

# MATTHEW ON CHRIST AND THE LAW<sup>1</sup>

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**M**ATTHEW'S PRESENTATION of Jesus' relation to the law," asserts M. Jack Suggs, "makes jugglers of all of us."<sup>2</sup> 5:17-19 and 5:20-48 have been seen, for example, not only to contradict each other but also to be internally inconsistent. Joachim Jeremias claims that in 5:21-48 Jesus with his *egō de legō hysin* has an unparalleled and revolutionary boldness to set himself in opposition to the Torah;<sup>3</sup> 5:21-48 would thus seem to contradict 5:18. Likewise, R. G. Hamerton-Kelly<sup>4</sup> claims that 5:21-48 does precisely what 5:17-19 prohibits: it declares certain parts of the law invalid.

Hamerton-Kelly<sup>5</sup> also claims internal inconsistency within 5:17-19. In 5:18 there are three distinct attitudes to the law: (a) a legally rigorist attitude which insists that the law of Moses continues to be observed in all its details according to the established halakah; (b) some of the law has been abrogated by Jesus; and (c) the authority of the traditional halakah has been replaced by the authority of the risen Christ. Suggs,<sup>6</sup> too, sees internal inconsistency in 5:17-20 and as a result does not derive his primary positive understanding of Matthew's relation to the law from this passage.

Günther Bornkamm,<sup>7</sup> among others, claims that in 5:21-48 the antitheses are inconsistent and that Matthew was not even aware of the inconsistency; the first, second, and fourth are a sharpening of the law, whereas the third, fifth, and sixth abolish it.

In this paper, by contrast, it will be argued that Matthew does have a

<sup>1</sup> This paper is a summary and revision of pp. 6-122 of my unpublished Ph.D dissertation *Matthew and Paul on Christ and the Law: Compatible or Incompatible Theologies?* (McMaster University, 1977).

<sup>2</sup> M. Jack Suggs, *Wisdom, Christology and Law in Matthew's Gospel* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1970) 112.

<sup>3</sup> Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology. Part One: The Proclamation of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1971) 253.

<sup>4</sup> R. G. Hamerton-Kelly, "Attitudes to the Law in Matthew's Gospel: A Discussion of Matthew 5:18," *BR* 17 (1972) 19-32, 21.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* 21.

<sup>6</sup> Suggs, *Wisdom* 116.

<sup>7</sup> Günther Bornkamm, "End Expectation and Church in Matthew," in Günther Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Heinz J. Held, *Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew* (London: SCM, 1963) 15-51, 25.

coherent total view of the law;<sup>8</sup> it will be argued (like John P. Meier<sup>9</sup>) that 5:17–19 and 5:20–48 are internally consistent and correlate with each other, and (unlike Meier) that each passage upholds the enduring validity of the law. My nuanced view of 5:17–48 and of the law as a whole will emerge through the consideration of a number of issues over which there has been considerable scholarly debate. These are: the validity of the Mosaic law and the halakah; the meaning of the demand for righteousness (5:20) and perfection (5:48); the meaning of the love commandment; and the interpretation of *plērōsai* (5:17) and *heōs an panta genētai* (5:18).

#### THE VALIDITY OF THE MOSAIC TORAH

In the case of divorce (5:31–32; 19:3–9 = Deut 24:1), oaths (5:33–36; 23:16–22 = Lev 19:12; Num 30:2; Deut 23:21), and the *lex talionis* (5:38–42 = Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21) Jesus prohibits something which the OT allows. The question, though, is whether or not Jesus is contradicting the commanding aspect of the OT. An example of how Jesus can, at first sight, appear to criticize the Mosaic Torah and yet believe in its validity is shown in the case of divorce in 19:3–9. The Pharisees ask Jesus why Moses *commanded* that a certificate of divorce be given. Jesus replies that for their hardness of heart Moses *allowed* them to divorce their wives. In support, Jesus appeals to the authority of Torah texts

<sup>8</sup> The current practice of redaction criticism is closely related to this position. There are two quite distinctive strategies that have been followed in its relation to Matthew. The first is dependent on the classical “two-source theory” (Matthew depends mainly on Mark and Q) and seeks to define Matthew’s specific theology by a comparison of his final text with his presumptive sources. Examples of this approach are Bornkamm, Gerhard Barth, and Held (*Tradition and Interpretation in Matthew*). The second strategy, sometimes called “composition criticism,” bypasses all particular theories about sources and interprets individual parts in light of overall design. An example of this approach is Peter F. Ellis, *Matthew: His Mind and His Message* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1974). This paper by no means wishes to exclude the idea that Matthew has an overall design or that he used sources, yet it neither makes assumptions nor comes to conclusions on the nature of either. The two-source theory is not taken for granted and no attempt is made to show what Matthew has done with his inherited sources. Here the redaction-critical hypothesis is assumed in its “soft” as opposed to its “hard” sense, and consequently much less weight is placed on Matthew’s omissions, additions, and reformulations. If it is defended in its hard sense, then Matthew has consistently edited his materials in accord with an *idée directrice* of his own; his omissions, additions, and reformulations, however slight, would carry maximum freight. It seems unwise (particularly in light of the increasing challenge to Marcan priority), as W. G. Thompson (“Reflections on the Composition of Mt. 8:1–9:34,” *CBQ* 33 [1971] 365–88, at 366) has pointed out, to commit oneself to the “somewhat acrobatic attempt to explain [Matthew’s] editorial activity from the viewpoint of Mark . . .” Matthew, however, is an author with both a theology and a coherent total viewpoint.

<sup>9</sup> John P. Meier, *Law and History in Matthew’s Gospel: A Redactional Study of Mt. 5:17–48* (Rome: Biblical Institute, 1976).

(*arsen kai thēly epoiēsen autous*, Gen 1:27; 5:2; and *heneka . . . mian*, Gen 2:24) (19:4–5). In the beginning (19:8) God willed that there be no divorce (19:4–5). Moses accepts the validity of Gen 2:24 but makes a concession (Deut 24:1) because of the hardness of men's hearts.<sup>10</sup> What is commanded (Deut 24:1) is not divorce but the giving of a certificate of divorce; this is better than no certificate of divorce.<sup>11</sup> In the case of divorce (19:1–9; 5:31–32) Jesus does not take away from the OT but adds to it.<sup>12</sup> The commands of Jesus are an interpretation of, and an advancement upon, the OT: his commands are an expression of the pure will of God, an expression at which the OT aimed.

By analogy the same conclusion could be reached in the case of oaths (5:33–36; 23:16–22) and the *lex talionis* (5:38–42). Although in 5:33–36

<sup>10</sup> David Daube ("Concessions to Sinfulness in Jewish Law," *JJS* 10 [1959] 1–13) argues that when Jesus says Moses made the bill of divorcement because of men's hardness of heart, he is using an established legal category of actions allowed out of consideration for wickedness or weakness. In this case the lesser of two evils was a merciful concession for the sake of the woman. The intention of Deut 24:1, then, was not to make divorce acceptable but to limit sinfulness and control its consequences. Deut 24:1–4 was a witness to the evil which arose from a disregard of the creation ordinance of marriage (Gen 1:27; 2:24).

<sup>11</sup> David Daube ("Repudium in Deuteronomy," *Neotestamentica et Semitica: Studies in Honour of Matthew Black*, ed. E. E. Ellis and M. Wilcox [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1969] 236–39) argues that the main reason for the certificate was to prove that she was divorced. Prior to the Mosaic provision, there might be severe consequences if she or her family wrongly believed a divorce had taken place.

