospels presupposes a set of common concerns and related approaches to Christian realities. Since neither appears to have influenced the other literarily, the relationship is best accounted for in terms of a related geographical and historical *Sitz im Leben*. Luke's concern with the role and place of Antioch in early Christian history points us strongly in the direction of that city, as does his use of a liturgical tradition related to that cited by Paul in 1 Cor 11:23-25.³⁹

Luke's concern with the predominantly Gentile churches can be seen from his outline of Christianity's movement out of its Judean cradle into the greater Gentile world. The progress was indicated by the scattering of Hellenistic Jewish Christians from Jerusalem (Acts 8:1; 11:19-20) and their gradual expulsion from the synagogues of the Diaspora. Although Peter himself was credited with a primordial role in opening the Christian message to the Gentiles (Acts 10:1-11:18; 15:7), Paul was the apostle to the Gentiles par excellence (Acts 9:15; 15:3, 12; 22:21), a fact indicated literarily by the author's manner of referring to Saul Paul. Whereas in the early chapters of Acts he consistently referred to him as Saul, beginning with 13:9 he uses the Gentile designation Paul. These observations are supported by data from the Gospel such as the genealogy of Jesus, which unlike that of Matthew does not begin with Abraham (Mt 1:1-2) but reaches back to Adam (Lk 3:38) and by Simeon's prophetic word to Jesus' parents (Lk 2:32).

The concern of Acts with the sweep of Christianity through Phoenicia, Cyprus, Syria, Asia Minor, and the Aegean basin all the way to the Roman capital indicates the breadth of the author's concerns. Although

³⁹ In 1 Cor 11:23 Paul indicates that what he handed on to the Christians of Corinth, i.e., circa 52 A.D., he had previously received. The statement thus refers us back in time to Paul's stay at Antioch, which was the mother community of Pauline missions. Several of the differences between the Lukan and the Pauline Eucharistic text may be accounted for in terms of development in liturgical forms employed at Antioch. The two would thus have quoted from the Antiochene tradition at different moments in the latter's development. This is not to deny additional Markan influences on the Lukan text.

Antioch looms large in the background, it would be wrong to present Luke as addressing himself primarily to the Gentile-Christian community of that city. Rather should we speak of him as a man of the Hellenistic Christian mission.⁴⁰ This fact differentiates him from Matthew, who spoke out of and addressed a particular community which we label Matthean. The difference may be accounted for in terms of the very nature of Gentile-Christian communities, which did not emerge out of prior well-defined communities as in the case of a Jewish-Christian community. A Gentile Church could only reflect the Gentile world, where a measure of local civic cohesion may be evidenced, but whose members related far more readily to the broad sociopolitical realities of the Roman world. In other words, the more universalist *Sitz im Leben* of Luke-Acts was but a reflection of the Gentile world from which its addressees were largely derived. In Luke, the universal mission was thus not a program to be undertaken by a particular community but a datum of early Christian history to be assimilated and ordered.

As in the case of Matthew, the very existence of Luke's Gospel indicates awareness of a need to address the Christian community with a new synthesis of the gospel. The preface to Luke-Acts (Lk 1:1-4) attests to Luke's conscious intention in this regard. The Lukan context which we have outlined to this point, however, shows that Luke's situation was vastly different from that of Matthew. For one, while both Matthew and Luke needed to establish the Church's relationship to Judaism, the former spoke from a community which continued to define itself in relation to and even as quasi-parallel to the greater Jewish community of which it could no longer form a part. The Lukan situation, on the other hand, shows greater distance from Judaism, which no longer acted as a contemporary threat or even as a point of reference. The Judaism to which Lukan churches had to relate was a phenomenon which reflected the historical origins of these churches and not a Judaism which they now needed to encounter. This situation merely provided a different kind of identity problem, one stemming from the communities' felt distance from their historical origins. The clearest and most general evidence for this problem lies in the very nature of Luke's work as historical. In this respect, the following pages will develop the Lukan problematique as one of demonstrating Hellenistic Christianity's continuity with its origins.