<sup>12</sup> On the divorce question a problem arises concerning the exceptive clauses *parektos logou porneias* (5:32) and *mē epi porneia* (19:9). Of the many possible views three will be noted. First, it has traditionally been maintained by Protestants that divorce here is allowed in the case of adultery. This view, though, is problematical, because (a) it makes the exceptive clauses agree with Shammai's interpretation of *'erwat dabar* in Deut 24:1, whereas Mt 19:3–9 (cf. 5:32) is in the context of a polemic against the Pharisees; and (b) *porneia* here probably does not mean *moicheia*, since at 15:19 they are distinguished. Second, and quite possibly correctly, it has been claimed that *porneia* should be read in light of Lev 17 and 18 (cf. Acts 15:20, 29). What is prohibited, then, would be marriage within the forbidden degrees of kinship; these marriages should be broken up. Finally, and I think rightly, it has been claimed that the exceptive clauses are preteritions, are exceptions to the proposition itself and not merely to *apolyō*. Divorce, then, is prohibited, the permission of Deut 24:1 notwithstanding. This interpretation has at least three advantages: (a) 19:9 would agree well with 19:3–9 where Deut 24:1 is under discussion; (b) 19:3–9 would become an excellent expansion of, and commentary on, 5:32; and (c) 5:32 would agree well with the rest of the antitheses where Jesus brings out the radically absolute meaning of the law. Its disadvantage is that in the LXX *porneuein* never translates *'erwat* (cf. Hans-Theo Wrege, *Die Überlieferungsgeschichte der Bergpredigt* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1968] 69). For a summary, and list of supporters, of the first view, see Wrege, *ibid.* 68. For a consideration of the second view, see Heinrich Baltensweiler, *Die Ehe im Neuen Testament: Exegetische Untersuchungen über Ehe, Ehelosigkeit, und Ehescheidung* (Zurich: Zwingli, 1967) 82–102. For the third view, see Bruce Vawter, "The Divorce Clauses in Mt. 5, 32 and 19, 9," *CBQ* 16 (1954) 155–67, esp. 163–65; and Robert Banks, *Jesus and the Law in the Synoptic Tradition* (SNTSMS 28; Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1975) 156.

Jesus' primary concern is not the OT view of oaths but someone's interpretation of them, yet he does go beyond the OT: the OT said that one is not to swear falsely but Jesus says that one is not to swear at all. He advances in the same direction as the OT, from a limitation of oaths to a further limitation of oaths. The OT legislation was not intended to make one take an oath, but if one insisted on taking an oath it prohibited him from swearing falsely; in the kingdom of heaven, however, there is no need to swear at all.<sup>13</sup>

The *lex talionis* in the OT was not a command for vengeance but a prohibition of unmeasured vengeance. Jesus advances in the same direction and prohibits measured vengeance.<sup>14</sup>

Apart from 5:17–48 there are indications that Jesus accepts the validity of the Mosaic Torah. At 22:34–40 Jesus claims that all of the law and the prophets depend on the wholehearted love of God (= Deut 6:5) and neighbour (= Lev 19:18), and at 7:12 the essence of the law and the prophets is expressed in the golden rule. At 19:16–19 the commandments

<sup>13</sup> A common view is that some of the antitheses constitute an annulment of the law. Recent examples are: Bornkamm, *End Expectation* 25; Reinhart Hummel, *Die Auseinandersetzung zwischen Kirche und Judentum im Matthäusevangelium* (Munich: Kaiser, 1963) 72–73; Charles E. Carlston, "The Things That Defile (Mark VII. 14) and the Law in Matthew and Mark," *NTS* 15 (1968–69) 75–96, 80–81; Joachim Jeremias, *Proclamation* 251–55; Alexander Sand, *Das Gesetz und die Propheten: Untersuchungen zur Theologie des Evangeliums nach Matthäus* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1974) 53; Georg Strecker, "Die Antithesen der Bergpredigt (Mt 5 21–48 par)," *ZNW* 69 (1978) 36–72, 69–71; and Meier, *Law and History* 140–61. There are some scholars, however, who hold that in none of the antitheses is the law revoked. Examples are: David Daube, *The New Testament and Rabbinic Judaism* (London: Athlone, 1956) 60; W. D. Davies, *The Setting of the Sermon on the Mount* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1963) 102; David Hill, *The Gospel of Matthew* (NCB; London: Oliphants, 1972) 120; E. P. Blair, *Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1960) 114; Christian Dietzfelbinger, "Die Antithesen der Bergpredigt im Verständnis des Matthäus," *ZNW* 70 (1979) 1–15, esp. 3, 9, 11, 12; and Ben F. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus* (London: SCM, 1979) 144. Meyer (*ibid.* 144) rightly notes that to view a particular antithesis as suppressing a Torah prescription is "to miss the angle of vision of these antitheses." In each case "the Torah is thought of as imposing a limit on man and the new prescription as imposing a severer limit of the same sort . . . He did not thereby undermine the Torah; he endorsed it à outrance."

<sup>14</sup> Hans Hübner (*Das Gesetz in der synoptischen Tradition* [Witten: Luther, 1973] 126, 196) claims the antitheses show that in Matthew Jesus fulfils the law by "modification." Thus Jesus as Lord over the Sabbath fulfils it by bringing it into line with the law of love. In Matthew the law no doubt in some sense is modified, but not in the sense that commands of God are abrogated. What Jesus does in the case of the Sabbath is in line with what the OT itself does. In his interpretation of the Sabbath Jesus, at 12:1–8, cites the cases of David (1 Sam 21:1–6) and the priests (Num 28:9–10). In the case of the priests it is explicitly noted that the law itself (12:5) provides the precedent. Banks (*Jesus and the Law* 39–49) argues that in the OT the provisions of the law are related to specific situations. Changing historical circumstances result in a corresponding reinterpretation of those provisions, so that torah is flexible in application.

(*tas entolas*), since they are necessary to keep in order to enter life, are valid. These are the love commandment and the Decalogue. These are the commandments to love one's neighbour as oneself (Lev 19:18) and to honor one's father and mother; the commandments not to kill, commit adultery, steal, or bear false witness. Further, at 12:7 and 9:13 it is the OT (= Hos 6:6) which teaches "I desire mercy and not sacrifice." At 23:23 it is obligatory to do the weightier matters of the law (justice, mercy, faith) and not neglect the others (tithing mint, dill, and cummin). Finally, at 8:1-4 Jesus tells a healed leper to show himself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded as a proof to the people.<sup>15</sup>

That Jesus proclaims a new Torah in Matthew has been both affirmed<sup>16</sup> and denied by many scholars. Against Hamerton-Kelly<sup>17</sup> and Ulrich Luck,<sup>18</sup> Jesus is not merely proclaiming a new halakah on the Torah, since he is much more than a rabbi.<sup>19</sup> Jesus' proclamation is in some

<sup>15</sup> There is no evidence that in 5:17-19 Matthew is concerned with those who take away from the ceremonial law or the halakah. When the law is declared valid in 5:17-48, it is primarily the moral aspects of the law that are in mind. There is no hard evidence that Matthew is greatly concerned to have *Christians* observe the purity laws, the sacrificial cultus, or the Sabbath. There is no evidence that in Matthew's church unclean foods (cf. Rom 14:14; Col 2:20-22; Acts 10:9-16; 15:17-29) or table fellowship with Gentiles (cf. Gal 2:11-17; Acts 11:2-18) is an issue. At 17:24-27 the disciples are to pay the half-shekel tax for the temple, but the reason given is "not to give offense to them" (17:27). Atonement comes through the death and resurrection of Jesus, not through the sacrificial cultus (cf. 1:21, 23; 16:21; 20:28; 26:28; 27:51). With regard to the Sabbath, Gerhard Barth ("Matthew's Understanding of the Law," *Tradition and Interpretation* 58-164, at 92) points out that the warning "Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath" (24:20) hardly means that for the sake of conscience one should so pray because flight on the Sabbath is sin, since in contemporary Judaism there are no longer any witnesses for such a strict attitude. He adds that E. Hirsch and A. Schlatter think of this passage as referring to danger from hate-charged Jews and that for Hirsch "a Christian congregation fleeing on the Sabbath would have been as recognisable . . . as a spotted dog." The severe tension between Church and Judaism would make this attitude intelligible.

<sup>16</sup> It is, e.g., explicitly affirmed by B. W. Bacon, *Studies in Matthew* (New York: Henry Holt, 1930) 181-83; G. D. Kilpatrick, *The Origins of the Gospel according to Saint Matthew* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1946) 107, 108; Julius Schniewind, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* (NTD; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960) 3, 4; Davies, *Setting* 187-90; and Eduard Schweizer, "Matth. 5, 17-20—Anmerkungen zum Gesetzesverständnis des Matthäus," *TLZ* 76 (1952) 479-84, 483-84. According to G. Barth (*Law* 153-54), this view was held by J. Wellhausen and J. Weiss. This view is explicitly denied, e.g., by Wolfgang Trilling, *Das wahre Israel: Studien zur Theologie des Matthäus-Evangeliums* (Munich: Kösel, 1964) 186; Bornkamm, *End Expectation* 35; Suggs, *Wisdom* 114-15; Hummel, *Auseinandersetzung* 75; Carlston, *The Things That Defile* 82; Hamerton-Kelly, *Attitudes* 22-23; and Ulrich Luck, *Die Vollkommenheitsforderung der Bergpredigt* (Munich: Kaiser, 1968) 21.

<sup>17</sup> *Attitudes* 22.

<sup>18</sup> *Vollkommenheitsforderung* 24.

<sup>19</sup> Daube (*Rabbinic Judaism* 55-62) and Morton Smith (*Tannaitic Parallels to the Gospels*

sense "new," but not "new" in the sense of a replacement of the old.<sup>20</sup> The Mosaic motifs are in correspondence rather than in antithesis to Moses.<sup>21</sup>

Robert Banks denies that Jesus' teaching is torah because (a) his teaching transcends the law; (b) no legal category can describe the contents of 5:17-48; (c) the parables cannot be called legal material; and (d) the expectation of a new torah is absent in Judaism.<sup>22</sup> None of these arguments, however, excludes Jesus' words as torah if torah is understood as "instruction." Banks himself admits that this is the primary sense both of Jesus' teaching and of the OT torah, and that Jesus does refer to his own words as *entolai*; yet, curiously, his words are not *t Torah*.<sup>23</sup>

#### THE VALIDITY OF THE HALAKAH

One passage (23:2-3) seems to support Bornkamm's and Hummel's view<sup>24</sup> that Matthew recognizes the validity of the scribal interpretation of the Torah. This passage may have been added, though, to give maximum force to the subsequent denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees.<sup>25</sup> 23:8-10 indicates the singularity of Jesus' office as teacher; it is Jesus and not the class of Scribes who is the rightful occupant of the *kathedra Mōusēs*. According to Hahn, *ekathisan* (= aorist, 23:2) may refer to a period now ended.<sup>26</sup> Or, alternatively, it could be argued that what the Scribes and Pharisees say (*legousin, eipōsin*) is fine, what they do (*erga, poiōusin*) is not. What they (seemingly) say is "obey the law of

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[Philadelphia: Society of Biblical Literature, 1956] 27-30) have argued that the six antitheses (*ēkousate hoti errethē . . . egō de legō hymin*, 5:21-48) can be seen in terms of rabbinic discussion. Eduard Lohse ("Ich aber sage euch," *Der Ruf Jesu und die Antwort der Gemeinde*, ed. E. Lohse [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1970] 189-203, esp. 198-99) notes, however, that Jesus as opposed to the rabbis neither contrasts his *egō de legō hymin* with other scholars nor does he ground it through scriptural exegesis; his word is marked with absolute authority, an authority which is evident throughout Matthew. The context of Jesus' use of *legō* elsewhere in Matthew indicates his authority; i.e., *amēn legō hymin* (6:2, 5, 16; 8:10; 10:15, 23; 11:11; 16:28; 18:3, 13, 18; 19:23, 28; etc.); *plēn legō hymin* (11:22, 24; 26:64); *dia touto legō hymin* (6:25; 12:31; 21:43); *legō de hymin* (6:29; 8:11; 12:6, 36; 17:12; 19:9); *legō gar hymin* (5:20; 23:39); *palin de legō hymin* (19:24); and *kagō de soi legō* (16:18).

<sup>20</sup> Against Bacon, *Studies* 47, 181-83; Kilpatrick, *Origins* 107-8; and Davies, *Setting* 187-90.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Bornkamm, *End Expectation* 35, and E. Lohse, *Sage* 202.

<sup>22</sup> Banks, *Jesus and the Law* 229-35.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* 39, 255.

<sup>24</sup> Bornkamm, *End Expectation* 24-25; Hummel, *Auseinandersetzung* 46-49.

<sup>25</sup> See Hill, *Matthew* 310, and Krister Stendahl, "Matthew," *Peake's Commentary on the Bible*, ed. M. Black and H. H. Rowley (Edinburgh: Nelson, 1962) 691.

<sup>26</sup> See Ferdinand Hahn, *The Titles of Jesus in Christology* (London: Lutterworth, 1969) 386, 405-6.

Moses"; what they do is bind heavy burdens (contrast Jesus' light burden = Mt 11:30) on others without lifting a finger to help (23:4). They do all their deeds to be seen by men (23:5; cf. 6:1, 5, 6).

There is much evidence that the Matthean Jesus does not believe in the scribal interpretation of the Torah. He criticizes their teaching on oaths (5:33–36; 23:16–22) and divorce (5:31–2; 19:1–9).<sup>27</sup> The presumably scribal view of "love your neighbor and hate your enemy" (5:43) omits "as yourself" from and adds "hate your enemy" to Lev 19:18. Such love is no better than the love that one tax collector has for another (5:46); it means something like "you scratch my back and I'll scratch yours."

For the sake of their tradition they make void "the word (= *logos*; many MSS = *nomon* or *entolēn*) of God" (15:6). They are "blind guides" (23:16; 15:14), "fools" (23:17), and "blind men" (23:19). Jesus does not observe their Sabbath traditions; he heals on the Sabbath (12:9–14). The disciples are permitted to eat ears of grain on the Sabbath (12:1–8) because David, when hungry, ate the bread of the presence on the Sabbath (12:3–4). At 23:23–24 the Scribes and Pharisees are blind guides who strain at a gnat, a valid gnat (= tithing mint, dill, and cummin), but have neglected the weightier matters of the law (= justice, mercy, and faith).

A further indication that the halakah is not valid is the strong polemic against the Jewish leaders,<sup>28</sup> especially in contexts where the essence of

<sup>27</sup> The antitheses do not merely show a contrast with the OT against Banks, *Jesus and the Law* 182–203.