Luke's historical perspective was also influenced by the context of the Gentile Church, in which Christians did not see the Roman world as a threat. Consequently, the urgent expectation of an imminent Parousia,

⁴⁰The Hellenistic Christian mission was the product of Jewish Christians whose origins lay in the Hellenistic Diaspora. In Luke's time, at least in the Lukan communities, it had become the missionary effort of Gentile Christians to the Hellenistic world.

which had been characteristic of Mark's Gospel and of traditions held in common by Matthew and Luke, was tempered with terms such as "daily," thereby indicating the author's commitment to ongoing history.⁴¹ Since such history could hardly be divorced from the Greco-Roman world, we are not surprised to find that Romans are accorded a singularly sympathetic treatment throughout Luke-Acts. The Lukan context thus reveals a Christianity which must identify itself not only in terms of its Jewish origins but also in relation to its position in the Roman world. Luke's view of the Church within his response to this complex need constitutes the object of the following inquiry.

Our study treats first of Luke's understanding of the Church in relation to the continuum of history. In this first section, historico-temporal considerations appear primary, and our analysis focuses on the life of the Church as a moment in Luke's theology of history. We shall then analyze Luke's view of the Church's role within its historical period. In this second section, historico-social considerations become primary, and our analysis bears both on the internal life of the Church and on the Church's mission vis-à-vis the non-Christian world.

The Church in the Continuum of History

The fact that Luke presented the gospel in a history represents an extremely significant development in that it clearly witnesses to Christianity's need to take temporality seriously. In Luke-Acts, the Church and its gospel has a prehistory and a past as well as a future; its life unfolds in the present. Moreover, this Church exists in a historical period which it partially defines and which forms one segment of a much longer historical continuum. Although the author's primary concern is with the continuum of biblical history, he is also careful to situate John the Baptist and Jesus in the history of the Roman Empire.⁴² One of the preconditions for such a historical presentation lies in the recognition that the Church has a future. Apart from an effort to formulate the Church's ongoing role in history, the subordinate effort to establish the Church's continuity with the past would be meaningless.

In order to circumscribe the Church's place in history, we must take careful note of Luke's division of history. Conzelmann, more than any other, has made the scholarly world aware of Luke's ordering of history: first, there was the time of John the Baptist, in whom the history of Israel found its culmination; second, there was the time of Jesus' ministry, which constitutes the center of salvation history; and third, there was the time of the Church, which followed upon Jesus' ascension and will

⁴¹ Compare Lk 11:3 with Mt 6:11, and Lk 9:23 with Mk 8:34.

⁴² Cf. E. A. LaVerdiere, "John the Prophet: Jesus' Forerunner in Luke's Theology of History," *The Bible Today*, March 1975, pp. 323-24, 328-29.

endure until the end of time.⁴³ Conzelmann's division, however, stands in need of further refinement, since both the time of Jesus and that of the Church are united by Luke in one era of the Spirit, which stands distinct from the era of Israel and John the Baptist. Accordingly, Luke saw history as divided into two major eras, the pre-Christian era of Israel and the Christian era. Further, the latter was subdivided into two periods, that of Jesus, which was inaugurated by the descent of the Spirit at his baptism and culminated in his resurrection-ascension, and that of the Church, which began with the Spirit's descent at Pentecost to endure until the *eschaton*. This division is required by the manifest parallelism between the two descents of the Spirit. In Jesus' case, the Spirit's descent serves to interpret his baptism (Lk 3:21-22); in the case of the Church, the descent of the Spirit is itself interpreted as a baptism (Acts 1:5). The time of Jesus and the time of the Church are thus extremely closely related.

While affirming the generic unity of these two times, however, we must not minimize their distinction, which is so clearly indicated by the two ascension narratives (Lk 24:50-53; Acts 1:6-11) and even by Luke's attribution of a farewell discourse to Jesus (Lk 22:14-38). Literary data such as this points to the definitiveness of the end of Jesus' life or *exodos* (Lk 9:31) at Jerusalem and the new beginning which follows his ascension.

Both the distinction and the close relationship between the time of Jesus and the time of the Church are significant for Luke's ecclesiology, in that Jesus and the Church belong to one and the same era. The historical life of Jesus was not purely and simply relegated to the past. On the contrary, the retelling of his life and message has immediate bearing on that of the post-Easter Christians, a Lukan concern evidenced by the very existence of his first volume and his abundant use of discourses, which in the manner of Greek and Jewish Hellenistic historians enable the author to address Jesus' message to new historical situations.