<sup>28</sup> This position is opposed to those who claim an anti-Pauline or an antinomian polemic in Matthew. Davies (*Setting* 316–41) gives a convenient survey of the discussion of an anti-Pauline polemic in Matthew. Three arguments are prominent: (a) that Matthean particularism (10:5, 23; 15:24) is opposed to Pauline universalism (ibid. 326); (b) that nothing is to be taken away from the law (5:17–19) is consciously opposed to Paul's view that the law is ended (H. J. Schoeps, *Theologie und Geschichte des Judenchristentums* [Tübingen: Mohr, 1949] 120, 127, takes the enemy who sowed the seed in the parable of the tares to be a cryptic reference to Paul); and (c) that Matthew (as opposed to Mark and Luke) elevates Peter (i.e., at 15:15; 18:21; 16:17–19; 17:24–27) in order to oppose Paul (ibid. 336–37). Against (a) there is a marked universalism in Matthew: i.e., 5:13–16; 12:18–21; 21:43; 24:14; 25:32; 28:19; 2:1–11 (= the visit of the Magi); and 1:3, 5, 6 (= the inclusion of pagan women in the genealogy of Jesus). Argument (b) rests on silence; also the considerations of n. 15 above tell against it. Against (c) there are Marcan (9:21; 13:3) and Lucan (22:8; 5:1–11) texts that give prominence to Peter where there is no such prominence in their Matthean parallels.—Barth (*Law* 58–164) is a prominent exponent of a polemic against antinomian teachers of heresy within the community who said that the law was valid only until John the Baptist. He points out (a) that the godlessness attacked is *anomia* (7:23; 13:41; 23:28; 24:12) (ibid. 63) and claims (b) that the word "all" (*pas*) in contexts associated with the law (3:15; 5:18; 23:3; 28:20) indicates that there are those who would abolish part of the law (ibid. 71). Against (a), the *anomia* of 7:23 and 24:12 is in an eschatological context. At 13:41 the field is the world; this is a decisive argument against a *corpus mixtum* view of the Church, and against antinomian teachers of heresy within the Church. Finally, at 23:28 *anomia* is used with reference to the Scribes and Pharisees. Against argument (b), 5:18 is

the law is stated (5:20—6:18; 22:37—40; 23:23; 9:13; 12:7).<sup>29</sup> In the antitheses the Scribes and Pharisees are taking away from the law—cf. 5:17—19, where nothing is to be taken away from the law—both by limiting it to the outward act and by seeking to evade the radicalness of its prescriptions (e.g., their teaching on oaths 5:33—36; 23:16—22). They are outwardly righteous but inwardly full of *hypokrisis* and *anomia* (23:28).<sup>30</sup> As hypocrites (6:2, 5, 16; cf. 23:13, 23, 25, 27, 29), they practice their *dikaiosynē* (6:1) to be seen by men (6:1, 5, 16; cf. 23:5). Their righteousness will not allow them entrance into the kingdom of heaven (5:20; cf. 5:48).

#### THE MEANING OF THE BETTER RIGHTEOUSNESS (5:20)

At 5:20 the disciples are told that unless their righteousness (*hymōn hē dikaiosynē*) exceeds that of the Scribes and Pharisees they will never enter the kingdom of heaven. We will be able better to understand this passage by considering the meaning of *dikaiosynē* in the rest of the sermon. *Dikaiosynē* is a special word in Matthew's Sermon on the Mount; five times (5:6, 10, 20; 6:1, 33) it occurs there but only twice (3:15; 21:32)<sup>31</sup>

the only relevant use of *pas*. At 28:20 the context is the universal missionary command; at 3:15 the context is not polemical nor does it have to do with the disciple's obedience to the Torah. The polemic of 23:3 seems to be directed against the Scribes and Pharisees.

<sup>29</sup> In polemical contexts where the essence of the law is under consideration, the following groups of Jewish leaders are mentioned: Scribes (7:29), Pharisees (9:10—13; 12:1—4; 19:3—9; 22:34—40), Scribes and Pharisees (5:20; 23:2, 13, 15, 23, 27, 29), Pharisees and Scribes (15:1—20), Pharisees and Sadducees (16:6, 12), and hypocrites (6:2, 5, 6).

<sup>30</sup> They cleanse the *outside* of the cup and plate but on the *inside* are full of extortion and rapacity (23:25). The *inside* must be clean before the *outside* can be clean. They are whitewashed tombs, beautiful on the *outside* but on the *inside* are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness (23:27). For further stress on inwardness, see also 12:33—37 and 15:1—20 (esp. 11, 18—20).

<sup>31</sup> It is difficult to be certain of the interpretation of *plērōsai pasan dikaiosynēn* (3:15) or *en hodō dikaiosynēs* (21:32). If our exegesis of *plērōun* (see below) is correct, then, against Walter Grundmann (*Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* [THKNT; Berlin: Evangelische, 1972] 97—98), *plērōsai* at 3:15 corresponds to the Hebrew *male'*, and not *qiyēm*. The context seems to be not of "establishing" righteousness but of "doing" it. For a survey of views, see Otto Eissfeldt, "*Plērōsai pasan dikaiosynēn* in Matthäus 3:15," *ZNW* 61 (1970) 209—15. With regard to *hodō dikaiosynēs* (21:32), Grundmann (*Matthäus* 308), noting its background in the LXX (= Job 24:13; 28:4; Prov 8:20; 12:28; 16:31; 17:23; 21:16) and in the NT (= 2 Pet 2:21), claims that John is the one who "den Weg der Gerechtigkeit zeigt und fordert." Following Ernst Lohmeyer (*Das Evangelium nach Matthäus* [Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1956] 308), he takes *erchomai en* to mean "etwas bringen." John the Baptist, then, is the one who brought the way of righteousness in that he pointed out what it is and demanded that men follow in it. Under this interpretation *dikaiosynē* in 21:32 would be similar in meaning to its usage in 5:20 and 6:1.

in the rest of Matthew and only once more (Lk 1:75) in the rest of the Synoptics. Within the sermon a distinction must be made between *dikaiosynē hymōn* (5:20; 6:1), *dikaiosynē autou* (6:33), and the absolute (*hē*) *dikaiosynē* (5:6, 10). A distinction should also be made between the *dikaiosynē* which the disciple is to perform and the *dikaiosynē* which he is to receive (as a gift).

*Dikaiosynē hymōn* (5:20; 6:1) sums up the righteousness which the disciple is to perform.<sup>32</sup> The examples of 5:21–48 (= murder, adultery, oaths, divorce, the *lex talionis*, love of enemy) and 6:1–18 (= alms, prayer, fasting) illustrate the *dikaiosynē hymōn* demanded at 5:20 and 6:1 respectively. The righteousness which the believer receives as a gift is summed up in 5:6;<sup>33</sup> it is God who satisfies (*chortasthēsontai* = divine passive) one's hunger and thirst for righteousness. The gift character of righteousness correlates with the fact that being precedes doing. Before one can do acts of righteousness, one must be righteous. The plant not planted by the father is rooted up (15:13). Only a sound eye can have correct vision (6:22, 23), and only a good and sound tree can produce good fruit (7:17, 18; 12:33). One who is evil inwardly cannot do the good; one cannot speak good when he is evil, for it is out of the abundance of the *heart* that the mouth speaks (12:34); it is from the *heart* that evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, and slander come (15:18–20). It is what comes out of rather than what goes into the man that defiles him (15:11). The Scribes and Pharisees are lawless hypocrites, outwardly *dikaioi* but inwardly full of *hypokrisis* and *anomia* (23:28).

There are, moreover, indications that in order to be righteous one must be in the kingdom and related to Christ. Seeking God's kingdom and God's righteousness (*dikaiosynē autou*, 6:33) are correlative, as are being persecuted on account of righteousness (*heneken dikaiosynēs*, 5:10) and being persecuted on account of Christ (*heneken emou*, 5:11). Following Christ is the decisive criterion for entrance into the kingdom (4:19–22; 9:9; 10:38; 16:24; 19:21; cf. 19:29).

<sup>32</sup> The demand character of righteousness also has parallels elsewhere in Matthew. It is necessary to do the will of God (*thelēma tou patros*, 7:21; 12:50; 21:31; cf. 6:10). At 5:19 it is he who teaches and does the commandments who will be great in the kingdom of heaven. At 25:31–46 the sheep as opposed to the goats will inherit the kingdom because they took care of the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the naked, the sick, and the prisoner.

<sup>33</sup> Examples of those who deny the gift character of righteousness are Carlston, *The Things that Defile* 80, and Georg Strecker, *Der Weg der Gerechtigkeit: Untersuchung zur Theologie des Matthäus* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1966) 149–58. Examples of those who see righteousness as a gift are Barth, *Law* 123–24, 138–41, and Hartmut Günther, "Die Gerechtigkeit des Himmelreiches in der Bergpredigt," *KD* 17 (1971) 113–26.

THE MEANING OF PERFECTION (5:48)<sup>34</sup>

5:20–48 not only begins with the demand for the better righteousness but also concludes with the seemingly impossible demand for perfection: the disciples must be perfect (*teleioi*) as their heavenly Father is perfect (5:48).

Elsewhere in Matthew *teleios* is used only at 19:21; there the reason the rich man did not have treasure in heaven or perfection (*teleios*) was that he had a divided heart.<sup>35</sup> This corresponds well with the meaning of *teleios* in the LXX,<sup>36</sup> where it means “unblemished,” “undivided,” “complete,” “whole,” and is especially used for *šālēm* and *tāmīm*. In 1 Kgs 8:61; 11:4; 15:3, 14; and 1 Chr 28:9 *teleios* is the translation for the Hebrew *šālēm* and is used of the heart which is undivided *pros kyrion* or *meta kyriou*, which is undivided in exclusive worship, without idolatry, and wholly obedient to God’s will. Nor is the case different when *tāmīm* is translated by *teleios*; for instance, in Deut 18:13 the people are to serve Yahweh wholly and undividedly (*teleios esē enantion kyriou*), and Noah was a man *dikaios* and *teleios* (Gen 6:9) in his generation (cf. Sir 44:17; *Nōe heurethon teleios dikaios*).

Lev 19:2 (cf. Lev 11:44, 45; 20:7, 26), even though *hagios* occurs there instead of *teleios*, sheds light on Mt 5:48; it reads *hagioi esesthe hoti egō hagios (q̄dōšim) kyrios ho theos hymōn*. It was distinctive of Israel that they were set apart for and must reflect the character of Yahweh; as Lev 20:26 puts it, “You shall be holy to me; for I the Lord am holy, and have separated you from the peoples, that you should be mine.” Similarly, the disciples (Mt 5:48) are to be characterized by their likeness to God.<sup>37</sup>

It is along these OT lines, in contrast to a Greek<sup>38</sup> or Qumran<sup>39</sup> view, that *teleios* is to be understood. The idea of wholeheartedness, of a

<sup>34</sup> For recent discussion on the meaning of perfection in Matthew, see Davies, *Setting* 209–13; Gerhard Delling, “*teleios*,” *TDNT* 8 (1972) 72–74; Jacques Dupont, “L’Appel à imiter Dieu en Matthieu 5,48 et Luc 6,36,” *Rivista biblica Brescia* 14 (1966) 137–58; Rudolf Schnackenburg, “Die Vollkommenheit des Christen nach den Evangelien,” *Geist und Leben* 32 (1959) 420–33; Trilling, *Wahre Israel* 192–96; and John Piper, “*Love Your Enemies*” (SNTSMS 38: Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1979) 146–49.

<sup>35</sup> *Teleios* at 19:21 is in the context of obedience to the law (*tērēson tas entolas*, v. 17), of the Decalogue (vv. 18, 19), and of love for one’s neighbour (v. 19).

<sup>36</sup> See Delling, “*teleios*” 72.

<sup>37</sup> Dupont, “L’Appel” 137–58, rightly argues that Matthew has changed Luke’s *oiktirmones* (6:36) to *teleios* (5:48), has turned a particular injunction into a general principle.

<sup>38</sup> Whereby two grades of achievement are designated. See Davies, *Setting*, and Delling, “*teleios*” 69–72.

<sup>39</sup> On this question see Delling, *ibid.* 69; Davies, *Setting* 211–12; and Barth, *Law* 98–99. In Qumran as in Matthew there is an emphasis on doing the whole law; those who do it are *tāmīm*. As Barth (98) notes, however, at Qumran this requires a larger number of commandments to be observed, whereas in Matthew the emphasis is on the intensive. Similarly, Davies (212) writes: “Qumran demanded more obedience, Matthew deeper.”

reflection of God's character, is a fitting summary of the rest of the antitheses and of the command to love one's enemy.<sup>40</sup>

#### THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LOVE COMMAND

The command to love one's enemies (5:43-47) appears, like the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37), to be opposed to those who would limit the concept of neighbor in their interpretation of Lev 19:18 (= the command to love one's neighbor as oneself). The significance of the love commandment is also apparent in 22:34-40; there it states that the first and great commandment (= Deut 6:5) is to love God with one's whole "heart . . . soul . . . mind," and the second and similar (*homoia*) command (= Lev 19:18) is to love one's neighbor as oneself. It is on these two commandments that "all of the law and the prophets depend" (*holos ho nomos krematai kai hoi prophētai*).<sup>41</sup>

If Matthew means the same as similar statements in the rabbis,<sup>42</sup> the meaning would be that the whole law and prophets can be exegetically deduced from the command to love God and neighbor (without reference to the precedent of either commandment). The *megalē kai prōtē entolē* (22:38), however, indicates the precedence of love for God over the other commandments, including the commandment to love one's neighbour.

This statement on love agrees well with what Jesus says in the antitheses: it is not only the outward act but also the inward motive from which the outward act issues that is urgent. Jesus thus forbids not only murder (5:21), adultery (5:27), divorce (5:31, 32), oaths (5:33-36), or retaliation (5:39), but also anger (5:22), lust (5:28), and (at least by implication) the desire for either divorce (5:31, 32), deception (5:33-36), or retaliation (5:38, 39). The positive counterpart of all of these forbidden motives is to love unconditionally and unrestrictedly, to love even one's

<sup>40</sup>*Teleios* at 19:21 is not a higher level of obedience than that demanded at 19:18, 19 (= the Decalogue; and the love commandment, Lev 19:18) but rather a restatement of it. This is predicated on the position that the rich man did not actually "keep the commandments" (19:17), since he "enters" (*eiselthein*) neither "the kingdom of heaven" (19:23) nor "life" (19:17; cf. v. 29), since his treasure is on earth and not in heaven (19:21; cf. 16:19, 20: 6:21, 24), since he does not follow Jesus (19:21, 22). Cf. Piper, "Love Your Enemies" 148.