For Luke, then, the Church lives in continuity with the life and work of Jesus. Literarily, this continuity is indicated by the parallelism between the Gospel's presentation of the life of Jesus from Galilee to Jerusalem and Acts' delineation of the development and spread of the Church from Jerusalem to Rome. Theologically, it is articulated by means of the principle of prophetic necessity, which is Luke's application of the early Christian method of reflecting on events according to the Scriptures. The same principle enables Luke to relate the Christian era to Israel and John the Baptist, whom Luke presents primarily as a prophet and only secondarily as a baptist.⁴⁴

⁴³Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (New York, 1960) pp. 12-15.

⁴⁴LaVerdiere, *art. cit.*, pp. 323-30.

Although it is the work of the Spirit that serves most strikingly to set Luke and Acts in a parallel relationship, many other literary indications could be adduced. Among these, perhaps the most significant is the manner in which the latter part of both works is presented as a long journey narrative. Each of these is marked by a very clear and deliberate beginning. In Lk 9:51 we read that when the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up, he set out for Jerusalem. This journey to Jerusalem ended only with his ascension. It is thus a theological journey as well as a geographical one, and Jerusalem is seen at once as a geographical terminus as well as a symbol of Jesus' passage to God. In Acts 19:21 we read that Paul resolved in the Spirit to go through Macedonia and Achaia to Jerusalem, adding that afterwards he must also see Rome. From that point on, the indicated journey provides a loose cadre for the remainder of Acts, which ends with Paul at Rome. As with Jerusalem, Rome is at once a geographical point and a symbol. In this case, however, the city is symbolic not of an end but of the universal nature of the mission which continues into Luke's own time (Acts 1:8) and will go on until Jesus' return (Acts 1:11) at a humanly undetermined and undeterminable moment (Acts 1:7).

Luke's methodological use of a unifying theological principle to relate the period of the Church to that of Jesus is best observed in Lk 24:7, 25-27, 44-47, where we find both the characteristic Lukan term *dei* and explicit mention of the prophets and the Scriptures. In these three sets of verses we note a definite progression towards a more ample and comprehensive application of the principle.⁴⁵ As we might expect, Lk 24:44-47, which is situated in the Gospel's final pericope, presents Luke's most highly developed expression of prophetic necessity. Both the events of the end of Jesus' life, including his resurrection, and the mission of the Church to all nations are said to be according to the Scriptures. Moreover, Jesus himself had indicated the necessity of this biblical fulfilment. Luke thus situated Jesus in the realm of prophetic fulfilment as well as in that of prophetic promise, the latter with regard to future events in his own life and mission which would then be continued in that of the Church. As fulfilment, the two periods of the Christian era of the Spirit, which is that of the preaching of the good news of God's kingdom, were also related to John the Baptist, who terminated the era of the law and the prophets (cf. Lk 16:16a).

On the basis of the above general outline of Luke's historical perspective, it is now possible to situate the Church with greater historico-temporal precision, first with regard to the past in Jesus'

⁴⁵ Cf. Paul Schubert, "The Structure and Significance of Luke 24," in *Neutestamentliche Studien für Rudolf Bultmann* (Berlin, 1954) pp. 165-86.

mission and the Church's Jewish origins, and second in relation to the future. As we have already noted, Luke saw the work of Jesus and the Church as universal from the very start (Lk 2:32; 3:23-38). In the passage which announces the beginning of the Galilean ministry (Lk 4:16-30), a unit which not only refers to a single incident but is proleptic and programmatic with regard to the remainder of the work, the author presented Jesus' own intention as universal. Alluding to biblical precedent (1 K 17:9; 2 K 5:1-14), Jesus challenges the Nazareth synagogue with the Gentile mission (Lk 4:25-27). In the Gospel, however, save for incidental contacts with Gentiles, this intention remains unfulfilled. *De facto*, Jesus' historical mission was to Jews, and so Luke presented it. Universal in intent, his mission remained geographically, temporally, and ethnically limited and incomplete in execution. The Church's role would be to continue Jesus' mission by extending it beyond the historical limits of Jesus' career and by eventually bringing his intention to fulfilment. In this way the Church's mission (Lk 24:47) could actually be presented as the fulfilment of what had been written about Jesus himself (Lk 24:44).⁴⁶

In its life and mission the Church is also dominated by Christ's future return. Jesus, who has ascended into heaven, will come again in the same way as the apostolic community has seen him go (Acts 1:11). The Church's mission does not represent an absolute reality completely understandable in itself, but one which is relative to the prior historical life of Jesus as well as to his future coming. Continuing Christ's work during his historical absence, it prepares mankind for his eventual return. Thus it is that, from the point of view of the Spirit, we must speak of continuity between the time of the Church and that of Jesus. In a Christological perspective, however, we find the Church living in a new period which is relative to that of Christ by reason of both its origins and its future consummation.