<sup>41</sup> A comparison of 22:34-40 with its Marcan (12:28-34) parallel reveals just how closely the love commandment is related to the law and how central it is for Matthew's understanding of the law. Matthew adds *en tō nomō* (22:36), *autē estin hē megalē kai prōtē entolē* (22:38), and *homoia autē* (22:39); he thereby respectively stresses the matter of the law, the importance of love for God, and the similar importance of love for neighbour. Several of Mark's phrases are altered in Matthew: *prōtē pantōn* becomes *megalē en tō nomō* (v. 36); the questioner is not *heis tōn grammateōn* but a *nomikos* (v. 35); and *meizōn toutōn allē entolē ouk estin* becomes *en tautais tais dysin entolais holos ho nomos krematai kai hoi prophētai* (v. 40). 22:40 is of utmost importance and (along with 7:12; 9:13; 12:7; 23:23) is a statement on the essence of the law.

<sup>42</sup> See Barth, *Law* 77; and Strack-Billerbeck 1, 907-8.

enemies (5:43-47). Undoubtedly, if one loved God with his whole being and his neighbor as himself, these forbidden motives and the outward acts from which they spring would disappear, and the positive acts which are commanded (5:23-25, 29-30, 37, 39-42, 44, 47) would appear.

So far we have concluded that Jesus is opposed to the Scribes and Pharisees who would evade the radical provisions of the Torah. With full authority he brings out its radically absolute meaning, summed up in the commandment to love God and neighbor (22:34-40). Being righteous, his disciples are to respond with a righteousness that is better than that of the Scribes and Pharisees (5:20). Like God, they are to be wholehearted (5:48); they must love even their enemies (5:43-48).

5:19 correlates with this account of the law. The disciples must not relax (*lysē*) the least of the commandments (*mian tōn entolōn toutōn tōn elachistōn*); they must, rather, teach (*didaxē*) and do (*poiesē*) them. The manner in which 5:17, 18 is related will emerge through a consideration of *plērōsai* (5:17) and *heōs an panta genētai* (5:18).

#### THE MEANING OF PLĒRŌSAI (5:17)

Views on *plērōsai* can be divided into at least six different positions: (a) "to do" or "to carry out";<sup>43</sup> (b) "to establish";<sup>44</sup> (c) "to set forth in its true meaning";<sup>45</sup> (d) "to keep intact";<sup>46</sup> (e) "to have the redemptive

<sup>43</sup> Theodor Zahn, *Das Evangelium des Matthaus* (Leipzig: Deichert, 1910) 211-16; Schniewind, *Matthaus* 53-54; and Adolf Schlatter, *Der Evangelist Matthaus: Seine Sprache, sein Ziel, seine Selbständigkeit* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1929) 153-54.

<sup>44</sup> Wilhelm Bacher, *Die älteste Terminologie der jüdischen Schriftauslegung* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1899) 170-71; Paul Fiebig, *Jesu Bergpredigt: Rabbinische Texte zum Verständnis der Bergpredigt* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1924) 27; Gustaf Dalman, *Jesus-Jeschua: Die drei Sprachen Jesu* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1922) 55-62; Erich Bischoff, *Jesus und die Rabbinen: Jesu Bergpredigt und "Himmelreich" in ihrer Unabhängigkeit vom Rabbinismus* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1905) 24-26; Daube, *Rabbinic Judaism* 60-61; Hill, *Matthew* 117-18; and Barth, *Law* 69.

<sup>45</sup> Erich Klostermann, *Das Mattheusevangelium: Handbuch zum Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1927) 40-41; Willoughby C. Allen, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Gospel according to S. Matthew* (ICC; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912) 45-46; Werner Georg Kummel, "Jesus und der jüdische Traditionsgedanke," *ZNW* 33 (1934) 105-30, reprinted in his *Heilsgeschehen und Geschichte: Gesammelte Aufsätze 1933-1964*, ed. E. Grasser, O. Merk, and A. Fritz (Marburg: Elwert, 1965) 15-35, at 34; Adolf Harnack, "Geschichte eines programmatischen Worts Jesu (Matth. 5:17) in der ältesten Kirche," *Sitzungsberichte der Königlich Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* (Berlin: Reimer, 1912) 184-207; Martin Dibelius, *The Sermon on the Mount* (New York: Scribner's, 1940) 71; and Allan H. M'Neile, *The Gospel according to St. Matthew* (London: Macmillan, 1915) 58.

<sup>46</sup> Albert Descamps, *Les justes et la justice dans les évangiles et le christianisme primitif hormis la doctrine proprement pauline* (Paris: Gabalda, 1950) 111-32; Albert Descamps, "Le christianisme comme justice dans le premier évangile," *ETL* 22 (1946) 5-33; Albert Descamps, "Essai d'interprétation de Mt. 5, 17-48: 'Formgeschichte ou 'Redaktionsge-

event take place";<sup>47</sup> and (f) "to bring to eschatological completion."<sup>48</sup>

*Plērōsai* cannot mean merely "to do." Barth points out that this meaning agrees well with the linguistic usage but in the context it is not Jesus' doing the law but rather his teaching of it that is decisive. Ljungman and Strack-Billerbeck indicate that in Jewish thought a law and its being performed form a unity, so that one cannot restrict fulfilment to "doing."<sup>49</sup>

*Katalysai* in 5:17, furthermore, weighs against this interpretation. The contrast *ou katalysai alla plērōsai* (5:17) indicates that *katalysai* and *plērōsai* are mutually exclusive. This exclusiveness is indicated by the formal parallel of this clause to others in Matthew: 5:17b *ouk ēlthon katalysai alla plērōsai*; 9:13 *ou gar ēlthon kalesai dikaious alla hamartōlous*; 20:28 *ouk ēlthen diakonēthēnai alla diakonēsai*; and 10:34b *ouk ēlthon balein eirēnēn alla machairan*. In each case the verb in the first part of the clause and the verb in the second part exclude each other.

Elsewhere in Matthew *katalyein* refers to the destruction as opposed to the rebuilding (*oikodomein*, 26:61; 27:40; cf. 24:2) of the temple in three days. The same contrast of *katalyein*-*oikodomein* occurs in Paul at Gal 2:18. In classical and Hellenistic sources, however, there is widespread agreement that *katalysai* means "abrogate," "declare invalid," or "abolish."<sup>50</sup> Zahn agrees that *katalysai* at 5:17 means "abolish," but (against Zahn) the law can hardly be abolished if it is merely not done or not observed; it must, rather, be abrogated or declared not binding. This is the clear force of *katalysai* at 2 Macc 2:22 and 4 Macc 5:33 (cf. 4 Macc 4:11; 17:9).<sup>51</sup>

The view that *plērōsai* means "establish" has been traced back to the Hebrew *hēqīm* (or *qīyām*) and/or the Aramaic *qayēm*. Albeit in a few OT passages the targums do use forms of *qayēm* where the LXX has *plērōsai*, it is significant (a) that the LXX never translates *plērōsai* for forms of *qīyām*, (b) that in the Syriac translation of 5:17 the underlying verbs for *katalysai*-*plērōsai* are *š<sup>e</sup>rē'*-*malē'*,<sup>52</sup> and (c) that usually *malē'* lies behind

schichte'?" *SE 1* (1959) 156-73; and Schoeps as summarized by W. D. Davies, *Christian Origins and Judaism* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962) 37-38.