By situating the Church in a history of the work of the Spirit, as the expression of prophetic fulfilment and in the context of Jesus' intended universal mission, Luke has responded to the need of the Gentile Church of the eighties to clarify its relationship to its Jewish origins and to the historical life and work of Jesus. He has thus enabled the Church to integrate its self-understanding with regard to the years of post-Easter experience, which had led Hellenistic communities far from their Jewish origins. On this basis these communities could then address themselves to the long-term continuation of Christ's mission. Looking forward to Christ's return, they were nevertheless free of immediate apocalyptic pressure.

⁴⁶ So, too, our understanding of the Church's mission depends on our understanding of Christ's mission today; cf. Schineller's article in this issue.

The Church within Its Own Period of History

The notion of salvation history provided Luke with a broad temporal framework for the Church's *raison d'être*. Indeed, the acceptance of ongoing history as theologically meaningful is absolutely essential to Luke's view of the Church. Without such acceptance, salvation history would have ended with the death of Jesus, and the life of the Church would have unfolded purely as a period of waiting for Christ's return. His resurrection would have been significant for the life of Jesus himself and as a condition for his return. Apart from providing a sign of hope for Jesus' followers, however, it would not have been a factor in the life of the Church. Salvation history was consequently an element intrinsic to the very nature of the Church, and we may state that in the most general terms the Church's *raison d'être* was to be God's historical agent in the ongoing work of salvation.

Having examined the Church's generic temporal purpose, we now turn to Luke's presentation of the Church's specific function within its own historical period. In this respect the Church may be said to have a bipolar orientation. As a community of sharing, it is characterized by the strong personal bonds of its members. As a community of witness, it is actively engaged in a mission to those still outside the pale of the gospel.

The Church is a community of sharing, and as such its sociohistorical *raison d'être* revolves around its own internal existence and set of relationships. This is the picture of the Church which emerges from Acts, and in particular from the major Lukan summaries of life in the primitive Jerusalem community (2:42-47; 4:32-35). These summary statements, which are even more concisely summarized in Acts 2:42, are paradigmatic of the ideal life of the Church. Like the parent Christian community at Jerusalem, a Christian community can and should be identified as one which devotes itself to the teaching of the apostles, to *koinonia*, that is, fellowship, brotherhood, common life, and sensitivity, to sharing in the breaking of bread and to the prayers characteristic of the community.

The four descriptive elements included in Acts 2:42 incorporate various aspects of the Church's life as it is presented throughout Luke-Acts. First, Luke's synthesis and interpretation of the teaching of the apostles is repeatedly presented in the various apostolic discourses of Acts, and in a sense Luke-Acts as a whole may be assumed under this rubric, since it is given as an effort at deeper and authentic understanding of Christian life and tradition (Lk 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-5). It should be noted that apostolic teaching does not consist primarily in presenting the message of Jesus but the Resurrection event in which Jesus' life culminated. Second, Christian *koinonia*, which includes a measure of

material sharing of goods, is developed in Acts 4:32–35 and in the two pericopes which follow. Barnabas' action is a positive example of the ideal (Acts 4:36–37); that of Ananias and Sapphira is a negative response or breach of brotherhood (Acts 5:1–11). This last indicates that *koinonia* had become problematic in the Christian communities addressed by Luke and points to the idealizing nature of Luke's picture of the earliest community. The theme is also reflected in the strong sense of hospitality which pervades relationships between Jesus and his fellow men. Third, the breaking of bread and the spirit of early Eucharistic meals is frequently presented in Luke–Acts. The account of Paul's departure from Troas serves as a good example (Acts 20:7–12). By focusing on Eutychus' near-fatal experience, the passage emphasizes the life-giving nature of the Christian assembly. Fourth, the importance of prayer is noted in Acts' first brief summary (Acts 1:14) as the characteristic attitude of the apostolic community even as it sought to establish itself after the events of the Passion and as it awaited the gift of the Spirit. Indeed, the role of prayer in the life of Jesus and his followers is one of the more general themes of Luke–Acts. The prayer of Jesus at the Mount of Olives is actually given as a short catechesis on Christian prayer (Lk 22:39–46), as is Lk 11:1–13, which includes the Lukan tradition of the Lord's Prayer (vv. 2–4).