<sup>47</sup> Henrik Ljungman, *Das Gesetz erfüllen: Matth. 5,17ff. und 3,15 untersucht* (Lund: Gleerup, 1954) 1-126.

<sup>48</sup> W. D. Davies, "Matthew 5:17,18," *Mélanges bibliques en l'honneur de A. Robert* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1957) 428-56, reprinted in Davies, *Christian Origins* 31-66; and Jeremias, *Proclamation* 82-85.

<sup>49</sup> Barth, *Law* 69; Ljungman, *Gesetz* 20; Strack-Billerbeck 1, 251.

<sup>50</sup> See Grundmann, *Matthäus* 145; F. Büchsel, "katalyō," *TDNT* 4 (1967) 338; Str.-Bill. 1. 241; Ljungman, *Gesetz* 17; Liddell-Scott-Jones 900; and Trilling, *Wahre Israel* 175.

<sup>51</sup> See Allan, *Matthew* 46; and Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich 415.

<sup>52</sup> See Kümmel, *Traditionsgedanke* 34.

the LXX *plērōsai*. Also Gaechter,<sup>53</sup> against the particular form of this view that sees *biṭṭel* and *qayēm* (= the binding and loosing power of the rabbis) behind *katalysai* and *plērōsai*,<sup>54</sup> notes that these terms apply to the law and not to the prophets.

The view that *plērōsai* means “to set forth the true meaning,” “to perfect,” or “to complete” has been criticized by McConnell<sup>55</sup> on the ground that Matthew would then have used *telein* or *teleioun*.<sup>56</sup> Delling<sup>57</sup> notes, however, that *plērōun* is similar in meaning to, but distinguished from, *teleioun*, because *plērōun* characteristically refers to the filling up of a measure.

*Plērōsai* in 5:17 cannot mean “keep intact.” H. J. Schoeps<sup>58</sup> interprets *plērōsai* here in light of b. Shab 116b; Matthew, however, misunderstood *w'lä* for *‘llā*, and consequently understood the passage to mean “I came neither to take away . . . nor to add.” This view is correct in that Jesus does not take away from the law, but it ignores the fact that *plērōsai* means to fill up a measure and that in 5:21–48 Jesus brings something new.<sup>59</sup>

The view that *plērōsai* (5:17) and *heōs an panta genētai* (5:18) refer to the death and resurrection of Jesus brings something entirely extraneous into the context. Ljungman argues that “the law and the prophets” refer to the *heilsgeschichtlich* redemptive promises of Scripture. Grundmann<sup>60</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Paul Gaechter, *Das Matthäus Evangelium* (Innsbruck: Tyrolia, 1962) 163–64.

<sup>54</sup> The view of Dalman, *Jesus-Jeschua* 53.

<sup>55</sup> Richard S. McConnell, *Law and Prophecy in Matthew's Gospel* (Basel: Reinhardt, 1969) 16.

<sup>56</sup> Trilling's (*Wahre Israel* 175) view that *telein* is a profane term for Matthew seems to be vitiated by the use of the same root (*teleios*, 5:48; 19:21) in a religious sense.

<sup>57</sup> Gerhard Delling, “plēroō”, *TDNT* 6 (1968) 290.

<sup>58</sup> Schoeps as cited in Davies, *Christian Origins* 37–38.

<sup>59</sup> Descamps (*Les justes* 111–32; “L'christianisme” 5–33; and “L'Essai” 156–73 [see Ljungman, *Gesetz* 23–26 for a summary]) claims that in contrast to *katalysai*, *plērōsai* means “keep intact.” *Katalyein ton nomon* means that the law is no longer in force and *katalyein tous prophētas* means that a prophecy is impossible (“irréalisable”). *Plērōun ton nomon* means “perfectly to obey the law,” and *plērōun tous prophētas* means “realize” (“réaliser”) the prophets; the Messiah does these in his words and deeds. Against Descamps, however, the law and the prophets cannot be fulfilled in different senses. Although the connective particle is *-ē* (not *kai*), it is not used in a disjunctive sense. M'Neile (*Matthew* 58), Blass–Debrunner–Funk (231), and Nigel Turner (in James H. Moulton, *A Grammar of New Testament Greek* 3 [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1963] 334) note that in negative sentences the disjunctive *ē* takes the place of *kai*. The law and the prophets are considered to be a unity and are a designation of the entire OT (cf. Kümmel, *Traditionsgedanke* 20; Str.-Bill. 1, 240; McConnell, *Law and Prophecy* 10, 11; Ljungman, *Gesetz* 12, 13; Rudolf Meyer, “*kryptō*,” *TDNT* 3 (1965) 978–79; W. Gutbrod, “*nomos*,” *TDNT* 4 (1967) 1059; Barth, *Law* 92–95; and Trilling, *Wahre Israel* 172–74).

<sup>60</sup> Grundmann, *Matthäus* 144.

claims, however, that “the law and the prophets” is able only at 11:13 (and consequently unable at 5:17; 7:12; and 22:40) to mean “bearers of the promise” (“Träger der Verheissung”). A proclamation of the will of God, though, can hardly be excluded at 11:13, where it states that *pantes gar hoi prophētai kai ho nomos heos Iōannou eprophēteusan*. At any rate, at 5:17 the commanding aspect of Scripture cannot be excluded, for the context is one of moral demand. Also it is possible that in the Sermon on the Mount the phrase “the law and the prophets” (5:17; 7:12) is to be understood as brackets; the intervening content is in some sense an exposition of the moral requirements of Scripture.<sup>61</sup>

The view adopted here is indebted to Joachim Jeremias.<sup>62</sup> He sees b. Shab. 116b (= the reading *'ellā*, as opposed to *w<sup>e</sup>lā*<sup>63</sup>), with its explicit claim to have come from a Gospel, as lying behind 5:17. He notes that this view matches the usual exegesis of 5:17b in Jewish Christianity (e.g., Pseud. Clem. Rec. 1, 39, 1). *Katalysai* is equivalent, then, to *miphāt* (“take away”) and *plērōsai* is equivalent to *'osope* (“increase,” “add,” “enlarge”). *Plērōsai* is an eschatological technical term; Jesus brings the final revelation, the complete eschatological measure of the law.

This view of *plērōsai* agrees well with its root meaning of “to fill up a measure.”<sup>64</sup> This view of *katalysai* corresponds well with *iōta hen ē mia keraia ou mē parelthē. apo tou nomou* (5:18) and *lysē. mian tōn entolōn toutōn*<sup>65</sup> *tōn elachistōn kai didaxē. houtōs* (5:19); all three verses state that nothing is to be taken away from the law.

#### THE MEANING OF HEŌS AN PANTA GENĒTAI (5:18)

There is widespread disagreement over the precise meaning of each unit of this clause: over the meaning of *heōs an, panta, and genētai*.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. *ibid.* 141–42; and Barth, *Law* 73.

<sup>62</sup> Jeremias, *Proclamation* 82–85.

<sup>63</sup> *welā* indicates that Jesus left everything as it was, whereas *'ellā* indicates that Jesus brought something new. For further discussion see Jeremias, *Proclamation* 83–85.