The Church's internal existence is inseparable from Christ's presence to its members. In Lk 24:13–35 we read the story of two disciples who come to recognize the risen Lord in the breaking of bread. This paradigmatic narrative develops the relationship between the disciples' experience of the unrecognized Lord in a discussion on the way to Emmaus and their recognition of him in a meal at Emmaus (Lk 24:32). The passage from nonrecognition to recognition is mediated by their invitation that Jesus remain with them (Lk 24:29). The Emmaus narrative's main intention is to present the locus and conditions for the recognition of the risen Lord.⁴⁷ This locus is specified as the Christian fellowship meal or breaking of bread. The main conditions are twofold. On the one hand, there is the initiative of Jesus himself; on the other, the disciples' response in their invitation that Jesus remain with them. We may safely assume that the story was told in response to Jesus' continuing historical absence and its perception as a loss to Jesus' followers. The significance of the Emmaus unit is thus inseparable from Luke's theology of the Ascension. Since Jesus can be experienced and recognized in an entirely new manner, which later generations would term sacramental, the absence of the historical Jesus (Lk 24:31b, 50–53) does not leave the Christians in dis-

⁴⁷The intention of the narrative is most easily seen from the author's use of a literary inclusion in vv. 16 and 31 and from the concluding summary statement in v. 35.

tressful sadness (Lk 24:18). On the contrary, they are filled with a joy which must be shared (24:32-35) and which expresses itself in divine praise (24:52-53).

Luke's understanding of the Church's internal social life is thus clearly related to the presence of Christ. Nearly all the elements included in the summary statement of Acts 2:42-47 have been assumed in the narrative statement of Lk 24:13-35. In terms of Luke's theology, we may consequently assert that the Church is a community whose life and existence is justified, at least in part, by the fact that knowing and experiencing Christ's presence has value.⁴⁸ Hence, the question "Why the Church?" is inseparable from the prior question "Why Jesus Christ?" Although the former question arises from the account of Acts and the Easter narrative of Lk 24, it can only be answered in reference to Luke's narrative of Jesus' historical life as presented in Lk 1-23. Luke's own manner of presenting Jesus in light of the Church's future life attests to the methodological soundness of such an inquiry.

At several points in the Gospel the significance of Christ's presence to men is presented in terms of salvation. Such is the case, for example, in the story of Zacchaeus (Lk 19:1-10), which like the Emmaus account is structurally articulated by means of a literary inclusion. After a narrative introduction, we read in 19:5 that today Jesus will stay at Zacchaeus' house. In 19:9 the account climaxes with the statement that today salvation has come to his house. The author has thus identified the presence of Jesus with the presence of salvation. Correlatively, the hosting of Jesus is equivalent to the hosting of salvation. The theme's importance may be seen from its earlier prominence in the Lukan prologue's birth narrative (cf. 2:11, 30). Concretely, Jesus' salvific presence is expressed in his attitude of service, which in its contrast with the great of this world provides an example for Jesus' disciples (Lk 22:24-30).

The Church's internal set of Christian relationships can be seen as the community's *manière d'être* rather than its *raison d'être*. In actual fact, the two are intimately related. Luke does not present the Church's mission as directed exclusively to non-Christians, but also as addressed to its own members, who remain in continuous need of Christ's salvific presence (cf. Lk 22:31-34).⁴⁹ The purpose of the Church is thus to provide a living and active locus of Christ's presence to followers of Jesus, who are ever on the way. Concretely, this function is epitomized in the breaking of bread, which in Acts 27:21-26, 33-38 is presented precisely in its relationship to salvation. As with the historical Jesus, the attitude of Christians and in particular of Church leaders must be one of service.

In terms of its mission to the world, the Church may be described as a

⁴⁸ Cf. Sears's article in this issue.

⁴⁹ Cf. *ibid.*

community of witness.⁶⁰ Such is the most obvious function of the Church as it is presented throughout the course of Acts in both narrative and discourse. Christians witness to others concerning Christ's work, but especially concerning what God has done in Jesus' behalf and through him on behalf of others.

This second aspect of the Church's *raison d'être* is intimately related to the first, which presented the Church in relation to its own internal life. Nowhere is this point more clearly asserted than in Acts 10:40-43, where the witnesses are said to be precisely those Christians who ate and drank with Jesus after he rose from the dead. This reference to Christian meals with the risen Lord must be related to the account of Emmaus, whose significance we have already indicated, and to other meal contexts in Luke-Acts.

As with regard to the Church's own experience of the risen Lord, the value of the Church's witness to Christ stands justified by the fact that Christ's work and message had value. Consequently, the question "Why the Church?" is once again inseparable from the prior question "Why the mission of Jesus?" In answer to the latter question, we once again turn to Lk 4:14-30, which is Luke's introductory statement concerning the mission of Christ, and in which Christ's work is presented as the proclamation of the good news through word and action, initially to Jews but ultimately to Gentiles. The content and nature of the mission is summarized in the text of Is 61:1 f., which is applicable to both Christ and the Church. Following the rejection of Christ's message by the Jews, Luke has the historical Jesus announce the mission to the Gentiles. Acts presents the Church as commissioned to carry out this mission, which remained unfulfilled at the time of Jesus' death. The story of Cornelius (Acts 10) is given as fundamental to the development of the Church's Gentile mission. As the turning point in the execution of the gospel mission, it also points to difficulties in the Church's assumption of a universal role. Indirectly, it thus attests to the redactional nature of the universal missionary program set out in Luke-Acts.

Thus has Luke confronted the Church's ongoing existence as well as its mission to the Gentiles. Following Jesus' death, the Christian communities continue to live in his presence. Filled with his Spirit, they carry out his mission to the ends of the earth.

CONCLUSION

With Matthew and Luke in hand, we can now offer some tentative suggestions as to what these writings might mean today and how they might function as normative for the Church today. That Church is

⁶⁰ Haight stresses this dimension of the Church.

experiencing a radical change, the type of change that leads to a new self-understanding and calls for new patterns of behavior toward the modern world. Matthew and Luke both wrote for Christian communities in transition. So we suggest that in spite of the temporal, geographical, and cultural gap between their situations and ours, we can affirm strong correlations in terms of the dynamics of change.

Those dynamics can be briefly described. First, events break in upon the community, causing its members to question their current behavior (Are we doing the right thing?) and even their own identity (Who are we?). Such questions trigger a sense of disorientation, confusion, tension, and often lead to conflict, as different people respond very differently to the changing situation. Some want to hang on to the past, cut out what no longer fits, and put new life in traditional patterns of behavior. Others want to accommodate the past, adjust to the new situation, facilitate growth and development, but always in harmony with the past. Still others want to break cleanly with the past, create unique solutions, and introduce a total transformation or revolution.⁵¹ Such pluralism and confusion drive the community back to its roots, to the persons and experiences from which it came to birth, so that they can rediscover and reclaim those persons and events. Then and only then can they meet the present and creatively address its challenges. Exploring their past enables them to formulate a more appropriate self-understanding, to create new perspectives from which to view their changed situations, and finally to choose more effective patterns of behavior and strategies for action.

Change was introduced to Matthew and his largely Jewish-Christian community by the events of the Jewish war, principally the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and by the emergence of Jamnia Pharisaism. These events made them wonder how they should behave toward their fellow Jews and how they should understand themselves in relation to Judaism and to the non-Jewish world. Such questions caused confusion, tension, and conflict in the Matthean community, a situation that was intensified by the activity of false prophets. So Matthew's task was to reaffirm their roots in Jesus Christ and through him in their Jewish heritage, and at the same time to teach them how to respond to their present situation. He accomplished this task by retelling the life of Jesus. In his earthly ministry the Matthean Jesus revealed himself to be the Jewish Messiah and the sole authoritative teacher of the Jewish law. His mission was limited to Israel. But after his death and resurrection the same Jesus, now endowed with universal authority, sends his disciples

⁵¹ John W. O'Malley, "Reform, Historical Consciousness, and Vatican II's *Aggiornamento*," *THEOLOGICAL STUDIES* 32 (1971) 573-601, esp. pp. 594-95.

to the Gentile world with the assurance that he will be with them to the end. Matthew thus taught his community that they must continue to exist, that they must understand themselves as separate and distinct from Jamnia Judaism, and that they must focus their attention on the Gentile mission. They must, in a word, choose to become universalist rather than remain sectarian, since only in so doing would they become in fact the true Israel, by carrying out the mission of their risen Lord. To accept this new self-understanding and fulfil their mission, they must deepen their faith in Jesus Christ and work toward reconciliation and forgiveness within the community.