<sup>64</sup> The following are examples of other NT passages in which Jeremias (*Proclamation* 84) sees the concept of eschatological measure: “the full measure of sin” (Mt 23:32); “the shortening of the time of distress” (Mk 13:20); “harvest as the full measure of time” (Mk 4:29); “the fulness of time” (Gal 4:4); “the full number of martyrs” (Rev 6:11). In addition, Gerhard Dellling (“*plērōō*,” *TDNT* 6 [1968] 287–88) documents how the Hebrew forms underlying *plērōō* in the LXX strongly support the idea of “to fill up the measure.” The content that fills the measure depends upon the context. At 3:15 and 23:32—the only other texts in which *plērōō* occurs actively in Matthew—the context would indicate that the measure is filled through actions. At 5:17, however, the context would indicate that the measure is filled through teaching. At 5:17–48 what Jesus does (as opposed to what the disciples are to do) is teach, what he does is fulfil the law.

<sup>65</sup> The view of Zahn (*Matthäus* 218), Klostermann (*Matthäusevangelium* 41), Ljungman (*Gesetz* 48–52), and Wrege (*Überlieferungsgeschichte* 41) that *toutōn* refers to *iōta hen ē mia keraia* (v. 18) seems correct.

*Heōs an* can be interpreted in at least three ways: (a) as meaning “until” with a temporal limit (= Mt 2:13; 10:11; 23:39); (b) as meaning “until” without a temporal limit (= Mt 16:28; 22:44; cf. 12:20; 24:34); and (c) as meaning “so that.” With regard to (c), E. Schweizer<sup>66</sup> notes that *heōs an* is used in a definitely final sense at Test. Iob. 21:2 and 22:3, and believes that the same usage occurs at Mt 5:18 and probably at 5:26. A. M. Honeyman<sup>67</sup> appeals to the Semitic background of 5:18 to solve the difficulty that the double *heōs an* clause there appears to but hardly can support a tautology. He notes that the Aramaic equivalents ‘*dd*, ‘*dš* may be used not only of time and place, but also of degree, manner, or extent. He concludes that *heōs an panta genētai* reproduces an Aramaic *klh* (*kl’*) ‘*d dytqyym* expressing in positive terms what is expressed negatively in the preceding clause. The force of *heōs an*, then, is not temporal but modal.

*Panta* has been viewed as referring to (a) the death and resurrection of Jesus;<sup>68</sup> (b) the Parousia;<sup>69</sup> (c) the end of the present era and the winding up to all things in the cosmos;<sup>70</sup> and (d) the law.<sup>71</sup>

*Genētai* can be viewed in at least three different ways; (a) as events which occur (= approximately 70 times in Matthew); (b) as “doing” (= Mt 6:10; 26:42); and (c) as “fulfil” in a manner similar to *plērōsai* in 5:17 (= Honeyman’s view).<sup>72</sup>

The context of 5:17–19 and 5:20–48, as we have seen, upholds the enduring validity of the law. This would mean that *heōs* does not mean “until” with a temporal limit and, consequently, *panta* can hardly refer to the death and resurrection of Jesus, since that would add something extraneous to the context. If *heōs* means “until” without a temporal limit, then *panta genētai* would refer either to the Parousia or the end of time. This view is certainly possible, since elsewhere in Matthew *ginesthai* overwhelmingly refers to events. For example, at 24:34 *heos an panta*

<sup>66</sup> Eduard Schweizer, “Observance of the Law and Charismatic Activity in Matthew,” *NTS* 16 (1969–70) 213–30, at 215. Cf. also A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (New York: Doran, 1914) 976. Turner (*Grammar* 3, 110) notes that H. Ljungvik (*Beiträge zur Syntax der spätgriechischen Volkssprache* [Uppsala, 1932] 43–46) has shown that *heōs* and *heōs an* in post-Christian papyri have a final sense. Similarly, Blass–Debrunner–Funk 193.

<sup>67</sup> A. M. Honeyman, “Matthew V. 18 and the Validity of the Law,” *NTS* 1 (1954–55) 141–42.

<sup>68</sup> Davies, *Christian Origins* 60–64; Hamerton-Kelly, *Attitudes* 28–31; Olav Hanssen, “Zum Verständnis der Bergpredigt: Eine missionstheologische Studie zu Mt. 5, 17–48,” *Der Ruf Jesu* (ed. Eduard Lohse) 94–111, 106–9; and Meier, *Law and History* 63–64.

<sup>69</sup> Schweizer, *Anmerkungen* 482.

<sup>70</sup> Schniewind, *Matthäus* 54.

<sup>71</sup> Barth, *Law* 65, and Strecker, *Weg der Gerechtigkeit* 144.

<sup>72</sup> Honeyman, *Validity of the Law* 141–42.

*tauta genētai* (a phrase identical to 5:18 except for the addition of *tauta*) refers either to the fall of Jerusalem or to the Parousia; at 28:11 *hapanta ta genomēna* refers to the resurrection of Jesus; and *touto de (holon) gegonen* (1:22; 21:4; 26:56) refers to events of Jesus' life which are a prophetic (*prophētēs*) fulfilment (*plērōun*) of Scripture. A different usage of *ginesthai*, however, is evidenced in the phrase *genēthēto to thelēma sou* (6:10 = the Lord's Prayer; and 26:42 = the prayer at Gethsemane).

If *ginesthai* refers to the doing of God's will, then *panta* refers to the law. A potential grammatical problem, though, is that *panta* is plural and *nomou* is singular. But the problem is relieved if *panta ta tou nomou* is understood for *panta* or if *panta* is contrasted with *iōta hen ē mia keraia*.<sup>73</sup>

The view adopted here is indebted to Honeyman's insight that *heōs an panta genētai* states positively what is stated negatively in the preceding clause; thus *heōs an* is final, *panta* is contrasted with *iōta hen ē mia keraia*, and *genētai* is the opposite of *parelthē*. *Parelthē* in 5:18 means pass away in the sense of "lose force," "become invalid."<sup>74</sup> *Genētai* then means "come to be" in the sense of "come into force," "become valid." The sense of 5:18, then, is that nothing is to pass from the law but rather that all of it is to come into full force. *Genētai* thus has a meaning similar to *plērōsai* in 5:17.

This view, like the one which claims that nothing will ever pass from the law, agrees with our previous conclusions concerning the law in Matthew: the law is valid, and there is a polemic against the Scribes and Pharisees who are taking away from the law. In addition, both views would affirm the exceedingly emphatic point of 5:17–19 that nothing is ever to be taken away from the law. My view, however, has the additional advantages (a) that 5:17, 18, and 19 would each have a negative followed by a contrasting positive statement and (b) that 5:18, along with 5:17 and the antitheses (5:21–48), claims that Jesus brings the law to its full measure.

#### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The essence of the law is summed up in the commandment wholeheartedly to love God (= Deut 6:5) and neighbor (= Lev 19:18) (22:34–40), with the concept of neighbor extended to include one's enemies (5:43–47).

Both 5:17–19 and 5:20–48 are internally consistent and correlate with each other. In none of the antitheses does Jesus abrogate the law; in each case, rather, he brings out its radically absolute meaning. 5:17–19 claims that nothing is to be taken away from the law; Jesus, instead, is bringing

<sup>73</sup> Ljungman, *Gesetz* 36–43, and Sand, *Das Gesetz und die Propheten* 37–38.

<sup>74</sup> Bauer–Arndt–Gingrich 631.

the law into full force (5:18), is bringing it to its full eschatological measure of completeness (5:17). The disciples, consequently, must not relax but, on the contrary, must teach and obey even the least commandment (5:19).

The righteousness of Jesus' disciples must be far better than that of the Scribes and Pharisees (5:20; 6:1). Unlike the Scribes and Pharisees, they must not take away from the law either by limiting it to the outward act or by evading its radical prescriptions. They must be wholehearted as God is wholehearted (5:48).