Change had a very different meaning for Luke and the predominantly Gentile-Christian communities for whom he wrote. The widespread success of the universal Gentile-Christian mission was a matter of history, and the Lukan communities reflected the broad sociopolitical realities of the Greco-Roman world. Judaism was not part of their contemporary culture, but it was at the roots of the Christianity to which the Gentiles had been converted. So the Gentile converts had many questions about how they should behave and understand themselves as Christians. Luke's task, consequently, was to demonstrate how Hellenistic Christianity was to see itself in relation to Jesus of Nazareth, in relation to the Jewish-Christian communities from which it came, and also in relation to its present position in the Greco-Roman world. He accomplished it in a two-volume work in which the life of Jesus and the story of the early Church were united in one era of the Spirit and presented as two phases of the one period of biblical history. For Luke, the Hellenistic-Christian communities live in continuity with the life and work of Jesus, a continuity delineated by the geographical movement of the narrative and explained theologically as according to God's necessary plan for the world. Unlike Matthew, Luke saw the work of Jesus and the Church as universal from the outset. Jesus' mission was universal in intent but incomplete in execution. It belonged to the Church to continue that mission, bringing his intention to fulfilment in preparation for his eventual return. Within its own historical period, then, the Church had been and was to continue to be a community of sharing characterized by strong personal bonds among its members, and a community of witness actively engaged in the universal mission begun by Jesus during his earthly life. The Hellenistic-Christian converts addressed by Luke could easily come to see themselves as full-fledged members of such a community.

Change in the Church today means confronting the modern world and the events that shape our understanding of the world.⁵² The result is an

⁵² For a description of this problem, see Haight's article in this issue.

almost despairing confusion. Within Roman Catholicism, for example, we have become increasingly aware, in the words of John O'Malley, that Vatican II "is an inadequate expression of what is required today and, indeed, of what is actually happening today. We are not experiencing a 'reform' as that term is traditionally understood as a correction, or revival, or development, or even updating. We are experiencing a transformation, even a revolution."⁵³

Can the writings of Matthew and Luke inform and influence the Church as we address this common task? How can they function as normative for the Church in this time of change? We must affirm once again the enormous distance that separates their situation from our own.⁵⁴ But within those differences we suggest three normative correlations. First, in a time of change a new understanding of the Church and its mission must be developed out of a new understanding of Jesus Christ and his mission; for both Matthew and Luke see the Church as the necessary extension and continuation of the work of Jesus.⁵⁵ Second, an adequate understanding of the Church must focus on its universal mission. Matthew's community had to face the decision not to remain sectarian but to become universal, because otherwise the universal mission of their risen Lord would not become a reality on earth. Luke's communities understood that Jesus' mission was universal from the outset, but that they were charged with the task of bringing it to fulfilment. Both affirm universalism, thereby suggesting that in any time of change the Church must come to understand itself in the terms of its broad, universal mission to the non-Christian world.⁵⁶ Finally, concern must also be shown for the inner life of the Church. Matthew was concerned that the tension, conflict, and confusion dividing his community be healed, but clearly in function of the Gentile mission. Luke seems to have made concern for the community's inner life more central. But both see it connected to the mission to the world.⁵⁷ So we suggest that this concern is normative for the changing Church today.

As a final word, we would like to suggest that the theologians' task today is not unlike that of the Evangelists. They must listen to the past and speak to the present and the future. For the Evangelists, the past was the life of Jesus and the early Church and the more remote history of Israel, and they spoke to the present in stories about Jesus and the Church. Theologians today have a far more difficult task. The past is far

⁵³ *Art. cit.*, p. 601.

⁵⁴ Recall pp. 568-69 above.

⁵⁵ This conclusion supports the approach to the Church taken in this series of articles; see Schineller.

⁵⁶ Haight stresses this role of the Church.

⁵⁷ Sears agrees more with the Lukan perspective.

more diversified, and the present far more complex.⁵⁸ Today we speak several languages at once: the descriptive language of the Bible, the technical language of creed and doctrinal statement, and the more precise language of contemporary science. Nevertheless, the process of listening and speaking remains the same. It is our hope that by describing and interpreting the data from Matthew and Luke, and by offering some suggestions as to its normative contribution to the Church today, we have assisted Christian theologians as they face the question "Why the Church?"

⁵⁸ The patristic article by Burns illustrates how diverse that past has been. For a discussion of our present situation, see David Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order* (New York, 1975) pp. 3-21.